

Getting Started with SoTL

Chancellor's Learning Scholars
Final Reflections/Products Spring
2020

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*Final Reflection not included

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Getting Started with SoTL

It has been my pleasure to organize the Chancellor's Learning Scholars Faculty Learning Community this year at Georgia State University's Perimeter College, Clarkston campus. Our topic was "Getting Started with SoTL" and we used our sessions to discuss strategies to improve mindfulness and mindset for both faculty and students.

We primarily used the workbook *Engaging in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: A Guide to the Process, and How to Develop a Project from Start to Finish* by Bishop-Clark and Dietz-Uhler, in addition to articles, videos, and websites, as well as bringing in a guest speaker, Mike Metzler for a presentation on generating a research question and IRB.

Our sessions were organized as follows:

Session 1: November 15, 2019

Planning session

- Introductions and icebreaker
- Overview: What is an FLC?
- Reading: "Introduction to Faculty Learning Communities" by Milton D. Cox
- Reflection/Discussion: Goals & outcomes for the FLC
- Logistics: Choose text and plan guest speakers

Session 2: January 15, 2020

What is SoTL

- Reading: *Engaging in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (Chs 1&2)*
- Discussion: Discussion: Getting Started with SoTL (1:00-2:00)
 - What is SoTL? Why should I do it?
 - What are some good examples of SoTL? (In general and in our disciplines)
 - What are the basic steps for a SoTL project?
 - How do we develop a *feasible* research question?
- Outcomes/Product: Strategies for developing feasible SoTL studies in our summer or fall course. Discussion of what pedagogical problems we'd like to tackle.

Session 3: February 07, 2020

SoTL in the Disciplines: Literature Review and Crafting Research Questions

- Reading: *Engaging in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (Chs. 3&4)*
- Discussion: What does SoTL look like in my field?
 - Discussion of types of research questions
 - Sharing articles from your field
- Active Session: Drafting Meaningful, Feasible and Focused Research questions

Session 4: March 06, 2020

Designing a SoTL study

- Reading: *Engaging in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (Chs5&6)*
- Presentation: “Designing a SoTL Study” – Mike Metzler
- Active Session: Working on study design, thinking about data gathering
- Sharing out and getting feedback

Session 5: April 17th, 2020 (via WebEx)

Navigating IRB and Next Steps

- **Presentation:** Navigating IRB – Mike Metzler
- **Discussion:** Next Steps –
- **Activity/Product:** SoTL projects for summer/fall

Chancellor's Learning Scholars, 2019-2020 Final Reflection

Kathryn Crowther, Facilitator

Despite all the upheaval and uncertainty of spring semester, this was an incredibly helpful and productive FLC. Nearly all the participants made progress on a SoTL project, some moving all the way through the planning stages to applying for IRB and preparing for implementation in the fall. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with this cohort of scholars; they were all enthusiastic and committed, though we did unfortunately lose a few participants after the online transition due to their increased workload. What I most valued about the FLC was the energy each participant brought to the discussions of *all* the projects we discussed; it truly was a community committed to improving teaching through SoTL.

In terms of my engagement with SoTL, I am reinvigorated to continue to modify the SoTL project I began as a USG SoTL Fellow in 2018-19. My project introduced an assignment into my English 1101 course asking students to watch a series of videos on mindset and neuroplasticity and then assess their final reflections to evaluate their understanding of how a growth mindset and an understanding of how learning works can lead to greater success as a student. I have gathered all the data for this project but have stalled during the data analysis and dissemination stage; I hope to return to this project over the summer and bring it to completion. I also plan to run a larger scale SoTL research study on a new cohort of Dean's Fellows and Innovation Grant recipients at Perimeter College.

The pivot to online teaching during this semester as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic has also led to a unique SoTL opportunity. Under the leadership of SoTL expert, Mike Metzler, Georgia State is spearheading a large-scale research study of the impact of the transition to remote learning on faculty and students across the USG. I have been working with Mike to help design and disseminate the study, and I look forward to helping analyze and disseminate the findings. My work in the SoTL FLC this semester certainly prepared me for this unexpected but very important work!

