OBTC

Teaching Conference for Management Educators

OBTC 2015 at University of La Verne
June 17th – 20th, 2015

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

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Submission Template for the
2015 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators

1) Title of Proposal:

Poetic Metaphor and the Creation of Community in the Management Classroom

2) Abstract:

Please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words).If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.

ABSTRACT

In this session, we'll use the Poetry Gallery workshop to explore how the poetic art form might be used as a powerful tool to enhance a sense of community in our classrooms. We have found this approach to be effective in connecting student experience to a variety of OB topics. This year's conference allows us to focus on the community-building aspects of the Gallery. A shortened version of the Gallery workshop will be followed by a discussion of its community building potentials.
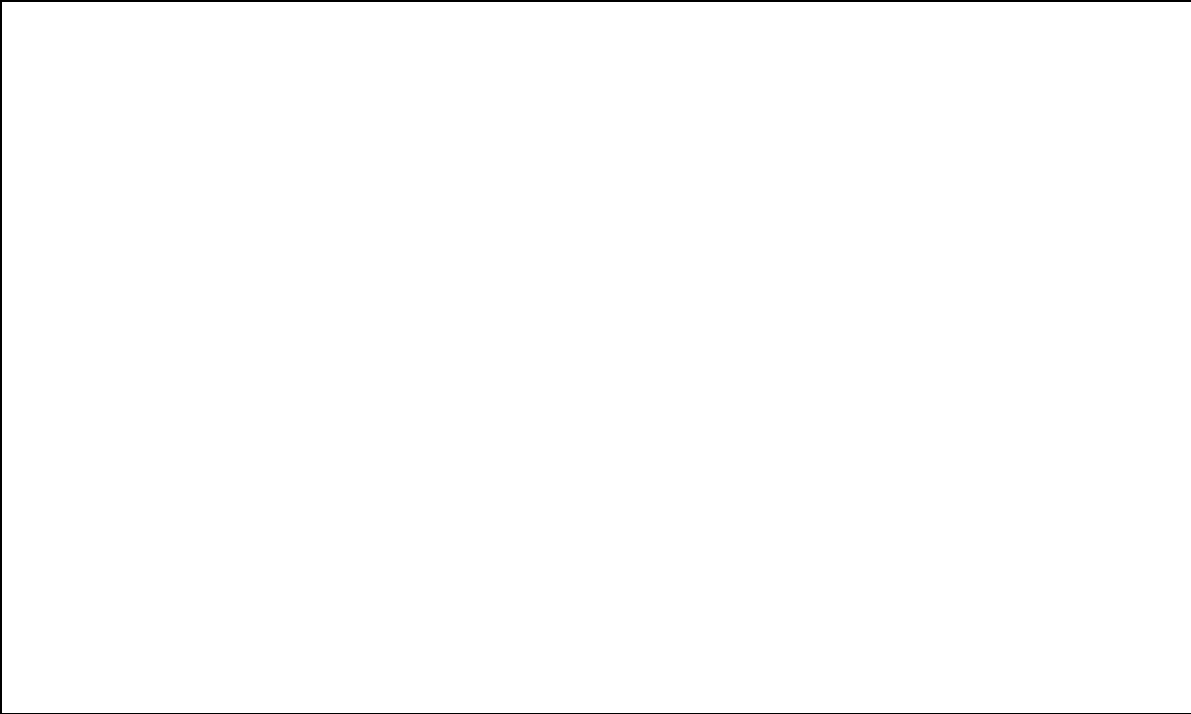
3) Keywords:

Use three or four keywords to describe your session.
Poetry, Metaphor, Community, Organizational Behavior

4) Format
__x__ Activity or exercise
___ Discussion roundtable (60 minute only)
___ General discussion session

5) Time Requested:
___ 30 Minutes
___ 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)
__x__ 90 Minutes

6) Planning Details:
Does your session have any special requirements for space or materials?

We need a newsprint pad, internet access, a projection screen and a classroom where sheets of newsprint can be taped to the walls.

7) Learning Objectives or Goals for the Session:
What are 2-4 specific learning outcomes that participants will get from your session?

