

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT

Volume 5, Number 1, Sept 2004

Conflict Resolution, Negotiation & Team Building: Reviewing an Impossible Course that Worked

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It was the review class for the mid-term test. I was going through the usual routine of highlighting the key ideas and arguments in the course, thinking I was covering everything important. Then a student raised his hand and asked, "But what is the connection between the social construction of reality and conflict resolution?" This became the defining moment in the course.

Institutional and Curricular Context

Ryerson University was founded in 1948 and is located in downtown Toronto, Ontario. It is dedicated to career-oriented education and has more than 18,000 full-time students. Historically, the Faculty of Arts has offered few degrees; its predominant role has been to provide various types of support courses to program departments that offer a wide variety of degrees in business, communication, design, community services, engineering and applied sciences. Changes to Ontario's post-secondary educational system, culminating in 2003, created new opportunities for curriculum development with Ryerson's Faculty of Arts.

In Ontario, until recently, high school included grade 13. When the provincial government eliminated this grade, it created a double cohort – grade 13 graduates of the old curriculum and grade 12 graduates of the new curriculum – entering university together in the fall of 2003. The resulting increase in demand for university spaces created circumstances for change within the Ontario university system. At Ryerson, the Faculty of Arts saw the situation as an occasion to develop a number of new Arts degrees. The first of these new degrees, called Arts and Contemporary

Studies (ACS), was launched in fall 2003 with approximately 220 students entering the inaugural year of the program.

Arts and Contemporary Studies is intended to offer students an undergraduate program, combining the best elements of traditional liberal arts education with contemporary competencies to prepare them for the emerging workplace needs of the 21st century. The program begins with two common years which include a set of courses that study ideas that shaped the contemporary world and a set of courses that develop key skills and competencies that include reading precisely, communicating effectively, studying the relationship between economic, political and cultural groups, developing critical thought, ethics analysis, mediating conflict and working in teams. (See the ACS web site listed in the References.)

The course teaching dispute resolution, negotiation and team building (ACS 201: Dispute Resolution and Team Building) was designed to fit into the program's first year curriculum. This essay reviews the nature of the course and in some detail the student response to it. Based upon this explanatory review, the essay closes with a discussion about appropriate content at the first year university level and how it might be most effectively taught.

Conceptual Overview of the Course

When I was initially asked by the Dean to design, virtually overnight, a course in dispute resolution for a new degree program that was being developed, I thought I was being asked to make a small contribution to the mammoth bureaucratic task of guiding a major curricular proposal through a multi-layered system. The Dean's requirements included that the course enhance student competencies and include three main components – negotiation, team building and dispute resolution. In initial discussions with the Dean, my strong recommendation was that the course have a more specific focus. When the Dean insisted the course have a more encompassing focus, I designed it, and momentarily felt a little sorry for whoever was going to have to try to teach so much within a thirteen week term.

When I was assigned to teach the course, I began to give serious thought to how "to do" it, that is, how to conceptually organize the course so that it made sense to me and so that I could explain it to the students. My main resource in thinking through the planning of the course was Campus Conflict Resolution Resources (see references). My approach to conflict,

and much else in life, is influenced by sociology and various interdisciplinary studies in which I had engaged over the years. So, I developed a conceptual overview.

Human life is characterized by social relations. As social beings we construct, maintain and change the social worlds within which we live – in part through negotiation, cooperation and conflict resolution. Conflicts are a normal part of our social relations and world construction. Conflict is as common as laughter, anger, love, sex and prayer, and no less important. Conflict can give voice to injustice; it can prod much needed change. It can be a source of personal growth and of social transformation. Yet, we often experience conflict as something negative. Because it is unavoidable, we need to learn how to respond to it productively. Principled negotiation, team building and conflict transformation are three of the ways we make productive use of conflict situations. To understand the range of possible responses to others, we need to recognize that individually and collectively in groups we make sense out of our experiences from different points of view.

Second, self-understanding is an invaluable foundation in negotiating, cooperating with others, settling our own disputes and assisting others to resolve their disputes. Moreover, working cooperatively in teams often means needing to talk about our differences and the conflicts that can arise out of them.

Third, while conflict is everywhere – from within our families to a central element in human history – it is more often described than analyzed. Conflict, like all human life, is often best understood as a narrative that has a beginning, middle and end. Negotiation and dispute transformation are two of the possible responses to conflict.