Participant Reflections

Lisa Alembik Scholarship of Teaching and Learning /Mindset FLC Critical Reflection

Since January 2019, I have had the opportunity to be in a Faculty Learning Community twice. I am working through an idea of encouraging students to bring compassion into their future occupations. Being a part of a convergence of educators from different disciplines over a collective goal of supporting each other has been very effective in adding spark to the quiet way I work. I tend to mull over ideas, sometimes chewing on them for so long that their meaning turns to mush. It has been helpful for me to voice what is on my mind, arranging the strains of my idea in the open for others to listen to and comment on. To formulate the words and listen as they exit my mouth—and then benefit from my colleagues’ fresh perspectives, pushes me forward into realms of teaching and learning that I had not considered.

In my work as an educator in studio art foundations, I embed themes into my technique-heavy assignments, supporting students as they ask big questions. I want them to contemplate the world in which they live, and consider their inner lives and how they engage with their environments. I never thought that this would be something that I could take further and study, to the point that I am now researching methods to teach ideas of connection and promote an awareness around social justice. One of the goals that I am working to better define, that has come to light through working in this FLC ,is to guide my students to bring an attitude of compassion and community into their future work.

In the first FLC I attended, I begin to understand the idea of mindset and how to provide a space, a classroom, that encourages a mindset of learning. This merged perfectly with my desire to have students take time to be aware of their own connection with their circumstances and surroundings. Last year I earned a mini-grant to continue to research bringing Compassion into the classroom. When I came to this Winter’s FLC, I knew I had to re-form my focus. In my Introductory Studio class, I assign a persuasive poster “Compassion Project,” where the main idea is, you guessed it, asking the public to be more compassionate towards a group who needs such concern and kind-heartedness. I had a dilemma in planning for Fall 2020. In the first incarnation of the persuasive poster, my students focused on motivating people who feel that they do not have a voice to go out and vote. With the upcoming election, I wanted to do the same theme—but I also did not want to leave my Compassion Project behind. While sitting in an FLC meeting, I began to see that these two subjects can exist hand in hand. To encourage people to vote, and have them recognize the power of their voice, they need to believe in themselves. I realized that I need to open up and reframe my research question. I am currently sitting within this idea, writing my question. I gave my students an exit survey asking questions that I hope to hone into a survey that I ask for IRB approval. I am interweaving this with research on

techniques to support an active problem-solving (more experiential) mindset not only in the classroom, but when students take their work home. This will connect with virtual teaching!

I proposed a panel to the Foundations in Art: Theory and Education biennial conference in April 2021, and will paste it below. Overall the FLC's have been invaluable in how I approach my teaching and now, my SoTL research.

My one disappointment beyond the Covid-19 quarantine, was not being able to connect with everyone on the FLC because the time we meet overlapped with other commitments. This is a difficult one to solve.

Proposed panel to Foundations in Art: Theory and Education conference. I should know in early may if it has been accepted:

Teaching Art, & Connecting with the Big Universe too

““A human being is a part of the whole, called by us, “Universe,” a part limited in time and space.” –Albert Einstein

The art foundations classroom is a space of opportunity. There, students can absorb both concrete and intangible information that are intrinsic to their studies of the elements and processes of artmaking—and possibly to being a better human. In this vein, projects may include the study of global and local issues, the intention of which is to demonstrate how we are all intertwined—from the Anthropocene, and social justice concerns, to what professors in the Physics department are discussing. Classroom dialogue, including critique, can be expressly based in compassion, guiding students towards improving their relational skills and general social awareness. Students can question, debate ideas through their assignments, while still being focused on gaining a better understanding of the tenets of art and materials. At its best, the creative process is about building connections while allowing the rigidity of old-ways-of-thinking and constriction of discipline to fall away. Through open inquiry and the act of making, students can become aware, can recognize that they themselves hold the power of the universe.

Dr. Samantha Andrews - SoTL Reflection

Being a member of the spring 2020 SoTL cohort has been beneficially both personal and professionally. I appreciated the opportunity to network with other faculty members from other Perimeter campuses and the online environment. I used to work at Georgia Gwinnett College and being able to interact with other faculty members across different departments was a valuable experience. It also what I miss the most about working there. The interaction removed that feeling of being isolated within your department and campus. I learned about the different concerns that each faculty member shared, such as empathy and perseverance, and ways that we can all address those concerns since they are not unique to a specific discipline or class. I hope to continue networking beyond this semester since making those connections are important for collegiality.

