The Trading Card Effect

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ABSTRACT

This article demonstrates a teaching method that I have used for the last several years and have found to be effective particularly during the challenging final weeks of the semester. I reward students with trading cards for answering questions currently during an unannounced quiz to provide positive reinforcement in an engaging way. Students form teams and receive a relevant and classic trading card that they can keep as a souvenir to the class and the course. While many of today’s students might view sports trading cards as an antiquated hobby by a previous generation, I have found that the majority of the students appreciate the gesture, receiving something that day to think about other than homework. The Trading Card Effect reinforces successful and scientific pedagogical approaches including working in teams among an active-learning environment. I summarize my teaching method, observations and formal assessment from a pedagogical perspective.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate a teaching method that I have used for the last several years and have found to be effective. The impetus behind this exercise came from my challenge to maintain student attention just after the post-spring break window before final exams. My motivation was to inspire and enhance student learning and to motivate my own students in my course Sports Law, having found that competing with the first week of Major League Baseball, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) March Madness basketball tournament, the late-April National Football League draft, and better weather was sometimes met with resistance and lack of classroom attendance.

After brainstorming ways in which I could keep their attention, I realized that much of the material that I was introducing during this end of semester time-frame focused on individual athletes who were involved in significant law cases that have impacted the sports law landscape today. I also noticed a consistent them: these same individuals, most of whom were professional athletes, were also members of my shoebox collection of sports trading cards, a hobby of my youth long before the world-wide-web existed. My guess was that many of these students who grew up with Google, YouTube, Facebook, and now Twitter and Instagram, most likely did not pursue collecting cards as a hobby.

I decided to use sports trading cards to provide positive reinforcement when a question was correctly during an unannounced quiz during the final weeks of the semester to engage the students, and maintain their interest in an active-learning environment. As a result of a correct answer, which is always ultimately the case, the students receive a relevant and classic football, baseball, basketball, hockey, or other trading card that they can keep as a souvenir to the class and the course. My guess was that there would be different levels of appreciation when it came to distribution of a sports trading card, but my intent was to give something to the students directly relevant to

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8 Special thanks for guidance, survey construction and research suggestions to Eron Drake, Ed.D., Assistant Director, and Brian Roberts, Faculty Center for Innovative Teaching (FaCIT) at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, Michigan.
2 Discuss further infra, text accompanying notes 12-19.
3 See Gerry Hess, Paula Lustbader & Laurie Zimet, Principles for Enhancing Legal Education, INST. FOR LAW SCHOOL TEACHING AT GONZAGA UNIV., SCH. OF LAW (2001), available at http://lawteaching.org/publications/videos/principlesforenhancing.php (last visited Jan. 20, 2014) (establishing that effective learning environments “Promote student-faculty contact; Articulate clear, high expectations; Use time effectively; Respect differences among students; Foster cooperation; Provide prompt feedback; and Encourage active learning.”).
4 I work with the students to ensure that they give the correct answer out loud even if their first choice is incorrect.
the subject matter at hand, at a relatively minimal cost, something easily portable, and hopefully, at least in some cases, something that could be cherished for years after graduation.

Thus, while many of today’s students might view sports trading cards as an antiquated hobby by a previous generation, I have found that the majority of the students appreciate the gesture, receiving something that day to think about other than homework. 5 I call this the Trading Card Effect. I have found that this one-time quiz exercise, which is actually a game of sorts, reinforces successful and scientific pedagogical approaches including working in teams among an active-learning environment.6 This article summarizes my teaching method, observations and assessment7 from a pedagogical perspective. I hope that it could serve as a basis for others to consider ways to engage students during the final push to the end of the term in their own way.

CLASS EXECUTION

As mentioned, I focus this class exercise during the post-spring break (or post-Thanksgiving holiday) timeframe when I have found it challenging to retain student attendance and attention. So, I surprise the students by announcing a pop-quiz at the beginning of class.8 After the discontent and inquisitive confusion, I assure the students that they will take the quiz together: but it will not be graded. At this point, most students usually call for an explanation. I explain to them that I have prepared a pop-quiz by using multiple-choice questions which will be displayed by the visualizer (over-head projector). I offer that these multiple-choice questions are utilized with the intent that the students would see the same (or very similar) questions on the final exam. In this way, I emphasize the importance of their knowing the question and answer for now and for future reference such as on the final exam.9

