

Final Report

STINT Teaching Sabbatical
Amherst College, Massachusetts, Fall 2022
Sexuality, Women's and Gender Studies
(SWAGS)



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Preparation and Planning

Upon acceptance to the STINT Teaching Sabbatical Program for Autumn 2022, I was provided with three contact persons at Amherst College (AC), my host institution: Janet Tobin, Associate Provost and coordinator for the STINT Teaching Sabbatical program; Amrita Basu, Professor of Political Science and Chair of Sexuality, Women's and Gender Studies (SWAGS) and Stephanie Orion, Academic Department Coordinator (ADC) for SWAGS. I was also in touch with Scott Kinney, Assistant Director of HR services at Amherst College for issues related to the J-1 visa. Since I could not attend the initiation meeting in Spring 2022, all conversations and planning was organized and extremely well-orchestrated by Stephanie Orion via zoom, over a stretch of four weeks in April. I met with faculty in SWAGS (Profs, Katrina Karkazis), History (Prof. Christine Peralta and Jen Manion) and Political Science (Profs. Amrita Basu and Kristin Bumiller). I also met with four students (Evelyn Chi, Anu Daramola, Mica Nimkarn and Oren Tirschwell) who had questions on the content of the course that I was planning to deliver at Amherst, mode of assessment and current teaching at my home institution (Department of Government, University of Uppsala). The most exciting engagement was to audit two courses on zoom: *History of Race, Gender and Comic Books* (offered at 200 level by Prof. Christine Peralta) and *Contemporary Debates: Engendering Populism* (offered at 400 level by Prof. Amrita Basu). This gave me a good idea on some learning and teaching practices at the college: the classroom environment; how teaching is structured; student participation and the facilities. At Uppsala University, our Head of Department at the Department of Government, Prof. Li Bennich Björkman and HR administrator, Anna Wistus, guided the process with utmost efficiency and academic support.

Amherst College is a private Liberal Arts residential college in Western Massachusetts. The college, located in the town of Amherst, laid its foundations in 1821 as a theological seminary and was a men's college until 1975. The college is exclusively undergraduate; offers a four-year bachelor's degree, with a choice of 42 majors and has a total enrollment of approximately 1,800- 2,000 students.



Tasks and Responsibilities

My main task was to develop, design and teach my own course: *(En)Gendering Development: Historical Genealogies/Contemporary Convergences* (SWAG-259), to be given at the introductory level 200, in Autumn 2022. Stephanie provided me with a selection of syllabi for previous SWAGS courses, which was very helpful as I developed my own course and syllabus. The 'new course proposal' had to comply with the guidelines formulated by the Committee on

Education Policy (CEP) and was submitted late January 2022. The Department Chair, Prof. Amrita Basu reviewed the course proposal and I had constructive conversations with her on the content, organization of teaching and modes of assessment. The course was cross-listed (with Political Science/POSC-259, Anthropology/ANTH-259 and Sociology/SOCI-259) with no required prerequisites. Students are able to search in the Course Scheduler for courses that have “no prerequisites” and that are appropriate for those who have no prior experience in the field. The course information was submitted to the Committee on Education Policy (CEP). An interesting observation was that on the course proposal form there was a distinction made to *Attention to writing* as opposed to *Writing Intensive*. I selected *Attention to Writing* “as one of its conscious and stated objectives [is] the improvement of students' critical writing, whether that writing is highly discipline-specific (e.g., a lab report) or broader in its application. In particular, writing assignments should be used at least in part for the purpose of improving students' writing skills rather than solely as evidence of their mastery of course content. The students can reasonably expect to receive extensive feedback not only on the content but also on the form of their writing. This feedback might be given in a variety of ways, e.g., written comments, one-on-one paper conferences, and/or classroom discussion of samples of student writing”. The course was set up on AC’s Learning Management System (LMS) – Moodle together with Workday, a centralized platform for the storage and organization of Amherst workplace information.

The Autumn semester began with an ‘add/ drop’ period during which students had the opportunity to attend different courses before making a final decision on their choice/s (usually four) for the specific semester. It was mentioned at the Orientation programme and reiterated by several faculty members that I might find this period a bit disruptive. I decided to start Week 1 of the add/drop period with a substantive lecture as scheduled on the course plan. At the end of the “shopping period”, I had 15 students registered (with one falling out mid-term due to problems with registration). Some of my students were enrolled at other institutions in the Five College Consortium that Amherst College is part of together with Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, Hampshire College and the University of Massachusetts. Amherst. The five colleges share use of educational resources and students enrolled at one of the colleges have access to courses offered also at the other five college institutions.



