

## **Stage 2 Political Communication in New Zealand Inquiry Course**

### **A Case study from the Inquiry-Based Learning Project**

#### **Political Communication in New Zealand – Stage 2 Humanities Inquiry Course, taught at the University of Otago**

**Teacher:** Chris Rudd, Political Studies

**Researchers:** Rachel Spronken-Smith and Rebecca Walker, Higher Education Development Centre, University of Otago

### **Contents**

Snapshot of Case.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Learning Outcomes.....	3
Description of Teaching Approach.....	3
Assessment.....	4
Experiences of Approach.....	6
Student Experiences.....	6
Teacher Experiences.....	11
Mismatch in teacher and student experiences.....	12
Reflections and Implications.....	13
Course design.....	13
Teacher factors.....	14
Implications for future practice.....	14
Appendix A: Course Outline.....	15
Appendix B: Inquiry Session in Practice.....	15

### **Snapshot of Case**

This stage two guided inquiry course typically attracted about 30 students each year. As well as students learning about political processes in New Zealand, the course aimed to develop research skills, the ability to work independently, and student confidence in their own abilities. The course was taught via weekly one-hour seminars that involved group discussion around key topics. Students prepared for these sessions by accessing digital resources and doing background reading. Learning was assessed via weekly learning logs, an in-class test, and an essay.

The teacher designed this course after experiencing dissatisfaction with 'traditional' approaches. He subverted the university system by having class discussions rather than lectures, having only one contact hour per week, rearranging the configuration of seating in the lecture room to allow discussion, and having 100% internal assessment that included many small items. The teacher highly valued links between teaching and

research and was a strong advocate for inquiry approaches, but was often frustrated by university norms that could stifle innovation.

Students appeared to achieve higher order learning outcomes and median marks for the course were high. This was the only class students attended that did not have lectures and most thought this was a positive feature as they enjoyed the emphasis on discussion. The seminars were valued for engagement with peers, being made to speak up and voice opinions, and for getting to know the lecturer on a personal level. Although students sometimes resented the workload associated with preparing for seminars, they found that this approach required them to engage with the course and become independent in their learning. They valued learning about political processes, the real world applications of the course, the class discussion and debate, the development of research skills and way the course challenged their beliefs. Students also valued the focus on inquiry and the development of skills in critical thinking. The learning logs were seen as a useful way to integrate and reinforce learning.

## **Introduction**

In 2007 Political Communication in New Zealand (POLS212) was a second year semester-long guided inquiry course taught by one lecturer - Chris Rudd. In 2007 the course attracted 30 students with 61% female and 36% male. The majority of the class (54%) were aged 20-21, with 42% in the 22-24 age bracket. The ethnic mix included 88% identifying as New Zealand European or Pakeha, 4% Māori, and 8% from other ethnic groups; 96% were New Zealand citizens and 4% were international students.

The course outline (2007; Appendix A) gives the following overview of the course:

*Communication* is an activity including *written and spoken words, pictures, movements, gestures, mannerisms, and dress*. The activity is *political* in that its purposeful intention is to influence the political environment, and to regulate human conduct under conditions of conflict. There are three sets of political *communicators* that we study in the course: parties and candidates; the mass media; and citizens/ voters. Why study political communication? Because who communicates, what they say, by what means they say it, and with what effect, are of central importance to any study of a country's political system.

The course was initially developed and taught in previous years by both Chris Rudd and Janine Hayward. Both of these lecturers were dissatisfied with lecture-based teaching. Chris commented: "Students don't bother doing the readings for a lecture because they will get it anyway in the lecture." Chris and Janine felt that there had to be a more effective way of getting students involved, so when given a brief to develop a new course they decided to try a new approach. Given the subject was political communication, they thought that "there's lots of good ways we can encourage students to read newspapers, watch television, listen to politicians, listen to debates" (Chris, interview). Neither Chris nor Janine were aware of any pedagogical research suggesting inquiry-based learning as a good way to engage students, and indeed they were not aware that the approach they proposed was a form of inquiry teaching. Rather they were using their tacit knowledge

about good teaching to design a course that would be more likely to engage the students in their learning.