Participants will experience the Poetry Gallery
Participants will reflect on poetic metaphors evoked in the Gallery
Participants will share their reactions to the Gallery and reflect on the sense of community that exists in the room
Participants will discuss the possibilities of using the Gallery to generate a metaphor-driven sense of community in their own classes.

8) Management or Teaching Topics:

Describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why Please include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.

The encounter with poetry and poetic metaphor experienced in the Gallery has a wide range of applicability to a number of management topics (See Van Buskirk & London, 2012). The Gallery triggers tacit, emotionally significant experiences which provide the backdrop for consideration of various OB topics. For example, hearing other students "speak from their hearts" tends to break down stereotyped perceptions of peers. This experience commonly connects students to topics of perception, communication and diversity (among others). As class members find emotional connections to the material, and as they see similar connections being made by others, they find a sense of community *in the process* of learning about OB.

Theoretical Grounding

Metaphor has been commonly mis-perceived as a literary device with little or no significance to everyday speech. The work of George Lakoff and associates has largely disconfirmed this prejudice. They show, in a voluminous body of work, how metaphor shapes common speech (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), academic discourse (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), and political debate (Lakoff, 2008). More recently, Bergen (2012) has summarized more than two hundred studies in which metaphor is implicated in brain functioning. In the management classroom metaphor has been used as a tool to galvanize engagement in Organizational Behavior (Leuchauer and Shulman, 19980), Strategy (Wagner-Weick, 2003), Organization Theory (Taber, 2007) and Organizational Culture (Starr- Glass; 2007)

According to Lakoff, metaphor is most powerful in situations where individuals, groups or societies confront unprecedented or uncertain situations. In these situations, it shapes thought and speech by extending aspects of a domain that is well known to one that is alien or unknown. A metaphor has two elements that make it up—a source domain well known to the speaker, and a target domain that is new, unknown or uncertain. Metaphor, understood in this way, allows us to provisionally understand the unknown in terms of the known. It is thus a fundamental cognitive resource through which we make sense out of novel situations. While this is no guarantee of rightness or accuracy, metaphor triggers thought and discussion in situations of high uncertainty. It also has a social aspect—shared metaphors allow for discussion to occur about uncertain situations. It thus underscores organizational discussions of all kinds: strategic, operational, political.

Beyond these merely cognitive functions, however, metaphor transfers emotional reactions from source to target. These emotional aspects of metaphor are intimately

bound up with its cognitive elements. For example, the metaphor "man is a lion" transfers to the rather generic term, man, a set of emotionally charged images and meanings. Under the influence of this metaphor, we may highlight such traits as ferocity, wildness or dominance. On the other hand, the metaphor, "man is a rose," highlights a different set of source characteristics: fragility, beauty, sensuality. Associated with these two metaphors are different feelings. The lion might inspire fear or admiration, while the rose might evoke gentleness, appreciation or desire.

Metaphor's dual power to evoke both conceptual understanding and emotion make it a powerful tool in the classroom. Intensified metaphors evoke experiences in students that are both important and poorly understood. Hence, they provide a provisional structure for insight. Moreover, when metaphors are shared they can provide a group with shared meaning and commonality of feeling that strengthens and supports community. It is the coming together of concept and emotion sets the stage for both deep self-understanding and appreciative insight into the feelings of peers.

We tap this power in various management courses through a workshop called The Poetry Gallery. We have described the rationale, design and effects of the workshop in previous papers (Van Buskirk & London, 2008; 2012). We have found that this workshop, by intensifying student experience of metaphor, deepens self-reflection that provides a platform for empathetic experience of others. The heightened emergence of community in turn provides a backdrop against which students consider various topics in Organizational Behavior. The class becomes then a community with a common stake in learning the material in ways that are both cognitive and emotionally meaningful.

9) Session Description and Plan:

What will you actually do in this session? What activities will you facilitate, how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you'd like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session's goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session. Include a timeline for your session.

We will run an abbreviated version of the Gallery that will take approximately **1 hour**. The activities will include:

Browsing a Gallery of Modern Poems that will be attached to the walls of the room.

Each participant will select a poem that speaks to her/him and share that poem with one other participant.

The poems and individual reactions will be shared with the group. Discussions of individual responses will occur.

Individuals will engage in a free-write exercise to generate their own poetic material.

