

Connections@Cal Fall 2011 Review

The Connections@Cal program is a new enhancement to the Freshman and Sophomore Seminars program at Berkeley. The purpose of the program is two-fold: to formalize the informal mentoring relationships that often arise spontaneously in Freshman Seminars, and to engage in what we are calling "cohort formation": helping the students in a seminar cohere as a group and then stay in touch with one another (and the faculty member) beyond the semester in which the seminar was taught. In addition to in-person contact in and outside of class, the program also includes a social networking component. Our research suggests that we may well be the first university to launch a program of this nature.

Connections@Cal was piloted in Spring 2011 with 3 seminars, and was expanded to all seminar instructors who wanted to participate in Fall 2011. Professors were offered an additional grant of \$500 to be used solely for course-related or social activities, so there was no direct reward to the professors for participating. In the first full semester of the program, 21 Freshman seminars in 14 departments – almost 25% of the Seminars offered – decided to make their courses Connections@Cal seminars, on subjects as diverse as 3D Modeling, the Films of the Coen Brothers, the Gospel of St. Mark, and the UC Botanical Garden (see page 5 for a full list of the Connections@Cal Seminars). These seminars enrolled 311 students, an average of 15 students per course. A total of \$10,500 was awarded in Connections@Cal grants. We were pleased that so many people signed up for the first semester that the option was available to them – the concept resonated with faculty, many of whom mentioned that they'd been doing this informally for years, and demonstrated their commitment to the students in these courses, without the need for any concrete monetary incentives.

Central to the mission of Connections@Cal seminars was cohort-building activities outside of class time. Although it was not explicitly required, professors were strongly encouraged to take students to topical events, or to just get together for pizza outside of class. Some courses attended performances together, professors hosted dinners, both out at restaurants and at the professors' homes, one seminar went for breakfast at iHouse, there was a trip to the UC Botanical Garden, various performances through Cal Performances, trips to the Berkeley Art museum and PFA, and others. The student response to these events was universally positive: "...the performances were very interesting/things I would not go out and see on my own" "it very helpful to see some of the topics we discussed in class applied in the world" "I was able to interact with professor on a more personal level" "Really allowed us to connect with the other class mates and the professor in a way that can be hard to do in the classroom setting. It was a great time and helped us form a better relationship with each other, I only wish we had started having class dinners more often and earlier in the semester."

In addition to the in-person aspects, professors were offered support in developing a course website, to add a social-networking dimension to the course. We hoped that this would help the students stay in touch both during the semester and beyond, as there is a common place for the students to keep in touch. In this aspect we are on the cutting edge – we are the first campus to use social networking to build strong and lasting bonds among seminar participants. Seminars primarily used one of two options for their course site: Townsend Humanities Lab and Facebook. The Townsend Lab sites offered a more

fully-functioned site that offered the opportunity for innovative teaching methods, while the Facebook sites had the advantage of capturing the attention of students who were already on the site daily.

Seminars used their websites in a variety of ways. For example, “The Judaism of St. Mark”, a Religious Studies course, used the Text Annotations feature of the site to comment on the text before class – comments made on a specific portion of the text show up as highlights that could be moused over to see the information. The professor said that this small piece of technology facilitated discussion hugely: when the students had already made comments on the text before class, discussion flowed more smoothly in class, and much of the awkwardness that often accompanies the first few seminars was mitigated, allowing the students to form a group sooner. “Photographing History in the Making” used a similar image annotation feature for photographs taken in the course.

“London Calling: Producing the News at the BBC” used their Facebook site to easily post links and have discussion. They also turned in short writing assignments via the comments function. Various seminars used. Other seminars used their site less formally, to post interesting links, chat about related topics, and in some cases to plan class events.

Students responded very well to social media aspect of the seminars, with comments like: “We were able to easily communicate as a group.” and “Everyone was connected like a social media site.” “[I liked] The ability to discuss informally with instructor and fellow students. Instructor also posted several links to interesting and relevant websites. Facebook also had the option to conduct polls, which were helpful in our seminar activities.” “The Facebook wall allowed us all to stay easily connected.” Beyond the communication advantages, students also liked the features: “the annotations on images was cool”. “I thought it was great that our Professor was able to post things that she thought might interest us and that students could do the same!”

Overall, student response to the seminars was extremely positive. Several comments on the overall class are below:

“I think all seminars should be a part of Connections@Cal.”

“I think it a great program that should continue to be supported!”

“It was highly challenging and a deeply thought-provoking class.”

“it was very fun and I strongly recommend the class”

“Thank You, it was an incredible experience!”

“The Connections at Cal element certainly added to the experience in a beneficial way!”