### **Learning Outcomes**

The course outline (2007; Appendix A) listed the course aims:

- To understand key theories in the fields of political communication, political marketing, politics-media relations and deliberative democracy
- To be familiar with key writings in the field of political communication
- To understand the broad contours of political communication processes in New Zealand and be able to situate these in an international context
- To have practical experience analysing political communication
- To develop students' skills in working independently, at their own pace, as well as in groups with other students
- In contrast to these mainly knowledge-oriented aims, Chris, in the interview, talked mainly about more generic skills as outcomes for students. In particular he wanted students to:
  - Be motivated to do their own research
  - Develop research skills
  - Consider alternatives
  - Form their own opinions based on evidence
  - Be aware that there is not one right answer
  - Gain confidence

### **Description of Teaching Approach**

To meet the suggested aims and outcomes, Chris developed a course that demanded engagement. His key concern with lecture-based teaching was that students were not doing the reading or taking much responsibility for their own learning. Thus the course was carefully designed so that the main learning approaches were:

- Independent research around key topics
- Weekly one-hour seminars with small groups (about 12-15 students) discussing the key topics. Chris had a lecture room booked for two hours once a week and split his class into two so that half the class attended the first hour and the other half the second.
- Learning logs that integrated students' learning - and these were assessed.

Chris viewed the key ingredients of the course as:

- Having some structure - a series of topics to frame the course and to cover the content. This course had 11 topics (see Appendix A) covering Political Marketing, Political Campaigning, Political Advertising, Manifestos and Speeches, Television and Radio, Newspapers, Leaders' Debates, Internet, Talk

### Radio and Letters to the Editor, Voters' Voice, and the Effects of Political Communication

- Asking key questions that triggered students to inquire into each topic. Chris said, "you sort of kick-start them but without suffocating them." Thus he used a few prompts rather than a set of detailed questions.
- Providing resources to support their inquiries. Associated with each topic were key readings and digital resources such as taped debates, newspapers, radio interviews etc. which were available either on the course Blackboard website or on reserve in the Central Library.
- Providing a space for discussion of key ideas via the weekly seminars. There was an expectation that students would prepare for the weekly seminars as they knew they would be asked to contribute their ideas. He commented that students knew that "if you don't do the reading or don't do something for that session, you'll be embarrassed."
- A mix of theory and practice. Chris felt strongly that the course should "marry together the theoretical with the practical." He thought that people would have a better understanding if they had everyday practical illustrations of concepts.
- Developing research and generic skills. The course helped students learn necessary research skills, such as critically reading the literature and content analysis, and gave them confidence in developing their own evidence-based opinions.

Chris's evaluation of the inquiry characteristics using the IBL checklist (see Appendix C in 'Overview of Project') rated the course as *always* well aligned and with a transparent assessment scheme. The course *usually* involved open-ended questions and tasks with more than one possible outcome, challenged students, gave students choice in their learning, was well aligned with his research interests, had him as a co-learner and facilitator and involved teaching of relevant transferrable skills. *Sometimes* he required students to work on the process of knowledge creation and there was *some* teaching of research process. However, Chris felt that students *rarely* collaborated in their learning or reflected on the process of constructing knowledge.

### Assessment

The course assessment is detailed in Table 1. The course was fully internally assessed although there was a mid-term test four weeks into the course.

**Table 1:** Assessment for POLS212. Further detail is given below the table.

Item	Worth	Due Date	Comments
In-class test	30%	March 19 in class	Covers the topics of weeks 2-3: political marketing and political campaigning. Involves four questions; students must answer TWO questions.

**Table 1:** Assessment for POLS212. Further detail is given below the table.

Item	Worth	Due Date	Comments
Essay	30%	May 7	This stems from a content analysis of two or more weeks of a New Zealand newspaper (copies of newspapers are provided). The analysis should focus on: 1. Do newspapers 'dumb down' coverage of current affairs? (the Franklin reading will help with this question). 2. Are editorials politically biased? And cartoons? 3. Is news coverage 'partisan'? (Kahn and Kenny study is useful for answering this question).
Learning logs	40%	Due in the day after the relevant seminar	These are to synthesise student learning about this topic. Four logs are required but six can be handed in with the best four grades contributing to your final mark.

For the *essay* assignment, Chris told the students that a considerable amount of their time would be spent reading and coding newspapers, and that he would take this into account when grading the essay. Also, he pointed out that there was no right or wrong answer/conclusion to this exercise - so that students should not worry if they were coming up with results that differed from others in the class!

