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# JNCHC

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## JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

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Spring/Summer 2002

Vol. 3, No. 1

JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

VOLUME 3, NO. 1

Honors Program  
University of Alabama at Birmingham  
1530 3rd Avenue South  
Birmingham, AL 35294-4490

### IN THIS ISSUE

#### LIBERAL LEARNING

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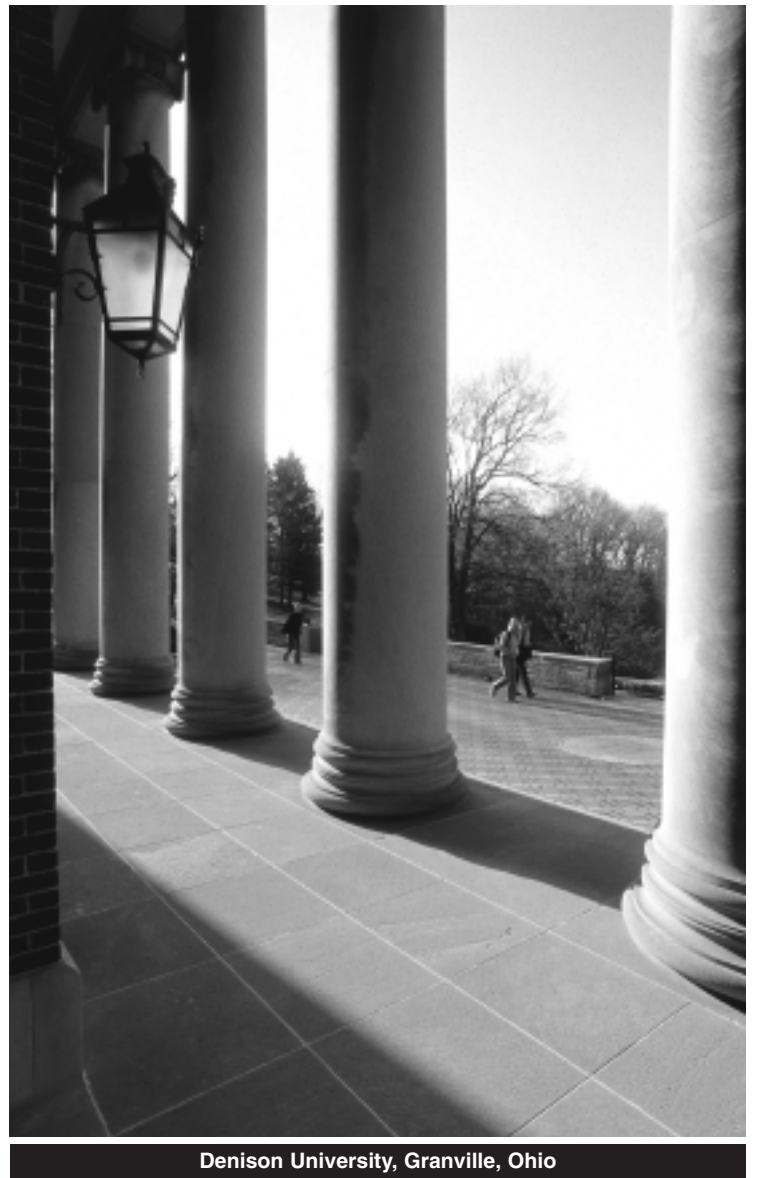
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A PUBLICATION OF THE



NATIONAL COLLEGIATE  
HONORS COUNCIL



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# JNCHC

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JOURNAL OF THE  
NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

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A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

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## LIBERAL LEARNING

JOURNAL EDITORS

ADA LONG

DAIL MULLINS

RUSTY RUSHTON

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

**The National Collegiate Honors Council** is an association of faculty, students, and others interested in honors education. *Rosalie Otero*, **President**, University of New Mexico; *Donzell Lee*, **President-Elect**, Alcorn State University; *Norm Weiner*, **Vice President**, State University of New York at Oswego; *Earl Brown, Jr.*, **Exec Sec/Treas**, Radford University; *G Hewett Joiner*, **Immediate Past President**, Georgia Southern University. **Executive Committee** *Brian Adler*, Valdosta State University; *Elizabeth Beck*, Iowa State University; *Ronald Brandolini*, Valencia Community College; *Kate Bruce*, University of North Carolina, Wilmington; *K. Celeste Campbell*, Oklahoma State University; *Ashley Carlson*, Chapman University; *Lawrence V. Clark*, Southeast Missouri State University; *Adam D'Antonio*, Long Island University, C.W. Post Campus; *Michael Gale*, University of Florida; *Morgan Anne Goot*, SUNY Potsdam; *Tolulope Olowomeye*, Ball State University; *Jack W. Rhodes*, The Citadel; *Jon Schlenker*, University of Maine (Augusta); *Ricki Shine*, SUNY Buffalo; *Shirley Thomas*, John Brown University; *Natalia Valenzuela*, Columbia College; *Jack White*, Mississippi State University; *John Zubizarreta*, Columbia College.

