

# TEACHING AS COMMUNITY PROPERTY

---

*Essays on Higher Education*

Lee S. Shulman

o

*Edited by Pat Hutchings*



**JOSSEY-BASS**

A Wiley Imprint

[www.josseybass.com](http://www.josseybass.com)

Copyright © 2004 by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. All rights reserved.

Published by Jossey-Bass

A Wiley Imprint

989 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-1741 [www.josseybass.com](http://www.josseybass.com)

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, 978-750-8400, fax 978-750-4470, or on the web at [www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com). Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, 201-748-6011, fax 201-748-6008, e-mail: [permcoordinator@wiley.com](mailto:permcoordinator@wiley.com).

Jossey-Bass books and products are available through most bookstores. To contact Jossey-Bass directly call our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 800-956-7739, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3986 or fax 317-572-4002.

Jossey-Bass also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Shulman, Lee S.

Teaching as community property : essays on higher education / Lee S. Shulman ; edited by Pat Hutchings.— 1st ed.

p. cm. — (The Jossey-Bass higher and adult education series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7879-7201-0 (alk. paper)

1. Education, Higher. 2. College teaching. I. Hutchings, Pat. II.

Title. III. Series.

LB2305.S58 2004

378—dc22

2003026853

Printed in the United States of America

FIRST EDITION

*HB Printing*

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## INTRODUCTION

### FROM IDEA TO PROTOTYPE: THREE EXERCISES IN THE PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING (1995)

---

IN 1994 LEE SHULMAN joined forces with the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) in a national project designed to pursue a theme appearing in many campus reports on faculty roles and rewards at the time: that teaching should be subject to the same processes of peer review that characterize other scholarly work by faculty. To launch the project, faculty teams from participating pilot departments on twelve campuses came together for a week in June 1994 to explore a vision of peer review predicated on Shulman's vision of teaching as intellectual work that must be reconnected to the disciplines. The three exercises, co-authored by Shulman with colleagues at AAHE, provided grist for discussion at that summer event, and were then made broadly available in a notebook of peer review resources distributed by AAHE.

# FROM IDEA TO PROTOTYPE

## THREE EXERCISES IN THE PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING

---

### Exercise I: Teaching as a Scholarship: Reflections on a Syllabus

#### *Introduction*

You may find the juxtaposition of “scholarship” and “teaching” a strange liaison. Teaching is often seen as technique, as presentational method, rather than as the kind of serious intellectual invention we associate with scholarly work. But for this first assignment, we want you to think about the ways your courses and syllabi represent profound acts of scholarship.

#### *Part I*

Select the syllabus from one of your courses as the subject of a reflective memo (inside five pages). The memo should provide a peer in your field with a window on the choices and rationale that underlie your syllabus. We offer the following prompts to guide you in this task—but we certainly don’t expect you to respond to each question. Our purpose here is to get you engaged in a kind of scholarly reflection about your teaching.

- Every course we craft is a lens into our fields and our personal conceptions of those disciplines or interdisciplines. Give careful thought to the shape and content of your course as if it were a *scholarly argument*. What is the thesis of the argument, and its

main points? What are the key bodies of evidence? How does the course begin? Why does it begin where it does? How does it end? Why does it end as it does? Most scholarly arguments carry the intention to persuade. What do you want to persuade your students to believe? Or question? Or do you want them to develop new appetites or dispositions?

- How can a colleague develop a sense of you as a scholar by examining the various features of your course? In your field, or even in your own department, are there distinctly different ways to organize your course—ways that reflect quite different perspectives on your discipline or field? Do you focus on particular topics while other colleagues might make other choices? Why?
- In what ways does your course teach students how scholars work in your field? How does it teach the methods, procedures, and values that shape how knowledge claims are made and adjudicated within your field? How does it open doors to the critical dialogues and key arguments scholars are engaged in on the cutting edge of your field?
- How does your course connect with other courses in your own or other fields? To what extent does your course lay a foundation for others that follow it? Or build on what students have already (one silently prays) learned in other courses? Or challenge and contradict what students are learning in your own or other disciplines? How, in general, does your course fit within a larger conception of curriculum, program, or undergraduate experience?
- What do you expect students to find particularly fascinating about your course? Where will they encounter their greatest difficulties of either understanding or motivation? How does the content of your course connect to matters your students already understand or have experienced? Where will it seem most alien? How do you address these common student responses in your course? How has the course evolved over time in response to them?
- Lastly, you might try playing with some metaphors for characterizing your course and its place in the larger curriculum or in the broader intellectual and moral lives of your students. Is your course like a journey, a parable, a football game, a museum, a romance, a concerto, an Aristotelian tragedy, an obstacle course, one or all or some of the above? How can your metaphor(s) illuminate key aspects of your course?

