

Inviting Students to the Table: Negotiating Power in Course Design

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Who is at your course planning table?

Small group discussion

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“The ironclad syllabus that handcuffs students to the course defines the teacher-student relationship adversarially. It all but dares the students to challenge the teacher’s authority...students’ motivation, confidence, and enthusiasm for learning are all adversely affected when teachers exert control, and students end up feeling powerless.”

—Maryellen Weimer, 2013, p. 93

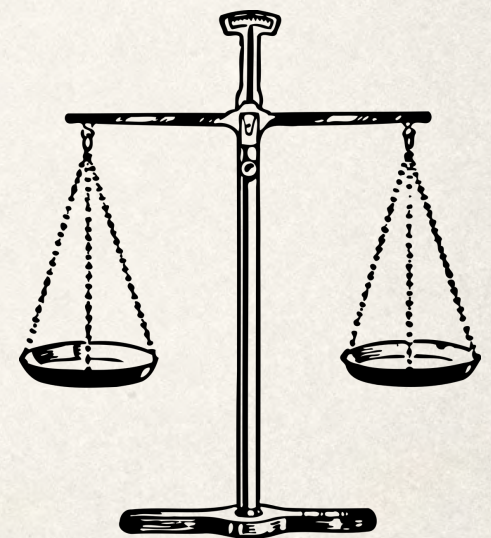


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Dimensions of the planning table

Power relations

Interests

Ethical commitments

Negotiation



Cervero, R. M., & Wilson, A. L. (2006). *Working the planning table: negotiating democratically for adult, continuing, and workplace education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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Gallery Walk

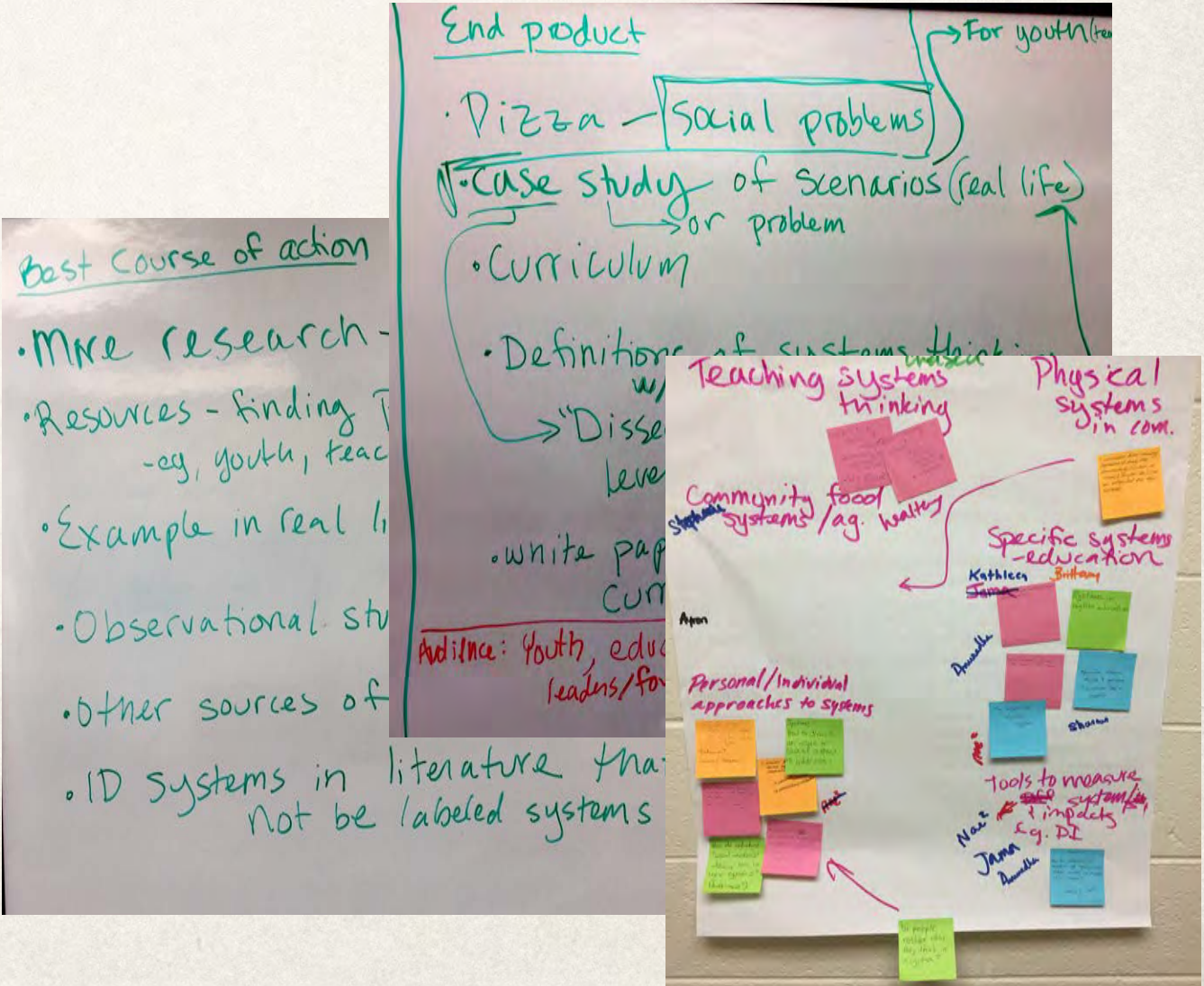
How do these dimensions play out in your work?

