

# Creating and Developing Learner-Centered Classrooms

31<sup>st</sup> Annual National  
Conference on  
The First-Year Experience

February 20, 2012

Mary Stuart Hunter

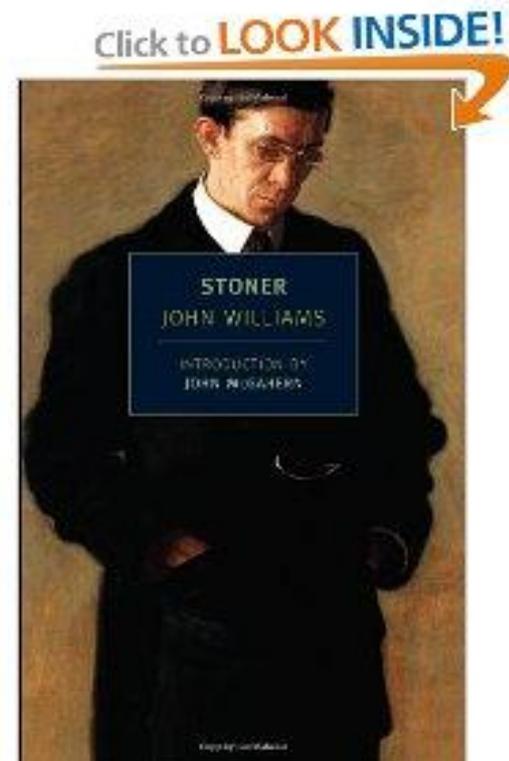


# Learning Outcomes

- As a result of attending this session, participants will
  - Be able to describe the differences between an instruction centered and a learning centered institution.
  - Be able to describe the differences between a teacher centered classroom and learner centered classroom.
  - Formulate new learner centered ideas for classroom strategies

“But despite Walker it was a successful seminar, one of the best classes Stoner had ever taught. Almost from the first, the implications of the subject caught the students, and they all had that sense of discovery that comes when one feels that the subject at hand lies at the center of a much larger subject, and when one feels intensely that a pursuit of the subject is likely to lead – where, one does not know. The seminar organized itself, and the students so involved themselves that Stoner himself became simply one of them, searching as diligently as they.”

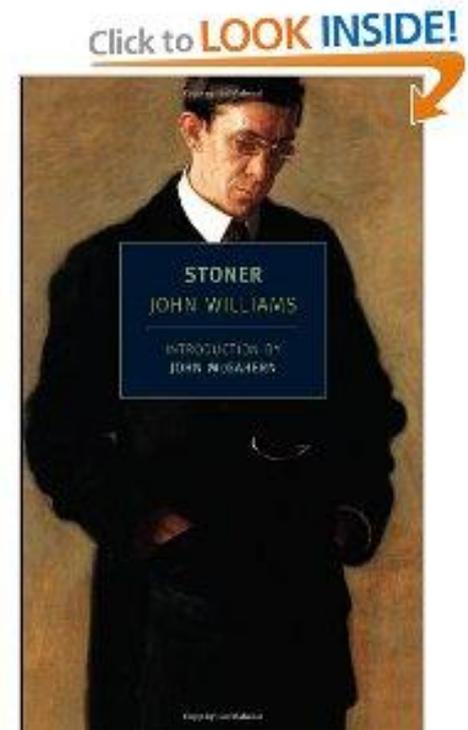
---*Stoner*, by John Williams, p. 134  
2006, NYRB Classics



# The class Dr. Stoner taught was a graduate level seminar, *Latin Tradition and Renaissance Poetry*.

Could this quote just as easily describe teaching in classes you teach or other learning environments?

If yes, in what ways?  
If no, why not?



