

# TEACHING CONCERNS

## *Grading with Rubrics: Developing a Fair and Efficient Assessment Tool*

Deandra Little, TRC Faculty Consultant, English

When I pose the question, “Why do we assign grades?” to a group of faculty and graduate instructors, at least one person jokingly replies “because we have to”; however, once the laughter dies down, most offer responses that fall into the following categories:

- To evaluate student work
- To communicate student achievement
- To help students learn and demonstrate their learning.

Ideally, grading serves the interests of both you as an instructor and your students. A grade, and the feedback that goes along with it, can assess present performance as well as indicate how a student might improve for future assignments or courses. Some of us find it important to measure student work and learning against a set standard and recognize the value of communicating this information to students, to potential employers, or to graduate and professional schools through a transcript. Grades can also motivate students to improve, can affirm their interests, learning, and abilities, and can even encourage them to seek out different courses or majors.

Most of us would agree that grades can be and should be used in ways that facilitate teaching and learning. And yet, grading remains a particularly vexed, often time-consuming, activity for the majority. Rather than a task we anticipate with great joy (imagine), it is typically an obligation we dread. Frequently, this trepidation results from the different meanings grades can have for students and instructors in any learning environment. If our grading system or expectations aren't clear, misunderstandings occur and these meanings begin to adversely affect learning. Students complain they get too little or too much feedback to know how to respond in future assignments. They may also perceive the grade as subjective (“She gave me a C”) or as a marker of the professor's idiosyncrasies (“I don't know what he wants”). Alternately, we begin to suspect students are not reading our comments carefully, if at all, and wonder whether the time we spend grading is ultimately worth it.

Clarifying your expectations for the assignment is an important first step toward creating an effective grading system, one which accurately reflects differences in student performance, lays out clear criteria so that students can gauge their own progress and, most importantly, is efficient, consistent and fair. Grading rubrics provide one means to create such a system. As a flexible assessment tool, rubrics can help reconcile instructor and student perceptions about grades and help students learn to evaluate their own work according to these standards. As a benefit to you, rubrics save on grading time while still offering specific feedback. They also help make the grading process more objective, particularly for multifaceted assignments or for assignments graded by a teaching team. Rubrics can also help instructors in sequenced courses communicate about student performance. For your students, other advantages include helping them learn what is expected of them for each assignment and what areas to focus on for future ones. By making instructor expectations

(continued on page 2)

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TEACHING RESOURCE CENTER

*Promoting excellence in teaching*

<http://trc.virginia.edu>  
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### IN THIS ISSUE:

- 2 Programs & Services
- 3 Deborah Roach,  
Cavaliers' Distinguished  
Teaching Professor  
Teaching Award Winners
- 4 Rethinking Courses:  
University Teaching Fellows
- 5 “No More Singin’ the Blues:  
Preparing for Oral  
Presentations”  
by Judith Reagan

### Deadlines

- 6 Workshops
- 7 Book Review: *Thought and  
Knowledge: An Introduction to  
Critical Thinking*  
by Diane F. Halpern
- 8 Seven Society Honorees

FALL 2006

## Programs & Services

To schedule any of the services described below, please contact the TRC a minimum of one week ahead of time. More information about each service can be found on the TRC website (<http://trc.virginia.edu>).

### INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATION

Trained TRC staff members can consult with you individually about any aspect of your teaching. Typical activities include observing your classroom teaching, analyzing student evaluations, discussing new course design or existing course redesign, and considering new teaching techniques. All consultations are confidential and tailored to your needs.

### TEACHING ANALYSIS POLL (TAP)

Find out what the majority of your students think helps them learn in your course. Time commitment: 25-30 minutes of class time, 30 minutes consultation time. Except in special circumstances, the TRC conducts TAPs only between the fourth and tenth weeks of the semester.

### VIDEOTAPING

Videotape usually makes it easier to analyze your own teaching since you can see your class from an objective point of view. During the 60-minute discussion about the class videotape, a TRC consultant will help you see what works and how to make desired improvements.

