

Volume 3  
Issue 10  
October  
2011

Lander University's

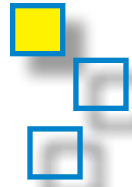
Article submissions encouraged.  
Send articles to: sgrund@lander.edu

# White Board



Become An Effective Teacher & Save Your Valuable Teaching Time and Energy

Center for Effective Undergraduate Teaching (864) 388-8426



## Encouraging Students to Consider Multiple Perspectives: Our Experience with Sharing Lectures

Alan Green, Assistant Professor of Economics, and  
Lucas McMillan, Assistant Professor of Political Science

AS INSTRUCTORS for general education courses in political economy (ECON 201: Macroeconomics and POLS 103: Introduction to World Politics), we strive to raise our students' awareness of the globalized nature of the world and further to show them different perspectives on the many issues that arise. It was no surprise to discover that both of us taught about international trade in our courses; we both have published on aspects of international trade and feel that it is an important part of "political economy" today. What interested both of us was how we covered trade. One of us focused on who supported trade, who was against trade, and why; the other aimed to convince students of the efficiency of free trade, an argument economists have been making for 200 years.

We decided that our students would benefit from hearing both perspectives, so we worked out a "lecture sharing" arrangement. We each would give half of the lecture on trade to both classes, with Prof. McMillan covering the politics of trade and Prof. Green covering the efficiency argument for free trade. Below we share the benefits of this arrangement and any difficulties we encountered.

### ALAN GREEN:

I found our arrangement to be enjoyable for me as an instructor. It was interesting to hear Lucas' lecture and also fun to lecture to another class that was not accustomed to my voice or appearance. When we discussed material, I noticed that Lucas emphasized the different perspectives on trade without coming down in support of any of them. I thus re-worked my part slightly to make a very strong economic argument for free trade, while throwing in a few digs at wishy-washy political scientists (full disclosure: I have a B.A. and M.A. in political science).

I think it surprised students, especially in Lucas' class, to have me disagree with him and make such a forceful argument. I did so respectfully, of course, and I lectured first so he had plenty of time to counter my arguments. The experience, though, brought a tension to the classroom that I

think helped get the students' attention. It also showed them that people can disagree, even strongly disagree, and still get along very well. In terms of general education goals, I think having both of us there helps a great deal with the goal of showing students different perspectives. No matter how many times we may emphasize two sides to an argument, students only hear one voice—their instructor. This exercise allowed us to actually show them a disagreement and have them hear two voices. Maybe that undermined our credibility with them, but that actually is part of the process of general education. They need to learn that professors are fallible as well and take responsibility for thinking critically themselves.

This arrangement was not difficult to set up or carry out. It obviously took more time than simply doing our own lectures as we also shared exam questions for assessment purposes. Overall though the extra time commitment was manageable and well worth it.

### LUCAS McMILLAN:

Unlike economists concerned with efficiency no matter the consequences, political scientists understand that both goals and who has the power to shape the agenda are constantly shifting. The first priority may be security, environmental protection, or human rights rather than economic exchange. I introduced concepts such as "national security export controls" and asked students to think about those things that the U.S. does not trade and the countries with whom the U.S. does not trade. While students may comprehend that some inefficiencies are necessary for over-arching goals, we need to do a better job getting students to apply this to other issues. I also gave examples of the "winners" and "losers" from trade and enjoyed asking students to think about trade while in Walmart, especially when it comes to the myriad of product choices.

While it was important to plan ahead with Alan to construct our syllabi, some spontaneity helped our presentations. For

example, I remember "arguing" with Alan over the definition of some concepts. My favorite part of this experience was showing students how dependent South Carolina is upon the free flow of trade and investment and describing these benefits: export-oriented jobs and investments like Fuji and BMW. Connections to students' hometowns always seem to peak their interest.

We can improve upon our assessment of these shared lectures. Exam questions written by the other professor are useful, but we (and others) should consider writing assignments in the future.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Students must see that issues in today's globalized world have different answers depending on the assumptions made, the questions asked, and the goals given. We believe our "shared lecture" exchange exposes possibilities for many of us to consider such undertakings—especially within the general education curriculum. A liberal arts environment should encourage learning across the curriculum. We can help our students form connections across disciplines if we, as faculty members, model this behavior ourselves.

Mid-Term Week - Oct 10

Fall Break - Oct 13-14

Open House - Oct 29

### WHITE BOARD

2011-12 Publication Dates

First Monday of the Month

September 5	March 5
October 3	April 2
November 7	May 7
December 5	June 4
January 3	July 2
February 6	August 6

[Newsletters Archive HERE](#)

Center for Effective  
Undergraduate Teaching  
Carnel Learning Center, Suite 106.

