“TERM IT!” : A Term-Based method that quickly transforms students into thinking and writing “macro-economically” or “micro-economically”

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Connecting classroom lectures to the real world not only creates relevance, but extends the in-class experience and increases retention. Youtube videos and online lectures are effective, but involve passive learning. This generation of students is eager to discuss current economic issues, but when asked to comment in writing, the experience culminates in a summary or simply a rephrasing of references. Term It!, a term-based method, engages students in active learning. It is an approach to writing that is supported by a framework involving the use of technical terms in generating written economic arguments. Term It! is a two phase process. The first phase involves the use of a template as part of in-class media literacy exercises. The second phase goes beyond the template, as Term It! offers a unique platform where the student must use technical terms in assigned essays. The use of term lists guides the students to think critically about their word choices in order to write something of substance. They become confident writers, start playing the ‘economics game’ and find economics more interesting and creative.

How the students use the framework reveals the depth of their micro or macroeconomic critical thinking. Students want writing tools, and the framework can be used as a retrospective rubric for the student, to discern how sophisticated or rudimentary their analysis actually was. I exposed my five principles classes to Term It! applications as collaborative in-class exercises. I also exposed them to another writing technique. 242 students over two semesters answered a survey where 76% reported trying at least one of the techniques in assigned essays, and only 24% did not. Students want help in improving their academic writing. Overwhelmingly those who tried the techniques found them helpful or very helpful.

Academic writing is a critical component of student success and needs the immediate attention and support of educators. Creating relevance to a course is another critical ingredient of the learning experience. Finally, making connections through critical thinking is a catalyst to both. Term It! can help on all counts.