WHOSE COURSE IS IT? STUDENTS AS COURSE CO-CREATORS
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Dedicated to my students of French 332, in appreciation of their patience, ideas, and ever increasing levels of engagement. Their cited comments come from a course focus group, classroom assessments, Teaching Analysis Poll, and end-of-semester evaluations.

When someone asks us as teachers what is most frustrating about teaching, we often complain about students' attitudes and the behavior that results from them: students don't care about learning anymore, they don't come to class, or—when they do—they aren't prepared or don't pay attention. All in all, they don't take enough responsibility for their learning! People's attitudes (and students *are* people) are determined by many factors, including their parents, friends, environment, education, and previous teachers and classes. But attitudes can change, and by working with our students we can help them grow into responsible, dedicated learners, the learners of tomorrow.

Traditional roles of teacher as expert knower and student as *tabula rasa*, of teacher as leader and student as follower, tend to disengage students from the learning process. When we as teachers assume an overwhelmingly active role, leaving only passivity to the students, it is not surprising that they accept that passive role. Of course, our own expectations and attitudes have been molded by our previous experiences, both as students and as teachers: On the one hand, we tend to treat students as we were treated; on the other, having encountered student passivity in the past, we may come to expect it. Thus is recreated the pattern of expectations: Teachers will hand out information, which students hand back on exams and papers.

Because this pattern perpetuates itself, changing it requires our making a conscious, vigorous effort to develop more responsible and engaged students than in the past. Yet by respecting students for who they are and for what they know, by recognizing them as responsible learners, and by offering them appropriate challenges and support, we can promote better learning through greater student commitment and harder work. This essay argues the value of shifting one's attitude in this direction, offers techniques and methods for making the shift, and provides students' reactions to the resulting new approach.

"It's really good to know that people care about you as a student but also as a

person, and that makes a relationship where there's respect, and a lot of times I would just do my homework because I wanted to respect her, not 'cause I really wanted to do it. The only reason that I did it, really, was to keep up that bond."

(focus group transcript, 1998)

Why an Attitude Shift?

Who Does Most of the Work?

Consider these basic questions about course design and implementation:

- Who created the course?
- Who decided what everyone would read?
- Who decided what the workload would be?
- Who decided what counts for how much?
- Who decides how a class meeting will go?
- Who decides what constitutes competent work?
- Who decides what everyone will talk about?
- Who knows just about everything about the topic?

In a typical course, at any level K-16, the answer to all these questions is, "the teacher." And, for most of the questions, "the teacher" is the best answer, the one that will lead to a coherent course with a solid content and valid evaluations of students' work. The person who knows the most about the subject and the most about teaching and learning should design the course and make the major decisions. As the teacher, the leader and expert, each of us needs to make final decisions about students' learning and competence; we need, in the end, to grade.

Yet, if the students' role is as small as the traditional answer to these questions makes it, what real stake do students have in most courses—aside from a grade? How can they, and why should they, contemplate taking an active role in making the course work? Without giving up the leadership role in a course—and recognizing the fact of individual learning styles—we can as teachers share the learning and managing with and amongst our students. We do not always have to determine how a particular class will go. We do not need to define every discussion topic. We can give students some choice about how they learn some information and skills, about how they complete some assignments. As Palmer (1991-92) writes, we can give students a voice.

What's In It for the Students?

Even though the teacher must design and chart the course, setting the basic goals and standards, most students can skillfully take more responsibility for day-to-day activities than we have traditionally encouraged them to take. The various techniques described in the second half of this chapter send a clear message that students have a say in what happens during class and that their ideas matter. Thus they engage more in

the course, in the several ways detailed below, and consequently enjoy the course more and learn better.

Greater Confidence in their Ideas

Asking students what they think (both about the subject matter and the way the course is going), listening to their ideas, and responding thoughtfully to them increases students' confidence in their ideas and willingness to share them.

> "She put us at ease & we felt like she respected our opinions, whether she agreed with them or not." "I always felt comfortable joining in class discussion--she always welcomed new ideas."
>
> (two students, final course evaluation, 1998)

Greater Engagement in Courses

One natural, almost immediate, result of greater confidence is students' willingness to engage more fully in our courses. At nearly every level of schooling, students are pulled in many disciplinary and social directions in any one day. They constantly need to set priorities and face frequent deadlines. Since people extend effort in directions they perceive as productive, responding positively to students' work provokes them to care about and focus on our courses. In fact, particularly dynamic students may help you generate other students' interest even beyond the classroom.

Conscious Feeling of Responsibility

Students' recognition that they are responsible for making class meetings effective and for learning leads to better preparation, thinking, attendance, and participation. By the time they reach high school, they know, for instance, what it takes to make a productive discussion; we can develop their sense of responsibility for classroom success in various ways. Here is one example: A few weeks into each course, I ask students to answer anonymously the following four questions:

- How did the discussion go?
- What could the teacher do to improve class discussions?
- What could the other students do to improve discussions?
- What could you do to improve discussions?

I then consolidate and return their listed answers. Students regularly respond with similar comments, remarks that echo what we teachers repeatedly recommend. Here are sample answers (1996) to the last, most personal question, "What could you do?", answers that I returned to the students:

> "Think about analytical questions before coming to class so I don't feel like I'm 'on the spot' and pressured to think on my feet--that way I cram up and

can't think."

"Maybe read the story twice and try to analyze it before class."

"Try to add more to the discussions."

"It's necessary to really think about the readings before class."

"I could read more closely with a dictionary. I should participate more but I do not feel very comfortable with my French & I don't feel as if I express my ideas clearly."

Hearing such good suggestions from peers can effectively persuade people to take on their share of the responsibility. Students showed that they recognized their role in learning when, in 1998, 40 percent of them commented on end-of-semester evaluations that a course weakness was their own level of effort.

Community Spirit and Support Network

"It was also good that we had the same partners [throughout the semester]. I got to be good friends with them and got used to calling them, like, every night [laughter]. But it was good."

"Uh-huh."

(two students; focus group transcript, 1998)

Students who take responsibility for learning spend more time creating, refining, and developing their ideas without our intervention (for a summary of the theory and research on student responsibility in college, see Davis & Murrell, 1993). As social creatures, we naturally feel more responsible toward people we know than toward strangers. A very simple way to build community, and hence responsibility, is to make sure students get to know each other as soon as possible. Throughout the semester, we can continue to build community spirit by structuring cooperative groups or teams in which students not only work but also develop interpersonal rapport and support networks. This kind of community within the classroom can extend beyond the classroom as well, as when one student used the class e-mail list to invite classmates to lunch at the French House.

In answer to the final course evaluation question, "How effective were the student-student interactions and teacher-student interactions?", one student wrote: "E*xtremely effective*! There was just *amazing* interaction between students and teacher and it was definitely the most effective aspect." Another wrote, "Wonderful—we feel 'bonded' in this class—students + teacher" (1998).

Better Intellectual Development

"She always stressed that we could present as many new ideas as we wanted, as long as we had something logical to support that. And that helped a lot, not only just writing for French, but it helps you think about other things the same way."

"Yeah, I think so."

"Taking an argument and having solid things to back it up . . . , it's going to help, you know, if you go into law, if you're going to do the literature stuff, if you're just going to have a conversation with somebody."