The classes were held at the Morgan Hall (left pic), a lovely historic building that also houses the Bassett Planetarium and a 5-minute walk from the SWAGS department office(right pic), which housed the administrative office and departmental meetings. Below I provide details on the course:

Course Title: (En) Gendering Development: Historical Genealogies/Contemporary Convergences

Course Content: We will explore the centrality of gender in the processes, problematics and politics of development through feminist postcolonial and decolonial conceptualizations, with a particular focus on gendered livelihoods and gendered vulnerabilities. Focusing primarily on the global South, the course will draw on empirical examples from Africa, the Middle East, South and South East Asia and Latin America. We cover the following development areas: a) orientalism and the global 'war on terror'; how gendered/sexualized orientalist discourses are deployed to heal wounded national identities and justify military interventions and territorial encroachments; b) anti-colonial nationalism and the rise of femonationalism; how discourses of gender, nation and sexuality are (re)framed for contemporary political agendas; c) structural adjustment programs and femicides; how trade liberalization and feminization of labor generates economies of sexualized violence in border industries; d) politics of population control and reproductive tourism; how bodies of underprivileged women, formerly seen as "waste," and whose reproduction should be "controlled", are transformed into sites of profit generation for the reproductive industry in the global North. The course will draw on the relevant academic literature as well as a range of other sources including news media, documentaries, movies, and policy reports.

Course Design: We met twice a week (Wednesday and Friday) for 80 minutes for 13 weeks (26 lectures). The course structure comprised of a combination of lectures and critical discussions. In the first meeting (Wednesday), I provided the foundation to the topic, through a short lecture, followed by a discussion. In the second meeting (Friday), we had an in-depth discussion on the readings, guided by a research question, which was provided in the course plan.

Assessment: The teaching platform, Moodle, was interactive and creative. The assessment of the course was continuous, with varied tools of assessment, rather than periodic assignment/s at specific junctures in the course. I am grateful to Theresa Ronquillo (Associate Director, Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Specialist) for informative discussions on modes of assessment. In particular, I borrowed an assessment practice of annotated resources that Theresa had tried and tested in her former university.

a) Class participation (25%)

Students were expected to attend all classes and participate actively in all aspects of class. To help support their engagement/participation, students completed the following two components, each week, throughout the term. They a) uploaded a forum post (15%) together with their critical reflections on the research question (assigned by me) of approximately 300 words and b) provided an external resource (10%), a 'new' teaching/learning resource that was potentially useful to understand the weekly research question. This could be something outside of their required readings. For example, articles, websites, podcasts, Ted talks, documentaries or media coverage on the topic discussed during the week. They could also discuss the new resource in their forum post, together with the assigned readings. The aim was to build an annotated resource list, which was used by the class as well existed beyond the class (for example, it could be used in other courses in the open curriculum that AC offers in humanities, social sciences and natural sciences). We archived this 'new' knowledge in a thematic way, throughout the course. An observation that I made was the importance of setting challenging and intellectually stimulating research questions to foster a good class discussions.

Before our second meeting, I read the forum posts and external resources and structured the thoughts/discourses thematically. Furthermore, I integrated student narratives/comments in my lectures and class discussions and often asked the students to elaborate on the points they had raised in their forum posts. This made students feel valued and stimulated class discussion. In

particular, I made a point to raise ideas that were new for me and where I had learnt from their inputs. Comments from the evaluation stated: *“Professor was amazing at stimulating conversation and inviting people to participate by reading our forum posts before class and choosing specific questions and ideas that we had written about regarding the class discussion”*. *“Often, Professor Suruchi will post questions that we should be thinking about, and the moodle posts always serve as the platform to organize and synthesize thoughts and paradoxes”*

- b) Class Presentations (25%). For this, I introduced a new pedagogical exercise that I had developed at Uppsala University: ‘The Experts Model’. Students were assessed through the following four transferable skills and detailed feedback was provided: **a)** Development of critical thinking; **b)** Independence of thought in designing research activity, **c)** Co-production of knowledge and working in a team; **d)** Management of time in a learning environment.