I have already prepared on small bits of paper a single number ranging from #1-#40 (assuming a class of 40 students). These numbers are placed in a baseball hat or bucket that is passed around the room. Each student reaches in and pulls out one of the numbers. I tell the students to keep their number confidential, at least for the moment. Meanwhile, I have already written on the whiteboard the numbers #1-#40 as the numbers are being passed around. As soon as each student has drawn a number, I select one student to start this exercise and to pick three other numbers from the board. I assure the student that there is no right or wrong selection. The student (for example #17) chooses #3, #18 and #29 from the whiteboard. I then ask the students to reveal who possesses that number. Once discovered, I erase these numbers from the board and the four students become a “team” to answer one of ten multiple-choice questions that will be answered by the class member-teams on that day. The following represents a basic yet typical question from the pop quiz:

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5 See, e.g., Mike Tierney, Fewer are Investing Hearts and Money into Baseball Cards, N.Y. TIMES (June 30, 2013), http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/01/sports/baseball/fewer-are-investing-hearts-and-money-into-collecting-baseball-cards.html?partner=rss&emc=rss&_r=2& (discussing the fading interest in card collecting, a once passionate hobby). I am referencing Lily Tomlin, “I like a teacher who gives you something to take home to think about besides homework.” See
7 See Barbara Glesner Fines, Classroom Assessment Techniques for Law School Teaching, EIGHTH ANNUAL CONF. FOR LAW SCH. TEACHING (2001), available at http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/profiles/GlesnerFines/cats.htm (offering, inter alia, “Frequent, timely and focused assessment is critical to improving student learning.”)
8 I tip the students the week before in-person and via Blackboard that there will be a surprise for them and I strongly encourage them to attend. I have observed that many suspect something “big” is going to happen such as a quiz and attendance usually increases, at least for this particular class period.
9 It would be disingenuous if I did not therefore utilize the same or similar questions, albeit limited in number, on the final exam that I use during this exercise.
I reveal the first multiple-choice question on the visualizer (i.e., the modern version of the overhead projector), and this team of students to work together to select their “final answer.” I encourage them to discuss the answer among themselves. Once the question is answered correctly-hopefully on the first try-each member of that first team of students is given the opportunity to reach into small plastic bucket and choose one trading card. When the card is selected (blindly), I ask the student to show and announce to the class the name of the person on the card and to tell me why and how that person was relevant during the study of the material that semester.

For example, after reaching into the hat, student #17 reads the card and says, “Curt Flood” to the class. I assure the student that this is a great baseball card selection and explains how Curt Flood’s federal antitrust lawsuit and ultimate Supreme Court decision in 1972 paved the way for modern free agency in professional sports leagues. Other cards might include, for example, Spencer Haywood (NBA), John Mackey (NFL), Reggie White (NFL), and other professional athletes, incidents or issues which I have demonstrated the relevancy to my course. I

10 Of course, I am referencing one of the catchphrases from the television show Who Wants to be a Millionaire. See Carrie Grosvenor, Top Game Show Catch Phrases, ABOUT.COM (2014), available at http://gameshows.about.com/od/quizzestrivia/tp/Top-Game-Show-Catch-Phrases.htm (referencing popular catchphrases from television game shows and noting that both “I’d like to phone a friend” and “Is that your final answer” both emerged from this show). I sometimes ask my students if they would like to phone a friend as well. More recently I have found that it would be more appropriate if I ask my students, “Would you like to text a friend?”

12 If the students do not answer correctly on the first try, I work with them to get the correct answer and I will ask other students to assist if necessary. I have found that many students are eager to join the discussion when this happens even though they are not on the team-at-hand.

13 See Flood v. Kuhn, 407 U.S. 258, 282 (1972) (referencing Federal Baseball Club of Baltimore, Inc. v. Nat’l League of Professional Baseball Clubs, 259 U.S. 200 (1922)). The Washington Senators was the team that MLB player Curt Flood eventually played for after refusing to be traded to the Philadelphia Phillies. Flood sat out the 1970 season and was traded to the Senators the next year, though his career ended when he retired after playing only 13 games for the Senators in 1971. This led to the Curt Flood Act of 1998, 15 U.S.C. § 26b (2013);


15 Mackey v. Nat’l Football League, 543 F.2d 606 (8th Cir. 1976) (holding that the Rozelle Rule, named after the league commissioner, was a violation of antitrust law).