Chris provided the following information in the course handout regarding the learning logs:

In order to facilitate your own learning and to allow me to gauge your progress through the course, you are required to write a learning log on FOUR class topics. Note that there are six possible topics to choose from. If you wish, you can write 5 or 6 logs and I will simply take the best four marks. Each log should be approximately 1000 words in length. Each log (except Log 4) must be completed and handed in by 4pm Tuesday, the day after the Monday meetings. The log will be returned to you at the start of the next session with my written comments and mark. In grading your logs, I will look for consistency, the effort you put in preparing for the session, and how well you expressed yourself in terms of what you felt you learned. In the log, I will be looking for (a) evidence that you are familiar with the key readings (b) your awareness of any major arguments (c) any comments in the class discussion that you agree/disagree with and (d) - last but not least - your own views on the topic! Note that Log 5 is based on the session where you look at letters to the editor and talkback radio. For that session you are required to send a letter to the editor of a newspaper and/or make a call to a talkback radio station. I recommend you start drafting those letters or making those calls sooner rather than later.

Appendix B provides an example of a session including the framing of the session, digital resources available to students, notes from an observation of the seminar and examples of students learning logs from this week.

## Experiences of Approach

This section draws on a wealth of data including both student and teacher experiences of the approach.

### Student Experiences

Student feedback on this course was extremely positive, as shown in Table 2. Students found the course well organised and stimulating and felt they learned a great deal about the subject matter. Although engagement in research-related abilities was rated lower, students felt that overall the teaching was excellent and that it was a good quality course.

**Table 2:** Course evaluation data for POLS212

NB: Students rated items on a Likert scale where for items 1-8: 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, and for item 9: 1 is outstanding and 5 is very poor.

Question	Percentage of students ranking item 1 or 2
1. I found this course to be well organised	90%
2. Information about content, assessment and other important matters has been clearly communicated in this course	71%
3. This course helped stimulate my interest and learning in the subject	81%
4. I learned a great deal about the subject matter	86%
5. The course developed my ability to engage in research-related activities	67%
6. Completing the assessed work helped me learn	86%
7. Comments and feedback I received helped me learn more effectively	67%
8. Overall this was a good quality course	90%
9. On balance how would you rate the quality of teaching in this course	90%

As can be seen in Figure 1, students certainly perceived that they were learning skills typical of an inquiry course. The blue bars show where students described an activity as taking place *a great deal* or *quite a bit*. Figure 1 demonstrates that the emphasis of learning in this course was on higher order abilities such as understanding and analysing. Students also felt they were reflecting on the meaning of what they were learning to them, their life and/or society.

