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Teaching Notes

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Editor: Tom Pusateri, CETL Associate Director for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning

KSU's Assurance of Learning Initiatives Receive National Recognition

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) selected KSU as 1 of 3 recipients from 31 applications for its *2008 CHEA Award for Institutional Progress in Student Learning Outcomes*. CHEA established this annual award in 2006 to acknowledge outstanding institutional progress in developing and applying evidence of student learning outcomes as part of the ongoing evaluation and improvement of college and university programs of study. KSU received the award for the quality of its Assurance of Learning initiatives. The other recipients of this year's award were Hocking College and Seton Hall University. The following citation will appear in the January 2008 issue of *The CHEA Chronicle*:

Kennesaw State University (KSU) is a large comprehensive metropolitan university in Georgia. In 2003, KSU established its ongoing Assurance of Learning (AOL) Initiative to enhance assessment of both general education and discipline-specific student learning outcomes within each academic degree program. The AOL Initiative is strategically integrated with other university initiatives including Comprehensive Program Review, faculty development in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, and the university's Quality Enhancement Plan, "Global Learning for Engaged Citizenship," and is coordinated by KSU's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). Each degree program's AOL report of student learning outcomes, assessments, and improvements are updated annually and published on the CETL Web site.

Recommended Web sites: Improving Student Writing

KSU's Writing Center: Just for Faculty

www.kennesaw.edu/english/WritingCenter/faculty.html

Provides resources for faculty to examine and enhance their teaching or use of writing in their courses.

Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL)

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/index.html>

Provides handouts for students and teachers are free to print and distribute if you include copyright information.

EasyWriter (3rd edition)

<http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/easywriter3e/>

This site provides resources students may consult, such as the 20 most common errors in college writing; how to document sources using MLA, APA, and Chicago styles; and examples of student papers in each of these styles.

Teaching Notes Seeks your Ideas

We seek your ideas for the contents of future issues of *Teaching Notes*, such as:

- Topics related to teaching that you would like future articles to address.
- Web sites or books that you have found useful for improving your teaching. Although we prefer resources that apply to many disciplines and Colleges, we also welcome suggestions for discipline-specific resources.
- Short columns written by one or more faculty members that discuss teaching tips or debate current issues in teaching in higher education.
- Articles on the scholarship of teaching and learning; see Harrison Long's article in this issue for an example.

If you have suggestions or are interested in submitting a column or article, email Tom Pusateri, Editor of *Teaching Notes*, at tpusater@kennesaw.edu. A 1-column article contains about 400-500 words and a full-page article contains about 900-1000 words.

KSU Online Course Quality Initiative

As previously announced by Provost Black, ALL undergraduate online classes scheduled for the Fall 2008 semester and beyond must be submitted for an internal peer review of course structure and organization as part of the KSU Online Course Quality Initiative. Submission instructions, supporting documentation, and additional resources are available via the KSU eLearning Faculty Portal (<https://elearn.kennesaw.edu>). CETL is also hosting six faculty workshops between January 18th and February 2nd to assist you in developing and/or improving your online course. Training dates and times are listed on the eLearning Faculty Portal site and CETL Web site (<http://www.kennesaw.edu/cetl>).

Summer 2008 Course Submissions are due Jan 30, 2008 and Fall 2008 Course Submissions are due Feb 18, 2008.

Join the KSU Peer Review Team!

Several of the best online courses we reviewed were submitted by KSU Peer Reviewers (PR). Not only do peer reviewers receive a \$50 honorarium and \$50 in travel funds for each completed review, they also gain additional experience using the Quality Matters Rubric and insight into online course design by evaluating courses across disciplines.

Two Quality Matters PR Training sessions are currently scheduled: Friday Jan 25, 2008, and Friday Feb 1, 2008. Space is limited, so RSVP to CETL (cetl@kennesaw.edu) to reserve your spot as soon as possible.

The following article is reprinted with permission from The Tomorrow's Professor Mailing List (Msg. #752) <http://ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/>

Learning Your Students' Names

Dr. Mary McKinney
Successful Academic Coaching

The posting below looks at how you can learn all, or most, of your students' names. It is one of the best things a professor can do. The article is by Dr. Mary McKinney of Successful Academic Coaching. Feel free to visit her web site at <http://www.successfulacademic.com> for additional tenure track tips and dissertation writing strategies. Copyright ©2006. Reprinted with permission.