Fourth, everyday life is full of negotiations. They take place within, and on behalf of, individuals, small groups and large organizations, even nation states. Team building can be understood as a kind of group negotiation. The scholarly literature on negotiation distinguishes between positional and principled bargaining. The course provides a theoretical grounding for and experience in principled or interest-based negotiations. The goal of negotiations is to reach agreement wisely, respectfully, and efficiently.

Finally, conflict arises between individuals and between and/or within teams – here "teams" is a metaphor for a wide range of social groups from couples to small work units to diverse populations within a region to nation states. Conflict is natural and ubiquitous. It can be viewed, not as a problem, but as an opportunity for moral growth and social

transformation. Strengthening the persons who are involved in conflict increases their capacity to relate to others. Using the transformative model of mediation (there are, of course, many others), the course provides a theoretical grounding for and experience in understanding and transforming conflict situations.

The core ideas about social relations and conflict transformation emphasized in this course are not merely "abstract theories." They have been applied in a number of specific organizational conflicts. The usefulness of the theories is that they help clarify our own principles of action and can be used to guide our everyday responses to the conflicts in our own lives, from the interpersonal to the global.

Course Objectives

For the winter 2004 term, the course was premised on the idea that negotiation, group work and conflict are inherent in interpersonal and organizational relationships, and that it is possible to respond to conflict productively. The objective of the course, broadly speaking, was to develop and enhance knowledge and skills about negotiation, team building and conflict resolution.

The course was both theoretical and applied. It provided a comprehensive social constructionist framework for analyzing social life generally and, more specifically, for contextualizing and examining negotiation, team building and dispute resolution. Human life is inherently social, and the course argued that we participate in the construction of everyday life and its meanings. Conflict is also a normal part of everyday life, and those involved in conflict construct the meaning and resolutions of disputes individually and collectively. The course provided opportunities to practice negotiation, team building and conflict resolution skills. Most importantly, it provided the opportunity for students to become more aware of their own experiences – how they conceptualize what needs to be accomplished, how choices are made, how one's choices affect others, and how to reflect on and evaluate these experiences.

The course provided an opportunity to develop and enhance professional skills and competencies and to consider a reflective (theoretical) understanding of these competencies. More specifically, in terms of professional practice, the course assisted students to:

- * enhance communication abilities
- * develop basic negotiating skills

- * become team members and work cooperatively with others
- * learn to respect and work with differences in others
- * develop basic mediation and dispute transformation skills.

In terms of theoretical understanding, the course assisted students to:

- * enhance their conceptual and analytical thinking
- * apply theoretical ideas to specific situations
- * learn and apply the principles of dispute analysis and transformation.

Brief Course Outline

The conceptual ideas and course objectives were then translated into a weekly course outline. Within a few weeks of beginning the course, a second instructor was assigned to the course to co-teach it; together we finalized the outline and made the requisite adjustments to it as the course was offered.

The summary of the weekly outline follows:

- * Week 1 Assumptions about human life
- * Week 2 Constructing approaches to understanding disputes
- * Week 3 Analyzing conflicts
- * Week 4 A continuum of dispute analysis and resolution
- * Week 5 Self-understanding and teamwork
- * Week 6 Dealing with conflict in teams
- * Week 7 Negotiation and conflict in social context
- * Week 8 Negotiation skills
- * Week 9 How disputes get "lawyered": Contrasting adjudication with ADR
- * Week 10 The transformative approach
- * Week 11 The mediation process
- * Week 12 Transformative principles in everyday life
- * Week 13 Course summary, review and evaluation

With the posting for each week, we included a comment to explain the focus of the week, topics to be covered, a quote of the week, a personal reflection question, the title of the small group exercised to be used

during the small group meeting, as well as required and suggested readings.

Required Readings

The required readings included a course reader edited by the instructors and two books. For explaining the social constructionist perspective, selections from Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann were used. To discuss the nature of conflict and approaches to understanding conflict, Robert Baruch Bush and Joseph Folger's "four stories" (1994), Christopher Moore's discussion of approaches to managing conflict (1996), John Conley and William O'Barr's natural history of disputes (1998), and Andrew Pirie's introduction of key concepts (2000) were read. Readings by Carl Rogers (1961) and John Cragan, David W. Wright, Chris R. Kasch (2004) helped students understand the relationship between self and teams. Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patton's Getting To Yes was used to introduce principled negotiation. And to analyze the transformative approach to disputes, Bush and Folger's The Promise of Mediation was read. While a number of other readings were required, the above offers a good idea of the required readings in the course and how they were used.

