MAIS Symposium – October 4, 2013
Research in the Interdisciplinary World

1:00PM – 2:30PM
Round Table on Curriculum and Pedagogy

Abstracts

Josipa G. Petrunic
"Interdisciplinary Research Methods: analyzing the revamped syllabus for MAIS 602 and addressing interdisciplinary research outcomes among graduate students"

In early 2012, the MAIS program at Athabasca University revised and overhauled one of its core research methods course, MAIS 602: Researching Society and Culture. A primary goal of the course redesign was to develop a curriculum that would equip students with an understanding of the "interdisciplinary research method", as it has come to be understood by contemporary methodologists such as A. Repko. A secondary goal of the redesign was to equip students with skills in basic qualitative and quantitative research methods applicable to both humanities and social sciences research studies. The new course was approved by the MAIS curriculum committee in August 2012 and first delivered by instructors in the winter 2013 semester.

An explicit goal of the new MAIS 602 course is to get students to conceptualize and produce a research proposal that prepares them to carry out meaningful interdisciplinary research at the 700-level in the MAIS program. In so doing, the new MAIS 602 course works to equip students with critical analysis skills in terms of engaging with scholarly findings (both conceptual and empirical in nature), which emanate from varied disciplines.

While early notions of "inter-disciplinarity" defined the concept as a consideration of multiple perspectives, recent methodologists have argued inter-disciplinarity is a systematic process that exposes researchers to disciplinary assumptions and methodological barriers, while also imbuing them with the desire to produce integrative outcomes that combine concepts, methods and theories in innovative ways.

Crucially, the new MAIS 602 course adopts this latter view; it presents inter-disciplinarity as a structured (though flexible) process that involves the step-by-step identification of relevant disciplinary insights and methods that can be integrated to produce new kinds of research outcomes.

In sum, the redesigned MAIS 602 course is set up as a skills training course. As such, it is a "heavy" course that demands students achieve certain objectives by following set rubrics for assignments, both online and offline.

In this presentation, I will review the new MAIS 602 curriculum with the MAIS community. I will also review examples of student assignments, instructor feedback, and end-of-semester evaluations. I will discuss exemplars that demonstrate student growth curves. And I will discuss pertinent student feedback that may lead to course revisions in the winter 2014 semester.

This session is meant to generate meaningful discussion among participants as to the workload we expect from students, the workload we expect from instructors, and the reasonableness of teaching research methods to a student audience not primarily oriented towards producing publishable outcomes.

Jane Arscott and Marti Cleveland Innis
"Is there a fit for Human Services in MAIS?"

This presentation will brainstorm some of the opportunities we have to expand FHSS grad programs by making strategic use of joint grad degrees across one or more faculties. In Health and Human Services the trend is toward Interprofessional Education. We will address the question: Might strategic alliances be struck with existing graduate programs to bridge FHSS and FHD (health and well-being, Interprofessional Education, gerontology, mental health)? FHSS and CDE (literacy studies, early childhood education and online relationship and community building or something else entirely)? How might such programs be positioned? Specifically, now that the Undergraduate Human Services major is approaching maturity, what might be possible at the graduate level? We will brainstorm some of the opportunities we have and address the familiar bugbear of personnel and resources. Might internal and external partnerships be used to leverage funds to make a quick startup possible?

Derek Briton
"Failure, Fantasy, and Fear: implications for Learning"

Adult learners do not learn in a vacuum. Unlike their less mature counterparts, they must contest with a host of factors that impinge upon and structure their learning environment. Unfortunately, in the haste to provide them with new knowledge, skills, and capacities, adult educators often pay little heed to the affective impediments adult learners bring to the learning environment. Yet rather than carefully-planned teaching and learning methodologies, lesson plans, or assessment models, it may well be such factors that determine the success or failure of adult learners.

Reinekke Lengelle
"Career writing – creative, expressive, and reflective narratives in career learning"

The labour market of the 21st century is characterized by increased complexity, individualization and insecurity. In recent decades, narrative theories and approaches to career guidance have been developed in order to address the career challenges of our era and are intended to help individuals develop a career identity. Such an identity takes on the form of a well-structured story, based on life themes, that explains "how the self of yesterday became the self of today and will become the self of tomorrow" (Mark L. Savickas) and is "not factual truth but narrative truth; meaningful to the individual in terms of experience, understanding of the world and of future possibilities" (Hazel Reid and Linden

West). It also takes into consideration the fragmented nature of self and society, whereby the self, as it relates to career, is defined as a dynamic multiplicity of positions or voices regarding work. Research being done at the University of The Hague with third-year university students will be discussed. The question to be answered is, does career writing promote the development of career narratives and therefore hold promise as a narrative approach?