Students in the US are embedded in a culture of public speaking, and this is inculcated at a very young age, an experience that my son shared with me from his school participation. To facilitate this process for students, who were from different backgrounds, countries, schools and colleges throughout the globe, I invited Susan Daniels, Associate in Public speaking at AC to deliver an in-class workshop. The main aim was to advise/help students to develop essential skills of public speaking with particular reference to their upcoming task of class presentations. I paste the guidelines of ‘The Experts Model’ below:

At the start of the course, you will be asked to sign up to facilitate a given week (in line with the lectures). You facilitate as an ‘expert’ for a specific week/ topic of your choice.

There can be two or three ‘experts’ facilitating each seminar discussion, and you will need to set aside time to meet with your co-facilitators to prepare well in advance of the seminar itself.

Guidelines:

1. All those who will facilitate the seminar should meet up with each other to discuss and plan the way in which they will conduct the seminar discussion.
2. They should divide the tasks of conducting the seminar among themselves so that all get an opportunity to participate in the discussion.
3. The content and format of the seminar will be the responsibility of the student or team leading the discussion. You can however approach the tutor and discuss your ideas before the seminar takes place.
4. You should prepare for the seminar using the mandatory readings but you can also choose from extra readings to substantiate your points. For example, you can bring quotations from your mandatory readings to support your empirical studies.
5. The success of the seminar depends on creativity, using different formats and engagement.

This was a successful pedagogical approach that I introduced in my classroom teaching and in their course evaluation, students mentioned the following: *“I enjoyed the presentations and the expert’s model -- it was my favorite part of the course. I think I was able to learn a lot from listening to my peers’ presentations and conducting my own presentation”*; *“The Expert Model*

really creates an opportunity for my partner and me to gain a super thorough and deep understanding of the topic we are interested in. I am even grateful for having the opportunity to speak to the class about what I am passionate about. It's always a gift to have someone listening and to have a place to speak out. I learned so much and really enjoyed the process"; "I think the fact that every two students should pair up and prepare a 70-minute presentation helped us gain deep and comprehensive understanding of certain topics, in which we are interested. That really helped my speaking skill and the complex of internalizing knowledge and reproducing them".

- c) Mid-term paper (20%). This was the first substantial piece of writing that the students had to conduct and in line with the aim of the course delivering *Attention to writing*, I made a small document on critical analysis, on the request from students (pasted below).

Assignment: Provide a critical review of the movie *Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo*.

The following points can be used to guide you through the process.

1) Introduction

The introduction presents the reader with what is being reviewed. The movie, director and year of publication are some things to keep in mind. What is the movie about? What geo-political and social context does it capture? Who are the main protagonists? INTRODUCE the subject.

2) Engagement with Assigned Readings

How does the movie illustrate/explicate/explain/support existing academic scholarship on the subject? Here you need to demonstrate a close engagement with the assigned readings to reflect your understanding of the movie. What are the main themes in these readings and how are these exemplified by the movie-narrative? State your points through appropriate citations (author, year and page number). Here you draw CONNECTIONS and CONVERGENCES between the movie and assigned readings.

3a) Critical Analysis

What does the movie narrate/explain/argue what the readings do not and vice versa? This is a two-way process where you place the readings and movie together and IDENTIFY POTENTIAL GAPS/AMBIGUITIES? For example, are there some links that you think are important but not explored in the movie? Are there aspects in the movie which should have been brought up in the academic writing? Here you REFLECT upon and EVALUATE the arguments in the readings and the movie? You can draw on readings that you have done in this course (or beyond this course) which can support your evaluation?

3b) After reflection and evaluation you DEVELOP your own argument beyond what you know on this subject and provide a clear thread to your reasoning. You can bring additional resources (other readings, personal experiences; forum posts; external resources, Feinberg Series, as some examples).

You will not be assessed on the quantity of readings/sources but on how well your resources elucidate your argument.

4) **Conclusion:** Do not summarize what you have done but ask yourself the question. How does your narrative relate to a larger geo-political or socio-economic issue that you are aware of? This will disallow repetitiveness in your review.

5). **A complete bibliography:** You can use any format style as long as you are consistent throughout. Please submit double spaced (approx. 5 pages), word document.

Preparing explanatory guidelines worked really well for students while simultaneously keeping the assessment transparent.

d) End of term paper (30%) was a 3000 word essay.

