David Thomson and Roberto Corrada: Friday Teaching Simulations

This presentation will feature two examples of teaching doctrine through whole-course simulations that are designed to implement the insights of the Carnegie Report, and studies about learning that support the Carnegie Report’s recommendations. The presentation will explain how they work and why they make sense, both in terms of learning theory and in terms the practicalities of modern legal education.

One of the great benefits of teaching through simulations is that they create many opportunities for active learning, sense-making, self-assessment, and reflection by the students, as the students work with each other to construct the subject of the course together in collaborative exercises. Simulations also have the benefit of supporting the professional identity apprenticeship – often overlooked in legal education - since they put the students in the role of the lawyer in a world in which lawyers increasingly work as members of problem-solving teams. Moreover, simulations support collaborative and active learning almost by definition.

These teaching methods provide a better way to achieve transfer and long-term retention of information while also providing an integrated law school experience emphasizing not only legal analytical thinking, but also practical skills and professionalism in a single class. Two examples will be described in this presentation – in a Labor Law course, and in a Discovery Law course.