(three students; focus group transcript, 1998)

The greatest good that stems from this approach—a good for both students and society—is the deeper intellectual development that results from students' truly engaging with their own ideas and those of others in a supportive community (see the summary of Swedish research results in Rhem, 1995). It has become axiomatic that people who study for tests soon forget most of what they could produce in the testing situation. It is through taking on ideas and trying them out for a while, arguing with them, analyzing and synthesizing them, supporting them with evidence from the course, and finally working them into the texture of one's understanding that people learn. By listening patiently to students' ideas and diligently questioning unsupported opinions, we can successfully move students to higher levels of critical thinking. They come to understand that solid thinking involves more than receiving knowledge from perceived authorities or believing one opinion to be as good as another; they recognize that good opinions are supported with reason and facts and that individuals must commit to their beliefs, taking into account what they have learned (Perry, 1970, 1981; Belenky et al., 1986; see Kurfiss, 1988, for summary). And one of the most important aspects of teaching critical thinking is providing an atmosphere "wherein students can let go of some of the personal moorings that impose limitations on the ways they think" (Meyers, 1986, p. 99).

Greater Student Satisfaction

Finally, we should not dismiss the importance of students' satisfaction with their academic experience and with their own successes. We are all heartened to see comments such as the following in response to the evaluation question, What sort of effort did you put into this class? "*A lot*. More than most other classes. I feel like I've improved a lot." The same student responded this way when asked for course improvement suggestions: "None. She took all our suggestions to heart. She changed the final exam because of our suggestions" (1998). Given such students' self-perceived effort and improvement, their happiness about the course and teacher's flexibility does not result from pandering to the "student as consumer." On the contrary, such students recognize that the course proved challenging and beneficial, while responding to their needs and desires. Everyone wins and wins in a big way. For example, upon majority student vote, we revised the final exam from a pencil-and-paper test of the same skills and knowledge that students had already shown they had mastered into a student-organized, directed, and produced tour of the University Grounds. Thus students used their research, composition, editing, and speaking skills to create a French tour designed for francophone visitors.

For the Teacher: Are the Challenges Worth the Benefits?

These abundant advantages for student learning make worthwhile our tackling a potentially demanding challenge: being flexible and relinquishing some control. The only way students will accept the responsibility that comes from helping define class meetings is our sharing with them some decision-making and responding nimbly to their ideas. Yet in giving up some control, we gain freedom, intellectual stimulation, student responsiveness, and interpersonal connections. Moreover, Boice (1996) provides evidence that college teachers who show their students that they care (what he calls "being immediate") experience far less classroom incivility. Students who might shy away from taking on responsibility may change their minds when faced with engagement on the part of their peers or when we orchestrate greater levels of responsibility into their cooperative group work (see Johnson et al., 1991a, for practical suggestions). Certainly, not every student will respond to this approach in every course; we must wonder, however, whether those who do not take responsibility when offered it would be any more engaged in a less interactive course.

New Ideas

> "When you're working together, it helps to be in a group, because you can learn from each other."
>
> "Plus, each person has something different to offer . . . . We all read the same poem, but we came up with different analyses, and I think that's also kind of what happens with poetry, because everyone has a different idea of what it is. I think it's not just the teacher spitting out *what it should be* to you."
>
> (two students, focus group transcript, 1998)

These students' comments refer to my standard practice of asking them to choose poems to study in depth. Their choices complement the required readings on the syllabus, and their group presentations define class activities for two weeks. Involving students in selecting some readings requires a teacher to take some risk and be open-minded. Yet what might occasionally be lost in their choosing a relatively slight poem (a rare occurrence, actually) is more than matched by the vigor with which they investigate, study, and explicate *their* poem. Stimulated to produce their own ideas, they are struck by what they can learn, and we also benefit from their thinking. It can be tantalizing, intriguing, provocative, vexing; their ideas make us think more, just as working through ideas teaches students to know pertinent facts and to think clearly about them. As Wayne Booth notes, "Responding to students' rival readings actually changed my opinions about how to appreciate a given novel or work of criticism" (cited in the *Reinventing Undergraduate Education*, 1998, p. 16).

In language courses, students working in groups may produce grammar and pronunciation mistakes. As we know, however, their errors, or learner talk, are a window into their understanding of the target language that give us insights into their learning processes (Brooks et al., 1997) and learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). Moreover, even as they make target language errors, they are most likely hearing others' ideas and

learning something, as long as the work is challenging, interesting, and clearly defined. If, on the other hand, they speak English during group work, we need to investigate why:

- Did they not understand the directions?
- Have they finished the assignment?
- Was it easier or more difficult than we'd thought?
- Are they bored and thus not as engaged as we'd like?
- If so, what would be best to do in the future?

Powerful Positive Peer Pressure

People who work in well-organized groups come to expect and rely on support from each other. The structure inherent in cooperative learning tasks and projects (detailed later in this chapter) encourages students to monitor themselves and each other (Johnson et al., 1991b, pp. 30-38) and thus more likely become lifelong learners. We simply need to meet the challenges of defining tasks clearly, giving necessary support, and then trusting students to work conscientiously.

Better Student Preparation

What impeded your learning?
"Workload too heavy." (Teaching Analysis Poll, 1995)
What most helped you learn in this course?
"Each class we are accountable for something." (Teaching Analysis Poll, 1996)
"Work each night." (Teaching Analysis Poll, 1998)

In fact, the 1995 workload in French 332 did not vary much from that in 1996 and 1998. Yet students' perception of the workload and of the value of preparation became more positive as I made clearer how their work affected their learning; students can recognize their own hard work and acknowledge its value. Better student preparation will result from our clear directions, our openness to students' ideas, and class activities that obviously cannot work without students' serious preparation (see Millis, 1998). Going hand in hand with a high level of student engagement are two demands on us: being flexible and knowing our subject very well (see Harper and Lively, 1987, for applications of this perspective to high school and community college conversation classes) . When we give students more responsibility, when we challenge them to bring knowledge and ideas to class, they need to perform. Since we must respond to their work, we control totally neither the information brought nor how it is managed. Yet when we respond thoughtfully to students' ideas, questions, and experience—giving them our full attention and engagement—they take our assignments seriously, realizing that they are accountable: "I definitely tried at the beginning, like, not to read. You know, in a lot of classes you can skim a couple of pages just so you have one thing to say and then, 'Good job; you spoke.' And then that didn't work. So then I started really

reading, took time, looked up the words I didn't know." (focus group transcript, 1998)

How Do We Make our Attitude Shift Visible?

Deciding to shift our attitude as teachers to one more respectful of students as people and as thinkers will not work until they understand our perspective. Typically trained to be passive, students do not usually expect this new attitude. But they will respond to our challenge to take a central role and thus enhance their learning when we show them clearly that *they* matter in the course. We can do so in three different ways:

- by defining clear, challenging expectations
- by teaching to engage students directly
- by stepping back frequently to see how the course is going.

Enunciating Clear, Challenging Expectations

Because students have mostly been trained to receive knowledge passively, we must counter their natural expectations with explicit expectations of our own. We can show that we count on their active engagement by lifting the veil of secrecy over why we conduct class as we do, by challenging and supporting them as necessary, by offering them clear criteria for what constitutes good work (including models of students' achievements), and by giving clear, quick feedback on their performance.

Lifting the Veil

Traditionally, teachers have carefully veiled the reasons for specific assignments and classroom activities and have avoided discussing course objectives after listing them in a description or syllabus. They might have said, as did the Wizard of Oz, "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain!" It was as though the students would somehow learn better if they did not know the point of the lesson. For instance, a standard language course goal is reading skill development. Yet traditional activities center on asking students what happened in the text, with the seemingly implicit assumption that answering questions spontaneously teaches students how to read, or that, knowing already how to read, students can answer comprehension questions. It was not until the 1980's that we began teaching reading strategies explicitly, letting students in on some secrets of learning (see, for example, Phillips, 1984; Barnett, 1988).

