

## CILA Lunch Discussion

Wednesday September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008

### **Academic Journaling: Effective techniques to assess student learning**

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#### **SURVEY QUESTIONS:**

1. Name
2. Department
3. Have you used journaling in any of your courses or programs you have led?
  - Yes
  - No (thank you)
4. If so, in which course(s)? (Course Name(s), Course Number(s))
5. What format(s) have you used for journal assignments? **Choose all that apply.**
  - Moodle
  - Web blog
  - Email
  - Paper
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
6. How do you structure students' journal entries?
  - I guide student journal entries with specific questions or comments based on course topics.
  - I provide general outlines
  - I let students journal about a topic or issue of their choosing.
  - Mix of the above.
7. What is your primary purpose in having students do journals)? **Choose all that apply.**
  - Reflection – have students reflect on and react to the course content
  - Assess student learning
  - Assess student engagement
  - To periodically touch-base
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
8. When you have used journaling, was it a course requirement?
  - Yes
  - No
9. Approximately what percentage of the final grade did you allocate to journals?
  - 0%
  - 0-25%
  - 25-50%
  - 50-75%
  - 75-100%
10. If so, did you grade the journal or was the journal just recorded as completed?
  - Journal was reviewed and graded
  - Journal was checked-off as handed in
11. Generally speaking, how useful have you found journals, based on the intent or goals you listed above?

1	2	3	4	5
Not Useful				Very Useful
12. Briefly list/describe what has worked well for you when using journals for courses or programs. (What has made this an effective tool for you?)
13. Briefly list/describe the challenges you have encountered when using journals in courses or programs.
14. Anything else you would like to share about your experience with student journaling?

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**SURVEY FEEDBACK (SUMMARY):**

**Total Respondents:** 81 total (out of 197 total full-time faculty 2007-2008)

60 marked "Yes" (have used journals in courses or programs), 21 marked "No"

**FACULTY/DEPT DESIGNATION OF RESPONDENTS**

<b>FACULTY</b> <i>*Eight respondents associated with more than one department</i>	<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>NUMBER of RESPONDENTS</b>
<b>Fine Arts</b> 9 "Yes" 5 "No" 14 total respondents	Art/Art History	4
	Dance	2
	Music	5 (4 No)
	Theater	3 (1 No)
<b>Humanities</b> 22 "Yes" 3 "No" 25 total respondents	Classics	1
	English	7 (2 No)
	German	1
	History	5
	Norwegian	2
	Philosophy	3
	Religion	3 (1 No)
Romance Languages	3	
<b>Interdisciplinary/ General</b> 11 "Yes" 1 "No" 12 total respondents	American Conversations	1
	American Studies	1
	Asian Studies	4 (1 No)
	Environmental Studies	2
	GE/Interdepartmental	1
	Interdisciplinary Studies	1
	International Studies	1
Russian	1	
<b>Natural Sciences &amp; Mathematics</b> 12 "Yes" 10 "No" 22 total respondents	Biology	6
	Chemistry	3 (2 No)
	MSCS	6 (2 No)
	Neuroscience	1 (1 No)
	Physics	2 (2 No)
Psychology	4 (3 No)	
<b>Social Sciences</b> 15 "Yes" 3 "No" 18 total respondents	Economics	5 (3 No)
	Education	4
	Exercise Science	2
	Political Science	2
	Sociology/Anthropology	2
Social Work/Family Studies	3	

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## COURSES, as reported by respondents

**Abroad Programs:** Interim "Italian Art in Context"; Term in Asia; AS215 Interim in China and Japan; Bio South India; Environmental Science in Australia; Peruvian Medial Mission; Term in Asia; Global Semester; ES 260 off-campus; Term in Middle East; ID 258 Theater in London; English Literature of Eastern Caribbean (off-campus); German 245 Arts in Vienna interim abroad; Term in Australia; French 275 ID French Studies in Paris