Phone: 388-8426

# Collaborative Teaching: Reflections and Lessons Learned

IT'S NOT "SERIAL TEACHING" or "a lot of little mini courses stuck together" or "sequenced solo teaching" as team teaching too often is, but rather teaching where "we are both planning, we are both making sure we understand the material as it needs to be presented, and we are both standing up there." That's how Jessica Lester and Katherine Evans describe their goal for team teaching a senior-level educational psychology course for preservice teachers. (p. 375)

Using a phenomenological method that included detailed analysis of unstructured, open-ended interviews with each of them, Lester and Evans report one grounding, overarching theme out of which five other themes emerged. Together these themes reflect those collaborative teaching experiences that stood out for each of them.

**GROUNDING THEME:** We didn't have a manual for finding our way through. Despite previous experience in teaching, both teachers were unfamiliar with the practical aspects and personal interactions that this kind of team teaching required. "We had no idea what this was going to look like and feel like ... and we didn't know each other

well enough by that point to even ask what it was going to look like." (p. 376) As might be expected, the process was most unfamiliar at the beginning of the course. "We were very individualized when we first started, and we didn't really mesh at first because we weren't sure how until we actually started doing, and then we figured it out as we did it." (p. 377)

**THEME 1:** You can't just shoot from the hip. This kind of truly collaborative teaching demands a major time commitment. "There's just a lot more involved in making sure you are prepared .... You can't assume that you know what you are going to say and roll with it as easily." (p. 377) This kind of teaching takes more time than it takes to teach a course solo. Lester and Evans do report that their perception of the time required changed. They don't know if preparation took less time as the course progressed, but as they became more efficient in how they worked together and with their students, it seemed as though it did.

**THEME 2:** Following and leading ... all of us together. The teachers discovered a kind of "flow" that occurred as each of them moved from leading what was happening in class to following as the other teacher and sometimes the students were leading the action. There were times when the flow really worked, becoming a beautiful cord of connection. However, there were times when they reported falling totally flat on their faces. They learned that the flow was hard to find when each followed her own agenda too resolutely.

**THEME 3:** If we walk away disagreeing, is it okay? Conflict is an inevitable part of this kind of teaching, and "working through such disagreement is not about conforming or about assimilation." (p. 378) Committed to preserving their relationship, these teachers discovered that they could learn and grow from their disagreements. They could walk away not agreeing, recognizing that they wouldn't have done something the way they had if they were teaching alone, but still seeing value in what occurred for the students and the other teacher.

**THEME 4:** The presence of another pushed us to go deeper. When there was conflict, both teachers reported that they learned much about their own teaching. "When you collaborate with someone else you see yourself ... you see a lot about your assumptions ...." (p. 379) Ultimately both teachers ended up understanding themselves better.

**THEME 5:** You build something bigger. The course and the knowledge gained from the experience of teaching it were bigger, and these teachers would say better, than what teachers can create when they teach on their own.

Here's how Lester and Evans sum up their experience: "As we found our way through this process, the time spent allowed us to deepen our understanding of the course content, improve interactions with students and each other, develop a capacity to embrace differences, and work toward a more collaborative approach to teaching and learning." (p. 379) This interesting account of two teachers who truly collaborated as they jointly taught shows how much teachers can learn when they work together. Their endeavor was time-consuming, but it provided a commensurate amount of personal growth and development.

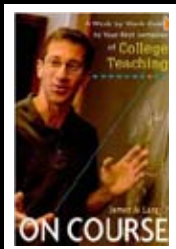
*Reference: Lester, J. N. and Evans, K. R. (2009). Instructors' experiences of collaborative teaching: Building something bigger. International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 20 (3), 373-382.*

*Reprinted from "Truly Collaborative Teaching." The Teaching Professor, 24.3 (2010): 4,6.*

*Maryellen Weimer, Teaching and Learning, Faculty Focus; August 16, 2011; [ <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-and-learning/collaborative-teaching-reflections-and-lessons-learned/> ], September 14, 2011.*

## BOOK

### On Course: A Week-by-Week Guide to Your First Semester of College Teaching



James M. Lang  
336 pages  
Harvard University  
Press;  
(May 10, 2010)

Practical and lively, **On Course** is full of experience-tested, research-based advice for graduate students and new teaching faculty. Packed with anecdotes and concrete suggestions, this book will keep both inexperienced and veteran teachers on course as they navigate the calms and storms of classroom life. - *Amazon.com*

## CAMPUS VIEW

