

## **Report to APA on \$5000 Small Grant given to the American Association of Philosophy Teachers (AAPT)**

Report written by Donna Engelmann, submitted by Emily Esch

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The APA funded \$250 towards travel for each of the 20 graduate student participants in the American Association of Philosophy Teachers' Teaching and Learning Summer Seminar held from July 27-31 at Saginaw Valley State University. The participants spend the mornings in the seminar and their afternoons attending the regular sessions of the AAPT workshop-conference. What follows is an evaluation and overview of the Teaching and Learning Seminar.

### **(1) Summary of Participant Evaluations**

17 of 20 participants returned evaluations. (See Appendix 3 for details on the evaluations.) An overwhelming majority of participants found the seminar helped them grow as learning-centered teachers who can identify valuable learning objectives, construct pedagogies to help students achieve these objectives, and assess how well students are doing (and improve the teaching and learning process as a result of students' response to their efforts).

### **(2) Summary of Facilitators' Reflections on the Seminar in light of the evaluations**

#### Strengths

- Focus on metacognition, formative feedback, and understanding student motivation to enhance engagement
- Focus on learner-centered teaching - alignment of outcomes, pedagogy and assessment
- Focus on making learning visible, through understanding of student motivation, clear articulation of learning objectives and goals, and engaging students in reflection on learning
- Facilitators modeling of best teaching practices, including a "flipped" classroom
- The readings
- Diversity of facilitators' presentation styles, which also were complementary
- Facilitators' passion for teaching philosophy, especially in light of their expertise in the theory and practice of teaching
- Collegiality and hospitality of the conference: lots of opportunities for formal and informal exchanges
- The inspiring company of people who love teaching philosophy, including fellow seminarians and other conference attendees
- Participants all are able to articulate innovations they plan to implement
- Participants overwhelmingly agreed that they would recommend the seminar to others

#### Weaknesses

- How the seminar fit with the conference. Participants wanted to attend more conference sessions, but also expressed a strong preference for more seminar time.
- Many said they had a hard time coming up with weaknesses to report, since the overall experience was so positive, but identified the following:
  - More time for direct discussion of the readings
  - More time to work on design of their own learning experiences and assessments (though they appreciated that time was required to lay out and connect the central ideas of the seminar)

### Looking Forward

- It is best to have three co-facilitators with a shared vision of the fundamentals of learner-centered teaching. Diverse but complementary styles and expertise are a great strength.
- Continue using a variety of classroom activities - lecture, small group work, large group discussion, individual writing and reflection.
- The blog we established on the AAPT website for participants did not draw as much participant comment on the readings as had been the case for the blogs in past seminars – we should rethink this strategy.
- We are building a large community of participants in both the APA/AAPT seminars and in the regional workshops and onsite workshops at philosophy grad programs offered by the AAPT. We should make attempts to track the influence that the AAPT teaching and learning workshops are having on the discipline of philosophy, and continue to build community among participants.

### **(3) Recommendations for future seminars, based on feedback from recent seminars**

(1) Keep the same basic structure:

- Stress (intentional and transparent) alignment of learning objectives, pedagogy, and formative assessment; expert/novice differences; “how to” instruction.
- Retain the Fink reading as centerpiece of the experience
- Keep the number of facilitators at three, with varying presentation styles and practices modeled

(2) Re-structure or replace the blog with another way of engaging participants before the seminar

(3) Continue to build online community through the AAPT Workshops and Seminars Facebook page, the AAPT listserv, the AAPT-sponsored sessions at the APA division meetings, and future AAPT regional teaching and learning workshops.

## APPENDIX 1

### American Association of Philosophy Teachers/American Philosophical Association Teaching and Learning Seminar *An Overview*

The APA Summer Seminar on Teaching and Learning shows participants how to improve their skills as learning-centered teachers. Participants study how to identify and select challenging and transformative learning objectives. By understanding the principles of integrated course design, participants appreciate how to best guide students to the successful achievement of these goals. Further, participants develop educative assessment strategies that allow them to measure success, continue to innovate, and create even deeper learning.

#### Readings

Prior to arriving for the four-day (3 hours/day) face-to-face meetings of the seminar, each participant reads and blogs about the following readings:

- Kelly A. Burns, "Minimizing and Managing Micro-aggressions in the Philosophy Classroom," *Teaching Philosophy*, 37:2, June 2014.
- Mary E. Diez, "The Central Role of Criteria in Giving Good Feedback," *Feedback Is Teaching*, (Alverno College Publications, 2015).
- Donna Engelmann, "Assessing Empathy Learning Outcomes," *Philosophy Through Teaching*, (American Association of Philosophy Teachers, 2014).
- L. Dee Fink, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to College Courses, Revised and Updated* (Jossey-Bass, 2013). [Chapters 2, 3 and 4]
- Paul Green, "How to Motivate Students: A Primer for Learner-Centered Teachers," *AAPT Studies in Pedagogy I: Practices in Pedagogy* (2015).

#### Schedule

<b>Date/Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<u>Evening Before first session</u>	
9pm	Introductions/Overview
<u>Session 1</u>	
9:00-10:00	Tips vs. Strategies and Transparent Alignment
10:00-10:10	Break
10:10-12:00	Learning Objectives I
<u>Session 2</u>	
9-10:20	Learning Objectives II
10:20-10:30	Break
10:30-12:00	Pedagogy I
<u>Session 3</u>	
9-10:20	Pedagogy II
10:20-10:30	Break
10:30-12:00	Assessment I
<u>Session 4</u>	
9-10:20	Assessment II
10:20-10:30	Break

10:30-12:00 Tie it all together

### **Shared Meanings**

By “Learning Objectives” we mean whatever is the answer to this question: How do you want students to be different after their time with you?

