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Philosophy in action: Developing a Rationale to Study Innovative Teaching Practices

What does innovative teaching really mean? How do faculty truly engage students in teaching? Georgia Gwinnett College (the nation's newest four year institution) has been charged with the mission to be innovative in an open access environment. This discussion seeks to define "innovation," "critical thinking," and "student engagement." In addition, a research protocol for an "innovative" large lecture introductory psychology course, combining both learning-centered and knowledge-centered environments, will be presented. The goals of this session are to: 1) demonstrate the strategies used in the introductory course, 2) determine the meaning of the terms "innovation" and "critical thinking," and 3) develop strategies for assessing innovation. The structure of this presentation will be in the format of the introductory course. First, a ten-minute "mini-lecture" on "innovation" in higher education will be presented. Second, a case study on designing a research protocol for assessing the effectiveness of a large lecture introductory course will be distributed to small groups of participants. Groups will be given a particular area to focus on: "innovation," "critical thinking," or "student engagement." Session participants will be encouraged to devise ways of incorporating the use of popular media (e.g., cell phones, video cameras, & digital cameras) to use in a presentation of their newly constructed courses. After the groups have met for twenty-five minutes, the full session will reconvene to discuss the effectiveness of their collaborations. Since the session is limited in time, the digital course designs will be collected and posted to a virtual space (i.e., wiki page, website, Microsoft Live site) devoted to the development and assessment of innovative teaching. Session attendees can expect to be involved in expanding notions of innovation, collaboration, and teaching. It is expected that participants will leave the session with connections to a real and virtual community to continued development of "innovation" in teaching.