

When lectures come to life...

Profs shut the books and shelve traditional teaching methods

by **Floyd J. Csir**
The Collegian

Kenley Branscome filed into Nick 8, joining about 23 other students one Saturday morning at 8 a.m. All the sixth semester management major had had to eat and drink was a bag of potato chips and a Pepsi, but this wouldn't be enough to last him until 4 p.m., the end of the simulation.

"I was skeptical at first," Branscome said. "But later, I viewed it (the simulation) as a worthwhile teaching technique."

He wasn't quite sure what the class would be doing for the next eight hours, but he participated anyway.

No, he wasn't part of an experiment in a Stephen King novel, but rather one of many students who has participated in a classroom simulation.

Gayle Morris, a visiting Assistant Professor of Economics, invited a Washington D.C. consultant to run a simulation called "Green Revolution" available to her Economic Development and Women in Development classes last spring.

Most students took the roles of peasant rice farmers in India during a five year production period, while others became bankers, suppliers and traders.

During the simulation, Morris and the consultant would walk to different tables in the room and say, "Farm one, you just had twins and farm two has a drought."

"Farmers could sell their rice or use it to feed themselves. They could support their children or hire them out to other farms," Morris said.

The students were given class time credit for attending the simulation, but were required to write a report about what they did during the simulation with the concepts they learned in class.

Morris noted that this wasn't a game like "Monopoly," where students could "go for broke" if their situation was getting worse within the simulation's context. "It's not that 'we get to play farmer for a day,'" said Morris, "but it's an educational exercise for students to take seriously and to learn without taking notes."

She said there is always a risk that the simulation will fail, but



Greg Geibel/The Collegian

Wondertwin powers activate: Theater Director Kathleen Campbell squares off against student Jim Barrett during a teaching exercise designed to help actors focus body energy.

most students have a favorable opinion of it after eight hours.

Not every unique teaching method needs to have a simulation. Sometimes students are asked to express their creative side, found in the right side of the brain. That's what Kathleen Campbell, Director of Theater and Lecturer, does in her acting courses.

"I try to get them involved in

prove frustrating at times.

"You wonder where the project is going, but then after spending time with your object, you get caught up in it," said Danny Burger, a first semester general studies student.

Name tags are another exercise Campbell uses to break the ice and make students tap into their expressive natures. Students must display their name on their body

and registering for class--must face demanding and narrow-minded employers.

Dr. Rod Troester, Assistant Professor of Speech Communication, incorporates a business / communication simulation called "Looking Glass" in his Speech Communication in Business course.

"It's nothing earth-shaking or monumental," he said. "It provides us with an organization we can play with. The students can make mistakes, but the consequences would not be the same as in a real organization."

Students apply for positions within the fictional lighting company, hold job interviews, write memos, and even make presentations to the Board of Directors.

Troester said that skill development courses are better suited for simulations. "All simulations are based on the idea of experimental learning, that assumes people learn best when they experience it," Troester said.

By getting students involved emotionally, mentally and behaviorally, called the three domains of learning, Troester said simulations are an effective tool in teaching. "It's a different means to the same end," he added.

"You have no clue why you're doing this."

-Skip Hiller
First Semester / Spanish

the creative process in a lot of little ways," Campbell said.

She asks her (Introduction to Acting) students to find an object found in nature, like a pine cone, an acorn, or a rock, and describe in writing what details the object has, using the five senses.

For instance, Skip Hiller, a first semester Spanish major, named his rock Frank. "You have no clue why you're doing this. But at some point it (the object) becomes your friend."

Campbell doesn't reveal to students what they will be doing with their objects, which can

for every class period. Names have been placed on belts, sandwich boards, hats, and one student even put letters running up a pant leg.

"The main reason for doing this is for the students to become familiar with non-verbal language," said Campbell, noting that acting, as well as life, is mostly based on this kind of communication.

Communication is also important in the business world, where college graduates--comfortable with the routines of class work, eating at the Gorge

Student evaluations -- Do they really count?

Your professor hands you a packet of papers and a box of pencils. You've just been chosen to hand out and collect your prof's evaluations. And you thought getting into *Who's Who* was an honor.

But are evaluations important enough to take the time to shade in those little ovals?

Dr. Daniel Frankforter, Professor of History and Acting Division Head of Humanities and Social Sciences, said, "They are taken very seriously."

Students respond to general questions about their professor's preparation, presentation, and other factors on a scale from one to seven. The overall rating for the course and the teacher are also included.

Once the evaluations are completed and sent to University Park, a computer processes the information, and the results are sent to each division office. One copy of the evaluation is given to the professor and one is placed into a dossier.

A second written evaluation asking for input on course strengths and weaknesses is also placed in the file.

If the professor is in a tenure track position, he or she is "up for review," every second, fourth and sixth year of teaching.

After six years, a tenure track professor is either granted tenure or is dismissed. Decisions on annual salary increases, tenure and promotion are partially based on the evaluations.

Professors are evaluated on four areas of academic performance: teaching, research, scholarly activity and service.

-Floyd J. Csir

**Student Government Association
Workstudy Positions Available:**

**Contact David Mahoney
898-6220 or 898-6936**