Regards,
Rick Reis
reis@stanford.edu

What's Your Name Again?

"I'm terrible at names," complained my friend Steve. He's a respected professor of entomology who is fascinated by ugly bugs that make many of us shudder. "Really?" I asked. "How many species of beetles can you identify by name?"

"Thousands," he said.

Obviously, he can remember some names.

Like Steve, many of us struggle to remember the names of acquaintances, despite being able to remember a great many names or details in our field of interest.

What about you?

- Do you forget the names of people at parties five minutes after they've been introduced?
- Do you dread making introductions for fear of drawing a complete blank, even if you know the people quite well?
- Do you have trouble keeping track of student names even at mid-semester?

Psychologists find that anxiety often interferes with people's ability to learn and remember names. At parties, we're often pre-occupied with the impression we're making. When teaching, we may be worried about the content we're about to teach or how well we're presenting the material. But whatever the context, be it cocktail party or classroom, remembering names indicates respect and concern, and can be essential to building a relationship.

I still remember the charismatic Professor Banchoff who taught my freshman calculus course in college. On the first day of class, he went around the room and asked each of us our names. When someone mumbled, or had a name that was difficult to pronounce, he asked us to repeat ourselves and then repeated the name himself. There were over 100 students taking the course so this initial roll call took a significant portion of the first class.

From that day on, when we raised our hands to ask or answer a question, Professor Banchoff called on us by name:

"Yes, Miss McKinney?" he would ask formally, when I raised my hand to answer a question. And when returning quizzes he might accompany my paper with "Good Job, Mary."

We were all awed by Professor Banchoff's memory (although we sometimes wished that it was less sharp when we skipped class or neglected homework assignments.). He regularly won awards for teaching excellence and received high marks for his clear and dynamic lectures. But I'm sure his impressive recall of our names also boosted his ratings. It always felt great to know that he knew who we were.

Do you know all of your students' names? If not, and your class doesn't top 40 students, learn them. Even if you teach a large lecture class, you can still learn many names - especially those of students who participate regularly.

I'm currently coaching a junior professor - I'll call him Jim - who is concerned about getting tenure, in part because of below average teaching evaluations.

During one of our early sessions, I asked, "How large are your classes?"

"About 30 students," he said.

"Do you know their names?"

"Well, some of them," he replied sheepishly. "I'm terrible at names."

"Let's change that," I said.

This year, even before the first day of class, Jim had downloaded the names and school I.D. photographs of each student enrolled in his courses. By the second class of the semester he'd memorized every name.

"What a difference," he said. "I can tell they're impressed that I've learned their names so quickly. And I feel much more confident during class discussions. Knowing their names has even been helpful outside of the classroom: I used to feel embarrassed when I ran into students in the hall, or they came to office hours, and I didn't know their names."

How To Learn Student Names:

1. Make it a priority. Focusing on any goal is the first step towards making it happen.
2. Read the registrar's list before the first class. Pay attention to the names that may be difficult to pronounce.
3. Take roll call on the first day of class. Take your time, pay close attention and repeat each student's name. Make sure that you have the proper pronunciation. If a student's name is unfamiliar be sure to ask explicitly if you've got it right. Students who are shy, or from cultures where greater deference to authority is the norm, may hesitate to correct you unless prompted and yet will still find it grating to be referred to incorrectly the entire semester.

4. Ask the students what they prefer to be called and be sure to write down nicknames on the class roster. You may want to preface your roll call with a request for nicknames: while you are likely to wonder whether Elizabeth goes by "Liz" or "Beth", you'll have no idea that Amy Jones goes by "A.J."

5. If you have access to students' photos, use them to familiarize yourself with names as part of your preparation in the first weeks of class. My client Jim had been unaware that he had access to student I.D. photos via the "Facebook" until he checked with the registrar.

6. If there are no photos available, consider taking your own photographs. In *Tools for Teaching*, Barbara Gross Davis suggests taking Polaroid shots of students and pasting them on index cards with the students' names and other personal information. Creating class "I.D. cards" is even easier with access to digital cameras.