# Foundations

## learning centered classrooms



- **Arthur Chickering & Zelda Gamsen**
  - *Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education, March 1987, AAHE Bulletin*
- **Robert Barr and John Tagg**
  - *Change Magazine article, November-December, 1995*
- **Maryellen Weimer**
  - *Learning Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice, Jossey-Bass, 2002*
- **Phyllis Blumberg**
  - *Developing Learner-Centered Teaching: A Practical Guide for Faculty, Jossey-Bass, 2009*

# Good Practices in Undergraduate Education

(Chickering & Gamson, 1987;  
Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005)

- ✓ Student-faculty contact
- ✓ Active learning
- ✓ Prompt feedback
- ✓ Time on task
- ✓ High expectations
- ✓ Respect for diverse learning styles
- ✓ Cooperation among students



# Comparing Educational Paradigms

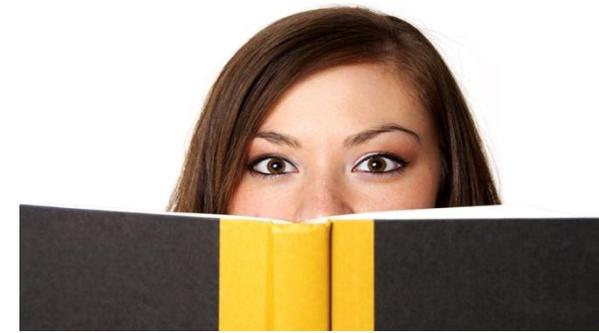
*from the 1995 Change Magazine article  
by Robert Barr and John Tagg*



Instruction = Learning



# Mission & Purpose



## Instruction

Provide/deliver instruction

Transfer knowledge from  
faculty to students

Offer courses and programs

## Learning

Produce learning

Elicit student discovery and  
construction of  
knowledge

Create powerful learning  
environments

# Criteria for [ Institutional ] Success

## Instruction

Quality of entering students

Quality and quantity of  
resources

Quality of faculty, instruction

## Learning

Quality of exiting students

Quantity and quality of  
outcomes

Quality of the students,  
learning



# Educational Structures



## **Instruction**

One teacher, one classroom

End of course assessment

Degree = accumulated credit hours

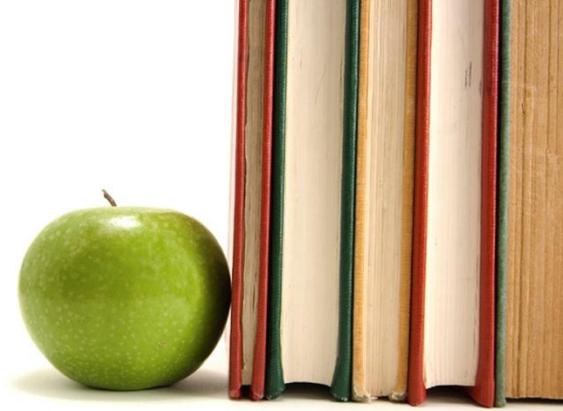
## **Learning**

Whatever learning experience works

Pre/during/post assessments

Degree = demonstrated knowledge and skills

# Learning Theory



## Instruction

Knowledge exists “out there”

Learning is teacher centered  
and controlled

The classroom and learning  
are competitive and  
individualistic

## Learning

Knowledge exists in each  
person’s mind and is shaped  
by individual experience

Learning is student centered

Learning environments and  
learning are cooperative,  
collaborative, and supportive

# Nature of Roles



## Instruction

Faculty are primarily lecturers

Faculty and students act independently and in isolation

Any expert can teach

## Learning

Faculty are primarily designers

Faculty and students work in teams with each other and other staff

Empowering learning is challenging and complex

# Assess your current environment

**On a scale of 1 to 12, how would you describe your institutional context?**

*1 = my institution is a teaching paradigm institution*

*10 = my institution is a learning paradigm institution*



# Weimer's Key Changes

toward learner-centered teaching

- The function of content
- The role of the teacher
- The responsibility for learning
- The purposes and processes of assessment
- The balance of power



# The Function of Content

includes building a knowledge base, how the instructor and student use the content

## **teacher centered approach**

Instructor allows student to memorize content

## **learner centered approach**

Instructor encourages student to transform and reflect on most of the content to make their own meaning