Course Schedule and Basis of Evaluation

The course had about 200 students in it. For lecture purposes the students were divided into two groups, and each group met once a week for a two-hour lecture and discussion period. All the students were also divided into twelve small discussion groups which met once a week for a one-hour period to engage in small group exercises and, ultimately, to make group presentations. I took three of the small groups, my colleague took one, and the remainder were divided between two teaching assistants. The average size of the small groups was 15 or 16 students. At Ryerson, such tutorial groups are usually twice that size, but in order to facilitate the small group learning, we were allowed to run significantly smaller groups. The evaluation schema had three main components: the course included a mid-term and final exam – both used essay questions of varying lengths; students made group presentations; and tutorial leaders provided an attendance and participation mark.

Central Argument in the Course

The course set out to teach students not only some basic negotiation, team building and dispute transformation skills; it also sought to provide a theoretical context, identifying the assumptions and implications of the skill sets. Moreover, it emphasized that learning the skills and understanding their theoretical context was a foundation for a holistic approach to learning and living. Ideas are the forerunners of human actions and the tools for reflective consideration of past actions in preparation for further action. We are responsible for constructing the meanings of our everyday social worlds.

The central argument of the course emerged most articulately in preparation for the mid-term test. I had been talking about the implications and significance of a social constructionist view of the world (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Berger, 1967) and the diversity of approaches to dispute resolution (Bush and Folger, 1994; Moore, 1996). But how are these connected? How is the critical perspective of the course, the social construction of human meaning, connected to the thematic focus of the course, the transformation of conflict into productive life experiences? Our actions in everyday life are based in large measure on how we perceive the world around us. Our perceptions of the world are profoundly influenced by our "worldview," which includes concepts, theories, assumptions and values. In this way, we create, maintain and change our everyday lives. Because it is rooted in a particular set of philosophical and sociological assumptions, transformative mediation is a particularly cogent way to approach the conflict in our everyday lives. Through empowerment and recognition we can reconstruct, and assist others to construct, a productive meaning to conflict in everyday life.

While the argument for the elemental value of the transformative approach to conflict may be seen by some as a controversial claim within the legal and conflict resolution fields – and it was explained to students as a minority view – the strength of the argument is that it permits a highly integral and integrated approach to the topics discussed in the course. The conflict response continuum from negotiation to litigation, including the diversity of alternative dispute resolution processes, was presented as a set of principled approaches. Interest-based negotiation is principled, and transformative mediation was tendered as an approach explicitly rooted in the relational worldview that invites the integration of ideas and values with living action.

Some Practical Challenges

The curricular and circumstantial challenges of the course were formidable. In winter, 2004, it was a course to be taught, for the first time, to first year university students who entered from two different high school curricula. It was a required course; students were registered whether or not they had any initial interest in the subject. For many students, conflict resolution studies were a previously unknown area of study. Though it was taught to 190 students, it was intended to be a skills or competency based course. The course required the integration of applied skills, theoretical understanding and social action. Finally, after several months of working on the course on my own, shortly before the beginning of the winter term it was to be taught, it was decided that the course would be team taught. I was to be the lead instructor; my colleague [ii](#), who is educated in both philosophy and law, would have a one-third involvement in the course because of numerous other commitments. We found team teaching both challenging and enormously rewarding. In my previous team-teaching experiences, colleagues and I had considerable time to develop courses together, and to get to know one another personally and intellectually. The last minute nature of this situation meant that my colleague had to acclimate substantially to the basic frame of the course as it had been developed, whether or not it was a frame that she would have chosen for herself. That she did so with grace and enthusiasm reflected her knowledge, abilities and commitment to the students. The belated team teaching arrangement also required me to accommodate a new set of interests and ideas, which I tried to do wittingly. Together we learned a great deal from each other.

The lecture and discussion period of two-hours – actually two fifty-minute periods – presented its own challenges. The two sections of students were scheduled back-to-back which meant four straight hours of teaching. The students who came into class for hours three and four were coming directly from a prior two-hour class. In part, because of our limited experience with each other, my colleague and I committed to being present for each other's presentations. This proved an invaluable commitment because we were able to respond to and integrate one another's ideas comfortably and effectively, typically within the same class period. We began the course by splitting the two-hours in each class section. This division of labor mitigated the four-hour block of teaching for some weekly classes, but the major benefit was that it kept my colleague directly involved in presenting the course for a number of weeks, although she was responsible for one-third of the course. After three or four weeks, students told us that they found it difficult to switch perspectives half way through each two-hour class, and we subsequently divided up the remaining weeks insofar as her responsibility to the course permitted.

