Getting Started With SoTL: Generating Ideas for Inquiry

Presenters: Kelly Wisdom and Chris Yockey

Person Writing in Journal. Digital Image.. *themindfulword.org* Web. 20 Jan. 2016.

Teacher Inquiry – Research Reform

- According to Dana & Yendol-Hoppey (2009), educational research has traditionally not included classroom teachers as significant participants.

- In contrast, the research method of teacher inquiry "highlight[s] the role classroom teachers play as knowledge generators" (8).

The benefits of this inquiry method include:

- "Real" educational practices drive theory

- Teachers become active collaborators because they are identifying and investigating the problems

- Since they are meaningfully involved in the process, teachers are more enthused about implementing any changes (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009).

Call to Action by Dana & Yendel-Hoppey (2009)

Given the current political atmosphere the "time seems ripe to create a movement where teachers are armed with the tools of inquiry and committed to educational change" (11).

"Inquiry ultimately emerges as action and results in change" (27).

Starting with Questions
SoTL Step One

Cathy Bishop-Clark & Beth Dietz-Uhler (2012).

- "A carefully crafted research question takes time, a thoughtful analysis of your own interests and practical constraints, a thorough review of the literature, and feedback from trusted colleagues" (31).

- "Your research questions come first from the experiences in your classroom that you find intriguing" (31). Once you choose a question, you must narrow it down to be "specific and testable" (31).

- Research theme vs. research question

Generating Questions: Personal Examples

- Why is no one in my literature class reading the literature?

- How can I get students to engage more with their research topics?

- How do I teach grammar without putting everyone to sleep?

- Is it worth my time to meet with first-year writing students for individual conferences?

- In what ways does teaching a narration unit help prepare students for future college and career writing tasks?

- Why do students not follow my directions on assignments?

Brainstorm!

Take a few minutes to think about your own experiences in the area in which you work. Jot down as many questions as you can about any aspect of your work.

Teacher at Chalkboard. Digital Image. *Flickr.com.* Web. 21 Jan. 2016.

Kinds of Questions (Hutchings, 2000)
Quoted in Bishop-Clark & Dietz-Uhler (2012)

- What works? This might include testing the "effectiveness of some new approach that we are trying in the classroom" (32).

- What is? Here the focus is on describing what a situation is like – for example, "What do novice programmers think as they solve simple computer programs?" (32).

- What might be possible? Includes determining the most important concepts and envisioning changes

- How does this add to the SoTL body of work? This includes formulating a new conceptual framework for shaping thought about the practice of SoTL (32).

Genres of Questions (Nelson, 2003)

Quoted in Bishop-Clark & Dietz-Uhler (2012)

- Reports of particular classes – what worked in specific cases

- Reflections on several years of teaching, informed by other SoTL work – what worked in a broader context

- Larger Contexts: Comparison of Course and Comparison of student Change Across Time (includes both qualitative and quantitative change)

- Learning Science (the body of work that exists in human and animal learning)

- Summaries and Analysis of Sets of Prior Studies (32).

What Have Others Done?
Examples from Cathy Bishop-Clark and Beth Dietz-Uhler

- Bishop-Clark (1998) "Do students using the visual programming language understand the fundamental concepts of computer programming better than those who are using the traditional text-based language?

- Dietz-Uhler & Bishop-Clark (2002) Pertaining to communicating with classmates in a distance learning class: "Was our activity in online friendship effective?"

- Dietz-Uhler & Bishop-Clark (2001) "Can the quality and quantity of in-class discussions be improved by a preceding online chat or a discussion board?"

- Bishop-Clark (1992) "What do novice programmers think as they solve simple computer programs?" (32)

Our Question

Does using a "backwards" approach to designing assignments foster student learning and aid in generating the desired response/outcome?

Example: Short Paper #2
Classic Psychology Study

Choose one of the well-known psychological studies we have discussed in class to analyze.

Length: 3 pages

Due: 2/25

Group Discussion:

As a student, how would you approach this assignment? What might you believe to be the expectations?

Next Step: Literature Review

Bishop-Clark & Dietz-Uhler (2012) pp. 34-36

- Identify key words/phrases to search

- Find education-focused journals in your discipline

- Review literature outside your field: "When multiple disciplines report the same finding, that finding has much more power" (36).

- Review Journals devoted to college teaching and learning (*The Journal of Excellence in College Teaching, Teaching in Higher Education, The International Journal on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, etc.)

- May include other journals, conference papers, dissertations/theses, websites, government publications and unpublished work.

