



Scaffolding a Departmental Pedagogy Seminar

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- + A key goal this year has been to begin to try to lead the pedagogy seminar as though it were a philosophy seminar.

This document summarizes my initial thinking on this issue: Why do it?
How might one do it?

The challenge

- + The pedagogy seminar is compulsory for G3 students in the Philosophy Department. These students often have very different levels of prior teaching experience.
- + In order for the seminar to be a constructive/beneficial for all participants, the seminar needs to be responsive to the needs of each person.
- + There *seems* to be a tension between the needs of students who are new to teaching and more experienced teaching fellows, and this tension seems to create a pressure on what is to be taught. I sketch one strategy in this document for resolving this (supposed) tension.

A suggested solution

- + Suggestion: We ought to approach how we teach pedagogy in the same way to how we approach teaching philosophy in the College.
- + That is, the purpose shouldn't be to merely communicate information about something but rather to equip students with the ability to actively participate in the activity and to develop a point of view.

An example: inclusive pedagogy

- + A 'traditional' lesson might focus on explaining what inclusive pedagogy consists in, and explaining various techniques that one might adopt in order to foster a open classroom environment and to support students from non-traditional backgrounds.
- + If we were teaching inclusive pedagogy as though it were a philosophical concept, we would first want the students to have a basic understanding of the relevant issues, and we would then encourage them to think for themselves.

Teaching inclusive pedagogy as though it were philosophy

+ Reading: excerpts from Anthony Jack's *The Privileged Poor*

Initial discussion about the impressions students had whilst reading the book. What resonated?

Focus on a particular example: what are the issues/ problems this case highlights?

As a teaching fellow, what could one do?

Within the institution of the University, how can one as a teaching fellow (and in the future, a professor) work to support the student holistically? How can one foster different connections/ relationships?

Within the context of a section that one is leading, what is to be done?

Summarizing the discussion and the general lessons: identifying issues; listening to students/ seeking out information on the experiences of students; crafting strategies to respond in the short-term and long-term, both within one's own class and within the wider context of the university.

Why adopt this approach?

- + Scaffolding

This approach offers learning opportunities that are relevant to the needs of both beginning teachers and more experienced teachers.

- + Recognizing that the pedagogy seminar is for philosophy graduate students

A key reason for adopting this kind of this approach is that it aligns the pedagogy seminar with the style and intellectual interests of the participants (i.e. people who enjoy thinking for themselves, question theories, and developing their own views) whilst also remaining grounded by the work of pedagogical researchers.