### TEACHING TIPS ON-LINE

Explore the TRC's collection of teaching essays and teaching tips contributed by U.Va. faculty and TAs via our easy-to-browse Teaching Tips page on the TRC site. There you can find strategies to engage your students, learn about assessment techniques, get some advice to spruce up your lecturing, or simply explore new teaching ideas.

specific and visible, rubrics also help level the playing field for first-generation college students or any students who may find confusing or vague the language commonly used to define academic skills (e.g., critical thinking or argumentative thesis).

A grading rubric typically takes the form of a grid that identifies and describes various levels of student performance for each of a task-specific set of criteria. Most commonly, rubric columns list three to five levels of performance or achievement and the rows list criteria being assessed. Each cell of the table describes what performance of a particular criterion looks like at a particular level. (See Figure 1 for a partial sample rubric.)

More specifically, to develop a rubric that functions as both a grading and teaching tool, I recommend creating a handout that includes a detailed description of the assignment at the top of the page and the rubric beneath it. (NB: I find it easiest to create a table in Microsoft Word; there are also websites such as the Rubric Machine at <http://www.thinkinggear.com/tools/> or Rubistar at <http://rubistar.4teachers.org> that will create the table for you.) This handout will not only help you while you are grading, but can be easily distributed and discussed with your class when you make the assignment.

Begin your rubric by identifying your criteria for scoring or evaluating each student's work and place this list in the rows of your table. (See "Questions to Ask" on page # for a quick list of steps.) These criteria may range from concrete skills to more abstract concepts and may include such items as content knowledge, argument, organization, creativity, or understanding of problem. Among other advantages, rubrics are useful when grading student performance that relies on higher order thinking or other complex processes. Whatever criteria you choose, they should be ones students must combine for their scholarly work to be successful. By defining the criteria carefully, you will provide each student with detailed feedback on how well or poorly he or she did on specific parts of the whole as well as with an overview of the student's strengths and weaknesses for the assignment.

For the next step, label the columns with a scale for evaluating student performance based on these factors (e.g., superior, competent, needs work; or exemplary, proficient, marginal, unacceptable). As you determine the labels or numbers for this scale, be sure to consider how many levels it needs to be both useful and clear. Research suggests 3-5 levels are optimal (Walvoord & Anderson, 1998). Determine, too, how much weight you'll give to each criterion when grading. Is organization more important to you than grammar or mechanics? How much more-20 out of 100 points or only 10? Communicating your priorities for the assignment to your students provides guidance as they work, showing what components make up the assignment and which components are most important.

The final step will likely take the most time. Once you've determined the criteria and levels of performance, fill in each cell of the table with a description of student performance at each achievement level. You'll find as you complete this section that precision is important-what does it mean that a student demonstrates excellent knowledge or poor problem-solving skills? These descriptions will provide the specific feedback on each student's performance that you can later circle or highlight as you grade.

After creating a rubric, test it on a student's work; you may find that it needs to be calibrated. As with all grading systems, issues of validity, reliability and fairness still apply. Be sure your rubric

aligns with reasonable standards and the curriculum; or, if you are part of a grading team, have everyone test the rubric first to standardize your grading expectations.

Figure 1:

Sample Rubric for an Oral Presentation			
Levels of Achievement	Superior	Competent	Needs Work
Criteria			
Organization	Thesis clearly stated and developed; specific examples are appropriate and develop claims.	Most information presented in logical sequence which audience can follow.	Audience cannot understand presentation because there is no sequence of information.
Student Knowledge	Student demonstrates full knowledge by answering all class questions with explanations and elaboration.	Student is at ease with expected answers to all questions, but fails to elaborate.	Student does not have grasp of information and cannot answer questions about subject.

Although a rubric can be time-consuming to formulate, in the long run it saves time spent grading and explaining grades, while keeping us objective, fair, and unbiased. One caveat: Rubrics are not self-explanatory, and you may find that students don't instinctively know how to use them; however, discussing the rubric in class when you make the assignment is an excellent way to promote both student understanding and self-assessment. If used in this way, rubrics can help clarify what the grade means by explaining standards, desirable qualities, and common pitfalls beforehand. As such, a rubric can provide a benchmark for students, helping them see their strengths and weaknesses on a given assignment in order to make future progress in those areas. In the end, rubrics help accomplish the three goals for grading I so often hear: Not only do they help instructors evaluate and communicate about student achievement, they can also help students learn and demonstrate their learning in more effective ways.