**Figure 1:** Type of learning encouraged by POLS212 (n=28/31)

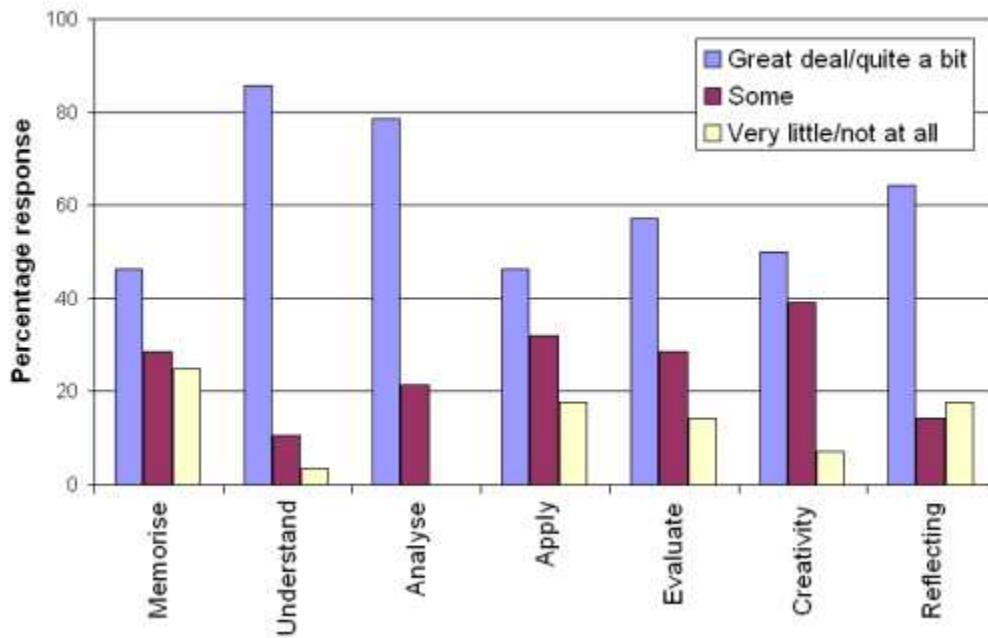


Figure 2 shows that the course had an inquiry approach whereby students were faced with questions that had multiple answers and 89% thought they were *always* or *usually* encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. They understood why they were studying but only 50% *always* or *usually* thought about how they were learning. About 46% of students felt they they *always* or *usually* had choices in what they could study, while 29% thought this was *sometimes* the case. Recall that in this course although students progressed through a series of content areas, they did have a choice in their essay topics. Half the class felt they were *always* or *usually* learning how to answer questions.

**Figure 2:** Experiences within POLS212 (n=28/31)

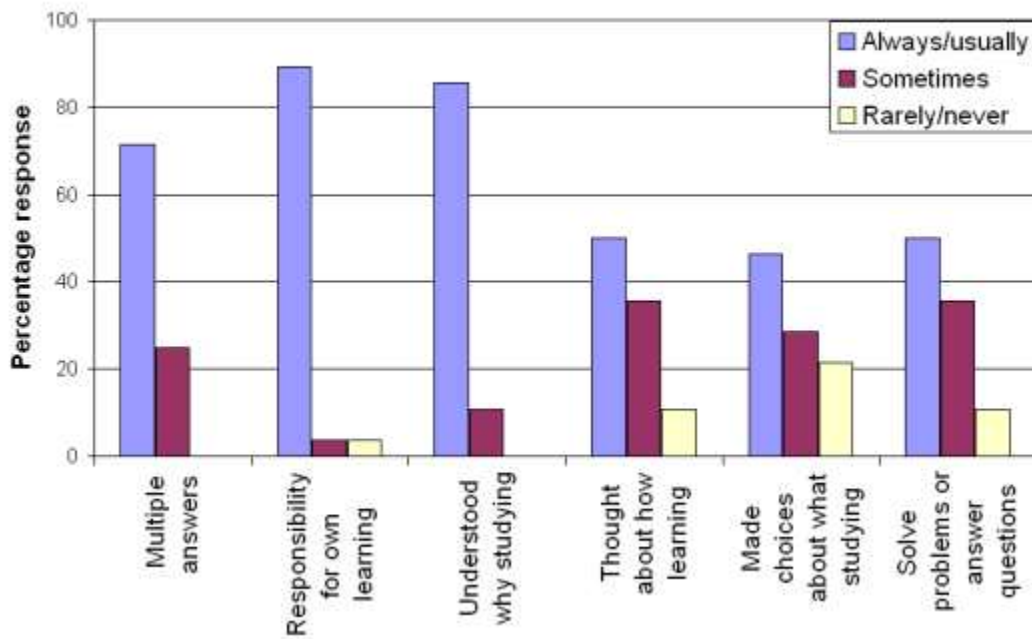
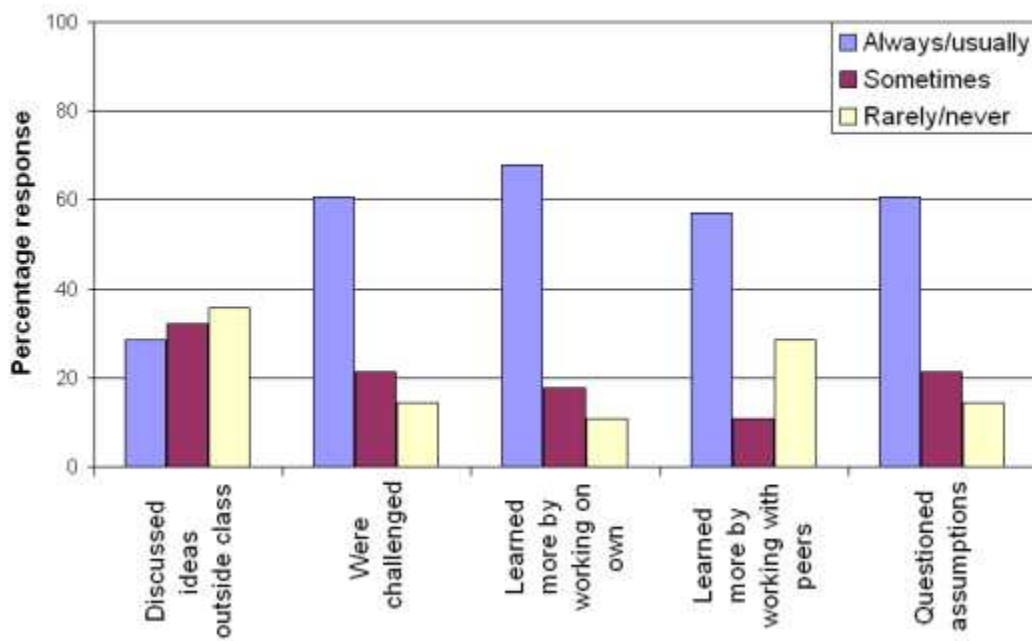




