

California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Q2S Enhancing Pedagogy

2020

English 2180 skeleton syllabus and sample assignment

Jennifer Andersen
janderse@csusb.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/q2sep>



Part of the [Other English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Andersen, Jennifer, "English 2180 skeleton syllabus and sample assignment" (2020). *Q2S Enhancing Pedagogy*. 168.

<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/q2sep/168>

This Lesson/Unit Plans and Activities is brought to you for free and open access by CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Q2S Enhancing Pedagogy by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

Jennifer L. Andersen
English Department
Faculty Learning Community for new GE Large Lecture Courses in English

During Fall 2019

Our faculty group met bi-weekly for two-hour meetings to discuss general pedagogical scholarship on teaching large lecture classes to learn best practices in the state of the field. We also consulted with Mauricio Cavidad of ATI about tools and functions in Blackboard that many of us have not yet used such as grading rubrics. He also introduced us to other tools for presentation and assessment that we could incorporate into Blackboard such as Voice thread and Play Pause it and provided us with the list of softwares licensed by CSUSB. As an entire group we read and discussed the following texts:

Bibliography

- Adrian, Lynne M. "Active Learning in Large Classes: Can Small Interventions Produce Greater Results Than Are Statistically Predictable?" *JGE: The Journal of General Education*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2010, pp. 223–237. *EBSCOhost*.
- Brookfield, Stephen D. and Stephen Preskill. *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms*, 2nd edition. Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- Buckles, Stephen, Gail M. Hoyt, and Jennifer Imazeki. "Making the large-enrollment course interactive and engaging." *International handbook on teaching and learning economics*.
- Cornell Center for Teaching Innovation website on engaging students in large courses: <https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources/engaging-students/large-courses>
- Foote, Stephanie. "Amateur Hour: Beginning in the Lecture Hall." *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2010, pp. 457–470. *EBSCOhost*.
- Fuss, Diana and William A. Gleason, editors. *The Pocket Instructor Literature: 101 Exercises for the College Classroom*. Princeton UP, 2016.
- Heppner, Frank. *Teaching the Large College Class: A Guidebook for Instructors with Multitudes*. Jossey-Bass, 2007.
- Paul, Annie Murphy. "Are College Lectures Unfair?" *New York Times*. September 12, 2015.
- Remler, Nancy Lawson. "The More Active the Better: Engaging College English Students with Active Learning Strategies." *TETYC*, September 2002. pp. 76-81.
- Stanley, Christine A., and M. Erin Porter. *Engaging Large Classes: Strategies and Techniques for College Faculty*. Jossey-Bass, 2001.
- Tinkle, Theresa, et al. "Teaching Close Reading Skills in a Large Lecture Course." *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2013, pp. 505–535. *EBSCOhost*.

Some highlights from this reading and discussion:

I found the Frank Heppner book particularly rich with detailed suggestions and pragmatic considerations when teaching a large lecture format class. Some concrete suggestions

made by Heppner that I will definitely implement in large lecture teaching include course planning, use of checklists and thinking ahead; modulating ones teaching person to various stages of the term; smaller group or class activities that one could perform in an auditorium; using media effectively. Because larger classes will rely heavily on Blackboard and projection systems, Heppner gave detailed attention to the optimal presentation of slides, paying attention, for example, to the slide size and orientation, various typefaces and sizes that are more easily legible for students. Such considerations may seem merely formal and mechanical, but if they can enhance student comprehension of the materials, they are worth paying attention to.

The Stephen Buckles article gave attention to the logistics of arranging make-up exams in large lecture classes, and without the support of a Testing Center at CSUSB, professors need to give more thought and planning to arranging make up exams, especially on the scale of a lecture course where there are sure to be many more occasions for making such arrangements are sure to occur. Buckles also had creative ideas about pacing the class, organizing it into blocks of time, and incorporating interactive activities to prevent students from sliding into habits of passivity and anonymity. Another concrete suggestion from Buckles was to provide students with skeleton notes for each class; this would consist in sort of a bare bones outline or framework for the day's topics which the students would fill in with detail as the class proceeds. Buckles also discussed some innovated ways for content delivery outside of class which now seem highly relevant since I am suddenly teaching three different classes online during Spring 2020.

During Winter 2020

After having discussed pedagogical techniques for large lecture teaching in a general way among the entire group in fall, in winter quarter we split into more specialized groups depending on the particular new GE English courses that we anticipate teaching.

The new GE course that I am preparing is **English 2180: The Function of Stories**. The department chair anticipates that the department will offer this course every fall and spring semester, usually either in one section of 140 students or in two sections of 70 students. This course will fulfill the GE-C lower division requirement.

