

**(Sharp, from p. 6)**

that are at the heart of the discipline central to the course itself, and by allowing the content to be mastered by the students as they dialogically inquire into the nature of the central concepts.

Once the reorganization has taken place, the format of such a beginning course shifts from lecture to seminar. The focus moves to an understanding of certain assumptions and problems in relation to certain questions that have been historically asked within the discipline. The role of teacher shifts. Rather than as dispensers of information, professors begin to view themselves as co-inquirers, persons who perhaps know the lay of the land but who are as seriously perplexed by the controversial issues in the field as the novice. Student perceptions about themselves also change. Instead of thinking of themselves as passive receivers of the facts, they begin to view themselves as active participants in thinking critically in and about the discipline. As the dialogue proceeds, they become conscious of their own assumptions and criteria. They expect to be questioned by their peers. They expect to be asked for good reasons for their views. They know they will have to take into account context and consequences.

As they begin to master the procedures of inquiry appropriate to the discipline, students also become aware of the various opposing views within the discipline, views that have been well supported, given certain perspectives in the field. Such awareness is liberating. Facts are no longer just inert matter to be learned and given back on an examination; instead, they come alive. In certain contexts, facts are consequently viewed as warranted assertions that make good sense. Rather than perceiving each of the disciplines as a world unto itself, students begin to view them as unique yet related, as diverse perspectives on the world, always changing and open to inquiry, always welcoming of new and fresh ways of perceiving the data. Such students have ceased to look at themselves as outsiders. They have been invited to participate in important conversation.

Their professors have not only modelled critical thinking in the discipline *for* students, but have actively participated in an exploration of fundamental issues *with* them. They expect students to think critically in and about the field as they immerse them in inquiry. They expect students to develop certain habits of thought,

*(Cont. on p. 10)*

**(Sacks, from page 7)**

thought that I might improve my skills in dialogic discussion in the classroom. So, during the Fall, 1987 semester, I set out to tackle teaching critical thinking skills in a more direct manner, fortified by a sharper analytical grasp of what my goals were. John Barell attended one of my courses and helped me analyze the results of some of my efforts. The result of my interactions with John, the critical thinking literature, and the Institute Round Table meetings is that I have begun to experiment in the classroom with different kinds of assignments and different presentations of material, slanted not just to-

ward knowing, but to thinking about how to know anthropological materials. Rather than teaching data or concepts, I have been engaging students in discussions designed to get them to use data to arrive at concepts useful in thinking "anthropologically" about society and culture. So far my classes appear to be more lively. Assessment of the learning process will have to wait until I have papers, examinations, and evaluations from this semester's work.

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**(Sharp, from p. 9)**

coupled with the ability to question the procedures themselves. They refrain from asking factual questions and yet expect students to support their views with evidence from the field. These professors listen attentively to what their students say, building on their ideas. They make available the sources in the discipline when students need it to support their own views or to answer their own questions.

In many cases, traditional content may not be covered, although often when a student begins to inquire with zest, she can cover an

amazing amount of material to gather evidence to support her argument. The professor is very likely to have succeeded in fostering critical thinking on a very high level while at the same time presenting his or her discipline with integrity. The students in such an introductory course are very likely to want to take a second course in the discipline because they will have many questions that demand further inquiry. And even if they don't elect a second course, they will have had the experience of engaging in active inquiry within a discipline in such a way that interest may be sustained for the rest of their lives.

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