



Colloquium on Team Teaching

September 13, 2024

Warm-up: Team Teaching Scenarios

Choose one scenario to discuss as a team. What advice might you offer these faculty? How could a faculty agreement help?

Kamala & James: The Vanishing Act

Kamala and James have been close friends for years. They often meet for coffee, attend faculty events together, and even go on family vacations. Their camaraderie extends into their professional lives, having successfully co-taught a popular program, "Literature and History of the Renaissance" five years ago.

The stars have finally aligned and Kamala and James plan to teach the program again this coming fall. However, as the summer progresses, Kamala finds herself increasingly frustrated. James had promised to work on revised catalog copy for their program, but as the deadline approached, he was nowhere to be found. Kamala, not wanting to miss the deadline, ended up writing it herself. Similarly, when textbook orders and program budgets were due, Kamala submitted those on behalf of them both. Kamala, though a bit disappointed at the extra work she had taken on, told herself that these were relatively minor chores, and recognized that James' mother-in-law had some serious health issues that were affecting his entire family.

Now, with the semester just a few weeks away, Kamala is trying to finalize the syllabus and other course materials. She has sent multiple emails and texts to James, but he remains unresponsive. She even tried calling him, but it always goes to voicemail.

Sarah & Mark: A Classroom Dilemma

Emma and Maria are sitting at a large table covered with notes, textbooks, and laptops. They are planning their lower-division program, which combines elements of Environmental Science and Political Science to explore global challenges.

Emma is enthusiastic about implementing a new pedagogy that focuses entirely on student-led projects and experiential learning. She believes this approach will engage students more deeply and foster critical thinking skills. Maria, while intrigued by the potential benefits, is not entirely convinced. She has strong misgivings about how to effectively

integrate the core content of Political Science into this model, in a program partially intended to prepare students for upper division study.

As they plan, Maria defers to Emma regarding the implementation of the new pedagogy, recognizing her expertise and passion. However, Maria can't shake her concerns about ensuring that students grasp the essential theories and frameworks of Political Science. She worries that extreme degree of autonomy this pedagogical approach affords students might leave critical gaps in their understanding that will hamper them in studying upper division political science.

Despite her reservations, Maria agrees to proceed with Emma's approach, hoping that her concerns will be addressed as they continue to develop the course. The tension between their differing perspectives creates an undercurrent of conflict as they move forward with their planning. Maria feels an increasing sense of dread as the new quarter approaches.

Emily & Jason: A Public Correction

Emily is leading a discussion on the principles of supply and demand. A student raises their hand and asks a question about how government intervention can impact market equilibrium.

Student: "How does government intervention, like subsidies, affect supply and demand in the market?"

Emily: "That's a great question. Government subsidies can increase the supply of a good by lowering production costs for producers. This can lead to a lower market price and higher quantity demanded."

Before Emily can continue, her teaching partner, Jason, interjects from the back of the room.

Jason: "Actually, Emily, I think it's important to mention that subsidies can also lead to market distortions and inefficiencies. They might encourage overproduction and can sometimes harm the market in the long run."

Emma & Maria: A Clash of Pedagogy

Sarah is lecturing on Newton's Third Law of Motion and, as she often does, pauses to ask students to work on a short problem in small groups. Sarah circulates, checking the progress of the groups, and her teaching partner, Mark, is at a side table grading chemistry homework assignments. As the groups work at their own pace and some groups finish early, there is a buzz of unrelated conversations developing, and just as Sarah is letting the class know they will be reconvening as a group for the lecture to continue, a student points at a student at the next table and declares to the rest of his group, just loudly enough for Mark to overhear, "All cops are bastards." The student pointed to is, in fact, employed in law enforcement. Sarah resumes her lecture without skipping a beat, reviewing solutions to the problem.

Building your Teaching Team

An important strategy for creating and sustaining a supportive culture is through establishing agreements among the teaching team. These co-created agreements articulate expectations and offer guidelines for engagement as leaders of the learning community. The act of co-creation is important because it builds collective responsibility to uphold the agreements. Revisit these agreements and use them as a platform to engage in honest conversations with each other. This might feel awkward at first but as you make it a habit, it will become more comfortable for everyone.

