

A globe is centered in the image, held up by two hands from below. The background is a gradient of teal and blue. The text is overlaid on the globe and background.

Connecting Curriculum with Current Events: Helping Students Escape Their Bubble

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What do we hope for your students?

- Bridge the Disconnect
- Escape a Myopic Worldview
- Engage with the Greater World
- Be Inspired with Curiosity



Workshop Objectives

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. assist their students in formulating higher-level questions, as per Bloom's taxonomy.
2. demonstrate to students that college coursework and current events are closely connected.
3. engage with interdisciplinary concepts and materials in order to create lesson activities which connect the curriculum with the greater world.
4. help their students become aware of a broader array of majors and areas of study.
5. demonstrate to their students how to engage with those who hold differing points of view civilly and productively.

What value does the news have to our curriculum?

- builds interest in and love for the topic and field
- gives a new perspective on concepts studied in class
- connects students with the real world
- assists students in seeing connections amongst various fields
- builds skills of empathy and compassion for the world



Why use current events in your course?

It is written in our curriculum and syllabi:

STEM:

1. HLTH 105—Personal and Community Health:

- “Demonstrate knowledge of **current, factual information** regarding health issues.”

2. HLTH 212 — Controlling Stress and Tension:

- “Identify and examine **current theories** and research on the causes and impact of stress on the individual and family, community and the **larger society**.”

3. ASTR 101—Introductory Astronomy:

- “Distinguish science from non-science or pseudoscience” & “Identify **reputable print and electronic sources** of astronomical research and data.”

4. BIOL 151 —Principles of Biology II:

- “Explain how **human activities** alter existing biodiversity and impact evolutionary and ecological processes

Humanities:

1. HIST 201— History of the United States 1865 to present:

- “identify and define key events, **social changes, political issues**, and personalities which had an impact on the United States from the end of the Civil War **to the present.**” & “analyze how the **events in the recent past** affect the direction of the U.S. in our **contemporary setting** and how they can shape future developments of the U.S.”

2. PSYC 102— Introduction to Psychology:

- “Applying psychology to **real life**: Students should be able to use psychological concepts to explain or interpret human experience”

3. WMST 101 — Introduction to Women’s Studies:

- “Understanding the historical forces that have shaped the **current world**: bridging past to the present” and “Connections to experience: Designing and applying creative solutions to **real world problems**”

4. POLI 101 — American Government: “ Analyze, interpret, and critically examine **current political events.**”

A Citizen Learner:

The Outcome of a Successful Education

1. What is an engaged citizen?

- up-to-date on contemporary issues and current events (aware and familiar with the major news stories of the day)
- shows concern for social issues and seeks to solve problems to create a better future

2. What is an engaged learner?

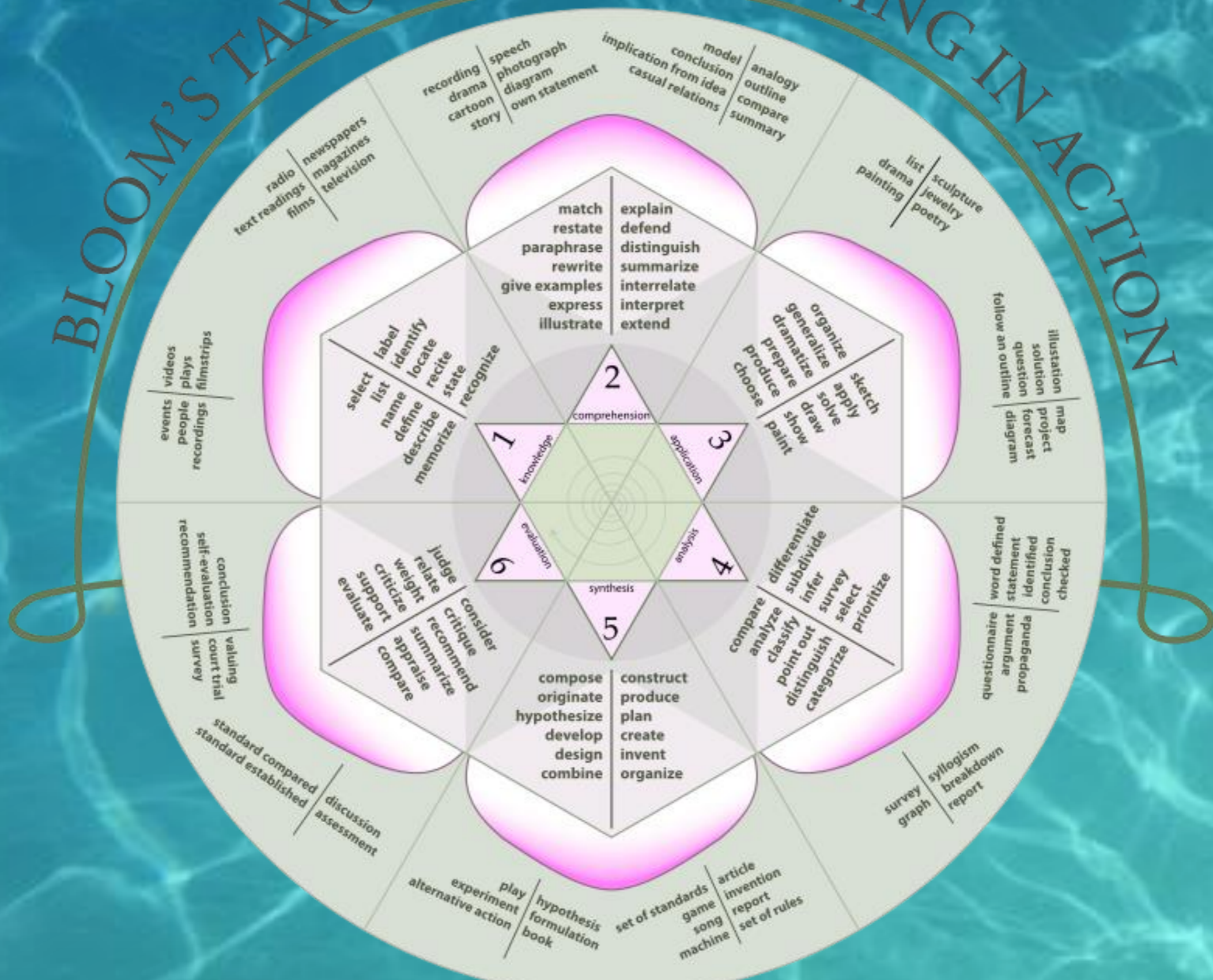
- able to think critically
- can make connections between larger concepts

