

Supercourse Newsletter:
August 25, 2006

www.bibalex.org/SuperCourse/Index.htm
www.bibalex.org/english/initiatives/SupercourseArchive.htm
www.pitt.edu/~super1

Friends, after a wonderful time in Montreal we have returned. It was amazing as almost 10 people offered to help us. Bruce Case from Montreal provided the Case Restaurant selection series, all of them were top notch. If any of you are planning to go to Montreal, we would be pleased to forward to you his selection, as well as Jan and my selection as well as the many others that provided input. Montreal is great, it was also good that we drove as we able to reach the hotel with hair shampoo, deodorant and a few brew skis which we would not have had if we had flown.

2700 WOW!!!

We have crossed yet another milestone with your help. Eugene just told us that we have over 2700 lectures. When we started 7 years ago, we thought we would be lucky to have 250 lectures. It has been a remarkable run to change the world.

Pedagogy:

If I were to ask our students as to the definition of "Pedagogy", 20% would indicate that that it was the science of walking, 30% would indicate that it was somehow related to Jon Benet Ramsey or a small number of Boston Priests, and 25% would think that was part of a web site Wikipedagogy. It is disappointing that Pedagogy is so little known, it is our fault.

Pedagogy (or paedagogy) is the art or science of teaching
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedagogy>

Pedagogy is one of our most important sciences. In reviewing graduates from our program over 50% end up teaching most of their time, almost all have to teach in some capacity in their jobs. It is likely that of all the talents needed for our students, the ability to teach may be the most important.

We all remember how important this can be. My experience was that I taught for the first time at age 25. The class went from 5:00-7:00 at night. I walked in there were 60 students, with a mean age was 50 primarily steel workers, who were much stronger than I was. Despite practicing for 3 weeks, my lecture was horrific. I went through 43 pages of notes in about 87 seconds, I was sweating profusely, and I could not look anyone in the eye. I had a classic case of "First Class Agony". This first class was one of the most terrible events of my life (almost as bad as my divorce and root canals). Think of your experience, and let me know. The first class we teach rings in our memory. I then received no training in teaching. Not much has changed in 30 years as our students receive receive little training on how to teach. We require that students learning about surgery before the go into the operating room, we require that they are certified as mechanics before they fix our Subarus, yet we can go into a class of 60 people and teach them with no training at all. The Supercourse helps by sharing content with the next generation, however, we still do not teach future scientists how to teach.

Isn't amazing that we provide an enormous amount of training to teach students to do one facet of the future jobs, research. However, very few students competent to teach when they leave. My department is likely similar to yours, there are about 63 different content courses, all focus on research methods in epidemiology and Science, and statistics. None discuss how to teach.

No students to my knowledge have taken courses in our education school to learn how to teach. The triple role of our Ph.D. graduates is research, teaching and service. Most certainly we have well conceived programs from creating competently research trained graduates, but we provide little training in "epidemiologic/prevention/scientific pedagogy".

We provide prelims, and oral examinations concerning the ability to do research, yet most students working towards their Ph.D. degrees do not teach. There is no higher education teaching certificates.

"Supercourse Pedagogy" is the art or science of teaching using the content of the Supercourse to assist. This could markedly transform local to global higher education if we added training in teaching as well..

Please let us know if you would like to provide ideas, and would like to help to build a Supercourse Pedagogy

We do not have the resource now, but we should start to work with you to help build a Supercourse Pedagogy course for use in all areas of science..

Every School who trains Ph.D. students should have a Supercourse Pedagogy. No students should be allowed to graduate unless they receive training in how to teach, and we as a group world wide can establish this system. Of the 60 courses that students take, they need to take at least one on how to teach.

Most of these ideas concerning Higher Education were expressed by John Dewey (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dewey, there is an excellent book by Louis Menand, titled the Metaphysical Club, when provides an overview "A story of Ideas in America". Clearly the establishment of an American Pedagogical system was extremely important for higher education in science and helped drive science. Sadly this seems to have disappeared in epidemiology, prevention, public health and Science.

Idea for a New Supercourse Series:

Dr. Pararajasegaram is a friend at WHO, and we have been talking for years. He had a brilliant idea, that we create a Supercourse of Food!! Starting with Montreal! Now that is information we could all use to teach (and eat) from.

Lecture of the week: Obesity is a growing problem in the US and worldwide. What is the cause of obesity? What is obesity? How do you measure obesity? Is there a way to control it? To find answer to all these questions, please refer to a new Supercourse lecture by Paul Earl that can be accessed at <http://www.pitt.edu/~super1/lecture/lec23961/index.htm>

We in the Supercourse would love to get more lectures on obesity. Please help us to expand our library!

Best Regards:

Ron, Faina, Mita, Eugene, Soni, Saida, Francois, John Dewey, Bruce Case (hmmm, good food), Ylli, Rania, Julia, Bambi's mother

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