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Renowned Harvard physicist and educator to visit UQ

Renowned Harvard physicist and lecturer Professor Eric Mazur will visit UQ this week to reveal his insights and methods into teaching large classes at university level.

In conjunction with the Harvard Club of Australia, Professor Mazur will visit on January 14 and 15 giving three separate presentations that are open to the public.

Renowned for his innovations in physics education, Professor Mazur's Peer Instruction program is described as "truly revolutionary".

Peer Instruction is a pedagogical method that actively involves students in the teaching process.

The program emphasises understanding of concepts and ideas, and hence, enables students to be become better problem solvers.

Students are challenged by concept tests that are flashed on screen during lectures. Students record their initial answer using hand-held devices, such as clickers used at UQ's larger Science lectures. They then have another minute to convince his or her neighbour of their logic. Chaos ensues as students start to argue back and forth, across aisles and rows.

Students are finally asked to plug their revised answers into the computer; they also record their confidence levels - pretty sure, not quite sure, or just guessing.

The computer instantly shows the percentage that answered correctly initially and after discussion, allowing the lecturer to adapt the teaching pace, providing more detail on the subject, and then re-evaluating with another concept test if required.

The method has received acclaim around the world, and has been used in other areas of science as well as the humanities.

On Thursday, Professor Mazur will present a seminar titled *Confessions of a converted lecturer* that will describe his realisation that it was, in fact, his teaching that was causing his students to fail and, as a result, how he has significantly improved his students' performances.

On Friday morning, Professor Mazur will lead an informal discussion regarding the use of clickers in interactive lectures.

An academic lecture will take place on Friday afternoon in the area of optical physics entitled *Black Silicon*.

For more information regarding these sessions visit <http://www.smp.uq.edu.au/physics/mazur.html> or contact Margaret Wegener at m.wegener@uq.edu.au

Media: Lynelle Ross (3346 9935 or l.ross@smp.uq.edu.au).

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