

Synergia

1. The interaction of two or more forces so that their combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual effects.

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Newsletter of Faculty Development • University of St. Thomas

Nov./Dec. 2007

TEACHING ABOUT RACE: COMMON MISTAKES OF WHITE PROFESSORS



*Stephen D. Brookfield,
Distinguished University
Professor*

A desire to teach about race, reduce racism, and honor diverse races, heritages and traditions is now extolled as a worthy project, indeed a necessity, for White teachers in many disciplines. As many Whites who have tried this know, however, such teaching is fraught with contradictions and missteps. Teachers who do this are themselves sometimes accused of racism, and raw emotions are often exposed in ways that cause some White teachers to vow never to raise this issue again. This brief article examines 10 common mistakes White teachers make in teaching about race. Some of them are basic (excusing oneself from complicity in racism, saying you understand oppression, asking a student to give the “Black,” “Asian” or “First Nations” perspective). Some are more subtle, such as the danger of repressive tolerance (appearing to open up a curriculum whilst simultaneously closing it down).

The ten mistakes are chosen because they are ones I myself have made and ones I have also seen colleagues commit. I don’t pretend to offer any simple solutions for teaching about race, since there aren’t any. But I will try to alert White professors to what awaits them when they try to do the right thing for the right reasons – and feel that it’s gone seriously wrong. My perspective is one that many will criticize and much of this criticism will come from those who call my assumptions into question. So for reasons of scholarly honesty I need to say that my remarks are framed by my understanding of critical theory, and of an associated discourse of critical race theory.

My Typical Mistakes as a White Professor

Maintaining racism is all a matter of individual choice and I have chosen not to be racist.

This is the Big Kahuna – the one I see committed most frequently and the one that subverts your intentions to be taken seriously by students and colleagues of color. This perspective holds that whether or not a White person chooses to be racist is down to the moral strength or militant Christianity he or she displays in fighting the system’s efforts to make them think and behave as a racist. It assumes that Whites can choose whether or not to be racist and that those with good hearts will choose not to be. In this perspective success in anti-racist work is largely a matter of individual fortitude; of how

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assiduously you gear yourself up to detect and fight the enemy.

We need to see racism as structural, prejudice personal. Racism is embedded within permanent practices and socially learned ways of thinking, prejudice a matter of personal choice. Racism moves in White people whether they wish it to or not. Having experienced several decades of socialization into racism, I am aware of how it moves within me, merely by the fact of my skin color. This is one reason I am so both bothered by all the praise heaped on the Oscar-winning film *Crash*. Written and directed by a white man (Paul Haggis) the film presented racism in a very White way, as a matter of individual choice that the characters opted in and out of depending on the situation. To me the film set back a true

understanding of racism as a structural phenomenon. Prejudice and privilege both certainly exist in individuals, but racism must be understood as something embedded within a whole political, economic and cultural system. It follows, therefore, that it is a deeper, more enduring phenomenon than individual prejudice and can only be successfully attacked structurally.

As a White person you are unable to escape complicity in racism. You can choose to fight this in yourself and others - individually and systemically - but you cannot decide not to be a part of racism. Acknowledge your own collusion in racism and how it moves in you. As a teacher never suggest you are free of racism. If racism is a structural reality bolstered by ideology, then all Whites have learned at an instinctual level racist stereotypes (what Raymond Williams calls a structure of feeling – an emotional response embedded in institutions and practices). There is no point to deny this – it should be mentioned, almost matter of factly (not as a dramatic confession) since a racist society in which White supremacy is a dominant ideology would mean that of course Whites have racism embedded in them.

I can teach about racism without having colleagues of color.

While it is certainly possible for Whites to teach other Whites about the presence of White Supremacy, White Privilege etc. and how to combat these, working with a multiracial teaching team is crucial for being able to model talking across difference and working through racial tensions. The team should talk out how their racial memberships manifest themselves in decisions about process; for example, how faculty ask students to address them, what behavior different team members regard as disrespectful,

people's level of comfort with gumbo ya ya (Alice Walker's description of overlapping speech patterns observable amongst African American students) or with call and response techniques, and so on.

Thanking students of color for the gift of their racial heritage and knowledge – for teaching you about race.

Thanking students for their heritage can easily come across as condescending and underscores the centering of Whiteness. It positions these racialized traditions as exotic others, different, and only emphasizes the “naturalness” of White and Eurocentric perspectives. So don't expect colleagues of color to “teach” you about racism and White supremacy - they have enough to do combating racism without taking you on as a learning project. This is your responsibility – you must conduct your own serious learning on this.