I dedicated a week (two sessions) as preparation for the last assignment. Since the class was efficient and always well prepared, I wanted to challenge them further through a pedagogical practice that places the students at the center of learning. After having worked with them closely (outside the classroom) in formulating their research questions, I introduced the next step of peer-to-peer feedback with two commentators on each paper. Together with a colleague at SWAGS, Prof Manuela L. Picq, an explanatory frame for designing a research question was prepared (see below).

The continuous and varied modes of assessment were well received and consistent with the learning outcomes- a) an established and critical understanding of key concepts and theories which are shaped by postcolonial and decolonial feminist interventions; b) an ability to apply their conceptual knowledge to re-evaluate empirical case studies in historical and contemporary development contexts and c) an intersectional approach to development. In the course evaluation students mentioned that the most significant skills and/or knowledge that they gained during the course was “*writing skills and critical thinking skills*”; “*I learned how to look at research papers critically and critique them*”.

How to design a research question?

Pick a topic that you are passionate about. You can choose any topic but it should be related to the course in some way.

Start asking questions that interest you about that topic. When choosing your questions pay specific attention that there is not a yes or no answer but rather it opens the subject for further debate.

Evaluate your question. A) Will this question expand theoretical and empirical knowledge, even if minimally? In other words, is your question analytical? B) Will this question generate a good debate; C) Will you be able to answer this question with the available resources (for ex. readings but other sources as well).

Choose your resources: What sources will you bring to answer to your research question? For instance news articles, case studies, statistics or any other material.

Overview: As you draft a detailed outline of the different sections of your paper, make sure that every section connects to the main research question. View your research question as the spinal cord to which you always come back and depart from.

Course Evaluations

I conducted midterm evaluation through the help of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). I had some wonderful creative sessions with Theresa Ronquillo (Associate Director, Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Specialist) on constructing a midterm evaluation. Getting feedback on students’ learning at the mid-point of the semester enabled me to develop a more

productive learning environment, greater student satisfaction and a more fulfilling course for the students and myself. An important aspect of the mid-semester feedback process is fostering a dialogue with the students through: a) acknowledging the aspects of the course and my teaching that they understand as being useful for their learning; b) identify and demonstrate willingness to make changes (though not substantive) to the course. This also enables us to reflect back to students that we ‘hear’ their feedback, value it and are willing to make changes and c) communicate to students how we believe the changes in the curriculum will better support their learning in the second half of the course. The evaluation was crafted around three questions: a) What are some things you are doing in class that you find useful for your learning; b) what are one or two specific things your professor does that help you in your learning and c) what are specific suggestions for changes you feel could be made in the course in order to enhance your learning? To give an example: in the midterm evaluation I picked up comments on the readings assigned every week:

Mid-term Evaluation-“Lighter reading load to be able to engage with materials more deeply and productively”

I did realise that the reading load was ambitious and while I did not want to remove the readings completely (as it was important for their knowledge), I was willing to drop the number of pages to be read in a week on the understanding that they would try to read the rest of the material at some point.

It was encouraging to see that the learning loop, which I refer to as: assessing, evaluating and recasting, had made a difference to their learning. This was reflected in student feedback in the End of term Evaluation- “*At times, the readings were definitely overwhelming, and the pacing felt a bit too fast. However, after the mid-semester evaluation, the Professor eased the reading load, which improved the flow of the class*”

Activities during the Teaching Sabbatical

Preceding the Orientation program, for New Faculty, including both new tenure track faculty and short-term visiting faculty/fellows, I attended the talk organised by the curators at Mead Art Museum and Emily Dickinson Museum (contact person, Emily Potter-Ndiaye). The purpose was to showcase the museum's resources available for our courses, research, and creative work and to foster student involvement with the museum as interns, docents, artists, and scholars. What caught my attention was a forthcoming exhibition on James Baldwin (*God Made My Face*) organised by Hilton Als (guest curator) during Spring 2023. If I had the opportunity, I would have liked to incorporate this exhibition as coursework on race and slavery in the U.S.