As responsible thinkers, students will more likely buy into a course when they know why they are asked to invest and what they should expect to reap. On the first day of a course, we need to ask students what they expect from the course. This works best when they think individually, then discuss in small groups before sharing with everyone their answers to one or more questions such as these: "What do you expect to learn in this course?" "How do you expect this course to expand on the one you just finished?" "Why did you enroll in this course?" Explicitly juxtaposing our expectations with theirs makes the course much more meaningful for them and sets the stage for us

to cue them in on the "whys" of various teaching and learning activities (see Barnett, "On the Same Wave Length?", 1999) It also helps us close the gap between what students and teachers traditionally expect from a course (Teeples & Wichman, 1997-98).

For example, I currently aim to help students develop their critical thinking skills, including their ability to find and analyze provocative rhetorical figures of speech in literary texts, what we call in class *figures de style* (e.g., metaphor, oxymoron, euphemism, antiphrasis). Thus I frankly tell the students with each rhetorical figure exercise that memorizing definitions is just the first step; in reality, they need to learn how to discover important rhetorical figures of speech in a text and to explain why they are powerful. During the focus group (1998), one student noted that having to find the *figures de style* in a citation from a familiar reading made the students really appreciate French writing. Another student added, "And she made you figure them out, like why is it there, what is the point, the significance? I guess we have to do that if we'll ever start understanding the subtleties." Thus, although students groaned upon seeing yet another *figure de style* exercise sheet, they acknowledged the value of the exercises because they knew why they were doing them and because they found they learned from them. (For a succinct summary of several effective techniques for teaching thinking, see Weiss, 1992-93).

Perhaps the most telling argument for removing the veil of secrecy comes from a focus group recommendation (1998). Proud of my technique of requiring students to share in class two or three questions about the short stories we read, believing that it engaged the students in discussing what *they* wanted or needed to know, I had asked the facilitator to discuss this technique specifically. Although one student noted her gratitude for these chances to discuss what they had not understood from readings, another said, "I didn't know that those [questions] were that important, though. Maybe she should have stressed that this is why we're doing it. Cause I didn't really do it. . . . Maybe if she'd just said, 'this is the reason why we're doing it, this is what I want you to get out of it,' then maybe we'd probably think about it a little more." Her comment confirms many students' willingness to work for the intrinsic goal of learning, of "getting something out of it."

Offering Challenges and Support

Challenging students without demanding too much can be difficult, but we can offer students support of various sorts. The value of community support and cooperative study is well documented; for example, Treisman found at the University of California-Berkeley that minority students who were organized into supportive, cooperative study groups in a challenging honors program were substantially more successful in calculus than were students who studied on their own (1985). Also, scaffolding, giving students help where and when they need it, helps them accomplish more challenging tasks than their level of expertise would seem able to sustain (Shrum & Glisan, 1994). We can build scaffolding into the course ahead of time (as in the case of model answers, described below), but we can also set up a scaffold quickly, when

students let us know that it is necessary. One student describes this type of support: "Another thing that she did one time that really helped--'cause we weren't doing very well on the structure of our papers--we were just throwing down words and ideas. So she made us write an outline, and that was really, really helpful. And it made us really think about our thesis and how to back it up, and that was, really, that was a good paper." "I was going to say the same thing," said another student (one among the best in the course and the other the weakest) (focus group transcript, 1998). The "outline" mentioned was the requirement that each student submit—before writing the next paper—preliminary ideas and thesis statement, together with supporting arguments and evidence. As a model of both the process and the product, together in class we created such an outline.

Essential support also comes simply from our willingness to meet students where they are and help them progress. Students easily perceive such support and often note it on end-of-semester evaluations: "strengths: enthusiasm for the material but especially for teaching, and a willingness to do whatever necessary to help us." The instructor furthered my interest in the subject "[by being] enthusiastic, made me confident in my ability, pushed us to our limits" (1998). People thrive on facing and meeting reasonable challenges.

Giving Clear Criteria and Models

> "We had a syllabus that told us what was due during the whole semester, and we never got off of it, which was nice."
>
> "We turned in something [to be] graded just about every class and got it back quickly."
>
> "Overall, every little thing that we did fit in somewhere."
>
> (three students, focus group transcript, 1998)

The teacher is the leader, and the students want to know where they are going and how to get there. The syllabus is the first road sign, and it needs to guide dependably. A syllabus should, among other things, pin down major assignments and tests, making clear that details will come in good time and will depend, to some extent, on how students respond to materials as they meet them. Even when first teaching a new course, we should be able to define in course packets or on web sites clear guidelines (App. B & C) and grading criteria for assignments, in-class work, and exams. See also Tulou and Pettigrew (1999).

Beyond theoretical guidelines, however, concrete models of good work help students understand what they are to do, while inspiring them with what is possible. Students are remarkably willing to permit us to offer their work anonymously as models for future students, and even for their classmates. After all, what could be a greater sign of their success than having their work chosen as a good example? For instance, the first time my students analyzed rhetorical figures of speech in writing, few of them went beyond definitions, even though we had discussed numerous analyses in

class. In returning their graded work, then, I added a sheet of sample "A" answers from students who had succeeded. Armed with these models and the realization that some of their classmates were already at this level, more students analyzed better on the next assignment.

On peer-editing guidelines (App. D), one student noted:

> "She had specific expectations for what we would say. She gave us an outline, didn't she, in the packet. This was what she expected us to write and what would help us, and so I think this will help me in revising papers [in future courses]."
>
> (focus group transcript, 1998)

Giving Clear Feedback

> "All my classes have a percent for participation, but you never have a clue, like whether that's a joke or not. But, like early in the semester, she gave us an indication of what our participation grade was, an idea of what to work on. So you knew that she was really paying attention. So we knew that it actually mattered."
>
> (focus group transcript, 1998)

Combining models with individual feedback gives students clear paths toward success. After they have tried to follow a model, they need to know what is good about their work and how to improve. The student quoted above notes that people work harder when they know that their work is noticed and when they learn how well they are doing. It takes just a few seconds per student to complete the Participation Feedback Form (App. E); I distribute these about a month into the course and then again, if necessary, a month later. Whenever students see their current grade and my suggestions, their participation improves perceptibly for the next several class meetings.

Similarly, grading students' peer-editing efforts may seem like a waste of time, and for years I simply labeled their editing with check-plus, check, check-minus. Noting students' end-of-semester complaints that peer editing was busy work, and that peers' comments did not very much help them revise, however, I began giving their editing more detailed, individual feedback and assigning it letter grades. The grade book shows that editing skills improved, and students' comments are positive: "We got graded on how we evaluated other people's drafts, and so we wanted to do a good job; we wanted to make comments that would really help them, so we would get a good grade on that." (focus group transcript, 1998) This student's frank avowal of the reciprocal effect of receiving a "good grade" on her desire to do a "good job" to help others is particularly telling given her stellar performance in the course, 100% attendance, consistently thoughtful discussion comments, and subsequent admission into the College honors program. Because most students' ingrained concern about their grades cannot be denied, we may as well use it to their advantage. The value of clear

feedback and well-founded grades on students' willingness to put forth the effort they need to learn cannot be overestimated.

Teaching for Direct Student Engagement: A Variety of Techniques

Along with making our expectations clear, we need to teach in ways that directly engage students in learning and explicitly show them that we, as well as the other students, need and depend upon their ideas and work. Doing so requires, of course, our recognizing different learning styles and differing contributions. The following techniques are not meant to be inclusive, but, rather, appropriate to foreign language and literature courses, as well as representative of the wide range of active learning techniques that promote students' engagement and responsibility (for other suggestions, in a wide range of disciplines, see Bean, 1996; Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Campbell & Smith, 1997; Kraft, 1990; Meyers & Jones, 1993; Silberman, 1996).

