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SOME STRATEGIES FOR THE CLASSROOM (AND BEYOND)

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“He who reviews the old and yet knows the new is [fit to be] a teacher.” Confucius

“The whole art of teaching is only the art of awakening the natural curiosity of young minds for the purpose of satisfying it afterwards.” Anatole France

“There is no defense, except stupidity, against the impact of a new idea.” P.W. Bridgeman

I. Introduction

The question I have been asked to address in this volume is a simple one: What is the most effective way to teach non-Asian students about Asia? The answer, however, is quite complicated. In the first place, teaching is an intensely personal activity, subject to the unique requirements of time, place and audience. No two classroom situations are the same, and no two instructors approach their material in exactly the same way. Each class has its own “personality,” its own “chemistry,” indeed, its own “culture.” The culture of the classroom—like culture in general—is marked by both fundamental similarities and significant differences. On the one hand, teachers and students occupy the same basic physical and intellectual space: They are all involved in the exploration of a certain topic or topics, at a certain hour, in a certain room, using a certain language (or languages). Yet each of them comes from a significantly different background—whether ethnic, geographical, socio-economic, educational or generational. They all have different strengths and weaknesses, and they all harbor different hopes, fears and expectations. The greater the cultural differences within a classroom, the greater the challenge for both teacher and student. Fortunately, this challenge affords unusually rich opportunities for genuine cross-cultural understanding. Indeed, my basic argument in this chapter is that a sensitivity to the question of “difference” should be as important to our teaching as it is to our scholarship. The keys to pedagogical success, I firmly believe, are to be acutely aware of all kinds of cultural differences, to remain open to the many possibilities that each new teaching situation presents, to entertain new ideas, to experiment with new approaches, and, above all, not to fear failure.

Effective teaching involves constant learning—not only about our specific areas of specialization (and the new technologies available for accessing and transmitting various kinds of specialized knowledge), but also about our students and ourselves. To put the matter somewhat differently, our notions about teaching should constantly be in flux. There is, after all, no single model for successful teaching, nor even a single definition of pedagogical “success.” Overly rigid formulas for teaching are, in my opinion, prescriptions for disaster.

Obviously no one person's classroom experience, however substantial, can provide an adequate guide for another's. At best, a given teacher's reflections may reveal a certain number of options to consider. My plan in this chapter is to draw upon some thirty years of teaching about Asia, in the hope that some of what I have learned—some of the ways I have come to think about my profession and material, and some of the specific techniques I have used to convey this material to Western students—will prove useful to other teachers, not as architectural “blueprints,” but rather as raw ideas to be refined or rejected. I am, as the Chinese might say, “tossing out a brick to attract jade” (*pao zhuan yin yu*).

Perspectives

The pedagogical reflections in this chapter come from a variety of sources, both personal and academic. From the standpoint of research, I have read a great deal of the scholarly literature on college-level teaching—much of which is now readily available on the world-wide web. [1] I have also read a number of more or less “popular” articles on the subject, including Mark Edmundson's fascinating piece on liberal education as “lite entertainment” in the *Harper's Magazine* (September, 1997). In addition, I have studied several documents devoted expressly to improving college-level instruction in the United States—notably “Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities” (1998). [2] This comprehensive manifesto is based on a three-year study undertaken by the Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates and sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. I have also drawn substantially upon the excellent work of Rice University's Ad Hoc Curriculum Review Committee, [3] which recently (December 4, 1997) identified the following goals as generally “appropriate for undergraduate education” in America:

- Competence in critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, and problem-solving.
- Interdisciplinary work.
- An understanding of cultural diversity within America and throughout the contemporary world.
- Development of a coherent framework for ongoing intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic growth.
- An ability to work collaboratively.
- Familiarity with a range of new technologies related to learning.

From the standpoint of personal experience, I have taught in five different institutions of “higher learning” over the past thirty years—three in the United States (a community college, two state universities and a private university) and two abroad (one, a Sino-British university in Hong Kong, where I taught only Chinese students, and the other, a Japanese university, where I taught only non-Japanese students). I have never taught in Europe. Thus, although I am relatively comfortable discussing what American undergraduate students want and expect from their teachers, I can say very little about the desires and expectations of European students.

For the past twenty-six years I have taught Asian history to a group of highly motivated but predominantly non-Asian students (a ratio of approximately 3:1 in most of my recent classes) at Rice University. From 1992-1994, a colleague in French Studies and I conducted bi-weekly faculty workshops at Rice on teaching—sessions in which we paid a great deal of attention to the problem of introducing students (and faculty) to “foreign” cultures, and in which we learned a great deal about how our colleagues operate in their classrooms. I have read literally thousands of teaching evaluations during my career as a college instructor, including not only my own, but also those of many colleagues, whom I have had to evaluate for various departmental and university standing committees, including the Committee on Undergraduate Teaching and the Committee on Promotions and Tenure. I have also spoken with a great many students about teaching, particularly during my five years as Master of Hanszen College (1982-1987), when I lived in a house on campus and ate three meals a day with a hundred or more of them, 5-7 days each week. In addition, I have conducted a number of recent informal surveys of undergraduate students, both at home (primarily Rice University) and abroad (primarily Kyushu University).

These surveys have been especially helpful in shaping my thinking about this chapter. In them, I asked the following questions to about 125 students:

- In general, what qualities do you value most in a teacher?
- What qualities do you dislike most in a teacher?
- What classroom techniques are most effective in transmitting information and encouraging critical reflection?
- What techniques are least effective?
- What are the special problems involved in learning about a “foreign” culture?
- How, in your view, can these problems be overcome or at least minimized?
- What kinds of in-class and out-of-class assignments are most effective, given these problems?

The answers to these questions were remarkably consistent, despite significant differences in the students’ countries of origin, gender, and educational backgrounds. Moreover, they conformed closely to the impressions I have gained over the years from reading my own teaching evaluations, and those of my colleagues.

The qualities students seem to value most in teachers are the following: intelligence and insight, mastery of the subject matter, clarity of presentation, the use of effective examples, responsiveness (openness and open-mindedness), consistency, enthusiasm and creativity. Many students indicated that they appreciated warmth and/or a sense of humor, and most wanted the instructor to take a genuine interest in them (and to know them by name). As one respondent put the matter:

The best teachers are interested in their students. Being very knowledgeable about their subject is important, but it is better for a teacher to have gaps in his/her knowledge and be very interested in helping the students learn about the subject than it is for him/her to be extremely knowledgeable and care little about the

process the students are going through to learn. If the teacher is interested in the subject and interested in helping the students learn about the subject, they will most likely get a lot out of the class.

What students dislike most in teachers is a lack of enthusiasm, lack of preparation, lack of clarity, narrow-mindedness, impatience, rigidity, aloofness, arrogance, and above all, a lack of concern—particularly, a failure to appreciate their personal needs, desires, interests and different levels of preparation and ability. A number of students also disparaged instructors who “fail to listen,” and “do not know who I am.”

