

IPESL Project Summary Report Guidelines
Deadline for report submission is Friday, August 31, 2007

Note:

- * Only one report per project (which may include more than one IPESL faculty participant) is necessary.
- * Assistance in report completion (if needed) may be obtained from IPESL Faculty Fellow, Chuck Lewis (charles.lewis@mnsu.edu)
- * All reports should be e-mailed to Stewart.Ross@mnsu.edu as an MS-Word attachment by August 31.

Report Outline:

1. Incorporating critical thinking through media literacy in Global Perspectives on Women and Change (WOST 220)
2. Purpose: Identify the purpose of your project (one to two sentences). If your work changed in any way from the original proposal – please note.

The purpose of our project was to increase critical thinking by teaching the students elements of media literacy. By encouraging students to explore how media can be used to make stereotypes and misrepresentations about other cultures appear normal, but can also be used as a tool for understanding different peoples, we hope to improve their critical thinking through the increased media literacy skills. Through active viewing of films, reflecting, doing active research, and presenting findings, students gained a better understanding of the diverse issues impacting women globally and have the tools to critically understand these complex issues. Ideally they learned to “watch carefully; think critically.”

3. *Results: Describe how your project enhanced* (or will enhance - if project results are to be implemented in future semesters) students’ critical thinking through one or more of the following activities:*
 - *development, implementation, and assessment of new instructional or curriculum materials*
 - *development, implementation, and assessment of new support mechanisms*
 - *development and implementation of new assessments*

Evaluation: D2L personal posts (comments and discussion) on course content.

ID	Score: early semester	Mid-semester	Late semester
39	2.5	2.5	2.5
88	2.5	2.5	2
56	2.5	2.5	2
91	2	2.5	2

82	1	2	3
72	2	3	2
76	2.5	2	2
90	2.5	3	3
10	3	3	3.5
45	2	2	4
50	2	2.5	2

Method of Assessment

Subjects for this evaluation activity were selectively sampled based on the class roster. Every third student was sampled to be assessed. Eleven students out of 35 were rated. The primary investigators attempted to represent the class demographics in terms of gender distribution. To rate the students progress in their development of critical thinking, both the primary investigators read the text of the discussion posts and agreed upon the score. This approach attempted to attain inter-rater reliability and validity. While the holistic critical rating rubric was scored on a range of 1-4, we chose to add a plus/minus system to more accurately rate the student's degree of thoughtfulness on the post. Because many of the posts were personal opinions, and similar in tone to their colleagues, elements of the holistic critical rating rubric were unable to capture personal opinion. For the next incarnation of this class activity, guided discussion questions along with the critical rubric rating scale will be distributed to students so that they will be aware of the critical thinking elements we will use for their evaluation.

Overall, students entered the class with a level two ability in their thinking. This is to be expected in a sophomore level general education course. Our perception is that most students increased to at least a level 3 in their critical thinking, with some at the fourth level by the end of the semester. While this was not always seen in the sample, there were noticeable improvements in the tone of the online postings and students' ability to integrate course concepts and skills in their oral and written communication. The specific results of ratings show that overall five of the eleven students improved in their critical thinking skills. Of the other six, four decreased in the quality of critical thinking shown in the post during the course of the semester, with two remaining at level two thinking. However if all of their writings had been analyzed, we believe that all would have shown some degree of increased critical thinking.

One of the students who showed marked improvement was student #82. This student initially postings demonstrated many of the elements of level 1 thinking such as biased interpretations, arguments using unwarranted claims, and defending claims regardless of evidence. In fact, this student galvanized discussion online and in class because other students found the student's argument problematic in relation to course content. We feel this accelerated other students desire to make accurate arguments to refute this student's

opinions. This process ultimately generated discussion within the class about how to consistently make credible, accurate, and judicious conclusions. To a degree these were put into practice online, in other writing assignments, and through group presentations.

The process of implementing critical thinking activities within the course met with mixed results, but provided many insights that will be implemented in the next offering of this class. For example, we found students needed more guidance in the development of critical thinking skills than anticipated. We believe that the recent curricular change of the course from a 3 to 4 credit hour general education offering will allow us to integrate critical thinking activities as part of a lab component that will not lessening time spent on course content and concepts.

4. Issues: What issues or challenges arose during project implementation/completion? How were they addressed?

We did find it challenging to attempt to simultaneously learn more about critical thinking and how to teach these skills while also teaching the course. As anticipated, it was difficult to add additional activities while still fully covering course content. However, we considered this Spring's course to be a practice session for the Spring 2008 class where the media literacy elements can be more fully. The Spring 2008 session will be four credits instead of three, which will allow the needed lab time to focus on media literacy activities.

5. Dissemination: How did you (or do you plan to) disseminate your project and/or its results? (e.g., published article, department colloquium, professional conference, meeting, college colloquium, university-wide colloquium, publication, IPESL website).

We will be writing up our project for a journal of feminist pedagogy and pursuing a presentation opportunity. We plan to discuss our methods at an appropriate university forum.