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning (in some ways similar to collaborative learning, although considered by experts to be different) has enjoyed wide support among specialists in both K-12 education (for example, Kagan, 1988) and college education (for example, Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991a; Millis & Cottell, 1998; Cooper, 1990; Bruffee, 1993). Sometimes misunderstood to mean simply having students work in groups, cooperative learning is, in fact, a highly structured approach to teaching that includes five basic elements (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991a, pp. 6-8):

1) positive interdependence: students' belief that they all sink or swim together;
2) face-to-face promotive interaction: students' helping, encouraging, and supporting each other's efforts to learn;
3) individual accountability: students' recognition that they are responsible for their own learning and for that of group members because individuals' learning represents that of the group;
4) social skills necessary to group success, including leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communicating, and managing conflict;
5) group processing: activities that enable groups to determine how well they are working together and what they can do to improve.

Clearly, structured cooperative learning is one way to work consciously toward building a class of students into a team that works together, taking responsibility for their own and for others' learning. Cooperative learning activities that influenced students' positive response to French 332 include team-building activities done at the beginning of the course to help them meet each other, think-pair-share, student-initiated discussions, peer editing, and group projects. Traditional lecturing can also prove more engaging for students when it includes cooperative learning techniques, and some are presented below.

"When you're working together, it helps to be in a group, because you can learn from each other."

(focus group transcript, 1998)

Team-Building Activities. Some of the earliest (and shortest) activities in French 332 have multiple objectives: to familiarize students with each other, to promote group bonding, to establish cooperative groups, and to introduce students to simple aspects of cooperative learning, such as the roles of leader, notetaker/reporter, and encourager. Often, before giving the class an assignment, such as clarifying what they expect to learn in the course or comparing their answers to identifications of theatrical terms, I rearrange them into groups of three or four. One can quickly do this by asking students to count off from 1 to 6 (in a class of 20, to arrange groups of 3 or 4); they then move to meet with others who counted the same number, thus meeting people in a different part of the room. I ask them to discover something interesting and not too personal about everyone in the group: for example, "Find out one thing you all like and one thing you dislike." "Find out who got up the earliest this morning." "Find out who lives the farthest away." In answering such simple questions, students get to know each other and relax more. Students *always* appreciate this personal connection, as summarized by one focus group comment (1998): "I have discussion sections that are smaller than this, and I don't know everybody's name. [Here] we all know each other. The first day of class, or the first week, whatever, everyone learned each other's names."

Think-Pair-Share. The think-pair-share technique is a mainstay of informal cooperative learning groups, in which students come together briefly during class to accomplish a task (as opposed to formal cooperative learning, in which students work on a larger project over a relatively long period of time) (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991a, pp. 4:2, 5:10). Easy to set up and requiring as little as three minutes of class time, this technique asks students to think individually, exchange ideas with a partner, and share the results with the rest of the class and the teacher. For example, when we begin the unit on poetry, I ask students to spend thirty seconds thinking about how they would describe poetry and then to compare and contrast their ideas with those of someone nearby to see whether they can synthesize them together (a two-minute task). When they indicate by a show of hands which pairs came to a synthesis, I ask those to share first, knowing that people who agree have added strength of conviction and willingness to speak up. Think-pair-share activities give every student quiet thinking time followed by a relatively safe, private opportunity to voice their ideas. Before announcing their thoughts to everyone, they can explain and fine-tune them. More students have ideas; more are willing to share them; ideas are generally better for having been contemplated. Using think-pair-share to kick off discussions may be one reason why French 332 students regularly cite them in answer to the Teaching Analysis Poll question: "What most helps you learn in this course?": "Discussion in class a plus." (1998) "Class discussions are engaging." (1997) "Discussions." (1996) "Class discussions are going really well." (1995)

Group Projects. Projects that students complete in groups can be the best or the worst of

a course, depending in great measure upon how carefully and clearly we structure them. Learning how to structure and grade them well pays off, however, in increased student motivation, enthusiasm, and hard work, as these two students' focus group comments about group poetry presentations (1998) indicate: "We made it fun, but it was serious. Everybody had to read and just about everyone researched their poem. It wasn't like a joke, but it wasn't 'another paper.'" "You really got a better knowledge, having to present it and teach the class." For a full explanation of the procedures used, see the Poetry Presentation Guidelines (App C). For a thorough discussion of peer teaching, see Whitman, 1988.

Student-Initiated Discussion. Student-initiated discussion is another productive discussion-starter that has its roots in cooperative learning. Here is one student's focus group comment about this technique (1998):

> "Typically, the discussion just kind of took off wherever we wanted it to go, which is kind of cool . . . . She would bring out certain things to stimulate our thought or whatever, but she never made us talk about one thing and only that thing. Like, if we had other ideas, we could go off on that, too."

At first reading, this comment might sound as though discussions were disorganized or somewhat sporadic. On the contrary, not only did I find student-initiated discussions to follow logical threads of thought, students in courses taught with this technique practically never complain that discussions go off on tangents or are disorganized. In addition, over the years I have found that students' serious questions about a text typically lead to a discussion of topics similar to those I would have proposed had I determined the direction of the discussion (for corroboration, see Campbell & Smith, 1997, pp. v-vi). Of course, in order to prepare for this more open-ended sort of discussion, we as teachers need to prepare more carefully, thinking not only about what we find to be the key discussion points but also imagining different ways to approach them from the issues students raise.

Orchestrating student-initiated discussion also requires convincing students that their questions about the assigned text are essential. Usually, I simply ask them to bring two or three questions that they cannot answer or that they find interesting, but we can also define the type of questions we would like (for instance, comprehension questions, analytical questions, questions the asker cannot answer, opinion questions, and so on). In class, students work in cooperative groups of three or four to answer as many of each other's questions as possible in 5-10 minutes. Of course, I circulate among groups, getting an idea of what types of questions they have raised, and on what topics. The questions that remain after their discussion are often ones that no one in their group can answer.

Students next organize their remaining questions logically: for example, comprehension questions vs. analytical questions, fact questions vs. opinion questions, or questions that can be answered from the text vs. questions that require additional

information. I write the categories on the board and invite a student from each group to write the most interesting questions of each type for the class. Students remaining in the group begin thinking about new questions as they appear on the board; I check to ensure accurate question categorization. The number of questions from each group depends on time available for this discussion.

After 8-10 questions are on the board, I decide in what order to take the questions to create a logical discussion and number them. For example, I often treat the simpler or more concrete questions first, then the more analytical or complex. The discussion then evolves from students' questions, as I ask students to clarify questions when necessary and challenge them to answer them. I work to ensure that as many essential ideas as possible are discussed critically and to weave students' questions and comments into coherent discourse. Variations on this technique are certainly possible (APP. F).

Peer Editing

> "It really helped to have her input and their input, and then we had adequate time to go back and do another draft; that was good."
>
> (focus group transcript, 1998)

A main focus of French 332 is composition, and students can constructively edit their colleagues' essays by working in cooperative groups. In fact, giving three-person peer-editing groups time to build group connections may well avoid students' natural reluctance to criticize others' papers (a reluctance noted by Diane Birckbichler, cited in Omaggio Hadley, 1993, p. 339). Both to symbolize our mutual team effort and to help students write better, I edit all students' first drafts using peer-editing guidelines (App. D); thus we all focus on helping writers make the best arguments possible by commenting mainly on purpose, organization, and clarity. Since students at this advanced-intermediate level often create as many errors as they correct when asked to edit for grammar, I encourage editors only to point out patterns of errors, and many do so accurately. I mark and grade grammatical accuracy on the final draft, although I explain how to handle complex structures that students include on first drafts.

