

Liberal Education and the World That Does Not Yet Exist

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- Liberal education is preparation for a future that is unknown
- Effectively dealing with situations that have not yet been experienced--and may not yet exist
- Constructing what did not exist before
- Both *Reactive* and *Creative*: Responding to new things that do not fit into what we know and generating new things

The Critical Transformation

Understanding the world as it currently exists



Living successfully in a world that does not yet
exist

Some Assumptions

- Liberal education is the development of abilities that follow from our intelligence but do not come automatically
- Some of the skills important in preparing for the future--e.g., prediction—are not automatic
- The development of complex abilities is aided by intentional learning

Critical Abilities

- *Adaptability*--Being able to change beliefs and behaviors
- *Imagination*--Being able to create ideas and visions that do not exist
- *Innovation*--Being able to implement new ideas--to make them happen

Hypothesis Testing

“If we encourage children to be competitive in recreational play, then they will be less likely to engage in violent behavior.”

Critiques

“Based on what you know about positive reinforcement and punishment, what could you say about our prison system?”

Synthesis

“If we combine Skinner’s ideas about reinforcement and the consequences of behavior with Karl Marx’ ideas about alienation of labor, what view of human nature results? “

Understanding Cultural Difference

- Understanding other people's behaviors and customs within the cultural context of which they are part is not simply an easy definition on the midterm exam
- Recognizing the power of culture to shape worldview and values means the world becomes a MORE difficult place in which to live
- What if the "other" person with whom you're interacting isn't culturally relativistic?

Applying a holistic, integrative perspective

- How is one aspect of culture & behavior related to other aspects of culture? How are politics shaped by religion, by family relationships? etc.
- How does one learn to seek connections?

Learning through "lived experience"

- Experiential learning and field methods
- How do people experience the structural and cultural forces that both motivate and/or constrain their lives?

Making Preparing Students for the Future Intentional

- Goucher's emphasis has been on international education
- Last major curricular revision was five years ago
- Needed to focus broadly on a Goucher liberal arts education

- Introducing the idea to the faculty
- Open conversations with the faculty
- Faculty conversations and retreat
- Next steps

FOR DISCUSSION....

Are adaptability, imagination, and innovation the right set of abilities to prepare students for an unknown future?

What activities will lead to development of these abilities?

How do we encourage faculty to make this a priority?

What faculty development activities do we need?