Not surprisingly, there was no consensus among the respondents as to which teaching methods were most effective. Some students felt that since different instructors had different skills, the most reasonable approach was for them to use the method(s) at which each excelled. Others pointed out that different teaching techniques had to be used in order to accommodate different kinds of learning abilities. Most students favored discussions, but only if they were well-structured, well-run, and if all the class members did the reading. Lectures are only effective, most felt, if they were well-crafted, well-illustrated and delivered in an enthusiastic and interesting manner.

Several American and European students who are presently studying (or who have previously studied) in Japan remarked on the tendency for Japanese instructors to rely almost exclusively on straight lectures. According to one such individual, who studied in Japan on two different occasions, and who graduated with a major in Anthropology and Asian Studies at Rice several years ago, fundamental differences in the way Japanese and American students approach learning help to explain this tendency. “Americans,” she writes, “like their agency acknowledged.” For them, learning is very “personal experience;” they “do not share the Japanese trust of authority and institutions in general.” Japanese students, by contrast, presume a higher degree of consensus among role models and authority figures and thus [are] not torn by conflicting ideas in the same way [that Americans’ are]. This frees them to focus more clearly and with a higher degree of confidence [in their instructors] Americans are more demanding, or perhaps demanding in a different way. They want to be taken seriously as thinkers. Like all broad comparisons, this portrait may be somewhat overdrawn, but it reminds us that cultural factors invariably affect pedagogy, and that they must always be taken into account in choosing teaching methods and strategies.

In addition to lectures and discussions, other classroom techniques regularly identified as effective by students include the creative use of audio-visual materials, including those available on the internet, collaborative learning (group work), and simulation (role-playing). Before turning to these and other pedagogical devices, I would like to give some explicit attention to the special problems involved in teaching European and American students about the Asian “Other.”

II. Issues and Approaches

Why teach about the “Other” in the first place? What do we want to achieve, and how? As purveyors of “foreign” material our basic goal should be to enhance the ability of our students to deal creatively and self-confidently with previously unfamiliar cultures, and to convey to them the sense of discovery, excitement and intellectual satisfaction that comes with encountering and understanding people whose values are significantly different than their own.

The benefits should be made clear to them. In the first place, from a purely pragmatic standpoint, politicians and other decision-makers need to recognize that “thin understandings of other cultures make bad policy, bad trade, bad neighbors.” [4] Furthermore, in a world where political, social and moral issues stemming from cultural diversity increasingly arise not only *between* societies but also *within* them, we need to promote a greater measure of cultural sensitivity in order to deal effectively with these issues.

From a more humanistic perspective, as Devon G. Peña reminds us, “the knowledge, values, and traditions of ethnic peoples . . . [can only] strengthen the overall richness and vitality of collective human knowledge.” [5] Clifford Geertz argues, in a similar vein, that the greater the reach of our minds—that is, the broader the “range of signs we can manage somehow to interpret” in our effort to understand the cultural ways of “other” people—the more expansive and rich our own “intellectual, emotional and moral space” will become.” [6] At the same time, sympathetic engagement with the Other defamiliarizes what may appear to be normative. That is, an honest effort to appreciate the way “alien” cultures see the world provides students with fresh perspectives on their own societies. The more they can understand what it is like to be the “other,” the more likely they are to understand themselves. George Marcus and Michael Fischer put the point this way: “Cross-cultural [comparisons] . . . have an important role to play in carrying out projects of repatriated ethnography, in defining novel approaches to taken-for-granted domestic phenomena, in framing questions, and in suggesting alternatives or possibilities among domestic subjects that are only revealed by comparative contrast with other cultural material.” [7]

Ways of Worldmaking

There are many different routes to cross-cultural understanding. One particularly useful approach, at least in my experience, is to focus on what Nelson Goodman refers to as “ways of world-making,” or what Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann describe as “the social construction of reality”—that is, the way groups of people (“cultures”) arrange things, ideas and activities into coherent systems of meaning. The fundamental assumption underlying this approach is that an understanding of another culture requires a genuine appreciation of how the people in that culture view the world—how they are socialized to accept a certain vision of the way things are, and the way things ought to be. [8] The question then becomes: What sort of cultural logic determines whether something in a given society is perceived as “natural,” “right,” “beautiful” or “true”?

To be sure, culture is neither static nor monolithic; it varies over time, across space, and according to factors such as age, social class, gender and ethnicity. Cultural categories are constantly contested, erased, invented and reinvented. Moreover, the larger the cultural entity, the more problematic questions of categorization become. In a provocative recent article, titled “Is Chinese Culture Distinctive?,” Andrew Nathan, a political scientist, expresses doubts that “hermeneutical” (impressionistic) claims for widely acknowledged “national” characteristics can be sustained by rigorous empirical investigation. [9]

Coming at the problem from another direction, Milan Kundera writes in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*: “Insofar as it is possible to divide people into categories, the surest criterion is the deep-seated desires that orient them to one or another life-long activity. Every Frenchman is different. But all actors the world over are similar—in Paris, Prague, or the back of beyond.” [10]

Despite such questions and qualifications, I would argue that within any given self-defined social group—regardless of its size and geographical spread—there are certain broadly shared perceptions, values, and inclinations that provide its members with a collective identity or orientation. This notion of “sameness” helps the group make sense of difference. As Marshall Sahlins points out, “In order for [cultural] categories to be contested . . . there must be a common system of intelligibility, extending to the grounds, means, modes, and issues of disagreement.” How, he asks, could a society function, and how could any knowledge of it could be constituted, if there were not some meaningful order in the differences? In Sahlins’ words: “If in regard to some given event or phenomenon the women of a community say one thing and the men another, is it not because men and women have different positions in, and experience of, the same social universe of discourse?” [11]

A number of Asian scholars have bitterly criticized this notion of culture, accusing its exponents of contributing to various “totalizing” and “essentializing” orientalist projects, including the rise of “academic modernization theory” and “imperialist development policy.” It has been blamed for creating a “neat divide between ‘Oriental’ culture and ‘Western’ reason,” and for providing “the most convenient” explanation for the “willful backwardness and irrationality [of so-called traditional societies] in the face of rapid global modernization.” In the view of critics such as Judith Farquhar and James Hevia, this sort of “reification” of ideas and values, which they blame on the theories of Talcott Parsons and others, has led to a “static and stagnant” conception of culture which justifies Western aggression and represents imperialism as “a salvation project.” [12]

I do not believe that all, or even most, of those who have employed this so-called Parsonian notion of culture in their academic writing are guilty of such crimes. Nor am I convinced that the long-positing relationship between ideas, values, intentions, ideologies and other forms of consciousness on the one hand and human behavior or “action” on the other is wrong-headed. One can, I believe, position culture in what Farquhar and Hevia refer to as “the materiality (and messiness) of everyday life” without disengaging it entirely from the realm of thought or creating a “static and stagnant model” of Asian societies. [13]

