

Getting Started Doing Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL)

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Session Overview:

In this session, we will introduce participants to some of the core texts in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL). This session will hopefully offer guidance to participants on how to get started doing their own work in this area. The authors are both Carnegie Scholars in the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

I. What is the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning?

Adapted from the website of *MountainRise*, an online Scholarship of Teaching and Learning journal published at Western Carolina University:

In 1990 in *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, Ernest Boyer said the professoriate must "...break out of the tired old teaching versus research debate and define, in more creative ways, what it means to be a scholar." Lee Shulman, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, adds that "viewing teaching as scholarly work is essential. Teachers have to carry out their work in isolation from their colleagues. The result is that

those who engage in innovative acts of teaching do not have many opportunities to build upon the work of others... we seek to render teaching public, subject to critical evaluation, and usable by others in the field." Doing this is the work of The Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Teaching and teachers benefit from this new awareness that teaching, not only disciplinary study, is a worthy subject for research in constructing a public body of knowledge that is steadily reviewed and developed. As Bender & Gray state, "More than simply a new term for traditional tasks, the scholarship of teaching describes a new concept of academic work. In the scholarly classroom, guided by reflective practitioners, students are encouraged to become speaking subjects, and teaching becomes the object of ceaseless and generative" inquiry (*The Scholarship of Teaching*)

As Pat Hutchings, Carnegie Vice President, and Lee Shulman, Carnegie's President, point out in their article "The Scholarship of Teaching: New Elaborations, New Developments" in the September/October 1999 issue of *Change*, however, the scholarship of teaching is something else. They write that the scholarship of teaching is characterized by "being public, open to critique and evaluation, and in a form that others can build on. . . . It requires a kind of 'going meta,' in which faculty frame and systematically investigate questions related to student learning - the conditions under which it occurs, what it looks like, how to deepen it, and so forth - and do so with an eye not only to improving their own classroom but to advancing practice beyond it." In other words, faculty set out to do the scholarship of teaching and learning not only to improve the teaching and learning in their own classroom but also to improve teaching and learning beyond their local setting by adding knowledge to - and even beyond - their disciplinary field.

II. A "Starter Bibliography" for SOTL

Boyer, Ernest L. 1990. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*.

Princeton: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

The first book to explicitly discuss a scholarship of teaching. Boyer proposed this category in addition to the more traditional "scholarship of discovery" – this book also talked of the scholarships of application and integration.

Glassick, Charles E., Mary Taylor Huber and Gene I. Maeroff. 1997. *Scholarship Assessed*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Following on Boyer, this book begins the process of exploring how we would evaluate SOTL work. It calls for similar standards for this and other work – clear

goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation, and reflective critique.

Bass, Randy. 1999. "The Scholarship of Teaching: What's the Problem?" *Inventio*, Volume 1, Number 1. <http://www.doit.gmu.edu/archives/feb98/randybass.htm>

Bass' formulation of the role of a "problem" in both traditional research and teaching is a very succinct formulation of what motivates many of us pursuing SOTL work.

Huber, Mary Taylor and Pat Hutchings. 2005. *The Advancement of Learning: Building the Teaching Commons*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

A fine new book by two scholars at the Carnegie Foundation, this book discusses the progress of the SOTL movement and suggests an action agenda for growing the movement on campuses.

Shulman, Lee S. 1993. "Teaching as Community Property: Putting an End to Pedagogical Solitude." *Change* 25: 6-7.

Lee Shulman, President of the Carnegie Foundation, has written a great deal in this area. This piece is a personal favorite, suggesting a model of the university where teaching is given a place of prominence.

III. Words to Ponder

From Randy Bass, 1999. "The Scholarship of Teaching: What's the Problem?" *Inventio*, Volume 1, Number 1.

One telling measure of how differently teaching is regarded from traditional scholarship or research within the academy is what a difference it makes to have a "problem" in one versus the other. In scholarship and research, having a "problem" is at the heart of the investigative process; it is the compound of the generative questions around which all creative and productive activity revolves. But in one's teaching, a "problem" is something you don't want to have, and if you have one, you probably want to fix it. Asking a colleague about a *problem* in his or her research is an invitation; asking about a problem in one's teaching would probably seem like an accusation. Changing the status of the *problem* in teaching from terminal remediation to ongoing investigation is precisely what

the movement for a scholarship of teaching is all about. How might we make the problematization of teaching a matter of regular communal discourse? How might we think of teaching practice, and the evidence of student learning, as problems to be investigated, analyzed, represented, and debated?

III. Anything else I should know?

From speaking to other scholars working on SOTL one lesson is that the best allies for this work may come from colleagues outside our disciplines. Some disciplines, like psychology and sociology have a much longer tradition of engaging in SOTL. Someone starting a program in Asian Studies, for example, would not look solely within political science departments for allies, but would instead seek out others with an interest in Asia – perhaps historians, literature folks, and the like.

We would also urge people considering doing this work to aim for methodological pluralism. The methods we use in our research may be useful, but documenting learning may take other forms – close reading of writing assignments, videotaping and evaluating student performance, etc. – that are less familiar to us. Remember, though, the different problems need different methods. Think broadly!

Doing SOTL elevates us as teachers and as professionals and dovetails nicely with the increasingly popular “teacher scholar” model. By applying the techniques we use in our own substantive work to better understand how our students learn, we can improve our teaching and ultimately better serve our students. Slowly but surely, political science as a discipline is becoming more and more open to such efforts to systematically understand the learning process. A window of opportunity has open, and we urge our colleagues to look at the references cited above and consider involving themselves in this growing area of political science.

V. Journals that have published SOTL work (not an exhaustive list)

College Student Journal Address: PO Box 8508, Spring Hill Sta, Mobile, AL 36608

College Teaching <http://www.heldref.org/>; <http://www.allenpress.com>

International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (IJ-SoTL)

<http://www.georgiasouthern.edu/ijsotl/current.htm>

Journal of Political Science Education (Taylor and Francis) John Ishiyama Editor in

Chief : <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/15512169.asp>;

jpse@truman.edu

Journal of College Student Development <http://www.acpa.nche.edu/pubs/public.htm>

Journal of College Student Retention

<http://www.baywood.com/journals/PreviewJournals.asp?Id=1521-0251>

Journal on Excellence in College Teaching <http://ject.lib.muohio.edu>

Journal of Public Affairs Education <http://www.naspaa.org/initiatives/jpae/jpae.asp>

Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (Electronic Journal housed at
Indiana University- Bloomington) <http://titans.iusb.edu/josotl/>

Mountainrise (Electronic Journal housed at Western Carolina University)

<http://mountainrise.wcu.edu/index.html>

PS:Political Science and Politics (Cambridge) Robert Hauck Editor; Stephen Yoder,

Managing Editor e-mail: ps@apsanet.org

Simulation & Gaming (Sage) <http://www.sagepub.com/journal.aspx?pid=34>