

## **The MBTI in the College Classroom: Matching Teaching Styles and Learning Styles**

### **Prepared by:**

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### **Abstract**

Students' struggles with course materials can increase when their learning styles differ from their professor's teaching style. Type theory reminds us that the same material can (and often should) be presented in different ways, to accommodate our students' "differing gifts."

This workshop will introduce the basics of MBTI type theory and guide participants in a "self-estimate" of their own type. Participants will then explore ways to lessen "type bias" in classroom instruction and in the structure/s of course assignments. The ultimate goal is to shape instruction in ways that support a greater range of learning/communication styles.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this workshop is to help participants understand the diversity of teaching/learning styles and to apply that understanding to classroom instruction.

### **Learning Objectives**

Participants will better understand type theory and develop a "self-estimate" of their own type.

Participants will better understand how their academic discipline (and, by extension, their own classroom instruction) tends to favor some learning styles over others.

Participants will explore complementary ways of "teaching and testing" their course material.

### **Synopsis**

Brainchild of Swiss depth psychologist Carl Jung, the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI) is the most extensively researched, heavily normed, and widely applied personality "sorting instrument" in use today. The MBTI gives insights into our individual cognitive styles and preferences; it also helps us understand the differing preferences, styles, and habits of our colleagues and—most importantly for this workshop—of our students.

The MBTI sorts individual preferences within four different dichotomies (note that the underlined letters form acronyms of the MBTI types):

Introversion vs. Extraversion

(where and how we direct our energies, whether inward or outward);

Sensing vs. intuition

(how we gather information, emphasizing either the big-picture “forest” or the fact-by-fact “trees”);

Thinking vs. Feeling

(how we make decisions, emphasizing either “impersonal rules” and logic or “personal values” and interpersonal relationships);

Judging vs. Perceiving

(how we organize our world and time, stressing either order/structure or freedom/spontaneity).

Combinations of these dichotomies make for sixteen different personality types, each with its distinctive approach to learning—and to teaching.

### **Suggested Practices**

Extend classroom “percolation time” and participation through Blackboard blogging (accommodating E/I preferences).

When presenting/explaining course materials, illustrate abstract concepts with concrete examples; conversely, relate concrete data to broader contexts/concepts (accommodating S/N functions).

Build variety into assignments, allowing for collaboration and/or solo work; also, give versions of the same assignment, one of which can be left relatively unstructured while another is deeply detailed with rules and recipes (accommodating SJ, SP,NF, NT temperaments).

### **References**

Kirby, Linda, et al. *MBTI Resource Guide*. Center for Applications of Psychological Type (CAPT), 2011.

Meyers, Isabel Briggs, et al. *MBTI Manual*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. CAPT, 2009.

### **Additional Resources**

Kroeger, Otto, and Janet M. Thuesen. *Type Talk : The 16 Personality Types that Determine How We Live, Love, and Work*. 1989. (This remains the most popular overview of the MBTI and its daily, practical applications.)

To take the MBTI online, visit [www.myersbriggs.org](http://www.myersbriggs.org). (NOTE: While there are many free online instruments based in the MBTI, these tend toward oversimplification in testing and in interpretation of results).

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