Figure 3 demonstrates that students did not feel that they often discussed ideas outside of class, either face-to-face or online, with 36% of students reporting this as happening *rarely* or *never*. However, within the seminar setting students felt they learned more than expected to by working with their peers (57% *always* or *usually*) and 68% of students thought they *always* or *usually* learned more than they expected to by working on their own. The latter finding probably reflects the preparation required for seminars and the writing of learning logs. In terms of finding the course intellectually challenging and requiring students to question their own opinions, assumptions and/or beliefs, 61% felt this happened *always* or *usually*.

**Figure 3:** Further experiences within POLS212 (n=28/31).



The final question in the IBL survey asked students to list the things they had learned in the course that were particularly valuable to them. The most common cluster of responses (8 students) was about valuing learning about political processes: "Gaining a better understanding and appreciation for the political processes in NZ." A close second (7 students) was an appreciation of the real world application of the course. For example, one commented: "Doing tasks which are related to real life e.g. pretending to be a political candidate." The next two clusters each had five students. One pertained to the value of class discussion: "Learning to discuss issues in a group environment." They valued hearing different points of view and gaining skill in political debates. The other cluster was about developing research skills - reading and interpreting the literature, analysing digital material, synthesising learning in logs, and content analysis. The final set of comments (3 students) related to having their beliefs challenged. For example, one commented: "Peer interaction is a great way of challenging your beliefs."

The small group instructional diagnosis with the whole class provided an opportunity to further probe into aspects of student experiences within this course. Several key themes emerged in terms of student experiences of this course; the expectation of preparation for sessions, the value of the seminar format, the use of learning logs for assessment, and the use of inquiry and becoming a critical thinker.

Students felt that preparation for sessions was particularly valuable because it required them to become independent in their learning. One student commented:

"Doing a reasonable amount of preparation for a class (at least 3-4 hours of reading, viewing DVDs etc) allowed me to refine my analytical skills, helping me to sort out what was/was not important. Meeting for a seminar discussion and doing my own research really helped me *learn*, not just memorise."

Another said: "I learned how to learn on my own which has made me more willing to do my own in-depth research, not only in this course, but other courses also."

The value of the seminar discussions was a recurring theme throughout all student feedback. For this class, none of the students had experienced another course without lectures. One expressed surprise at their learning in this mode - prior to the course the student had thought lecturing would be more effective at helping them learn: "I am hugely surprised at how much I have learnt during this course and how it felt good to do reading, and actually learn it for yourself rather than sit and be lectured on topics." Another commented that the format had helped them learn to think more holistically. One said: "Each group seminar helped to focus the information I had learned into something useful". The discussion format was valued for the engagement with peers, being required to speak up and voice opinions, and for getting to know the lecturer on a personal level.

The learning logs as an assessment item were also valued. They were seen by many as a useful way to integrate and reinforce learning.

"The best thing is that it's 100% internal and the learning logs force you to keep up with the readings for the course. My learning has improved and I have achieved all the goals I mentioned. [These were given earlier as] a wider understanding in how politicians communicate their ideas to the public. Wanted to improve my problem-solving skills and be able to think critically and analyse different types of communication devices."

When asked whether this course had engaged them in inquiry - that is, in learning a process for questioning and for thinking critically about and seeking answers to difficult questions or problems - twelve students responded that it had, and for many, to a great extent.

"This has happened to the greatest degree possible. Every week I look at the topics for the next seminar and by the end of the readings I feel I am very well educated on the issues surrounding it. I am constantly pondering the difficult problems and questions this course has posed to me and am now

incredibly interested in this area of study. There was an incredible amount of inquiry - perhaps too much but the end result was well worth the hours of effort."

