Training Journal

1-29-2008 Adjunct Professor Seminar—If it had been nothing more than an opportunity to network, the training was time well spent. However, the training provided was valuable as well. There was an introduction to the writing center on campus, a presentation on library resources that I was unaware of, and the technology center extolled, ad infinitum, the virtues of blackboard. One of the participants at my table made a somewhat valid observation that one of the drawbacks of having lectures and notes, etc. available on blackboard was that students have less incentive to attend classes. I think, however, that Dr. Reeder overcame some of that objection when she shared her relationship method of connecting with students as individuals. Because she may read this as part of my assignment, it is difficult to talk about that impact without feeling like a “suck-up”, but there is no erasing the impact of the conviction I felt from her sincerity which will make attending her classes even more valuable. The other thing I saw was the practical application of some of the techniques discussed in Allen’s *Train Smart*. When the library representative told us she was very excited about the tools she was sharing, I got a little excited. When, during the course of the lecture, she did not make it very exciting, I felt what could almost be described as betrayal. Towards the end of her time, I noticed that people at my table were doing other things, like having side conversations, and yawning. I understand that the material was important, and the same people will probably complain later that they “were never told about ‘this’”. However, information does not get taught if the student is not learning.

1-30-2008 Economics of Global Climate Change—Economics professors from Boise State University discussed what companies are doing to adapt to the market demands for sustainable growth and eco-friendly business operations. Carbon markets were described, including their origins and their differences, as well as their economic and ecological benefits. The concluding speaker, a representative of Patagonia, detailed the measures her company has taken to improve environmental preservation. All of the professors, while maybe a bit dry, were all on topic, professional, and spoke with authority. I finally have some understanding about what a carbon market is, and why there would be a demand for the credits that are traded both here and in the EU. The speaker from Patagonia was much harder to listen to. Her use of the words “like” and “as if” made her sound juvenile and unprofessional. Her verbal pauses made her sound unprepared. The worst effect was her use of the live website during her presentation. The computer controls were two steps away from the microphone, so every time she had to change pages, she had to move. When moving, she continued talking, but we couldn’t hear her.

2-1-2008 Tonight I had to present some tools for use in our ward missionary effort. It was a short training to only two people. Unfortunately, I totally abandoned anything I have learned from the readings and reverted to several of my bad habits. This is mostly due to the time I did not take to prepare for the meeting. I had more than a week to prepare but procrastinated, using school as my excuse. While the topics I covered were important, and I felt I was being sincere, the participants never had a chance to get involved in the learning, and I never rose out of the comfortable levels of lecture and using knowledge based questioning. I certainly never engaged them, or allowed them to apply the tools to their own circumstances. It was important for me to come away from the meeting and realize that these effective methods will require some practice.

2-10-2008 I cannot imagine a less useful way to present material than to start at the beginning of a text, asking the first person to read until they feel like stopping and continuing in this manner with only brief pauses for elaboration or discussion. This process becomes exponentially more painful as it is prolonged; for nearly forty-five minutes, it results in a near catatonic state in all participants. I tried to break it up with interesting comments or questions, but my efforts were frustrated by my very efforts. I did not realize until afterwards how other class members viewed me in the culture of the class room. As a temporary resident, with a defined departure date, I am an encroacher who is unaware of the norms of a group that existed and will soon again exist without me. Oh, I will not say I had no effect, or that my attempts produced only annoyance. However, I am the stone thrown into the ocean; who will notice that the sea-level has risen? But the stone is buried in the depths, almost inaccessible. Now I am being dramatic, of course. The point is that while I suffered through the lesson, I realized that, in my own ways, I have been guilty of the same mistake—plodding through the material because I have material to cover, and not sharing the value of the material, or even focusing on the most valuable material.

**2-12-2008** The effort it took me to prepare a five minute presentation was surprisingly enormous—probably because it is not a subject I am extremely comfortable with, and because I still feel out of my element in a class of communications majors. The relaxation and visualization technique was the most effective weapon against my nerves, and it played out almost exactly as I envisioned it. The time to write on the board took longer than I expected, and I guess I really did have more time to continue with some of the activities I had planned. I allowed myself to become subject to the clock. The feedback I got was very useful. I had not realized how quickly I had adapted my plan to include elements from the earlier class discussion, so that is a strength I can play to. It is true what Dr. Reeder said about not giving enough affirmation for class participation, but I am not sure how to change it or practice it so that it is sincere, not just a “technique” I learned in my communications class. By over thinking something like this in the past, I came off as mocking and insincere—definitely not my objective. If I had used the “Question, Clarify, Question” technique, the answers would have started closer to what I was looking for. However, I should not discount or be dismissive of an idea simply because it is not what I am looking for. By using the words “thank you” and “good point”, I can be more affirmative. By asking the speaker to elaborate or expound or be more specific, I respect their responses and keep the discussion moving forward.