Putting motives, materiality and messiness aside, this much seems evident: Most college students give very little thought to the systems of meaning that shape their lives. They seldom ask, for example: How do such systems come into being and how do they evolve? How do we learn about them and internalize their messages? Do competing systems of meaning exist and, if so, how are conflicts and contradictions resolved? To what extent do my own particular “ways of world-making” affect the way I approach other cultures? Here are some additional questions we might ask our students to consider from the standpoint of their own society and others, keeping in mind the variables noted above:

- How is knowledge organized? What are the primary categories of cultural concern? How are things “named” and arranged, or renamed and rearranged? What realms of knowledge are especially prized?
- What is the relationship between language and thought? What are the dominant symbolic structures and forms of communication in the culture?
- How does geography influence culture? How do cultures organize space? How do the people of a given culture view “the other?”
- How is time conceived and measured? How do cultures view their own history? How is “history” distinguished from “myth” (or is it)? Who are the historical heroes and villains of any given society, and why are they viewed in this way?
- How is government organized? How is it justified? How is it viewed by society at large? What is the place and purpose of law?
- How is society organized? What legal, moral and cosmological assumptions inform the social order? What are the dominant moral values of the society? Where do they come from? How are they expressed and/or reinforced? Are they related? Do they ever come into conflict? What are the mechanisms of social control?
- What are the organizing principles and basic assumptions of religious life? What role(s) does religion play in the society?
- What are the major categories of art? What sort of a vocabulary exists for talking about aesthetics? What sorts of artworks are especially prized? Why?
- What are the major categories of literature? Which forms of literature are most prized? Why?
- What are the most important rituals of the society (both secular and sacred)? How do people enjoy themselves (amusements, games, etc.)? What are the major holidays or festivals? Why are they important?

Questions of this sort lend themselves not only to illuminating comparisons between various Asian and Western cultural values, but also to fruitful comparisons between two or more Asian civilizations—for example, China and Japan. Such comparisons might be relatively narrowly focused—for instance an analysis of gender issues in the novels *Tale of Genji* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*—or they might deal with broad issues of historical change, such as the complex relationship between imperialism, nationalism and modernization in nineteenth and twentieth century China and Japan.

Orientalism and Representations of the “Other”

The problem with such comparisons, as hinted at above, is that they seem to suggest—at least to some scholars—an “Orientalist” mentality, either in their “reification” of Asian cultural values or in their apparent acceptance of Western categories of concern. According to Edward Said, Orientalism may be defined as a discourse about “the East” constructed by “the West.” [14] In the eyes of Said and his followers, Orientalism has served as an instrument of imperialist power, supporting colonial enterprises and paternalistic privileges. By dividing the world into the “Orient” and the “Occident,” Westerners, including well-intentioned scholars, have “essentialized” (i.e. stereotyped) Asian civilizations, denying them their own voice, obliterating their self-identified national and/or regional characteristics, and stigmatizing them collectively as “unchanging,” corrupt, despotic, and so forth. Orientalism as a Eurocentric construction thus implicitly or explicitly asserts the “superiority” of Western civilization.

Since the question of Orientalism looms so large on the horizons of Asia specialists, it should probably be addressed straightforwardly in the classroom. Said has identified a set of four conditions without which Orientalism could not have occurred in the West: (1) European expansion into Asia; (2) the “sympathetic identification” of Western observers, including scholars, with Asian cultures; (3) an impulse on the part of Westerners to classify nature and man into new conceptual categories; and (4) the emergence of a comparative history that grew out of Western contact with Eastern civilizations. Imperialism, in other words, created a way of looking at the world that placed Europe at both the center and the apex, in a position to dominate other people not only militarily and economically but also intellectually.

There is much worth pondering in Said’s interpretation, although it certainly has not gone unchallenged. Some scholars—many of them Asia specialists, and a number of them Asians—have criticized Said for oversimplifying an extremely complex historical process, and for failing to acknowledge that Western scholarship on Asia has become increasingly more rigorous, empirically grounded, and methodologically sophisticated during the twentieth century. [15] Others have pointed out that Orientalism has never been a purely Western invention, and that the Asian people subjected to Western imperialism were not as “silent” or as “incapable of representing themselves,” as Said has asserted. In the words of Arif Dirlik, “from the beginning Asians participated in the construction of the orient.” Thus, Orientalism must be viewed more broadly as “a problem in Asian modernities,” not simply “a problem in Euro-American modernity.” [16] Considered from this angle, the contemporary “self-orientalization” of Asian intellectuals, which Dirlik discusses at length, appears not as a manifestation of powerlessness, but as a sign of newly acquired power.

Students should be encouraged to take part in such discussions and debates. One focal point might be the issue of how, or even whether, it is possible to establish and transmit cultural understanding across boundaries of language, culture, space and time. A forum on “Universalism and Relativism in Asian Studies,” published in the 1991 *Journal of Asian Studies*, provides a convenient point of departure for this kind of debate. In his “Introduction,” David Buck identifies “cultural relativism” and “evaluative universalism” as the two most common interpretive paradigms in the field of Asian studies.

Cultural relativism grows out of skepticism over “whether any conceptual tools exist to understand and interpret human behavior and meaning in ways that are intersubjectively valid.” Said, influenced by Michel Foucault and other “post-modern” thinkers, puts the matter this way:

The real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything or whether any and all representations, because they are representations, are embedded first in the language, and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer. [17]

Evaluative universalism, by contrast, is predicated on the possibility of intersubjective understanding based on “objective” standards of rationality and truth. [18]

Is there, then, no middle ground between an imperialistic projection of the self onto the Other and a complete denial of the self as a valid perspective from which to view the Other? The literary critic Zhang Longxi believes that there is. He refers to this conceptual space as one of “mutual illumination and enrichment,” comparable to what Hans-Georg Gadamer has called a “fusion of horizons.” Drawing upon the famous exchange between the Chinese philosophers Zhuangzi and Hui Shi on a bridge over the Hao River (in which the former claims that although he is not a fish he can still “know what fish enjoy”), Zhang suggests that meaningful cross-cultural understanding “can come from a genuine appreciation of the equal capabilities of different individuals, peoples and nations.” [19] But how, realistically, can we reach this sort of appreciation and understanding—especially if Orientalism is as big a problem as some scholars insist? One approach, advocated by the ever-provocative Wendy Doniger, is to assume “the self in the Other” as an initial step, and then to “go over to the other side,” and thus to “end up with difference.” The key point, Doniger emphasizes, is that “similarity must not be allowed to become normative.” She writes:

The challenge [of meaningful cross-cultural comparisons] lies in choosing as the Other in whom we assume an initial likeness an Other as other as possible, as different from us as possible, perhaps one we don’t like or understand at all at first and have to work hard to like or understand. The comparison that chooses an Other in which the initial likeness is more immediately apparent is more ethnocentric; it is easier, and ultimately it proves less. [20]

One concrete way to promote a sympathetic understanding of “difference” on the part of students is to encourage them to assume the point of view of the Asian “Other” whenever possible. For example, in both group activities and individual assignments, they can be urged to imagine themselves at a certain place and time (either “at home” or “abroad”), with a particular outlook informed by a specific (self-selected?) philosophical or religious orientation, as well as a certain age, gender, and social status. The students can then respond “authentically,” but in diverse ways, to a given idea, issue, image or artifact. This sort of consciousness-raising exercise, which has the virtue of revealing tensions and divisions within a given culture, can also be directed toward a project of deeper cross-

cultural understanding. Instead of accepting Orientalist constructions of Asian societies, students can engage in the opposite process: an Asian critique of the “other.” Thus, for instance, an instructor might ask each of them for an authentic “Chinese” or a “Japanese” evaluation of a “foreign” painting, poem, person, historical event or story.