"I think my critical thinking skills have been developed in POLS212. We are encouraged to and given reasons for, why we should consider the material we view in different lights. We are asked, and ask questions in class and discuss them together. We are required to give our own views and thoughts on issues in our reading logs. We are given questions to think about on the BB slides."

"The class discussion engaged all members of the class; thus everyone can claim to be a part of the intellectual debate! I believe that they stimulate learning process and manifest thought and interest as they encourage everybody to think further than their original capacity of knowledge."

"To a reasonably high degree. In class you cannot be a wall flower so was forced to critically analyse each subject matter. This was not a negative exercise, made seminars more enjoyable to be a part of."

Several students commented that this format had engaged them in further inquiry. For example one said that it "opened up new pathways for more queries." For many students their interest led to the course becoming rather consuming, and they found themselves engaging above and beyond the required preparation time.

Although student response to this course was overwhelmingly positive, there were a few aspects that students felt could be improved. The key concerns were accessibility of resources, the workload, and some issues around assessment. The preparatory slide material on Blackboard was in a format that the students could not download and this was a source of much frustration. Also, many of the readings were on e-Reserve, which meant that students had to pay to print out articles. It was also hard to find some of the digital resources for each session. To remedy these difficulties the students wanted a course reader and a DVD with the digital material. Although 48% of the class rated the workload as *about right*, 52% thought it was *too high*. The main reasons for this were, the number of readings required, the time finding the digital resources, and the work that had to be put into writing learning logs. Regarding assessment, although the learning logs were valued, many students wanted more time to complete these. Students also wanted to gain marks for participation in class discussion.

### **Teacher Experiences**

Overall Chris was very happy with the course this year. However, he was keen to address students' comments and concerns. The main issues he noted were:

- **High workload and in particular, too many readings:** Chris's intention in prescribing extra readings was to provide alternatives in case students could not get hold of some, but he subsequently realised that they were attempting to read them all. Following this feedback Chris plans to reduce the number of recommended readings. He did make the argument, however, that this course offered students more flexibility in managing their workload than traditional second year courses, as there was only one contact hour. There is also the issue that in courses like these

students necessarily put in more hours, not only because of the preparation required, but often because they want to as they become stimulated and motivated by the approach.

- **Difficulty of locating and downloading or printing resource material:** Chris intends to put together a course reader for future years and investigate whether the media clips can be collated on a DVD (depending on copyright issues).
- **Desire for more interaction among peers:** Contrary to much student feedback, Chris was concerned that there was not enough peer interaction. He had hoped for more of this on the Blackboard site and within class. He felt that often students were discussing issues with him, rather than more broadly with the class. For example, he commented that: "I notice now, they sort of, whenever they talk, they talk to me. You know, they don't talk to the other students." To try and generate more peer interaction, he is considering group work on an assignment related to the election in 2008.
- **Grades for participation in discussion:** Chris has noted that students want this but was reluctant to go this route as he felt it would likely result in grades for attendance. He preferred evidence of participation to come through in the learning logs.
- **Timing of the learning log hand in:** This was a tricky issue for Chris. In response to students voicing this same concern in 2006, Chris had allowed students an extra day in 2007, so that learning logs were due 48 hours after the seminar. However, he was not keen to extend the due date because his intention was that students should have prepared for the seminar and then complete their logs soon after so that they could then start preparing for the following week. Rather than extend the due date, he will seek to make the reasoning for this timeframe clearer to the students next year.

### **Mismatch in teacher and student experiences**

There were a few contradictions between the teacher's and student's experiences of the course. These related to learning from peers, student involvement in research, and thoughts about learning. In an evaluation of IBL processes (via the IBL checklist) Chris thought that students would *rarely* collaborate in their learning. This was also borne out in his IBL survey predictions when he thought that students would have *very little* discussion of ideas and issues with others outside of the class, either face to face or online. Only 7% of the class agreed; 33% thought this happened *sometimes*. Chris also predicted that students would *never* learn more than they expected to by working with their peers and again only 7% of the class agreed with this; 11% thought this occurred *sometimes* and 36% said that it *usually* did. Working with peers also came through strongly as being valued by students in other data reported above. For example, students placed a high value on group discussion in the seminars. So although Chris thought that students were not interacting and learning much from their peers, this was not the perception of the students.