Thus a **citizen learner** is someone who does both

How can we facilitate the development of citizen learners?

1. Lead students through the tiers of Bloom's Taxonomy to develop critical thinking skills
2. Engage students in thinking critically about a vast number of diverse topics
3. Use question stems to help students form questions of increasing complexity to explore current issues in society
4. Build lesson activities that provide the opportunity for students to practice and utilize problem solving and analytical skills related current social issues and problems
5. Explore how current events can affect multiple disciplines

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY - LEARNING IN ACTION



Bloom's Taxonomy

What students should be able to do at each level:

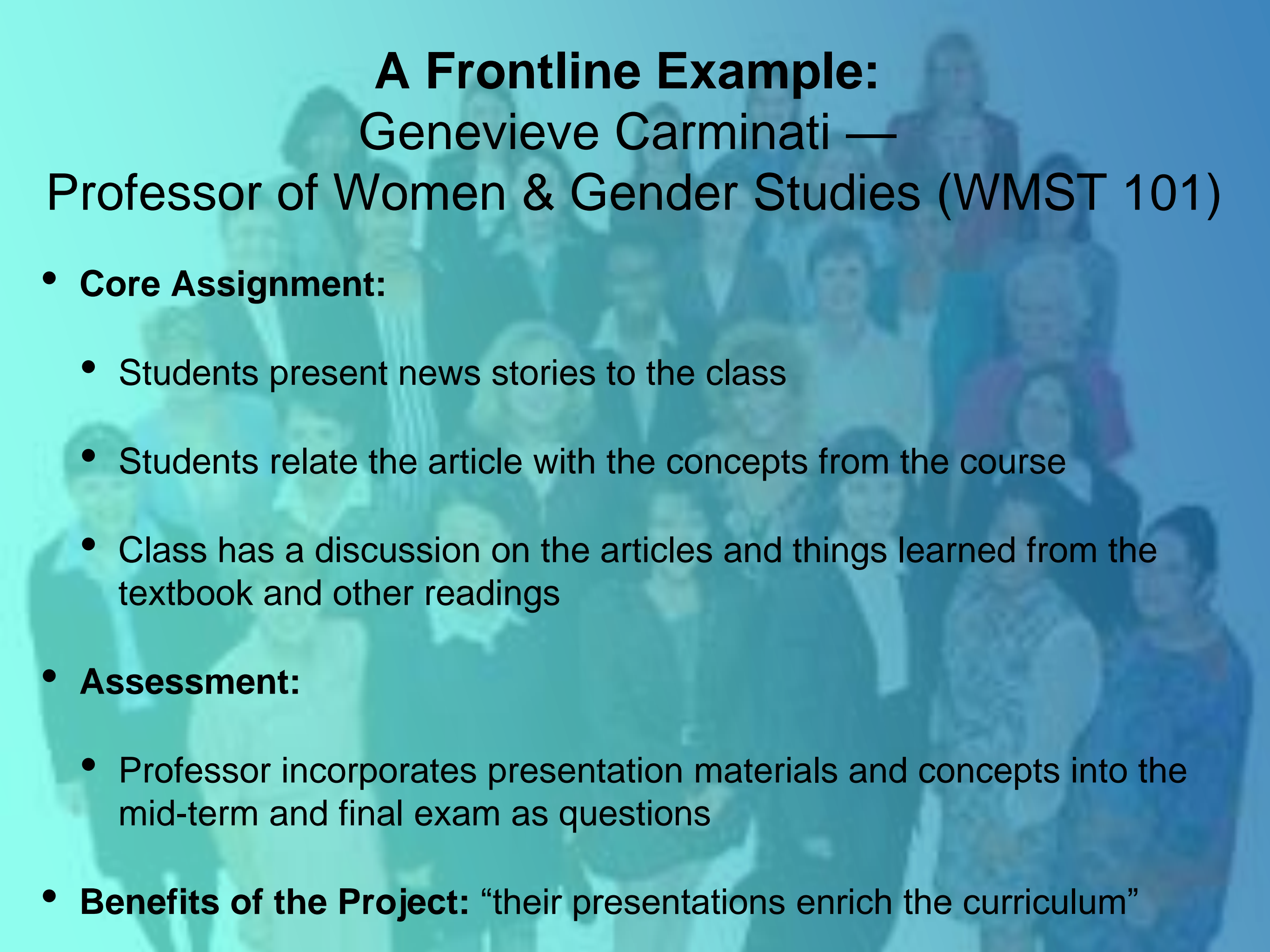
- **Knowledge (RECALL):** recite what they learn, be able to state the facts, recite new vocabulary, match vocabulary with definition
- **Comprehension (UNDERSTAND):** read something and be able to paraphrase and summarize; express the ideas read/heard; give examples; identify main ideas and details; understand the organization of the writing
- **Application (APPLY):** use information in a meaningful way; creating diagrams or outlines of material;
- **Analysis (ANALYZE):** discuss or explain how ideas and concepts differ from one another; identify salient features of the topic; infer underlying perspectives
- **Synthesis (CREATE):** create a new product by piecing together all the learned information; repurposing the old ideas into something more currently relevant
- **Evaluation (EVALUATE):** making commentary on the perspectives; judging the validity of sources and statements; offering recommendations for current issues

Things to keep in mind about Bloom's Taxonomy

1. The levels of thinking do not occur in an isolated manner.