I can understand how you must feel.

Don't ever suggest you understand how it feels to be the victim of racism. As a White person you can't. To students and colleagues of color race trumps EVERYTHING. Saying you're from the working class, have suffered under patriarchy, have experienced religious discrimination and can therefore understand what students of color experience will come across as naïve and condescending. You lose credibility in an instant.

You must have misunderstood me, I'm teaching AGAINST racism!

Be prepared to be called a racist, it comes with the territory of this work. You may feel you're working with sensitivity and goodwill but as soon as you stir the waters with racial discussions you will inevitably inflame some people. As a White person and a representative (in the eyes of students' of color) of White supremacy you must expect to be mistrusted and not let that stop you. You

must also expect White colleagues to accuse you of politically incorrect reverse racism. This is NOT a sign that you are somehow failing. It comes to every White person in this work.

Let me show you how I have read works on the Black, Asian etc. perspective on this.

Before you open your mouth to show how you have read authors of color make sure you have truly engaged with scholarship of color and are aware of the major debates, disagreements and differences in the racial tradition you profess to be knowledgeable about. You expect your colleagues of color to be well acquainted with Eurocentric analysis, ideas of the Enlightenment, the hypothetic-deductive method scientific reasoning, Marxist critique etc. They have every right therefore to expect you to be similarly well versed in Africentrism, the debate between integrationism and critical race theory, differences between Civil Rights movement figures on charismatic leadership and grass roots strategy, the Ebonics debate, the case for Black Nationalism or alliance with broader social and political movements, etc.

Let's hear the Black, Asian, First Nation, Indigenous, Pacific Islander etc. perspective on this issue.

Never ask a student to speak for their race - this implies that all people of a certain phenotype think and behave in exactly the same way. It would be infuriating for you to have to give the “American” or “White” perspective on something given the multiple ethnicities, religious identities, ideological affiliations, and histories of groups in American culture. So never assume there is a unitary Black/Latino/Asian/ or other perspective. After all, there is not a unitary White perspective or viewpoint on most issues.

Let's leave race out of this for a moment / put questions of race aside.

Assume that for students of color race is evident in everything - how people name themselves, what people consider as respectful behavior, how people think a good discussion goes, etc. The freedom to say "let's put race aside" is something Whites have – they can "choose" when to switch the racial perspective on or off.

As a Friend let me tell you what to do.

The European-American Collective Challenging Whiteness describes a number of traps White teachers fall into in their effort to be allies to students and colleagues of color. One of these is that of disdain. Whites who have a beginning familiarity with anti-racist practice frequently position themselves with regard to their "less enlightened" White colleagues as 'holier than thou' and free of racism. Falling into a posture of scolding and preaching is a sure way to secure your own isolation.

I musn't criticize students of color or I'm a racist and I need to grant special dispensations.

Holding back from challenging students of color out of a "concern" for their wellbeing masks an embedded racist consciousness that says that "they" can't take a "strong" challenge from a White person. Quickly granting paper extensions to students of color because they are students of color (without any attempt to assess their ability) springs from a White Supremacist judgment that because students of color are not as intelligent or strong as White students, of course they will need more time to complete their work. Colleagues of color will have no compunction about holding students of color to the highest standards.

The European-American Collective Challenging Whiteness describes this

behavior as withholding. Withholding is a behavior Whites fall prey to in multiracial environments. Withholding is the self-imposed silencing of self with the intention of creating space for the racial other to speak. Withholding underscores the White center by implying that a white voice is so powerful it will overwhelm all else.

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Peterson, E. and Brookfield, S. (2007) "Race and Racism: A Critical Dialogue" *Proceedings of the 46th Adult Education Research Conference*. Halifax, NS: Mount Saint Vincent University. Available at http://stephenbrookfield.com/pdf_files/Peterson_Brookfield_Final_paper.pdf



Teaching about Race: Common Mistakes of White Professors, led by Dr. Stephen Brookfield
Thursday, December 6, 2007 (MPLS)
Monday, December 3, 2007 (St. Paul)
2:30 - 3:30 p.m., MOH 417
3:30 - 4:30 p.m., Murray-Herrick 155
Registration Deadline: November 30, 2007

UST BUSH GRANT



Robert Werner
Director, Bush Foundation
Program Grant

Congratulations to the following individuals and departments for receiving Bush grants.

