Building Student Community through a Sailing Course

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Introduction to Sailing

- One credit hour general education course
- Fall 2012
- Open to first-year students
- Eight weeks long
- Met once each week for two hours
- Taught in collaboration with Geneva Lake Sailing School
This course introduces students to lake-based sailing. Topics covered include terminology, equipment, as well as technical and safety skills. Safety will be emphasized. Students will have the opportunity to sail in pairs each week on Geneva Lake (weather permitting) and put lectures, discussions, and readings into practice.
Course Objectives

- Basic sailing nomenclature
- Understand the theory of sailing
- Proper rigging and care of sails
- Execute a man overboard drill
- Tie the following knots: figure-8 knot, square knot, half hitch, and bowline
- Identify the “points of sail” and sail them
- An awareness of wind direction (true & apparent)
- Proficiency at launching and landing a sailboat
- Start, stop, and sail backwards
- Perform tacks and jibes and know the difference between the two
- Confidence in steering, trimming the mainsail, and trimming the jib
Additional Objectives

- Engage first-year students in the culture of George Williams College
- Provide students with a co-curricular activity intended to build community
1. Points of sail, nomenclature, rigging the boat, how a boat sails, finding the wind
2. Steering, trimming, safety position, tip-test,
3. Launching and landing, start stop reverse, man over board drill
4. Knot practice, tacks & jibes, heading up, bearing away
5. Upwind sailing, telltales
6. Downwind sailing, balance
7. Basic right of way rules, racing, strategy and tactics
8. Fun race: to be determined…
GWC Race Day!

Goals
- races

Course: Windward Leeward 1 lap

Imaginary Starting line

3 minute Starting Sequence
There were two written assignments for the course.

End of week one: One to two page list of personal goals that the student had for the course.

End of week eight: Two to three page reflection on what the student gained from the course in terms of skill development, personal development, and how the course helped build community and helped the student become more engaged in the culture and customs at George Williams College.
Coming into this class I was skeptical as to how it had anything to do with our curriculum as a college student. I soon began to realize that sailing itself was not all that we were learning. We were learning many other social and personal lessons along the way.

Beginning the class I was very apprehensive to let go of the group that I was comfortable being in. However, we were made to change crew mates every week; for which I am extremely thankful because it allowed me to meet new classmates and helped me to learn through experience how to work with others in situations that we may not all be completely comfortable in.
Student Reflections

Being out in a boat where everyone is new to the skills and trying to learn together there would be conflicting opinions as to what should happen.

There wasn’t a class that went by that the students and instructors were not joking with each other and generally having fun. However, when practicing new skills, tension would rise and the fun would diminish somewhat.

We were a community, we succeeded and failed together. You could see this community on the bus ride to class each week. The students would be reviewing together and working to help everyone learn