

# Applying the Theory of Multiple Intelligences To Teaching and Learning in the University Community

Charlotte Matthews Harris, Assistant Professor and Chair of Foundations and Secondary Education, Penny L. Smith, Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education, and Patti M. Tolbert, D.M.A., Assistant Professor of Music Education, Georgia College and State University

Georgia College and State University (GC&SU), as Georgia's only public liberal arts institution of higher education, strives to provide a student-centered residential learning community that fosters excellence in the classroom and beyond and to endow its graduates with a passion for achievement, a lifelong curiosity, and an exuberance for learning. The process of conceptualizing and operationalizing this new mission has led to the creation of GC&SU's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, through which dedicated faculty, committed not only to teaching but also to inspiring learning, work collaboratively across disciplines to explore and share innovative educational approaches that will enhance student learning and maximize student potential. As participants in this process, we, as teacher educators, have shared our efforts to personalize education for our students of teaching through the application of the theory of multiple intelligences (MI).

MI theory, as framed by Howard Gardner, is based on the premise that "an intelligence is a biological and psychological potential that...is capable of being realized to a greater or lesser extent as a consequence of the experiential, cultural, and motivational factors that affect a person" (1995, p. 202). On the basis of this premise and empirical evidence, Gardner (1993) identified and delineated seven distinct and semi-independent intelligences at work in the human mind: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal — and more recently an eighth intelligence — naturalist. There are two fundamental principles upon which this theory is founded. Gardner purported that intelligence is not fixed; instead, we as educators have the ability to develop the intellectual capacity of our students. Secondly, intelligence is not singular. All persons have each of the intelligences as well as unique patterns of intelligences.

Traditional approaches to college teaching tend to serve best those students who have highly cultivated linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences. Acknowledging the MI perspective in theory and practice, we employ a variety of instructional approaches in order to accommodate individual differences and provide a more equitable learning environment for all students. In so doing, we provide a more personalized approach to education. As teachers of teachers, we promote an understanding of how children differ in their approaches to learning and encourage our students, who are preservice and in-service teachers in P-12 classrooms, to apply MI theory, as well as other complementary theories, by creating instructional opportunities that take these differences

into account. This is consistent with our mission, in The John H. Lounsbury School of Education, to facilitate the development of teachers who are "architects of change." At the same time, we strive to model the kind of student-centered teaching, create the kind of caring learning community, and foster the kind of teacher-student relationships that we expect from our teacher-students. Consequently, we apply MI theory in a variety of ways to support and encourage multiple ways of knowing and to enhance teaching and learning in our college classrooms. We represent knowledge in different ways and encourage our students to do so as well.

Course requirements for a graduate course in the socio-cultural foundations of education, for example, included group projects, case studies, multimedia presentations, papers, and a "traditional" mid-term examination. Approximately two weeks before the final exam, the instructor prompted the students to reflect on their experiences in the course and think of ways they could represent their learning to the instructor and their classmates. Although criteria were established, the assignment was clearly open-ended. Products resulting from this assignment demonstrated the various strengths in students' abilities. Several students wrote poetry, while another wrote a song that he sang in class. Two students visited a metropolitan shopping mall, interviewed citizens regarding diversity issues in education, and produced a video. Still others chose to write research papers or construct multimedia presentations. By allowing the learners to express their knowledge in ways that were most meaningful to them, the instructor facilitated the creation of a dynamic and powerful learning community.

Similarly, preservice teachers in the Master of Arts in Teaching program are guided toward representing their emerging professional and pedagogical knowledge in ways that are their own. They accomplish this through a variety of developmental and assessment activities, such as teaching metaphors, electronic discussions, field trips, portfolios, reflective journals, critical life histories, school ethnographies, and action-oriented classroom inquiry projects. The critical life history assignment challenges them to reflect on their personal views about teaching and learning and the historical development of their social and cultural identities. In addition to writing a descriptive autobiographical account, each student must create a learning map that depicts this journey in another medium and highlights it in a manner that allows him/her to share it with his/her fellow students. Although the students, and sometimes the instructors as well, are initially uncomfortable with assignments that provide parameters but are not

prescriptive, value process over product, encourage collaboration rather than competition, they come to appreciate the power and the freedom of assuming responsibility for their own learning. Knowledge flows in multiple directions, and professors and students are partners in the learning process. We learn from each other.

