

Teaching Statement - Zoller

My classes, like my own research, focus on a comparative and interdisciplinary approach to business. Teaching business and management requires keeping-up with current business trends and providing practical examples for an audience that tends to be skeptical, especially at the undergraduate level. For students to be able to evaluate business contexts, they should be familiar not just with theoretical concepts, but also use critical thinking to evaluate real-life situations while integrating considerations using multi-disciplinary approach.

In my courses, I stress teamwork and make theoretical concepts tangible and applicable to students' careers by assigning semester-long group projects. Class groups are diverse and include students with different skills – a leader, a creative person, detailed-oriented individual, and a technologist (per students' self-reporting). By the end of those courses, students understand the advantages of using diverse groups and the benefits of the synergy process that occurs when groups become teams.

In my business Strategy and Policy classes, I use a 'Strategic Management – Bikes' simulation by Marketplace Simulations which exposes participants to all aspects of business by simulation a creation of a start-up bicycle company. Students complete it class teams (4-5 students per group) by evaluating a multidisciplinary approach to decision content including marketing, product development, Internet marketing, traditional and web sales channels, human resource management as well as the fundamentals of finance, accounting, and operations. The main lesson is the needs for strategy to continuously evaluate the external and internal environments, formulate a plan, execute it, and measure performance to adjust.

In my Organizational Behavior (OB) and Capstone courses in Leadership and Organizational Development, groups of 4-6 students assume the role of a consulting firm and examine a managerial process, such as motivation, organizational change, or burnout, in an organization of the group's choice. Class projects start with a group agreement signed by all members and continues with weekly assignments including introduction of the organization and the topic selected, tentative reference list, quantitative and/or qualitative data collection, SWOT analysis of the organization, and assessment and recommendations. In our last class meeting, students deliver oral presentations of their findings using concepts and themes covered throughout the term.

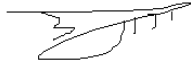
In undergraduate level courses, I use learning techniques that include games (such as Kahoot) and active learning. For instance, our first class starts with an 18-minute '*marshmallow challenge*' where groups are required to construct a free-standing building made from 20 spaghetti sticks, a yard of tape, a yard of string, and a marshmallow on top. Learning outcomes for this challenge include teamwork, the importance of prototyping, and leadership. Another activity used when discussing groups is a '*survival challenge*' when groups are asked to reach a consensus in ranking 10-items in order of importance to be able to survive after a plane crash in the Canadian cold. Finally, to demonstrate difficulties in communication in a virtual workplace, I use a LEGO activity that requires groups to construct a LEGO structure based on an existing model available only to the team leader who is outside the class for the duration of the activity.

Teaching Statement - Zoller

To do so, groups have access only to limited information. Initially, the only form of communication between the leader and the group is through voice (phone). This step follows with an ability to see a two-dimensional picture of the model and, finally, the ability to see video of the structure taken by the leader.

My experience as a business practitioner and the focus I place on encouraging students to share real stories from their careers with class helps make class material memorable. For instance, following a discussion on office politics, a student reached out of her supervisor on a personal level to increase her power in workplace. Following a class discussion on negotiation, a student used his new knowledge of distributive negotiation process to negotiate buying a new car. In sum, my pedagogical strategies make business classes practical and memorable. I teach how to think and not what to think. My satisfaction as a professor comes when students tell me how inspired they are to bring changes to their organizations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yaron Zoller', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Yaron Zoller