

FYEX 100 – Strategies for Success
And
Elizabeth Moon’s *The Speed of Dark (SOD)*

Module I – Identity

(Second day of class) Read the first three pages of SOD in Class. Ask students how they think Dr. Fornum made Lou feel. Ask students how listening to his thoughts makes them feel. Ask them to write a couple of sentences on the front of an index card with their name on it about a time when someone made them feel less than adequate, not real, not normal, or like they were doing something wrong. What/when was it? What did the person/people say? How did they react? How did it make them feel?

This is a book about a young man’s struggles with his identity, with the world’s perception of him, and with his choices for the future. A first-year seminar is about helping students to examine their identity, to explore how they fit into the world, and to begin/continue the process of making decisions about their futures regardless of the negative experiences they may have had in the past.

Now, have them turn over the index card and write a few sentences about how they have proved or are proving or are going to prove the person/people wrong who made them feel inadequate or abnormal. Then have the students think of at least two positive adjectives to describe their strengths and write these on the bottom of this side of the card. Ask them to write a two-sentence facebook profile, one that they would be proud to show to potential future employers, in which they describe those two strengths.

During this semester in FYEX 100, they will explore aspects of their identity and learn skills to help them add to their strengths and positive perceptions. Part of HCC’s motto is “You can get there from here,” so it is important for students to know who they are and know from where they are starting as they decide where they are going.

Module II – Change/Transition

The art of life lies in constant readjustment to our surroundings.

- Okakura Kakuzo

(Second week) On page 23 of SOD, the villainous Mr. Crenshaw says, “Things cannot go on like this, Lou. Change happens.” What does Mr. Crenshaw mean? What is Lou’s reaction? Why does this make Lou shiver? What changes might the future hold for Lou?

A key to being a successful learner in college is the ability to deal with change. As a first-year student, you are transitioning (changing as you face change) into a new environment.

On pp. 33-35, Lou faces a new environment when he is at the airport with Marjory. What happens? How does he handle being at a place where people do not know him and they are asking him to do something that is difficult for him? How has he prepared for the possibilities?

As you begin college, you also are in a new environment. How is it different? In groups of 3 or 4, list as many as possible that high school is different from college. You will have 10 minutes to see which group can identify the most differences. Appoint someone as note taker, and appoint another person as the one who will share this information with the rest of the class when you are finished. After the group who has the most shares, the other groups will add any items that they have on their list which were not mentioned. Next, go to the FYE student website to the list of dissimilarities between high school and college and look at the categories. Note some that have not been identified.

Choose one difference or category of differences and reflect on this/these. Write a paragraph that discusses the difference. Include your thoughts about how you might prepare yourself for this difference to avoid negative experiences.

Module III - Multiple Intelligences/Learning Styles

Many scientists, psychologist, and educators have studied how people learn or how they know. Howard Gardner is famous for his theories on multiple intelligences. He believes that people have neural conditions strengthened by experience and repetition that are activated by cultural settings, opportunities, personal decisions, and values that lead them to solve problems in different ways.

To introduce students to this concept, have them participate in a “Jigsaw” Activity. Divide them into 5 groups of 4 or 5. Have group read the above description of multiple intelligences and then count off 1,2,3,4 (The extra person can choose any number). Number each corner of the room and send students to their respective corners. Each group will be given a sheet that describes two of the intelligences listed below. They will be asked to review this sheet and then think of examples of how people might learn using that intelligence. They become the experts on those intelligences and then report back to their initial group along with the other respective experts from each corner, so that everyone has a complete understanding of the different intelligences.

Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences (From Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st century*. New Bork: Basic Books.)