Along with providing appropriately detailed peer-editing guidelines, we need to give students models of good editing (gathered from previous classes or from our own work) and a chance to practice editing at least once in class. Spending class time on an activity clearly conveys its importance; having students try out editing guidelines when we are there to answer questions and track their progress saves false starts and wrong turns when they later edit on their own. The day the first paper draft is due, therefore, students spend thirty minutes in their peer-editing groups reading and commenting on others' drafts. Two students work on the third student's paper (who reads another's paper), which generates comparative editorial comments when they voice main comments to the writer. I randomly select which student's paper becomes the focus of the group by having each group discover an arbitrary fact (for example, who most

recently saw a movie or who has the next birthday) and then choosing the person to the left or right of that person. Students seem to appreciate the fairness of such a random selection process. Listening in on various groups, I gain a good sense of how well editors follow the guidelines, how clearly they explain their reactions, and how willingly students engage in the process. If necessary, I can review certain points for individuals or, later, for the entire class.

Throughout the semester, when all drafts are submitted along with the final paper, I grade individual students' editorial comments, taking into account thoroughness, clarity, and tone. I make sure the editor's comments take into account most of the points suggested on the Peer-Editing Guidelines (App. D); I applaud particularly insightful and helpful comments; I suggest ways to improve general or vague remarks. I also tell editors when they need to be more critical in order to help writers improve their papers. (For a more lengthy cooperative peer-editing structure, see Johnson, Johnson, and Smith, 1991b, pp. 71-72.)

> Focus group question: "What have you learned in this course?" "How to write." "You actually need to write your French papers like your English papers, not just put a bunch of words down on the page and not have them make sense." (two students, focus group transcript, 1998)]

Engaging Students during Presentations (App. G). Literature and civilization courses often require us to present a wealth of information to students not only through readings but also through classroom presentations and lectures. Since attention spans average no more than 15 minutes and classes typically last at least 50 minutes, we need techniques to re-engage students' attention. Used thoughtfully, such activities tell students that their ideas matter and that they need to assimilate what they are hearing and seeing. We can use questions and other activities at the beginning and throughout a presentation to keep students intellectually engaged (Sarkisian, 1994). Students' work with such questions may be treated individually or cooperatively.

One specific cooperative learning technique uses focused discussions as bookends before and after the lecture, with pair discussions interspersed throughout (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith, 1991a, pp. 5:10-12). As always, it is important to make the task and instructions explicit and precise and to require a specific product (such as a written answer). In summary, this technique works as follows. Students next to each other first complete a task designed to organize their thoughts about the upcoming lecture: for instance, they might note and share answers to the question, "What do you already know about the predominant religions in France?" After a 10-15-minute lecture, paired students undertake a think-pair-share task designed to involve them with the information they just heard. In our example, they might compare what they had already known with what has been presented and note new information. Or they might give a reaction to the theory, concept, or information presented or relate the new materials to past learning. After this three- or four-minute discussion, two or three randomly selected students share their answers with the class. This process repeats

after each lecture segment. The class ends with a four- to five-minute pair discussion to summarize the material covered, a discussion that should result in students' integrating new information into their existing conceptual frameworks, or schemata (for a summary of schema theory as it applies to foreign language reading, see Barnett, 1989). Students will develop skill in responding to lectures thoughtfully if we give them opportunities to process these tasks by asking questions such as, "How well prepared were you to complete these discussion tasks?" and "How could you come even better prepared tomorrow?" Various question types (App. G) may be used in the bookend lecture format.

Using Instructional Technology

Some technological innovations can help us give our students more responsibility, help them engage more directly with the course and course material, and help them recognize the importance of their work (see Warschauer, 1995, for practical ideas about implementing technology in courses). Electronic mail is now easily accessible to most students, and some teachers require e-mail discussions outside of class as part of their participation, along with offering to answer students' questions via e-mail. When they can quickly and regularly use e-mail to communicate, students generally appreciate this closer contact with their teachers, the fact that they can ask at any moment a question (even a so-called "dumb question") and may well have an answer within 24 hours. Some seem more willing to communicate through e-mail about how the course is going for them and what else in their lives is affecting their ability to succeed. In fact, e-mail can be so appealing that teachers with many students may need to limit its use in order to avoid a flood of messages.

Likely advantages of e-mail discussion, however, include our seeing deeper analyses and more participation from students who are shy in person and from those who write more easily than they speak. Kern (1995), for instance, found that students exchange ideas more during class via computer than via oral discussion, but with perhaps less coherence and less grammatical accuracy. Students who have e-mailed comments and questions about a text before coming to class--and who have made the time to read others' remarks--are farther along in their thinking than those who read the text at the last minute (Ramazani, 1994). As for community-building, teachers who set up course-wide lists may find, as I did, that students use them to set up target-language lunches and review sessions for the final exam; the list seems to make them feel more a part of that particular group.

Since e-mail does take time for both teacher and students, we need to make sure that our e-mail assignments are not overwhelming. If our syllabus is already full, we must realize that writing and reading e-mail is yet another requirement that should be added only in place of something else. Students need to have easy, frequent access to e-mail; if they do not, we must recognize the extra time needed to get to a terminal. Finally, we need to grade e-mail participation (App. B) explicitly if we want students to engage in it as reliably as in other assignments.

The reality of the World-Wide Web offers another opportunity to show students that their work really matters. Lee (1999) discusses using a web home page and chat room to engage students with current events in the target-language countries. Gaspar (1998) explains how foreign language students can research through the web, as well as through traditional sources, to create group projects. The web also offers the advantage that publication there exposes "student writing to an outside readership who will deliver real-world feedback and response straight to the author's e-mail account" (Kirschenbaum, 1996). Thus students' presentations made available on the web are real work for a real audience.[3]

Stepping Back to Take a Look

In various ways, we need to involve our students throughout our course, reminding them of their central role, of their goals, of their successes and their potential. By invoking their metacognitive skills, their ability to think about what they are doing and why, we can regularly help them step back a moment to become aware of what they are learning, how they are learning, and how well the course is working for them. They thus learn more about how to learn and get to know themselves as learners, which is a key element of their success (Rhem, 1995; Carrell, 1989). We can do this subtly, or we can focus explicitly on metacognitive strategies, using, for instance, scenarios or mini-case studies that illustrate productive metacognitive strategies (Loring, 1997, writing of first language reading at the K-12 levels). Several techniques that relate to the various aspects of metacognition are detailed below.

What They're Learning

Angelo and Cross, in *Classroom Assessment Techniques* (1993), present a plethora of techniques designed to engage students' metacognitive awareness on several fronts: course-related knowledge and skills; learners' attitudes, values, and self-awareness; learners' reactions to instruction. Lavine (1999) discusses the philosophy and methodology of these techniques, with a focus on student management teams. Two other Angelo and Cross techniques particularly appropriate to foreign language and literature courses are student-generated test questions (#25, pp. 240-43) and word journals (#14, pp. 188-92). When students create possible test questions, they show us what they consider the most important or memorable content, what they understand as fair and useful test questions, and what answers they give to questions they have posed. Thus, if we ask for these questions at least three weeks before the test date, we know more about what to teach and/or review, and we can also re-educate students who have unrealistic expectations about tests (Angelo & Cross, 1993, p. 240).

Students very much appreciate, as well, the opportunity to discuss test format and expectations ahead of time. To use this technique, we write for students specifications about the kinds of questions we want. Students need to know what they are to do, how their questions will be used, what sort of feedback they will receive, and how this activity will help them perform better (p. 242). To use the data they give us,

we can roughly tally the types of questions students propose. For example, how many require only a knowledge of facts? How many require paraphrasing, only, of a text read; how many require synthesis or analysis? We can use some of their questions as examples in giving feedback and others as review questions. It is important to state clearly at the beginning of this process what will be done with students' questions, whether any will actually appear on the test, for instance, in order to avoid misunderstandings.