I learned that as a professor I need to consider whether I am equipping my students to meet my expectations as mentioned in my interest in developing a research question about technical writing and student's ability to write quality lab reports. I am at the beginning stages of developing my research question since my interest revolves around writing lab reports and our return to campus at the current moment is uncertain. In fall 2020 or spring 2021 when we return to campus, I will work on my question of determining if writing more critical lab writing assignments will result in higher quality lab reports. This will involve creating lab documents that require students to describe their results and conclusions. I am confident that by adding more information to the lab, students will understand the purpose of the lab, be able to report their finding with graphs and tables (which is a struggle for some), and explain their findings. Sometimes students honestly don't know why they are performing experiments despite the readings and prelab quizzes that are provided to them. They will also learn that unexpected results are not a bad thing and they can try explain why their experiment turned out in the manner they observed.

Remote learning was more of a challenge for my lab classes. The purpose of lab is for students to have a hands on experience for the class such as using microscopes, conducting DNA analysis, and dissections. The lab class turned more into a YouTube/Google learning experience. If I had my way I would not offer lab classes online. You cannot translate watching an animal dissection or bacteria plating procedure into a competent lab skill. They are also experiments that cannot be conducted at a student's home. However, given the current and future situation we have to make the best use of the tools we have available to provide students with an amazing online lab experience.

I was also concerned about student integrity with online learning. I had students who had big leap in their scores. I am not sure if it was because they had more time to study or if they were violating the Academic Dishonesty policy. Since I had no way to verify their integrity while they were completing their work, with exception of homework assignments, I have to assume that they are studying more.

For fall, I plan to incorporate more critical thinking questions in my Bio 2 majors lab. Lab reports are required for the class and I want students to answer questions regarding their lab results so that transitioning to lab reports will not be large leap. As I mentioned during the sessions, we require students to write reports, but they are not required to take technical writing. Typically in the lab I only make sure they are one task, but for fall I am going to create document that correspond to the lab that

make students think about their findings and record their answers. I will give provide feedback during the lab so they have an idea of the expectations for reporting when their lab reports are due.

I hope to continue to be a part of the SoTL cohort for fall. I want to continue to improve my teaching skills and network with other professors. Hopefully being a part of the program will lead to interdisciplinary collaborations. I would like to thank the CETL staff, especially Katy, for the opportunity to be a member of the cohort.

SoTL FLC Critical Reflection
Jennifer Duncan, Assistant Professor of English

As part of the spring 2020 Faculty Learning Committee on SoTL, I have greatly valued the ability to collaborate with faculty from other disciplines to discuss SoTL, not only in its philosophy, but also in its practical aspects including those things that we have often found daunting. While it may seem elementary to say it, knowing that other faculty members experience the same issues as I helps me to feel better equipped to move into this area of scholarship. Even the time and space to just meet other faculty members and hear what sorts of exciting things they are doing in their own classes is extremely valuable in keeping us engaged with SoTL within our college.

I like to think of myself as an innovator in the classroom, and I have always been willing to try new things and to evaluate how they did or did not work; however, this semester's FLC has encouraged me to move beyond just self-evaluation and consider how my work can take on a more formal nature. Whether its presenting at conferences or publishing, I think this semester has encouraged me to step outside of my own classroom and present my work more publicly.

In partnership with Macmillan Learning, I have been part of an IRB approved efficacy study of a new software for composition instruction. I have served as both treatment and control class to investigate how student outcomes (grades, retention) differ in the sections of the courses which are and are not using the Achieve product. This type of experiment is something I have participated in for years; however, beyond reporting my findings in my own portfolio, I have never done anything with the information. I am unsure of whether or not publishing or presenting my results will be appropriate since I certainly do not want to be just an advertisement for the company, but I do see the value in making the results known in some way. Since the students in the course did agree to be part of research, however, I think I might be able to use the data from this semester to create a new project for fall and use this spring as comparison.

As an online instructor, my courses were not affected by the coronavirus in terms of how I taught my course, but losing face to face access to my colleagues in the FLC did help me to better understand how distant my online students can feel. If I am honest, it also helped me to understand how easy it is for them to neglect their online courses in order to pay attention to the immediate demands of their household, family, and work obligations. The online sessions were valuable in terms of their content, and I especially appreciate Katy and Mike taking time to deliver the information on IRB to us; however, I missed the face to face interaction that really helps to build a sense of community.

