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Faculty Development Luncheon
Tuesday, March 25, 2014

**Classroom Response Systems
and Ways to Engage Students
in Large Lectures**

Presented by:

Dr. Jasmine Townsend

Assistant Professor of Park and
Recreation Management

Register [Online](#) by March 19th.

Graduate Student Seminar
Designed for graduate instructors
and teaching assistants.

Thursday, March 27, 2014

**Classroom Response Systems
and Ways to Engage Students
in Large Lectures**

with **Dr. Jasmine Townsend**
Assistant Professor of PRM

Details and RSVP is [Online](#) at
<http://cetl.olemiss.edu/gss.html>

The Power of Level Three Thinking

By Dr. William W. Berry III, Assistant Professor of Law, Law Center

Media portrayals of classroom experiences are often entertaining, and can be (not so subtly) insightful into the experience of teaching a class. One of my favorites is the teacher from *Peanuts*, from whom we just hear the endless drone of trombone-sounding “wah-wahs.” Another is the teacher from *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*, who calls, “Bueller, Bueller, Bueller...” waiting for a response that never comes. Charlie Brown’s teacher is the classic lecturer, good at making noise, but clearly not achieving much more than that. Her words are but the background noise to the real conversation—the one between the students. Ferris Bueller’s teacher is perhaps a bit better—at least he is inviting participation, but alas, all he gets is silence in response to his monotone, and somewhat hopeless, solicitations.

As a law professor, I like to envision the material we cover in our curriculum as one with three levels—the black-letter law (level one), the application of that law to new, hypothetical factual scenarios (level two), and the underlying policy or worldviews that guide the application of law to fact (level three). In my experience, most students approach new subjects bringing a set of subconscious “level three” predispositions, bringing their past experiences and philosophical perspectives into the class.

Given these predispositions, if the classroom experience is merely a lecture explaining the black-letter law, my students (much like Charlie Brown and Linus) often lose heart if I start to drone on, and often start another conversation (one to which I am not privy). This is because I have not yet provided a way for them to connect their own experiences to the material in the class—I am simply talking *at them*. The problem only becomes exacerbated if I try to move to level two and ask for participation, often resulting in the cricket-like silence of Ferris Bueller’s classroom.

A better approach, I have found, is to aim to connect all three levels of thinking. Certainly, a particular judge’s own experiences, biases, and worldview often shape the judicial decision that resulted in the black letter law rule in the first place. Inviting the students into a conversation in which they explore the level three predispositions of the judge often taps into the students’ own subconscious views. This allows them to place their own worldviews alongside that of the court or in opposition to it. By helping the students to grasp *what is really at stake*, the students themselves become invested because *their opinion counts*. Once the deeper, level three picture is on the table, the students become more interested in the content of the rules themselves (level one), and can begin to learn how they operate in practice (level two).

This is certainly not a one-size fits all approach, but has worked as a way to improve student engagement and “get them thinking”—certainly one of the central goals of education. Whenever I start to sense that I am giving Charlie Brown lectures or starting one-sided Ferris Bueller conversations, it is returning to level three thinking that is often the key to re-energizing the classroom.

Dr. Berry is an Assistant Professor and Beccaria Scholar in Criminal Law at the Law

School, where he also serves as Director of the Cambridge Summer Abroad Program. He received the Elsie M. Hood Outstanding Teacher Award in 2013.

Quotes from Teachers

"A perusal of the forefront of new research shows that there is much that is unknown, confusing, and difficult about science. It is a shame if the students do not get a feel for that side and know that there are exciting challenges—that not all of science is cut and dried." (Robert Doerksen, Medicinal Chemistry, University of Mississippi)

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Netflix and Hulu – Tricks for The Professor's Toolbox

By Rebekah Wiggers, PhD, NCC, CETL Learning Specialist

Every semester as an instructor I am given the opportunity to learn something new about the world of teaching - whether it is about the effectiveness of specific pedagogical techniques, how various levels of students (freshmen vs. graduate) tend to engage in the learning process, or about my own performance as a professor in the classroom. This semester I have been fortunate to teach a graduate-level course on marriage and family therapy. As with many courses, it seems like there is so much to cover in just one brief 15-week semester. With so many theoretical approaches one can take when working with couples and families, how can I help students not only remember and understand each of these approaches, but begin to understand how they can incorporate these systems into their work as counselors? Netflix and Hulu, two of the most popular instant-streaming websites for TV shows and movies, have become quite helpful pedagogical tools for me this semester. Although using videos is nothing new to the realm of teaching and I would never claim that showing Netflix in class is all that creative, I think working with technology as opposed to against it can help with the learning process.

The first half of my 2.5 hour long class involves presenting the specific theoretical approach of that day, then showing a 10-15 minute clip of a popular TV show. The second half of class involves having students apply this information to mock marriage and family therapy sessions. So far the feedback I have gotten from students has been quite positive. One student said:

Chapter 8 dealing with Transgenerational Family Therapy was very interesting to me. The Jersey Shore exercise was enlightening and entertaining and really helped in my understanding of triangulation, differentiation of self, and fusion and how they can look in a family system. The Netflix clips that are used in class are also very beneficial because they demonstrate (if not sometimes to an extreme) what a family therapist might truly deal with in many family systems.

What also struck me in this statement was how the student viewed the exercise as entertaining. As instructors I think we may feel pressure to make class a show, for the purpose of helping our students become more engaged in the learning process, helping students relate to us better, etc. However, I would argue that even though we are not necessarily meant to be actors on a stage, using pop culture in the form of brief clips can enhance learning – as well as make our jobs fun in the process.