17 See Clarett v. Nat’l Football League, 369 F.3d 124 (2d Cir. 2004) [Clarett II], cert. denied, 125 S.Ct. 1728 (2005); see also Adam Epstein, The Empire Strikes Back: NFL Cuts Clarett, Sacks Scheindlin, 22 ENT. & SPORTS LAW 12-17 (2005) (discussing the case involving football player Maurice Clarett who sued in order to be eligible for the NFL draft even though it apparently had a rule that required him to be three full seasons removed from his high school graduation. Clarett won at the district court level, but the Second Circuit Court of Appeals vacated the district court’s order that he be declared eligible for the 2004 NFL draft. Clarett was ultimately drafted in the third round by the Denver Broncos in the 2005 draft, but he did not make the team; see also McNeil v. NFL, 790 F. Supp. 871 (D. Minn. 1992). Freeman McNeil (New York Jets) and seven others, as former members of a decertified union, sued alleging that the NFL’s Plan B free agency violated section 1 of the Sherman Act. Plan B had been implemented in 1989 and allowed clubs to protect the rights to 37 players from entering the free agent market. The jury found that NFL compensation rules were more restrictive than reasonably necessary to achieve the objective of establishing or maintaining competitive balance, causing economic harm to the players).

18 Another useful example is the now-infamous Sausage-gate incident of 2003. In this incident, Pittsburgh Pirates first baseman Randall Simon was cited for disorderly conduct, fined $2,000 by MLB and $432 for disorderly conduct by the local sheriff’s
then randomly choose another student who selects numbers from the whiteboard to form a team and repeat the process again.20 I inform the students that they will likely see these questions again, and most take notes during the exercise accordingly. As the exercise proceeds, some students have asked me, “Did you pay for these out of your own pocket?” I assure the students the cards were purchased by me.21 Some have asked me, “What’s the catch?”

When everyone has a card and the session is over, I announce that they made trade among themselves or trade for remaining cards in the bucket with me. I have found that many students ask for a trade as soon as the class ends. By engaging students this way, I strive to reinforce learning and interest in my course. At the very least, I hope it encourages class attendance by those less motivated.

I have observed that students follow-up with many “thanks,” while others will leave the class bewildered that something is being given to them without a fee, though pleasantly surprised. A few students have told me much the card is worth on eBay. Others respectfully demonstrate no interest in the cards and gave them away or back to me.

UNIVERSITY ASSISTANCE

I decided to contact the university’s teaching and learning center (TLC) for advice as to establish the legitimacy of my efforts pedagogically, to explore the relevant literature, and to conduct a survey among my students to assess its efficacy.22 Since I am not a trained teacher, per se, I wondered whether or not there was a science behind my efforts and how I could provide other law professors—whether in colleges of business, law schools or otherwise—a summary of what I do to so that it might inspire new and refreshing ways to deliver legal education in their own class.

I was encouraged by our TLC to conduct a formal-albeit brief-study involving an anonymous survey of my students who participated in the activity. In this way, I might have more concrete evidence to demonstrate whether or not The Trading Card Effect was actually effective. However, since human subjects are involved, the university teaching center cautioned that consideration must be given to file a protocol and receive Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval first.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Since my students are involved in this exercise and I intended on formally surveying (and publishing) the effectiveness of my efforts, I was cautioned by the TLC that any time human subjects are involved in the research, it would be appropriate to seek approval of from the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) first. Having heard of the IRB before in the most general of terms, but never thinking I would actually need to use it, I enrolled in the Basic Course for Training in Human Subjects Research sponsored by the University of Miami’s Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI).23 This involved hours’ worth of reading and taking quizzes in order to receive a positive Curriculum Completion Report.24 I took the quizzes over two days and passed successfully.25

office for knocking the Italian Sausage character to the ground during the Milwaukee Brewers’ famous sausage race. See Adam Epstein, Teaching Torts with Sports, 28 J. LEGAL STUD. Educ. 117, 132-33 (2011).

19 See, e.g., Harlem Wizards Entm’n Basketball, Inc. v. NBA Props., 952 F. Supp. 1084, 1088-89 (D.N.J. 1997) (summarizing history of the professional NBA basketball team nickname dispute between the Harlem Wizards and the Washington Wizards); Pro-Football, Inc. v. Harjo, 415 F.3d 44 (D.C. Cir. 2005) (discussing the case and other potential “immoral, deceptive, or scandalous” matters involving trademarks and Native American nicknames and connotations with regard to ethnic-based mascot issues).