III. Classroom Approaches

One of the most important initial steps in teaching students about an alien culture is to find out what they actually know and think about it. This involves not simply discovering what they have previously been taught (or not taught) in the classroom, but also what they have “picked up” in the course of living their lives—“facts” (both right and wrong), prejudices, stereotypes (positive and negative), etc. In short, teachers need to know “where their students are coming from” (as Americans like to say). At the same time, students need, or at least want, to know about their professors—their backgrounds, their personal and professional lives, and even their past and present research. Above all, students need to know what the expectations of the instructor are.

Ideally, as a matter of simple fairness, education should involve some sort of negotiation between the expectations of the teacher and those of the student. Indeed, an entire class period might profitably be devoted to a discussion of what the students hope to get out of the course, and what the professor expects to achieve. If undertaken in a spirit of openness and accommodation, both the students and the instructor stand to gain significantly from such an exchange of views.

This spirit of negotiation facilitates “active learning,” which authorities such as Chet Myers and Thomas Jones consider to be the most productive approach to education. An overwhelming body of research indicates that students learn best by doing, that when they are involved in activities that lead them to discuss, question and clarify course content, they retain the material better and are trained to think more carefully and critically. And if students are encouraged by teachers to give expression to their experiences and outlook, they can begin to see themselves as active participants in a course rather than simply passive recipients of pre-packaged knowledge. This approach also has the advantage of linking the class material in a concrete way to their lives—another important feature of effective education in the eyes of students and experts alike. One concrete means of involving students in a class is to ask them how they would respond to a certain issue from the standpoint of their own upbringing, or in terms of the disciplinary perspective represented by their major. In discussing childhood socialization, for example, the instructor might ask the students to remember the stories they grew up with, asking: What you think the messages of these stories were about at the time, and what do you think about them now? A historian might ask sociology majors (or anthropology majors, or religious studies majors) how their discipline would view material that had just been presented from an historical viewpoint.

Course content itself can be considered in terms of a constant “negotiation” between various dichotomies, including gender differences, elite and popular culture, global and local perspectives, theory and practice, orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and past and present.

The instructor must also negotiate a path between facts and interpretations, between generalization (an emphasis on “similarities”) and particularization (an emphasis on “differences”), between “inner” and “outer” perspectives, and between encouraging cultural sensitivity and provoking cultural critique. Similarly, one’s approach to structuring the classroom learning environment might be considered in terms of finding the right balance between tried and true formulas and creative experiments, between structure and spontaneity, between authority and challenges to it, between objectivity and subjectivity, and between the needs of individuals and the needs of the group. One’s research interests naturally affect one’s approach to teaching, and students deserve to know the various ways in which this may be true. It is also important, I think, to bring our most recent work to the class in some form, at least occasionally, in order to show the students exactly what we do, how we do it, and how our own research relates to larger interpretive problems in the field. We should be careful, however, not to allow our research methodology to undermine the creative tension provoked by the dichotomies noted above. For example, in my own published work on Chinese culture—which includes various books and articles on calendrical science, classical literature, popular almanacs, ritual, cartography, cosmology, divination, and religion—I tend more toward the generalizing than the particularizing side of the interpretive spectrum. But precisely for this reason, I periodically challenge my own generalizations in class, and encourage my students to do the same. Nothing, I have found, is quite as successful in fostering a critical attitude on the part of the students as a vigorous critique of one’s own work.

The Lecture Format

Lecturing does not of itself contribute to active learning. Students tend to like lectures (at least interesting ones) primarily because they normally require nothing of them except the appearance of alertness. Lectures can, however, serve as an efficient means of conveying information and of developing a systematic argument. They can also provide ways of linking research concretely with teaching. Moreover, if carefully constructed, lectures can prompt further reflection and investigation. What constitutes an effective lecture? Here are some commonly reiterated criteria summarized from the student surveys:

- lectures should be well organized and clearly delivered (an outline written on the board or distributed to the students helps)
- lectures should challenge students to think
- lecturers should be dynamic and enthusiastic
- lecturers should be knowledgeable about the subject matter
- lecturers should entertain questions and comments, either during the lecture or at the end
- lectures should be complemented by illustrations and other materials

This last point is especially important, because area specialists often underestimate the degree to which the cultures they teach remain truly “alien” to non-natives. Students who have not grown up in a given cultural environment need to familiarize themselves with its physical features and material products as thoroughly as possible, not only to increase their understanding but also to enhance their appreciation. This is, of course, one of the

most important benefits of study abroad. But foreign access to a culture is always incomplete—all the more so for students who have just begun their overseas stay. It is important, therefore, to place them in constant proximity to the culture under consideration, not only through field trips (see below) and conventional oral and written materials (including illustrative anecdotes, which students seem to value greatly, especially if drawn from personal experience), but also through the creation of a self-consciously “sensual” environment in the classroom.

In other words, students need to see, hear, and touch the physical world of the “other,” and to have it explained to them systematically. This means that instructors should consider using films, slides, overhead projections, music (tapes and CDs), videotapes and authentic artifacts of various sorts (e.g. scrolls, books, maps, posters, calligraphy materials, religious items, coins, etc.) in their classrooms. Visual, aural, and tactile experiences can thus serve as a useful and most welcome complement to lectures, discussions, and texts.

A related problem in dealing with “alien” material is the mastery of new terms and concepts. Area specialists, for whom the vocabulary is, of course, not foreign at all, can easily fail to appreciate the magnitude of this problem in their lectures. Some students will say that the best solution is to keep foreign terms to a minimum, but others think that the most fruitful approach in lectures is not to avoid such terms, but rather to focus directly on them, and to explain them fully. In the words of one respondent: “Constant attention to language difficulties can help [to overcome the special problems in learning about a ‘foreign’ culture].” The instructor should “provide lots of examples of terms, discuss their derivation and use, and show why they are so important to the other culture.” In this view, which I believe is fundamentally the correct one, language differences should be emphasized rather than neglected, for it is in the realms of vocabulary and terminology that the most powerful illustrations of cultural difference often appear. In addition, once students acquire a basic familiarity with terms and concepts, they become much more comfortable in asking questions and participating in discussions.

Discussions and Debates

Many students have pointed out that discussions serve as a useful, some would say essential, complement to lectures. In the words of one: The best classes I’ve had are those which combine lectures with small discussion groups. By attending lectures for a couple of weeks and then breaking off into small groups, the material really comes alive, and everyone gets a chance to talk (as compared to the whole class discussion).