Orientation days (August 24-26) were incredibly rewarding and welcoming remarks by the new President of the college, Prof. Michael Elliot and the Provost and Dean of the Faculty, Prof. Catherine Epstein were heartwarming. A panel with four tenure-track faculty from across the college shared their experiences and offered suggestions on what to expect in the first days and weeks of teaching and trends. There was information delivered about Title IX, presentations by representatives of Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Anti-Racism at Amherst; Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL); the Center for Community Engagement; the library and the Office for Diversity and Inclusion. The 26th of August was the Provost and Dean of the Faculty’s Annual Retreat on Teaching and Learning, an annual event that brings faculty and instructional staff together to reflect teaching in the Amherst classroom. The theme was *Ethic of Care: Relational Teaching and Learning* and the discussions centred on how we align our pedagogical work with the most effective and sustainable strategies for fostering meaningful

relationships- with ourselves, our colleagues, and our students. The emphasis was on relationship-rich education for the overall success of students, specifically those from marginalised communities, facilitated by two keynote speakers, Mays Imad and Peter Felten (and his recent book (together with Leo Lambert) *Relationship Rich Education: How Human Connections Drive Success in College*, 2020). It was also interesting to hear the 'Alumni Panel' on aspects of teaching and learning that they, as students, appreciated during their time at Amherst. We also had a rich session with presentations from key members from Centre for Restorative Practices (CRP), Suzanne Belleci and Fabio Ayala) and CTL. Besides the academic procedures that are slightly different, the orientation programme also disseminated information on resources for staff and students. After the orientation programme, we were invited to meet the Class Deans (for each class year) who are supported by the Office of Student Affairs. Each Class Dean is dedicated to the oversight and stewardship of each class year and offers direct personal attention to each student. Attending this session was important for me, as I did need the guidance of the class dean when resolving deteriorating academic performance on two counts.

I attended a Departmental Meeting, a Department Curriculum Meeting (on zoom) and a Faculty Meeting, which was educational to gain impressions on how academic life is organised at AC and the key issues that foster the makings of a good academic community.

Besides this, I also audited three courses given by faculty in SWAGS and the Anthropology Department. The courses were: *Race, Nature, Power* (Victoria Nguyen, ANTH-268); *Asian American History: 1800-Present* (Christine Peralta, HIST 158) and *Indigenous Women in World Politics* (Manuela L. Picq, POSC/SWAGS 411). This was a valuable experience as it enabled me to gain insights on the advantages of autonomy in creating individual courses; different pedagogical practices for enhancing critical engagement of students and an array of resources deployed for enhancing learning.

I was interested in Community Based Learning and participated in a series, *The Stolen Beam*, which was sponsored by the Jones Library and the African Heritage Reparations Assembly. It offered to the Amherst public to learn about and being more engaged with the subject of reparations. While the sessions were held on zoom in the evenings and it was a closed group, I could share some of the discussions and resources with my students when engaging with similar issues on racial inequalities.

I attended several seminars hosted by the five-college consortium and since some of these sessions were online, I could navigate the timings in conjunction with my teaching rhythm. I also gave two presentations. The first was to the *Peer Advocates' Reproductive Justice Panel*, organized with speakers from the five-college consortium (October 19th). The second was a joint event with another colleague from AC (December 7th), Prof. Sheila Jaswal (Department of Chemistry, Biochemistry & Biophysics Program) on *Exploring Normalization and Naturalization of Racism within the Academy*. Besides the interdisciplinary intellectual endeavor, I really appreciated that Shiela had invited colleagues from the Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion, who shared perspectives and experiences from their everyday work with these issues. This was delivered at the Centre for Humanistic Inquiry (CHI), which was a hub of many other social and academic meetings (pic on the left)

I also attended some college events, which constitute important nodes of community life at Amherst: *Homecoming* (October, 2022) and *Family Weekend* (November, 2022), while sharing the privilege of parents attending and participating in the lecture/seminar on my course. I had the wonderful opportunity to attend several recitals in the evenings and it was very enriching to see talented students perform in the Amherst Symphony Orchestra (pic on the right). In

particular, I enjoyed the recital dedicated to the celebration of Women's Suffrage and the 19th Amendment.



I attended the mid-term workshop at Ohio State University (organised by STINT) which was enlightening on the “unique ecosystem of higher education” and teaching philosophies and practices by fellow ‘Stintonian’s in other universities in the US.

Finally, I initiated a conversation between Janna Behrens (Director of Global Education) at Amherst College and Li- Bennich Björkman (HOD at the Department of Government at University of Uppsala and Stina-Lena Kaarle (Co-ordinator for Global Education). The main purpose is to create a sustainable exchange programme for faculty and students between the Department of Government (Uppsala University) and SWAGS (including Political Science at AC).