## EDITORIAL POLICY

*Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* is a refereed periodical publishing scholarly articles on honors education. The journal uses a double-blind peer review process. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education. Submissions may be forwarded in hard copy, on disk, or as an e-mail attachment. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to: Ada Long / JNCHC / UAB Honors Program / HOH / 1530 3rd Avenue South/Birmingham, AL 35294-4450 / Phone: (205) 934-3228 / Fax: (205) 975-5493 / E-mail: adalong@uab.edu.

## DEADLINES

March 1 (for spring/summer issue); September 1 (for fall/winter issue).

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# CALL FOR PAPERS

The Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council is now accepting submissions for the Fall/Winter 2002-03 issue, which will focus on the broad theme “Technology in Honors.” We are interested in articles which deal with honors coursework in technology, or the application of pedagogical technologies in honors courses (e.g., distance learning, on-line courses, web-enhanced courses, etc.) Submissions which deal with theoretical considerations—both the advantages and disadvantages of instructional technologies—will be especially welcome.

**The deadline for submission is September 1, 2002.**

**For the subsequent issue of JNCHC (deadline: March 1, 2003), we will accept submissions on any honors-related topic.**

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. We will accept material by e-mail attachment, disk, or hard copy. We will not accept material by fax.
2. The documentation style can be whatever is appropriate to the author’s primary discipline or approach (MLA, APA, etc.), but please avoid footnotes. Internal citation is preferred; end notes are acceptable.
3. There are no minimum or maximum length requirements; the length should be dictated by the topic and its most effective presentation.
4. Accepted essays will be edited for grammatical and typographical errors and for obvious infelicities of style or presentation. Variations in matters such as “honors” or “Honors,” “1970s” or “1970’s,” and the inclusion or exclusion of a comma before “and” in a list will usually be left to the author’s discretion.
5. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to:

Ada Long  
JNCHC  
UAB Honors Program  
1530 3rd Avenue South  
Birmingham, AL 35294-4450  
E-mail: [adalong@uab.edu](mailto:adalong@uab.edu)





# DEDICATION



**ANNE PONDER AND SAM SCHUMAN**

An issue of JNCHC that addresses the topic of “Liberal Learning” could evoke no finer exemplars than Anne Ponder and Sam Schuman. Both of them have stellar individual accomplishments to their credit, including their past service as presidents of the National Collegiate Honors Council and current service as college presidents, but we wish to dedicate this issue of JNCHC to them not as individuals but as a team. Anne and Sam have demonstrated time and time again the value of collaboration. The two of them provided the NCHC with one of its most useful and popular contributions to honors education: the series of workshops at each annual conference called “Beginning in Honors.” They were guest editors of the first issue of JNCHC, a festschrift in honor of Catherine Cater. Most recently, they convened the Undergraduate Summit of some thirty leaders in higher education last October, in conjunction with the annual NCHC conference in Chicago, to begin a dialogue about the role of the liberal arts in undergraduate teaching and learning. In these and all their collaborative efforts, Anne and Sam have pooled their considerable intellects and imaginations in the service of others. Sam has said, “Colleges and universities...are all too often seen as venues of individualized competition—sort of intellectual track meets, where runners are all out for themselves.” Sam and Anne have certainly overcome this “locker room mentality” and have set a new standard for success “by looking for ways to work together, with each other and with others, rather than trampling on the competition.” They have set new ideals, and they have more than lived up to them. It does honor to the JNCHC to dedicate this issue to Anne Ponder and Sam Schuman.



# EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

ADA LONG

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

The essays collected in this issue of JNCHC all connect, at least tangentially, to the topic “Liberal Learning,” and they all focus directly on the importance of balance. Perhaps liberal learning—which I personally tend to define as academic learning at its best—requires balance. Perhaps what we mean when we refer to such clichés as “critical thinking” or “excellence in education” or “high-quality undergraduate experience” is the impulse toward balance. If our cultural pendulum swings toward elitism, the academy almost inevitably provides a counterbalance in the interest of egalitarianism; if globalism displaces regional interests on the national agenda, then the academy is likely to renew interest in smaller ethnological and ecological niches. Industry, commerce, media, politics, and popular culture tend to be in sync; the academy is skeptical of such unanimity, and perhaps this skepticism is its crucial role in our culture. Our politicians and public commentators and media mavens frequently attack or belittle this role, turning it into a weapon against colleges and universities—and what could be more natural? People whose livelihoods and power bases thrive on consensus hardly welcome naysayers. Yet, even those who deride the skeptical stances of the academy in their public orations do, in fact, value it. They deliver their children, during the most impressionable period of late adolescence, out of their families and into the academy, just as they themselves were (in most cases) delivered by their parents. This paradox of simultaneous acceptance and rejection of the academy, combined with the tradition of skepticism within the academy, yields—not surprisingly—a healthy intellectual focus on and orientation toward **balance**.

A perceived imbalance in the current directions of higher education prompted two former presidents of the National Collegiate Honors Council—Sam Schuman, Chancellor of the University of Minnesota, Morris, and Anne Ponder, President of Colby-Sawyer College—to convene an “Undergraduate Summit” in Chicago this past October, in conjunction with the annual conference of the National Collegiate Honors Council. The purpose of the Undergraduate Summit was to “reaffirm the value and role of the undergraduate institution and experience” within the current context of higher education. During the second half of the twentieth century, higher education in America saw the rapid expansion of two-year institutions, graduate research universities, post-secondary vocational schools, and (most recently) distance education. The undergraduate Summit was an attempt to bring together numerous representatives of higher education to reflect on these developments, to reassess the role of the liberal arts curriculum, and to balance the expansionism within higher education with a renewed appreciation of traditional undergraduate education, as represented in smaller liberal arts colleges and also in honors programs.

The opening section of this issue of JNCHC presents two of the plenary addresses at the Undergraduate Summit followed by post-Summit responses from several of the

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

participants. Sam Schuman's presentation—based on an analogy between the small liberal arts college and *The Little House* in the city that came to be surrounded by skyscrapers—laid out the central dilemma that inspired the Undergraduate Summit. Dale Knobel, President of Denison College and a former member of the NCHC Executive Committee, presented a cautiously optimistic vision of the continuing value of liberal education, mindful of the dangers inherent in creating honors "tracks" while the rest of an institution provides something less, but also convinced that liberal education continues to thrive. These two opening perspectives begin our "Forum on Liberal Learning."

Further presentations and then a lengthy, lively exchange of ideas between some thirty participants in the Undergraduate Summit focused on key questions that are represented in this issue by contributions from: Rosalie Otero, President of the National Collegiate Honors Council; Charles F. Blaich and Mauri A. Ditzler from the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College; and John Nichols, President of the Association for General and Liberal Studies. This section concludes with a "CALL" for action—"Presidents' CALL: Campaign for the Advancement of Liberal Learning"—submitted by Carol Schneider, President of the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Two of the key questions emerging from the Undergraduate Summit were (1) the role and legitimacy of honors programs as embodiments of the traditional ideals of undergraduate education, and (2) the precise and appropriate language we need to describe the kind of education we value. Even the sentence I just wrote contains sharp thorns: is "traditional" a word we want to embrace when, in fact, the kind of education most of us advocate is innovative, challenging, and risky? Yet, it would be perverse to deny that education is, above all, the passing down of tradition. The unavailability of an acceptable vocabulary—while the cause of much fretting and debate at the Undergraduate Summit—signals a healthy dissatisfaction, an openness to new ideas that is inherent in the inadequacy of old words. In settling on the phrase "Liberal Learning" as the focus of this issue of JNCHC, I do so embracing its oddness, its tendency to skid into the realm of politics, its provocation, its puns. And I savor the paradox that "liberal learning" really means "conservative learning"—learning that conserves the tradition of the liberal arts.

Erin Osborne-Martin, one of the winners of last year's Portz Awards for Undergraduate Research, has produced an outstanding example of liberal learning in her essay "Understanding Caesar's Gallic Ethnography: A Contextual Approach to Protohistory." In her analysis of the extent to which Caesar's texts on the Celts seem reliable or misleading, she elucidates the fragile balance between different kinds of evidence used in reconstructing protohistory: the historic documents produced by powerful conquerors or the archeological evidence left behind by all people, rich and poor, conquered and unconquered. Osborne-Martin's essay is primarily a recuperation of classical texts as valuable and valid modes of understanding protohistory, but only if they are tempered by the insights and strategies developed by anthropologists in the past several decades. This study of Caesar's texts in the contexts of modern anthropology is a superb example of Dale Knobel's definition of liberal education as "learning to learn," a process that takes place by questioning both old and new methodologies and finding new ways to balance their findings.

