VIEWING TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THROUGH THE LENS OF SOTL

Peter Felten  Center for Engaged Learning  Elon University
What is SoTL?
Why do SoTL?
How do I do it?
“The most important obligation now confronting the nation’s colleges and universities is to break out of the tired old teaching versus research debate and define, in more creative ways, what it means to be a scholar. It’s time to recognize the full range of faculty talent and the great diversity of functions higher education must perform.”

(Boyer, 1990)
“The scholarship of teaching and learning encompasses a broad set of practices that engage teachers in looking closely and critically at student learning for the purpose of improving their own courses and programs. It is perhaps best understood as an approach that marries scholarly inquiry to any of the intellectual tasks that comprise the work of teaching.”

(Hutchings, Huber, and Ciccone, 2011)
Principles of Good Practice in SoTL

1. Inquiry focused on student learning
2. Grounded in context
3. Methodologically sound
4. Conducted in partnership with students
5. Appropriately public

(Felten, 2013)
SoTL Questions

What works?

What is?

(Hutchings, 2000)
SoTL Domains

- Discipline Knowledge
- Global & Cultural Competencies
- Health & Wellness
- Leadership
- Research, Creative & Scholarly Activities
- Service Learning & Civic Engagement
How can we help students think like philosophers in an introductory course?

(Bloch-Schulman & Cahill, 2012)

What kinds of assignments work best?

Would teaching students how to take notes “like a philosopher” help?

How do students read assigned texts?
Think-aloud interviews

This is an abbreviated version of a true story originally recounted by Simon Wiesenthal in his book The Sunflower.

Simon, a Jew who was captured trying to escape Nazi persecution of the Jews, is placed in concentration camp though he had committed no crime. He is horribly treated, underfed, overworked and in fear for his life. One day he is taken with a group of other concentration camp prisoners to a hospital to clean up the grounds. While he is cleaning, a nurse approaches him and asks him if he is Jewish. When he says “yes,” she insists he follow her upstairs. She brings him to a room in which a person all covered in bandages lay on the bed and leaves Simon alone in the room.
Finding
Students read in fundamentally different ways than philosophers do.

Implications for teaching & learning
New ways of teaching students to read and take notes like a philosopher, including use of “expert” think alouds to model reading - and practice in class doing think alouds of readings.

Going public
Disciplinary articles, SoTL presentations, department/campus workshops
What questions do you have about your students’ learning?
What questions do you have about your students’ learning?

Pick one of your questions to focus on for the rest of the workshop.
What is SoTL?

Why do SoTL?

How do I do it?
SoTL improves teaching approaches and student learning outcomes.

(Trigwell, 2013; Hutching, Huber, & Ciccone, 2011)
“SoTL-active faculty...generate visible analyses of the learning taking place in their institutions, provide excellent models of practice for local colleagues, generate high quality evidence for internal and external assessment, and offer accessible examples of quality education to prospective students.”

(Bernstein, 2013, p. 35)
SoTL develops “a generative culture [that] multiplies the impact of formal faculty development, enhances self-motivated individual faculty learning, and supports faculty experimentation in their courses.”

(Condon et al., 2016, p. 121)
Students as objects of SoTL

Students as actors in SoTL
First-generation student engagement in high-impact practices
(Coker & Porter, 2015)
Why do you (or why might you) do SoTL?

Who (colleagues, students,…) could you partner with in SoTL?
What is SoTL?

Why do SoTL?

How do I do it?
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Disciplinary

Institutional

Curricular

Professional

Student

Research on learning and teaching

2. Grounded in context
Grounded in Your Context

1. How do your discipline, institution, students, career-stage, etc., shape your inquiry?
2. What do you already know (or suspect) that might help you answer your question?
3. What else do you need to know to make progress on your question?
4. Who can help you learn what you need to know?
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Your methods should

Fit the purpose of your inquiry

Capture or represent authentic student learning (directly or indirectly)

Be within your capacity to do well
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(Ashwin & Trigwell, 2004, p. 122)
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Big, Broad Qs

Narrow Q: Cognizant of Evidence

Narrower: Component Qs

Student Evidence

Narrower: Component Qs

Student Evidence

Narrower: Component Qs

Student Evidence

(Adapted from Visible Knowledge Project, Georgetown)
Think-aloud interviews

This is an abbreviated version of a true story originally recounted by Simon Wiesenthal in his book *The Sunflower*.

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<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
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<td>On what feature of the source does the reader focus?</td>
<td>Focus on information</td>
<td>Focus on information but some attention to meaning and context</td>
<td>Focus primarily on context and meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little or no attention to perspective / author</td>
<td>Notice the perspective / author of the source at some point during the reading</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little or no attention to what is missing</td>
<td>Superficial attention to what is not in the source</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Treats all sources as essentially the same</td>
<td>Superficial attention to the type of source</td>
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First-generation student engagement in high-impact practices (Coker & Porter, 2015)
Gathering and Analyzing Your Evidence

1. What’s the purpose of your inquiry?
2. What does your purpose suggest about the methods you should use in your inquiry?
3. What evidence can you gather related to your inquiry?
4. How could you analyze your evidence?
5. Who can help you gather and analyze your evidence?
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Going Public

On campus or beyond?
Within your discipline or beyond?
In a conference or a journal or…?
Going Public
On campus or beyond?
Within your discipline or beyond?
In a conference or a journal or…?
Going Public

1. What’s the purpose of your inquiry?
2. What are appropriate ways to go public with your inquiry given your purpose?
3. What do you need to learn to go public in those ways?
4. Who can help you go public with your inquiry?
Next Steps

1. What are one or two things you can do next to make progress on your inquiry?

2. Who can help you with your inquiry? How can they help you?
“Educational innovation today invites, even requires, levels of preparation, imagination, collaboration, and support that are not always a good fit (to say the least) with the inherited routines of academic life.”

(Hutchings, Huber, & Cicone, 2011, p. 6)
Higher education develops “a craft or a skill or a way of being in the world that frees us to act with greater knowledge or power. But [it also must] remind us of obligations we have to use our knowledge and power responsibly .... exercising our freedom in such a way as to make a difference in the world for more than just ourselves.”

(Cronon, 1998)


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