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Teaching portfolio

Ian Woodward

In the area of teaching, my strong performance is based upon the *originality and innovation exhibited in curricular design and revision*, the development of curricula for core courses in the Sociology major offered by the School of Humanities at Griffith University, Australia, which deal with *consumption and material culture*, and also course dealing with *practices of social research*, the production of an important global text in the field of cultural sociology, as well as my success in the supervision and mentorship of postgraduate PhD, MA and BA students. Since 2015, at Syddansk Universitet, I have taken responsibility for the Cand. Negot. course Cultural Sociology (n=125, 2015 -), the course Introduction to Globalisation (n=100, 2016-17), and the Masters course Advanced Market Anthropology (n=15, 2016-17).

1) Teaching, curricula development and innovation.

At Griffith University, I was centrally responsible for conceptualising, developing and delivering all of the second year course offerings on both Nathan and Gold Coast campuses and therefore played a significant leadership role in the successful establishment of the Sociology major offered by the School of Humanities. The innovative teaching practices I developed fit well with the University's *emphasis on research-based learning*, the acquisition and development of relevant skills, and the development of an ethic of enterprise, independent learning and responsibility. Alongside this major contribution to the undergraduate curricula in my area I have also had success *recruiting, mentoring and graduating postgraduates of all levels*.

There are two major innovations I was responsible for in my curriculum area. First is the *introduction of research-based learning strategies* into the core 2nd year undergraduate units I have taught in. The distinctive feature of my research style – using empirical approaches to explore and test theoretical ideas – has been incorporated into my teaching to help students develop research skills in the context of learning about cutting-edge theoretical debates. This aspect of my courses is now one of the broader features of the Sociology major. For example, in the unit 'Cultures and Lifestyles', I organized for students to undertake field observations at Southbank Parklands in a module that looked at change in the postmodern cities. Likewise, I organized for students to undertake fieldwork in the youth consumption zone of Fortitude Valley, in Brisbane. Preparation for this fieldwork involved developing skills in the areas of basic qualitative and quantitative data collection as well as developing cooperation and teamwork. In later versions of the unit, the course assessment requires students to investigate the biography of a particular object, or item of material culture, from their everyday world. This exercise allows them to apply concepts and approaches learnt in lectures and tutorials to consider how studying a real object from their personal world allows them to consider a range of political, ethical, environmental, social and cultural implications. This process also helps students confront personal issues, from their own reliance on consumer objects, fashion and dress, as well as questions of over-consumption, waste and the ethics of consumer society. In linking concepts and theories to everyday lives of students, these tasks show the analytic power of the social sciences, as well as their capacity to excite self-reflexivity in learners. In addition, these pedagogic strategies have been effective because they *integrate theory with empirical observations, develop research and report-writing skills, teamwork skills, help students to link classroom learning to possible careers in various fields and link theory to issues in real-world settings*.

In Spring semester 2016 at SDU, I employed a similar learning strategy for students in my course 'Advanced Market Anthropology'. After reading about and discussing *research strategies for identifying, conceptualizing and observing market action and actors*, the class visited 3 sites in Odense to make comparative observations on the character of markets: the upscale department store, Magasin, the farmers market in Odense, and the multiethnic mall Fyn Bazar. The skills and strategies practice linked theory to observation, helped prepare students for their final field report, and also created a positive collective feeling in the class.

I am well-practiced with this type of *hands-on, practical approach to learning* which links skills to theory. For example, in the 3rd year capstone undergraduate course I was responsible for teaching at Griffith, 'Research in Sociology', students undertook their own small-scale qualitative research project. This course builds on the preliminary methodological learning students have accomplished during their second year courses in the major by building skills in in-depth interviewing, qualitative data analysis and writing up research results. Beginning with the definition, conceptualization and clarification of a research problem and research question (which the students choose based on their interests), students interview a small group of respondents, transcribe their interview, then analyze and write up a research report based on the findings

that emerge from their interviews. The course offers students a hands-on opportunity to learn about *how sociological ideas can be translated into the study of real-world contexts, and in turn how people's real world experiences relate to sociological concepts and theories*. The course also introduces students to matters of research ethics, the use of computer software programs in analyzing interview data, and to the process of producing professional standard research reports. The type of *unique pedagogy enables to the lecturer to become more of a research mentor and guide*.

2)Evidence of quality and impact.