Word journals can help us assess students' ability to read carefully and their skill and creativity at summarizing a short text in a single word, as well as their proficiency in explaining and defending, in a paragraph or two, why they chose that word (Angelo & Cross, 1993, p. 188). Practicing this classroom assessment technique helps students become more adept at writing highly condensed abstracts and at storing large amounts of information in memory by "chunks." To use the word journal process, we as teachers must make sure the exercise works with a particular text by following our own proposed directions before giving them to the students. We also need to tell our students that the choice of a specific word is less important than the quality of their explanation, and we need to give them some ideas about what their explanations should contain (p. 190). By sharing with students several different good approaches submitted, we can help them develop their range of responses to texts.

When we offer students such thought-provoking exercises and tell them why, we also give them the opportunity to learn more about how they are developing skills and about why we teach as we do. Classroom assessment techniques such as student-generated test questions and word journals are less about finding out how well students have mastered the material and more about discovering—for both us and them—how they are grappling with the material and skills of the course. By provoking metacognitive thinking, they help us all understand better the learning process.

How They're Learning

People are more likely to take responsibility for things under their control. Thus helping students recognize that they have a great deal to say about what and how they learn--that this is, in fact, more their province than that of the teacher--empowers them to take more initiative to learn well (Wenden, 1999). As noted earlier, requesting students' comments about the course should go beyond asking how well we are doing as teachers to ask the students to contemplate their own contributions. For courses that include a significant amount of discussion, asking students what their colleagues can do to improve the level of discussion, as well as what they can do individually, and then reporting their answers back to them typically results in a noticeably increased quality in preparation and participation (Loevinger, 1993). Similarly, asking students to rate their preparation for lectures (App. H) shows them how essential their thinking is to their understanding and remembering and gives them clear criteria by which to judge their involvement and resulting success (McAllister, 1997). We can also help students take more responsibility by directly giving them useful information about strategies

relevant to foreign-language learning in general (see, for example, Oxford, 1990; Rubin & Thompson, 1994) or to specific aspects of the course, for instance, memorizing and taking tests or reading a foreign language (Phillips, 1984). For a discussion of elementary school children's learning strategies and ways to integrate them into the classroom, see Chamot in this volume.

How Well the Course is Working for Them

> "Every single thing we said in the evaluation [Teaching Analysis Poll]—and we were, like, scraping to find bad things to say—she changed. They weren't even like really bad things."
>
> "She changed the room, she brought in a speaker, she changed her final exam. I think those were the only things we ever mentioned that we would kinda want to be changed."
>
> (two students; focus group transcript, 1998)

As noted throughout this essay, we have many and varied ways to ask students how well the course is helping them learn (App. A). By soliciting and responding to students' comments about how well they are learning in the course, we not only get new ideas (often quite good ones), we also promote students' commitment to the course. By replacing the final exam with a student-requested French tour of the University, for instance, we reinvigorated our flagging end-of-semester energies in a demanding composition course, discovered French connections at the University, and produced an amusing and enlightening videotaped tour from students' perspectives. At the same time, students wrote, edited, and revised another paper, something they would not have accomplished with a final exam.

Conclusion

On balance, the mutual respect, novel ideas, hard thinking, and caring engagement engendered by treating students as responsible adults more than outweighs the value of any control we relinquish in acknowledging that the course belongs to them as well as to us. In order to succeed with this approach, we must make our attitude clear to our students, leading them to recognize that our attitude is "not like, 'I'm your teacher, and I can make you do this.' It's helpful." (student comment during focus group transcript, 1998) People most often commit themselves to endeavors in which they are interested and have a personal stake. And, as Richard Light's work in assessment confirms, such a commitment to academic work is productive and frequently leads to happiness in students' college careers (1992). As teachers, we play a significant role in determining how committed our students are to foreign language, culture, literature, civilization, and history. And success partly comes from a "strength" a student noted on the 1998 French 332 final course evaluation: "caring about us, working with us."

Notes

[1] French 332 (The Writing and Reading of Texts), a University of Virginia French composition course that also serves as an introduction to the study of literature, is prerequisite for nearly all succeeding courses, required of majors and minors, and enrolls primarily first- and second-year students (enrollment limited to 15). The course is designed to prepare students to take higher-level courses on French and francophone literature, civilization, and history while helping them improve their communication skills. Specific goals include improving students' abilities to read and discuss texts analytically (including understanding and interpreting rhetorical figures of speech) and to write persuasive essays. Toward these course-wide goals, I help my students work toward improving their abilities to recognize what they do not understand and ask about it, to ask and answer interpretative questions, to define, recognize and then analyze figures of speech, and to read and comment judiciously on others' writing.

[2] Quotations come from students enrolled in French 332 (The Writing and Reading of Texts). I developed the approach presented in this chapter over four spring semesters, from 1995 through 1998. Students' comments are solicited in a variety of ways: mid-semester questionnaires, specific questions about class activities, Teaching Analysis Polls, end-of-semester evaluations, end-of-semester focus group (quotations are unedited transcriptions of students' oral remarks) (App. A). Given my administrative responsibilities in faculty development, I teach only one semester each year.

[3] Details are beyond the scope of this chapter, but sample student publications are available at the following URLs:

- English essays:

http://www.engl.virginia.edu/~enwr1016/index.html
http://www.engl.virginia.edu/~enwr1013/Art/

- Compilations and analyses of data about the American Civil War:
  http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/vshadow2/cwprojects.html
- American Studies:

http://xroads.virginia.edu/

- Costume history:

http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~kmr3c/docs/frameset.html

- Interactive virtual worlds:

http://www.etc.cmu.edu/projects/bvw.html

- Digital video projects:

http://www.cc.gatech.edu/classes/AY2000/cs4480_spring/

Appendix A

Soliciting Students' Comments

Students very much appreciate having an opportunity before the end of the semester to comment on how well a course is working for them. Depending on their comments, we can make reasonable changes in the course to accommodate their needs, or we can explain again why we have assigned "such difficult" readings, why there are "so many" quizzes, why class participation counts. This appendix includes three methods of gathering students' comments well before the course ends (Mid-Semester Questionnaires, specific questions, Teaching Analysis Polls) and two end-of-semester methods (evaluation forms and focus groups).

A-1: Mid-Semester Questionnaires @ a head

Mid-semester questionnaires can be as long or short, as general or specific, as we like. Here are the questions I typically use for French 332, a course taught almost entirely through discussion:

- How did the discussion go?
- What could the teacher do to improve class discussions?
- What could the other students do to improve discussions?
- What could you do to improve discussions?

Students answer such questions anonymously during five minutes at the end of a class period before the middle of the semester. It is important to summarize or itemize the comments and discuss them with the students either during the next class or via an e-mail message to all students.

A-2: Specific Questions about Class Activities @ a head

At times when we would like to know how students respond to a specific activity, we can simply ask them. To keep this activity brief, I hand out quarter-sheets of paper at the end of class and ask only one or two questions. For instance, to discover students' perceptions about the group poetry presentations, I have asked (in French), "What do you think about the system we used to discuss poetry? (That is, you chose the poems to study, you prepared them in groups, you gave oral presentations, and you discussed together.)" In order to see how well students were understanding readings and discussions, I have asked (in French), "What was the most important point you learned from the discussion today? What questions do you still have about the story we read for today?" Similar to the one-minute paper and muddiest point classroom assessment techniques (Angelo and Cross, 1993), these questions elicit answers that give me insights I would otherwise rarely get. I can then adjust my assignments and discussion-leading the next class, reviewing if necessary.