Important lessons

“Teaching and Learning are processes rather than states of being. There is always more to learn and more relationships with students to forge” (Jagu Jagannathan, Physics and Astronomy, Amherst College)

Despite my embeddedness in research and teaching for over two decades, the teaching sabbatical provided the opportunity to absorb fresh perspectives and as Jagannathan states, “there is always more to learn”. The first was the importance of a two-way symbiosis between research and teaching – the ways in which my own research informs teaching *in the classroom* - to the teaching situation becoming a site of reflection on my research, *outside the classroom*. Learning entails challenging teachers and but also empowering students as knowledge producers in the process. This dialogic and experiential learning has not only enriched my pedagogical thinking but also enabled me to develop a learning environment of plurality. In relation to this, I found that my efforts to build a community within the classroom by focusing on the strengths of the students created an environment where students felt free to speak their minds and bring diverse critical perspectives to the classroom, even if they differed from my own intellectual and political leanings. It is important to be a good listener and to make students feel worthy and important. Being attentive and expressing appreciation when students bring ideas/thoughts to the classroom is important for building a sense of community. As some students commented: “*The professor was very engaged in all the course material and discussions which fostered a great learning environment*”. “*One of the most significant skills I gained was confidence in my own ability to contribute to a class and weave intricate ideas of development and gender together. I felt comfortable and encouraged to participate in class, which is not something I can say has been true in a lot of my courses!*”

The second was to evaluate and understand the processes behind research led teaching. Additionally, how do leading/top College such as Amherst foster excellence in both research and teaching? For example, at the Orientation programme, it was mentioned that AC was continuously striving to match its R1 (research-intensive) profile with its T1 (teaching intensive) profile. Students and professors work closely on research projects and this collaboration is facilitated through existing programs. For example, through the *Schupf Fellows Program*, students at Amherst have the opportunity to focus on their own research project, under the guidance of a faculty mentor; work on a project related to a faculty member's research; or conduct collaborative research with a group of students, under the guidance of a faculty member. The *Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship* (MMUF) also entails working closely with faculty mentoring designed to better prepare them for scholarship and teaching (<https://www.amherst.edu/about/diversity/office-of-diversity-equity-inclusion/mmuf>; <https://directory.amherst.edu/academiclife/student-faculty-research/schupf>).

Third, the research community works together and encourages faculty to incorporate different events/features in their course syllabi. A concrete example is the UMass Amherst History Department's Feinberg Distinguished Lecture Series (2022-2023; <https://blogs.umass.edu/feinberg/>) on *Confronting Empire*, which brought together scholars, journalists, educators, writers, community organizers, and survivors of state violence to examine global histories of U.S. imperialism and anti-imperialist resistance. I incorporated the keynote lecture (19th September): US Policy in the Global South (Speakers: 1992 Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Dr. Rigoberta M. Tum, Vincent Bevins, Amy Goodman) in the course syllabus and invited student's reflections on it. The second concrete example is the Amherst College Presidential Scholars program through which some of the most distinguished voices in the area of anti-racist scholarship and policy are invited to AC for short-term residencies. During their time at Amherst, visiting scholars present a public lecture in the *President's Colloquium on Race and Racism*, hold seminars, and meet with students, faculty, and staff. I was pleased when Darryl Harper, Director, Center for Humanistic Inquiry asked if I might be interested in a class visit by the current Presidential Scholar (October 23-29), Karma R. Chávez, Bobby and Sherri Patton Professor of Mexican American and Latina/o Studies and Department Chair at the University of Texas at Austin. On Friday October 28, Karma visited my class. It was the day of the presentation on Naomi Klien (2007): *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Karma commented on student presentations and drew connections with her own research. In the midst of the teaching term, the civil unrest in Iran (the death of Mahsa Amini, an Iranian Kurd, following three days in police custody for violation of the official dress code) was the subject of much academic debate at Amherst College. A student volunteered to represent our class on the "community conversation" (Pruyne Auditorium, Fayerweather Hall, October 21) on "The Iranian Feminist Protests in Global Context," and to initiate the next meeting with insights from her participation at this event. Thus, students could gain credits by attending events outside the normative classroom teaching. This was extremely refreshing because it not only broke the monotony but also created a good symbiosis between inquiry learning with experiential learning. Like Uppsala University, Amherst is a research-intensive institution and these initiatives help in creating environments that foster excellence in both research and education.

