

11.124 Introduction to Education: Looking Forward and Looking Back on Education, Fall 2011

Transcript: Current Events

SLATE: The Current Events activity helped keep the class in the context of today.

At one point, I realized that I was teaching the course in a way that was sort of timeless. And it's really about, I really wanted to think about it much more in a way that was set in context – of today and the history of education in the past. And I wanted to do that in a way that felt like, again I was embodying the constructivist principles that I really think are important to learning. And so the first thing I brought in was Current Events. I wanted students to bring in, to understand what's going on in the world of education today because it's changing very rapidly in terms of what we know about teaching and learning, what technologies we're using for teaching and learning, and the policies surrounding all this, and people's attitudes towards it.

So rather than sort of me... sort of telling them about this, I wanted the students to take some ownership over that, and we brought in Current Events. And so students... investigate current events, choose things that are important and meaningful to them, and bring it into the classroom for discussion. And then, over time, we've sort of changed the way that we do that, so that we think about the ways that - can we use the online components more effectively so that students are doing some of the... thinking about the issues before they get to class, and then use the class time for something that's unique?

SLATE: Students engage in discussions surrounding the current events both online and in class.

For the Current Events, we actually think that there's enough that you can get out of an article and some questions online and some online forums so that actually some of that conversation can happen before they even get to class. So, in those cases, there's a current events article that goes up – usually relatively short – and some questions that are posed with it, and students need to read the article and respond to those questions.

And then what happens in class is a follow-up to that. So sometimes there's themes that happened in student responses. Sometimes there's an issue raised that was, that maybe the people who were responsible for the Current Events that week didn't think of in advance. And that's a chance to kind of follow up on some of that.

And this year actually for the first time we were actually saw, started seeing some groups do some interesting activities that were follow-ups to those as well. Not just pure discussion, but activities that sort of brought out some of the big issues, or sort of pointed out some similar thinking or dissimilar thinking that was happening in the class.

There was some that were sort of like voting with your feet. So it was a matter of like looking at distributions on... in terms of viewpoints on issues, where, you know, people who thought like "Yes" about one issue and "No" about one issue went to different sides of the room. And then there was some debate around the issues around there. So it was a nice way to sort of call out, "OK, there's distributions

on issues. There's people that think different things about this, but there's reasons for that, and let's have some dialogue within people that have common thoughts, and people who have disparate thoughts as well.

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