

DEFINITION

The Harvard Business School has been using Case Method since 1908. This seminar is part of the Harvard Participant-Centered Learning Project. Students are presented with a written case, two to ten pages in length, presenting a problem. Then students are put into the role of decision makers facing the problem. Through group discussion, lead by the instructor, students then solve the problem. This approach fosters critical thinking and reasoning. The basis of the method involves group discussion.

Case Method has long been used as a teaching approach in MBA programs, Business training, Economics, and Marketing. Case Method has rarely been used in teaching Theatre. In fact the only published work that I could find that uses case method in the teaching of Theatre is **Directing in the Theatre** by J. Robert Wills, The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1980.

GOALS

To immediately improve:

- My skills in preparing for discussions.
- Discussion leadership skills.

My long-term goal was to see if case method could be used in the teaching of Experiencing Theatre 191.

SEMINAR ACTIVITIES

Art & Craft of Discussion Leadership Part I Harvard Business School, Boston, MA

The November 11-12 seminar is intended for all instructors, regardless of their level of experience with participant-centered learning. The seminar covers a broad range of topics, including:

- Establishing and reshaping the learning contract
- Questioning, listening, and responding
- The teacher/student relationship
- Designing the teaching plan
- Practicing the skill

To help instructors fine-tune their approach to participant-centered learning, Attendees will experience the seminar both as instructor and student. First, as an instructor, by learning techniques for orchestrating classroom discussion, blackboard management, teaching plan preparation, etc. Second, as a student, by preparing and discussing cases.

At the seminar we prepared and discussed five different case method studies. We all took part in the preparation stages and then took turns leading the individual discussions. During the leadership sections we were constantly side coached by the instructors on question style, follow-up questions, maintaining direction and focus, techniques for scoring student participation, and doing board work.

The best unexpected outcome of this seminar was the diversity of the attendees. Over nine different countries, forty different schools, and over a dozen different

disciplines were present. While I was the only Theatre educator in attendance we all seemed to be dealing with language, vocabulary, and discipline barriers. Dealing with these individual barriers was actually a bonding experience for the attendees.

MEETING THE GOALS

Discussion preparation skills:

The seminar made me aware that my preparation for discussions is good in regards to my ability to let the discussion be open-ended. I think this relates to my ability to improvise. But my preparation has to be a little more detailed and have an organized board plan.

Discussion leadership skills:

In regard to discussion leadership, my questioning and listening skills seem to be more than adequate. My follow-up questions were excellent. The improvements that were urged were to not to rely on my status as a source of knowledge, but to challenge students to settle and mediate their own conflicts in the discussion. A great deal of this can be done with creative board work.

Long-term goals:

I believe it is possible to use case method to teach Experiencing Theatre 191. Most easily the very method itself means that each historical play that we read can first be approached as a case method study. This of course means that I will have to write the case studies. I will attempt to incorporate two new case studies in the spring semester. (*Oedipus and Tartuffe*).

Students in my THE 191 classes currently a classroom presentation of historical plays. As part of their presentations the lead the class in discussion about the plays. I will change the current assignment (writing five discussion questions) to a case method study of the play. This should be a simple but very effective change.

Lastly I believe that Theatre production can be approached and taught using case method. This will require a great deal of writing on my part. I believe I should be able to incorporate two new case studies on Theatre production by next fall semester.

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