Recently, I attended the “CLA in the Classroom” two-day workshop at North Dakota State University (NDSU) in Fargo. The course provided an opportunity for UND and NDSU faculty from various disciplines to come together and learn about the CLA method (developed by Dr. Marc Chun, Council for Aid to Education) to foster critical thinking in the classroom. Prior to leaving, our only “assignment” was to ponder which class to apply the CLA method to. I chose Geography 574, Advanced Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

Advanced GIS, the third of four courses in the GIS Certificate Program in Geography, provides opportunities for graduate students from across the United States and overseas to develop skills necessary in becoming effective GIS analysts. The students in

**CLA FOR TECHNIQUES-BASED GEOGRAPHY**

Christopher Atkinson, Geography

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**PERFORMANCE TASKS IN THE HUMANITIES:**

**SHAKESPEARE AS AN INSTITUTION**

Adam H. Kitzes, English

While putting together a Performance Task, in the spirit of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) Classroom Academy, I initially found myself facing two distinct yet overlapping challenges. One is to produce the sort of “hypothetical but realistic situation,” which would demonstrate how the intellectual skills that students practice might transfer from the literature classroom to an experience they might come into as part of their professional lives. The other is to conceive situations in which a mature knowledge of literature might itself have direct bearing.

Between the two challenges, I find the first less pressing. I do not want to take up space here rehearsing well-known beliefs, which either assail non-professional degrees for not offering practical skills, or which make sententious pronouncements about how liberal arts courses teach the very thinking skills most eagerly sought after by employ-
the course come from a wide range of school and work experiences. The focus of the class is to cater to working professionals; however, while there are many working professionals that do enroll, the class is also open to undergraduate students. Advanced GIS provides opportunities to practice skills learned in Geography 474 (Introductory GIS) and to learn more complex skills necessary for effective spatial analysis of geographic data expected of GIS professionals. Finally, students craft a research proposal in this class for the capstone GIS course, an independent research project.

Effective GIS analysts must be able to evaluate spatial problems from many different angles. After a geographic problem has been evaluated, GIS analysts need to be able to find and access the correct data helpful in solving/assessing options for the geographic problem at hand. Effectively evaluating and selecting data to solve problems requires critical thinking. Reminding me of geography as application, the CLA workshop in Fargo helped me as an instructor consider options that I might try in helping students foster those critical thinking skills necessary in the GIS profession.

When I first arrived at the venue for the “CLA in the Classroom” event in Fargo, I must admit that I felt like a “stranger in a strange land.” I realized that I like the concept-driven mode of teaching, the traditional lecture style of conveying information to the students. In contrast to my comfort zone, I gained insights into alternative methods of teaching that would foster better student learning by incorporating critical-thinking assignments that demand more student interaction, while teaching geographic concepts too.

Remembering this background to my GIS role at UND and what the CLA workshop could do for my students in Advanced GIS, let me briefly share some of my experiences at the workshop. The workshop, as I mentioned, was a two-day event. During the first day, I learned about what the CLA is and how it helped the facilitator, Dr. Daniel Kalma-la, Associate Professor of English and Interim Assistant Dean of the Graduate School and Director of the Master of Liberal Studies program, from Fort Hays State University, foster better critical thinking skills and connection with his students in English. In addition to critical thinking, CLA tasks shift the focus from an immediate grade to a chance for students to try, fail, get clarification, try again, and then be graded. The idea of student success based on repetition and constructive feedback before a student is concerned with “making the grade” really appeals to me. I am still distilling how the CLA task I developed will best fit into Advanced GIS, a course with heavy emphasis on learning and utilizing the GIS software (ArcGIS 10.0). During the second day, all workshop participants were given ample time to work on developing CLA tasks for their selected classes. For Advanced GIS, I focused on developing my CLA task by focusing on the larger issues surrounding the “Buffalo Commons”* in Nebraska. I was impressed with the progress I made on my CLA task while at the workshop, and I plan to implement it during Spring 2012 in Advanced GIS.

The “CLA in the Classroom” workshop in Fargo provided a rare opportunity to reflect on my teaching in geography and share ideas with UND and NDSU colleagues. Not knowing what to expect, I came away very satisfied with what I gained as potential avenues in fostering student learning in geography. Finally, “CLA in the Classroom” shines if instructors are looking for the marriage of content and critical thinking.