Generally speaking, discussions are most effective in groups of fifteen students or less. They are also most effective when the students read the assigned material before class. One method of encouraging them to do so is to call upon them randomly during the discussion. Another is to devise questions that the students will have an incentive to

engage; for example, topics that might appear soon on a written examination. Yet another method is to have a discussion immediately after a short quiz.

A discussion is only as good as the question asked or the issue addressed. In my experience, the most fruitful topics are those that students can identify with personally: imagined business or diplomatic situations; legal conflicts; policy debates; intellectual arguments; moral dilemmas; disagreements over aesthetics; cultural misunderstandings; etc. One fruitful way to activate (and empower) students is to encourage them to suggest their own discussion topics.

Sometimes classroom discussions work best when the focus is on broad and relatively abstract questions, like the relationship between “generalizing,” “essentializing,” and “stereotyping.” Other situations require more concrete topics. For example: Suppose you are in charge of an advertising campaign targeting “Chinese” customers in Mainland China. Your product is “x.” Wanting to reach the broadest possible market, and able to afford only one kind of outdoor advertisement, what sorts of slogans and symbols would you employ? Why? Now suppose you are targeting “Chinese” customers with the same ad not only in Mainland China but also in Taiwan. Would the ad look the same? If not, how would it be different? What if the ad also had to target “Chinese” customers in the United States?” Would it still look the same? Similar questions could be asked to test the limits of, say, “East Asia” as a concept. Are there any slogans or symbols that would resonate throughout the region?

Aside from the choice of a topic, the major problem with discussions is that the instructor must be careful not to structure them too much or to allow them to become too instructed. Too much structure constrains the students, but too little infuriates them—especially if a few students are allowed to dominate the discussion, or if the point at issue evaporates or becomes trivialized. Another problem is in establishing the proper mood for discussions. Some instructors prefer a harmonious, collegial environment; others favor a more contentious, highly charged atmosphere. Much depends on the chemistry of the classroom—that is, the collective nature of the students and the individual style of the instructor. Personally, I enjoy debates, but one has to be constantly vigilant, making sure that remarks do not become too personal and that the debate does not become too one-sided. Students must learn how to disagree in a civil and respectful manner.

Readings

Readings, like discussions, can be structured in a variety of ways, depending on the type of course taught and the special needs of the instructor. In my own experience, written materials are most effective when placed in some sort of conversation, if not outright debate. Disagreements might revolve around issues of contemporary scholarship (methodology, ideology, etc.), or around differing “native” viewpoints as expressed in primary materials. Collections of translated documents are particularly useful for conveying Asian perspectives, but first-hand accounts written by Western sojourners can also be valuable if used with care. Although many such works reveal significant Orientalist biases, and some display overt racism, they are useful, in part, precisely for the prejudices that they display.

Collaborative Learning

As authorities such as David and Roger Johnson have noted, many studies (well over a hundred) show that collaborative learning promotes higher individual achievement than either competitive or individualistic learning—results that obtain for both verbal tasks (such as reading, writing, and orally presenting) and mathematical tasks. These studies also indicate that cooperation promotes “greater intrinsic motivation to learn, more frequent use of cognitive processes such as reconceptualization, higher-level reasoning, metacognition, cognitive elaboration, and networking, and greater long-term maintenance of the skills learned.” [21]

After becoming aware of this research, I began using various collaborative methods in my own classes at Rice University. One approach has been to build gradually a broad consensus on a given issue or problem. This involves dividing the class into several groups, each of which elects a spokesperson to convey its opinions. The task of each group is to reach a consensus regarding an answer to a given question, from which we then work toward a broad consensus of the class as a whole. Usually I write on the blackboard the major points made by each of the spokespersons, in order to highlight similarities and differences. Although ostensibly designed to produce a consensus, this exercise invariably reveals the tensions that emerge out of the preliminary group discussions, leading eventually to a dismantling or “deconstruction” of the consensus. Sometimes the students see the conflicts right away; on other occasions I have to point them out.

In the case of the exercise noted in Appendix “A”, our collaborative effort to identify ten “special characteristics” of American society generally produces a rough consensus on certain points (e.g. the themes of capitalism, democracy, equality, and “rule of law,” for instance), but it also often provokes a vigorous student critique of the gap between theory and practice in these aspects of American life. Furthermore, it usually leads to an indictment of American pride (arrogance), individualism (selfishness), aggressiveness (imperialism), and materialism (greed).

Another cooperative strategy is to encourage group research projects and group presentations. My colleague in Anthropology, Professor Benjamin Lee, and I have used this approach in our team-taught undergraduate course on contemporary Chinese culture. About halfway through the semester (after the assignment of two preliminary research papers), we ask the students to organize into groups of 5-6 persons each in order to investigate collaboratively, and then report collectively, upon a significant cultural debate. The members of the group must not only choose the general problem they want to research together, but also decide on an equitable division of labor for the project. For example, some students will want to concentrate primarily on research; others will prefer to write papers and/or create and maintain a group website; still others will decide to do more work on the final oral presentation, which is required of each group in the last few weeks of the semester. After a group topic has been approved, each team provides the instructors with a general outline of the project, a preliminary list of sources to be

consulted, and a description of the anticipated division of labor. From this time onward, students are required to keep personal journals, which record their discoveries and reflections, as well as their interactions with other members of the group. Grades are based on the preliminary papers, the final group report (both oral and written), and the individual journals.

Since students are often uncomfortable with the idea of receiving a group grade, the personal journals provide a means of encouraging peer-evaluation as well as a form of self-evaluation. Another evaluative possibility is to create formal peer assessment forms based on models such as those in the journal *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. As Theresa Bulman has noted,

peer assessment . . . works as both peer pressure and as a release valve. Students know going into the project that they will evaluate their peers and be evaluated by them. This causes them (they tell me) to work harder on the project than they might if their grade only were at stake. On the rare occasion when a student does not do a fair share, the other members of the group have an opportunity to reveal that problem. [22]

Professor Lee and I have found that personal journals yield the same basic result.

Techniques of Simulation

One of the best ways for students to empathize with an “alien” culture is to recreate it authentically in the classroom. This is the great virtue of simulation (role-playing). Another obvious virtue is that it promotes “active-learning.”

Perhaps the most stimulating and exciting classroom experiment I have tried in some thirty years of teaching has been the adaptation of Robert Oxnam’s *The Ch’ing Game: History and Simulation* (1972) to my class on traditional Chinese culture. Oxnam invented the Game in order to introduce his students to Chinese history “through both an intellectual and experiential mode.” The players were to be, in other words, more than simply students of Chinese history and culture; they were also to be active participants in the simulated society and government of traditional China during the Ch’ing (Qing) period, 1644-1912.