7. Often it is most difficult to remember foreign students' names, which may be unfamiliar to Western ears. Be sure to write a phonetic version of the name if needed. For example, in one of my classes the name of a Chinese student was transliterated as Xiou - but pronounced something like "Shaw."

8. A common memory trick is to link the name with something or someone else - thus my student Xiou became the unforgettable George Bernard "Shaw" in my mind.

9. Think of another person you know who has the same first name as the student. Then make a link using a visual image. For example, I imagine my short-haired brunette student Susan with the wild grey mane of my cousin Susan, who hadn't changed the style of her coiffure since the late 1960's. The incongruous image cements the student's name in my cortex.

10. Use humor in your associative links to make a lasting impression. I kept getting confused about whether a student was Eglia or Elga until I imagined her with a hard-boiled Egg of a head.

11. Find a rhyme to create mental associations: Is Jim slim? Or an adjective that tips you off about the name's first letter: Is Thomas tall? Can you visualize Sarah in a sarong? Again, humor helps. Thus Slim Jim becomes a life-size stick of dried beef sausage. And Sarah, well, sarongs fall off easily, right? (Need I admonish you that the mnemonic devices should be kept to yourself?)

12. Use your students' names frequently both to call on them to participate and to refer to previous points made in the discussion. Davis points out that this technique can be used in even very large classes: Ask students their name when they make a comment and later refer to it as "Jeff's point" or "Audrey's contribution."

13. When you take roll, consider creating a map of the seating arrangement labeled with student's names. I'm always surprised at how consistently students sit in the same seats, or at least the same quadrant of the room. In my small classes, we sit around a large table and for the first few classes I write down who chooses to sit where as

students arrive. Writing the names down also helps commit them to memory. Some professors ask students to sit in the same seats for a few classes, a request that communicates their earnest efforts to learn names. I prefer to keep my mnemonic methods mysterious. Either way works.

14. Using name tags for the first few class sessions can help students learn one another's names at the same time it helps you. I ask my students to write their first names in very large letters so that I can read them from the front of the classroom.

15. When teaching very large classes it is tempting to give up. Resist the temptation. Try learning five names per class and try to use those names.

16. Use name tags or cards. One professor I know uses name cards for her large classes. Students pick up the cards as they file into class and place them at the front of their desks. This United Nations style name card strategy is also useful because the tags that aren't retrieved indicate absent students.

17. With any sized enrollment, between classes, look at registrar's list during week and see how many faces you can recall.

18. Make sure you know the names of students who visit you during office hours. Take a few minutes to ask the students about themselves, their major, where they are from, etc. Personal contact is one of the ways you can increase the effectiveness of your teaching.

Becoming an expert at memorizing names is a small but respectful step toward demonstrating personal investment in your students' well-being. Building a mutually respectful relationship with students is as important as having an organized lesson plan, giving a dynamic lecture, or encouraging enthusiastic class participation. Positive student-teacher relationships foster engagement and achievement.

Learning your students' names quickly and well may also provide a small boost of your end-of-term evaluations. The positive effects on your teaching reputation, departmental reviews and chances for tenure - vis-a-vis evaluations, future class enrollments, etc. - are secondary fringe benefits that may provide pragmatic motivation to invest your energy in the task.

Learning student names is just a minor, obvious task among the multitude of steps required to become an excellent teacher. However, like many basics of good teaching, it is often neglected. Being able to identify a student by name may be the first step toward cultivating a level of rapport that will make a difference in your students' lives and your own career.

Do you have any additional tips for remembering students' names? Let me know and I'll share them with other readers. *NOTE: This article first appeared in the on-line journal "Inside Higher Education". Click here to read that version and see the many helpful comments and responses from readers.* <http://www.insidehighered.com/workplace/2006/02/13/mckinney>

Undergraduate Student Research: It's not Just for Scientists!