2. Multiple levels of thinking can be at play for a given activity.
3. It is not necessarily a set progression of levels.
4. Try to address all levels even if it seems basic because what may seem self-evident may not be to students.
5. Also, putting students in the position of creating their own questions may facilitate greater learning.

How to Incorporate News Stories into Your Lesson

- 1. Build Vocabulary-** discuss field-specific content vocabulary
- 2. Lead-in** to an important new concept (Stepping Stone)
- 3. Follow-up** to an important new concept covered (Review)
- 4. Independent activity-** signature assignment, essay, group project, research paper
- 5. Formal assessment-** exam or quiz



A Frontline Example: Genevieve Carminati — Professor of Women & Gender Studies (WMST 101)

- **Core Assignment:**

- Students present news stories to the class
- Students relate the article with the concepts from the course
- Class has a discussion on the articles and things learned from the textbook and other readings

- **Assessment:**

- Professor incorporates presentation materials and concepts into the mid-term and final exam as questions

- **Benefits of the Project:** “their presentations enrich the curriculum”

Practice Incorporating a Current Event

1. Review question stems based on each level of Bloom's Taxonomy
2. Practice writing questions specific to the Caster Semenya news article
3. Go over general activities for each level of Bloom's taxonomy
4. Discuss possible activities for a lesson incorporating the news on Caster Semenya

Sports Court Backs Distinct Gender Lines, in Defeat for Olympian



Image Credit:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caster_Semenya_\(42411013704\)_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caster_Semenya_(42411013704)_(cropped).jpg)

[VIDEO: Caster Semenya News Clip](#)

