INTERACTION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING

The first two interactions asked you to think about your teaching as it is designed and proposed (through the syllabus) and conducted (through structured procedures and methods). The conceptions and actions of teaching are, of course, not the complete picture—effective teaching is also intrinsically tied to student learning. The third interaction thus focuses on documenting evidence of student learning/understanding/performance and reflecting upon it with respect to achieving your overall teaching goals and objectives.

Collecting Student Work:

Throughout the semester, collect samples of student work into an archive. Keep at least two examples of high, medium, and low passes for all major assignments, as well as any minor assignments you might want to include. Consider whether you want to track a few students through each assignment or track the class as a whole—if so, collect accordingly.

Remember: it is almost impossible to reconstruct this archive later. Keep copies of student work throughout the semester. You’ll be glad you did.

Selecting your Samples:

Select up to three of your course assignments (e.g. papers, tests, projects, documented performances, homework assignment) that you want to analyze fully in the portfolio.

Reflection Memo:

Discuss how well your students met the activity’s objectives based on the evidence from the collected student work. There are a variety of ways you might measure student learning—you could identify representative examples of high, medium, and low passing work, and connect those examples with the overall performance of the class; you could focus on selected questions or activities that you feel represent ‘higher order’ thinking or learning and look at samples across the entire class; you could focus on a few students and track their progress over the course of the semester. However you choose to assess student learning, you should consider:

- What is the overall range of student performance in this activity? (how many students performed well, acceptably, badly? How many did not complete the assignment?) How do you account for this range? Are you satisfied with it?
- What differentiates high/medium/low accomplishment in the assignment?
- What criteria are you using to assess student understanding?
- Does the evidence (as represented in your work samples) show that students are meeting or not meeting the specific learning goals you designed the assignment to assess?
- How do the criteria for the assignment relate to the intellectual goals you have set for the class?
• Based on their work in this activity, are students learning ideas and/or skills that are central to the course and your teaching goals?
• Do their performances in this activity reveal misunderstandings or confusions about the assignment itself?
• Do their performances in this activity reveal misunderstandings or confusions about the ideas and/or skills that are central to the course and your teaching goals?
• Did the student performance that you have documented meet your expectations? Why or why not?
• How does their achievement of the goals of this assignment relate to the goals of your department’s curriculum or the university’s student learning objectives?
• What changes (if any) do you plan to make to this assignment, or the way you teach in preparation for this assignment, in the future? How do you think those changes will improve student learning?

Discussion:

After exchanging Reflection Memos with your partner and mentor (cc’ing the program coordinator), the three of you should meet to discuss student learning and its assessment.
• What insight(s) did you gain about your own assignments and student learning by writing the reflection memo?
• What insight(s) did you gain from reading your partner’s?
• Are the criteria for judging student performance related to the instructor’s goals for the assignment and for the course?
• How clear are those criteria and linkages to students?
• What are the advantages and disadvantages of using student learning performance as a way to evaluate teaching (in comparison, for example, to student evaluations)?
• How would you combine student performance with intellectual content and teaching practices to offer a complete/useful/appropriate picture of your students’ experiences in your class?

Follow-up Memos:

Write a brief memo to your partner (cc’ing your mentor and the program coordinator) reflecting on your conversations and discussing any changes you plan to make to your teaching, class activities, or assignments as a result of this conversation.