Previously, the typical section size that I have taught at Ryerson had been around forty students. From that experience, trying to engage one hundred is daunting. The classroom in which we taught was a tiered lecture hall that had been retrofitted with a number of technologies. These included a computer to show PowerPoint slides, with the ability to go to the course web site and numerous other sites, and the capacity to show DVDs and video tapes. (For the first few classes I brought in CDs to play music between the fifty-minute periods and between sections, but the room was so noisy that they were inaudible.) These technologies helped us to get and maintain the attention of students, for example showing brief CBC news documentaries to introduce topics and stimulate initial discussions. But it is important not to be seduced by technology. Overall, I found the most powerful pedagogical tools for reaching students were teaching with passion, presenting an argument (not just information), being responsive to students, and challenging them to think in a more holistic way about their lives. One day in mid-lecture the classroom computer system went down, and I continued the class without my PowerPoint slides. The class discussion became the best one in the course to that date, and from that point on I used PowerPoint more sparingly, to outline the week's direction, to illustrate and summarize points, and occasionally to lay out the details of a more complicated argument. The technology simply cannot replace the power of interpersonal exchanges.

So, what did the students make of all this?

The First Year Student Experience

The student response to the course was measured in three systematic ways, plus through anecdotal evidence. The university has an official Faculty Course Survey that consists of eleven ranking questions concerning courses and their instructors; 125 of the 190 students competed this evaluation. I also "designed" – the term implies a more rigorous methodological approach than was actually used in the heat of the closing weeks of the term – an on-line survey of multiple choice and open-ended questions, to which 28 of the 190 students replied. Third, in my own tutorial sessions, students were asked to identify the "three best and three worst" aspects of the course; 29 of 51 students responded. As a teacher, I find the open-ended questions the more illuminating method. These sources provide the bases for my understanding of the student experience.

The university's official survey evaluated only me as the lead instructor, even though it was a team-taught course. The results of the survey indicate that students evaluated me as enthusiastic, well organized, fair, respectful and clearly responsive to questions with scores ranging from 1.0 to 1.4 on a scale of agreement from 1 to 5 where 1 is "agree." The overall worth of the course was evaluated more moderately with a 2.2 ranking on the same scale. The students ranked the level and amount of course material as fairly demanding with scores ranging from 3.4 to 4.1 on a scale where 1 means "light" and 5 means "heavy."

One must be careful about generalizing from the information gathered on-line because of the smaller number of students who completed the survey (28 of 190). Nevertheless, based on the on-line survey, 60% of the respondents found their experience of the course very positive (21%) or somewhat positive (39%); and more than 70% reported at least "some" learning, though only 11% indicated that they learned "a great deal." Focusing on the small group tutorials, 43% of respondents found the small size of the groupings – ranging from 10 to 18 students – to be "highly valuable" with another 32% finding them "somewhat valuable." Twenty-nine percent of the respondents found the small group exercises used in the tutorials to be "highly valuable" with another 39% finding them "somewhat valuable." The importance of the quality of tutorial leaders was highlighted by the fact that 64% of the respondents found the leaders to be "highly valuable" to their learning experience. Of the required readings, the source students felt was most useful was Fisher, Ury and Patton's *Getting to Yes*. And almost two-thirds of the respondents (61%) recommended the future use of weekly quizzes to motivate students to keep up with the reading.

More telling than these numbers were the student responses to open-ended questions about the course. These reveal some of the strengths and weaknesses of the course. The open-ended comments ranged from evaluating the course as "fantastic" to "absolutely pointless." And there were some hints of new interest; one student wrote, "Other than my own disappointment with having to take a course about team building and conflict resolution, I felt that the lectures were extremely productive and at times engaging. . . ." While not exactly a ringing endorsement, it shows growth in the student and some success at connecting with the student.

A significant number of students found the course useful, were able to apply what they were learning in their everyday lives, and saw it as valuable for their future careers. One student wrote, "I have noticed myself using some of the skills on a day to day basis." And another

wrote, "I learned so much and was able to apply the information in many everyday as well as some more serious situations." One of the ways the course invited students to utilize the course ideas was in small group presentation projects that focused on either the Oka crisis or a UN Security Council debate over terrorism (see References). While not universally acclaimed, many students found that this assignment required them to apply what they were learning. The positive reactions to the group presentations ranged from "somewhat valuable" to "awesome!"