Our winter faculty learning group was interested in exploring best practices for creating and using multiple-choice tests in large lectures. Without extra assistance from Teaching Assistants to grade student work, the efficiency of the multiple-choice exam seems like a necessary evil in large lecture courses in order to manage the work load. The advantages of multiple-choice tests are that they are easy to score reliably, can test a range of learning objectives, and provide a sample of student performance. Disadvantages are that they are difficult to write, cannot test the full range of learning objectives (because of their structure), and make it difficult to discern how students are thinking. We reviewed tips and suggestions from C.B. Peters for writing better multiple-choice exam questions. One consideration is to make sure that questions involve higher order, critical thinking

and not simply rote memory. We also considered suggestions for writing good essay questions. Using both multiple-choice tests and essays and papers for assessment is probably necessary in order to assess the full range of course objectives in an English literature class.

My own planning for English 2180: the Function of Stories

Finally, I looked into various possible approaches and materials to use in the specific GE course I will prepare for the new semester curriculum. Here are several of the ideas that I developed. Each would involve taking a specific approach to the broader question of the function of storytelling.

1) Legal Argumentation as Story-telling: the role of stories in jurisprudence

One of the angles that I am considering for the Function of Stories course is looking at legal argumentation as storytelling. The notion here is that in forensic contexts, trial lawyers tap into pre-existing narrative shapes and frameworks to appeal to juries. Trial attorneys, like successful demagogues, incorporate evidence into narratives that use and appeal to popular values to enlist the approval of the public. Two books that explore these sorts of dynamics are:

James Boyd White, *Heracles' Bow: Essays on the Rhetoric and Poetics of the Law* (University of Wisconsin Press).

Sam Shrago, *The Trial Lawyer's Art* (Pittsburgh: Temple University Press, 1999)

2) Philosophical explorations into cognitive and affective benefits from fiction

Some ideas here are that reading literature helps us to make cognitive and ethical distinctions. In fiction, we are able to gain information which would be costly, dangerous, and difficult for us to extract from the world on our own. So literature provides a sort of low stakes, practice environment for us to discover social information which in real life involve high risk. An excellent recent study in this area is:

Blakey Vermeule, *Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?* (Johns Hopkins, 2010).

3) Socio-historical arguments about the rise of the novel

Theories surrounding the rise of the novel in the eighteenth-century seek correlations between the development of the novelistic imagination and form with historical developments. For example, a medium given over to the sustained and protracted exploration of the shades and nuances of behavior and feeling reached its fullest development in the two centuries which witnessed the rise of political institutions nominally dedicated to tolerance and a large measure of individual freedom. Some of the most important studies relevant to this scholarly debate include:

Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

Michael McKeon ed., *Theory of the Novel: a Historical Approach* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: Cultural contexts of eighteenth-century fiction* (New York: Norton, 1990).

4) Fiction as cautionary tales for maturing adolescents

One sub-strand of scholarship on the origins of the novel considers the notion that, as more young people moved away from their rural homes and the traditional authority figures from whom they sought advice, fiction could provide advice for maturing young men and women in the form of cautionary tales. Uprooted from protective family environments, and often working as servants or apprentices in the households of elite or merchant families, these young people craved narratives that could help them imagine and navigate unfamiliar social situations and futures. Some studies that contribute to this line of thought are:

J. Paul Hunter, "The Young, the Ignorant, and the Idle": Some Notes on Readers and the Beginnings of the English Novel in *Anticipations of the Enlightenment in England, France, and Germany* ed. Alan Kors and Paul J. Korshin (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987).

J. Paul Hunter, "The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Reader" *Genre* 10, 4 (1977), 455-84

Robert Darnton, "Peasants Tell Tales: The Meaning of Mother Goose" *The Great Cat Massacre and other episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984).

5) Psychological benefits: storytelling as a source of analogues for subjective experience

The notion here is that fiction can provide analogies for individuals of specific subjective experiences that readers experience in isolation.

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENT for English 2180: The Function of Stories

From the topics discussed above, you can see that I plan for the course to sample a number of different explanations for the function of stories, drawing on different disciplinary perspectives to ask the question, and looking at different arenas of human activity and experience involving storytelling. The answer to the larger question of the course, “What is the Function of Stories?” will thus be nuanced and varied.

Here is a sample assignment that will involve students in engaging with some of the ideas above regarding the function of stories early in the course:

Essay Prompt

Write an essay in which you recount the experience of finding that some form of story (whether in a book, a movie, or another medium) mirrored an experience that you have had.

- Explain what specific elements of the story mirrored your experience.
- Try to remember and describe the sensation of discovering something that you considered to be a private experience limited to yourself in a work of fiction.
- Finally, discuss whether the discovery of this fictional analogue for your own experience helped deepen your understanding of the shared event or perception. How did the fictional analogue cause you to reflect on your own experience.