Summer Core Course Development Workshop 2012

The Threshold of Democracy: Athens in 403 B.C.

Thursday, May 10, 2012

9:00–9:30AM OPENING REMARKS
9:30–10:30AM GAME SET-UP
   Introduction to the Game, Historical Background, & Plato’s Republic; Character
   Introductions; Faction Meetings
10:30–11:30AM GAME SESSION I
   Meeting of the Athenian Assembly: Debate on the Reconciliation Agreement
11:30–12:30PM PLENARY: THE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE
   Topics: Student Motivation; Engagement with the Texts; Writing and Speaking for
   “Reacting”; Classroom Dynamics
12:30–1:30 PM LUNCH BREAK
1:30–3:00 PM GAME SESSION II
   Meeting of the Athenian Assembly: Debates on Government Agency and the Extent of
   the Electorate
3:00–3:30 PM GAME POST-MORTEM
   Discussion of the historical record, participants’ roles, and reactions to the game
3:30–5:00 PM PLENARY: TEACHING “REACTING”
   Topics: Game Management; Assignments & Grading; Course Planning & Syllabus Design

Immersion – FYS Model (2 modules)
This workshop allows faculty members to experience a shortened version of a highly effective
and engaging pedagogy used in a large number of First-Year Seminars at other institutions. This
pedagogy can be used in the form presented or with variations as the unifying experience for a
FYS spanning most of the semester or for a limited number of sessions only. It involves close
reading and critical analysis of primary sources, as well as writing and speaking. Detailed
documentation and support material will be made available during the workshops. Participants
will be provided with individualized material before the workshop as preparation allowing
faculty members to experience the FYS model also from a student perspective. The pedagogy
showcased in this module is one that can be adapted also to other classes – the module may
therefore also be of interest for faculty members teaching other classes (not FYS). Participation
in this workshop requires attendance of both modules (morning and afternoon) on the same
day. Seats in this workshop are limited - early registration recommended.
**Material:**

**Role Descriptions**
Sample Syllabi

**Facilitator:**
Thaddeus Russell is a historian and cultural critic and the author of *A Renegade History of the United States* (Free Press/Simon & Schuster, 2010). He teaches American history and cultural studies at Occidental College and has taught history, American Studies, and the history of philosophy at Columbia University, Barnard College, the New School for Social Research, and Eugene Lang College.
Born and raised in Berkeley, California, Russell graduated from Antioch College and received a PhD in history from Columbia University.
Russell has appeared on the History Channel, Al-Jazeera, Fox News, and *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart.

**Concept:**
Reacting to the Past (RTTP) consists of elaborate games, set in the past, in which students are assigned roles informed by classic texts in the history of ideas. Class sessions are run entirely by students; instructors advise and guide students and grade their oral and written work. It seeks to draw students into the past, promote engagement with big ideas, and improve intellectual and academic skills.
In most classes students learn by receiving ideas and information from instructors and texts, or they discuss such materials in seminars. “Reacting to the Past” courses employ a different pedagogy. Students learn by taking on roles, informed by classic texts, in elaborate games set in the past; they learn skills—speaking, writing, critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, and teamwork—in order to prevail in difficult and complicated situations. That is because Reacting roles, unlike those in a play, do not have a fixed script and outcome. While students will be obliged to adhere to the philosophical and intellectual beliefs of the historical figures they have been assigned to play, they must devise their own means of expressing those ideas persuasively, in papers, speeches or other public presentations; and students must also pursue a course of action they think will help them win the game.