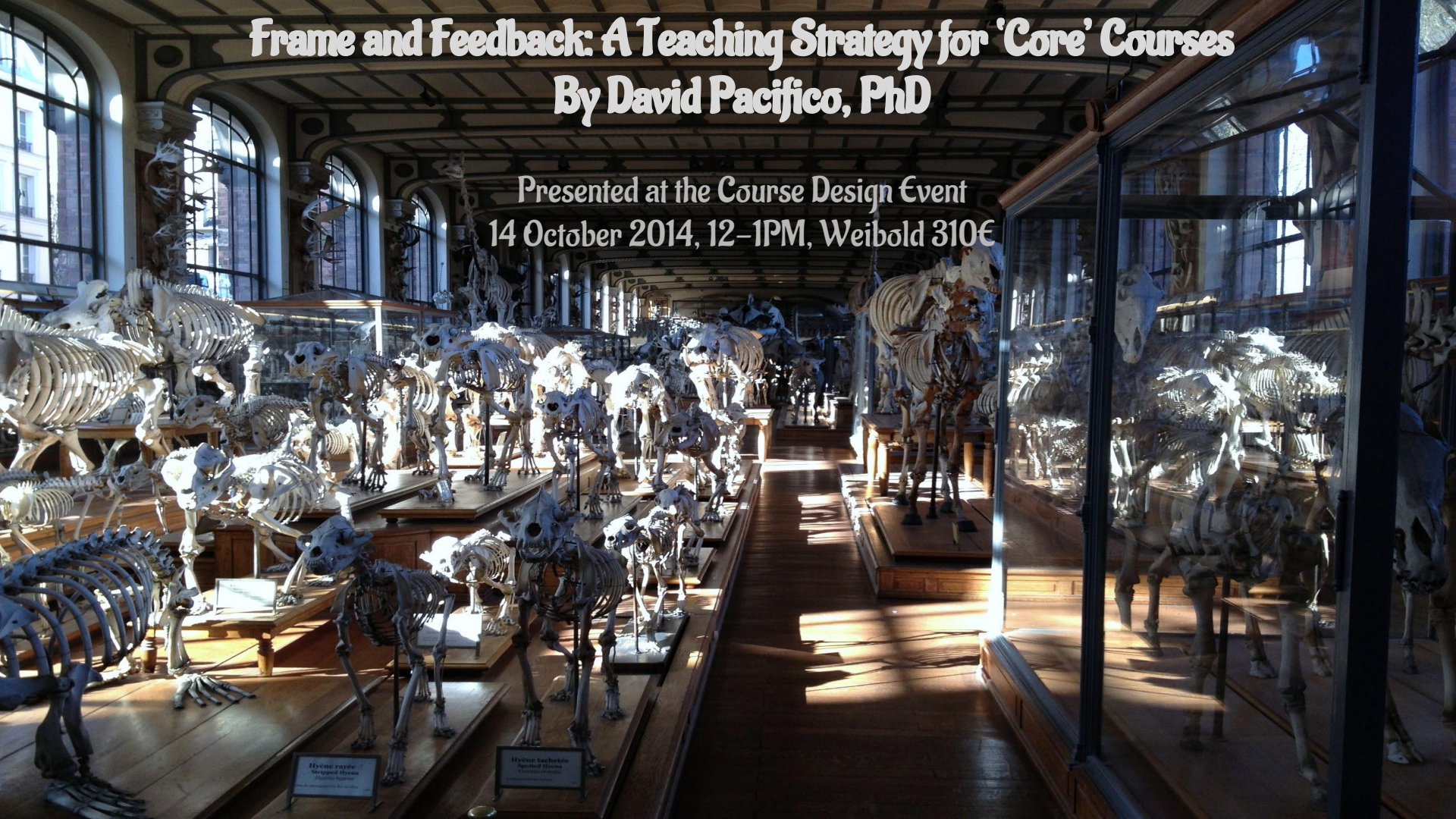


Frame and Feedback: A Teaching Strategy for 'Core' Courses

By David Pacifico, PhD

Presented at the Course Design Event
14 October 2014, 12-1PM, Weibold 310C



The Course

Self, Culture, and Society III (Spr '14)

Required 'core' course in the social sciences

Fixed reading list, though Lecturers decide on specifics

Marx/Smith → Durkheim/Levi-Strauss → Freud/Butler

Learning Goals

Content – Informed interpretation of authors' essential arguments around themes of self, identity, social significance and material consequences

Skills – Critical reading/observation, analysis/thinking, and writing/communicating

The Method

Cadre – 'square;' students have wide opportunity for self-directed exploration and creativity within a frame (cadre) I maintain for ensuring learning goals are met

Transparency – I tell students what, why, and how they will learn
I direct them to monitor that learning
They report to me how we are doing

The Process

Student-Run Classes – Students plan a class with my supervision and run it in pairs each Monday

Modelling and Practice – Wednesdays I run class around writing exercises where I model, they practice, and we complete up-scaling writing exercising together

After each class meeting students fill out a feedback sheet

An Example

Wednesday we psychoanalyze Max Ernst's *Sheep* (1921) painting
I provide a framework with 5 thematic paragraphs and
Explain what each paragraph should do

We write it together, start to finish, ca. 600 words

Midterm = Psychoanalyzing an Imagist painting at Smart Museum of Art

Results

Students' grades trended up across quarter, despite blind grading

Students were robustly engaged with each other and with texts

Students quickly grasped the main concepts and
moved toward explorations of deeper concepts

Students reported that they were learning and course was successful

Revisions and Remaining Questions

Currently reducing in-class writing exercises to maximize student-student engagement in small group discussions/report-backs because students identified this method as preferable

Classes have been extremely active with student-student engagement

But how will writing goals be affected?



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