The great virtue of Oxnam’s Ch’ing Game is that can be played in any number of ways, and it can be adapted to any culture or time period. What follows is a brief summary of the way I have structured the Game in my traditional Chinese culture course. A much more detailed account can be found at the following website:
http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~asia/conference_papers.htm

Preparation for the Game took up much of the course. Early lectures, discussions, papers and exams were devoted to topics such as Chinese political, social and economic institutions, as well as language, philosophy and religion. Later coursework stressed the importance of art, literature, music and other forms of refinement as “cultural capital” in

Ch'ing society. Special sessions were devoted to discussions of Chinese law, bureaucratic behavior, social ritual, and particularistic relationships. All of the lectures, discussions and assignments were designed to prepare the students to play realistic parts in the Ch'ing Game, and to encourage them to think concretely about the reward structure and strategies of advancement in traditional Chinese society.

In an initial note on the Game—part of a special *Handbook* compiled for the students—I discussed the basic organization and aims of the exercise, including Oxnam's idea of "rounds"—each of which represented the passing of three years' time. Special "situation cards" introduced additional variables into the Game. From the instructor's standpoint, the challenge of the Ch'ing Game (or any version of it) is to devise authentic situations that require appropriate responses on the part of specific groups and individuals. The planning (an on-going process) takes a substantial amount of work, but the rewards are commensurate.

Part of my introductory note in the *Handbook* stated: "The point of the Game will be for both individual players and groups (families, clans, cliques, etc.) to improve their position in Ch'ing society by various bureaucratic and extrabureaucratic means. This should not only give the players an active appreciation of the way the traditional Chinese state operated [at a certain place and point in time], but also indicate the importance of informal channels of information and opportunity that existed in Chinese society as a whole." I went on to say that my aim was "to illustrate concretely the dynamics of Chinese political, social, and economic life. By participating in the Game, players should come to appreciate more fully the complexity of Chinese culture, with its intricate web of group affiliations, personal relationships, and codes of conduct. They will see more clearly the problem of reconciling individual interests with those of the larger group, as well as the difficulty of contending with conflicting loyalties and commitments in different social and political circumstances."

Finally, I expressed the hope that the Game would "show the players the many ways in which 'knowledge was power' in traditional Chinese society—how, for example, a knowledge of culture (in the sense of literary ability, artistic refinement, an appreciation of music, etc.) contributed to social and bureaucratic mobility. Players will see how variables such as wealth, education, birth, and personal ties affected behavior, and how intermediaries (ranging from official patrons to matchmakers and "peace-talkers") were essential to most aspects of Chinese life." In short, my aim was to give players in the Game a genuine "feel" for traditional Chinese culture, and an appreciation for its subtlety and sophistication.

In the allocation of roles, I stressed that every role would be challenging and rewarding if played correctly, and I encouraged each student to choose a part that seemed particularly appealing. If more than one person signed up for any single role, the choice would be made by a random draw. Students were allowed to trade roles if they could find someone with whom to switch, in order to maximize their interest. Although this process took some time and organization, it helped to generate an atmosphere of genuine involvement.

Since my classes were fairly large (60-70 students), we decided to play the Ch'ing Game at several levels simultaneously—with a sophisticated imperial court, a metropolitan bureaucracy, and a provincial government, in addition to a local government and two or three individual local lineages. But an equally productive and satisfying Game could be undertaken on a smaller scale at the local level only, focusing primarily on social interaction and lineage competition, or at the metropolitan level, focusing on bureaucratic politics.

Preparation for the Game included the writing of individual papers on various roles, organizations, and systems. Each paper was designed as a reference for all other players (to be placed in the Reserve Reading Room), and was written with this specific purpose in mind. Once again, students were allowed to choose their paper topics from a list of possibilities, as long as all major topics were covered. Under some circumstances, two people were allowed to write on the same subject if they could agree on a fruitful division of labor.

Most students wrote papers on the roles they would be assuming in the Game, while others wrote voluntarily on organizations (such as lineages, villages, guilds, scholarly associations, and secret societies), or systems (such as those of education, examination, law, land tenure, taxation, marketing, communications, local control, the military, ritual, religion, banking, and charity). In order to encourage proper role-playing and to evaluate it fairly, I required all players to keep a personal “diary” of their activities, to be turned in at the end of the semester together with official records, land deeds, money, “gift certificates,” and other relevant documents. This made it possible for each student to reveal his or her interactions with various other players and to explain personal “misfortune.” It also allowed me and my student assistants at our “Game Headquarters” to compare their accounts. Overall, the players responded with diaries of remarkable insight, sensitivity and authenticity.

Other simulation techniques, involving fewer students and therefore less preparation on the part of the instructor, can focus on a specific hypothetical situation—for instance, a scholarly meeting (where poems are exchanged and philosophical conversations take place), or a legal trial, carefully constructed to reflect a number of different interests and points of view. It is also possible to recreate specific historical events (for example, factional struggles during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, 1966-1976) or actual debates (such as the controversy over the “opening” of Japan to the West in the 1850s). Scholarly articles, excerpts from books, and collected translations of documents provide students with the necessary academic grounding, but they should always be encouraged to use their imaginations as well. Indeed, if they read broadly and carefully enough, they can respond creatively to counterfactual situations as well as actual ones.

Use of the Internet

The World Wide Web (WWW) has become, almost overnight, an indispensable source of electronic information, providing unprecedented access to written texts as well as a wealth of astonishingly vivid sights and sounds. E-mail, as one method of information

delivery within this system, serves as a convenient means of mutual communication for teachers and students, as well as a source of immediate contact with scholars and other authorities throughout the world. As the *Boyer Commission Report* makes clear, these new interconnected technologies “will unquestionably change the nature of pedagogy.” The report notes, for example:

Used creatively, electronic communication techniques can . . . be uniquely effective for certain kinds of courses, for example, some of those that have been taught in large lecture sections. Students are able to fit course materials into their own schedules and repeat material as often as desired. Technology provides an alternative context for learning, a context universities need to use. It is also increasingly providing a channel of asynchronous communication between faculty members and students.

The Boyer report goes on to emphasize, however, that “technology cannot be a substitute for direct interactions between human minds”—a point made by many other authorities, including Robert Godwin-Jones, who provides the following guidelines for using technology in the classroom:

- Think pedagogy first, technology second. Don’t do things through technology that are better done face to face.
- Use technology that’s within reach of all students.
- Choose approaches that promote active learning. Computers can automate repetitive and predictable tasks . . . but they can also be used to guide self-discovery.
- Whenever possible use interactivity and multimedia to engage students. Static Web pages provide information to users, interactive pages make users into participants.
- Provide remote access to materials when possible. Our students lead busy, complicated lives. If we can give them the option of working with course materials at a time and place of their convenience, it can make the difference in whether those materials are used effectively or used at all.
- Use technology to help integrate teaching and research. [23]

The main problem with the Internet is that it offers a huge amount of material but provides little in the way of guidance, much less quality control. Fortunately, in recent years a number of publications, many on the WWW, have appeared which not only provide specific ways of dealing with “information overload,” but also offer concrete strategies for using the Web as a teaching tool. An article by my colleague in Latin American Studies at Rice, Professor Patricia Seed, offers one excellent example of the way the Internet can be used to encourage innovative, exciting and active learning. [24]

Here are some basic tips for students drawn from such sources. Overall, using the internet is much like using a library, except that locations (“addresses”) often change, and the date of any given document may be difficult to discern. As a rule, academic resources are the most reliable. The URL (address of a “website”) will show who produced the site, or at

least who posted it. Academic sites include the designation .edu in the URL; .com indicates a commercial site; .gov refers to a government site; .org usually denotes a non-profit organization; and .net refers to a networked service provider. Other “domain” designations include: .arts for cultural and entertainment groups; .firm for businesses; .store for businesses offering goods for purchase; .web for entities emphasizing activities related to the WWW; .and .info for information service providers.

