

JOIN US FOR AN ITV WORKSHOP ON “CRITICAL THINKING”

The CASTL Leadership Project



When: November 14, 2007 from 2-4 p.m.

Where: TnT lab in the lower level of the Library

Why: To learn more about ways to increase critical thinking skills for undergraduate students

What: The ITV presentations will consist of four IPESL grant recipients:

1. Dr. Charles Lewis: Professor of Mass Communications—“Turning It Off: Teaching Media Criticism Through Ethnography.” The project purpose was to increase student engagement in the media criticism part of a key senior-level Mass Communications core course titled "Ethics and Press Criticism." The idea was to have students conduct honest, disciplined and rational self studies — studies meant to build insight regarding how media use can affect people's values, beliefs, actions and relationships. Hypothesis: through the observation and analysis of their own media use and through the self-experiment of eliminating for a time electronic-media use from their lives, students will develop a deeper understanding of a range of media effects.

2. Dr. Steven Kipp: Professor of Astronomy—“Did we learn anything? Evaluating the effectiveness of physics, psychology and philosophy courses designed to improve critical thinking in the sciences.” While students are asked to take courses to improve their critical thinking skills, little information is available as to these courses’ effectiveness. The aim of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of three critical thinking courses in Philosophy, Psychology and Physics.

3. Dr. Marie Pomije and Dr. John Thoenke: Professors of Chemistry—“The redesign of general Chemistry II to promote critical thinking and long term learning.” The purpose of the project was twofold. First, development of online materials was completed by the researchers to motivate and guide students to review topics from General Chemistry I, as required for success in Chemistry II. The second focus was the creation of “workshop days” in which the students worked in groups to solve application problems designed to create multi-dimensional critical thinking skills (both conceptual and mathematical).

4. Dr. Cathryn Bailey: Professor of Philosophy—“Incorporating critical thinking through media literacy in global perspectives on women and change.” Based on observation it seemed clear that not enough has been done to creatively incorporate revision strategies to best exploit revision’s potential to develop critical thinking in philosophy classes. The project proposed to explore how professors in other disciplines understand and utilize revision. From this information new revision strategies were developed and implemented in a writing intensive course titled “Philosophy of Race, Class, and Gender.”

BACKGROUND:

IPESL (which is short for **Initiative to Promote Excellence in Student Learning**) was a grant opportunity from the Minnesota State Legislature for faculty to improve student learning. Each of the seven state universities in Minnesota were asked to develop their own prospectus for their own campus. At MSU it was decided that the most important need was for faculty to infuse courses with critical thinking through one or more of the following areas:

- new instructional or curriculum materials to improve critical thinking (development, implementation, and assessment)
- new support mechanisms to improve critical thinking (development, implementation, and assessment)
- new assessments of critical thinking (development and implementation).

A total of 39 faculty received funding for 22 different grants to develop projects during the spring semester 2007. Areas of study included the following disciplines with some projects completed by teams of faculty: Philosophy, Speech Communication, English, Music, Mass Communications, Physics & Astronomy, Modern Languages, Nursing, Accounting & Business Law, Mathematics & Statistics, Chemistry, Women’s Studies and Urban & Regional Studies.

For more details about IPESL please go to the following website:

<http://www.mnsu.edu/grants/ipesl>