The Cultural Scripts Instructional Framework

Key steps for instructors on embedding transferable skills into the curriculum using a cultural and disciplinary approach

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Skills like oral communication, teamwork, or problem-solving are too often discussed, taught, and measured in higher education as generic, context-free "bits" of aptitude. Instead, how these complex competencies are **defined, valued, and used** in practice vary according to discipline, race/ethnicity, gender, community, and task situations.

Additionally, skills are not static aptitudes, but instead are "routinized sequences of actions tied to performance in specific situations that are considered normal and acceptable to particular communities" – or **cultural scripts.**

However, teaching cultural scripts involves rethinking how we design our curricula and teach our classes, from covering content or conveying "skills" to **socializing students into disciplinary cultures** in a way not unlike an internship or apprenticeship.

The "Cultural Scripts Instructional Framework" is a two-phase approach to using principles of backwards design, active learning, sociocultural learning theory, and formative assessment to improve how transferable skills are taught in today's college classrooms.

References and Resources:

Abelson, R. P. (1981). Psychological status of the script concept. American Psychologist, 36(7), 715-729.

Dannels, D. P. (2001). Time to speak up: A theoretical framework of situated pedagogy and practice for communication across the curriculum. Communication Education, 50(2), 144-158.

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The Planning Phase:

1 **Articulate cultural script-related learning goals:** Define a cultural script from your profession in specific and sequential terms; determine how script is related to content; and consider if/how script may encode biases.

2 **Identify assignments and assessments appropriate for the cultural script:** Determine which assignments and assessments best match the script; consider duration, importance, and assessment type (e.g., evaluative); and use formative assessment to give feedback.

3 **Select teaching methods that align with goals, assignments, and assessments:** Determine which types of active learning methods align with cultural script-related learning goals, assignments, and assessments.

The Instructional Phase:

1 **Explain the nature and value of the script:** Lecture about the value, characteristics, and uses of the script.

2 **Demonstrate the script:** Demonstrate or model how the script is used in your profession.

3 **Have students practice the the script:** Use active learning to allow students opportunities to practice the script.

4 **Provide feedback:** Provide quick, detailed, and honest formative feedback on students' performance of the script. Be aware of ways that students' cultural backgrounds (and scripts) may differ from your own notions of "good" skills.