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COLLABORATING THROUGH TEAM TEACHING (CTT) REPORT

A. Brief description of team teaching that was done.

This was a team-teaching “trio” consisting of professors Roy, Davidson and Otto from the Philosophy Department. The aim of our project was to teach through a true seminar process – focusing on original research, with both student and faculty presentations, and drawing on the extra faculty to elevate the level of classroom discussion.

B. Why/Purpose: Teaching need(s) addressed by team teaching

Many courses at CSUSB are labeled ‘seminar’ for curricular purposes. However the term ‘seminar’ usually designates class size, not the interactive seminar type of class activities. It is our experience that attempts to drive course content by student presentations and follow-up discussion in the mode of a true seminar often founder on the inadequacy of student preparation and initial student preparations. It is particularly desirable to overcome these difficulties in the Socratic context typical of philosophy.

C. Preparation: What preparation(s) did you have to make to do team teaching?

Given that we used our entire TRC course release toward the course itself (officially in Roy’s name, with release for Davidson and Otto), preparations were much as usual. Roy worked up a syllabus, agreed upon by others. All of us focused on content particularly for the first few weeks of the course.

D. Administrative Issues: What administrative issue(s) did you have to address to make team teaching happen?

Our proposal indicated that we would make use of extra faculty, in part, by means of an elaborate presentation process including student discussion conferences and the like. This was difficult to manage with student and faculty schedules. Similarly, as the number of faculty goes up, the more difficult it becomes to set up regular meetings and the like, so that administrative tasks that might have seemed simple did sometimes become surprisingly difficult.

E. Student Reactions/ Expectations: How did the students react to being team taught? Were their expectations different? Describe other student reactions or challenges encountered regarding students.

Student reactions were generally positive. In the final review, numerical evaluations for the course as a whole (with seven forms) were at a mean of 5.1 just over Very Good, slightly under the individual score for Prof. Roy at 5.4. Representative comments relevant to our team teaching are,

If one teacher couldn't explain the material so that the class could understand another would help out

I thought the instructors did an amazing job trying to teach a very hard subject. From time to time class moved a little too fast, a little too slow, and a little unorganized, but everything was done with the students in mind first.

For a first attempt at a new teaching style and class presentation I commend the instructors. I feel having three instructors was valuable and helped to clarify issues in different ways making the material somewhat manageable. However I feel the level at which the instructors communicated with each other in class was over my head and not broken down clearly so as to understand the debates that took place in class.

Holy crap! This class is very mind blowing, however very good in its instruction. The 3 instructors teaching lend extremely well put together answers or objections to what is being said – and it totally relates to the class.

It seems that efforts to expose students to serious material and elevate debate were largely successful, with room for improvement.

F. Teaching: What impact did this have on your teaching?

This course impacted the teaching of all three professors, on at least three levels. First, we learned from watching one another teach. We each took different approaches to teaching the material, and so were exposed to approaches we had not necessarily considered. Second, we were able to interact with one another while teaching, which drew out the material in unexpected, and often beneficial ways. Third, we would comment on each others' teaching methods before and after class, which helped us improve our teaching skills.

G. Evaluation: What did you do to evaluate the effect of team teaching on student learning? Your and your partner's teaching skills? How did this affect student grading, SETE's?

From the student point of view, this was a wonderful opportunity. Students were exposed to a level of material and discussion that is not usually possible in the classroom at CSUSB. For the most part, they realized this, and were appreciative of it.

From the faculty perspective, we were able to improve our teaching skills through discussions with each other (see answer to “impact” above, for more details). In terms of grading, we were able to give student work a great deal more attention than would be possible in a normal class, owing to the low teacher-student ratio. This made a enormous difference to student learning outcomes, since students were guided by consultations with professors both before and after papers were submitted. In terms of SETEs, the comments made by students (see answer to “student reactions” above, for more details) speak for themselves. In addition, we intend to transfer some of the teaching techniques we learned during this course to future classes.

H. Other additional comments, future plans on team teaching.

We thank the TRC for the funding that made this project possible.