For fall 2020, I will be teaching ENGL 1101 and ENGL 1102, and I think that it might be valuable to evaluate the effectiveness of a specific LMS tool in helping students with their essays. I am considering whether to evaluate the use of a checklist is ensuring that students meet the minimum requirements of an assignment as many of my students fail an essay because of missing the word count, the required sources, or even the correct topic. These types of mistakes can certainly be dismissed as careless and lazy errors, but if there is a step I can take to help students ensure they don't make such errors, that would improve not only course grades, but student retention and student morale.

My other option is to continue evaluating the effectiveness of the Achieve writing site as the publisher has agreed to let my students use it for free again in the fall. There are two texts that can be integrated into the system, and it may be valuable to compare the two texts to see if student outcomes are affected by which etext is used. This would be most useful in a comparison with 1101 courses.

The most valuable tool that this FLC has offered is the samples of IRB language, templates for IRB proposals and other tangible items that help those of us who are completely unfamiliar with the formal IRB process to navigate what seems to be a nebulous system that privileges those who have extensive research testing experiences or staff to complete these processes for them. Providing more training on IRB, a designated IRB mentor/assistant within Perimeter College, or even more online tutorials and resources would be extremely valuable moving forward.

Ulrike Lahaise

Final Reflection

I participated in the SoTL FLC. I valued most to be walked through the practical steps of what is involved to develop a solid SoTL project and the training and paperwork needed to get it off the ground, especially about what exactly the IRB requirements are and how to work with them in an efficient way.

I had joined the SoTL FLC because I have been developing and piloting a new, semester long student activity involving learning and applying criteria to distinguish legitimate scientific information from any source from false claims and pseudo-science. The SoTL FLC has given me the tools and provided me with a solid approach on the elements needed for a meaningful SoTL project. I feel much more knowledgeable and confident about setting up and carrying out my SoTL project.

I will be teaching two parallel sections of an introductory Astronomy online lecture this summer. This gives me the opportunity to make one section the test section with the new, embedded content, and the other the control section without the new, embedded content but otherwise exactly the same. Both sections will receive the same pre/post survey and assignments at the beginning and end of the session, respectively. I will complete the CITI training and go through the IRB approval process. I will run my steps and any questions by Mike Metzler, a GSU IRB expert who held two workshops for our FLC this Spring and has offered to be available for us as we conduct our SoTL research.

Since I was already a full time online teacher before the pandemic, my own teaching and learning experience has not changed. Even before the pandemic I had already attended a few of the FLC meetings with WebEx, although I strongly prefer to attend face to face. The biggest change for me was the addition of tasks in my capacity as a veteran online teacher assisting my face to face discipline colleagues transitioning their classes to fully online. One particular effort was to curate the Introductory Online Laboratory procedures so that all Astronomy faculty teaching labs this summer will have fully functioning sets of online labs ready to go. The CETL also hired me as one of the faculty facilitators for their MOT (Mastering Online Teaching) certification program that all GSU faculty have to go through between now and fall who have not taught online before. Unfortunately, this took time away from the work I had hoped to do towards my SoTL project.

In Fall 2019, I piloted the first version of my “Science Or Not” project in my Introductory Astronomy Online Honors class. The students were very actively engaged and one particular student reported an eye-opening experience while evaluating two online articles on very similar topics for how scientifically authentic they were. Even though I had edited and streamlined the original materials a lot before adding them to the project, students still reported that they were overly complicated and not very clear. In Spring 2020, I did not have a freestanding Honors section so I decided to pilot a different approach to the “Science Or Not” project in both of my Astronomy lecture sections. A lot of students were very engaged and from their discussion responses it was clear that a lot of them had already given the distinction between authentic information from inauthentic or fake information a lot of thought

probably due to the current proliferation of fake information in social media and fringe media. The list of criteria for detecting fake information that students from both classes combined came up with matched very closely the list of criteria I had collected from various instruments offered by several renowned national and international sources. The onset and fallout of the pandemic, unfortunately, left the end of the project hanging. Only few students completed it, and I had to make the hard choice to make it optional after GSU required all instructors to revise their syllabi to accommodate the much increased challenges in our students' lives due to the ongoing pandemic. On the other hand, the pandemic and its mass, social, and fringe media fall out we are all experiencing right now is driving home the point that being able to distinguish legitimate science from fake science and pseudoscience is not just an academic past time but a vital survival skill.

In the immediate future of this Summer and Fall, I would love for Katy Crowther and Mike Metzler to mentor me in the process of implementing my intended SoTL project.