The next section of this volume provides examples of effective strategies for teaching students to question, to assess, and to take an active role in their education. Anders

Greenspan describes a course he taught at Long Island University, C. W. Post Campus, on "Perceptions of the Past." The course included a field trip to Colonial Williamsburg, affording the opportunity for students to discover for themselves the accuracies and falsehoods of a major historical renovation project. Students could explore the shifting balance between national mythology, historical fact, and commercial manipulation, learning as much about the era during which the renovation took place as the era that was purportedly being represented.

In "Teaching 'The Other Legacy,' Learning About Ourselves: Latin America in Honors," Celia Lopez-Chavez describes a series of courses about Latin America she has developed and taught in the University of New Mexico Honors Program. Her diverse array of courses has at least one shared goal: to balance the personal with the public, the self with the other. Lopez-Chavez uses Latin American literature, art, music, history, politics, sociology, and cinema not only to teach her students about a distinct culture, in most cases different from their own, but also to provide them with different lenses through which to view their culture in New Mexico or wherever they are from. They learn to read themselves and their own cultures as texts in comparison to the materials they see, hear, read, and experience in class.

Cheryl Achterberg, Amanda Wetzel, and Emily Whitbeck describe, in their essay "Student-Led Quality Teams in the Classroom," a process developed at the Pennsylvania State University for putting students in charge of course evaluation. The process does not follow the standard pattern of written comments at the end of a course but instead introduces a method to assess and intervene while courses are still in progress. The process has proved very successful at Penn State, not only leading to more effective teaching and learning but, just as importantly, empowering students to take charge of the quality of their education. Adjustments to the balance of power between faculty and students thus become an opportunity to provide a more engaged and engaging experience in the classroom.

This issue of JNCHC concludes with a defense of traditional teaching and learning—a defense against the incursions of post-modernism into the pedagogies and curricula of the past several decades. Those of us who have experienced greater excitement in post-colonial, post-modernist, and new-historical theories than has James Kelly will not agree with each step of his argument, but few could deny the interest, conviction, and value of his argument—value especially in counterbalancing what has become consensus in many parts of academia today. Like all of us in the academic world, perhaps especially in honors programs, he seeks the location of authenticity and authority with deep passion—as do all the other contributors to this volume. Additionally, he provides the opportunity to end this issue of JNCHC with an example of conservative liberal learning—an excellent example, once again, of the academy's ability to set standard definitions on end in the quest for better education.



# Forum On Liberal Learning

On October 31, 2001, in conjunction with the National Collegiate Honors Council's annual conference in Chicago, Sam Schuman and Anne Ponder convened an Undergraduate Summit of leaders in higher education. The Summit was co-sponsored by the NCHC and the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges. The purpose of the gathering was "to offer these leaders an opportunity to meet under 'neutral' and comfortable auspices to mull the state of undergraduate teaching and learning in America today and to begin working together to chart and articulate its future."

Two of the opening presentations and several post-Summit responses are presented in the following pages. Additional details about the Undergraduate Summit are included in the "Editor's Introduction" to this issue of JNCHC.

On the reverse of this page is the list of organizers and participants in the Undergraduate Summit.

## Undergraduate Summit

### Organizers:

Samuel Schuman, Chancellor, University of Minnesota, Morris

Anne Ponder, President, Colby-Sawyer College

Chris Dahl, President, SUNY, Geneseo

Dale Knobel, President, Denison University

### Participants:

Michael Baer, American Council on Education

Brooke Beaird, Campus Compact

Jerry Berberet, Association of New American Colleges

Earl B. Brown, National Collegiate Honors Council

Margaret Brown, National Collegiate Honors Council

Joan Digby, National Collegiate Honors Council

Richard Elkman, Council of Independent Colleges

Kathy Engelken, Campus Compact

Nicholas H. Farnham, Educational Leadership Program

John Fuller, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities

Michelle Guillard, Consortium for the Advancement of Private Higher Education

Jim Herbert, National Endowment for the Humanities

Susan Howard, Phi Beta Kappa

Susan Whealler Johnston, Association of Governing Boards of Universities & Colleges

G. Hewett Joiner, National Collegiate Honors Council

Andrea Leskes, Association of American Colleges & Universities

Donzell Lee, National Collegiate Honors Council

Ada Long, National Collegiate Honors Council

C. Peter McGrath, National Association of State Universities & Land-Grant Colleges

Jamie Merisotis, Institute for Higher Education Policy

John Nichols, Association for General and Liberal Studies

Robert Orrill, National Council on Education and the Disciplines

Rosalie Otero, National Collegiate Honors Council

Carol Schneider, Association of American Colleges & Universities

Mary Tolar, Truman Scholarship Foundation

David Warren, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities



# We *THINK* We Can, We *THINK* We Can...

SAMUEL SCHUMAN

CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, MORRIS

One of the most enduring story books of my childhood, along with *Little Toot* and *The Little Train Who Thought He Could*, was the tale of *The Little House* in the city. It is no surprise that all these are stories of little guys, surrounded by big things, but coming out OK by virtue of pluck and innate value.