Among the questions to ask of any electronic document are: Is there an author listed? If so, what are the credentials of the author? Is there a bias or a commercial interest in the site? Who is the intended audience? How current is the information? Are references, citations, or links to other resources included?

Search strategies vary, and new search engines appear all of the time. According to one useful document (Rice University; URL: <http://riceinfo.rice.edu/Fondren/Netguides/strategies.html>), last consulted on June 2, 1998:

For a search of many, many Internet resources, choose HotBot. To search resources by subject area, choose Yahoo. To search several WWW indexes at the same time, try MetaCrawler. To locate text files (gopher sites), use Veronica. To locate software, select Archie. To find a telnet address of a library catalog, choose HyTelnet. To browse Internet mailing lists, select Liszt. To search usenet news, try DejaNews. To find an email address, search WhoWhere? To translate a web page from one language to another, try Alta Vista Translation Service. For updates on search engines and their features, go to Search Engine Watch

A few excellent Japan-oriented websites are the following:

Harvard University (Reischauer Institute): <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~rijs>

Stanford University: <http://fuji.stanford.edu/JGUIDE/>

Library of Congress (Japan—A Country Study)

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/jptoc.html>

Useful edited discussion groups, available to “scholars, graduate students and professionals,” include:

H-ASIA: <http://h-net2.msu.edu/~asia/disclist/h-asia/>

H-Japan: <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~asia/disclist/h-japan/>

There is also an on-line publication, the Asian Database Online Community Electronic Newsletter (AsianDOC), which provides a wealth of information on Asia-oriented electronic resources:

<http://asiandoc.lib.ohio-state.edu/v1n2/>

In addition, a useful article titled “Internet Resources on East Asian Studies” is now available at:

<http://www.ala.org/acrl/resjul98.html>

An interesting student-oriented site on Japan (again, one of many) is Lee A. Makela’s homepage at Cleveland State University, in Ohio:

<http://www.csuohio.edu/history/japan/japan.html>

For references that provide guidance in citing electronic sources, see:

The “MLA Guide to Electronic Citation:”

<http://www.cas.usf.edu/english/walker/mla.html>

SUNY-Binghamton’s “Citing Electronic Resources:”

<http://library.lib.binghamton.edu/webdocs/citing.html>

Finally, the Journal of the Association for History and Computing, as its name suggests, exists to promote “the use of computers for historical studies, both in teaching and research. It’s address is:

<http://ssd1.cas.pacificu.edu/history/jahc/jahcindex.htm>

IV. The Pursuit of Local Knowledge

For all the advantages of the world-wide web, there is still nothing like the “feel” of a real cultural site. I will never forget the first time I saw the Great Wall of China or gazed out on Mount Fuji through a Japanese bamboo grove. But I will also never forget the simple pleasure of exploring Beijing’s narrow alleyways, or my delightful chance encounter with a small Shinto shrine near a ceramic shop on a hillside in the town of Karatsu. All kinds of physical locations have potential value: places of awe-inspiring natural beauty, historical monuments, museums, parks, zoos, temples, castles, factories, shopping malls, and sports arenas, as well as private homes, burial sites, commemorative arches, bridges, gardens, and fields of grain. Calligraphic inscriptions—whether written on buildings or boulders—provide important cultural information, and even street signs and advertisements tell revealing tales. I remember how surprised I was, at least initially, to find streets in Taipei, Taiwan, with names such as “Loyalty and Filial Piety Road.” For students studying abroad, field trips are absolutely essential to maximizing their learning experience. Ideally, these trips should be linked to some sort of specific assignment—a paper, a photographic essay, a poem, a painting, a class discussion, etc.

As indicated above, area specialists often take their “area” for granted, and thus fail to appreciate the different ways students may respond (or not respond) to a certain site. For this reason, broad-ranging discussions—before the visit, on-site, and after the visit—should always take place. On the one hand, students need to know what the instructor wants or expects them to see; on the other, they should be encouraged to offer their own personal reflections and cross-cultural insights. Imagine how many different ways there are to think about a religious monument, or an artifact such as the remnants of the wall at Fukuoka built by the Japanese to repel the invading Mongols in the late 13th century. (The modern sign marking this spot refers to the Mongols as the “Yuan [dynasty] bandits,” using the same unflattering character for “bandit” that the Chinese traditionally used to describe the Japanese.)

V. Problems of Evaluating Students (and Ourselves)

As the research of Howard Gardner and others has shown, students have very different strengths among their various learning abilities. Gardner calls these abilities “multiple intelligences.” They are:

- Linguistic intelligence (the capacity to use language—one’s own and perhaps others—to express what’s on your mind and to assist in understanding other people)
- Logical-mathematical intelligence (an understanding of the underlying principles of “causal systems,” and the ability to manipulate numbers, quantities, and operations)
- Spatial intelligence (a knack for recreating the spatial world internally in your mind, either in the arts or in the sciences)
- Kinesthetic intelligence (the capacity to use your whole body or parts of your body to solve a problem, make something, or put on some kind of a production)
- Musical intelligence (the ability to “think in music,” to be able to hear patterns, recognize them, remember them, and perhaps manipulate them)
- Interpersonal intelligence (an understanding of other people)
- Intrapersonal intelligence (an understanding of oneself, the knowledge of who you are, what you can do, what you want to do, how you react to things, which things to avoid, and which things to gravitate toward)
- Naturalist intelligence (the ability to discriminate among living things (plants and animals) as well as sensitivity to other features of the natural world (clouds, rock configurations, etc.).

Effective teaching, including testing, should take into account these different “intelligences.” Although it is clearly not realistic to expect instructors to tailor each lesson or assignment in such a way as to accommodate each specific capability, it is well to consider what might be done for the students in this regard. For instance, my colleague in Chinese Literature, Professor Qian Nanxiu, has at least one assignment per semester in which she asks her students to create a project based on their academic major or personal interest. Thus, for example, a music major might compose a piece based on an event, personality or theme in Chinese poetry or prose.