Chris talked at length during his interview about the links between his research and teaching. He framed the course according to his own research process. For example, he commented: "It's very interesting because I can actually set them tasks or problems which

are mini versions of what I am, myself, doing." He had a strong belief in students learning through doing, saying:

"You can tell them to do something, you can describe content analysis until the cows come home but only when they do it and start saying, well, how in the hell do I code this article? Is this article really anti-Labour or pro-National or whatever? Only by doing it. I can tell them about all my experiences and I can point them to the literature but only when they actually do it, like with a survey, the students doing the methods' paper, only then do they realise that questions can have different meanings."

Yet despite the high value he placed on close ties between research and teaching, and indeed his value of research-based teaching such as inquiry, he was not explicit about his research to his students. He believed he shouldn't be saying what he did and how, because he didn't want them "to read what I've done and published because I can see they'll be saying, ohh, well Rudd said this and Rudd said that and I don't want them to think, well this is how he did it. This is what they've said they did. I want them to do it, find out themselves rather than just trying to follow a format that I've come up with."

Given Chris's thoughts about his research and his reticence to share his research, it is perhaps not surprising that when students were asked 'how did the teacher's research influence this course/your learning?' they had difficulty responding. Most felt that Chris' research did not really influence the course beyond his being passionate about the subject, and the fact that they used his textbook.

Chris underestimated student responses on a range of questions linked to their learning. For example, Chris predicted the class would do *very little* reflecting on the meaning of what they were learning but only 11% of the class agreed; the majority (36%) indicated that they engaged in *quite a bit* of reflection. Chris also predicted that students would only *rarely* think about how they were learning (only 7% class agreed), whereas the majority of the class (36%) reported that they would do this *sometimes*. Finally, Chris predicted that students would *rarely* understand why they were studying what they were studying (0% class agreed), and only hoped they might *sometimes* do so (10% class agreed). However, most students (50%) reported that they *always* understood why they were studying.

## **Reflections and Implications**

The wealth of data provided by this investigation has allowed an in-depth exploration of the functioning and reception of this course. This section draws together some key findings and suggests some implications for inquiry practitioners.

### **Course design**

The approach and structure of the course *demanded* engagement from the students. Students were required to prepare for seminars by analysing digital resources and readings and to come ready to discuss key ideas. Students were asked by name to contribute ideas in class and to debate key issues. This provided a compulsion to carry out the preparation for the seminars. Indeed Chris noted that if students were not willing

to put in the work required for the seminars they would drop out (although few have over the last two years of the course), so in a way the course self-selected the students most likely to thrive in this engaging environment. It appeared that Chris was rebellious as a teacher - he was subverting the traditional university teaching culture. For example, he subverted the physical space of the lecture room, by getting students to rearrange tables and chairs to facilitate discussion. He chose not to use lectures and indeed had only one contact hour per week, a move unpopular with some colleagues. His assessment regime with 100% internal assessment and the use of many learning logs also challenged departmental norms. Finally, he had high expectations of workload and colleagues were worried about how students would cope with the hours expected from such a course. This was somewhat ironic as colleagues were also unhappy with the low contact hours - only one hour per week!

The course had well aligned outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment items. In particular the learning logs were an invaluable way for students to integrate and reinforce their learning. Students were required to prepare for each seminar by analysing the digital resources and doing the reading. They then discussed key ideas in the seminar and subsequently completed their learning logs which served to synthesise their learning for that particular topic.

The course appeared to result in the achievement of higher order learning outcomes. Certainly students perceived that they were acquiring higher order skills such as analytical and evaluative skills, as well as other research skills. Thus the inquiry process seemed to be promoting critical thinking. Chris also observed that students in his course consistently achieved a higher median mark when compared with that obtained by students in other second level political studies papers. While hoping that this was a result of the inquiry process, he recognised that his course may have self-selected better students.

### **Teacher factors**

The success of this course stemmed not only from sound course design, but also from personal factors. Chris was clearly student-centered in his approach. He was focused on learning outcomes for students and developed an excellent rapport with students. He knew them all by name and students appreciated getting to know him on a personal level. Chris was also a strongly reflective practitioner. He was constantly seeking feedback on his teaching and on his courses, with a view to improving student outcomes. He valued the links between teaching and research and used his research to inform his teaching. He also believed in research-based teaching through inquiry approaches. He was an advocate for inquiry, but was frustrated by university norms that often stifle innovation.