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CONSTRUCTING A RUBRIC	
Questions	Actions
1. What criteria or traits must be present in the student's work to ensure that it is high in quality?	Include these nouns or noun phrases as rows in your rubric. (e.g., Clarity, Organization, Eye Contact, Formulation of Problem, etc.)
2. How many levels of achievement do I wish to illustrate for students? (Walvoord & Anderson recommend using 3 to 5 levels.)	Include these as columns in your rubric and label them (e.g., Excellent, Average, Poor, or Not Yet Competent, Marginally Competent, Competent, Sophisticated, etc.).
3. For each criterion or trait, what is a clear description of performance at each achievement level?	Include descriptions in the appropriate cells of the rubric.
4. What are the consequences of performing at each level of quality?	Add descriptions of consequences to the commentaries in the rubric.
5. What numerical rating scheme will I use in the rubric?	Add this to the rubric in a way that fits in with your grading philosophy. Use only as many levels as you need.
6. When I use the rubric, what aspects work well and what aspects need improvement?	Try out the rubric and revise accordingly.

(continued on page 8)



Dan Addison  
U.Va. News Services

## Cavaliers' Distinguished Teaching Professor

The Cavaliers' Distinguished Teaching Professorship was established in 1991 to recognize an eminent scholar for outstanding teaching of undergraduates. In addition to receiving a summer salary, Cavaliers' DTPs teach University Seminars (USEMS) and work with the Teaching Resource Center to promote the general enhancement of teaching at the University. *Teaching Concerns* highlights this year's winner, Deborah Roach of the Department of Biology.

Debbie Roach describes her primary teaching goal as infecting students "with an intellectual excitement so that they will have a life-long interest in scientific discoveries." More than just teaching long-established facts or previously answered questions, Debbie emphasizes the "how-to" of the scientific process of discovery in her classes by including cutting-edge research in her lectures. In so doing, she teaches her students that there are still many questions to be explored and that they can contribute to finding the answers. A colleague writes that Debbie "instills in her students a passion for real science, the way it is done in the real world." Whether or not her students eventually become scientists themselves, Debbie hopes her classes will help them critically evaluate what they read about science in the newspaper or see on television.

Combined with her enthusiasm, Debbie's choice to include recent discoveries in her lectures and her conversational lecture style make her classes current, engaging and highly interactive. Students describe her classes as challenging and worth it-as a place where they "did a lot more active learning than passive." A current undergraduate sums up Debbie's approach to teaching nicely: "She does not teach at you, but shares *with* you."

## 2005-2006 Teaching Awards

### All-University Teaching Awards (in alphabetical order)

Reid Adams, M.D., *Surgery*  
Ira Bashkow, *Anthropology*  
Mary Beck, *Mathematics/SEAS*  
Stephen M. Borowitz, M.D., *Pediatrics & Health Evaluation Sciences*  
John Dobbins, *Art History*  
Nilanga Liyanage, *Physics*  
Allen Lynch, *Politics*  
Mitchell Rosner, M.D., *Nephrology*  
William T. Scherer, *Systems & Information Engineering*

### Alumni Association Distinguished Professor Award

Lillian R. Bevier, *Law*

### Alumni Board of Trustees Teaching Award

Robert Cross, *Commerce*

### Cavaliers' Distinguished Teaching Professorship

Deborah Roach, *Biology*

### State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV)

#### Outstanding Faculty Award

John D. Arras, *Biomedical Ethics and Philosophy*  
José D. Fuentes, *Environmental Sciences*

### Outstanding Departmental Graduate Teaching Assistant Award

(Asterisks denote All-University winners)

