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## Defining a Sociocultural Approach to Teaching Classroom Assessment



BOSTON  
COLLEGE

Since Fall 2020, Dr. Susan Lyons has redesigned and taught the classroom assessment course at Boston College for undergraduate, pre-service educators. Susan's approach veered away from the traditional scope and sequence for an undergraduate assessment course in favor of a more progressive, sociocultural understanding of the role of assessment within a learning environment. Not only was the content of the course focused on developing an understanding of the role of assessment in facilitating learning through a sociocultural lens, the structure of the course itself reflected this perspective.

### Course Learning Objectives

The goal is that students will walk away from this course understanding that good classroom assessment practice is really all about good teaching. More specifically, by the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- ✓ Explain how the latest science on learning informs classroom assessment practice.
- ✓ Set meaningful learning goals, articulate a progression of how student understanding will develop to reach those goals, and use that learning progression to plan formative and summative assessment opportunities.
- ✓ Implement a range of formative assessment practices in their own classrooms.
- ✓ Empower students as agents of their own learning through effective classroom assessment practice.
- ✓ Design authentic performance-based tasks to elicit rich evidence of student learning.
- ✓ Use student identity and culture as assets for engaging in meaningful classroom assessments.
- ✓ Develop high-quality rubrics.
- ✓ Critique existing systems of grading for communicating about learning.
- ✓ Meaningfully contribute to public discourse on classroom assessment.

### STUDENT FEEDBACK

"Dr. Lyons was respectful to all students and their time & learning. She was attentive and prompt with feedback and showed a genuine care for each student's understanding of course material. She used her own experiences and wealth of career knowledge to propel classroom conversations and provide insightful discussion topics. Her class truly connects to our future careers and has been so helpful in applying what we've learned elsewhere."

This course does not adopt a textbook, but instead leverages key readings and excerpts from the classroom assessment literature. For each of the readings, students engage in a content analysis with their peers and prepare and facilitate student-led discussions. These readings include:

- Brookhart, S. M. (2013). *How to create and use rubrics for formative assessment and grading*. Ascld.
- Cowie, B. (2013). Classroom assessment: Making space for diversity. In *Valuing assessment in science education: Pedagogy, curriculum, policy* (pp. 249-265). Springer, Dordrecht.
- Cowie, B. (2005). Student commentary on classroom assessment in science: A sociocultural interpretation. *International Journal of Science Education*, 27(2), 199-214.
- Feldman, J. (2018). *Grading for equity: What it is, why it matters, and how it can transform schools and classrooms*. Corwin Press.
- Fine, C. G. M., & Furtak, E. M. (2020). The SAEBL Checklist. *The Science Teacher*, 87(9), 38-48.
- Heritage, M., & Harrison, C. (2019). *The power of assessment for learning: Twenty years of research and practice in UK and US classrooms*. Corwin.
- Hockett, J. A., & Doubet, K. J. (2014). Turning on the lights: What pre-assessments can do. *Educational Leadership*, 71(4), 50-54.
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). *How people learn II: Learners, contexts, and cultures*. National Academies Press.
- National Research Council. (2001). *Knowing what students know: The science and design of educational assessment*. National Academies Press.
- Rosa, R. (2017). Identity Affirmed, Agency Engaged: Culturally Responsive Performance-Based Assessment. *Voices in Urban Education*, 46, 55-60.
- Shepard, L. A. (2000). The role of assessment in a learning culture. *Educational researcher*, 29(7), 4-14.
- Shepard, L. A., Diaz-Bilello, E. K., Penuel, W. R., & Marion, S. F. (2020). *Classroom Assessment Principles to Support Teaching and Learning*. Center for Assessment, Design, Research and Evaluation, University of Colorado Boulder.
- Stanley, T. (2021). *Performance-based assessment for 21st-century skills*. Routledge.
- Wiggins, G. (2011). A true test: Toward more authentic and equitable assessment. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(7), 81-93.
- Wylie, E. C., Gullickson, A. R., Cummings, K. E., Egelson, P. E., Noakes, L. A., Norman, K. M., & Veeder, S. A. (2012). *Improving formative assessment practice to empower student learning*. Corwin Press.

## STUDENT FEEDBACK

"I loved the course's structure with outside readings, content analysis sessions and then discussions that were rooted in those content analyses. The instructor provided regular feedback and criteria for success were distinctly outlined. The layout of the class and its small size facilitated genuine relationships among students and developed a strong classroom community."

"I am so thankful for the discussions that we had. I feel like all of my peers worked to contribute to the discussions and Dr. Lyons' knowledge enhanced these talks."

"I have learned so much from professor Lyons and I am so thankful to have been in her class."

  
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