Rosamond Rodman

Final Reflection

This was a strange semester. Looking back on just a few months ago now seem like years ago.

We began by casting about for ways we could spend our time productively as a group and on our own SoTL projects. It was valuable to get feedback and insights from others; it was also helpful to have a forum to safely speak in order to think through a plan. I began thinking I would pursue one project, about tracking reading comprehension, but then I switched to another project, about experiential learning. Hearing from others, and hearing others do the same thing, was reassuring. Katy's curiosity and creativity modeled the approach and the attitude to a SoTL project. She is one to emulate.

Helpful too were the templates shared on how other SoTL project began and were revised. Katy provided examples of finished products as well as some proposals to look at and to use. In one of our sessions we spent time articulating in writing what our projects would be by using a template from an actual proposal. A good research question -- what exactly would we be asking and answering -- proved to be trickier than I thought. The yellow book was terrific in not only explaining what a SoTL project is, but guiding one through it. As I switched tacks, these resources were helpful in understanding how concrete, measurable, and focused a good project should be.

For me, the last part of our time together was greatly enhanced by Mike Metzler, whose knowledge of the IRB system and graceful social intelligence paved the way. Just as I was getting ready to IRB my plan, though, Covid-19 really changed the semester for me. My attention fell away to the more pressing matter of getting classes online. Since my project was about what students learned by doing site visits, I was sort of experiencing a one-two punch. Obviously, the site visit requirement of the course was no longer possible.

My research question still probably needs work. What do students learn by going on site visits? What is the benefit of having students actually, physically, enter into a religious community? It still seems redeemable, though. First, I think there are ways to use online sites (treasure hunts, curated exhibits, virtual and streaming services); second, if and when there is a return to normal.

Although I did not produce a full proposal, I learned a lot. I think I'd use another semester to reconceive the project for online teaching/hybrid possibilities.

Finally, since I have a very marginal existence (interim faculty), the utility of this project as something that could be shared with colleagues in my departments seemed remote. I often felt discouraged by this. GSU needs to do a better job – particularly with the increasing adjunctivization of higher ed – of de-hierarchalizing teaching resources, benefitting from the wisdom of, and better rewarding those who actually do the bulk of the teaching.

Thanks for the space, time, modeling and encouragement.

Marlena Salters: Final Reflection on Spring 2020 SoTL Faculty Learning Community

Prior to participating, I read the description of a Faculty Learning Community (FLC). Still, I was unsure of what to expect. I am pleased to have participated in the FLC this past semester because my experience helped me to be more mindful of how I determine whether students are learning in my classes.

The camaraderie and sharing of ideas were greatly appreciated and the thing that I valued most from participating in this semester's FLC. It was great to be able to pitch thoughts and ideas and to receive substantive feedback from people with varying perspectives.

I think that participating in the FLC has made me more thoughtful about the quality of my assessments. Additionally, I've put more thought into the best way to measure whether students are meeting course objectives.

This semester has been a fact-finding period for me. I have not started to develop a SoTL project. I am interested in researching resilience and have continued to think about my research interest in the FLC. While attending FLC meetings, I've thought about various research questions and how a research project may look. However, nothing has been finalized.

I am a lecturer with a 6/6 load. All my classes were face to face classes. When we were required to transition from the face to face format to the online format, my career foci were to set up everything in a way that would be user friendly as best I could, support my students, respond to the increased emails I was receiving, attend the weekly department meetings that I was to attend and participate in the Mandatory Online Training that faculty were encouraged to attend. Therefore, the advent of remote learning due to the coronavirus certainly shifted my priorities. As mentioned earlier, one of the things that I valued most was interacting with the other FLC participants. Because we were mandated to shelter in place, we were unable to meet in person. While there were opportunities to meet via WebEx, there was a different feel of the FLC for me.

As it relates to specific applications, I've added more low stakes assessments and opportunities for reflective writing in my classes (no stakes assessments).

Perimeter College has a lot of wonderful faculty with great ideas. I think that it would be fabulous to have annual fireside chats, workshops, forums and book clubs on each of the Perimeter campuses to create more opportunities for faculty to network, meet our coworkers and strengthen relationships, work together and share ideas. My impression is that stronger faculty who feel invested in their work community and the people that they work with will produce a healthier work environment and will lead to better outcomes for our students.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the FLC this semester. The FLC was informative and a great way to connect with faculty members from other departments and campuses.