Tamara L. Bjelland, *Spanish, Italian & Portuguese*  
Peter Capuano, *English*  
Haley F. Castiglione, *Nursing*  
Sherrilynn Colby-Bottel, *Anthropology*  
Melissa A. Commisso, *Physics*  
\*Anne-Marie Durocher, *Politics*  
J. Alex Foraste, *Civil Engineering*  
Drake A. Guenther, *Biomedical Engineering*  
Thomas C. Hammond, *Curry School of Education*  
Daniel Hedden, *Philosophy*  
Amanda Hege, *Psychology*  
Stephen R. Keller, *Biology*  
Jura Liaukonyte, *Economics*  
\*Raymond J. Malewitz, *English*  
Jennifer McBride, *Religious Studies*  
Catherine E. Prudom, *Chemistry*  
Robert Benjamin Rakove, *History*  
David L. Richardson, *Environmental Sciences*  
Cedar Riener, *Psychology*  
Meredith K. Sagers, *Economics*  
Paula Kaye Sato, *French*  
Nitin Singh, *Materials Science & Engineering*  
\*Michael D. Smith, *Mathematics*  
Jeffrey J. Steckroth, *Curry School of Education*  
\*Brendon M. Stiles, M.D., *Surgery*  
Joanne van der Woude, *English*  
Amy S. Wentworth, *Spanish, Italian & Portuguese*  
Daniel R. Wik, *Astronomy*

### Seven Society Graduate Fellowship for Superb Teaching

Matthew P. Hural, *Architecture*

### Dr. Frank Finger Graduate Fellowship for Teaching

Peter J. Capuano, *English*

### Class of 1985 Graduate Fellowship for Creative Teaching

Amy S. Wentworth, *Spanish, Italian & Portuguese*

## Rethinking Courses



*Nisha Botchwey*

The University Teaching Fellows Program aims to help our most intellectually sound and successful junior faculty members develop into exceptionally fine teachers. The selection committee—comprised of award-winning faculty—seeks to choose junior faculty members who show promise of becoming both eminent researchers and inspiring teachers. In existence since 1992 and funded by the Provost, the UTF Program remains true to its original Lilly Endowment goals to support impressive junior faculty as they refine their teaching expertise while pursuing strong research agendas. The Program centers around ongoing conversations about how faculty communicate their academic disciplines to undergraduates, how various teaching approaches might enhance one's courses, and how research enlivens and inspires teaching. The 2006-07 winners of University Teaching Fellowships will be rethinking these courses:

### **Nisha Botchwey, Urban and Environmental Planning, School of Architecture**

The neighborhood planning and plan making accomplished through my Neighborhood Planning Workshop involves a host of social, economical, cultural, aesthetic and legal considerations. For undergraduate planners to successfully interpret, respond to and present a professional plan, they must apply core knowledge planning components to team projects based in the local Charlottesville community. I would like to redesign this course to help students sharpen their data analysis and communication skills. Students will consult with citizens and local institutions, create plans and publish them on the internet.



*Irina Mitrea*

### **Irina Mitrea, Mathematics**

During the next academic year, my plan is to design an interdisciplinary course that introduces undergraduate students from a variety of disciplines to mathematical modeling. This course will take competent students who had not previously considered a career in mathematical sciences and let them experience scientific discovery by engaging in significant research. By modeling various aspects of everyday life such as weather forecasting and air traffic control, the class will emphasize teamwork versus individual effort. The best four students will have the opportunity to participate and represent U.Va. as a team in the international competition Mathematical Contest in Modeling.



*John Nemeč*

### **John Nemeč, Religious Studies**

My project for the coming year involves designing a course entitled "Contemporary Hinduism." The course will survey contemporary Hinduism in light of the classical tradition. My goal is to bring a multidisciplinary approach to the subject matter by involving anthropological and sociological methods, as well as textual studies, in order to understand the impact of the continuities and innovations of contemporary Hinduism on the classical tradition. I will focus on better integrating theoretical materials into the course syllabus, as well as innovating new methods of examining the ways in which religion interacts with the state and operates in the public square.



*Todd Scanlon*

### **Todd Scanlon, Environmental Sciences**

Introduction to Physical Hydrology (EVSC 340) is a required class for Environmental Sciences majors that applies quantitative principles of math and physics to hydrological problems. My primary goals in improving this class include these: (1) better integrate current issues of interest to students, (2) foster classroom discussion and (3) stress linkages between hydrology and other aspects of environmental sciences. As part of the course design, my plan is to meet all the students on a one-to-one basis during the semester and to reward class participation while enhancing resources available for study outside the classroom.