An ESL Example of Caster Semenya News Article

- **Vocabulary:** concept terms- Supreme Court, testosterone; collocations: “preferred event”, “gold medalist”; idioms/cultural references: “Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps”; figurative language: “First chapter of my life don, looking forward to my second chapter.”; aphorisms: “Don’t go through life, grow through life.”
- **Lead-In:** Discussing Issues Course- Read the article as a lead-in to a unit on sports and competition
- **Follow-Up Review:** identify parts of speech of language: undergo (verb), eligible (adjective), emphatically (adverb), vowed (verb); review vocabulary definitions; dissect the verb tenses: “will maintain”—future, “until her case is resolved” — passive; word-family work: emphatic, emphasis, emphasize, emphatically
- **Project/Assignment:** opinion essay; summary and response of the news article; debate (perspective of Caster, the perspective of the IAAF, or perspective of another athlete); Grammar review worksheets (Usage of the present perfect verb tense and usage of modals)
- **Assessment:** reading comprehension quiz (main idea, details, inferences); test of reading skills (contextual analysis, pronoun referents, fact vs. opinion); listening comprehension (watch a short news clip and answer questions about Caster)

Other Discipline Activities

- **Professor Carminati- Introduction Women & Gender Studies:**

- As a lead-in: Use the article to explain concepts of socially constructed gender identity and gender expectation
- As a follow-up: Continue a discussion on theories on gender identity and the body: gender variance, gender dysphoria

- **Law/Ethics:**

- Classroom discussion: Is it fair to restrict Caster when she has no control over her body?
- Role Play: Pretend you are a member of the IAAF. What other policies does a governing board such as the IAAF need to create for individuals like Caster? Are there legal ramifications in situations like this and would other athletes be able to sue over a situation like this?

- **Health Sciences:**

- Draw a diagram or flowchart of the pituitary gland. Demonstrate how hormones are produced in the body and how high-level competition and exercise can change the testosterone level in women. What causes the endocrine system to produce more testosterone in women?
- Write an essay describing all possible treatment plans to regulate testosterone levels. Would the treatments that the IAAF is suggesting cause any negative effects on Caster's body in the future (i.e. fertility, cognition, daily life functions, etc.) Discuss advantages and disadvantages.

- **Business:**

- Role Play: As a large company such as Nike or Adidas, create an advertisement and marketing plan using Caster as the celebrity face for your line of high-end female sportswear.

More Cross-Curriculum Applications

- **Philosophy/Law:**

- Have a class discussion about what is fair in athletic competitions.
- Have a debate and argue both sides of the case

- **Sociology**

- Discuss how discrimination can lead to hate crimes

- **English:**

- Write an opinion paper about how you personally feel about the issue

- **Ecology/Environmental Studies:**

- Do a research project on how chemicals in our environment can also affect our hormones. Research natural and toxic chemicals that might raise testosterone levels or estrogen levels, etc.

Independent Practice

(Individually or with a partner)

1. Choose one of three articles to read
2. Formulate questions on each level of Bloom's taxonomy for the article of choice
3. Create activities for the chosen article (vocab, lead-in, follow-up, assessment, and project)
4. Think of some interdisciplinary questions and activities that could apply to the article.
5. Discuss how this article could enrich your course.

Integrative Learning/Cross-Disciplinary Practices

- **What is Integrative Learning?**

"Integrative learning is an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus" (American Association of Colleges and University, VALUE Rubric for Integrative Learning, 2015 & <https://mcintegrativelearningfieldguide.weebly.com>)

- **Why should we do it?**

- It gives students the ability to adapt and be versatile in multiple settings
- Students learn to transfer knowledge from one discipline to solve problems in another field
- It builds awareness of other fields and helps students choose the best career path in the future
- Collaborative work is key to workplace success and students learn to be team players

[**Elon University Video on Integrative Learning**](#)

Tips on Helping Students Engage Civilly with One Another

1. Start small and choose less controversial news events
2. In the beginning keep discourse short. Work up to longer discourses as students become more comfortable
3. Watch short video clips on how other people are discussing the issue (gives students differing perspectives and also language to articulate their own viewpoints)
4. If the topic is particularly charged or controversial, give students the opportunity to journal privately to respond to the topic. Decide after reading student responses whether a more public forum in class is appropriate.
5. For classroom discussions, be sure to state ground rules explicitly:
 - Listen before responding. Listen respectfully.
 - Try your best to remain calm when you don't agree.
 - Ask for clarification when you don't understand something another student has said.
 - Separate the topic from the person. Don't use derogatory or belligerent language.

An Overview of Newspapers Resources through Montgomery College's Library

1. Go to www.montgomerycollege.edu
2. Click on the "Library" tab on the top right
3. Scroll down to "Research and Access" and select "Newspapers"
4. ProQuest Newspapers is a vast database. You can filter the search by topic, date, and sources.
5. There is an option to browse individual newspapers such as *The Washington Post*, *NYT*, *WSJ*, and *The Baltimore Sun*.
6. There is also an option to find articles from educational newspapers such as *The Chronicles of Higher Ed*, *Education Week*, and *Inside Higher Ed*.