

Some Models of Interdisciplinary and Team Teaching (following Common Ground Lunches March 2 and March 9, 2006)

The following preliminary map about team teaching grew from the wide range of 2005-2006 Common Interdisciplinary Ground lunches, and especially the two special sessions focusing on collaborative teaching at Grinnell. Hopefully this incomplete map can serve simply as a starting point to begin considering: Why team teaching? What is the vision? Why/how does team teaching better or differently deliver an interdisciplinary experience for students? What other interdisciplinary pedagogies are interesting complements to team teaching? What are the goals of interdisciplinary and integrative teaching? How does it change Grinnell's curriculum? If it's an experimental vision or process, what's the experiment? As we collectively try to think about what the vision for team teaching is at Grinnell, consider some of these tentative positions and further questions about team teaching:

- expands the pool of expertise and knowledge among the instructors (and, it's fun)
- helps students to view a course topic from different disciplinary lenses
- de-privatizes the classroom and knowledge production, de-isolates intellectual academic work – making syllabus construction, lectures, discussions, assignments, and grading a group effort - where classrooms are open systems – easily accommodating visitors, new spaces, etc ▫ if collaboration is a value, then collaborative teaching might be an important model for collaborative student work
- to what degree is active learning, experiential learning, and problem solving a particular goal of team teaching?
- to what degree is integrated, holistic, or experiential knowledge a goal?
- to what degree does collaborative teaching challenge us to re-envision departmental culture at Grinnell? what does a Grinnell curriculum look like that supports a wide-range of innovative, experimental, collaborative teaching?

We invite challenges, corrections, additions, and whole-scale revisions to these models. A faculty workshop will convene this summer to engage some of these models and questions. In the meantime, send comments to Marci Sortor, Director of the Office of Interdisciplinary Studies: sortor@grinnell.edu.

Hum 140 model

- two instructors in the room all the time, a syllabus attained by committee/consensus
- a model with good Grinnell history, a popular course, more info needed.
- to what degree does the course structurally approach disciplinary forms in order to synthesize, problematize, or otherwise analyze them?

Freedom and Authority: Control of Reproduction

- three instructors, three major units, each instructor acts as major presenter for each unit, and then breaks-out into small group discussions

- students came equally from all three divisions – they were broken into mixed interdisciplinary groups
- syllabus created by instructors (in this case over a summer workshop)
- de-privatizes activities like creating assignments, grading and commenting
- de-isolates intellectual work both for faculty and for students
- this particular format allows for the faculty to have only occasional shared classroom discussions – that is, each runs a lecture class and then subsequent classes break-out into groups, minimizing the time when instructors can interact, assume various roles and pedagogical stances, minimizes the amount of time that students get to see instructors interact, or that students can see the live collision or interaction of different disciplinary stances
- a capstone experience for seniors –
- final assignments tend toward students’ and instructors’ disciplinary moorings
- challenges included: freeing up 3 people from different departments in the same semester; finding a common language to talk about very different disciplines; teaching writing – negotiating whether all the assignments could be written for some kind of general audience, or whether each assignment should in some way adhere to disciplinary standards of the unit;

Intro to Technology/Leadership:

- modular format with a one constant instructor, and many short, guest spots from other profs
- an explicitly multi-disciplinary format (serial disciplinarity) with the lead instructor providing some synthesizing (even trans-disciplinarity) overview or the overriding connective logic
- downside – this doesn’t impact or reorganize teaching commitments, it just adds short stint to your already existing course load, albeit an interesting stint

MAPs

- Generally, MAPs seem to provide the experience of advanced, interdisciplinary, less-formally structured study.
- Case Study example from Common Ground lunch:
 - Mapping Yosemite was a project devised by Vince Eckhart from Bio and Steve Andrews from English in 1995. There were independent components (Andrews and his 4 students were retracing Emerson’s 1871 trip west and made archival research pit-stops along the way (in Salt Lake City and San Fran); Andrews and his 4 students spent some weeks by themselves at Yosemite; Eckhart and his students did field work in the southern Sierras, joining Andrews et al for a last shared week)
 - for Eckhart’s students there was no transcript trace of interdisciplinary work – the MAP and the +2 was treated simply as an independent study – maybe Bio 399; while Andrews’s students have no transcript trace of science – just a MAP and HUM 399.
 - the genealogy of the project: started as a conversation about influence of landscape on human character; become a faculty to faculty tutorial where they read each other’s stuff; got a CSFS grant for their 6 total students – for a summer MAP with a 2 credit follow up in the fall. In the summer they each drove out to their respective starting points, convening eventually in cabins at Yosemite NP. In the fall,

interdisciplinary student teams collaborated on papers written on the summer's themes - two teams, each writing about "wilderness" in various aspects.