Harrison Long

Assistant Professor, Theatre and Performance Studies

As Coordinator of Acting within Theatre and Performance Studies, I am a passionate believer in our department's dual emphasis on the artist/scholar. The fifteen years I spent as a professional theatre artist taught me the essential role of research within the creative process. Since coming to KSU in 2005, I have included research as a part of my intermediate and advanced acting courses because I know firsthand how important it is for students to comprehend the historical, social and performance contexts of the material they present. The benefits of this approach reach far beyond the classroom or even the proscenium arch. Our program encourages students to observe the social forces governing the roles they play from day-to-day, both on and off the stage. Our challenge is to sharpen each student's ability to critically observe the world. Our mission asserts that the creative process is "vital to individual and social growth." A foundation of solid performance skills, coupled with broad-based exposure to a larger performance context, develops students who understand both the fundamentals of theatrical artistry and the social consequences of their work. No playwright, in my experience, illustrates the consequences of personal acts more vividly than Anton Chekhov.

I applied for CETL's CARET award in the spring of 2007 while teaching an advanced acting course titled *Performing the Plays of Anton Chekhov*. As part of the course, my students participated in a master class on the Michael Chekhov technique taught by our own Provost, Dr. Lendley Black, an internationally recognized expert on the subject. The culminating event of the semester was a five-day workshop taught by Russian Master Teacher, Sergei Tcherkassky, of The St. Petersburg Theatre Arts Academy. The CARET award has provided five students and me with the opportunity to extend our work as part of a six-phase creative/research project. What resulted is one of the most exciting and challenging endeavors of my career to date.

PHASE 1: Semester-long acting class, *Performing the Plays of Anton Chekhov*.

PHASE 2: Five-day workshop with master-teacher Sergei Tcherkassky, Professor of Acting and Directing at the St. Petersburg State Theatre Arts Academy, Russia.

PHASE 3: Transcript editing. Students and the team leader collaborated to edit a transcript of Professor Tcherkassky's workshop.

PHASE 4: Research trip to New York City. May 1-5, 2007.

- **Participated** in the Michael Chekhov Symposium, The Actors Center. Featured experts: J. Michael Miller, Joanna Merlin, Ted Pugh, Per Brahe, Lendley Black.
- **Conducted research** at the New York Library for the Performing Arts' Theatre Archives. Students examined research materials unavailable to the general public, including photographs of historic Chekhov productions, the original text of *An Actor Prepares* and Elizabeth Hapgood's correspondence with Konstantin Stanislavsky and Michael Chekhov.

- **Toured** the Stella Adler Studios. Interview with Tom Oppenheim, President of Stella Adler Studios.
- **Audited** Austin Pendleton's Scene Study Class, HB Studios.
- **Attended theatre performances** of *The Coast of Utopia, Part 1: Voyage* (2007 Tony Award, Best Play) and *Inherit the Wind*.

PHASE 5: Rehearsal and performance - Anton Chekhov's *The Proposal*. August 23-25, 2007.

PHASE 6: Southeastern Theatre Conference, Panel. March 6, 2008. Chattanooga, TN. The creative/research team will present their findings at the conference, the largest theatre gathering of its kind in the nation.

What began as an intense investigation of Anton Chekhov's plays and Konstantin Stanislavsky's performance theories has developed into something much larger. Certainly, each team member emerged with a greater understanding of Psychological Realism and its impact on modern acting styles. It has been edifying to examine the historical contexts of Chekhovian performance and to explore the rehearsal techniques employed by Stanislavsky and his followers. But along the way, we've unexpectedly discovered a great deal about collaboration and shared authorship. Like the greatest works of art, our research has become a vehicle for self-examination.

Acting requires a great deal more than "playing pretend." Over the course of my career, I've grown accustomed to the nervous laughter that bubbles forth when I tell people I am an actor. There is often a pause followed by the inevitable joke about my skills as a liar. I tell these folks they shouldn't worry because actors are the *opposite* of liars; a liar tells falsehoods under real circumstances, I assure them, while an actor tells the truth under imaginary circumstances. In its simplest form, the actor's job is to bring emotional truth to an imaginary set of events.

But the intersections between a character's life and an actor's are often difficult to find. When an actor discovers emotional truth, she cares about what the character cares about; she genuinely wants to achieve the character's desires and is willing to fight for them. That's where research plays a vital role in the creative process. Michael Chekhov claimed an actor must "go beyond the playwright" to find his true character. Emotional truth demands a thorough understanding of the social, historical and literary contexts surrounding a dramatic work. Good research is invaluable when it is infused with the actor's imagination.

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