Free-writes will be shared with the group

Discussion of the here and now sense of community in the group/ in classrooms (**30 minutes).**

10) For Activities and Exercises:
Attach any materials needed to run the activity and debriefing questions. Evidence for effectiveness may also be included.

We will provide materials.

See Van Buskirk & London (2012) for evidence for effectiveness.

11) Implications for Teaching or for Teachers:
What is the contribution of your session?

The Gallery supports teachers at a number of levels. By intensifying individual experience through metaphor, it brings a level of passion into the class that remains marginal in most academic settings. By connecting this energy to course material, it makes the job of teaching more rewarding. By connecting students to one another at the level of the metaphors they use, the Gallery opens heretofore private realms of student culture to public discussion and provides a host of teachable moments throughout the semester.

12) Application to Conference theme:
How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of Learning in Community?

We think our presentation dovetails nicely with a number elements of the conference theme.

Creating an active learning community where students connect their learning to the subject, themselves, and their fellow learners: The Gallery has been demonstrated to achieve each of these effects. The intensification of poetic metaphor that it evokes provides clarity on important personal issues. It also provides a platform for discussing these issues in the class (thus enhancing student bonding and engagement) and in

relationship to the material (cf. Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Van Buskirk & London, 2012)
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· *Encouraging distinctive or diverse expression that challenges our assumptions and broadens our understanding of diverse communities.* In the process of generating new metaphors, the workshop spontaneously introduces for students new ways of thinking about their experience.

· *Developing communities that support educators and their learning.* Shared metaphors connect people on a number of levels—cognitively, imaginatively, emotionally and at the levels of value. As students connect to one another at these levels, and with the professor, a sense of community builds (Van Buskirk, London, & Plump, 2015).

· *Understanding our role as authentic teachers, deeply connecting who we are with our students and what we teach.* To the extent that a professor can share his/her responses to the poems (the Gallery provides many opportunities to do this), a sense of engagement often grows across student/ professor boundaries.

· *Connecting with the broader local and global community to inform and deepen student learning.* In classes with students from cultures where poetry is common (i.e. middle east, Asia or Latin America) students sometimes find opportunities to connect across cultural and linguistic divides.
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References

Bergen, B.K. (2012) *Louder than Words: The New Science of How the Mind Makes Meaning.* Basic Books. New York.

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1989) *Metaphors We Live By.* University of Chicago Press. Chicago, Ill.

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M (1999) *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought.* Basic Books. New York.

Lakoff, G. (2008) *The Political Mind: Why You Can't Understand 21st Century American Politics with an 18th-Century Brain.* Viking Press. New York.

Leuchauer, D. & Shulman, G. (1998) Using a metaphor exercise to explore the principles of organizational culture. Journal of Management Education, 22(6), 736-744.

Starr-Glass, D. (2007) Exploring organizational culture: Teaching notes on metaphor, totem and archetypal images. Journal of Management Education, 28(3), 356-371.

Taber, T. (2007) Using metaphors to teach organization theory. Journal of Management Education, 31(4), 541-554.

Van Buskirk, W. & London, M. (2008) Inviting the Muse into the Classroom: Poetic License in Management Education., 32, 3. *Journal of Management Education,* 32,3 294-315

Van Buskirk, W. & London, M. (2012) Poetry as Deep Intelligence: A qualitative approach for the OB classroom. *Journal of Management Education,* 36, 5 636-668.

13) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?

We have presented this workshop many times, both at the OBTC and in a variety of corporate and community settings. This presentation emphasizes the community building aspects of the workshop, a dimension we have not previously emphasized.

14) References and/or Additional Materials:

References

Bergen, B.K. (2012) *Louder than Words: The New Science of How the Mind Makes Meaning.* Basic Books. New York.

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1989) *Metaphors We Live By.* University of Chicago Press. Chicago, Ill.

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totem and archetypal images. Journal of Management Education, 28(3), 356-371.

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Van Buskirk, W. & London, M. (2012) Poetry as Deep Intelligence: A qualitative approach for the OB classroom. *Journal of Management Education,* 36, 5 636-668.

Van Buskirk, W. London, M., & Plump, C. (2015) Poetry and Poetic Metaphor in Teaching Leadership and Ethics. *In press.*