# The Role of the Instructor

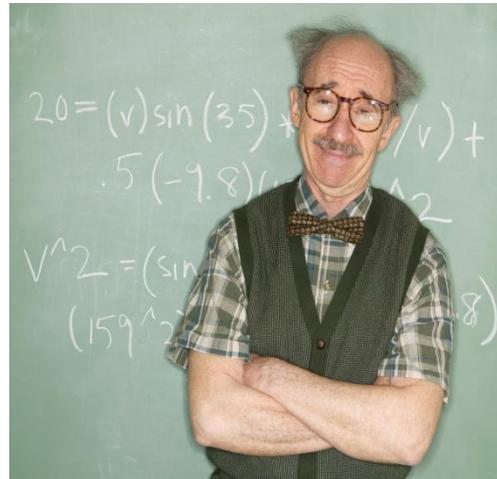
an essential role of the instructor is to  
assist student to learn

## teacher centered approach

Instructor does not have  
specific learning goals and/or  
uses teaching and learning  
methods that conflict  
with learning goals

## learner centered approach

Instructor intentionally uses  
various teaching and learning  
methods that are  
appropriate for student  
learning goals



# The Responsibility for Learning

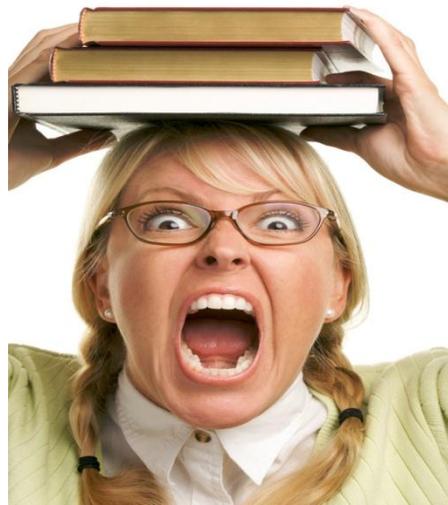
students should assume greater responsibility  
for their own learning

## **teacher centered approach**

Instructor assumes all responsibility for student learning (provides content to memorize, does not require student to create their own meaning of content, tells student exactly what will be on exams)

## **learner centered approach**

Instructor provides increasing opportunities for students to assume responsibility for their own learning, leading to achievement of stated learning objectives.



# The Purposes and Processes of Assessment

there are additional purposes and processes of assessment beyond assigning grades

## **teacher centered approach**

Instructor uses only summative assessment in making decisions on grades. Provides no constructive feedback.



## **learner centered approach**

Consistently throughout the learning process, the instructor integrates formative assessment and constructive feedback.

# The Balance of Power

shifts so that the instructor shares some decisions about the course with the students

## **teacher centered approach**

Instructor mandates all policies and deadlines, or instructor does not adhere to policies

## **learner centered approach**

Instructor is flexible on most course policies, assessment methods, learning methods, and deadlines.

Instructor always adheres to what instructor has agreed to with the students.