Dr. Kris Bunton (Communication & Journalism) was awarded an Entry-Level Course Planning grant for her department to design a course in citizenship and communication. The course will be the first course in the newly combined departments of Journalism & Communication.

Issac Alderman and **Donald Beyers** (Theology) received an Entry-Level Course grant to create a final project for THEO 101, the Christian Theological Tradition, wherein students will produce a short documentary film comparing the lives of John Wesley and John Henry Newman.

Dr. Cris Toffolo (Political Science) was given an award to use an Inquiry-Based Learning format so that students in her senior-level Comparative Politics course could explore how globalization affects local social movements.

Drs. Tonia Bock, Elise Amel, and Christie Manning (Psychology) received a Core & Core Area grant to modify the introductory psychology course to make it more relevant to contemporary problems by using a theme-based approach about environmental sustainability.

Dr. Doug Orzolek (Music) was awarded a Scholarship of Pedagogy grant to fund dissemination of his work using Inquiry-Based Learning and constructivist methods in pre-service music education.

Upcoming Bush Grant Deadlines

Dec. 1 for J-Term or spring, 2007

For more information, see the web site: www.stthomas.edu/bushgrant



PROFILES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

A column devoted to celebrating innovations in teaching and learning at St. Thomas



*Lynn Hartsborn,
Associate Professor
of Chemistry*

Entry level Course Planning for Chemistry Labs

One of the problems with teaching General Chemistry is that like other introductory science courses, the sections are very large and impersonal (ranging from 65 to 90 students). It is therefore crucial that the labs, which meet in smaller groups (20 to 22 students), provide a more interactive learning experience. This is harder to provide when most of the lab sections are taught by adjuncts or teaching staff who are less connected to the classes than full time faculty. Weekly meetings of the general chemistry team devoted to procedural problems allow little time to discuss

major changes in the content or pedagogy of the labs.

A summer project, funded by the Bush grant as an Entry Level Course project (ELCP) sought to improve the student experience in introductory chemistry labs. The project had two main goals—first, to discuss the goals of the labs and determine whether the labs were achieving those goals, and second, to make some of the labs more inquiry based (IB). IB labs have been shown to improve students' thinking skills and their understanding as they plan their own procedure based on the concepts being taught, instead of having procedures given to them.

To begin our project, ten faculty read several articles on IB labs, then met to discuss advantages and disadvantages of IB labs and review each existing fall semester lab to determine its objectives, whether it met the objectives, and whether it could be improved, particularly if changed to an IB format. By doing this, team members gained a fuller understanding of the goals of the labs, and several labs were successfully modified to an IB format. Next steps are to assess the success of the IB labs, and modify second semester labs accordingly.



FACULTY CENTER FOR eLEARNING ASKS FOR FACULTY HELP

Rosann Cabill, Information Resources and Technologies

The Faculty Center for eLearning invites faculty to share their knowledge with colleagues in the "Share It" series—an opportunity for faculty to conduct a workshop, seminar or lead a discussion with colleagues about integrating technology into teaching, learning or research. While we are looking for different formats, brief one-hour topics are encouraged.

Topics can range from describing a simple but effective writing exercise using a Wiki, to tips on managing a discussion board, to coordinating synchronous Web conferencing sessions. Different examples will inspire fellow faculty to imagine, experience and apply the various instructional strategies others have tried. In addition to sharing knowledge and expertise with colleagues, faculty will receive an honorarium for conducting a "Share It" event.

The Faculty Center for eLearning (FCL) is located in O'Shaughnessy Frey Library, Room 102, and provides programming, physical and virtual space designed for the exchange of ideas, conversation and the building of community – all with the goal of developing effective collaborations between and among faculty and IRT staff to promote effective learning and academic excellence.

Faculty interested in conducting a "Share It" event should talk to their reference librarian, Academic Technology Consultants or email fcl@stthomas.edu with their ideas.

For more information on our fall schedule of workshops, including registration, covering a variety of instructional technology topics visit www.stthomas.edu/elearning.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK ...



Sue Chaplin,
Director

From the Teacher-Scholar to the Scholarship of Teaching

I am continually amazed by the professional maturity of my newest colleagues, not just in their specialized research areas, but in the classroom as well. Programs like Preparing Future Faculty have provided us with new faculty members that arrive on campus ready to hit the ground running toward tenure at a rapid pace. They demonstrate a classroom savvy that probably took me 15 years and a lot of trial and error to develop. We share “war” stories of our trials in the classroom and what we learned from it with them, and they tell us about the session in their PFF class that dealt with that issue. However, the oral tradition of teaching is really not good enough these days. We need to share the experiences and the experiments in teaching in written form because there is such a diversity and wealth of knowledge to impart. Consider the following scenario.