Some of you perhaps remember this yarn, written in 1943 by Virginia Lee Burton (also the author of *Mike Mulligan*, by the way), which I propose as a kind of allegory to kick off our discussion today. The book (for those of you whippersnappers too young to recall it) begins with a tidy, happy, even perky little house, chimney puffing away happy little clouds of clean smoke, yard well manicured, handsomely sited in an attractive bucolic country lot. Soon, the isolation of the little house is restricted as other homes, of comparable size and character, develop around it. The suburban phase. Things begin to get really serious, though, as the neighborhood is increasingly given over to taller and larger buildings, closer and closer to the little house. At the crisis of the narrative, the house cowers in the midst of the industrial and residential skyscraper development of what is clearly a major metropolitan area. Its sun is gone, its yard reduced to a junk lot, its happy existence now overshadowed by looming gigantic, even monster, buildings that leave the little house grotesquely disproportionate to its surroundings, lost in the big city, a tiny relic of a disappeared past. This story ends happily through the somewhat *deus-ex-machina* plot mechanism of moving the little house out of the big city, and back into the country, where it once again fits into the landscape and is proportionate to its surroundings.

It is not so clear that we are heading for that particular happy ending.

The point of this infantile prelude is pretty clear. It was not the little house which changed, but its neighborhood. The little house was a fine little house, but over time, it found itself surrounded by gigantic new growths which thrust up to the sky and took away its place in the sun. The little house didn't do anything wrong. It just stayed the way it was while the whole world around it was transformed. Indeed, the owners may have done extensive internal remodeling and kept the place quite up-to-date (you know, revised the curriculum, incorporated the latest technology, that sort of thing.) Nor, of course, is there anything wrong about office blocks and apartment houses and factories—at least there were very few folks who thought there was anything wrong with them in the post-War America in which I grew up having this little book read to me. The problem was not inherent in either type of structure: it derived from the competition over limited turf between entities which were created to do very different things and, hence, took very different shapes and made incompatible demands on the space they occupied together.

## WE THINK WE CAN, WE THINK WE CAN...

The crisis faced by undergraduate colleges in America today is not that those colleges and programs have gone astray, but that huge, new, domineering enterprises have shot to the sky all around us and threaten to take away our place in the sun. And that those institutions all have their own, powerful, claims to legitimacy and valid service to the Commonwealth. Prior to the Civil War and the founding of Johns Hopkins University in the final quarter of the 19th century, “College” in America pretty much meant small, usually private and parochial, undergraduate liberal arts colleges.

A mere century and a quarter later—not much time at all in the historical sweep of things or even in the lives of colleges (or even, we sometimes suspect, in the calendar of decision making at small colleges)—institutions that focus on the baccalaureate four years are surrounded by a daunting variety of huge, new structures. These include: the major, flagship research universities, such as the land-grant Universities; regional comprehensive universities, often with 5-figure student populations, a smattering of graduate programs, free-standing “colleges” of education or business, as well as arts and sciences; a huge network of largely-public two-year vocational institutes and community colleges. Then there is an exploding for-profit post-secondary industry, often involving some deep commitment to distance learning, such as the University of Phoenix: corporate post-secondary options ranging from short training courses to virtual collegiate experiences under the aegis of, say, hamburger chains. We live in the era of the Mac-Baccalaureate. The four-year, undergraduate, often liberal arts learning career was for roughly half our national life the definitive collegiate experience; by the dawn of the 21st century, it seems perilously close to disappearing. We’re still here, but those industrial giants of higher learning which surround us increasingly block our sky. This really has been a rapid shift. In 1960 when I had just graduated from high school, if one said: “I’m going to college,” it was assumed that one probably meant Grinnell College, or Beloit or Coe or Kendall, or some similar four-year liberal arts institution. I propose that today, if a 19-year-old says “I’m going to college,” the default is much more likely to be the local community college, or the nearest state-affiliated regional comprehensive. In my part of the world, if you said you were collegiate-bound 40 years ago, you meant St.Olaf, or Concordia, or Gustavus Adolphus or Luther or maybe the Twin Cities campus of the University of Minnesota. Today, the chances are you are understood to mean St. Cloud State or Southwest State College, or Alexandria Tech or Fergus Falls Community College. Increasingly, it might mean you are going to sit at home in your bedroom and take courses off the Internet on your computer. And, of course, the largest collegiate institution in our country is the Community College of the Air Force. One recent article I read affirmed that, just prior to the Second World War, about half of all American college students were enrolled in small liberal arts colleges but that by the mid 1990’s that number was below 20%. Even allowing for a rather dramatic increase in the raw number from which those percentages are derived, this is a drop which, for example, in the commercial world, would signal abject bankruptcy!

