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INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH IN TEACHING ENGLISH AND CRIMINAL LAW

Interdisciplinary teaching is a method, or set of methods, used to teach a unit across different curricular disciplines. Interdisciplinary analysis examines an issue from multiple perspectives, leading to a systematic effort to integrate the alternative perspectives into a unified or coherent framework of analysis.

Interdisciplinary instruction entails the use and integration of methods and analytical frameworks from more than one academic discipline to examine a theme, issue, question or topic. Interdisciplinary education makes use of disciplinary approaches to examine topics, but pushes beyond by: taking insights from a variety of relevant disciplines, synthesizing their contribution to understanding, and then integrating these ideas into a more complete, and hopefully coherent, framework of analysis.

There are many different types, or levels, of interdisciplinary teaching. On one end, schools might employ an interdisciplinary team approach, in which teachers of different content areas assigned to one group of students who are encouraged to correlate some of their teaching. The most common method of implementing integrated, interdisciplinary instruction is the thematic unit, in which a common theme is studied in more than one content area.

Why should we teach English and Criminal Law with an Interdisciplinary Approach?

1. Interdisciplinary teaching increases student learning.

Engaging students and helping them to develop knowledge, insights, problem solving skills, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and a passion for learning are common goals that educators bring to the classroom, and interdisciplinary instruction and exploration promotes realization of these objectives. Interdisciplinary instruction fosters advances in cognitive ability

Among educational benefits of interdisciplinary learning are the abilities: to recognize bias; think critically; tolerate ambiguity; acknowledge and appreciate ethical concerns.

2. Interdisciplinary Teaching Helps Students Uncover Preconceptions or Recognize Bias

Interdisciplinary instruction allows us to understand our preconceptions of «what is» and the framework by which we arrived at «what is.» It also fits with recent advances in learning science about how to foster learning when students bring powerful preexisting ideas with them to the learning process. Interdisciplinary forms of instruction, help students overcome a tendency to maintain preconceived notions. This is accomplished by recognizing the source of the preexisting understandings they arrive with, and by introducing students to subject matter from a variety of perspectives that challenge their existing notions. Interdisciplinary instruction accomplishes this goal in two ways. First, by helping students identifying insights from a range of disciplines that contribute to an understanding of the issue under consideration. Second, by helping students develop the ability to integrate concepts and ideas from these disciplines into a broader conceptual framework of analysis.

3. Interdisciplinary Teaching Helps Advance Critical Thinking and Cognitive Development

Interdisciplinary instruction helps students develop their cognitive abilities - brain-based skills and mental processes that are needed to carry out tasks. Interdisciplinary learning helps students acquire perspective-taking techniques - the capacity to understand multiple viewpoints on a given topic; develop structural knowledge - both declarative knowledge (factual information) and procedural knowledge (process-based information); integrate conflicting insights from alternative disciplines.

4. Interdisciplinary Teaching Helps Students Tolerate or Embrace Ambiguity

Interdisciplinary instruction advances the notion that ambiguity results from alternative perspectives on issues that are advanced by different disciplines rather than a shortcoming of a particular discipline. Thus, students acquire a better understanding of

the complexity of problems of interest and the associated challenges of solving them.

5. Interdisciplinary Teaching Promotes Significant Learning

Significant Learning takes place when meaningful and lasting classroom experiences occur. When teachers impart students with a range of skills, and insights about the educational process that students will see as meaningful and salient to them they promote student engagement in the learning process and greater learning occurs. Interdisciplinary instruction fosters the acquisition of foundational knowledge, promotes integration of ideas from multiple disciplines and provides insight on how to apply knowledge all of which advance a students understanding of how to learn. Moreover, students are encouraged to account for the contribution of disciplines that highlight the roles of caring and social interaction when analyzing problems. Thus, the very structure of interdisciplinary learning is consistent with the core features of significant learning, so students are expected to find interdisciplinary education engaging and thus an effective way to advance their understanding of topics under investigation.

There are 6 elements of the educational process that lead to significant learning and each of these is a common feature of interdisciplinary forms of instruction.

- Foundational Knowledge - acquiring information and understanding ideas
- Application - acquiring an understanding of how and when to use skills
- Integration - the capacity to connect ideas
- Human Dimension - recognition of the social and personal implications of issues
- Caring - acknowledgment of the role of feelings, interests, and values
- Learning How-to-Learn - obtaining insights into the process of learning

6. Interdisciplinary Teaching Promotes Understanding when Students Learn in Heterogeneous Ways

Interdisciplinary instruction opens academic conversations to ideas from a range of disciplines so all students should be able to

relate and contribute to the dialogue. Thus, the likelihood of connecting with the full array of the students in the classroom is enhanced by interdisciplinary learning.

7. Interdisciplinary Teaching Helps Students Appreciate Ethical Dimensions of Concerns

Ethical considerations entail moral concerns which means accounting for perceptions of right vs. wrong, good vs. bad, and the provision of justice. Many disciplines steer clear of such subjective phenomena and confine their analysis to more objective factors in an effort to be scientific.

Interdisciplinary instruction promotes the integration of ideas from relevant disciplines - including moral philosophy when exploring an issue so ethical considerations are often part of an interdisciplinary examination of an issue. This is useful since or perspectives on a question, and policy considerations are likely to include discussion and valuation of ethical factors.

List of references

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