By “Pedagogy” we mean whatever is the answer to this question: What will you design for students to do, and in which order, so that they end up different in the way you hope?

By “Assessment” we mean whatever is the answer to these two questions: How do you know if your students have changed in the way you hoped they would (at time X in the semester)? Given the answer to the previous question, how should you adjust?

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Facilitators and Participants**

#### ***Seminar Leader:***

Donna Engelmann, Alverno College, [Donna.Engelmann@alverno.edu](mailto:Donna.Engelmann@alverno.edu)

#### ***Seminar Facilitators:***

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#### ***Seminarians:***

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## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Post Seminar Evaluation Responses**

## QUANTITATIVE RESPONSES

(4=*Strongly Agree*; 3=*Agree*; 2=*Disagree*; 1=*Strongly Disagree*)

The seminar illustrated how to identify how I want students to grow (learning objectives).

16 of 17 respondents said “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”

The seminar increased my understanding of transparent alignment in creating learning experiences.

17 of 17 respondents said “Agree or “Strongly Agree”

The seminar illustrated how to discover how my students are doing (assessment).

15 of 17 respondents said “Agree or “Strongly Agree”

The seminar increased my understanding of learning-centered teaching.

17 of 17 respondents said “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”

## REPRESENTATIVE QUALITATIVE RESPONSES

(1) Do you plan on implementing one or more pedagogical innovations as a result of your participation in this seminar? If so, please describe at least one change and motivation behind it.

- Will clarify learning objectives before beginning course design – “Yes, I will develop future courses around the course goals, rather than around content.”
- Will increase alignment in the course as a whole – “I am going to make sure that I communicate how whichever task we are up to is supposed to support the skills or goals for the class.”
- Will incorporate more active learning – “Yes, I am going to decrease my reliance on lectures and increase the number of activities I use: ‘The ones who do the work do the learning.’”
- More metacognition experiences – “Yes I plan to integrate more student self-evaluation into my course to improve student learning and metacognition.”
- Different kinds of assignments and assessments – “I’m planning on varying the kind of written work I require (short essays and in-class writing) to better reflect my learning goals.”
- More “How-to”/scaffolding instruction – “I anticipate changing many of my pedagogical approaches as a result of the seminar, most immediately, I have started to scaffold my course to assure progression towards learning goals.”

(2) Has participation in the seminar changed the way you think about teaching and learning? If so, in what ways?

- The importance of alignment – “My thinking changed particularly about the importance of transparent alignment.”
- The importance of intentional, objectives driven course design – “I have recognized the need for designing activities that will help students develop metacognitive skills.”
- What being learning-centered really means, and how important it is – “It furthered the shift in my thinking away from content knowledge goals to other kinds of goals, and has given me a good theoretical vocabulary to begin to articulate these kinds of goals more specifically.”

(3) Considering content, format, presenters’ style, or other variables, what would you say were the strengths of the seminar?

- Three facilitators with varying perspectives and styles – “I think one of the greatest strengths of the seminar is the diversity of teaching styles that the presenters put on display... Each gave us a different (yet equally excellent) model of classroom behavior. They all also made the classroom a very inclusive place.”
- Collegial atmosphere – they appreciated “the comfortable sense of a learning community between my peers in the seminar.”
- Good readings, providing essential vocabulary to describe learner-centered approaches
- Excellent modeling of valuable pedagogies - “The presenters all showed us how these methods worked by using them on us. It’s hard to deny the usefulness of a learning tool that has been shown to be useful on you.”
- It’s inspiring

(4) Considering content, format, presenters' style, or other variables, what would you say were the weaknesses of the seminar?

- More time to talk about assessment, and design assessments, and rework syllabi
- More time to talk about the readings, critically respond to the readings, and consider the application of the readings to our own practice

(4b) Cuts Both Ways

- And again, not enough time (participants wanted to discuss more about virtually every topic and three hours a day wasn't enough time). They would like to see more workshop time for designing their own syllabi, courses, learning experiences and assessments.

(5) Would you recommend the experience to others? If you were to describe your experience in the seminar to a friend, how would you describe it?

- 100% of participants who responded said they would strongly recommend it
  - "The seminar (and conference) was extremely rewarding and uplifting, and came at just the right time in my career. I'm not sure I can express to you how great it was to meet other people who are passionate about teaching philosophy, who have such a wealth of knowledge and great ideas about how to teach philosophy well, and who are nice philosophers, too!"
  - "The tools and ideas the workshop gave me make me feel confident and excited about teaching in a way that I haven't in a while. I am grateful for that."
- "The workshop revolutionized the way I look at teaching. I will be much more confident that my students are learning."
- "Yes. Invaluable help for a central but neglected element of our profession."

(6) Please report here anything else you want to say that wasn't captured by the questions above:

- "I loved it. It has changed the way I think about teaching in profound ways and I am so thankful to the presenters for such an enriching, heartening and valuable experience."
- Please get the workshop and conference schedule out to seminar participants as soon as possible, so we can make travel arrangements. Many of us are very busy in summer!