

Chicago  
Center for  
Teaching

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

CHICAGO CENTER FOR TEACHING

Wieboldt Hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
1050 East 59<sup>th</sup> Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60637  
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## MID-COURSE REVIEW FINAL REPORT

Date: April 27, 2018 (Week 5)

Graduate Teacher: Marjorie Schaeffer

Graduate Teacher's role in the course: Sole instructor, self-designed course

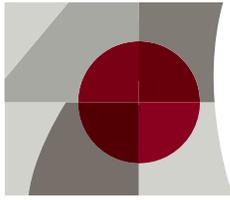
Course: Psychological Impacts of Education Policy

Consultant: Nell Hawley

Attendance: 26

Students reported overwhelmingly positive learning experiences in Marjorie Schaeffer's undergraduate seminar course "Psychological Impacts of Education Policy," which Marjorie designed herself and for which she serves as the sole instructor. Students benefited from the variety of learning modes that Marjorie introduced into each class session: students discuss the assigned readings in small groups, work together to complete in-class assignments, talk about the readings as a whole class, and experience a "preview" of the next week's readings at the end of class when Marjorie gives a short lecture on the major issues that they will encounter in the texts. Many students that this last strategy, the preview lecture, is particularly effective because it helps them think about the assigned readings with greater precision before they have to discuss them in the next class. (Of this practice, one student wrote on her feedback sheet: "Every teacher should do this!") That Marjorie creates multiple pathways for students to access the course material during a single class session is especially important given that each session is nearly three hours long. Students reported that the structure and variety of each session makes the time fly by. They also said that it helped increase their participation, particularly in the small-group and partner activities. By carving out a range of ways and opportunities for students to engage with the course material, Marjorie creates an inclusive classroom for her students.

Many students commented on the quality of the learning materials that Marjorie integrated into the course: they felt that the readings were appropriate to their skillsets in terms of content and quantity; they appreciated that Marjorie illustrates certain concepts using videos and slide presentations. Students pointed out that Marjorie sets them up for success when it comes to working with these learning materials because she is careful to share important background information throughout. In doing so, she demonstrates an awareness that the students in her class, who are at different stages in their undergraduate programs and come from a variety of majors in the College, have different learning needs. Accordingly, students expressed that Marjorie presents the course material so that they can reasonably achieve the course's learning objectives coming from their current levels of ability and background knowledge. Many commented on Marjorie's friendliness



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and accessibility and said that her leadership had created a fun, constructive, and safe atmosphere in class.

In my meeting with Marjorie, we discussed how best to take into account the suggestions that students shared about how to support their learning even further. Students shared that they learned best when Marjorie presented them with directed questions about the reading that they could use as jumping-off points for their small group discussions during class, so Marjorie and I talked about how she could use that strategy on a regular basis. We also talked about how Marjorie might integrate students into the process of coming up with discussion questions, for example, by asking each student to formulate a discussion question on the basis of one of the weekly readings and to email it to Marjorie on the day before class. Since students already appreciate the short pop quizzes that Marjorie uses to make sure that they have interacted with the assigned readings in advance of the class discussion, it seems likely that they would welcome this extra opportunity to engage with the course texts before discussing them in class.