**Art:** Art 254; Women and the Arts; Methods of Art History; Foundation Drawing

**American Conversations:** Amcon 102

**American Studies:** American Studies 100

**Asian Studies:** AS211; AS121 Asian Cultures; AS212 National Identity in China and Japan

**Biology:** Animal Behavior; BioPsych 386; Bio 272/273; **Internships; Independent Study Credit**

**Chemistry:** Chem 126 ("many years ago")

**Classics:** Classics 251 ("but not for 20 years!")

**Dance:** Dance 121, 220, 221, 210, 211, 100, 232 Movement Analyses

**Economics: Independent Studies and Internships** (Management Studies 294/394)

**Education:** ED 290, Student Teaching; ED 330 Principles of Education, ED 345 Teaching of Communication Arts and Literature; ED 260 Perspectives on Teaching; ED 231; ED 375 Reading and Differentiated Instruction; ED 246 Issues in Education – ELLs; ED 347/348 Methods and Assessment of ESL; ED 170 Urban Education

**English:** English 257 Intro to Poetry and Fiction; English 132 First Year Writing, Reading for Life; GE-111 First Year Writing; English 233 Journalistic Writing; English 251 Creative Nonfiction; English 233 Children's Literature; **Internships and Independent Studies**

**Environmental Studies:** ES 222

**Exercise Science:** All 0.50 activity classes taught by faculty member respondent; ESAC 133 Individual Fitness

**History:** History 217 Age of the Renaissance; History 296 Medical Vocation in Historical Context; **Internships**

**MSCS:** CS350 Advanced Team Project; Education 350 Teaching of Mathematics; **Off-campus summer internships**

**Music:** Music 364 Vocal Pedagogy and Performance Studies

**Norwegian:** Nor 386/286 Ibsen; Nor 253, 232

**Philosophy:** "almost all of them"; Philosophy 256 Friendship, Love, and the Good Life

**Political Science:** PS 113 Intro to Political Theory; PS 384 Seminar in Political Theory; **Independent Studies; Internships**

**Psychology: Internships** (*the entries reflect the key learning goals and strategies as described in their learning plan. When the internship is over, students use the journal entries to evaluate progress toward reaching learning goals and summarize experience, sometimes in response to specific questions that we have identified at the beginning of the internship. Students find it useful later to have both the daily/weekly journal entries and the summaries of their experiences.*)

**Religion:** 275Historical Geography & the Bible; 251; 262

**Romance Languages:** French 372 Topics; Confessional writing; ED 353 Special Methods

**Russian:** Russian Literature, film and theater courses (261, 262, 255, 250, 265)

**Sociology/Anthropology:** S/A 292 Anthropological Theory; 264 Race and Class in American Culture; 261 Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective

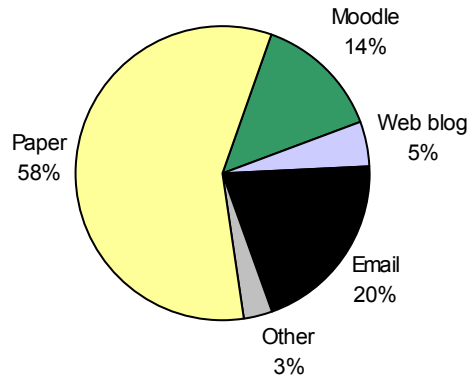
**Social Work/Family Studies:** SW 380, 254, 256, 274; FS 242 Family Relationships; **Internships**; SW 246 Human Behaviors and the Soc Environ