The criticisms offered were, of course, the most interesting material. The more instructive criticisms pointed to the need for a more clear sense of focus and trajectory at the beginning of the course, for more experiential applications of ideas and a closer integration between a given week's lecture material and the same week's small group exercises. It was also clear that the students found the course very theoretical; they wanted a "more 'hands-on' experience." This was reflected in comments on the required readings. While some students found most of the readings helpful, others commented that some of the readings were "lengthy," "technical," "abstract," and "extremely advanced." Here, too, there were some hints of new thinking; one student wrote, "The required readings at first seemed overwhelming and boring but once I grasped the purpose of them, I found myself finding them very relevant and useful."

The third source of evaluation was the open-ended questions to students in three tutorials; 29 of 51 students were available and responded to the request to identify the three best and the three worst aspects of the course. Substantially different student populations were reached by the on-line and the in-tutorial surveys, because only 25% of the students who responded to the on-line survey had me as their tutorial leader, whereas all the students who responded to the in-tutorial exercise were my tutorial students. As previously noted, one has to be careful about drawing generalizations from this sub-sample of the students. There are some important overlapping interconnections between what the three evaluative instruments seem to indicate.

In identifying the "best aspects" of the course, the vast majority of respondents (23 of 29) noted the importance of the small tutorial sections. They noted such qualities as the small size of the group that facilitated communication, the interactive nature of the role playing and group exercises, the opportunity to clarify and apply concepts, and the linkage between lectures and the tutorials. These comments from the in-tutorial evaluation helped to explain the generally strong positive feelings students expressed in the on-line survey about the tutorial groups. Nine students identified the group presentations (on the Oka crisis and the UN

Security Council) which were made in the tutorials as one of the best aspects.

Almost half of the respondents in the in-tutorial evaluation (14) emphasized the relevancy of the course material to their own experiences, noting that they had already applied course ideas and skills to their everyday lives, or thought it will be easier to resolve conflicts, or saw the course as job related. Others – in addition to the 14 – found the combination of theory and practice as one of the best aspects of the course.

Again, almost half of the respondents (14) said one of the best aspects was the quality of teaching. They found the instructors enthusiastic, genuinely concerned with students, easy to talk to, passionate about their subject, knowledgeable, humorous, open to feedback, respectful, available, and presenting a "welcoming 'vibe.'" One student commented that s/he valued the freedom to express ideas without being criticized. These comments helped to explain the positive evaluation of the lead instructor provided on the university's Faculty Course Evaluation. It also related to one of the points identified as one of the worst aspects of the course.

In identifying the "worst aspects" of the course, one-third of the students (10 of 29) commented on various aspects of the readings. These students found the readings to be challenging in one way or another. There were comments on the amount of reading, the length of some readings, and their difficulty. One respondent also said the readings were "confusing" because they were a new area of study. In addition, a quarter of respondents (7) commented on the overall cost of the course readings, some noting that not all the readings from the course reader were used, others recommending the elimination of "recommended readings" from the reader. (As a matter of balancing student views, five students noted they found the readings quite interesting, especially Berger and Luckmann on the social construction of reality and Bush and Folger on the transformative approach to conflicts.)

Finally, a quarter of the respondents (7 of 29) highlighted the challenge team-teaching presents from the student point of view. These students found it difficult to shift between and to integrate the different ideas, perspectives and pedagogical approaches of two instructors. This comment is particularly interesting in light of the overall positive evaluation of the quality of teaching. I interpreted these findings as a reminder of the complexities of team-teaching and the importance, whenever possible, of colleagues working together from the earliest

possible planning stages so that they can clearly articulate for themselves – and later for their students – the connections between their ideas, perspectives and pedagogies.

Questions Raised by the Experience

The experience of teaching this course raises at least two basic questions: What is appropriate content at the first year university level? And how it is most effectively taught?

What is the appropriate content? From early in the conception of the course, I was requested to include basic concepts of negotiation, mediation and teamwork. To do this in one semester seemed too much to attempt. Having taught the course once, my judgment now is that not only can it be done – with some reorganization of materials and classes – it is an exciting and useful course. It is precisely the integration of these fields of study that make the course so dynamic an experience. In particular, each of the three focuses require praxis – the reflective experience of understanding and action. It is notable that in the on-line survey 86% of the respondents found "mediation in general" well covered by the course, though 71% found "negotiation" and 61% found "teamwork" to be the most useful focuses (more than one answer was permitted). This suggests the importance of having a foundational understanding of the social experience and the need to re-balance the weight each of these nodal concepts receives within the basic framework. A fuller articulation of such a perspective is beyond the scope of this essay and, unquestionably, an issue for another paper.

