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CETL Faculty Teaching Certificate Program (Certificate I) 2006-2007
Capstone Project

A. Introduction

In November 2006, as part of my CETL Faculty Fellowship this past year, I attended a conference in Bloomington, Minnesota on student motivation sponsored by the Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching and Learning. One of the presenters was Dr. Jeff Meyer, a Professor of Music at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. His presentation was called "Can We Evaluate Differently?: Creative, Engaging, and Self-Motivating Work for the Classroom." In this presentation he discussed a writing assignment he designed for his music history course. His goals for this student writing are to 1) stimulate increased learning of the assigned material, 2) provide a creative outlet for learning, 3) keep students on task and schedule, and 4) evaluate students on a regular basis.

Prof. Meyer's assignment requires students to prepare written responses to particular readings. The students are required to choose one response format from a set of five options. Some of the response formats are taken from Thomas Angelo and Patricia Cross's famous book, *Classroom Assessment Techniques* (Jossey-Bass, 2d edition, 1993). Others are modifications of those techniques (for example, the Angelo and Cross book includes a CAT technique in which students write a one-sentence summary of a reading, with an explanation. Professor Meyer changed this to a one-word summary, with an explanation.)

I adopted Prof. Meyer's approach in my Spring 2007 courses, with small modifications. First, while Prof. Meyer allows his students to choose from a set of five response formats, I reduced this set to three formats that I thought would work best in my class.¹ Second, I asked students to write responses to a video I showed in class² as well as to reading assignments.³

¹ The three formats were 1) Question, Quote and Reaction (QQR); 2) One Word Summary and Explanation; and 3) Invented Dialogue. See Part B below. In my Spring 2007 classes, the most popular written response formats were QQR and One-Word Summary and Explanation.

² The video I showed was "Safe Speech, Free Speech and the University" (1991), part of the Fred Friendly Seminars series, broadcast on Public Broadcasting System (PBS) television stations and sponsored by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. This panel discussion addressed whether a university should be able to prohibit and punish student expression that is racist or sexist. Panel members included college presidents, law professors, journalists, and college students. Although the "Safe Speech" seminar is now 16 years old, the issues raised remain relevant today; the press continues to report incidents of racist and sexist expression by college students nationwide.

The discussion moderator, Fred Friendly (1915-1998) was the president of CBS News from 1964-1966. At CBS in the 1950s, he and legendary broadcast journalist Edward R. Murrow created the highly-respected television news series "See It Now." In 1954, "See It Now" took on Senator Joseph McCarthy, whose campaign against suspected Communists in American government, business, and academia fueled paranoia and invaded constitutional rights of free speech, freedom of association, and due process. The "See It Now" broadcast about McCarthy has been widely credited with breaking the Senator's grip on the nation.

Part B below contains the description of the writing assignment I gave to my students in Business Law 200 (Legal, Political, and Regulatory Environment of Business) in Spring 2007.⁴ I required the students to write two one-page papers⁵, using one of the three written response formats. To streamline the grading process, I graded each paper Pass, High Pass or Fail. One student received a grade of "High Pass" on the second assignment. The other papers received grades of "Pass." A few students did not turn in the second assignment and received a failing grade. No student who turned in the assignment received a failing grade.

Part C below contains a student response that I considered very good and that I graded "High Pass." The assigned reading that this student responded to was Patrick Kelly's article on privacy and security (see footnote 3).

B. My Writing Assignment

BLAW 200

Spring 2007

Professor Dan Levin

Out of Class Writing: Written Response Formats

One of the learning objectives for this course is the ability to communicate effectively in writing (Syllabus p. 3). In this regard, about 5% of the course points are attached to out of class writing assignments (Syllabus p. 7). I anticipate 3 of these writing assignments. You will have at least 4 days to do these.

Friendly resigned from CBS News in 1966 when CBS pre-empted Congressional hearings on U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War to air reruns of "I Love Lucy." Friendly then joined the Ford Foundation where he was a driving force behind the creation of public television. He began the Fred Friendly Seminars on public television in 1984 as an outgrowth of the "Media and Society Seminars," which he had created at Columbia University. Friendly retired from the series in 1992. Friendly and Murrow are widely considered to be models of journalistic quality and integrity.

³ In Bus. Law 200 in Spring 2007, I asked the students to write about the following materials.