Fourth- developing an understanding and implementing a learning-focused syllabus rather than a content-focused course syllabus. The main purpose was to focus on student learning and the best possible pedagogical ways to support students in achieving the learning goals (for more details see <https://www.accessiblesyllabus.com/text/>; <https://www.amherst.edu/offices/center-teaching-learning/a---z-resources/syllabi-resources>). As a student commented: "I found the design of the course to be really great. It was dense, but not overwhelmingly; fast, but not

rushed; complex, but understandable; rigorous, yet rewarding. The class made connections between seemingly disparate concepts, and I think about gender roles, economic development, and policies in a completely different way now. I think the class content and structure were also very good". I successfully integrated a flipped classroom pedagogical approach through out-of-class (task to meet up and discuss with a peer) and in-class elements, while simultaneously expecting students to take responsibility for their own learning. The following outcomes were realized: a) increased interaction between the professor and the student (they ran the presentations past me for comments and feedback); b) interaction and cooperation between peers; c) established deep learning, as the students were able to connect the taught topics to previous knowledge and to the real world. Reflecting back, I can say that it led to higher achievement, greater productivity and more caring, supportive, and committed relationships amongst students. It also led to greater psychological health, an issue that was palpable during my time at Amherst. In the course evaluations students mentioned: *"She was incredibly helpful outside of class. Also, very understanding and easily accessible through office hours. This class felt special both because of the students and the professor, and led to a welcoming and encouraging learning environment"*.

The fifth was the importance of mid-term evaluation. As we enter a new university/college system with an entirely new and different cohort of students, it is important that we evaluate our teaching mid-term. This gives us a good idea if what we bring to the students works and what changes we can make to adapt to their learning. It allows us to recalibrate our practices.

Comparison between the Host and Home Institutions (in Sweden)

The two institutions are comparable for being old and prestigious in their own geographic contexts: Uppsala (1477) and Amherst (1821). In terms of the size of the student body, AC as a private liberal arts college with approx 1800 undergraduate students is not comparable to Uppsala- a large public university with approximately 52,000 registered students at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels and 2,200 PhD students. Furthermore, courses at the Department of Government, Uppsala University are large as compared to AC. For elective courses, student numbers can be between 30-45, while core courses can enrol more than 100 students. The normal format is (2x 45minutes) lecture followed by (2x 45 minutes) seminar. Seminar teaching can be allocated to doctoral, post-doctoral students or co-taught with other faculty. At Uppsala, a large class often means that we have several seminar groups running parallel to each other. This does not enable a continuous and sustained interaction with all the students. At Amherst, I had a class of 15 students, which was slightly larger than a seminar group at Uppsala. The advantages of having a small class meant that in two sessions (2x 80minutes), I was able to deliver a foundational lecture on Wednesday and an in-depth seminar discussion on the same subject on Friday. It presented an ideal teaching situation- a cohesive and secure environment, where students discussed and shared ideas freely. This also resonated with the students: *"I really appreciated the structure of the classes each week, whereby one class was a lecture and the other was a discussion. This was really effective for my learning"*. Furthermore, at AC, courses are administered with considerable autonomy and flexibility and the creativity lies in the fact that we can make modifications to the courses at a short notice. This is coupled with unparalleled administrative support. The teaching structures and administrative routines at my department do not allow such flexibility.

The drive to learn and excel is stronger among students at Amherst than at Uppsala university. On the other hand, the drive to excel also feeds into high levels of anxiety that the students at Amherst embody. In Uppsala, every cohort has some students who are driven but it is not the norm. I do think that an 'open curriculum' facilitates the breath and knowledge students acquire

across various disciplines. This has an obvious impact on discussions within the classroom. At my department at Uppsala, a common point of discussion is how to break the silence in the classroom, especially during seminars. This was not the case at Amherst where student's potential and self-motivation, if harnessed properly, generated an effective learning environment.