"Review the literature until you feel comfortable that you have a representative sample of the body of work that exists in your field" (36).

"The final step in your literature review is to analyze and interpret the reviewed work. Recall that one of the primary reasons for a literature review is to better inform your question" (36).

Our Research

Ordered according to our thought processes as we considered assignment design.

"Working Backwards: How Departmental Faculty Can Re-think Curriculum to Accelerate Students' Growth as Disciplinary Writers and Thinkers" by John Bean (2008)

John Bean (2008) questions the traditional teaching of "term" or "research" papers in college courses. He asks faculty to consider the kinds of writing students will do in "real life" and to think about the differences between teaching a research paper versus designing writing assignments that begin with a question (SoTL!). It is in finding the answer – seeking to solve a problem – that student learning of research concepts occurs.

"Reverse Course Design" by Caitlin Dungan

Dungan outlines six key concepts to consider when designing *courses*; we adapted these to designing major assignments.

- Goals & Outcomes: In the end, what do I want the students to have learned (SLO's)?

- Context: Where does this fit within the course? Where have we been? Where are we going next?

- Assessment: How will I know they have learned?

- Formative Work: How will I build up to the skills required?

- Textbooks & Readings: What should students read to help them?

- Scheduling: How much time is needed for this task? How should tasks be ordered?

We Added Three Additional Concepts to Consider

- What **questions** can I ask to elicit higher-order thinking?

- What **terms** should I use?

- What are my mechanical requirements?

Ask Socratic Questions
(Revisiting Assignment Example)

Choose one of the well-known psychological studies we have discussed in class, such as the Stanford Prison Experiment or the Milgram Obedience Experiment, to analyze. Consider the following:

- What was the hypothesis of your chosen study? Who were the subjects? What results were determined? (summarize)

- Identify a theoretical approach from your textbook that applies to this study. Give examples to support your reasoning. (identify patterns; make text-to-text connections)

- What problem were the researchers attempting to solve? What might be the impact of the research on society? (evaluate; synthesize)

# Determine the Appropriate Terms
Commonly Used Verbs

- **Analyze** – to break something down into its component parts and show how those parts work together to create a whole

- **Describe** – to use sensory details to allow readers to imagine a person, object, or event

- **Evaluate** – to rate something (a piece of writing, a movie, or a product, for example) according to a few specified criteria

- **Explain** – to break a process, occurrence, or event down into easily understandable steps

- **Reflect** – to look back on a something completed (a writing assignment or experiment, for example) and describe the process of completing it, explaining the reasoning behind the steps taken and assessing the outcomes

- **Summarize** – to condense a large amount of information into a relatively small number of words

- **Synthesize** – to combine ideas to create new ideas

Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning

More Action Words for Assignments

Bloom's Taxonomy – Learning in Action. Digital Image. *iteachu.uaf.edu.* Web. 21 Jan. 2016.
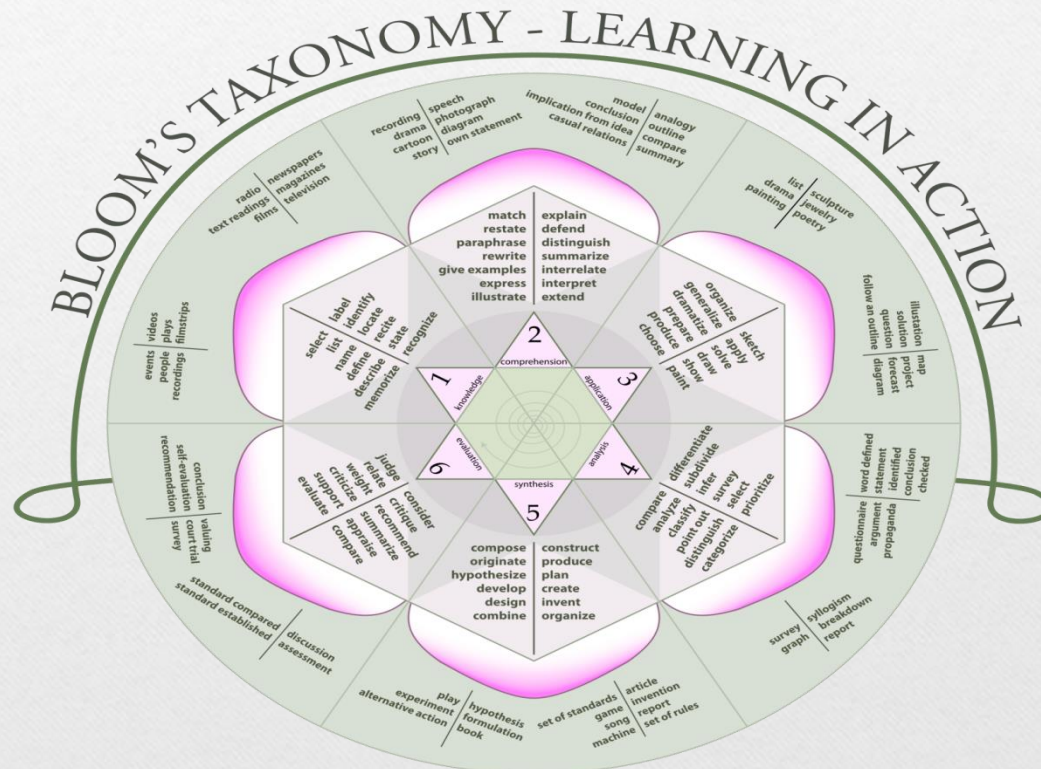
"5 Tips for Designing Course Assignments" by George Williams (2017)

