                            PATHWAYS TO GLOBAL COMMUNICATION

                                           REFLECTIVE PORTFOLIO TEMPLATE

Part 1

Reflecting on Theory, Practice, and Communication

(To be written after workshops 1 and 2)

* What is your teaching philosophy?
* What do you see as the benefits and/or challenges to having culturally and linguistically diverse students in your class?
* How might the ideas about language, diversity, and cross-cultural communication discussed during the NEA workshops thus far contribute to your classroom practice?

Part 1 already submitted…brief recap here:

* My philosophy is to respect students, be as objective as I can, impart a joy and seriousness for learning, to draw on my own and the students’ experiences to ground and make meaningful any content.
* The benefits are enormous. Western hegemony and culture is so pervasive that it is too often assumed to be the *sine qua non*. We all gain when we actively support experience and content that shows it is not. It is only through diversity and openness that we all truly advance.
* It has certainly made me more aware—even though I thought I was! I am more sensitive now, and I actively include student input about their experiences and their perception of content, mores, and cultural connotations.

Part 2

Moving Theory into Practice: Diversity as Resource

(To be written after workshops 3 and 4)

* How might you change an existing lesson/assignment as a result of participating in the NEA project?
* What new assignment might you develop that would incorporate lessons learned as a result of the Pathways to Globalization workshops?
* When responding to and evaluating student writing and/or presentations, which assessment practices will best inform students’ understanding of communicating across cultures?
* I have already, changed my assignments and lectures to invite more personal, diverse participation. In other words, I have endeavored to more clearly open interpretations of “western” content. I have stopped myself, and my students, from accepting assumptions that are endemic in what is “scientific” content. Because I teach psychology—from General to Personality, Abnormal, and Gender Expression and Perception in Fashion—it behooves me to put the western “scientific” approach to research in a more global perspective.
* In assessing psychological data, and studies both current and entrenched (like Milgram’s “just following orders” electric shock study), new assignments include questions to expand perspective: “What would the Maori say?” “How would Coco Chanel interpret this finding in fashion? --How would Kanye? --Or, how would designers in Turkey…?” “Does this study make sense, is it applicable, in the Middle East…or Africa…or Canada! …and why or why not?”
* In writing assignments I look for content, and intent. If the student’s intent comes through but is hampered by execution, I am accepting of that. Language and grammar can be learned; it is a process. If a student is at an earlier level, but his/her passion, knowledge and focus comes through, that is what’s important to me. To help him/her I would direct the student to the appropriate writing assistance programs. But beyond correcting papers and presentations appropriately for language, etc., I support students’ understanding and feeling more, but absolutely encourage their seeking assistance to improve their ability to communicate their thoughts appropriately.

Part 3

Teaching Goals Statement

(To be written upon completion of the program)

* Given the topics discussed in the NEA workshops and your own experiences teaching, please prepare a personal statement describing your teaching goals for the next few years
* My teaching goals for the next few years include lecturing less. Having been a student of “old school” techniques in lecture halls, and even seminars, there seemed to be fewer opportunities for interactive learning. I’m afraid that this carried over from my early years of teaching. Although I have certainly changed as my experience increased, this program sensitized me all over again. For that I am grateful.
* One of the things I have done is to change the landscape of the classroom, making seating nonlinear so that students can see each other. By facing their colleagues there is a subtle and continuous interaction, perhaps silent and sub-rosa, but there nonetheless. It reduces the implicit power in the face-front focus on the professor. Also, I now sit down (as much as I can as I’m Italian and a hand-waver and pacer) and the effects have been gratifying. Student engagement with each other in discussion is markedly increased. They are more willing to speak and to question each other in a respectful and truly inquisitive manner. To facilitate this I promote an anxiety-free atmosphere of analysis and free exchange in order to learn something new, think more holistically. I make a point to remark to students, “I hadn’t thought of this in that way…” which bolsters the courage of students to speak, to question. Or I make sure to note, “this study was done in the US, what do you think would have been the result in another environment, with another population…?”
* These workshops again sensitized me to language, cultural connotations and link between language and cognition—the words that become internal images. Words have meaning; they also create visuals. So I give exercises to break the bonds of language and stereotypes. (1) Think of a dog. See it? Ok, but it’s a three-legged dog… It’s a three-legged blue dog. This dog is wearing a dress. That dress is a weapon the dog can use. What is that dress like? How would you market it? What is the dog’s personality like…? (2) When is a shoe also a hat? When is a belt also a thermometer? …And similar exercises to sensitize students to how language creates imagery and to break stereotypical word-image bonds. This is important, I feel, especially for our FIT students.