*Bethany Teachman*

### **Bethany Teachman, Psychology**

I am interested in developing a seminar on fear and anxiety disorders that will be cross-listed for undergraduate and graduate students. The course will focus on risk factors for anxiety problems, phenomenology of the primary anxiety disorders, and evidence-based treatments. I expect that the class will include undergraduate and graduate students from non-clinical tracks of psychology and also clinical graduate students with extensive experience in the subject area. I want to explore how to make class discussions and projects work for students with such diverse backgrounds and how to have the class effectively meet the needs of students at multiple levels simultaneously.

### **Fernando Tejedo-Herrero, Spanish, Italian & Portuguese**

Spanish Sociolinguistics introduces students to some fundamental topics related to studying language in its social context. In teaching this course, I realized that students could not capture the level of abstraction of theoretical explanations if they were not exposed first to examples of how those principles manifest themselves in real language use. Thus I will focus primarily on authentic material and examples underlying main theoretical aspects. By emphasizing the practical component, I intend to involve students more in discussion, build their interest in research, develop their perspective on the cultural and linguistic diversity associated with the broad term "Spanish," and periodically assess how the course is going.



*Fernando Tejedo-Herrero*

# *No More Singin' the Blues: Preparing for Oral Presentations*

Judith Reagan, TRC Associate Director, Drama

Too many instructors have related the experience of students who are deeply engaged in research projects during the semester, but who then stumble painfully when presenting their work orally to the class. The same students who have animatedly pursued capstone projects that, in written form, reflect a mature grasp of concepts central to the discipline may come across as inauthentic pretenders when faced with the "stand and deliver" challenge of the oral presentation and discussion of their work.

Knowing that oracy<sup>1</sup> is a hallmark of an educated person as well as a valuable life and professional skill, faculty want to develop students' presentation skills but struggle with how to fit that into the curriculum without sacrificing course content. I offer the suggestion below as a time-efficient approach to building students' confidence and competence as speakers. In addition, I invite instructors who have experienced success with this or other strategies to share them with me for posting on the TRC website.

Well in advance of the dreaded "oral reports," it's helpful to address the issue of effective speaking directly in class. Prior to that discussion you might have students read a short article that stimulates thinking about public speaking. Ideally the piece would relate in some way to course content, such as the following example articles:

- Formal Oral Presentation, *Handbook for Speakers*. 2006. Washington, DC: American Chemical Society.<sup>2</sup>
- Hurrelbrinck, Nancy. 1996. Subtle Sexism (Still) Chilling the Climate for Women in the Classroom, *Inside UVA*, 1 November.<sup>3</sup>

An in-class discussion of the trigger article can generate a list of specifics students identify as important in oral communication. Likely to arise in their considerations:

- *Can the speaker be seen?*
- *Can the speaker be heard? Does the voice reach everyone in the room?*
- *Is the rate of speech conducive to understanding, or too rapid?*
- *Does the speaker seem connected to the talk? Does s/he seem confident, energized? Or, is there a high degree of anxiety evident?*

From that discussion, compile and distribute the students' list of the essential elements for effective communication. Likely they will have identified volume, eye contact, rate, posture, and a few additional items.

Then (and this is key!), implement a system or assignment which pairs students for the purpose of working with each other before presenting in class. In a practice session, each should hear the other's talk and give feedback and specific suggestions for improvement. If you require an account (a paragraph or two) of what was done and the ideas that arose, written independently by each student and turned in on or before the day of the oral presentation, you will ensure that the rehearsal is held; you will also find that it yields many ideas you can collect and give to the whole class as a take-away product. Once several of these accounts are handed in, you can compile and distribute the best ideas. Typical discoveries that can be shared may include remarks such as:

- *We practiced outdoors (in a garden, in the Amphitheater) because we wanted to develop adequate volume. As a byproduct, we learned how to concentrate through a lot of distractions.*
- *She suggested I make eye contact first with those sitting farthest away.*
- *He told me I didn't appear as nervous as I felt.*
- *I re-wrote my talk because my partner wasn't able to follow it.*
- *We read each other's talks aloud. Listening to what I had written spoken by someone else gave me a lot of ideas for fine tuning.*

(continued on page 6)

# Deadlines!

Please note that some deadlines occur early in the fall semester. Unless otherwise noted, for more information, see the TRC website (<http://trc.virginia.edu>) or contact the TRC at 982-2815 or [trc-uva@virginia.edu](mailto:trc-uva@virginia.edu).