# Application Exercise

*Small group discussion*



# Weimer's Key Changes

application possibilities various learning settings

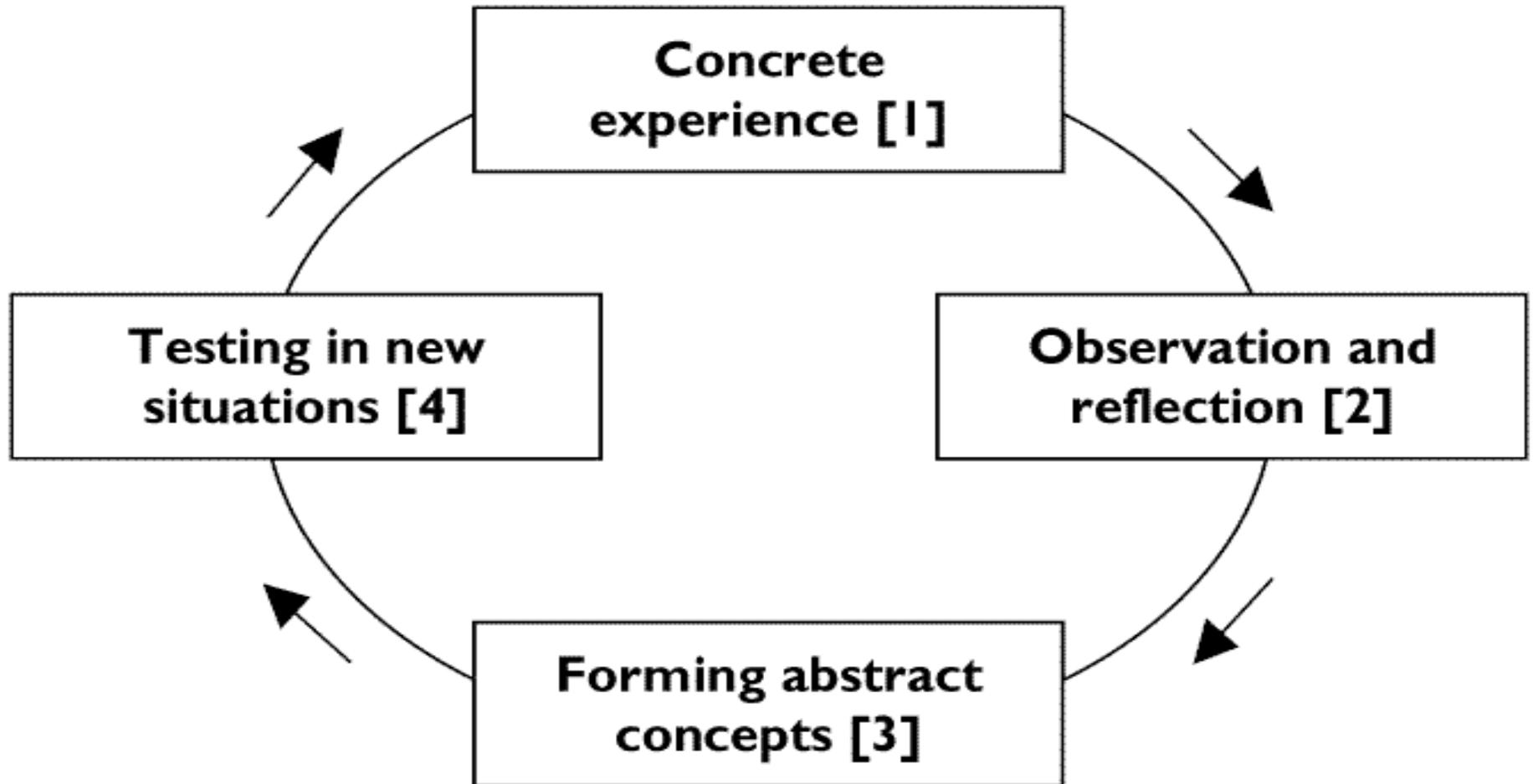
- The function of content
- The role of the teacher
- The responsibility for learning
- Evaluation purpose and process
- The balance of power



# What are three ways you can apply this principle in teaching ?

- 1
- 2
- 3

# David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory



**CONCRETE  
EXPERIENCES**

Interviews  
Field experience  
Observations/demonstrations  
Role play, simulations, case studies  
Stories, films, video clips



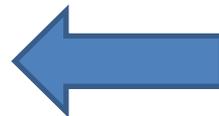
**REFLECTIVE  
OBSERVATION**

Journal writing  
Small group discussion  
Class discussion  
Silence  
Asking for reactions



**ABSTRACT  
CONCEPTUALIZATION**

Print materials  
(books, articles, etc.)  
Lectures  
Programmed instruction



**ACTIVE  
EXPERIMENTATION**

Papers  
What-if situations  
Devising plans of action  
Problem solving activities



By learning you  
will teach;

by teaching you  
will learn.

- *Latin Proverb*





## Mary Stuart Hunter

Associate Vice President & Executive Director

University 101 Programs

National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience  
and Students in Transition

University of South Carolina

shunter@sc.edu



# THE FUNCTION OF CONTENT

What are three ways you can apply this principle in teaching ?

- 1
- 2
- 3

# THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

What are three ways you can apply this principle in teaching ?

- 1
- 2
- 3

# THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING

What are three ways you can apply this principle in teaching ?

- 1
- 2
- 3

# THE PURPOSES AND PROCESSES OF ASSESSMENT

What are three ways you can apply this principle in teaching ?

- 1
- 2
- 3

# THE BALANCE OF POWER

What are three ways you can apply this principle in teaching ?

- 1
- 2
- 3