



**University of Michigan
Provost's Teaching
Innovation Prize**

2018 WINNER



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Designing “Problem Sets” and Flipping Humanities Courses

Innovation Description

What do you do if the science of learning persuades you that students benefit hugely from project-based learning, but you teach a humanities subject that lacks the problem sets around which lectures can so productively be flipped in disciplines like engineering or dentistry? And how do you scale a newly flipped course to serve 60-70 students after pilot runs with 30-40?

HISTORY 335 “Immigration Law” created space for new activities by first adopting a familiar technique: clicker quizzes at the beginning of class encourage students to actually do the readings beforehand. This change freed time for students to work in small groups. Requiring the groups to sit together during lecture was a “eureka” moment because projects started in lecture can wrap up with report-outs during discussion section. The flexibility to plan group work spanning lecture and section was key to scaling up the model.

Like problem sets, carefully crafted activities ask students to put their readings into practice through engagement with new material in authentic tasks. For example, research tools like the Shepardizing function in Lexis Nexis let students identify all subsequent cases that cite a given case so they can trace changes in immigration policies. In about the same amount of time required for a real intake interview, students role play meetings between visa seekers and legal practitioners, including hunting online for appropriate forms.

Colleagues have noticed the “stimulating, collaborative, and inspiring” atmosphere in HISTORY 335, and other history faculty are adopting similar project-based strategies and practices.

Student Comments

“Each class generally begins with our i-clicker questions, followed by a short lecture, and ends with a memorable and relevant activity. This allows us to talk about the material, ask questions, and get to know our classmates.”

“Activities give us real tools for future assignments.”

“We are given a reasonable amount of readings for each week. Each reading is extremely relevant to that week’s topic.”

“Memorable and relevant activities have ranged from research workshops, where we have learned the needed tools to complete our own legal research, to activities where we take the role of immigration officer and decide who is admissible and who is not.”

“The lecture activities helped me to draw connections between the course material and real-life applications and helped demonstrate the reality of the laws for the people subject to them.”

“This model has made our class rousing and dynamic; it is more inclusive and impactful to our learning.”

“Rather than memorizing dates and laws before an exam, which we will forget once we are out of the exam room, we are walking away from his course with unforgettable lessons that we can continue to apply in our lives.”

Examples of Teaching Innovation

Legal Research Workshop II – The Constitutional Challenge to Chinese Exclusion

The purpose of this activity is to introduce students to key concepts in legal studies (judicial review, opinion, dissent, precedent, citation, Shepardize), to give students training and experience with an important legal research tool (LexisNexis) that they will be expected to use for their group presentations, and to begin to explore two crucial Supreme Court decisions that will be appear in next week’s readings and will be part of our “Paper Chase” role playing exercise next Wednesday.

Part One

Full class demonstration of LexisNexis and definition of key terms.

Part Two

You will be working in your regular groups of four. Over the rest of the lecture period your assignment is to

- 1) Find your assigned case on LexisNexis
- 2) Read the case

3) Discuss it in with your group and produce
a. Full Chicago Manual of Style citation for your case, as if it were going to be cited in a history paper.

b. A two-minute synopsis to be presented in sections. What was the case about? What was the conclusion of the court (or of the dissenters)? What was their primary legal argument? If you are in one of the “shepardizing” groups, how does your case relate to the precedent cited? If you are in a group charged with tracking subsequent court interpretation of the ruling, what are the overall patterns and how (if at all) do they change over time.

Part Three (In sections)

Your group will have a short amount of time to finish up your preparations. Then each group will give its minipresentation.

Part Four (In sections)

Debriefing and general discussion, led by GSI.

This activity is designed so that each discussion section has exactly one research team working on each of the following topics. How do you know which topic your team was assigned? Look at the color of your handout.

Lavender -- Fong Yue Ting Decision

Salery -- Fong Yue Ting Dissent

Aqua -- Wong Wing Decision

Hot Pink -- Wong Wing Dissent

Emerald -- How have the courts cited Fong Yue Ting. Was the case ever overturned or questioned by any court? Has this changed over time?

Powder Pink -- Find a case that recently cited Fong Yue Ting. What was at stake in this case. How does Fong Yue Ting relate.

Banana -- How have the courts cited Wong Wing. Was the case ever overturned or questioned by any court? Has this changed over time?

White -- Find a case that recently cited Wong Wing. What was at stake in this case. How does Wong Wing relate to the case?

Designing activities as interlocking “jigsaw” pieces keeps tasks for each group manageable and provides incentive for students to pay attention to other groups’ report-outs.