

Mega-classes: some resources and suggestions

Grinnell College

A relatively simple yet effective way to teach collaboratively and bring an interdisciplinary or integrative approach to courses is the mega-class. A mega-class is an ad hoc meeting of two or more classes, organized around a common theme or subject related to the content of courses in different departments or divisions. In general, the students prepare by studying a common reading assignment or by attending an extracurricular event, such as a Scholar's Convocation or an exhibit at the Faulconer Gallery. A mega-class can also be organized around the research or scholarship of one of the instructors or a team of instructors. Mega-classes can entail discussion of the students' shared academic experience, with the instructors serving as experts to help interpret the assignment from different disciplinary perspectives. This model has little organizational overhead and can be opportunistic, taking advantage of campus events or other courses.

What do you need to do to plan a mega-class? Identify the themes or opportunities that you and the other instructor(s) want to develop in a plenary meeting (or meetings), and identify the times in the semester—perhaps linked to a campus event—when you can best develop these with a mega-class.

The following resources are available to you for planning a mega-class:

1. The Rosenfield Program, Faulconer Gallery, Convocation series, and the Centers for the Humanities, International Studies, and Prairie Studies publish their schedules of events on the web. In many cases, events are planned well in advance of the semester in which they take place.
2. Common readings can be placed on electronic reserve. Your department's academic support staff can help put materials on reserve by following the guidelines at <http://www.lib.grinnell.edu/general/missionpolicies/copyrightereservespolicy.html>. The librarians should be advised that the assigned reading is for a mega-class. They will need to know the title of the mega-class, how many students are involved and the names of the instructors involved. A reserve course listing will be created under the title of the mega-class in the library e-reserve system, which students can access through the library catalog. To address problems, please contact Gail Bonath at bonath@grinnell.edu.
3. Mary Wells in the Registrar's office at x4084 or wells@grinnell.edu can help you schedule a room for the mega-class.

The Office of Interdisciplinary Studies and the Associate Deans are happy to offer any assistance we can in support of instructors who would like to design mega-classes or initiate other collaborative teaching proposals through the tutorial program. For further information, please contact Kathleen Skerrett at skerrett@grinnell.edu or Marci Sortor at sortor@grinnell.edu.