## *Part II*

Now give your syllabus and memo to your project teammate in your department and take your teammate's syllabus and memo in exchange. Using your teammate's syllabus/memo as evidence, imagine yourself writing a recommendation to a university-wide faculty committee that is considering your colleague for an award for distinguished service as a teacher-scholar. Your task is to interpret your colleague's work and thinking to colleagues beyond your own field (inside three pages).

The same questions that we offer as a guide to construct the reflective memo may be helpful in preparing your commentary, but we also encourage you to think about the *standards* by which your colleague's work should be reviewed. What is important to take into account? Coherence of "argument"? Distinctiveness of approach? Quality of reflection? Inventiveness of the course? To what extent are these standards similar to those you would use in judging the quality of your colleague's research?

## **Exercise II: Capturing the Particulars of Classroom Practice**

### *Introduction*

This second exercise picks up where the first left off—with course planning and conception—and seeks to capture how your intentions actually "play out" in classroom practice. That is, rather than looking at the course as conceived, this exercise seeks to look at the distinctive way each teacher enacts that conception, through the many context-specific, interrelated decisions that we make during any classroom session or episode, as we engage students in discussion, decide to digress (or not), change directions to take advantage of an opportunity, invent new explanations and examples, judge whether students are "with us" and what to do if not . . . .

Behind this exercise lie two issues that we'd like to explore. The first is technical and pertains to ways of preserving and representing what goes on in the classroom. We've given you three methods to choose from in hopes that this exercise will provide useful grist for sorting out the comparative advantages and limits to each.

The second issue deals with our conceptions of teaching and the scholarly expertise that goes into it. What is it that good teachers in the different disciplines and interdisciplines know and can do in the classroom? In what episodes and "telling moments" is that know-how reflected? And how do we judge classroom practice: by what standards and criteria?

This exercise is designed to uncover the craft and intelligence that is often embodied in the particulars of classroom practice. Like the first ex-

ercise, it entails an artifact (or documentation) and a reflective memo; two questions for further thought and discussion follow in Part II.

### *Part I*

Identify a telling episode or some incident of classroom practice that reveals something distinctive about your approach to teaching your field to your students. This might mean a laboratory demonstration you use to teach a key concept; it might mean an interactive group activity in which students solve a problem that's central to your course conception; it might mean a lecture and follow-up discussion on an important aspect of the field.

Select one of the three strategies indicated below to document the episode/incident that you identify. It may be useful for you and your project teammate to choose different strategies in order to compare the strengths and weaknesses of different options.

1. Videotape one or two classroom episodes (which may be an entire class session or a shorter segment of activity). You may then wish to draw on both tapes for the reflective memo (see below) or to select one.

*or*

2. Arrange to have a colleague visit your class and take detailed notes of what happens.

*or*

3. Write a case study about a classroom episode that reveals something important about your effectiveness as a teacher. The idea here is to use narrative to capture the particulars of classroom practice in a telling way.

As in Exercise #1, we ask that you create a reflective commentary on what you have documented by writing a brief memo—three to five pages in length—using any of the following prompts that you find provocative:

- Why did you choose to document this particular classroom episode? What is it meant to be evidence *of*? Is it, for example, a particularly compelling, insightful, or artful rendition of a key concept in the course or field? A new metaphor or demonstration you have developed to illuminate a topic that students perennially find particularly difficult? An exercise that allows students actively to

experience and engage in scholarly inquiry? A unique interpretation you bring to the topic that distinguishes you from your colleagues? Or, in contrast to all of these, is it simply a "typical" day in your class, and if so, why did you choose that basis for your sample?

- What context is needed to understand the sample? Where are we in the unfolding of the semester? What other topics is this session's topic situated within? How does it relate to what was discussed the day or week before and what is planned to follow?
- What were your goals for this day? Did the class session go as planned or deviate from your expectations? How so? Why? Did you change direction to take advantage of some new opportunity, to get around an obstacle, to deal with a new circumstance?
- What does the sample say about your teaching? Does it show a characteristic style? A distinctive approach to material? Would others in your field be likely to teach this topic/concept/whatever differently? Are you trying something new? Something you will continue to work at and improve? Do you like what you see?