Williams is an associate professor of English at USC-Upstate. He writes of observing assignment handouts that consist of "an unreadable gray blob of text in 10-point type" (para. 1). He urges instructors to:

- Think like the students who will be reading the assignment

- Use larger font such as 12'

- Use white space between sections

- Use heading and subheadings where appropriate

- Use bulleted lists

Provide Clear Grading Criteria
(Example of One Section of Assignment)

Paper Expectations:

1. Essay clearly addresses all questions listed in prompt.

2. All writing is clear and direct, using an academic tone. Imagine your audience to be members of the scientific community.

3. Length is to be at least 750 words and no more than 1000 words. Include a word count.

4. Format the paper according to the guidelines listed in your course syllabus.

"Teaching with Rubrics: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" by Heidi Goodrich Andrade (2005)

"Instructional rubrics help me clarify my expectations and focus my instruction. To begin the process…I list my goals for students, choose or create a project that will help them learn and demonstrate their learning, and draft a rubric for the project. By working backwards in this way, I can design daily lesson plans and choose reading assignments that focus on developing the concepts and skills that students need to do well on the project" (27-28).

Rubrics

Create rubrics that help make expectations clear to students and help the instructor achieve objectivity and uniformity in grading.

- Holistic Approach
- Linear Approach

Next Step: Involve Students

- Class discussions

- Reflections

- Surveys

- Let them do research

- Other ideas?

Group Activity

- Return to your list of brainstormed questions and choose one to three you are most intrigued by.

- See if you can revise these questions to be as specific as possible. (They may already be specific enough.) Examples below.

    - **Original question:**

    - Does using a "backwards" approach to designing assignments foster student learning and aid in generating the desired response/outcome?

    - **More specific:**

    - Will having students complete a reflective writing assignment after a major essay make them more able to reflect upon and explain their writing strategies in the prewriting stage of the next major essay?

Group Activity

- Share and discuss your question(s) with your group members.
- Brainstorm ways to improve wording/specificity of questions
- Come up with key words for research
- Discuss known journals or avenues for researching questions.

Questions and Discussion

Too Many Questions. Digital Image. *Leadership Freak.* Leadershipfreak.wordpress.com. Web. 21 Jan. 2016.

References

Andrade, H. G. (2005). Teaching with rubrics: the good, the bad, and the ugly. College Teaching, 53:1, 2005. https://e-learn.sdu.dk/bbcswebdav/courses /E_learn_Support_Center/Andrade_2005_good_bad_ugly.pdf

Bean, John (2008). Working backwards: how departmental faculty can re-think curriculum to accelerate students' growth as disciplinary writers and thinkers. *Center for Instructional Design, University of Washington*. http://depts.Washington.edu/writeuw/Bean-Handout.pdf.

Bishop-Clark, C., & B. Dietz-Uhler (2012). *Engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Bloom's taxonomy learning in action (2011) *Samuelspettigue*. Digital Image. Accessed 4 Jan. 2016. https://samuelspettigue.wordpress.com/2011/10/13/blooms-taxonomy-learning-in-action/

Dana, N.F., & D. Yendol-Hoppey (2009). *The reflective educators guide to classroom research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Dungan, C. (2015). Reverse course design. *The Writing Campus*. George Mason University. Video Clip. Accessed 22 Oct. 2015 at https://thewri/tingcampus.com/author/caitedungan

Williams, G. (2017). 5 tips for designing course documents. Chronicle of Higher Education, 24 Apr. 2017. http://www.chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/5-tips-for-designing-couse-documents/63963