

Critical Reading

The complaint voiced most often in our office is that students do not read. This might be the case. I think, though, it is worthwhile to examine why this might be so. First, one might wonder whether students aren't able to read at the college level, thinking they are ill-prepared for college work. This may in fact be true. In comparing student SAT scores in reading in 1972 (530) to 2011 (497), there has been a precipitous drop of 33 points! This could be one factor. Another factor could be that assigned readings are not developmentally appropriate to the students' level of thinking and comprehending. Students who are freshmen are not as equipped to read the same material as a graduate student. Finally, one might think about the fact that, for the most part, the actual act of reading hasn't been addressed since most of our students were in grade school. And, according to Bosley (2008), "high schools typically require students to read receptively, to read for information. Many freshman students have not been taught to read actively or critically, to construct knowledge as they read" (p. 286). So the kind of reading taught at each level is completely different from the type of reading required of a college student. Finally, not all textbooks require the same kind of reading. Reading a Calculus text is completely different from reading a History text. In short, we need our students to be critical readers. Critical reading is college reading. It is careful, thorough, mindful and active reading. If our students are not reading critically then we must try to find a way to help them with developing this skill.

Using mini-lessons might be employed at the start of each semester to familiarize your students with the text, with the kind of reading that your course requires and with the means to learn to critically read. Mini-lessons involve devoting 10 minutes of class time to helping the student develop any learning skill, in this case, critical reading. The following are a list of mini-lessons that you might decide to use to help your students become critical readers:

Pre-reading exercises- Have your students open their text and explore its content. Have them look at the Table of Contents, explore how each chapter is set up, look into the details, for example, how the concepts and their definitions are treated. Then take a few minutes to discuss the reading strategies that will be necessary to be successful in your course. In other words, explain to the students what is it they should be looking for when they are reading.

Making connections with the readings- Ask your students to connect what they already know with what they learned in their text. This can most successfully be accomplished by having the students compose answers to such questions as:

- What do the titles in the chapters or articles imply?
- How might this next chapter tie into the material we have already covered in class?
- How would this material be significant to your course?

Interacting with the text- Challenge your students by having them think about a particular reading passage on three different levels. Have them ask and answer "Right There" questions where they analyze the facts. Have them ask and answer "Think and Search" questions which have them construct inferences from the facts. Finally, have them ask and answer "On your Own" questions which force the students to create plausible inferences based on their own life experiences.

Critical reading is analytic reading. If faculty, who are the Content Specialists, help students identify patterns of elements like information, values and assumptions in their readings, the students will be more successful.

Bosley, Lisa. (2008). "I Don't Teach Reading": Critical Reading Instruction in Composition Courses. *Literacy Research and Instruction* 47(4), 286.

College Board (2011). *2011 College-Bound Seniors State Profile Report-Michigan*. Retrieved from http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/MI_11_03_03_01.pdf

Raphael, T. E., & Au, K. H. (2006). *QAR Now: Question Answer Relationships*. New York: Scholastic.

Upcoming workshops offered through our office!

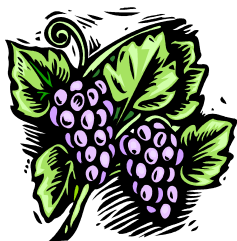
This month's **Lunch and Learn** will be held on January 27th in our office in SE 201. The topic for discussion will be Student Motivation. We will look at the various ways we, as faculty, can motivate our students to successfully learn. Bring your sack lunch and share time with your colleagues!

Unlearning to Learn is the topic for the monthly workshop held on February 10 at Noon in SE204. You might know from experience that mental models resist change. If learning is important then it is necessary for students to rearrange their mental models to accept new ideas, feelings or habits. This workshop will discuss the ideas behind unlearning to learn and offer some techniques to help you help your students unlearn.

As you put together your syllabus for this semester, did you ask yourself, "Where is this course going?" Do you feel you need to find the time, energy, and inspiration to develop a new course or to re-design an existing course? Well then, the **Course Design** workshop will assist you in making progress toward designing or re-designing an effective and innovative course! This workshop is held over a three month period for a few hours on Saturday mornings. Part I of this workshop will be held on Saturday, February 18, Part II on Saturday, March 17 and Part III on Saturday, April 21. Each will be held in the Emeriti Room at 9:00 and a light breakfast will be served.

All adjunct faculty are compensated for attending workshops at a rate of \$25.00 with a limit of three workshops. **Course design workshops do not qualify for this limit.** Please consider attending any of these happenings. To do so you may register at www.svsu.edu/workshops or by writing us at adjunctfaculty@svsu.edu or by calling us at 964-4050. We do so look forward to seeing you!

Grapes of Wrath Book Club



The first **GRAPES OF WRATH BOOK CLUB** will be held on February 3 at 4:30 in our office, SE 201. The purpose of the Book Club is to share teaching experiences (wrathful or excellent) in a relaxed setting. Aged grapes and other assorted goodies will be provided for refreshment. The Club will be reading *the Faculty Lounges and Other Reasons Why You Won't Get the College Education You Paid For*. This book will also be provided.

Reminders



The University is closed Monday, January 16th in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Our President, Dr. Gilbertson, encourages us all to spend this special day participating in community service in honor of Dr. King.

If the University is closed due to weather conditions You can check the SVSU home page or you can call the SVSU weather information line at 989-964-4477. The best option available to you is to register your cell phone and/or home phone with SVSU's automated Emergency Notification Program. You can register for this important service by going to <http://www.svsu.edu/universitypolice/campus-alert-sign-up.html>