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Example from my practice

Date	Topics
August 30	Orientation to the topic (Part 1): What is systems thinking?
September 6	Orientation to the topic (Part 2): What is a “complex” system?
September 13	Orientation to the topic (Part 3): Humans and complex systems
September 20	Creating and managing change in socio-ecological systems
September 27	Systems thinking in education
October 4	Research team meeting: Report on literature reviews
October 11	Research team meeting: Research questions
October 18	Research team meeting: Data collection protocol
October 25	Research team meeting: Debrief data collection protocol pilot
November 1	Research team meeting: Data collection progress and challenges
November 8	Research team meeting: Debrief initial coding – develop codebook
November 15	Research team meeting: Data analysis progress and challenges
November 22	Thanksgiving Break
November 29	Research team meeting: findings
December 6	Research team meeting: significance of findings
December 13	Research team meeting: debrief manuscript draft
December 18	Final manuscript due (5 pm)

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October 18	Complexity Science revisited Systems ideas in Leadership
October 25	Complex system modeling approaches
November 1	No class: Individual meetings with Hannah Final project proposal due (5 pm)
November 8	Student 1 Student 2
November 15	Student 3 Student 4
November 22	No class: Thanksgiving Break
November 29	Student 5 Student 6
December 6	Student 7 Student 8
December 13	Semester wrap-up: Where have we been? What’s next?
December 18	Final product due (9 am)

Final Project Proposal

Due at 5 pm on November 1st, 2017

5 points

As we discussed in class, many of you were interested in developing a case study of a real-life social system. I am open to other ideas you may have had since then as well, so you are not limited to this format. I hope that you will use this opportunity to explore something you are interested in. The goal of this proposal assignment is for you to articulate your ideas for your project to me so that we both know where you are going with it and I can give you formative feedback to guide you moving forward.

Please include the following using the headers provided:

Driving question and context

Explain the question or questions that will direct your inquiry and the particular topic you will engage with or context in which this inquiry will be situated.

Project plan

Provide a detailed outline of what it is you want to accomplish. This should include a description of the format and content of the finished products you plan to produce. You should also describe the intended audience for your products. In other words, who (besides you) might use it?

Relevance to the course

Briefly describe how your project is relevant to this course. You should explain how it fits into the broad field of systems thinking and, more specifically, what concepts or tools you intend to employ in your project.

Criteria for success

Please describe your goals for the finished product and how you want to be graded for this assignment. This should include specific criteria for a successful product related to content, scope, writing, etc. The final submission is worth 30 points, so you should articulate how you want those points to be distributed. I know this is probably new for many of you, but try your best and I will let you know if you are way off.