Source Citation:
NRSV Mark 1

(Mark 1) The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; 3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" 4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." 9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 11 And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." 12 And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 13 He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. 14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." 16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea--for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him. 21 They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synaogue and taught. 22 They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. 23 Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, 24 and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." 25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" 26 And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. 27 They were all amazed, and they kept asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching-- he taught with authority! He command fame began to spread through the synagogue, they entered. Now Simon's mother-in-law He came and took her by the hand to serve them. 32 That evening he cured many who were sick and very dark, he got up and wept. 33 He said to them, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may

Kate Hagen at 09/04/2011
 When reading this, I get an image of some ghostly spirit being torn from a man by Jesus, however, I feel like this is not meant to be taken literally. Does anyone have any take on this? I feel like the "unclean spirit" is more a figurative way of saying his unfaithfulness or something along those lines.
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A screenshot from a text annotation in "The Judaism of St. Mark". The students in this seminar annotated portions of the Gospel of St. Mark every week, which the professor used to jump start lively discussions in the course.

- Music
- Notes
- Questions
- Links

MORE ▾

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~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Is anyone else planning on taking the bus? I know there's one that stops at Telegraph and Bancroft and another by Unit 1 and 2 around 7:20-7:30ish. It'll drop us off near Center St and from there it's only a short walk to the theatre. I'll post more specific details in a bit!

Like · Comment · Follow Post · February 2 at 4:15pm



~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ and ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ like this.



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~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ yeah :)

February 2 at 6:01pm · Like



~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Im going to take the 51 b too I think

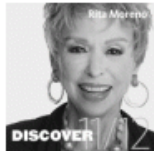
February 2 at 6:26pm · Like

Write a comment...



Susan Schweik

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Ghost Light 11/12 - Berkeley Repertory Theatre
www.berkeleyrep.org

Tony Award-winning nonprofit regional theatre in Berkeley, California -- Tony Taccone, Artistic Director / Susan Medak, Managing Director

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~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ and ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ like this.



View all 7 comments



~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Sure, I will make sure to do that if I arrive later

February 2 at 1:10pm · Like



~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Thanks!

February 2 at 1:11pm · Like

Write a comment...



Susan Schweik

Very easy way to get to Thai Temple: take BART to the Ashby stop. Then it's just a short walk up to the corner of Martin Luther King to the corner of Russell, where you turn right. You'll see the many Thai-food eating people as soon as you get to the corner, probably.

Like · Comment · Follow Post · January 29 at 8:15am via mobile



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Students in "Procrastination: Theory and Practice" planned events together on their Facebook site

Courses offered as part of the Fall 2011 Connections@Cal Program:

Professor	Course	Course Name
Rosemary Joyce	Anthropology 84, Sec 1	Race, Gender, and Social Life in Honduras: Reading Over the Shoulder of People in the Past
Greig Crysler	Architecture 24, Sec 1	New Horizons in Design: Products, Buildings and Cities
Ronald Rael	Architecture 84, Sec 1	3D Modeling, Rendering and Animation
Brian Barsky	Computer Science 39P, Sec 1	Photographing History in the Making
Sue Schweik	English 24, Sec 2	Procrastination: Theory and Practice
Genaro Padilla	English 24, Sec 5	The Arts at Berkeley and Beyond
Julia Bader	English 84, Sec 1	High Culture, Low Culture: Postmodernism and the Films of the Coen Brothers
John Coolidge	English 84, Sec 2	Know Thyself
Eileen Lacey	Integrative Biology 24, Sec 7	Night (and Day) in the Museum: What Really Goes on in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology?
Bill Drummond	Journalism 24, Sec 1	London Calling: Producing the News at the BBC
Susan Rasky	Journalism 24, Sec 2	Talkin' bout My Generation (and a Few of the Others)
Alan Pomerantz	Legal Studies 39D, Sec 1	Current Political and Moral Conflicts and the U.S. Constitution
Susanne Gahl	Linguistics 24, Sec 2	Your languages at Cal
Matthew Potts, Peter Berck	Natural Resources 24 Sec 1	Global Environment Theme House Freshman Seminar
Matthew Potts, Peter Berck	Natural Resources 84 Sec 1	Global Environment Theme House Sophomore Seminar
George Chang	Nutritional Science and Toxicology 24, Sec 1	Science and Culture of American Foods
Chelsea Specht	Plant & Microbial Bio 24, Sec 2	Extreme Green: Using the UC Botanical Garden to Understand Plant Adaptation to Life on the Edge
Daniel Boyarin	Religious Studies 24, Sec 2	The Judaism of St. Mark
Daniel Melia	Rhetoric 24, Sec 1	Arguing with Judge Judy: Popular "Logic" on TV Judge Shows
Penny Edwards	South & Southeast Asian Studies 24, Sec 1	First Person Plural: Voices Across Cultures
Bac Tran, Frank Smith, Joi Barrios	South & Southeast Asian Studies 84, Sec 1	Contemporary Southeast Asian Society and Culture through Film