**Theatre:** Intermediate Acting, various rehearsal processes when directing

**Women's studies:** Intro to Women's Studies

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**Format of Journal**



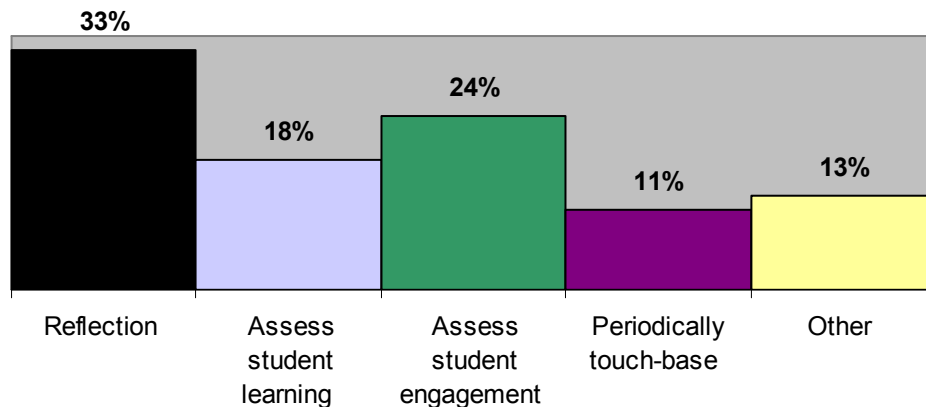
*Other included: Daily response papers, Wimba voice forum.*

**Structure of Entries**



- Let students choose issue/topic
- Provide general guidelines
- Guided with questions or comments based on course topics
- Mix of the above

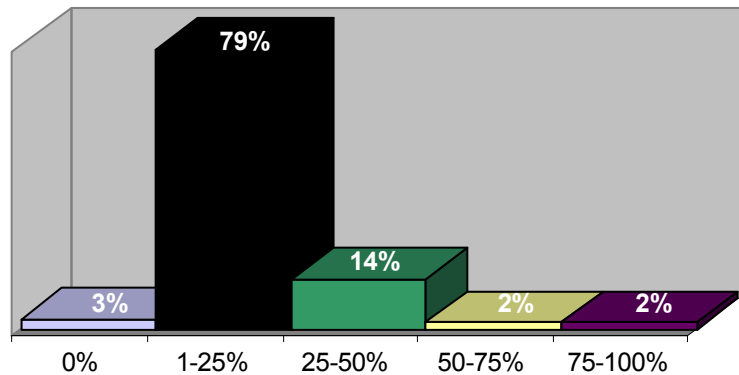
**Primary Purpose of Journals**



**Primary Purpose of Journals, "other" included:**  
 Help students prepare for class discussions; practice writing casually in foreign language; create awareness among team members of project activities; engage aesthetic language and evaluation of specific works of art along with drawing and other visual information; practice skills taught in course; structured ethnographic journal, students responding to questions as they complete assigned activities; opportunity to ask student questions and hear the response – have them apply knowledge from past coursework; serves as base for poems and stories students develop; practice creative or journalistic writing; record physical activity and related information, reflect on the information they record and consider changes to exercise and diet; asked for description, interpretation and analysis - as well responses to their perceptions of what was happening; building individual relationships with students and with community-building in the class as a whole; give students a place where they can take time to pay attention to their world; give them a safe space for risky comments; to make connections between their lives and values and the course issues; discover what is of interest and impact and they record events they reflect on years later (as they have written me).

*\*NOTE: Respondents could choose more than one. Out of the 56 respondents to this question, 44 indicated 2 or more purposes, 31 indicated 3 or more purposes.*

**% of Final Grade Allocated to Journals**



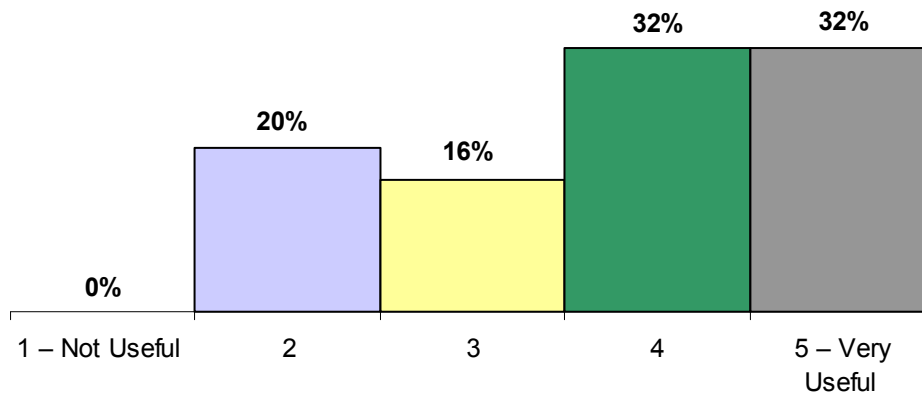
**Course Requirement:**

Yes (56)  
No (0)