For me, it was at the midterm review, in response to the student question at the beginning of this article, that the course solidified a well-articulated, purposive central focus – expressed above as the central argument of the course – and set a clear progression of topics based on that focus. The reasons for this slow start, despite the months of preparation before the course began, I suppose, are the newness and rather unique tripartite nature of the course and the lingering development of the best division of topics between the two instructors. For me, this particular student question was one of the key moments in the course. Faced with the student experience of the lack of clarity about the link between essential ideas and the uncertainty of the purpose in studying these ideas, I was able to articulate more clearly for the students and myself the key arguments in the course: that we are responsible for constructing the meaning of our lives, that we do this through theoretical frameworks with varying degrees of explicitness, that

conflict is a normal part of our lives, and that the transformative approach to conflict is a particularly powerful perspective in the construction of meaning. Some students were clearly energized by the challenge to integrate school work with other aspects of life. Others were challenged by the idea that education was more about greater self-understanding and increased respect for others than about memorizing

How is the course to be most effectively taught? While one's conceptual arguments can always be tightened up and further elaborated, what students most seem to want and to need are experiences – the opportunity to learn about and participate in real conflicts, negotiations relevant to their immediate experiences, and teamwork experiences that are somehow more than the usual group presentations. The Oka crisis and the UN Security Council exercises are good opportunities for this, and I would like to find other options for major group work. But more interpersonal conflicts also need to be used in the classroom to give "reality" to the power of student classroom experiences through a range of pedagogical techniques from quick exercises that can be managed with one-hundred students to simulations. The brief news documentaries helped bring examples and applications into the class to stimulate discussion, and other techniques are needed. One of the greatest challenges is to match with greater precision the content of lectures and the exercises to be used in that week's small group meeting. These are the areas where I expect to put further substantial efforts in the next few months before the winter term.

The opportunity to teach dispute resolution to around 200 students a year is a remarkable challenge. It is of course important to the students registered in the course that the course be the best it can be. But it is also an opening to encourage and enhance the development of the field of dispute resolution professions in Canada. The evidence suggests that in the first year of the program a successful effort was made, but it is equally obvious that a more effective job can be done.

In the first class meeting of the course, I told students that the course had three basic goals – enhancing their abilities to deal with conflict, developing a conceptual understanding of their efforts to transform conflict into a productive experience, and helping them to live well. Telling students that you are going to teach them to live well is akin to Yann Martel's claim, put into the mouth of the protagonist at the beginning of *The Life of Pi*, that he is going to tell a story that will make us believe in God. For me, my audacious claim is justified by the link between the social constructionist idea that individually and collectively we play a role in defining, constructing, maintaining and changing the

various social worlds in which we live and the promise of transformative conflict resolution to help people be "not just better off but better: more human and more humane" (Bush & Folger, 1994 at 29). Dispute resolution is not just an academic area of specialty, nor simply a professional practice. Addressing conflict is an existential part of everyday life that provides us with opportunities for personal and social growth.

At the close of the course one student wrote to me of a conflict within her family situation and how the conceptual tools of course had helped her "in unexpected ways" to understand her perspective and needs more consciously and communicate them more clearly to everyone involved. I believe that if I do my job right I can help students give themselves a fuller understanding of their own conduct. Like the unanticipated question during the mid-term review that calls for a more vital integration of ideas, the student's unexpected application of the course's concepts invites me back into the classroom this September.

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Endnotes

i The two teaching assistants were Rebecca Morier and Devin Dubois. Rebecca had recently completed her Masters degree, and Devin was currently writing his Masters' thesis in Communication and Culture, a joint graduate program between Ryerson University and York University.

ii Alex Wellington teaches Philosophy at Ryerson; her education includes a Ph.D. in Philosophy and a L.L.M. in Law as well as a Masters in Environmental Studies.

I am grateful to Alex Wellington, Mark Lovewell, Robin Haley-Gillin, and Bill Wartens for their criticisms and suggestions of an earlier draft of this article. Their comments substantially improved the paper; the essay's weaknesses remain my own.