During my twelve years at Griffith, my teaching and course evaluations generally scored in the 'high' range according to University-wide comparison scores and show *students consistently rate highly my ability to create an atmosphere conducive to learning, my ability to explain material and communicate with students, my ability to explain expectations for assessment items, my ability to organize and present lecture materials, and my overall capacity to teach effectively*. For example, the quantitative scores for my course 'Cultures and Lifestyles', show that the course performs in the 'High' category on 6 of the 7 questionnaire items. For all but two items, the percentage of positive ratings are above 90%, with a mean course satisfaction score of 4.3/5 (96.2% positive). Items rated most highly for this course are: the effectiveness of teaching staff in fostering learning (4.5/5), the organisation of the course (4.3/5), overall course quality (4.3/5), and capacity of the course to engage students in learning (4.2/5). The results for the Nathan offering of 'Cultures & Lifestyles' are even more glowing: the overall effectiveness of the course in fostering learning scored 6.2/7, with 100% of positive ratings. Ratings for course organization, clarity and fairness of assessment, and effectiveness of teachers all scored 4.5/5, with 100% positive ratings in each item. All other rating items for this course scored in the 'High' range on comparative scores, with the exception of the engagement rating that was marginally off scoring a 'High'. In the third year offering, 'Research in Sociology', the ratings are quite a deal higher, which is to be expected given it is a 3rd year, smaller scale course where students receive personal assistance, frequent feedback, and direct help with their projects. It is also understandable in the context of the course, where students are granted autonomy for their learning, being treated as junior social researchers. In the 2011 Nathan offering of this course, 100% of ratings are positive across all questionnaire items, with highlights being engagement with learning (4.8/5), receiving helpful feedback (4.8/5), and the effectiveness of the teacher (4.8/5). Overall, this course scored a rating of 6.5/7, putting it well into the top 25% rated courses of similar size and group. The open-ended comments made by students give an insight into their high level of satisfaction with the course design and learning experiences: "both the lecturer and tutor are excellent communicators. The assessment was paced well and it felt as though a natural progression of attained skills could be applied. It was also a very useful course for further study and research focused jobs"; and, "I enjoyed designing and focusing on my own research topic. The step-by-step approach taken throughout the teaching and assessment is like a 'how to' guide on designing and conducting a research project. The feedback after each stage is excellent in developing further skills for the next step".

In Fall Semester, 2015, I implemented my own assessment of the large first year course I taught, 'Introduction to Globalization'. Having just begun teaching at SDU, student feedback allowed me to gauge how my teaching style was received, and how the course teaching and assessment could be improved in the future. Once again, the open-ended comments demonstrate student enthusiasm for my teaching style, for my capacity to explain difficult concepts and theories, and for my ability to engage and include students in an active learning environment. For example, when asked what they found valuable and enjoyable in the course, students responded: 'The discussions and open debates in class were a good way to actively get involved in the lesson. The powerpoints were always on point, and a great starting point for studying and taking notes. Always fun and easy to pay attention'; 'You are a very inspiring teacher'; 'Your creative way of teaching – love it!'; and, 'Your humour, your energy, and helpfulness when working with our papers'.

For me, the pedagogic lessons suggested by these evaluations is clear: *students value structured autonomy, an experienced and knowledgeable lecturer who also values student knowledge and experience as the basis for learning, a lecturer who can give specific, helpful feedback to work with students in improving their work, and a classroom environment where lecturer and students are engaged in the collective practice of learning*.

3)Authorship of traditional and flexible learning resources.

The capacity to translate my international reputation in cultural sociological research to the classroom setting is not only evident in courses like 'Research in Sociology' and 'Advanced Market Anthropology', but is also made clear by the recent publication of the text *Cultural Sociology. An Introduction*, for Wiley-Blackwell in 2012. The text was conceptualized, planned and proposed to Wiley-Blackwell by myself and Prof. Andy Bennett. In addition, we used our strong international contacts – I recruited the two North American authors, Assoc. Prof. Ron Jacobs from SUNY at Albany and Prof. Laura Edles from California State University – to assemble a highly respected and experienced team of authors, all esteemed in their particular fields of research. In addition, we recruited a further staff member, Dr Margaret Gibson from Griffith Humanities, onto the author team. This is the first comprehensive student textbook in the field of cultural sociology, especially notable for assembling a genuinely international team of excellent researchers for its authorship, and for its origination at Griffith. In addition, during 2010-2011, I revised the Open Universities Australia course guide for the course SGY250 'Material Culture and Commodity Culture', with an extra written unit on the ethics of consumption added along with a series of additional flexible and blended learning resources.

4)Postgraduate and Higher Degree Research supervision.

I have a successful record of attracting, mentoring, and graduating HDR, MA and BA (Hons) students, in total being

involved in the successful supervision of 8 PhD, 4 MA dissertations and 7 Honours dissertations. At Syddansk Universitet, I have already graduated over 15 Masters student projects, and 15 Bachelors projects. One of my strengths as a supervisor is to encourage students at all levels to convert their research into conference and journal papers.