**Graded or Checked-off As Complete:**

Journal was reviewed and graded (39)  
Journal was checked-off as handed in (15)

**How useful?**



**Most Mentioned Successes:**

1. Guiding students with questions and clarifying expectations improved journal entries; stress the need to Describe – Interpret – Analyze (D-I-A). Provide structure.
2. Provide an outlet for students who don't speak up in class
3. Offered opportunity to engage with assigned readings, determine level of understanding, and able to tell who's doing the readings
4. Effective way of encouraging students to reflect on experiential aspects of interim abroad courses – relating readings to experiences and observations, reflect on cross-cultural experiences

**Most Mentioned Challenges:**

1. It's an easy assignment to fake. Students don't take them seriously. Some students just don't know what to write in their journals, and so don't make good use of them. Getting students to write as they are experiencing each assignment rather than bursts of "catch-up" communication (some are very good at doing the entire week journal in one sitting with a variety of pens and pencils). Getting students to see the value. Not seeing progress in the students' entries.
2. Often students end up with many pages of entries over the course of a semester, which makes for heavy reading on top of essays and exams, especially in larger classes. Time consuming to review and offer feedback to students, especially during off-campus programs.
3. Course material invites personal response that is difficult to evaluate. How to grade journaling.
4. Getting students to think conceptually rather than describing and summarizing. Getting students to analyze and meditate rather than simply sound off an opinion, reflect intellectually rather than just emotionally.

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ADDITIONAL SUCCESSES MENTIONED	ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES MENTIONED
Connects course to students' personal histories/plans Brought up excellent questions for class discussion	Handwritten journals can be impossible to read. Along with useful, engaged entries were lots that were superficial and some that contained personal information I did not need or want.
Info used to tailor course content (e.g. re-teach a topic that many students didn't understand)	Some of students' richest material is in journals, but often they won't bring this to class discussion.
Useful in getting to know students' personalities/more personally (especially in off-campus programs – a way to keep tabs)	Due to the lack of formal restraints, journals tend to be the students' most successful writing, so grades tend to be very high.
Great for students to reflect on their thoughts/info tracked and have something from which to base decisions for future action and/or improve	Getting students to hand in their work on time.
Distinguishing between reaction to course material and reflection on their writing/learning is significant as students prepare for the major seminar. Also, reflect on their teaching strategies	Some students end up telling about their meals, souvenir-shopping, and late-night adventures, which isn't the type of reflective, thoughtful journaling that was intended.
Electronic submission allows for daily reading – easier to keep up. Having several due dates throughout the term helps.	With a larger class, having students react to each others comments can be difficult – a lot of work. (WSST enrollment growing – will journaling have to be dropped? This is a serious concern in this program.)
Encourage students to respond to each others' entries – engage in conversation. Incorporate into course presentations on material.	
Leave assignment open so students can use in ways most helpful to them	
Most enjoyable experiences are when students make insightful links between their internships and the topics discussed in class.	
Make the quality of the journal a large part of students final grade	
A safe space for students to disagree/share opinions	
Entries used as starting points for writing assignments	
Great souvenir for abroad/off-campus experience	
Allow students to share difficulties they may have understanding course material	
Require entries be typed with a table of contents and highlighting those entries to be further developed	
Meet with students to discuss journal entries	
Encourage students to keep a SEPARATE personal journal/scrapbook for non-academic personal reflections as a souvenir	
Talk about the journals during class in order to add value to the process.	
Journals allow students to react and express themselves without the time constraints of class.	
Students create their own questions for discussion	
For project management, use of journals to coordinate worked well – real time updates and broad visibility were important characteristics	
To determine how well students are assessing their own creative development and how effectively they are plugging course concepts into the approach they take on individual performances required class.	
Allows students to spill ideas onto paper without concern for formal shaping and development.	
I have replaced journals with short, directed writing assignments that I call post-card assignments. This are handed in more frequently; the length is controlled; students receive more response, more immediately; and the assignment is more clearly specified. I have found this much more effective for an abroad course.	