20 If there are not enough students in the class, I will actually go to what I call “Round 2” and keep the same teams and give them the opportunity to select a second additional card as well.

21 I purchase them on eBay. I recognize that not all professors may have the means to spend freely on eBay for items, but generally my purchases do not exceed $60.00 for the semester.

22 The impetus behind the survey was by Dr. Eron Drake, Assistant Director of FCit. I had not considered conducting my own, in-class survey prior to discussion with her and Brian Roberts. Dr. Drake worked with me to conduct a survey design based upon her formal training and experience doing the same for others at our university.


24 Particular emphasis was given to Office of the Secretary, Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, THE BELMONT REPORT (Apr. 18, 1979), available at http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/belmont.html (last visited Jan. 20, 2014) (emphasizing , inter alia, that when conducting research involving human subjects that there are boundaries between practice and research, that informed consent is vital, and that there are three basic ethical principles including Respect for Persons, Beneficence [defined as an obligation to 1] do not harm and 2] maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harms], and Justice.). Today the Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare is known as the United States Dept. of Health & Human Services.

25 Reference ID: 11810318.
Surprised, I received an email response which determined that my “…project does not meet the definition of human subject research under the purview of the IRB according to federal regulations.”26 Thus, I was encouraged to proceed freely with this activity since my goal was to determine the degree to which my students enjoyed (or did not enjoy) The Trading Card Effect exercise to determine whether they felt it added value to their learning experience...” in my class.27

Accordingly, I invited two members from the TLC to attend my class and I explained to my students that these attendees were there to observe only.28 Unbeknownst to the students, I had also agreed with the TLC members that we would conduct our own anonymous survey at the end of the semester, in addition to the standard anonymous course evaluations.29 Everything went according to plan, although the class size that semester was smaller than usual having only 14 students. A few weeks later, I stepped out of the room as the TLC Assistant Director conducted the carefully crafted anonymous survey at the beginning of the last day of class.30

PEDAGOGY AND BEST PRACTICES

I was directed to various pedagogical research by the TLC. After exploring the various articles, studies and reports, I realized that The Trading Card Effect was in line with many effective teaching techniques though I was previously unaware of the vernacular. For example, I was unaware that there was literature related to the use of games in teaching, more formally known as gaming in education.31 However, the most significant law-related pedagogical production, in my opinion, that I explored is BEST PRACTICES FOR LEGAL EDUCATION by Roy Stuckey and others.32 This comprehensive 2007 production is available online and focuses primarily on best practices for legal education at the law school level, espousing seven categories of best practices.33 After reading the production it became apparent that I was utilizing many of the best practices without knowing it.34

26 Memorandum regarding The Trading Card Effect, Reference #546862-1, from Central Michigan University Institutional Review Board 1 to Adam Epstein, J.D., via email dated Dec. 8, 2013, on file with the author. The TLC informed me that it was important to seek IRB approval since human subjects were involved, in this case my own students, so as to avoid an appearance that conducting such research would affect their grade in any way (which it did not). Even though it was determined that what I was doing was not deemed to be human research since I was seeking student opinions, it was quite a relief to receive the green light to proceed.

27 Id.

28 I also invited a faculty member from my department to conduct a peer evaluation of me as well at the same time.

29 I conducted the university’s standard Student Opinion Survey (S.O.S.) the last week of class, but not last day of class. For the fall semester, 2013 Individual Opinion Survey, students responded to the question, “What are some specific things your instructor does that help you learn in this course?” with “Enjoyed the final exam review w/ [sic] trading cards.”; “Played a study game in class.”; “Use of examples and interacting with the class.; Activities like the card game was fun.”; and “Trading card game was good.” (on file with the author).

30 Dr. Drake provided a survey she crafted and then we worked together to fashion it for the class and the exercise.


32 Roy Stuckey & Others, BEST PRACTICES FOR LEGAL EDUC. (2007), available at http://www.cleaweb.org/Resources/Documents/best_practices-full.pdf (offering, on p. 27, “The Best Practices Project was undertaken in the spirit of fixing our own house before reform is imposed from the outside. Hopefully, the product of our work will help law schools broaden their educational goals, improve the preparation of students for practice, and become more accountable for their products and more consumer oriented in their educational practices.”); see also Christine N. Coughlin, Lisa T. McElroy & Sandy C. Patrick, See One, Do One, Teach One: Dissecting the Use of Medical Education’s Signature Pedagogy in the Law School Curriculum, 26 GA. ST. U. L. REV. 361 (2010) (referencing BEST PRACTICES FOR LEGAL EDUC. throughout).