## **PROFESSORS AS WRITERS (PAW) WRITING GRANTS**

Deadline: Tuesday, September 12, 2006. Through one-time writing grants of up to \$1000 offered annually, the PAW Program supports U.Va. faculty with writing-related concerns at any stage of their careers. For more information, contact the PAW Program Administrator ([trc-paw@virginia.edu](mailto:trc-paw@virginia.edu), 982-2815)

## **UNIVERSITY SEMINARS (USEMS)**

Deadline: Monday, November 27, 2006. University Seminars give first-year students the opportunity to study with faculty members in a seminar that encourages intense interaction and discussion. Seminars meet for at least two hours per week and carry two or three hours of credit. Proposals for 2007-2008 USEMS should be approved by departmental Chairs and submitted on the appropriate form to the Office of the Provost, PO Box 400308, Booker House or [usems4faculty@virginia.edu](mailto:usems4faculty@virginia.edu). For more information, contact Milton Adams, [jma@virginia.edu](mailto:jma@virginia.edu) or 924-3728.

## **NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES DISTINGUISHED TEACHING PROFESSORSHIP**

Deadline: January 15, 2007. Distinguished Teaching Professors are selected from among U. Va. associate and full professors in the humanities who teach courses that fulfill College Area Requirements. Nominations and applications for the Richard A. and Sara Page Mayo NEH Distinguished Teaching Professorship (2006-09) should be forwarded to Karen Ryan, Associate Dean of the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, Cabell Hall, PO Box 400771. For more information, contact Marva Barnett, [marva@virginia.edu](mailto:marva@virginia.edu) or 982-2816

## **OUTSTANDING FACULTY AND GTA TEACHING AWARDS and CAVALIERS' DISTINGUISHED TEACHING PROFESSORSHIP**

Deadline: Monday, February 12, 2007. The Provost's Office and the Teaching Resource Center are proud to administer this program of a dozen faculty teaching awards, 28 school/department-wide Graduate Teaching Assistant awards, and four All-University GTA teaching awards.

(continued on page 7)

## WRITING WORKSHOPS

Funding from the TRC and the Dean of Arts & Sciences is available for several departmental Writing Workshops on a first-come, first-served basis. During the Writing Workshop, instructors learn how to grade and comment on student writing more efficiently, accurately, and confidently. Workshops are normally tailored to specific needs such as making assignments, working with students' drafts, and grading essay exams or lab reports. For more information, contact Deandra Little, 982-2807 or [dlittle@virginia.edu](mailto:dlittle@virginia.edu).

## JANUARY TEACHING WORKSHOP

Tuesday, January 15, 2007, *Ruffner Hall*  
This year's half-day January Teaching Workshop will begin at 9:00 am. As always, these sessions will cover a variety of issues of interest to all members of the University's teaching community and provide a great opportunity for a reenergizing start to the spring semester. Plan to join us! **Pre-registration is recommended.**

## TEACHING PORTFOLIO WORKSHOP

This May workshop helps participants analyze and describe their teaching in a portfolio that is useful in many ways. We can accept a limited number of faculty and TAs into the workshop, which consists of three morning sessions and individual meetings over a two-week period following the spring semester. Applications considered beginning March 1, 2007.

# Workshops!

## FACULTY OF COLOR TEACHING IN PREDOMINANTLY WHITE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

**Christine A. Stanley**, *Executive Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, College of Education and Human Development, Texas A&M University*

Wednesday, September 20, 2006, 10:00 am-12:00 noon

*Byrd/Morris Seminar Room, Harrison Institute/Small Special Collections Library*

The phenomenological experiences of faculty of color teaching in predominantly white colleges and universities are rarely topics for dialogue, introspection and experiential learning. Much of the existing research in this area implies that we have yet to listen to the narratives of faculty of color in order to gain a better understanding of their challenges. Using information from the book she edited, *Faculty of Color: Teaching in Predominantly White Colleges and Universities* (Anker, 2006), Christine Stanley will share predominant themes and engage participants on the first-hand experiences of faculty of color teaching in predominantly White institutions. This session should particularly benefit those faculty, future faculty and administrators who desire to deepen their understanding of these issues and seek to engage in dialogue on developing effective recruitment and retention strategies for institutional change.