## *Part II*

As indicated above, there are two issues we'd like to get at through this exercise. Please think about the two questions that follow, and use them as grist for discussion with your project teammate(s).

**1. ISSUES OF METHOD.** What do you learn about the teacher through this method (video, visit, etc.)? Assuming you and your teammate used different methods, did one turn out to be more revealing, more reflection-prompting, more useful than the other? Why? What aspects of teaching are *not* knowable through this method? What other information would you want to add if this were, say, an entry in a teaching portfolio? How important is it to document the classroom aspect of teaching?

**2. ISSUES OF CONCEPTION AND QUALITY.** What are the most appropriate and best criteria for judging classroom practice? What matters most: creativity and originality? Thoughtfulness of the teacher's reflection or rationale? Significance of this particular topic to the field? Accuracy of the teacher's construal of the material? On what other dimensions might one judge classroom practice? Might the standards/criteria differ if the teacher were teaching the course for the first time versus having had sev-

eral years of experience with it? Are the standards for judging scholarly research appropriate to teaching? Which ones? Why or why not?

### Exercise III: Putting the Focus on Student Learning

#### *Introduction*

In the first two exercises, we asked you to think about your teaching as it is designed (through the syllabus) and conducted (through actual classroom practice). But the conceptions and behaviors of teachers are only part of the educational picture. As teachers and as colleagues trying to assist each other with teaching, we also consider students and their learning. We consider how students understand (or don't) our explanations and queries; what sorts of misconceptions or questions about our fields they bring or construct; how we monitor and help direct their learning through appropriate assignments, exams, projects, and the like; and what new understandings they leave with at the end of a class or the course.

For this exercise, then, we ask you to reflect on your teaching in terms of student learning.

#### *Part I*

Choose an assignment—that is, instructions for a student project, paper, problem set, classroom assignment, computer simulation, etc.—that is designed to promote and/or elicit an important aspect of the learning you intend for students in one of your courses. (You may find it helpful to focus on the same course as in the syllabus exercise, though the choice is yours.) Attach to the assignment several samples of student work, illustrating a range of responses, perhaps with your feedback included.

Write a brief reflective memo (two to three pages) in which you comment on what the assignment/student work samples reveal about students' learning in your course. Think of the audience for your materials/memo as a committee that is conducting a departmental program review and wishes to construct a map of what and how students learn about your field as they move through various departmental courses.

As you put together your work samples and write your reflective memo, use any of the following prompts that you find provocative:

- Why did you choose this particular assignment (as opposed to some other assignment) to reflect on? How is it important to your overall intentions, course design, conception of your field, and the

way you want students to understand it? Are there distinctly different formats or focuses you could have chosen for this assignment that would have highlighted different dimensions of the idea or the field?

- Why did you structure the assignment in the way that you did? How does its particular question, problem, or application reveal *differences* in student understandings or interpretations of a critical concept you are teaching? What patterns emerge as you study your students' work?
- What, in particular, do you hope your students will demonstrate in their work on this assignment? What are your expectations? Drawing on a scientific research metaphor, what was your hypothesis about what students might learn from this class, unit, or course? What evidence does the assignment provide that would serve to confirm or disconfirm this hypothesis? Where else do you look for such evidence?
- What do your assignment and students' responses to it tell you about how students are constructing the ideas that are central to the course and to your teaching goals? What misconceptions do they have about these ideas? How do you identify and address student errors and misinterpretations?
- On what standards do you judge student work on this assignment? How do these standards compare with those you would use in a more introductory/advanced class? How are your standards related to the standards you would use to evaluate a piece of scholarship that a colleague has asked you to critique?
- What thoughts do you have about improving your assignment, your course, or your teaching as a consequence of completing this reflective exercise?

## *Part II*

Please think and talk with your project teammate about the following two issues:

1. This exercise asks you to try your hand at just one of a number of possible ways to document student learning, including, for example, classroom assessment techniques, and individual or small-group interviews with students. In addition, most of us have information from student evaluations of our teaching. Probably you can think of

additional options, as well. What advantages and disadvantages do these alternative methods offer? What combination of them would offer a useful/fair/appropriate picture of your students' experience as learners?

2. How important is it to include evidence about student learning when making a case about teaching effectiveness? What are the pitfalls of doing so? The opportunities?