Recommendations

Collaborative teaching is important for observing and learning innovative pedagogical approaches from colleagues at other institutions. For example at AC, there is in place a *First Year Seminar program*, which is interdisciplinary and compulsory. Each first-year student is required to take a first-year seminar. These courses are planned and taught by one or more members of the faculty as a way to introduce students to liberal-arts studies. Though the subject matter of the courses varies, each seminar constitutes an inquiry-based introduction to critical thinking and active learning at the college level- discussion-based classes; writing-attentive instruction with frequent and varied assignments; close reading and critical interpretation of written texts; and careful attention to the development and analysis of argument in speech and writing. This is a valuable resource for Stintonians.

Second, it is important to be aware of grants/funds available to invite 'external' speakers to your course as this always makes courses interesting for the students. Another alternative in this vein is to link lectures to online seminar series (see discussion under Lessons Learned). Students attend these seminars and enrich the classroom with their fresh insights. One can streamline these contributions further by linking it to critical research questions, which provide an effective hinge for class discussions.

Third, as professors, scholars and teachers we need to be attentive to the 'social' dimension of learning. As Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu said: "we need other human beings in order to be human. I am because other people are". Transporting this thought to a classroom means building a constellation of meaningful relationships with students. These are formative years for the students and making students feel worthy is important. A concrete example is to include student's opinions and ideas as part of collective learning- making students feel that what they say (no matter how small) makes a difference. This is one way of creating equitable and effective classrooms.

Fourth, try to attend/audit courses taught by colleagues within and across disciplines. This is a great learning opportunity and enables one to embed in the teaching culture of the college. It is also a great way to build collegiality.

Fifth, we need to make our assessments consistent with the learning outcomes of our course. Continuous and varied forms of assessment are a good tool in achieving this goal. Finally, course evaluations are necessary for continuous learning for us as faculty as well as students. A mid-term evaluation followed by a final end of term evaluation is an effective way to administer the learning outcomes of the course.

Action plan -topics to address and if possible, introduce in Sweden

The first is to build in office hours within our job profiles. This interactive space between the professor and a student is valuable in many ways as it: a) enables to build a relationship with the student; b) develops effective communication; c) provides sustainable support for the student.

We need a mentoring programme that enables the students to feel supported throughout their time in the university. The system of Class Deans (who stay as Deans for the students for their entire academic degree time). Besides the Class Deans, the College has built in checks and balances that support the student. For example, The *Office of the Registrar* picks up midterm (interim) grades to ascertain if some students are struggling or lagging behind. Midterm grades are submitted for students who may fall within the D or F grades through the Workday portal. Otherwise, it is assumed that the students in the class are on track to earn a C or a better grade.

The attitude towards teaching needs to change. With the increasing push towards research grants and research outputs, most staff see research as the most rewarding task when making a career. On the other hand, teaching is something *you have to do* but not excel. For teaching to be seen as an important part of academic development, it should be equally rewarded and supported as research, with pedagogical merits considered equally important as research merits. Thus, research and teaching should be connected and coupled with an individual's career development. Furthermore, teaching is not only about imparting information and knowledge but inspiring students to have an inquisitive and inquiring mind. More attention needs to be given on how classrooms can be spaces for creative learning and critical thinking. For this, we need to continuously reflect and reassess our pedagogical routines.

Amherst College builds strategic contacts and co-operation with public and private enterprises, in line with universities' Third Mission. Building connections with civil society actors and making our research relevant to society and economy at large can be explored further at Uppsala. This will also prepare the students to take on responsible tasks, once they leave university. A closely connected aspect is the importance of building a strong Alumni community who provides a valuable interface between the academic community and the public world.

Acknowledgements

I see the teaching sabbatical in a different university environment as a unique opportunity to: a) gain insights from a comparative and an international perspective; b) provide space to deepen pedagogical knowledge and strengthen the quality of teaching and c) reflect upon and re-assess my current teaching methods at Uppsala university with the aim for self-development and more broadly institutional development and d) revitalize, restore and sustain teaching and learning. I am grateful to STINT for providing an opportunity to gain new insights and pedagogical practices at Amherst College, my host institution. Special thanks to Prof. Amrita Basu, Stephanie Orion, Janet Tobin and wonderful colleagues at SWAGS. I firmly believe that mobility and experience of new academic environments and teaching traditions is important for academics to remain creative. Amherst community was wonderful, supportive, and fun.

Thanks to my Head of Department at Uppsala University, Professor Li Bennich Björkman for nominating me for the Teaching Sabbatical programme and supporting me throughout the process. A special thanks to Mattias Sigfridsson and Prof. Maria Eriksson-Baaz for their advice and support.