Two options which are not available to us are, first, rolling back the clock and returning to those bucolic days of a century ago when we were the only folks in town. And, second, we can’t pack up and move out of town and back to the Jeffersonian rural isolation, which would at least let the little house be itself again. We cannot recreate in time or in space or in the national consciousness the world that we dominated, which is a “world we have lost.” One option, of course, is to try to become bigger ourselves, and, in fact, most

of the Regional Comprehensives began their lives as four-year colleges, often teachers' colleges, and have evolved a University structure and a graduate curriculum.

Some of us, though, believe that maybe we need something else—a different kind of zoning, perhaps, which lets the various mega-institutions have their space, but reaffirms the value of ours, too. Some of us believe that the missions which animate undergraduate colleges in America are anything but outdated or peripheral in this new millennium. Some of us believe in the cultivation of wisdom and the value of reflection, in the possibility of the kind of creative thinking which enables one to define a problem, imagine solutions, test them, modify them, and select among them. Some of us believe that lifelong learning can mean, in addition to older people coming back to school, teaching all undergraduates the methodological habits of self-instruction which make lifelong learners not just of those who come back to our colleges, but also of those who graduate from them. Some of us, in short, believe that the undergraduate experience, the baccalaureate four years (or some approximation thereof), is not just still valuable, but still rightfully claims its place as the core collegiate unit, the sun around which the rest of the educational planets, even the giants, revolve.

The reason we are meeting here today [at the Undergraduate Summit on Higher Education] is that, if we believe these things, the people in this room today represent the leadership which will have to reaffirm, to reclaim, this centrality of the undergraduate collegiate experience and the undergraduate college. Our colleagues at the Community Colleges, the Research Universities, the Internet learning providers, and the corporate training centers are not going to do it for us. Each of our organizations is focused on some important aspect of undergraduate teaching and learning: honors students, liberal learning, public or private colleges, etc. All of us occupy some larger or smaller part of that imperiled but sacred plot of ground around which have sprouted looming challenges. We can't move, and they aren't going to go away. Our goal today is to give us together the chance to talk a bit among ourselves about some of the ways we can work most effectively together to retain and restore our place in the sun.

Both President Ponder and I spent some considerable time at a Quaker college, where we learned quickly the lesson that I suspect just about everyone in our business gets to sooner or later: that the collective wisdom of a group focused on solving a problem is inevitably better than the most ingenious solutions which can be imagined by an individual. Which is to say, we don't know exactly where today's discussions are going to lead us, nor what outcomes will result from our meeting. We have considered the possibility of a statement or declaration or publication, a press release or a manifesto. We have wondered about other possible productive venues of cooperation amongst all of us or some of us, or some of us and others. We have NOT much considered starting yet another organization in an already crowded field. Part of our assignment today is to explore commonalities of understanding of the current situation of undergraduate education in American, of our beliefs in the value of that enterprise, and ask, if those commonalities hold, what we can do to articulate them most effectively and to advance them collectively. It is my personal conviction that this isn't really a large task: it is just that there are none larger.

I don't believe *The Little House* meant to decry hotels or factories or offices, nor even to say that the house was a better structure than those sorts of buildings. What the book claimed, and what we believe, is that only one of those many important and

WE THINK WE CAN, WE THINK WE CAN...

imposing sorts of places is built as a home for humans. Our undergraduate colleges offer places of a sort and scale in which our students can come to know themselves and each other, in which students and teachers live in humane proximity, with enough shelter to be safe and enough space to be free. We think this is a neighborhood we can't afford to lose.

(These remarks, in altered form, are the "Preface" to Sam's book *Old Main: Small Colleges in Twenty-First-Century America*.)