Self Assessment

Reflect on the following prompts in writing

Goals: What are your desired goals for the team? For the students? What challenges do you anticipate?

Assets: What role will you play? What perspectives, values, & skills do you bring to the team?

Participation & Expectations: What do you need from the team? How often would you like to meet? What time of day/week? What will happen in the meetings? How will you communicate equitably? How will you prepare? How will you share information? How will you make decisions? How will you manage conflicts or disagreements? How will you hold yourself accountable? How would you like to be held accountable by others? How will you support others on your team?

Policies: What are your preferred policies (e.g., credit, attendance, lateness, late work, disruptions, etc)?

Assessment & Evaluation: What are your assessment and evaluation practices? How might these policies interface with others on the team?

OPTIONAL: Take the Teaching Goals Inventory and share your results with the team -

<https://tgi.its.uiowa.edu/teachinggoals/>

Build Team Agreement

As a team, compare responses to the self-assessment (both the TPI and your reflective writing). Use your reflection and the prompts below to build your team agreement.

1. Purpose & Goals

What is the essential dilemma, issue, or question (DIQ) that guides the learning community? How does it connect to the [Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate](#)?

2. Composition & Roles

Who are the team members? What differences in positional power, social capital, and resource access exist among team members? How will you attend to these differences?

Who will take responsibility for convening meetings, sharing information, etc? How will you support each other? Will you identify a leader or share leadership?

3. Policies

How will you maintain consistency in policies (credit, attendance, seminar, preparation, late work, disruptions, etc) across the learning community? How will you manage violations of policy? When will you exercise flexibility? How will you communicate about policy exceptions to each other? To students?

4. Participation & Decision Making

How much time will each individual devote to the team? How will you store and share documents? What information will you share about students? What communication strategies will you adopt? What medium will you use for electronic communication with each other? With students?

How often will you meet? What needs to happen in meetings? How will equitable participation be fostered? How will you make and document decisions? How will you manage differences in opinion or conflict?

A note about accountability

A weakness of team agreements can be staying accountable to each other. Often, we will enthusiastically develop agreements but return to them infrequently. To be effective, community agreements need to be actively practiced and evaluated by the team.

Productive conflict

Disagreements arise in all relationships. Some strategies for learning from conflict are offered below.

Ouch/Oops/Whoa

Adopt a shorthand for identifying when something has been said that needs addressing.

- Oops: I made a mistake or misspoke.
- Ouch: I feel offended or upset.
- Whoa: I need clarity or an explanation.

Reflective Writing

A “Stop and Write” or other reflective writing technique can be useful if discussion is getting heated and you aren’t feeling confident in managing it. Simply provide a prompt and ask for 5 minute of silent writing to allow everyone to check-in and process how they are feeling and what they are thinking.

OTFD Communication

[adapted from [Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom](#)]

A communication technique can be very useful. The value of these techniques is that you practice them frequently and are able to deploy them in heated moments. For example,

Observe: Concrete, factual observations of situation

Think: Thoughts based on observation (yours and/or theirs)

Feel: Emotions using “I statements”

Desire: Specific request for desired outcome

“I noticed (Observe) the volume of some people’s voices rising. I think (Think) there were some strong reactions to what was said. I feel uncomfortable (Feeling) moving forward with the discussion until we explore this. I am hoping some of you can share (Desire) what you are thinking/feeling right now so we can have a conversation and learn from each other.”

Restorative or Healing Circles

Circles are useful to process harm and heal after a conflict. There are many protocols for conducting circles, however, the basic approach is to give everyone the opportunity to speak uninterruptedly in a circle without cross-talk. Everyone says what they are moved to say.

Additional Resources

Cruz, L., & Geist, M. J. (2019). [A Team Teaching Matrix: Asking New Questions about How We Teach Together](#). *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching & Learning Journal*, 12(1).

Duhigg, C. (2016, February 25). [What Google Learned From Its Quest to Build the Perfect Team](#). *The New York Times*.

Kecskemeti, M., Kaveney, K., Gray, S., & Drewery, W. (2013). [A Deconstructive Approach to Class Meetings: Managing Conflict and Building Learning Communities](#). *Narrative and Conflict: Explorations in Theory and Practice*, 1(1), 31.