1. Linguistic Intelligence – the ability to use words effectively whether orally or in writing.
2. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence – the capacity to use numbers effectively and to reason well.
3. Spatial Intelligence – the ability to perceive the visual-spatial world accurately and to perform transformations on those perceptions.
4. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence – expertise in using one’s body to express ideas and feelings and facility in using one’s hands to produce or transform things.
5. Musical Intelligence – the ability to perceive, discriminate, transform, and express musical forms.
6. Interpersonal Intelligence – the ability to perceive and make distinctions in the moods, intentions, motivations, and feelings of other people.
7. Intrapersonal Intelligence – self-knowledge and the ability to act on the basis of that knowledge.
8. Naturalist Intelligence – expertise in recognizing and classifying living and non-living forms within one’s environment.

After this activity, each student will be given two copies of a web that has a box for each intelligence. On one sheet they will use SOD pages 5-10 and 38-40 to list how Lou uses multiple intelligences to learn. The other sheet they will take with them for the day and list how may intelligences they find themselves using.

Module IV – Roles, Responsibilities, and Time Management

The challenge is not to manage time, but to manage ourselves.

- Steven Covey

Write the seven days of the week on the board. Ask students to get into groups and use their SOD book to determine what Lou does on the different days of the week. Pages 68-71 will be of help. Fill in the days as best as possible. Ask students why they think Lou's week is so structured? Is this just because he has autism?

Now ask students to identify what roles Lou is taking on in each of these activities. Lou works his schedule around his many roles of worker, science fan, fencer, human with personal and household needs, etc. All people have many roles and responsibilities.

Ask students to list the roles/responsibilities they have in their lives. Ask students to share. Have them look at the schedules they have created for the time management activity. How do these roles fit into those schedules? What determines how much time they give each one? Why might the amount of time change from week to week or month to month?

Now have students write a reflection paragraph on the five most important roles they have right now and how they will prioritize their time to fulfill their responsibilities in these roles.

Module V – Critical Thinking/Problem Resolution

Men become civilized, not in proportion to their willingness to believe, but in their readiness to doubt.
-H.L. Mencken

What people try to convince Lou to perform a certain way in SOD?

Does this create a problem for Lou? How would you define problem? Does the word “problem” always have a negative connotation? For some people, a problem is an opportunity to make a difference or a change in their lives.

When trying to make a decision or solve a problem, it is important to think critically. Here are some steps from *Becoming a Master Student*:

1. Define the issue and connect it to you personally
2. Look at different points of view
3. Look at the support (logic and evidence) for each point of view
4. Look for other possibilities

Does Lou use critical thinking in dealing with his problems? How or how not?

When thinking critically and attempting to solve problems, people should not allow themselves to be persuaded by faulty logic.

What are some examples of faulty logic?

Jumping to conclusions/ hasty generalizations, attacking the person, appealing to authority, pointing to a faulty cause, thinking in all/nothing, yes/no, or pro/con terms, basing arguments on emotions, and making faulty assumptions.

How do some of the people causing problems in Lou’s life use faulty logic?
How does Lou react to this?

Have students form groups of 3 or 4 and think of some problems that many first-year college students might have. Ask them to focus on a problem that they think is important and of interest to them. Then ask them to answer the following questions as a group:

1. Why is this issue important for first-year students?
2. What are some of the different points of view on how to handle this problem?
3. What are the arguments or supporting evidence for these points of view?
4. What other information can students use to make their decision? Are there resources on campus that might help with this?
5. What might be some other possibilities for students when dealing with this issue?

Have students follow up with gathering relevant information on campus and from reliable sources. Ask groups to present their issues and alternatives at the beginning of the next class.

Module VI – Decision Making

At this point in the SOD reading, students can see that Lou is facing a large decision in his life. Ask them to put into words what his decision is.

Based on what they have read so far, have students list the pros and the cons of the Lou going ahead with process involved in this decision. Draw two large circles on the board. Put the pro's in one section and the con's in the other.

Ask students to describe how people have tried to influence Lou. Who is in favor of the process and who is against it? Why?