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# Liberal Education: “Learning to Learn”

DALE KNOBEL

PRESIDENT OF DENISON UNIVERSITY

When Sam Schuman and Anne Ponder recruited Chris Dahl and me to join them in developing an “Undergraduate Summit” which might bring together representatives of the major higher education associations, they billed our roles as “conversation starters.” I hope our remarks do just that, not offering fixed conclusions but sparking conversation among those who’ve joined us at the table in Chicago and among those who might become acquainted with the Summit later on. It is more than the accident of friendship that brought us together to get a larger conversation underway. Though all four of us are now leading college and university campuses of different kinds, we came from Honors program backgrounds, and this has colored our thoughts and perhaps even explains why we believe that a broader conversation about undergraduate education today is important. Ostensibly, Honors programs (or, increasingly, “colleges”) are meant to enrich, to challenge, and to meet the differing needs for intellectual stimulation among the members of diverse student bodies. But I think that few of us who have been involved in Honors education have failed to observe that in too many instances they seem intended to “salvage” the quality of an undergraduate degree for a fortunate minority—to provide (for at least those chosen and electing to take part) engaged, participatory learning, close interaction with “real” professors, intellectual community, and opportunities to try a hand at independent scholarship. Where this is, in fact, the case, it is a sad commentary on the state of a baccalaureate education—where it takes a “special” program to deliver to some students what ought to be in the experience of all. To note this takes nothing away from the dedicated Honors program administrators and faculty who conduct the programs. It only recognizes that in such settings they are swimming against the tide in their home institutions rather than with it, beating against the current for the best of reasons.

Those of us who have been active in the National Collegiate Honors Council can also attest that, over the last fifteen years or so, the most rapid generation of new Honors programs has been within the ranks of two-year and community colleges offering not the Bachelor’s but the Associate’s degree. Typically, these programs take the form of something like an enriched “track” for those students bound for ultimate transfer to a four-year college or university, inadvertently implying that the general curriculum is not equipped to get one to a Bachelor’s degree. Acknowledging that it is not always the intent of two year programs to send their graduates beyond the Associate’s diploma, I know I am not alone in wondering what statement it makes that aspirants to a Bachelor’s degree should get on the “Honors” track. But if “Honors” is what is required to pursue a baccalaureate education, then thanks, again, to the hard-working faculty and staff that make it possible.

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While there are many exceptions to the objects of the foregoing observations, there is far too much evidence that the proliferation of Honors programs is, in some respects, an index of how far the attention—and, most importantly, the resources—of the higher education community have strayed from excellence in undergraduate education for all. My point is that “Honors” has too often become substitutive rather than additive.

Who can help being made aware of the undervaluing of the baccalaureate learning experience by much of the media hype surrounding the application of information technology to undergraduate teaching and learning? We all know that technology can fruitfully—though not as easily as some of the earliest enthusiasts assumed—enhance excellence in undergraduate education. But so much of the literature and at least public conversation is not about excellence at all but about how to employ technology to make undergraduate education less costly for an institution to deliver (which is not entirely the same thing as less expensive for a student to receive). To the extent that information technology is treated in the popular media as useful to the student, it is all too frequently discussed as a matter of speed. How can technology help a student complete a degree more quickly? How can a student take advantage of technology to complete a degree with less time in the classroom? The focus on speed is often thinly disguised as an enhancement in access. But access to what? And at what qualitative cost? Fortunately, the conversation on campus, as opposed to that in the public press, is increasingly about how technology can be most usefully integrated into the college classroom rather than how technology can replace the classroom and campus experience.

All of this is ironic because a baccalaureate degree—or, more importantly, the learning that goes into it—has never been more relevant to the world beyond the college or university than today. The lives that today’s (and very likely tomorrow’s) adults are leading in this country have never in recent memory been less “tracked” and predictable. The likelihood that a college graduate will be able to spend an entire career with a particular employer or even in a particular career line is growing more and more remote. Changes in travel and communications technology, in international production and trade, and in the organization of public and private enterprises alike means that the old saw of liberal education—“learning to learn”—has an unmatched immediacy. Teaching to promote breadth, adaptability, and learning “process” is the focus neither of graduate and professional education nor of the terminal Associate’s degree. It has been the special province of the baccalaureate degree. In an information-rich world, many of the important issues in education surround not the acquisition of information so much as the ability to sift, evaluate, choose, and communicate information. All but the narrowest of baccalaureate degree programs acknowledge this by including considerable “general education” in their curricula, providing some breadth of exposure to the humanities, social and natural sciences, and, perhaps, the arts and mathematics, along with special attention to communication skills. Above all, such breadth is calculated to encourage a better understanding of oneself and, especially, of others. Our “shrinking” world places a premium upon such knowledge, which, at its best, produces empathy. Whatever else they do, neither sub- or pre-baccalaureate educational programs nor post- have breadth and empathy among their special goals.