A-3: Teaching Analysis Polls @ a head

Teaching Analysis Polls (TAPs) are offered by the Teaching Resource Center at the University of Virginia and, under other titles, by faculty development programs around the country. But a faculty developer is not necessary, since colleagues can easily act as consultants to do TAPs for each other. The process begins when the consultant visits the teacher's classroom for 25-30 minutes to poll the students about their

perceptions of the course. (After introducing the consultant, the teacher leaves.)

- The consultant gives groups of four or five students five minutes to answer two questions:
  - What most helps you learn in this class?
  - What impedes your learning?
  - How can improvements be made?
- One student in each group writes on the board the answers that all group members agree about. The consultant monitors responses to verify that a proposed solution accompanies any problem.
- With the whole class, the consultant reviews these comments, clarifying ambiguities and keeping only those observations a majority of students approve.
- The consultant thanks the students and reiterates that the instructor will receive the summary of reactions remaining on the board.

During the follow-up meeting, the consultant gives this information to the instructor, and they discuss ways of responding to the comments. Here some of the benefits:

- The TAP gives more details than do written evaluations because students discuss the course in a confidential and interactive setting, while the consultant monitors responses to eliminate vagueness.
- Students learn from each other, as they debate their various perceptions of the course.
- Students appreciate having this chance to share their ideas about the course.
- Because only responses that have been agreed upon by a majority vote are reported, the teacher can focus on the main issues.
- A TAP requires no more than 30 minutes of class time, and an additional half-hour outside of class to review the results.
- What is learned from a TAP, especially one done in the first six weeks of the semester, helps both teacher and the students get more from the course immediately.

A-4: End-of-Semester Evaluations @ a head

End-of-semester evaluations at colleges and universities are frequently required and are created either within individual departments or formulated and distributed centrally. The U.Va. French Department form contains standard questions about the course and instructor. I add specific questions focused on activities pertinent to our course:

1. What did you learn in this course?
2. How effective were the following aspects of the course, and how could they be improved in the future?
   - peer editing:
   - class discussion:
   - student-student interactions and teacher-student interactions:
   - e-mail communication

A-5: Student Focus Groups @ a head

Prompted by the editor of this volume, in 1998 for the first time I asked my students to spend about 45 minutes talking about the course with an objective consultant trained to lead focus groups (my thanks to Jennifer Chylack and Jennifer Secki, University of Virginia, for leading and videotaping the focus group). Students did not object to having this focus group videotaped, and I promised not to view the tape until after submitting final grades. Of course, I was not present at the focus group, which took place on our final exam day, after the students' tour of the University Grounds (which was also videotaped). Like the Teaching Analysis Poll, the focus group provided thoughtful, detailed, finely tuned feedback about the course. Quotations attributed to "focus group transcript" are unedited transcriptions of students' oral comments during this focus group. Students not only responded to the consultant's questions (see below) but also added comments about aspects of the course important to them. Here are the focus group goals and prompting questions that the consultants and I created:

Goals:

- Determine learner reaction to:
    - teacher's approach to course.
    - various exercises.
- Determine which exercises were most helpful/effective in developing skills.
- Determine how engaged and connected to the course the students felt.
- Determine how responsible to the course the students felt.

Questions:

1) Describe the course activities:
    a) What did you do in class?
        - What types of exercises?
        - What did you think of the student-generated questions about short stories?
        - What did you think of the poetry presentations and tour?
        - What kinds of interactions were there?
        - Which did you find to be the most helpful in learning how to think clearly and express yourself well in French?
        - How important did you think it was to attend class and participate? Why?
    b) What types of homework assignments did you have?
        - How was homework integrated into the course?
        - How important did you think it was to do the homework? Why?

2. Attitudes about the course:
    - How comfortable were you in this class?
    - How would you define Ms. Barnett's attitude about the course and the students?

3. Have you used the material / knowledge from this course in other areas / classes / places? Please specify.

4. How did the workload in this course compare to that of other 300-level French courses?

5. Would you recommend this course to other students? Why or why not?

Appendix B
Participation Grading Guidelines
(included on French 332 syllabus)

(Adapted from the work of Edmund P. Russell, Department of Technology, Culture, & Communication, School of Engineering and Applied Science, which was itself adapted from the work of Martha L. Maznevski, McIntire School of Commerce, University of Virginia. Used with their kind permission.)

Grading stresses quality of participation, not quantity per se. The key to quality is preparation before class or before writing on e-mail. I expect that average participation will be in the B range. Before mid-semester, I will let you know what your participation grade is so far, and how to improve it.

A Shows excellent preparation. Analyzes readings and synthesizes new information with other knowledge (from other readings, course material, discussions, experiences, etc.) Makes original points. Synthesizes pieces of discussion to develop new approaches that take the class further. Responds thoughtfully to other students' comments. Builds convincing arguments by working with what other students say, but may question the majority view. Stays focused on topic. Volunteers regularly in class and on e-mail but does not dominate.

B Shows good preparation. Interprets and analyzes course material. Volunteers regularly and participates on e-mail in a timely fashion. Thinks through own points, responds to others' points, questions others in constructive way, may question majority view, raises good questions about readings. Stays on topic.

C Shows adequate preparation. Understands readings but shows little analysis. Responds moderately when called upon but rarely volunteers, or talks without advancing the discussion. Writes short, non-analytical e-mail messages.

D Present. Shows little evidence of preparation or comprehension. Responds when called on but offers little or distracts the discussion.

F Absent, or non-responding via e-mail.

Appendix C
Poetry Presentation Guidelines
(translated from French to English)

C-1: How to Present a Poem to the Class (a head)

OUTSIDE OF CLASS:

Read the poem, discuss it with your group, and explicate (analyze) it.

Remember that it's very important to specify the principal theme or atmosphere of the poem and to support your thesis statement. Depending on which poem you analyze, you will find that different aspects of the poem are more or less essential to your analysis; but don't forget to consider scansion, rhythm, rhyme, images, narration (if any), atmosphere, emotions, etc. Speak about the poet if necessary; but don't repeat the information in the text, and don't give the poet's biography. Discuss the poem and your ideas with your teammates; feel free to write the presentation together or to write parts of it individually, as you prefer.

Share the work of the oral presentation.

In your group, decide who will present which part. Create as imaginative a presentation as you like.

Practice your presentation to be certain that it's clear.

Your group will have **30 minutes** to present your analysis. Be sure not to read your presentation to the class; remember that **you're speaking to your colleagues.**

IN CLASS:

Before the beginning of class, write on the board the vocabulary that you expect others won't know. Pronounce and explain these words before beginning your presentation.

Present the poem.

It's certainly best to memorize the poem. In any case, you need to present the poem in a way that immediately indicates your interpretation of it. You might use music or pictures, for example. Use your analysis of the poem to decide what changes of voice are necessary, and practice your poem presentation out loud several times. I recommend that you record and analyze it before doing it in class.

Present your analysis.

Decide in advance how you will orchestrate your presentation, and remember not to read it.

Be open to questions and new interpretations that will help you improve your final, written analysis.

Lead the discussion.

It's up to you, as group presenters, to entertain questions and lead the discussion. I'm part of the audience, as are the other students. We'll spend the entire class discussing each poem.

C-2: How to React to Presentations (a head)

OUTSIDE OF CLASS:

First, study the poem before coming to class, and note your interpretation.

IN CLASS:

Remember that you are responsible for helping your colleagues perfect this analysis before they write it in its final form.