Now ask students to participate in a social barometer exercise. Based on the information they have gathered, ask them to stand on a section of an imaginary line across the classroom that goes from Lou should *definitely take advantage of the process* to Lou should *definitely not succumb to the process*.

Now, ask students to consider what they would do if they were autistic. Ask them to repeat the process by standing on the imaginary line based whether they would *definitely take advantage of the process* or *definitely not succumb to the process*. If there were any changes, ask students to share what new factors came into the decision for them.

Remind students that although they may not have the same type of decisions to make, they do have a large choice in front of them when it comes to career planning. Using the information from their Library Activity or from their own interests, have students identify a career that they think they have decided to pursue or at least one for which they would like to get more information. What were some of their choices and how did they select one? How did it fit with their interest and values?

As a career is part of a life plan, so is an academic plan part of a career and life plan. Have students use a chosen career to create an academic plan for their time at HCC while keeping the decision making process in mind.

Module VII – Communication/Civility

Communication works for those who work at it.

-John Powell

In *The Speed of Dark*, several interesting “conversations” appear from the top of page 71 to the bottom of page 80.

The man looking for spaghetti sauce

Marjory

Emmy

The woman behind Lou in line

Don

Divide the class into groups and have each group take a conversation. Have students discuss the following questions:

What parts of the conversation are verbal and nonverbal?

What internal/external noise is present?

What rule of etiquette or social protocol might be challenged with these interactions?

What barriers exist?

Does the conversation achieve its intent or purpose? Why or why not?

Have the groups share their perspectives briefly. Ask students how they might have reacted differently.

When something that another person has done or said is offensive, how do people handle it? Are getting emotional, screaming, and acting out physically effective forms of communicating dissatisfaction? Some people recommend the use of “I” statements (See *Becoming a Master Student* pp. 150-152).

Ask groups to create an “I statement” for their conversation segment that Lou could have used in each of these instances and share.

For people to communicate effectively, especially in large groups, it is important to have some ground rules. Based on Lou’s experience and their own, ask students to list what classroom rules should be.

Show HCC’s Code of Conduct to students. Ask them to compare. What would they include in their own “code of conduct” for the class?

Do students follow these rules in classes? What can faculty and students do to help this framework for communication to exist?

Module VIII – Diversity

According to University of Maryland, to be a well-educated person – one that contributes to the advancement of society – requires gaining knowledge of our society’s many diverse populations, and developing skills to communicate and engage across difference. What is meant by the word diverse – what is diversity – Have students try to define this term with a partner. Share a few of the definitions and note the individual and collective differences.

Sometimes discussions about groups of people can be awkward. Some people have conceptions of how others are supposed to look, act, and think. These are called stereotypes. Generalizing about people based on faulty assumptions is not only incorrect but it is hurtful. If you have ever been on the receiving end of these stereotypes, you understand.

Have students view the You Tube video clip on The Office – Diversity Day. Explain in advance that some of the material is biased and stereotypical, and that you are presenting what is available and widely viewed in the media.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrjxIDfAFzI&feature=related>

What are the reactions to this clip? Is it funny? Is it hurtful? Is it sad?

How do people stereotype – based on what factors – have students list as many as possible including gender, age, race, cultural background, religion, ability, etc.

What stereotypes has Lou encountered? Can students identify sections of the book/scenes in which Lou was treated differently because of his disability? Do they believe this happens in their lives? How or how not?

One way to combat negative stereotypes and to help people become globally aware is to educate them about different populations. To understand Lou better, it might help to learn a little about autism. Watch <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbgUjmeC-4o&feature=related> – *In my mind* video about a teenager with autism (asberger’s).

To understand different cultures, it might help if everyone brought in a “cultural artifact.” Students should identify a group to which they belong. They should think of an item – clothing, food, decoration, etc. that represents some aspect of their group. They will be given two-3 minutes in class to present the following information while displaying the item:

What is this item? Does your group have a special name for it? Why did you choose it? What does it represent? How does it symbolize your group?