Proposal allows for
student choice in topic
and format

*Driving question and
context*

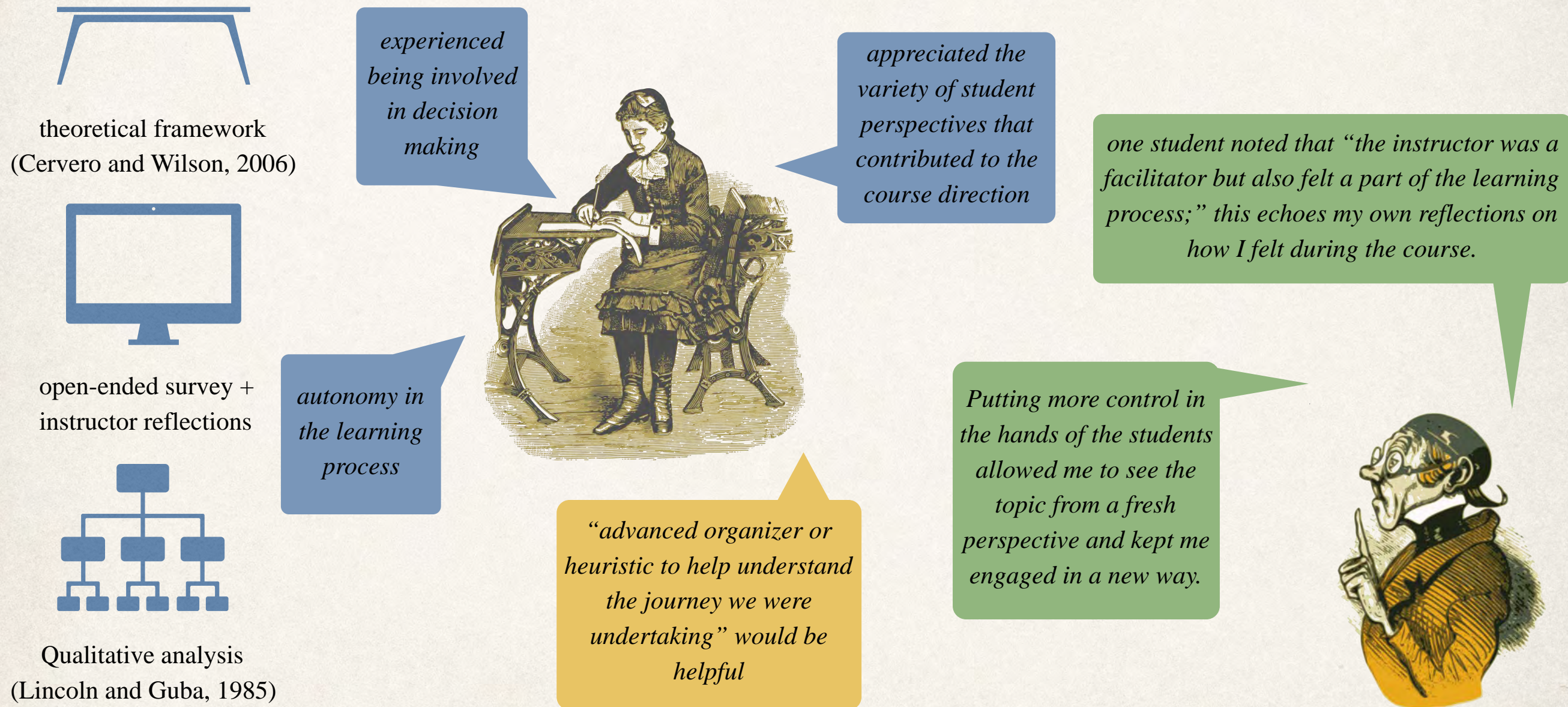
Project Plan

Relevance to the course

Criteria for success

- ◆ Student interest guided “literature review” assignment, including choice of topic and group
- ◆ Reflection on presentations, individual, small group, and whole group to determine next steps for the remainder of the course
- ◆ Project proposal process
 - ◆ Individual meetings with instructor
 - ◆ Written proposal
 - ◆ Feedback on written proposal and revisions (if needed)
- ◆ Class facilitation: Students chose a component of what they were working on for their final project to present to the class
- ◆ Final project: instructor graded using student determined grading scheme

Student perspectives



Cervero, R. M., & Wilson, A. L. (2006). *Working the planning table: negotiating democratically for adult, continuing, and workplace education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, Calif: Sage Publications.

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What is your next step?

Thinking about your practice, how will you bring students to the planning table in your courses?

- ❖ Activities and assignments
- ❖ Course policies
- ❖ Course content
- ❖ Student evaluation