Aaron is a new faculty member at Podunk U, and has two sections of a freshman introductory course on his fall schedule, both with very large enrollment (>100 students). The course has a reputation for being a “weeder” course, with a high drop out rate, and Aaron wonders what the basis for this might be. Is there something about the particular subject that makes it difficult for freshmen; is it the size of the sections; or is it the transition from high school to college that is difficult for freshmen?

Aaron’s department chair suggested that he look for solutions in some of the educational journals. “I can’t afford the time to read the education literature looking for answers,” Aaron thought to himself. What should he do?

Fortunately for Aaron, Podunk U’s library had current issues of some very relevant journals that published articles by faculty with similar problems. Using this information, Aaron was able to map out a strategy for teaching his large enrollment sections and obtain feedback from the students to modify the approach throughout the semester. Aaron’s student evaluations were high, and a record number of students moved on to the next course in the sequence.

The worth of the professor becomes consequential only as it is understood by others. Yet today, teaching is often viewed as a routine function, tacked on, something almost anyone can do. When defined as *scholarship*, however, teaching both educates and entices future scholars.” (Boyer, 1990, p. 23)

The good news is that there are increasing numbers of journals publishing articles on the whys, wherefores, and how-tos of teaching and learning in all disciplines, and to a great extent they are not education journals per se. They

represent a new category of “Scholarship of Teaching and Learning,” and contain a wide variety of articles from a wide variety of disciplines. Like Aaron, this is where you can find the good ideas that we occasionally share at

the copy machine or the coffee bar.

Here’s where you can start your search:
www.buffalostate.edu/orgs/castl/publish.html

But sharing is a two-way street—sampling other people’s good ideas invites you to share your own good ideas in written form. I encourage you to apply the skills honed by the practice of your professional discipline to your experiments in the classroom, and preserve that hard-earned know-how for others who will follow you in that classroom.

Boyer E.L. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching. Princeton: 1990.



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The lobby area and resource room of the Center will be open from 8 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. M-F. Please stop by!

The opinions expressed in articles in Synergia are not necessarily those of the Center for Faculty Development.

NEWS FROM THE FACULTY GRANTS OFFICE

Federal Agency Funding Opportunities

See FGO website for links to these and additional programs:

WWW.STHOMAS.EDU/FGO

ADVANCE:

National Science Foundation

The goal of the ADVANCE program is to develop systemic approaches to increase the representation and advancement of women in academic science and engineering careers, thereby contributing to the development of a more diverse science and engineering workforce.

Deadline: December 6, 2007

Informal Science Education

National Science Foundation

The ISE program invests in projects that develop and implement informal learning experiences designed to increase interest, engagement, and understanding of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) by individuals of all ages and backgrounds. ISE projects are expected to demonstrate strategic impact, innovation, and collaboration.

Deadline: December 13, 2007

Information Technology Experiences for Students and Teachers (ITEST)

National Science Foundation

ITEST is designed to increase the opportunities for students and teachers to learn about, experience, and use information technologies within the context of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), including Information Technology (IT) courses.

Deadline: Preliminary, January 4, 2008; Full, May 8, 2008

Biology Research: Undergraduate Schools (NICHHD)

National Institutes of Health

The program supports small-scale developmental biology research projects proposed by faculty members who would be unlikely to participate in NIH-funded research.

Deadline: Letters: January 15, 2008; Applications: February 15

Geography and Regional Science

National Science Foundation

This program sponsors research on the geographic distributions and interactions of human, physical, and biotic systems on the Earth's surface. Investigations are encouraged into the nature, causes, and consequences of human activity and natural environmental processes across a range of scales.

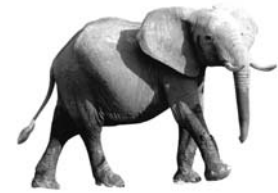
Deadline: January 15, 2008

Decision, Risk and Management Sciences

National Science Foundation

This program supports scientific research directed at increasing the understanding and effectiveness of decision making by individuals, groups, organizations and society. Research is funded in the areas of judgment and decision making; decision analysis and decision aids; risk analysis, perception, and communication; societal and public policy decision making; management science and organizational design.