**Space is limited; to pre-register, contact Kathy White, [kmw7f@virginia.edu](mailto:kmw7f@virginia.edu), or 924-6865**

*Co-sponsored by the Professors as Writers and Tomorrow's Professor Today Programs*

## CV AND COVER LETTER WRITING WORKSHOP

**Wendy Perry**, *Assistant Director, Graduate Arts & Sciences Career Services*

Thursday, October 12, 2006, 12:00 noon - 1:30 pm

*Auditorium, Harrison Institute/Small Special Collections Library*

This workshop will expose graduate and postdoctoral students to the elements of effective CVs and cover letters for the academic job market. Wendy Perry will draw on the latest literature regarding format, categories of information, changing styles and variations across the disciplinary spectrum. Participants will collectively critique sample CVs and cover letters from a variety of fields and discuss them as marketing tools.

*Sponsored by the Tomorrow's Professor Today Program.*

## GETTING YOUR JOURNAL ARTICLE INTO PRINT

**Wendy Belcher**, *Academic Editor and Award-Winning Author* (More at <http://www.wendybelcher.com>.)

**For Faculty:** Monday, October 30, 2006, 10:00 am - 12:30 pm and 2:00 - 4:30 pm

**For Graduate Students:** Tuesday, October 31, 2006, 10:00 am - 12:30 pm and 2:00 - 4:30 pm

*Byrd/Morris Seminar Room, Harrison Institute/Small Special Collections Library*

These one-day workshops will be facilitated by Wendy Belcher, who specializes in helping scholars get published. In the morning session of each workshop, she will engage participants in developing good writing habits and getting motivated. In the afternoon, she will address why editors reject academic articles and what writers can do to avoid such rejections. Belcher led a similar, well-rated workshop in Fall 2004 for U.Va. French Department graduate students. Participants will benefit most by attending both morning and afternoon sessions.

**Pre-registration is required; space is limited.**

*Co-sponsored by the Professors as Writers and Tomorrow's Professor Today Programs.*

*(continued from page 5)*

Staggering the oral reports over a period of weeks rather than packing them all into very few class sessions will result in better learning because it allows more time for students to consider and develop both content and presentation. Helpful competition may kick in as students wait to see which ideas from rehearsal accounts the instructor deems worthy of dissemination.

Why make the effort to adjust class procedure as suggested above? To spare everyone a round of de-energized, uncommitted and unconvincing oral reports! Demystifying the expectations surrounding oral presentation and providing a method to practice often unlocks creativity and confidence and allows students to own and voice what they've learned. Again, I invite you to let me know the effects on students' performance you note when using this or other approaches to building speaking competency.

<sup>1</sup> Oracy, the ability to be fluent with words, also suggests a connection to literacy (from Patsy Rodenburg, *The Need for Words* [Routledge, 2001]: 9).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.chemistry.org/portal/a/c/s/1/acdisplay.html?DOC=meetingshandbook.html#formal> (accessed August 15, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.virginia.edu/insideuva/textonlyarchive/96-11-01/6.txt> (accessed August 15, 2006).

## Book Review:

### *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.*

By Diane F. Halpern. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: Mahwah, New Jersey, 1996.  
Reviewed by Ryan Emanuel, *Former TRC Graduate Student Associate,*  
*Environmental Sciences*

Diane F. Halpern's text on critical thinking covers a broad range of topics related to the acquisition, retention and translation of knowledge. Although the book is commonly used as a teaching text, *Thought and Knowledge* is equally suitable as a reflective tool for instructors from many disciplines. Halpern challenges the teacher as well as the student to develop skills necessary for "knowing how to learn and knowing how to think clearly about the rapidly proliferating information with which we will all have to contend" (4). In just under four hundred pages, Halpern presents a well-organized discussion of strategies for meeting this challenge. The book cites the cognitive psychological literature extensively but not superfluously, and in such a way that the general reader is informed rather than overwhelmed.

