

# Social Sciences Workshop

**Valerie P. Hans**



*Institute for Transforming  
Undergraduate Education*

*University of Delaware*



PBL2002: A Pathway to Better Learning

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# Goals of the Social Sciences Workshop

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- **Meet other social scientists who are using PBL in teaching**
- **Discuss unique strengths and challenges of using PBL in social science courses**
- **Exchange ideas about PBL problems and other active learning approaches in social science courses**



# Structure of Workshop

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- **Introduction of participants**
  - Who we are
  - Experience with PBL
- **Discussion of use of PBL in social science courses**
- **Presentation of problems used in different social science courses**



# **PBL and the Social Sciences**

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**Social sciences provide a rich source of PBL problems!**

- Clinical judgments**
- Legal decision making**
- Political conflict and debate**
- Policy recommendations**



# **PBL Helps to Development Multiple Skills Social Scientists Need**

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**High level of communication skills**

**Ability to define problems, gather and evaluate information, develop solutions**

**Team skills -- ability to work with others**

**Ability to use all of the above to address problems in a complex real-world setting**

Desirable characteristics of college graduates, from Quality assurance in undergraduate education (1994) Wingspread Conference, ECS, Boulder, CO.

# **Additional Skills for Social Science Graduates**

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- **Knowledge base**
- **Social science research skills**
- **Ability to use and interpret social science statistics**
- **Others??**



# **PBL: Citizenship Training?**

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**“PBL students continuously engage in discussion, persuasion, and deliberation. If deliberative democracy requires creating social circumstances and institutions that promote public reasoning, then PBL groups are such a creation.”**

**Kurt Burch, “PBL, Politics, and Democracy,” in Duch, Groh & Allen, *The Power of Problem Based Learning* (2001)**



# **PBL and Diversity**

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**PBL groups, like societies, are formed of diverse students with differing experiences and perceptions.**

**PBL interaction can encourage students to draw upon diverse perspectives, debate differences, arrive at consensus outcomes.**



# **PBL and Social Science: Some Illustrative Examples**

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- **Predicting Dangerousness (Psychology)**
- **Managing Common Property Resources (Resource Economics)**
- **Recommending Asylum in Female Circumcision Case (Women's Studies)**
- **Solving Economic Underdevelopment in the Third World (Political Science)**
- **Litigating Family Disputes (Legal Studies)**



# Predicting Dangerousness

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- **Used in Valerie Hans's Psychology and Law course, University of Delaware**
- **Teaches students about factors that increase likelihood of dangerousness**
- **Illustrates the complex clinical, social, moral, and legal consequences of predicting dangerousness**



# Structure of Dangerousness Problem

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- **Students read two vignettes based on actual cases**
- **They conduct research on factors affecting dangerousness (text, additional readings)**
- **They reach group decision recommending whether to hold or release the individuals**



# Dangerousness Vignettes

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- **George**, a young white man, lives in a bad home environment. Suffered head wound from burglary, and has been behaving erratically since injury –Family wants to commit him. What do you recommend?
- **Suzanne**, a black woman with alcohol problems, convicted of killing someone who assaulted her 8 years ago. Should she be released on parole?



# Managing a Common Property Resource

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- **Used in Joshua Duke's resource economics course at University of Delaware**
- **Students formed into four groups, and assigned roles of hypothetical firms**
  - Abraham Paper and Energy Company
  - Norton's Paper Interiors
  - The Veneman AgPaper Company
  - Whitman's Environmental Paper Concern



# Managing Resources Problem

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- **Students first make individual decisions about how to manage their firm's waste**
- **They observe first hand the suboptimal results for society!**
- **They then explore how using market and nonmarket resolutions can resolve the resource management problem.**

From Joshua Duke, UD's PBL Clearinghouse (2002)



# Recommending Asylum

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- **Used in Karen Bauer's Psychology of Women course at University of Delaware**
- **Students learn about US asylum application of Togo citizen Fauziya Kassinga, on grounds that she fears circumcision.**
- **A short lecture on female circumcision, pros/cons and legal status, is presented.**



# **Bauer's Small Group Exercise - The Circumcision Case of Fauziya Kassinga**

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- I. If you were the judge, would you grant her asylum in the US? State your reasons for or against.**
- II. How is female circumcision different from male circumcision?**
- III. It is important to respect other cultures' traditions. Where do we draw the line between freedom of religion and/or cultural traditions and practices such as FC?**

From Karen Bauer, UD's PBL Clearinghouse (2001).



# **Solving Economic Underdevelopment**

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- **Used in Julio Carrion's political science course, University of Delaware**
- **Students assigned roles of a newly elected president/prime minister and a team of advisors of a poor, underdeveloped country**

# **Economic Development Problem**

## **Part 1**

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**Each team writes speech about what has caused underdevelopment, and a plan for correcting it.**

**You are so lucky! You have been elected President [of a poor, underdeveloped country]! You explicitly said in your electoral platform that you would enact the necessary economic and social policies to jumpstart the economy and put the country on the road to recovery to development during your first six months in office.**

**From Julio Carrion, UD's PBL Clearinghouse (2001)**

# **Economic Development Problem**

## **Part 2**

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**Devise a strategy to get proposed changes through legislature!**

**You are in charge of devising a strategy to push your proposals through congress. Since your party does not have a majority, you need to form alliances with other groups, and mobilize public opinion, to enact the legislation.**

**From Julio Carrion, UD's PBL Clearinghouse (2001).**



# Litigating Family Disputes

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- **Used in James Soles's Introduction to Law course, University of Delaware**
- **Whole course PBL problem – and problems within problems!**
  - **Students introduced to complex family whose patriarch has just died, apparently without a will**
  - **Students assigned to law firms operating in various states**



# Example of The Will Problem

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- **Patriarch, now dead, was married/divorced multiple times, and has numerous children, both legitimate and illegitimate.**
- **Who should inherit??**
- **Students research legal issues in different states and write “legal associate” memo.**



# Staging The Will Problem

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- **Monday: Students receive Will Problem and begin research**
- **Wednesday: Each student turns in individual paper with results of their legal research; work in class with group on group memo**
- **Friday: Group memo due**
- **Following Monday: Papers returned, problem discussed**



# Questions and Discussion about Using PBL in Social Science Courses

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