



**Boston Faculty Fellowship
Academics as Salt & Light in the University
January Retreat 2017**

Session 2: Engaging in Teaching

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INTRODUCTION

If we are to “engage” all aspects of university life, then teaching is critical.

A. My Teaching Experiences

Trained as an elementary school teacher after college and taught briefly. A very helpful experience

Taught for many years in the College, the undergraduate teaching site at the University of Chicago

Taught graduate seminars in the Department of Sociology, University of Chicago

These days I teach occasionally – master classes, short courses in summer institutes, etc.

B. Global Vistas -- from IFES Standpoint, Around World – Enormous Heterogeneity:

- Rote teaching
- Professors acting as final authorities
- Teaching to the test – mass classes – multiple choice – US (mass production)
- Tiny seminars (University of Chicago) – classes LT 30. Conference square face-to-face
- Oxford tutorials (1-2 persons at a time)
- Doctoral thesis supervision/post-doc sponsorship
- Clinical/applied – learning diagnosis – law/medicine -- professions
- Online learning – anonymous – learning? Teaching?

C. Purposes Today:

--to stimulate us to reflect more deeply on all dimensions of our teaching:

Formal – university settings

Informal – interactions

--emergence of perspectives to inform IVCF, IFES faculty/movements worldwide

TEACHING IN THREE DIMENSIONS

I shall introduce 3 questions which we can elaborate in our small groups.

1. What is the *relational texture* of our teaching?

Eg., from *Hillbilly Elegy* of Yale Law prof.

Much biblical teaching is on the quality of interactions—person to person reflective of God to humans & vice versa.

The quality of interactions is integral to texture of teaching. What are some of those relational qualities?

- *Personal, face-to-face* – not simply remote – but is this practical with 300 students, etc.?
- *Encouraging* – building on whatever is offered, presented, if authentic effort (??)
 - Mentoring
 - Discipling (academic)(Christian)
- *Challenging*
 - Pressing person(s) beyond where they are, what they think they are capable of doing
- *Affirming* dignity of the other
 - No belittled, shaming
 - YET
 - have you prepared? Have you read?
- *Rigorous / disciplinary*
 - With students, teaching the discipline of scholarship:
 - Setting high expectations
 - Appropriate preparation
 - Strict deadlines
 - Quality presentation (e.g., of papers)
 - Cf. Psa 89 (memory from my u/g days):
 - 30 “If his sons forsake my law
 - and do not follow my statutes,
 - 31 if they violate my decrees
 - and fail to keep my commands,
 - 32 I will punish their sin with the rod,
 - their iniquity with flogging;
 - 33 but I will not take my love from him,
 - nor will I ever betray my faithfulness.
- *Empathetic* – how does it feel?
 - Remembering when we were junior, vulnerable
 - Putting ourselves in shoes of another
 - Jesus – felt the pain of sick – wept with the relatives of Jarius’ daughter

2. What kinds of *thinking* do we stimulate as Christian faculty?

- (a) Do we teach *critical thinking*? If so, how?
 How to modify the adjective *critical*, i.e., as in openly examining v. generalized cynicism?
 Questioning assumptions – questioning logics of argument – questioning
 Seeking alternative scenarios, outcomes, directions – questioning next steps in
 sequences of experiments or research trajectories
- (b) Do we impart *creative thinking*? If so, how?
 Offering freedom of space to think differently
- (c) Do we teach *hermeneutical* understandings? i.e., self-reflection on our interpretive
 positions?
 In the sociology of science it is presupposed that science has social contexts – shaped by
 ideologies, governments, funding, corporations, prejudices of scientists.
 Hermeneutics in humanities --
 Hermeneutics in theology – teaching how to read biblical texts with discernment as to
 genre, immediate v. distal applications, immanent v. future circumstances.
- (d) Do we impart/our Christian gps on campus impart *thinking skills* which simultaneously
 deepen faith and deepen intellectual understandings?
 We have spoken about Christian service on campus including the development of skills
 consistent with the ideals of the university
 What do Christians/Christian groups offer the university? Further the goals of the
 university?

3. Teaching the art of *conversation*

In the classroom
 In all university contexts

This speaks to relational texture. To deepening skills. Esp. how to *question* and how to stimulate
collegiality

- How to elicit from others their intellectual passions – esp. if they are in fields remote
 from our specialties
- How to affirm through interest
- How to nurture the art of questioning
- How to stimulate cross-disciplinary understanding
- How to clarify one's own research findings/scholarly focus, i.e., in an elevator speech
- How to reach "publics"

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