For the first writing assignment, I gave students a choice of writing about the "Safe Speech" video I showed in class (see footnote 2) or Linda Greenhouse's article, "Court Hears Whether a Drug Statement Is Protected Free Speech for Students," *The New York Times*, March 20, 2007. Some students were not in class to see the "Safe Speech" video, so I provided Linda Greenhouse's article as an alternative. Both the video and the article concern the permissible scope of student expression, which we had discussed in the Constitutional Law segment of the course.

For the second writing assignment, I gave students a choice of writing about Patrick Kelly's article, "Balancing Privacy and Security," *Minnesota Bench and Bar*, March 2007 (Mr. Kelly is the President of the Minnesota State Bar Association; *Minnesota Bench and Bar* is a practitioner journal for Minnesota lawyers) or Tamar Lewin's article, "Laws Limit Options When a Student Is Mentally Ill," *The New York Times*, April 19, 2007 (written in response to the shootings on April 16 at Virginia Tech). Both articles concern the competing social values of privacy and security, which we had discussed in the Torts segment of the course.

⁴ I also had a writing assignment in Business Law 450 (Contracts, Sales and Professional Liability).

⁵ I had originally planned to assign three papers in Business Law 200 but, due to time limitations, reduced that number to two.

In each assignment, I will ask you to prepare a written response to a reading assignment or video we saw in class using **one** of the following response formats (whichever response format you prefer). The responses should demonstrate study and thought on your part. The responses will be graded Pass, High Pass, or Fail. Pass is worth 85% of the available points, High Pass is worth 100% of the available points, and Fail is worth zero points.

Grading criteria: Is your writing clear, grammatical, logical, and thoughtful? Does it demonstrate an understanding of issues and concepts we have studied/discussed in the course?

Page length, etc.: 1 page, 1 inch margins on all 4 sides, Times or Times Roman font, 12 point typeface, double-spaced. Submit via D2L Dropbox.

Response Format Options

a) QQR—Question, Quote and Reaction. In a page, include the following:

- 1) What question do you have about the reading or video? The question may concern what you do not completely understand, or something that extends beyond what the material covers, or how what you have read or seen/heard in the video relates to something else (such as a topic we have talked about earlier in the course).
- 2) Provide a quote from the reading or video that you think is especially important or intriguing.
- 3) State your personal reaction to what you have read or seen/heard in the video. What do you think about some or all of the material? Does what you have read or seen/heard in the video change how you think about society or law or yourself? What engages you about what you have read or seen/heard in the video?

b) One-Word Summary; Explanation. In a page, include the following:

- 1) Summarize the reading or video in a single word. Think carefully about what one word will capture as much as possible about the material. Think conceptually and don't simply use a word the material already uses.
- 2) Write 2-4 paragraphs explaining why you chose that particular word to summarize the reading or video.

c) Invented Dialogues. In a page:

Synthesize your knowledge of issues into the form of a carefully structured, illustrative conversation that you imagine might take place between or among people involved in events addressed in the reading or video.

**C. A Very Good Student Written Response to
Patrick Kelly's article, "Balancing Privacy and Security" Minnesota Bench and Bar
(March 2007 issue)**

Written Response to Balancing Privacy & Security by Patrick J. Kelly
QQR

“Intuitively, most of us are more concerned about the intrusion when a governmental agency procures our private data than when we freely submit our information to a private company.”

If this is indeed intuitive, why do so many of us freely submit our information to private companies? I was talking to a friend today and I happened to mention this article. He told me how surprised he was with just how many kids were giving away their information and signing up for things without hesitation for a free pizza or sandwich at a chain restaurant. In my experience we have similar solicitors at least twice a semester at MSU. The guy standing between Morris and Armstrong Halls handing out ‘free pizza!’ flyers always catches me at least twice during the days he’s on the job. Common sense tells most of us right away that it’s some kind of ploy-and it is-but many students still take the bait. Are students merely complacent enough to have their ‘free’ pizza while signing on the dotted line, giving their information to anyone who wants it? Apparently; companies generally don’t continue ad campaigns that don’t make them any money. What’s surprising is that this type of data mining isn’t a new trend. According to my computer sciences professor, there was an ice cream shop in the Vietnam era that would give free ice cream to people on their birthdays if a person could supply proof that it was, in fact, their birthday. Sounds like a great deal, but my professor also said that they copied down all the young men who were turning 18 on that particular day into a list, and would sell the list to selective service. How is that for a rotten deal? Free ice cream, but you have to unknowingly sign up for the draft. Freely giving away your information and privacy has been a part of American culture for several decades at least. The deals these days are a little less life-or-death, but the underlying idea is the same. When it comes to free stuff, some people are just willing to pay more.