**2-19-2008** This most recent teaching practice went much better, I think, than the last one. I was still rushed—for all my preparation and practice, I still had too much material for the time—but I think I was a little more comfortable, maybe just with the audience in general. I had some great ideas, but I did spend too much time on the introduction, and I need to ingrain in my memory that group activities always take longer than I expect them to. That is what killed me last week as well. Some of the tools are easier to use than others for me. In this class I have tried to use some that are interesting and less natural. My use of the open loop would have been very effective if only I had planned less material and paced it correctly. Now that it is behind me, it is time to turn my energies to the teaching philosophy statement.

**2-23-2008** I am supposed to journal on my readings, so under duress, I am adding this entry. As often as I have taught, lectured, or participated in a program, I have always taken the technical knowledge for granted. However, I see why that is a better place to start than with the presentation skills of a facilitator. Leaders can only lead to where they know to go. Also, when I am teaching, I think I don’t do enough to develop trust. I take for granted that the audience wants to be there, and I am qualified to teach. I do keep commitments, and I am honest, but I do try to do more than influence outcomes and don’t always demonstrate that I have participants’ best interests at heart. I may feel it, but do I show it? This goes back to the feedback I got about my giving feedback when I ask a question.

I started to work on my teaching philosophy and learned that I have no foundation for my teaching style other than two semesters of public speaking classes, years of practice, and feedback from a very restricted scope of audience. It is easy to teach people who think like me, especially in church because it is a topic in which I am so fluent and also in which I have almost 15 years of exposure. To teach adults who may or may not care what I have to say and may often disagree with me is another matter entirely. I have no support for my choices, I have no guiding philosophy, and I have limited knowledge of what others have found to be effective. I went to the library today and found 10 books that deal with the history and development of the major thoughts on learning. Now I get to read them, so by Monday, I will be back with another entry about some of what I have read.

**2-26-2008** Ok, so it is after Monday, but the reading took me a bit longer than I expected. Honestly, I only got through a couple of the books with any detail. Some of them were more or less duplicate information, and others I will hope to get to later this week, but my test this morning took precedence, and if I don’t get writing soon, I will never finish this philosophy. Although I still am not sure I know what I am doing, I am making progress. Most of my reading was spent in Psychology of Learning for Instruction by Marcy Driscoll. She gives a great history of some of the movements in the field of learning. As it always is with hindsight, it seems so obvious that associationism can only explain a portion of learning. In twenty or one hundred years, when learning is understood better, the things that are now “known” may be taken for granted in the same way.

Reading about how memory is understood to work explains a lot about why at times I am very good at testing and at other times I am not. Rehearsing being only part of the picture confirms my prior belief that varying repetition through different methods of instruction helps in retention and recall. I now understand why I was often told to “practice for a test in a test taking mode.” Learning by using “cues” that will be readily available at the time of a test enhances recall ability. Using multiple cues improves the chances of having the memory “jogged”. By presenting material and then practicing, it is encoded better. All this I think I intuitively knew (probably less instinct and more years of indoctrination by good teachers). What I did not know, or at least not know well enough to implement effectively, is that enforced encoding is less effective than allowing participants to “self encode”. By giving participants an opportunity to “make it their own”, their recall will be easier and more successful. I have watched my brother for too long suffer under the “illusion of knowing” where he has felt like he studied but never really come to an understanding of the material. In my teaching, I hope to give students the tools to learn, holding them accountable for the material before testing so that they can have the “aha” moment of realizing they have not learned before there are truly painful consequences.

**2-29-2008** Temperament Theory and Theory of Psychological Type. Understand core student needs and use more strategies that reach more students more effectively.These methods take into account the needs and skills of the teacher as well as the student. Recognizing the strengths that my style brings to the process is only half of the equation. I need to know how to communicate with those whose styles differ. It is funny that my efforts at pushing my style result in the “Stuff-a-duck” philosophy that my interpersonal communications teacher tried to warn me about. Funny in the ironic sense, not in the fact that I am not yet amazing at reading people and having the perfect style to meet their learning needs. Temperament Theory comes from constitutional psychology—observable human features and behaviors; Melancholy, Sanguine, Choleric, and Phlegmatic are personality traits I am more than a little familiar with. I know that I am phlegmatic with a hint of sanguine, that I love to have a party, but really want to belong and make sure everyone gets along. I guess that translates to guardian with a bit of idealist. The more I read, the more I learn I already know. Not that I know everything, but that I know things that I did not know were valid. The writings give confidence and credibility to that knowledge.

**3-3-2008** My presentation last night started well enough—a good question to get participation and start the thought process, a startling fact to keep interest. It went downhill from there, though fortunately never to a chaotic failure. I guess I hadn’t rehearsed enough, and my notes were not very clear, so I lost my place, confused my facts, and made talking points that had nothing to do with the current slide. As a result of my stumble, I forgot to do anything other than lecture—my safety default mode I suppose. Sure, it was better than it would have been before taking this class but not what I would have hoped for.