### **Implications for future practice**

This study has highlighted a few issues about inquiry teaching that may inform other practitioners:



- The need to be rebellious and contest dominant university teaching cultures: Students do value what you are trying to do as a teacher. Colleagues need to be educated in how inquiry approaches can benefit student learning.
- The need to be clear about expectations to students at the start of an inquiry course: This is so they are clear about workload expectations, and how their learning will be different in this mode.
- Ensuring resources are easily available for students: In inquiry approaches relying heavily on resource material, teachers need to ensure students are able to locate and utilise such resources. This may mean providing a course reader and/or DVD with supplementary material.
- Trying to be more explicit about teaching-research links to students: This is to enculturate students into the research culture of the university.

## **Appendix A: Course Outline**

[Course Outline - Download PDF](#)

## **Appendix B: Inquiry Session in Practice**

As an example of a session this Appendix gives the framing of the session, the digital resources available, notes from an observation of the seminar and examples of students learning logs from this week.

### **Week 5 Political Advertising**

#### **Readings**

- Janine Hayward and Chris Rudd (eds) Political Communications in New Zealand chs. 3 and 4
- N. Hager The Hollow Men ch. 12
- Brian McNair An Introduction to Political Communication ch. 6
- Kaid, L. and Holtz-Bacha, C. (eds) The Sage handbook of Political Advertising
- Lynda Kaid et al. 'Comparing Political Advertising Around the World'
- Lynda Kaid et al. New Perspectives on Political Advertising pp. 184-209, 293-313
- Bruce Newman (ed) Handbook of Political Marketing ch. 23
- Lynda Kaid (ed) Handbook of Political Communication Research ch. 7

#### **Observation of session**

As soon as the students arrive Chris Rudd (CR) got them to change the layout of the lecture room. Upon arrival all tables and chairs were arranged in rows facing the front, but CR got them to rearrange into a square, that they all then sit around. CR greeted students by their names as they arrived. CR started off the session by commenting he had marked their exams and if they wanted feedback he would make 15 minute slots available for consultations. He explained that he uses criterion-referenced assessment and that if they met the criteria they would get a decent mark. CR then showed a new textbook and DVD and then switched off projector screen and sat down at the table with the students.

CR then went straight into the session on political advertising and CR asked who wanted to kick off. One student immediately jumped in after a few seconds. CR asked one student (by name) to comment and then asked who did the readings (many nods around the table). A discussion ensued about TV versus newspaper and CR addressed all students by their names. CR picked up on key ideas brought out in discussion and reiterated these and highlighted the key points (which sparked some student note-taking). CR encouraged all to contribute to the discussion and continually asked questions relating to advertising. Students were referring to the readings (e.g. “that study you made us read”) but most of the comments were from personal experiences of election campaigns.

CR then focused the class on one article and got a student to write up the features on the whiteboard. CR then walked to the board and added some features that students call out. CR then set a task – the class were to imagine they had been hired by a political party to design an advertising campaign for 2008. The students got into four groups and were assigned a party. Each group had to decide on the type of advertising (issue, image, positive, negative), whether they focused on the party or a candidate, and come up with a slogan. The students immediately engaged, while CR constructed a matrix on the whiteboard, and after 10 minutes CR asked the groups to start filling out this matrix (Table 1). When this was complete CR asked each group to tell the others about their campaign. Each group did so and some students asked questions of others. The setting was informal and conversational with balanced input from readings and experience.

CR then discussed some other aspects not yet covered and this sparked questions from students. All students took notes except a newcomer (who has not yet attended and who CR asked to see after the class).

**Table 1:** Student matrix of advertising campaigns.

<b>Party</b>	<b>Issue vs image?</b>	<b>Party vs candidate?</b>	<b>Positive, negative, comparative?</b>	<b>Logos, ethos or pathos?</b>	<b>Slogan</b>
Labour	image	candidate	positive	pathos	Don't look back...vote labour
National	issue	candidate	comparative	logos	Let's make the change now
Greens	both – 3 specific issues	party	comparative and positive	usual ethos but focus on logos	Green is better
NZ First	issue	candidate	negative	ethos	New Zealand FIRST

After 50 minutes CR finished the session and handed back exams. Students then left but one questioned him about learning logs.

[Example of Student Learning Logs from this session](#) (PDF)