33 Stuckey, supra note 32, at 5 (“We divide our discussion of best practices into seven categories: 1) setting goals, 2) organizing the program of instruction, 3) delivering instruction, generally, 4) conducting experiential courses, 5) employing non-experiential methods of instruction, 6) assessing student learning, and 7) evaluating the success of the program of instruction.”).

For example, in Chapter 4: Best Practices for Delivering Instruction, the chapter is divided up into several areas including: A. Know Your Subjects Extremely Well; B. Continuously Strive to Improve Your Teaching Skills; and C. Create and Maintain Effective and Healthy Teaching and Learning Environments. Having reached out to the TLC coupled with my interest in developing a new and effective way of presenting the material, I feel that I complied with the spirit of these principles. By using trading cards, I tried to make students feel welcome and included, another tenet of these best practices.

There are various other principles from this same work that I incorporated including collaboration and cooperative (i.e., team) learning, engaging in active learning, taking delight in teaching, brain-based learning, and enhancing learning with technology, just to name a few. In my opinion, BEST PRACTICES FOR LEGAL

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35 Stuckey, supra note 32, at 76-77 (“Principle: The teachers know their subjects extremely well. It also states, however: The most knowledgeable teachers, however, are not necessarily excellent teachers. [The best teachers], unlike so many others, have used their knowledge to develop techniques for grasping fundamental principles and organizing concepts that others can use to begin building their own understanding and abilities. They know how to simplify and clarify complex subjects, to cut to the heart of the matter with provocative insights, and they can think about their own thinking in the discipline, analyzing its nature and evaluating its quality. That capacity to metacognitively drives much of what we observed in the best teaching.” citing Ken Bain, WHAT THE BEST COLLEGE TEACHERS DO 15,16 (2004). However, it then goes on to say, “So, although one cannot become a great teacher without knowing the subject extremely well, more than knowledge is required to excel.”).

36 Id. at 76.
37 Id. at 80. I only focus on the first three, but other areas in this chapter include D. Explain Goals and Methods to Students; E. Choose Teaching Methods That Most Effectively and Efficiently Achieve Desired Outcomes; F. Use Multiple Methods of Instruction and Reduce Reliance on the Socratic Dialogue and Case Method; and G. Employ Context-Based Education Throughout the Program of Instruction.
38 Id. at 81 (“In the end, therefore, the single most important keys to effective teaching are a teacher’s desire to be an excellent teacher and a willingness to work hard at becoming one.”).
39 Id. at 89.
40 Id. at 88. (“Principle: The teachers encourage collaboration among students and teachers.” “An extensive body of research documents the benefits of cooperative learning methods. Over the past 100 years, more than 600 studies have demonstrated that cooperative learning produces higher achievement, more positive relationships among students, and psychologically healthier students than competitive or individualistic learning.” quoting a reference to Gerald F. Hess, Heads and Hearts: THE TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN LAW SCHOOL, 52 J. LEGAL EDUC. 75, 94 (2002) and (citing David W. Johnson et al., Cooperative Learning: Increasing College Faculty Instructional Productivity 1 (1991); Vernellia R. Randall, Increasing Retention and Improving Performance: Practical Advice on Using Cooperative Learning in Law Schools, 16 T. M. COOLEY L. REV. 201, 218 (1999)).
41 Id. at 91, citing Hess at 101, “Students learn better when they are actively engaged in the learning process.” The work also states “It has long been stated that active methods of learning are more effective than passive ones. Indeed, conference papers demonstrating that fact no longer reach the research journals,” citing DONALD A. BLUGH, WHAT’S THE USE OF LECTURES? 254 (2000).
42 Id. at 92. citing Hess at 104, “The teacher’s attitude, enthusiasm, and passion are main ingredients of an effective teaching and learning environment. Students regularly identify teacher enthusiasm as the most important component of effective instruction. In Lowman’s model of exemplary teaching, the most common descriptor of excellent teachers from students and other faculty was enthusiastic. A teacher’s passion for both teaching and the subject is a critical factor in student motivation.”
43 See Glenn Omatsu, Teaching for Social Change: Learning How to Afflict the Comfortable and Comfort the Afflicted, 32 LOYOLA L.A. L. REV. 791, 795 (1999) (referencing brain-based learning and stating, “Researchers have found that people learn best in situations of social interaction, or cooperative learning, and that students learn the most when situations are structured to promote both sensory and emotional stimulation - which leads to the discovery of new knowledge - rather than through memorization and repetition.”); see also Coughlin et al., supra note 32, at 414 (“…students learn from repetition, reward and punishment (characteristic of behavioralism); brain-based learning, sorting, encoding, and retention of material from short-term to long-term memory (characteristic of cognitivism); and, most importantly, the ability to apply learned concepts and ideas to new situations (deriving from both cognitivism and constructivism.”).
44 Stuckey, supra note 32, at 117, “If technology is not the future of legal education, it is at least part of the future.” (citing various articles that delve into the merits and specific details of using technology in law schools to include Kristin B. Gerdy, Jane H. Wise & Alison Craig, Expanding Our Classroom Walls: Enhancing Teaching and Learning Through Technology, 11 LEGAL WRITING 263, 263-66 (2005); David M. Becker, Some Concerns About the Future of Legal Education, 51 J. LEGAL EDUC. 469, 477-85 (2001); Gerald F. Hess et al., Seven Principles for Good Practice in Legal Education, 49 J. LEGAL EDUC. 367 (1999) (developing seven principles for good practice in legal education, which he modeled after seven principles for good practice in undergraduate learning, offering that good practice in legal education; encourages student-faculty contact; encourages cooperation among students; encourages active learning; gives prompt feedback; emphasizes time on task; communicates high expectations; and respects diverse talents and ways of learning.); see also Paul L. Caron & Rafael Gely, Taking Back the Law
ASSESSMENT

