THE TEACHING EXCHANGE
BROWN UNIVERSITY ▪ VOLUME 7 / NUMBER 1 ▪ SEPTEMBER 2002

Sheridan Center Introduces a New Seminar Series: Classroom Tools

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The Sheridan Center is pleased to introduce a new teaching seminar that will experience its inaugural run during the 2002–2003 academic year. The *Classroom Tools Seminar* (Teaching Certificate II program) is founded upon the belief that employing a variety of teaching tools allows instructors to engage the intellects of a wide range of students. It will explore a series of pedagogical tools that college and university instructors may wish to implement in their classrooms in order to reach the broadest possible learning population.

The new seminar will be composed of five individual sessions, each of which will last approximately ninety minutes. Each session will:

- define and explain a particular pedagogical tool or set of tools;
- demonstrate how the particular tool(s) may be applied in the classroom; and
- discuss how instructors may assess the impact of the tool(s) upon student learning.

In all *Classroom Tools* sessions, participants will be given the opportunity to debate the strengths, shortcomings, and potential classroom value of each tool considered. The Sheridan Center would like to emphasize that its new seminar will not focus upon how to construct the different tools; instead, the sessions will stress how to implement the tools in a pedagogically-valid manner. For example, instead of learning how to build a course Web site, participants will learn how to use a Web site to enhance their teaching effectiveness and increase student learning.

Seminar sessions will be run by the Sheridan Center staff. Brown faculty and staff members will serve as guest speakers and lend their knowledge and expertise to seminar participants. All sessions will be held from 4 pm until 5:30 pm (location to be announced). Following is a list of the topics that will be discussed over the course of the *Classroom Tools Seminar*:

Assessment Tools

The first session will occur on 30 September 2002. It will explore how various assessment measures can aid instructors in their efforts to gauge whether students are realizing course objectives. Dialogue will focus upon the effective use of in-class assessment tools, which take a wide variety of forms and include everything from simple, handwritten response pieces to futuristic, computer-based Personal Response Systems (PRS). Ideally, the use of such assessment tools enables instructors to attain immediate feedback regarding student comprehension and, if need be, to adjust their teaching strategies accordingly. But do such assessment tools live up to the "hype" surrounding them? The first Classroom Tools session of the year will help teachers ensure that assessment tools do, in fact, satisfy instructors' and students' expectations.

Artifacts

The second gathering will take place on 28 October 2002. It will introduce attendees to the practice of teaching with artifacts (primary sources such as objects, images, architecture, or music, to name a few). During this session, participants will discover how the use of artifacts may enhance teaching in both traditional and non-traditional classrooms across the curriculum. They will discuss how teaching with artifacts can integrate and deepen student learning across the disciplines.

Course Web Sites, On-line Discussions, and Bulletin Boards

The last session of the autumn semester will take place on 18 November 2002 and will center upon the use of course Web sites, on-line discussions, and bulletin boards. It will address the following questions: How can instructors effectively use Web sites to stimulate student interest in and enthusiasm for a course? How can "virtual" conversations (e.g., on-line discussions and bulletin boards) augment face-to-face classroom interactions?

Multimedia Presentations

The theme of teaching with technology is carried into the fourth session, which is scheduled for 24 February 2003. This first session of the spring semester will delve into multimedia presentations; it will show instructors how to prevent these popular teaching tools from becoming simple "tricks" that look pretty but do not facilitate student learning. Over the course of the session, participants will investigate how to use music, film, visual charts/graphs, slides, and/or overhead-projector images in a pedagogically-valid manner.

Distance Learning

The last session of the year will take place on 17 March 2003; its topic will be distance learning. Participants will debate under what circumstances the distance-learning experience can be made as effective as traditional face-to-face classrooms. Attendees will leave the session with increased knowledge of some of the available methods, tools, and

practices that may help instructors re-conceptualize their courses for use in distance-based learning environments. This is an important session for anyone considering teaching in a "virtual" classroom.

The *Classroom Tools Seminar* has a limited enrollment. Although it has been designed for graduate teaching assistants and junior faculty, senior faculty are always welcome to attend. Visitors are also invited to attend whichever individual sessions they find pertinent and/or interesting.

Those graduate students who have already attained a Sheridan Center Teaching Certificate I and who participate fully in the Classroom Tools Seminar will be eligible to earn Teaching Certificate II. Candidates for Certificate II will complete an assignment in advance of each session; these assignments are designed to stimulate thought about the topics scheduled for discussion. After each Classroom Tools Seminar session, Certificate II candidates will write a one-page response piece in which they reflect upon what they have learned. These response pieces may be posted on the Sheridan Center's Web site in order to encourage further on-line discussion. Graduate students who attend all five sessions and who complete all of the seminar assignments will be awarded Sheridan Teaching Certificate II.

Graduate students who wish to earn Teaching Certificate II should contact the Sheridan Center (Sheridan_Center@brown.edu or 863-1219) and let a staff member know of their intentions. For planning purposes, the Sheridan Center also asks faculty and visitors who wish to participate in the Classroom Tools Seminar to RSVP and advise which particular sessions they plan to attend. The staff of the Sheridan Center looks forward to enjoying a productive, thought-provoking year for everyone who participates in the Center's newest program.