In a recent interview with Kathy Checkley, Professor Gardner pointed out:

The standard view of intelligence is that intelligence is something you are born with; you have only a certain amount of it; you cannot do much about how much of that intelligence you have; and tests exist that can tell you how smart you are. The theory of multiple intelligences challenges that view [R]ather than one or two intelligences, all human beings have several (eight) intelligences. What makes life interesting, however, is that we don’t have the same strength in each intelligence area, and we don’t have the same amalgam of intelligences. . . . This premise has very serious educational implications. If we treat everybody as if they are the same, we’re catering to one profile of intelligence, the language-logic profile. It’s great if you have that profile, but it’s not great for the vast majority of human beings who do not have that particular profile of intelligence. [25]

In response to the question “How can teachers be guided [by this theory] when creating assessment tools?,” Gardner answered:

We need to develop assessments that are much more representative of what human beings are going to have to do to survive in this society. For example, I value literacy, but my measure of literacy should not be whether you can answer a multiple-choice question that asks you to select the best meaning of a paragraph. Instead, I'd rather have you read the paragraph and list four questions you have about the paragraph and figure out how you would answer those questions. Or, if I want to know how you can write, let me give you a stem and see whether you can write about that topic, or let me ask you to write an editorial in response to something you read in the newspaper or observed on the street.

This is good advice, I think. Even if a society values a “language-logic profile” of intelligence over others, there are still many different ways to test its achievements. In most humanities courses (at least those taught at American universities), the evaluation of students involves a combination of examinations and papers, as well, often, as grades based on class participation and/or oral presentations. The weight attached to each form of evaluation varies substantially, but a common formula for a humanities course might be: two midterms (20% each), a paper (20%) and a final exam (40%). Another formula, taking into account the importance of class discussions, might involve one midterm (20%), a paper (20%), and a final (40%), with class participation counting for 20% of the course grade.

Most students seem to have a clear preference for either papers or examinations as the principal means of evaluation. Ideally, they might be given a choice. A compromise would be to assign one or more of each over the course of a semester. As indicated above, peer evaluation techniques, including journals, are particularly valuable in assessing group projects and simulation exercises. Sometimes I have had my students grade and comment upon their own assignments—although I must admit that most of them are intensely uncomfortable with this particular approach. The advantage is that it causes them to consider the evaluative process much more carefully than they otherwise would.

Papers which allow students to pursue their own interests generally bring out the best performance. Tests provide a useful means of evaluating basic knowledge, but they are often seen by students as capricious and coercive. In my own experience, the most effective way to encourage students to prepare for an exam is to put together six key questions and then choose one randomly by means of a dice throw in class. But whether one relies on papers, exams (oral or written), or a combination of the two, it is well, at least some of the time, to encourage one's students to adopt a “native” viewpoint in responding to questions—a “insider” perspective that, as suggested above, takes into account not only time and place, but also age, class, gender and other social variables.

It seems appropriate to end this discussion with a brief remark on student evaluations of teachers. Poor teachers tend to discount poor evaluations, but there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that student evaluations should be taken seriously. In fact, I find it particularly useful to conduct a mid-semester evaluation, designed to identify and rectify

problems well before the end of the course. Sometimes I simply ask the students on a certain day (usually a bad one!) to tell me directly what they like and dislike about the course; but, as might be expected, the most candid comments tend to appear on anonymous written forms. Questions similar to those put forward at the beginning of this chapter seem to serve the purpose pretty well.

NOTES

1. See, for example, the websites of the following major teaching centers:
 Duke University: <http://www.ctl.duke.edu/>
 Harvard University: http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~bok_cen/
 Indiana University: <http://www.indiana.edu/~teaching/>
 University of Texas-Austin: <http://www.utexas.edu/academic/cte/>
 University of Virginia: <http://minerva.acc.Virginia.EDU:80/~trc/links.htm>
 All of these websites, and those cited below, were accessed for this article during the summer of 1998.
2. [Http://notes.cc.sunysb.edu/Pres/boyer.nsf](http://notes.cc.sunysb.edu/Pres/boyer.nsf)
3. [Http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~currrev/ESv3.html](http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~currrev/ESv3.html)
4. Suzanne Hoeber Rudolph, "The Paradoxes of Transnational Learning," in George Keller, et al., eds., *Changes in the Context for Creating Knowledge* (American Council of Learned Societies Occasional Paper No. 26, 1994), p. 19.
5. See the excellent discussion in Devon G. Peña, "Diversity and Community: Two Views," *Liberal Education*, 76.5 (November/December, 1990).
6. Clifford Geertz, "The Uses of Diversity," *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 25 (1986), p. 113.
7. George Marcus and Michael, Fischer, *Anthropology As Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
8. I have adopted this approach in *China's Cultural Heritage: The Qing Dynasty, 1644-1912* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1994). See also my articles "All Under Heaven: The West and 'the Rest' in Humanistic Education," in Tamar March, ed. *Interpreting the Humanities* (Princeton: Woodrow Wilson Foundation, 1986) and "China and the West: Some Comparative Possibilities." *Liberal Education*, 73.4 (September/October, 1987).
9. Andrew Nathan, "Is Chinese Culture Distinctive—A Review Article," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 52.4 (November, 1993).
10. Cited in Wendy Doniger, *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 46.
11. Marshall Sahlins, "Goodbye to Tristes Tropes: Ethnography in the Context of Modern World History," *Journal of Modern History*, 65 (March, 1993).
12. Judith Farquhar and James Hevia, "Culture and Post-War American Historiography of China," *positions*, 1.2 (1993).
13. I have developed this argument in various works. See, for example, "Mapping China's World: Cultural Cartography in Late Imperial Times," in Wen-hsin Yeh, ed., *Landscape, Culture and Power in Chinese Society* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1998). See also note 8 above.

14. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).
15. ee Philip Huang, "Theory and the Study of Modern Chinese History: Four Traps and a Question," *Modern China*, 24.2 (April, 1998), passim, esp. p. 195.
16. Arif Dirlik, "Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism," *History and Theory*, 35.4 (December, 1996), passim, esp. p. 96.
17. Said (1978), pp. 272-73.
18. Cf. the debates in linguistics over theories of linguistic universalism (e.g. the "transformational grammar" of Noam Chomsky) and linguistic particularity (e.g. the theories of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf).
19. See the introduction to Longxi Zhang, *Mighty Opposites: From Dichotomies to Differences in the Comparative Study of China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).
20. Doniger (1998), p. 34.
21. David Johnson and Roger Johnson, "What We Know About Cooperative Learning at the College Level." *Cooperative Learning*, Vol. 13.3. Reprinted in <http://www2.emc.maricopa.edu/innovation/CCL/whatweknow.html>
22. Bulman, Theresa, "Peer Assessment in Group Work." <http://www.oaa.pdx.edu/CAE/FacultyFocus/spring96/bulman.html>
23. Bob Godwin-Jones, "Ten Ways to Enhance Teaching through Technology." <http://www.vcu.edu/teaching/issue2/TenWays.html>
24. Patricia Seed, "Teaching with the Web: Two Approaches," *Perspectives* (February, 1998). See also Andrew McMichael, "The Historian, the Internet, and the Web: A Reassessment," *Perspectives* (February, 1998) and Charles T. Evans and Robert Brown, "Teaching the History Survey Course Using Multimedia Techniques," *Perspectives* (February, 1998).
25. Kathy Checkley interview with Howard Gardner, *Educational Leadership* Vol. 55, No. 1 (September 1997). Reprinted in <http://odie.ascd.org/pubs/el/sept97/gardnerc.html>

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