Deadline: January 18, 2008



*Want to talk
about the
“elephant in
the room”?*

The 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure affirms that “teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject.” This affirmation was meant to codify understandings of academic freedom commonly accepted in 1940. In recent years these understandings have become controversial. Private groups have sought to regulate classroom instruction, advocating the adoption of statutes that would prohibit teachers from challenging deeply held student beliefs or that would require professors to maintain “diversity” or “balance” in their teaching.”

Read the AAUP subcommittee on Academic Freedom and Tenure's report: Finkin et al. (Sept-Oct 2007) at www.aaup.org/AAUP/comm/rep/A/class.htm.

*Join us for wine, cheese, and
a little conversation about
Academic Freedom in the
classroom...*

*Monday, Nov. 5,
3 - 4:30 p.m.
Luann Dummer Center for
Women, 103 OEC*

OF INTERNATIONAL INTEREST

Teaching for Global Citizenship—One Example

Pam Nice, Associate Director of Faculty Development

Faculty Development has been collaborating with faculty and other units on campus, such as International Education, Service Learning, and the Human Diversity Requirement committee, in an initiative called Teaching for Global Citizenship (TGC). TGC at its core promotes the idea that because our U.S. culture interacts continually with other cultures of the world, we must seriously consider how our actions as individuals and as a society affect other cultures, and vice versa. We want to instill a global ethic in our students, encouraging them to think beyond our borders and to see the interconnectedness of transnational problems and solutions.

An example of this approach might be seen in the way Iraqi refugees are

studied. One might study the refugees from one perspective, for instance—that of Iraq's reconstruction. This focus would emphasize the brain drain in Iraq as skilled professionals leave en masse, the depletion of the general work force as less skilled workers leave, the difficulties of funding reconstruction from a local tax base, thereby encouraging foreign investment and management of resources. Or one might take a transnational approach, and study not only the effect of the refugee movement on Iraq, but also its effect on the economies of nearby countries hosting hundreds of thousands of these refugees. Most of these are developing countries with struggling economies, already strained social services, and large numbers of people in poverty, who are therefore made to compete with the immigrant refugees. So the Iraqi refugee issue is not just a local problem for Iraq, but a regional one. In addition, the U.S., which instigated the war with Iraq, is accepting only 7,000 Iraqi refugees per year. There might be a global justice issue here.

See the Faculty Development web site for more information on the TGC initiative, and the back page of this issue for a TGC workshop in November on Intercultural Experiential Learning.

For more information, contact Sarah Stevenson, Director, International Education, 962-6450



Teaching for Global Citizenship Workshop

Expanding the Walls of the Classroom:

Intercultural Experiential Learning (IEL)

Facilitated by Barbara Baker, Amy Muse, Pam Nice, Sarah Spencer, with Faculty Presenters

Thursday, November 8
3:30 - 5 p.m.,
152 Murray Herrick Campus Center

(Sponsored by Faculty Development, International Education, Service Learning)

APPLICATION DEADLINES FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Note that deadlines are 4 p.m. on dates below. Late applications are not accepted. Send a copy of the application by email to sbchaplin@stthomas.edu. One copy of forms requiring a signature should be brought to the Faculty Development Center, OSF Library Suite 403-406 or mailed to Mail 4034 in time to reach us by 4 p.m. of the deadline date. Please see FDC website for instructions and application forms: www.stthomas.edu/fdc/grant.htm.

Teaching Enhancement Grant: April 15

Faculty Partnerships: February 15 for Spring Semester
April 15 for Summer (after July 1)

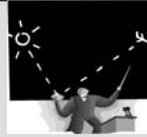
Partnership-in-Learning: February 15 for Spring Semester
April 15 for Summer (after July 1)

Distinguished Visitor Grant: One month prior to visit. No applications accepted between May 15 and August 15.

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS (FALL '07)

See the Faculty Development web site for more information about each workshop.

E-mail: pmalexander@stthomas.edu for registration.



Dealing With Common Problems in Discussion, led by Dr. Stephen Brookfield

Wednesday, November 28, 2007 (Mpls.)

2:30 – 4 p.m., MOH 417

Registration Deadline: November 19, 2007

Monday, November 26, 2007 (St. Paul)

3:30 - 5 p.m., Murray-Herrick 152

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See pg. 3.

Monday, December 3, 2007 (St. Paul)

3:30 - 4:30 p.m., Murray-Herrick 155

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See pg. 7.

The “Elephant in the Room”: Academic Freedom in the Classroom

Monday, November 5

3-4:30 p.m., Luann Dummer Center for Women

Check your mailboxes for registration information. See pg. 6.



UNIVERSITY of ST. THOMAS

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