I worked closely with the Assistant Director of the TLC to develop a survey to assess The Trading Card Effect, which I discovered later was also consistent with Chapter 7: Best Practices for Assessing Student Learning and in particular conducting a formative assessment during the semester. With regard to formative assessments,

“Formative assessments also help teachers know whether their coverage of a topic is sufficient or whether they need to review the material again or present it in a different manner. Educational experts advocate assessing student learning throughout the learning process and afterwards for the purpose of determining how to improve instruction and whether to continue or discard it. “If it becomes apparent that all or most of the students fail to comprehend a particular area of a course or a particular point made by the professor, this data indicates that the problem may be attributable to the professor.”

The Assistant Director collected the anonymous data and provided me with results via email but, as agreed, only after I submitted my final grades at the end of the semester so as to avoid any appearance that the data might influence a student’s grade.

When asked to rate the importance of various activities throughout the semester relative to the students ability to learn and retain essential course concepts, 33.3% rated it extremely important, 33.3% rated it very important, and 33.3% rated it moderately important. When asked to indicate the extent to which the students agreed or disagreed with various teaching methods, 55.6% strongly agreed that “The Trading Card activity helped me to learn course

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45 See also Barbara J. Millis, Becoming an Effective Teacher Using Cooperative Learning: A Personal Odyssey, PEER REVIEW (Spring 2009), available at http://www.aacu.org/peerreview/pr-sp09/pr-sp09_millis.cfm (“Effective teachers also teach intentionally, reflecting on their teaching and making changes. Many of them deliberately sequence assignments and activities to build for deeper learning even if they are unfamiliar with the specific research literature. They plan carefully to design structured assignments. Students understand what is expected of them. And, often because they are motivated by an inspired, inspiring teacher, they strive to meet or exceed those expectations. They are often motivated by a caring teacher. Teaching is a science more than an “art.” A few “natural” teachers seem to develop expertise effortlessly. Most of us labor in the teaching vineyards because we care about our teaching, about our students, and about our students’ learning and professional growth. Sometimes we labor far longer than we should. Learning to teach effectively is typically an evolving process. Caring teachers grow over time, aided by self-reflection, reading, workshops, peer mentors, and faculty developers. Even in these “tough economic times,” teaching centers, with some lamentable exceptions, continue to flourish. They help caring teachers grow and develop; they play instrumental roles in helping institutions commit to student learning, and because effective teachers help produce better educated students, ultimately, they serve the needs of a democratic society.”).

