PRESENTING PAPERS CONFERENCE-STYLE

STEPHEN PETERS, Faculty Lecturer

Department of Integrated Studies in Education
Faculty of Education

COURSE:
CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDIES IN EDUCATION
(EDEC 627)

SUMMARY

During an in-class mock conference, students present the content of their final paper prior to the due date. They receive feedback from the instructor and peers that they can use to further organize their thoughts and refine their work.

"The conference program makes the event official. Students take it seriously and some even get dressed up for it!"

- Stephen Peters

GOALS

- Allow students to try out and get feedback on their ideas before submitting a high-stakes final assignment

- Help students understand that scholarly writing is a process that happens over time with multiple sources of input

- Afford students the opportunity to prepare for a real-world experience

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STEPS

1. The conference spans two class periods at the end of the semester. Students sign up for a 15-minute time slot. Presentations are individual.

2. Students submit a 150-word abstract about their research paper a week before the conference.

3. The instructor provides feedback on the abstracts.

4. Students resubmit and the instructor creates a conference program with the abstracts that is posted to myCourses in advance of the conference.

5. Students present for 8 minutes and must allow 7 minutes for feedback and discussion.

6. The instructor chairs the conference and moderates the discussion.

7. Peers fill in a feedback form, which they give to the presenter at the end of the presentation. This peer review is not anonymous.

ASSESSMENT

- The conference presentation is worth 15% of the final grade.

- Presentations are assessed according to a rubric.

- Students also receive peer feedback in writing, which is separate from the grade.

READY TO TRY IT OUT?

HERE'S SOME ADVICE ...

- Highlight to students the importance of the abstract: it pushes them to articulate the scope of their project, construct their argument, and locate the value of evidence in making their argument.

- Encourage students to read the conference program before the presentations so that they can mentally prepare for what they will hear.

- Give students guidelines about how to engage with scholarly ideas and constructive criticism.

- Use count-down signs during the presentation to indicate how much time speakers have left.

BENEFITS

- The in-class conference, including having students submit abstracts for a program, increases student engagement: students are keen to participate in a real-world activity and in one that has the potential to help them succeed on their final, high-stakes assignment.

- Peer review is a valuable additional source of feedback for students.

CHALLENGES

- The question period can get lively and intense. It is important to ensure exchanges remain collegial and respect time limits.

- Honing students' presentation skills is not among the learning outcomes and is not part of the assessment; however, students' different skill levels can unwittingly influence assessment.

BEYOND GRADING: ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FROM MCGILL INSTRUCTORS

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