- Questions/Challenges: how to sustain an interdisciplinary focus throughout, balancing that with some degree of disciplinary informed research;
- If they did it again, they would spend more time together in Yosemite – allowing for more unstructured time, where unexpected encounters can occur. The highlights of the trip seem to lie in the unexpected – from a demonstration at the park, to a series of encounters with other hikers at Hetch Hetchy. During the lunch, when Eckhart and Andrews talked about these unstructured encounters, was also when the different disciplinary assumptions came up, and some kind of questioning about the actual value or purpose of an interdisciplinary team in the wilderness – what can be discussed and thought about and acted upon if a place, questions, history, region, affect is encountered from multiple perspectives?
- Could the EKI use a Wilderness or Remote Field Station? idea floated about the possible value of a remote field station – similar, it would seem, to the ACM Wilderness Field Station – up in MN Boundary Waters, Coe is currently managing the spot. Benefits: a place to return, to be able to re-stage courses, conversations, experiments over time, easier logistics; But, of course, where? Something that could be of value to those doing urban, archival, or university-based research as well as wilderness/field work? humanities field work or experiential work in addition to science or social studies?

8 or 12 Credit Class

- Courses that have significant reading, research, information components might logistically benefit from such a strategy.
- Has clear potential to avert some of the logistical, departmental release logistical difficulties
- There is good history of this at Grinnell – but not enough known for this document. The possibilities of this deserve further consideration.

Cross-listing

- Perhaps the simplest way to accrue departmental recognition for team taught or interdisciplinary courses would be just count them toward departmental teaching.
- This is done very sparsely at Grinnell. Might be worth considering why (this might launch a need to re-envision departments – rather than re-envisioning concentrations); might also be worth looking at some curriculums that include much cross-listing. Many examples, but here's Macalester. Particularly, the courses for their (newish) Humanities and Media and Cultural Studies Major: http://www.macalester.edu/academic/catalog/program/hum_c.html.

Megaclass

- an occasional event at Grinnell when three or more courses have joined together to discuss a question and/or prepare for a visiting scholar
- an informal model of interdisciplinarity where students get the opportunity to bring their semester's disciplinary training into conversation with other disciplines in a problem or issue based setting.

- logistical questions (finding a big enough room, and a mutually convenient time) when arranged in adhoc fashion –
- there have been a couple of mega-classes convened in the last few years at Grinnell, with seeming success.
- is there a way to institutionalize the megaclass? (see below)

Clusters

- one institutional route this form of collaboration has taken at other colleges is clustered courses. Thematically similar courses are clustered together – and some kind of informal or formal “learning community” might result.
- another logistical variation of the cluster/mega class format is to create clusters which the registrar works around – scheduling classes at the same time so instructors can switch classes or join classes more easily
- a possible soft form of collaboration and interdisciplinarity – if not quite team teaching. possibility of instructors listing their course as a mega/cluster/ID course that is in grouping with several other courses – the instructors might then meet actually and through a listserv – they can join their classes and stage some sort of regular or intermittent team-teaching; or they can switch classes.
- could have the effect of creating new classrooms, deprivitizing and deisolating teaching/learning, softening departmental boundaries, while not requiring the wholesale restructuring that team teaching sometimes looks to require.

Matrix Model

- a structure borrowed from organizational theory
- approach the college in terms of rows and columns: departments are columns – vertical organization of faculty by disciplines -- superimpose a horizontal structure of rows that gathers faculty into functional units that cross departmental lines. Departments are left relatively undisturbed while creating another set of structures creating mechanisms for new conversations, faculty reading groups, lunches, research ideas, etc eventually interdisciplinary team- taught courses.
- over time the rows could become clusters, examples given in one source are similar to ours - sustainability cluster, diversity cluster, ethics cluster, global cluster, etc.
- for more on the matrix model, look at *Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research*, especially the chapter, “[Toward New Interdisciplinary Structures.](#)”
