Welcome to Our (Creative) Classrooms!
Tuning into the fun in teaching – how to stop worrying and embrace creativity


Selected References:


Examples from Presenting Team:

**Philippe Caignon - Classroom Museum: When learning becomes a Show-and-Tell Event.** In terminology, the traditional tool, still in use, to demonstrate understanding of a domain or discipline is a concept tree. However, concept trees do not reflect how humans think. Concept maps and mind maps are far better for visualizing links between notions, and they allow for more creativity in doing so. In consequence, my students are called upon to create maps to illustrate their understanding of their chosen domains (i.e. green economy, ufology or economy of death) and to explain their individual maps to the rest of the class the way artists would explain their “œuvres d’art” to ordinary people visiting a museum.

**Carol Duncan:** Krik Krak! These words signal the start of a story in Caribbean storytelling. Storytelling offers us opportunities to explore topics and themes in our various academic disciplines while making connections to
‘real life’ experiences and circumstances. Oral traditions including music, dance and storytelling are some of the oldest methods of knowledge production and transmission in human cultures. Our textually-dominant, increasingly high tech academic culture often downplays the inventiveness and significance of these traditions and what they have to offer as modes that both complement and challenge what we have come to see as “traditional” teaching. My grandmother’s patchwork quilts are visual compilations of multiple stories about culture, family and communities. … The quilting process and the quilt itself are an example of how we construct narratives about what happened in our lives and in our communities. … I like to use this quilting metaphor as a starting point for designing a course or structuring a discussion. ... You, the listener have the power to interpret my quilt story in a way that makes sense for your life.

Donna Marie Eansor: Creative approaches to teaching law.

Pippa Lock - “VSEPR (Molecular shape) aerobics”: This is an active exercise designed to bring an abstract visual concept to life. It involves all participants in the room in physical movement and hopefully some hilarity.

Pat Maher - a “community” museum exhibit (audio): Part of my own creativity is to allow students to express their creativity. I taught Community Studies 1100 for the first time in the fall of 2014, and by the winter semester of 2015 I had three sections of the course due to an unexpected leave by a colleague. The course, as I inherited it, had a final essay – reflecting on what they’d learned. To me this seemed a bit static and too individual, boring in fact, so I implemented the curating of a museum exhibit, and set it up so that every section of my class was available and would “show” their work to all the other sections. 60 first year students – most of whom are shy and not in an artistic discipline, showing their art in a large public space. For the student I think it went like this - Horror at first, absolute success by the end. Wonderful creativity displayed, and a slight risk in my assessment scheme paid off.

Jacqueline Murray - role of spontaneity and serendipity: How to make the Middle Ages real to students is a challenge. At a craft fair I stumbled upon a bag of silk cocoons. Silk weaving was an important industry and dominated by women. To show what it entailed I tried to follow the steps from cocoon to filaments to spin with medieval illustrations for each step. It was a comedy and no step "worked" but the students loved it and were totally engaged.

Rosemary Polegato - Worth a Thousand Words: This is a new angle on identification of topics for student papers. Instead of giving a list of topics or asking student teams to find a topic, I present a list of images. Each image is accompanied by the source of the article in which the image is embedded. Students may interpret the image and source article either literally or figuratively as inspiration for their topic. A visual list of topics engages students’ imagination because images capture “unspoken issues” and “complex relationships and lots of information all at once” (James & Brookfield, 2014, p. 87). The topics that students come up with are deeper, more student-centred, and more interesting than a text-only, instructor-centred list of topics.

Cam Tsujita - Paper Towel Timescale: Everyday objects can be used to bring tangibility to concepts (such as deep time) that are otherwise difficult for many students to comprehend. I "walk" students through time on the unrolled paper towels and highlight significant events in Earth’s history in the context of Earth's age. The creative use of even the most mundane of materials can bring life to the driest of topics.

Maureen Volk – Arms Falling Through Jello (video): This approach helps students to imagine what it feels like when their arms approach the piano correctly. Students “got it” and responded with a sense of humour by bringing in Barbie doll arms immersed in pots of Jello.

Jonathan White - “What is Creativity?”

Creativity is getting out of the shower to write down that new idea before it’s gone.
Creativity is mysterious – where are these ideas coming from? [+ much more!]