Our application of MI theory in the university community demonstrates and promotes a blending of teaching and scholarship. It also puts into operation three dimensions of Boyer's (1990) perspective on scholarship: (a) the scholarship of integration, in that it synthesizes the tenets of MI theory, interprets them for use in the university setting, and makes connections across disciplines; (b) the scholarship of application, in that it facilitates a learning environment in which individual differences are

respected, the needs of diverse learners are met, and all students can be successful; and (c) the scholarship of teaching, in that it bridges the gap between theory and practice and informs our teaching.

There have been many interpretations of MI theory and how it can be applied to schooling, but the focus has been mainly in the area of P-12 education. However, the tenets of MI theory have implications for practice in higher education as well. By constructing multiple teaching and learning strategies for college students and by engaging them actively in constructing their own knowledge, college professors assist in the cultivation of an educational community that endows its members with a passion for achievement, a lifelong curiosity, and an exuberance for learning.

## The Fall of the House of Seven Gables and Other Haunted Tales of the Gothic as a Senior Seminar

Laura Dabundo, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of English, Kennesaw State University

Winter Quarter, 1997, at Kennesaw State University, I taught a seminar primarily for undergraduate English majors on British and American prose Gothic. The ten-week course covered twelve novels from the 18th century to the present (and encompassing five Americans and four women authors). These were the texts: *Wieland* by Charles Brockden Brown, *The Collector* by John Fowles, *The House of the Seven Gables* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* by Shirley Jackson, *Haunted* by Joyce Carol Oates, *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Tales* by Edgar Allan Poe, *The Italian* by Ann Radcliffe, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde.

The great riches of the history and development of the English and American literary and cultural experience of the past three hundred years can be studied usefully from the perspective of the Gothic. The Gothic impulse is, in fact, a particularly rich subject for a senior seminar because its manifestations are international, interdisciplinary, and broad-ranging. Thus students who have become seniors can attempt in class and in long written projects to assimilate and reflect the generous span and scope of the material their major studies have presented to them. The issues that arise in studies of the Gothic that assist these kinds of assimilations would include the obvious, such as the supernatural and psychological and sexual, but extend as well into art, religion, class and economics, gender, education, social issues, the law, and many others. This complexity and multiplicity, by the same token, therefore, also contributes an additional and useful aspect to the topic.

Scholars know that a precise definition even of just the literary identity of the Gothic is elusive. Part of the project of this class, then, could well be to arrive at a definition.

The goal of this course, as a senior seminar, was to enable students to bring together the skills and knowledge of English studies, making interdisciplinary connections, and completing and presenting orally a significant and original research project. In addition, throughout the quarter, each student was responsible for one of the texts and had to prepare and deliver a short seminar paper on it for the class the day that book was assigned to be discussed. At the end of the quarter, the students completed an in-class, closed-book, final examination, which was a single essay designed to summarize their intellectual journey through the course.

The syllabus set forth the following expectations: We shall try to conduct this class as much as possible as a seminar, which means that the responsibility for the success of it resides with the students as well as with the instructor. Students are expected to have read and thought about every assignment before class. For each class after the second week, students will present short oral reports on the works to be discussed, handing in a five-page (minimum) paper at the same time. At the end of the quarter, students will make a longer oral presentation (fifteen to twenty minutes) on their original research and hand in a substantial term paper (fifteen pages or more) defending the thesis of the oral presentation with substantiation from published scholarship.

Ten students enrolled in the class, including two English Education majors and a History major (who, as it happened, was far and away the best prepared and most