

From Sarah Champlin-Scharff

Chapter 13, Understanding and Interpretation: A Hermeneutic Approach to Advising

Discussions to facilitate reflection and understanding

At the center of this chapter is the notion that a nuanced understanding of the students we advise can aid in providing effective, useful, and meaningful advice. Below are a number of exercises to help advisors draw out context and meaning.

Group Exercises:

- Refer to the notions of connectedness, world, and time as outlined in pages 227- 231 in order to draw out context. Consider one or two student cases together with a group of colleagues. Begin reviewing the case through one of these interpretive “lenses.” How might the connections of others be influencing the ways in which the advisee makes sense of his/her experience as a college student? How might his/her contextualized world be filtering and shaping how things have meaning for him/her?
- Refer to pages 231-232. Consider your own experience as a college student through Gadamer’s framework. How did your personal history “prejudice” the way in which you participate in the work of advising?

Individual Exercises:

- Consider the “big picture” as outlined in the discussion of the hermeneutic circle on pages 233-234. Think through the construction of meaning, what matters or makes sense to a student, as “...the interplay between the prejudgments and traditions that the advisor and advisee each bring to the situation...” (p. 234). Reflect on a conversation you are about to have with a student. Consider how you might use these probing questions from page 235 to frame the conversation.
- Before your next advising meeting read the small section on page 236 about epistemic humility. Approach the next conversation with the conscious recognition that you don’t have all of the answers open to what you might find. After the meeting reflect about how it changed or didn’t change your conversation.