After surveying the problem at hand — that many of today's university students lack the fundamental critical thinking skills necessary for classroom and real-world decision making — Halpern embarks on a discussion of cognition and epistemology that is filled with practical examples and interactive puzzles to benefit those of us who have not spent much time thinking about "thinking." In fact, major topics throughout the book are punctuated by verbal and visual puzzles ranging from classic brainteasers and memory problems to questions of decision-making and experimental design. Many of the exercises would work well as warm-up questions for a variety of classroom situations.

Subsequent chapters expand outward from the fundamentals of cognition and memory to discuss language, logical reasoning, arguments, hypothesis testing and probability. As a teacher, I found several selections from the core of the text to be quite useful. In particular, Halpern includes a previously published table that lists a number of questions classified by the type of thinking skills they stimulate. While the generic questions themselves are universally familiar among teachers (e.g. "What are the implications of ...?" or "Why is ... important?"), the associated cognitive skills which they exercise (e.g. "analysis/inference" or "analysis of significance") may not be immediately apparent.

Halpern's chapter on arguments contains another noteworthy selection: "Twenty-one Common Fallacies." Instructors from many disciplines are likely to recognize some of these mistakes as recurring themes in their students' writing from semester to semester. Becoming familiar with this list can help teachers spot and avoid fallacies in their own work as well as in the work of their students.

If you do not have time to read *Thought and Knowledge* cover to cover, individual chapters are fairly self-contained and may be digested independently. Although intended as a textbook rather than a text for teachers, Halpern's insights into critical thought processes are appropriate for college instructors seeking to help themselves and their students acquire and refine the skills of thinking, remembering and reasoning that are crucial both to the classroom and the world beyond.

(Deadlines continued)

#### **TEACHING + TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE (TTI)**

Deadline: TBA. This program, funded by the Provost and ITC, usually sponsors up to four faculty fellows with highly innovative projects integrating teaching and technology. Program guidelines at <http://nmc.itc.virginia.edu/tti/>. The RFP is undergoing revision and targeted for dissemination in October.

#### **TEACHING + TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT PARTNERS (TTSP)**

Deadline: Friday, February 23, 2007. The TTSP Program, funded by the Provost and ITC, trains a graduate student to provide faculty within a department or school with technical support in using new technologies for teaching innovation. The program usually selects four departments to join each year. Schools and departments with a substantial undergraduate population are eligible. Program description at <http://nmc.itc.virginia.edu/tti/>.

#### **UNIVERSITY TEACHING FELLOWSHIPS**

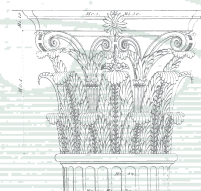
Deadline: Monday, March 12, 2007. With summer grants of \$7,000 and ongoing, interdisciplinary discussions, the University Teaching Fellows Program aims to help our most intellectually sound and successful junior faculty members develop into exceptionally fine teachers.

#### **TOMORROW'S PROFESSOR TODAY**

Applications considered beginning May 21, 2007. Cosponsored by the Office of the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Tomorrow's Professor Today is a certificate-bearing program open to a limited number of graduate and postdoctoral students considering an academic career.

#### **EXCELLENCE IN DIVERSITY FELLOWSHIPS**

Deadline: early June 2007. The University-wide Excellence in Diversity Fellows Program supports first-year tenure-track faculty in developing productive long-term careers at U.Va. The Program fosters strong interdisciplinary mentoring and peer networks, offers monthly workshops, and provides \$1000 grants for professional development.



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**Pat Fuller**  
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**Resources available in the TRC library or on-line:**

*Authentic Assessment Toolbox*: <http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/rubrics.htm>.

(An excellent, online article explaining the hows and whys of analytic and holistic rubric).

Frisbee, D. A & Waltman, K.K. *Developing a Personal Grading Plan*. NCME Instructional Module for Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice, Fall 1992. Available on-line at <http://depts.washington.edu/grading/plan/frisbie1.htm#foot1#foot1>.

Huba, M.E. & Freed, J.E. (2000) *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Stevens, D.D. & Levi, A. (2005) *Introduction to Rubrics: An Assessment Tool to Save Grading Time, Convey Effective Feedback, and Promote Student Learning*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Walvoord, B.E. & Anderson, V.I. (1998). *Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (NB: Walvoord and Anderson call rubrics Primary Trait Analysis (PTA) Scales).



**Honorees, Seven Society Graduate  
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