1) Therefore, make sure that they support their thesis statement(s). Ask questions to

get more information if necessary.

2) If you have another interpretation that you still find logical after having heard the presenters', offer it (with your supporting arguments). As a result, we'll discuss other possibilities, and you'll give your colleagues new ideas.

Take notes during the presentation.

Contribute to the discussion.

Two types of contributions are very useful:

1) questions that oblige the presenters to think more deeply;

2) comments that offer a new interpretation or that support it. Questions of clarification are often necessary, but less useful to the presenters. **Be sure to ask a probing question or offer a useful commentary.**

C-3: How These Exercises are Graded (a head)

The presentation:

Your presentation grade will count as four individual class participation grades. Since half the grade will be **a grade for the entire group**, it's worthwhile helping your partners to prepare as well as possible; the other half of the grade rates what you do as an individual. The two grades will depend on your ability to explain and support your ideas and on the quality of your French.

Your reaction to presentations:

This individual grade will count as a class participation grade and will depend on the quality of your comments and questions. Work toward engaging in a true discussion.

Appendix D
Peer-Editing Guidelines
(translated from French to English)

(Adapted from Valdés et al. (1989). Composición: Proceso y síntesis (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Random House.)

Use these questions to analyze your colleagues' essays and to help them fine-tune them. (In addition, you will learn how to ask yourself questions about your own essays.)

Take notes on another sheet of paper, or on each essay itself, and save this handout.

First impressions

1) What is the thesis of this essay, the main point?
2) How does the author support the thesis?
3) Are you convinced of the value and exactness of the arguments?
4) What pleases you about this essay?

More detail: Are there places where

1) you need more information or more proof?
2) what's written adds nothing (or almost nothing) to the thesis or to the essay?
3) the organization is not clear?
4) the author should add more details?
5) the details are . . .
    very well chosen?
    superfluous?
    uninteresting?
    weak?
6) the language or tone is inappropriate to the purpose or to the readers?
7) the language is . . .
    particularly interesting or powerful?
    difficult to understand?
    ambiguous or confusing?
    redundant?
    incorrect?
8) Are the quotations well chosen to support the thesis? Are they well analyzed?

Summary

1) Does the essay achieve its purpose? Are you convinced by the arguments, the examples, the reasoning?
2) How could the author improve the essay? Where should the author work hardest to revise?

Appendix E
Participation Feedback Form

Name: _____

Your participation grade in class so far: _____

How can you improve this grade? Follow the suggestions checked below:

_____ Come to all the classes.

_____ Volunteer when you have a chance to.

_____ Show that you have well prepared the text or the lesson by offering good questions or good comments.

_____ Push yourself a bit by trying to say something more difficult, analytical, or imaginative than usual.

_____ Comment via e-mail in a more detailed and analytical way.

_____ Try to move the discussion forward by responding to your colleagues' ideas.

Appendix F
Variations on Student-Initiated Discussion Techniques

1) Student groups can present the most interesting question and their answer to the entire class.
2) We can ask student groups to synthesize and prioritize their remaining questions.
3) After getting comfortable with this activity by working in small groups, students may prefer to raise their questions before the entire class.
4) We can invite individual students to write their most interesting question on the board before class begins. Of course, with this system, the students who arrive early are most likely to have a chance to ask their questions.
5) Students can send their questions to classmates (and the teacher) over e-mail ahead of the class meeting. This method is most suited to larger projects with a longer time frame, since students need time to prepare their questions, reach a networked computer and send them, read colleagues' questions. Because of these multiple steps, fewer students may be prepared for class than with the simpler method.

Appendix G
Engaging Students during Presentations

(Adapted with the kind permission of Ellen Sarkisian, Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University, from her adaptation of *Participatory Lectures*, 1994.)

- Begin with a question or questions that help you understand what your listeners are thinking or what their relevant experiences are. For example: What is the historical context of War and Peace? Why might we be interested in the origins of Spanish? How many of you have traveled outside the United States?
- If background reading or preparation has been assigned, ask questions about it to review and integrate that information. For example: During World War II, how was the French Underground formed? What were some of the economic and sociological factors that contributed to the rise of Naturalism?
- Pose a problem (perhaps at the beginning of your talk) and elicit several answers or solutions. You can then explore and build on these. For example: Why do you think it's so hard to develop a native accent? Why might so many people from other countries have fought in the Spanish Civil War?
- Ask students to raise their hands to answer, to vote, in effect. For example,: What is the direction of the data? Who thinks it's increasing? decreasing?
- Use questions with surprising answers or with answers that are counter-intuitive. For example: What is the probability that two people in this room have the same birthday? How many Muslims live in France?
- Use thought-provoking questions and questions without a right answer. For example: Do you think U.S. policy toward Haiti has become more or less strict in the last twenty years? Which references could you use to support your position?
- After making a major point, ask a question that allows listeners to apply that information. If you have time and the information warrants it, ask them to vote on the right answer, then turn to their neighbors and persuade them of the answer within the space of two minutes. When the time is up, ask them to vote again (you should get more correct answers). (see Mazur's involvement of students in lectures on the videotape "Thinking Together," 1992). For example: Now that we've studied the effect of velocity on the driver of a car suddenly stopped from 40 miles per hour, what do you think would happen to the driver stopped while going backward? Would she feel pushed forward, backward, or neither?
- Give your listeners opportunities, when appropriate, to write down answers before discussing them.
- Solicit questions throughout the presentation, when appropriate, and at the end.

Appendix H
Self-Assessment Form

(Slightly adapted and used with the kind permission of William B. McAllister, Teaching Resource Center, University of Virginia, who adapted his from the work of Patrick Rael, Bowdoin College)

Please check those items that are applicable to your work in this course so far this semester.

--- BEFORE LECTURE ---

___ I read assignments **before** the corresponding lecture.
___ I re-read at least some assignments before the corresponding lecture.
___ I take notes while reading the assignments.
___ I try to make connections between the reading assignments, looking for agreement, disagreement, and/or differing emphases.
___ I organize my thoughts about the material in advance of the corresponding lecture.
___ If I do not understand the material, I write out questions in order to quiz myself or I ask questions in lecture.

--- DURING LECTURE ---

___ I have attended every lecture.
___ I have attended almost every lecture.
___ If I am unable to attend lecture, I secure class notes from a reliable source.
___ I have asked a question during lecture.
___ I have participated in large-group discussion, usually responding to questions asked by the instructor.
___ I take notes regularly during lecture.
___ I always participate in the (sometimes offbeat) activities during lecture.

--- BEFORE DISCUSSION SECTION ---

___ I read assignments **before** the corresponding discussion section.
___ I re-read at least some assignments before the corresponding section.
___ I prepare a list of talking points I might wish to discuss during section.
___ I prepare a list of questions about material I do not understand or about which I would like to have more information.

--- DURING DISCUSSION SECTION ---

___ I have attended every discussion section.
___ If I am unable to attend the section, I secure class notes from a reliable source.
___ I participate in discussion every week, either by raising an interesting question, responding to a point made by someone else, or making some other substantive contribution that facilitates learning for myself and my colleagues (the other students).

--CONTACT, COMMUNICATIONS, AND CONTINUING TO THINK ABOUT THE COURSE--

___ I think about issues raised in this class at some time when I am not dealing directly with work related to the class.
___ I have talked with others about issues raised by the course.
___ I read carefully the comments on my graded assignments.
___ I have sought out my TA or instructor (whether in person, during office hours, by

phone, or by e-mail) for some purpose other than to complain or ask some routine question concerning course assignments.

AFTER READING OVER THIS LIST, ONE THING I CAN DO TO FACILITATE MY OWN LEARNING IS: (please turn over and write on other side if necessary)

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