

## Friday @ the Center: February 1, 2008

### Midterm Musings

The days are getting longer; the daffodils are miraculously up in Sunset Park; and midterms are already upon us. As you assess the degree to which your students have learned something during the first five weeks of class, take a few minutes to get some feedback on how the class is going from the student perspective. Simply have your students anonymously answer two questions: 1) what has been happening in this class that has helped you learn? and 2) what has kept you from learning, or would help you learn more? It's useful to also address their comments in the following class period—giving them a summary of the major trends in comments and your response to them. Will you do something differently? Will you keep an aspect of the course that students say impedes their learning? If so, why? Last quarter in my Senior Seminar in Emily Dickinson, after my students told me in the midterm evaluation that they needed more practice doing explications before they wrote their final paper, I developed some additional strategies to give them such practice.

### Dealing with Problem Students: #2

**Shy Suzy or Steve (SS):** Many students are hesitant to speak up in class for a variety of reasons. Of course, this exacerbates the problem we discussed last week of TT and is a serious problem if class participation is an important part of the course. While we might be tempted to think, "They're grown-ups. If they don't participate they will just have to face the consequences," a more teacherly tact is to develop strategies to help students learn to be comfortable and capable of good participation. Some possibilities: 1) Call on students by name whether or not they have raised their hand; this is my regular teaching strategy, but I always explain initially why I do this, and if it is apparent I'm working with someone who is extremely shy, I'll be careful to ask that SS easier questions at first to boost her or his confidence. 2) Vary your questions, from asking about simple facts, to providing additional examples, to repeating a point you have made, to more open-ended questions. 3) After asking a provocative question, ask everyone to write a few sentences in response. Then call on different students to read their answers. 4) Have students discuss in small groups of 4 students at least 4 times during the quarter and require a different person from the group to make an oral report to the class each time. 5) When talking about the importance of participation, let the class know that anyone who is absolutely terrified to talk in class should talk with you personally. Encourage this SS to take a communication class, receive tutoring, or, if appropriate, find assistance in the Student Counseling Center.

### Fulbright, Rhodes, and More . . .

Please let your academically gifted sophomores and juniors know about the CSFD Student Workshop next week providing an overview of the major national scholarships available for graduate work, such as the Rhodes, Marshall, Mitchell, Truman, Goldwater, Davies-Jackson, and Gates scholarships. This workshop will also discuss the Fulbright program, which provides an excellent opportunity for students to study overseas. Post BA Fulbrights involve either a year working on an independent research project or a year working as a teaching assistant in an English language class. Fulbright Fellowships are also available to graduate students pursuing research, so encourage graduate students who might be interested in applying for a Fulbright to attend this session, as well. Thursday, Feb. 7, 9:30-10:20 a.m., DH 258. For more information on the various major national scholarship programs, see <http://www.spu.edu/depts/csfd/studentresources.asp>.



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