References


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2012 Teaching with Writing Course Development Workshop
May 21-25, 8:00 am to noon

How would you like to have that new prep for fall 2012 completely planned out before the end of May? If you are planning to use writing in a new course or a revision of a course, apply to participate in the Teaching with Writing workshop. The workshop provides an opportunity to work on course development with the input of colleagues from across the disciplines. Along the way you’ll learn about best practices for teaching with writing, including ways to use writing to promote learning and ways to teach students the writing conventions of their disciplines.

The workshop will take place May 21-25 from 8:00 am to noon. Participants receive a $500 stipend (subject to standard deductions) and workshop materials.

The workshop is limited to 12 participants, and applications are due April 2.

To apply, complete the online application at http://und.edu/academics/writing-across-the-curriculum/workshops.cfm
ers. These are not the concerns that motivate my students – they seem to find it important enough to engage with this fascinating thing called fiction, in all its forms – and anyway I have confidence in students who earn their degrees. But where will people actually face problems concerning literature once they leave the classroom, and what forms might these take? Is reading books an activity that people do in their spare time when they are not otherwise busy with their “real” lives (professional, familial, social)? Will the literature they encounter in their public lives have any connection with the books they had come across in the classroom? Are there potential real world issues, in which the knowledge of literature, and of the various approaches that people take in its interpretation and criticism, might truly come into hand?

I find these questions particularly appealing with regard to Shakespeare’s plays. Editions of his plays tend to find their own section on shelves at bookstores, to say nothing of their own cinematic adaptations, festivals, museums and tourist attractions. (There are now over a dozen “replicas” of the Globe Theater in place, the overwhelming majority of them in the U.S.!) There is no question of his academic privilege. Our own English department offers two courses in Shakespeare per year, often with multiple sections, and when I cover them I make a point of presenting Shakespeare not only as a poet or playwright, but as an institution. I am candid in my critical position, which holds that Shakespeare remains successful today precisely because he lends himself to cultural adaptation, even as that adaptation tends to run in direct opposition to what contemporary scholars and critics recognize as sound interpretation. As proficient readers, students will need to learn how to work with this tension between acknowledging a writer for what he was – writers past are also a foreign country where they do things differently – and being involved with what he has become today.

The two Performance Tasks I have started to put together (one for each course) address this critical conflict directly. Each task involves a distinct hypothetical situation. For one, students are expected to imagine themselves working in a marketing department for a large firm (any firm), which has a history of sponsoring a local theater company. In the wake of a controversial performance of *The Merchant of Venice*, which claims historical accuracy as its premise, the student must help decide whether to recommend the firm to continue sponsorship or to support calls for a boycott. For the other, students are expected to imagine themselves working for a non-profit organization, which reviews materials for education. The students have been asked to decide between two film adaptations of *The Tempest*, one being a documentary of rehearsal and performance by inmates from the Luther Luckett correctional facility, the other claiming to be more true to Shakespeare’s original vision. The writing projects will require students to imagine distinct audiences, one being a document written for internal use and the other a more potentially public statement. In both cases, students will be expected to navigate conflicting claims about the status of authenticity in literature touching on questions such as what it entails, what privilege it enjoys, who it empowers and excludes. Perhaps most important, the assignments will require students to adopt a clear position, recognizing that the cultural values they choose to endorse often will involve real material stakes.

At this point both tasks remain in early stages in development. For instance, I have selected already existing documents, rather than develop ones specifically for the purposes of the task. There is no shortage of material to choose from, and this approach may even allow students to directly explore the question of what counts as information in cultural analysis. I have been working with linking the available documents to specific “Higher order thinking skills.” In fact I have begun to think very hard about the expectations I have for my students as they engage with the various documents I end up offering to them. Just what are people supposed to do when they encounter a review, either popular or critical, an advertisement, a series of photographic stills taken from performances over the past two centuries, or a letter that voices complaints over cultural insensitivity? What skills will they need to call on, and how will they learn them? These represent a very different set of challenges, but I believe that as professors, our ability to address them will go a long way toward imparting the learning skills we want our students to have.