46 I was unaware that utilizing teams as a successful teaching strategy is known as cooperative learning. See generally Clifford S. Zimmerman, “Thinking Beyond My Own Interpretation:” Reflections on Collaborative and Cooperative Learning Theory in the Law School Curriculum, 31 ARIZ. ST. L.J. 957 (1999).

47 Stuckey, supra note 32, at 191, (stating, “It is important to know what we will do with the information our assessments will produce. The purpose of an assessment can be formative, summative, or both. Formative assessments are used to provide feedback to students and faculty. Their purpose is purely educational, and while they may be scored, they are not used to assign grades or rank students. A summative assessment is one that is used for assigning a grade or otherwise indicating a student’s level of achievement.” “It is important to know what we will do with the information our assessments will produce. The purpose of an assessment can be formative, summative, or both. Formative assessments are used to provide feedback to students and faculty. Their purpose is purely educational, and while they may be scored, they are not used to assign grades or rank students. A summative assessment is one that is used for assigning a grade or otherwise indicating a student’s level of achievement.” “Providing formative feedback to students ought to be the primary form of assessment in legal education.”).

48 Id. at 192, quoting-apparently-Gerald F. Hess & Steven Friedland, TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING LAW 286 (1999).

49 The six activities polled were Lectures, Cases, Trading Card Activity, Writing Assignment, Clickers (Personal Response Systems), and Tests. The possible responses were Extremely important, Very important, Moderately important, Slightly important, and Not at all important. The sample size was small (9) but only 14 students were enrolled for the course that semester.

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content,” while 44.4% agreed. Student comments specifically with regard to the effectiveness of the Trading Card exercise as a learning experience in the course included:

1. Clicker game/Trading Card game gave new perspective to the material. Cases could be tough to follow along with. Lectures/PowerPoint Notes were extremely helpful;
2. All of the names were a little bit overwhelming. Going over the questions is really valuable;
3. It was a fun way to stay engaged the whole class period;
4. It was a creative way to remember material, wish we could’ve had more time-it felt rushed;
5. Different way of learning so it made me remember more information;
6. High energy kept the class period upbeat and fun;
7. It was a great exercise! Proved I knew more than I thought! Great way to keep the material fresh in our minds!;
8. Help remember some of the key players and individuals involved in the ever changing world of sports law.

I was pleased to receive the positive feedback. With the help of the TLC, I was able to assess students in an anonymous way which confirmed that my exercise works for me.

Finally, I do recognize the limitation of the application of using trading cards as a form of positive reinforcement of concepts and individuals. Using professional athletes’ images and cards might not work for you. I do not propose specific suggestions for how one might find an innovative method of teaching for your class as it certainly depends upon your interests, the subject matter, and so on. I wanted to try something new to keep student interest as the semester’s end was in sight.

Still, The Trading Card Effect works for me and I will continue to use it as long as I feel it is effective (and fun) in this class. Upon reflection, I certainly learned a lot about pedagogy in general and the science behind effective teaching and methods. Reaching out to the university’s TLC for the first time also enabled me to operate outside my comfort zone, seek IRB approval (something I thought was just for the sciences) and work with individuals who have had formal training in teaching methods, course design and development. I think the act of giving students something tangible that they can remember from your course could have an impressionable, positive impact for that student on that day and beyond.

CONCLUSION

I have found that utilizing sports trading cards is a fun and engaging way to bridge a hobby from yesterday-year to connect with today’s students. I give my students a tangible time on that day to take with them, and I hope that the non-recorded, pop-quiz exercise creates a memorable learning experience over evaluation. I am confident that this exercise is consistent with pedagogical research and other teaching suggestions. The value and assistance of the university’s teaching and learning center cannot be underestimated.

Shortly after class or the semester, I hope that students who believed that there was still a “catch” might return to their ubiquitous, virtual world and realize that they were able to appreciate the class in retrospect with the receipt of that tangible sports trading card. I have found that The Trading Card Effect possibly impacts me more than my students, but at least it represents a way to connect with students without having to use Wi-Fi.

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50 The rating choices included, “1. The lectures helped me to learn course content; 2. The course materials (PowerPoints, notes, etc.) helped me to learn course content; 3. The course information posted to the Blackboard site helped me prepare for this course; 4. The Case Quiz did NOT help me to learn course content; 5. The Trading Card activity helped me to learn course content; 6. The Writing Assignment did NOT help me to learn course content; and 7. The Guest Speakers helped me to understand course content.” Possible responses were Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.