

SHEEDY AWARD PRESENTATION

~ October 11, 2002 ~

My name is Eugene Kang; I'm a senior sociology/pre-professional major and a past participant of the learning pedagogy through two courses: Self, Society, & Environment and Society and Identity. I believe that pedagogy is not just the science of teaching; it's an experience that alters or reaffirms whatever speculations we may have about life. It comprises the passage of facts and concepts onto new generations not through merely reading or lecture, but through personal discovery and understanding. I have been fortunate enough to experience such a phenomenon here at Notre Dame. It's not that I haven't learned anything in classes of the traditional style of teaching, but the learning pedagogy instills knowledge within the mind through a rather unique and lasting manner.

It kind of reminds me of the 1989 film, *Dead Poets Society*, where an inspiring English teacher uses unorthodox but effective teaching styles to educate his students. He helps them to experience ideas for themselves rather than just hear or read about them. It is this sort of encounter that I have had in the learning pedagogy. Through discussion with the professor, who may be referred to as "O Captain, my captain", and interactions with other students in the class, one is able to experience the same thought processes as authors whose writings he or she is reading. The pedagogical style enables one to understand the foundations of concepts as well as their process of birth. At the same time, moreover, it allows for a person to formulate his or her own beliefs while being exposed to the opinions of others.

Much of this is due to the central theme of freedom in the learning pedagogy. Everyone has the freedom to express their thoughts, agreements, and disagreements. No one is forced to join in the discussion but the overall dynamics and mood of a learning community entices students to participate. Along those lines, students technically have the freedom to show up and

not to show up but in a display of reverse psychology, everyone ends up attending anyway because they look forward to learning something new each class period. The learning pedagogy, moreover, thrives on the personal views of the participants within. No matter what their credo or culture, everyone adds their own flavor to the interpretation of the current topic at hand and others benefit vicariously through their personal experiences.

Personally, the learning pedagogy has taught me to take into account every perspective possible over issues ranging from environmental pollution to who we are as human beings. I feel I have become less cynical and more analytical in my daily encounters while attempting to understand why things are the way they are. As a student, I've learned to be more objective and skeptical of information I absorb. As a member of society, I've developed a fuller understanding of our relationships in this interactive macrocosm. And as a person, I've reshaped my general philosophies in the ongoing search for my personal definition of life.

...Thank you for your time and now I'll pass the baton onto Sarah MacMillen.