(Kitzes, continued from page 1)
The following individuals and departments have been selected to receive Outstanding Faculty Awards at the Founder’s Day Banquet (February 23, 2012):

**UND Foundation/McDermott Award for Excellence in Teaching, Research or Creative Activity and Service**

*Cindy Anderson, Nursing*

**UND Foundation Award for Individual Excellence in Teaching**

*James Popejoy, Music*

**UND Foundation/Saiki Award for Individual Excellence in Teaching**

*Diane Darland, Biology*

**UND Foundation/Clifford Award for Graduate or Professional Teaching Excellence**

*Marcus Weaver-Hightower, Educational Foundations and Research*

**UND Foundation/McDermott Award for Departmental Excellence in Teaching**

*Educational Foundations and Research Department*

**UND Foundation/Clifford Faculty Achievement Award for Outstanding Faculty Development and Service**

*Brett Goodwin, Biology*

**Fellows of the University Award for Departmental Excellence in Service**

*Social Work Department*

**Outstanding Faculty Academic Advisor Award**

*Lowell Stanlake, Mechanical Engineering*

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**Upcoming On Teaching Lunch Seminars**

**Teaching with Performance Tasks**

*Thursday, March 01, 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM (register by Tuesday, February 28 at noon)*

**Integrating Teaching, Research, and Service**

*Thursday, April 05, 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM (register by Tuesday, April 3 at noon)*

Join us for these informal lunch-time discussions on teaching-related topics of interest to faculty in all disciplines. Both sessions take place in the Badlands Room.

To register and reserve a lunch, please fill out the **online registration form** on the OID webpage (oid.und.edu).
The goal of OID’s Summer Instructional Development Professorships (SIDPs) program is to improve the quality of teaching and student learning at UND. SIDPs have a long history on campus. The program first supported course development work in the summer of 1981, just a year after the Office of Instructional Development was founded.

Last summer awardees from the fine arts to professional programs worked on a range of projects, with the disciplines represented running the gamut from Aviation to Theatre Arts. Dhesshana Jayasundara in Social Work designed a course that connects UND students with social work students and agencies in Sri Lanka. Shawn Boyd in Languages developed an online course that utilizes technology to give students greater responsibility for their own learning through self-guided vocabulary and grammatical lessons. Karyn Plumm in Psychology worked on an online graduate diversity course, concentrating on distance students achieving a greater depth of understanding through scholarly community. In Chemical Engineering, Gautham Krishnamoorthy designed a series of practical problem sets with increasing complexities to guide students towards a better comprehension of key concepts in his courses. In all, twelve faculty took solid pedagogical ideas and built a framework to bring those approaches to students in their classes.

If you have an idea for how to enhance student learning in one of your online, on campus, or hybrid classes, applications for Summer Professorships are due March 1 at noon. The Faculty Instructional Development Committee (FIDC) awards the grants, which are funded by the Alumni Foundation. Members of the committee look for innovative instructional projects that go beyond normal course development and draw on best practices. The grants provide a salary stipend of $4000 for four weeks of full-time work and the forms are available online at www.oid.und.edu.

International Teacher-Scholars: Growing UND’s Best Practices

NORTH DAKOTA MUSEUM OF ART
MARCH 20, 12:00-1:30

How can teaching internationally contribute to your classroom practices here at UND and likewise, how can teaching internationally contribute to a robust research agenda? Find out, based on first-hand accounts from UND faculty members, about existing opportunities with UND’s Norway exchanges and with other faculty led international experiences in Austria, China, and Germany; learn how international experiences can enhance your teaching and your academic career.

Co-Facilitated by: Melissa Gjellstad (Languages), Anne Kelsch (OID) and Tami Carmichael (Humanities & Integrated Studies)

RSVP to tami.carmichael@email.und.edu by Friday, March 9

Space limited; complimentary lunch catered by North Dakota Museum of Art
UPCOMING DEADLINES

March 1    FIDC Summer Instructional Development Professorship Deadline (noon)
March 1    FIDC Grant Monthly Deadline (noon)
April 2    Teaching with Writing Course Development Workshop application due
April 2    FIDC Mini-Project Grant & FIDC Monthly Deadline (noon)
May 1      FIDC Grant Monthly Deadline (noon)
           should include all requests between May 2-Aug. 31

On Teaching is published six times a year as a service to UND faculty.
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OID/WAC Staff: Jeanne Boppre & Jana Lagro.