Undergraduate education is, in fact, alive and well in many quarters of American higher education. And where it is flourishing, it is because of its *length* and its *breadth*,

not its speed or its specificity. At its best, an undergraduate liberal education provides an unmatched opportunity over a period of several years for students to explore, to experiment, and to try things out within a community of other learners.

For all the incompleteness of our efforts in higher education to achieve diverse student bodies that reasonably reflect our society, it is in undergraduate study that young people (and, sometimes, not so young people) are likely to have sustained interaction with others who have had life experiences that are different from their own. This is not only on account of being brought together in classrooms, residence halls, and student organizations with people of other races or ethnic backgrounds but also by being joined by those of different socio-economic backgrounds, by persons arriving on campus nurtured by different family structures and parental careers, by those who have come from different kinds of communities and secondary schools, and especially by those who bring with them unique and personal interests. That exposure—if reflected upon in any serious way and reinforced by curriculum—is a source of knowledge that is central to becoming an educated woman or man.

On many campuses, the residential character of the undergraduate experience is an important part of learning—whether shared residence is on a campus or in a college or university community. And it may even be an important part of the experience for “com-puter” students who, nonetheless, spend a big chunk of their learning hours on a campus living with others. It is no wonder that an undergraduate education is one of the best venues available to us for teaching about living in a civil society. The interior lives of residence halls, of student organizations and interest groups, and of campus governance are all about learning to negotiate one’s own interests and points of view with those of others. I am inclined to think that one of the very best things that can come out of an undergraduate experience is “integrity” between what one is learning about world, self, and others in the classroom and life lived on the campus and in the community outside of it.

Without trying in any way to be exhaustive, I am convinced that there is much to feel good about in undergraduate education as it is practiced in colleges and universities across the land today. “Participatory learning” is more than a buzzword as faculty try to find more ways to transfer responsibility for learning from the teacher to the active learner. “Collaborative research” is, on many campuses, far from using students as test-tube washers or library go-fers and has become a real partnership between teacher-scholars and student scholars. Students are voting with their feet by stepping off campus in droves to engage in community service that is “hands-on,” and resourceful professors have found ways to meaningfully relate these opportunities to classroom instruction in the best examples of service-learning. Technology *is* being used effectively not to replace face-to-face interaction in college classrooms but to enrich it by placing the information resources of virtually the world in the hands of students and teachers, not just to be viewed but to be evaluated, manipulated, and discussed. Internships and off-campus study which are more extensive than the study-abroad of an earlier age (though international experience is still an important component of off-campus study) have brought experiential learning to a larger and larger proportion of students. And consortial relationships between colleges and universities—whether promoting shared technology, shared libraries and information resources, shared teachers, or shared programs (including the sharing that takes place

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through the National Collegiate Honors Council)—have helped ensure that productive innovations spread widely and quickly.

There is much to celebrate in contemporary undergraduate liberal education. And there is good reason to think that a baccalaureate degree is more relevant to the world in which we live—and to the world that we project—than ever before. As we think about the challenges undergraduate education faces, we also need to be mindful of its successes and contributions.

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# That Fine Little House

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I was intrigued by Sam Schuman's allegory about liberal arts education using Virginia Lee Burton's story of *The Little House*. Sam points out that it was not the little house that changed, but its neighborhood. I would argue that not only the neighborhood changed, but what went on inside the little house. Like most people, my first house was small, and the activities that went on within our house generally centered around a young family and a new career. As the years progressed, I moved to a larger house, and the activities changed from managing teenagers to grandchildren and elderly parents. Like the little house, undergraduate education has changed within and without. In the early years small liberal arts colleges, for example, were able to educate only a few. The research university and its many spinoffs brought democratization. Institutions became open to a much wider spectrum of society. This new university, rather than providing the final polish to an already established upper class, would itself be an avenue toward advancement in the world.

The University of New Mexico, for example, was founded in 1889 by Territorial Act. The first building, Hodgin Hall served to educate 108 students in two departments, Preparatory and Normal. Today, the University's main campus encompasses more than 600 acres with approximately 25,000 students. It offers more than 200 degree programs and majors. The University gave Albuquerque an intellectual life, attracted scholars from around the world, and generally transformed the city.

We know that similar accounts can be given of most of our educational institutions. Of course, the "house" or architecture of colleges and universities is often seen as merely the form of its functions, but in reality it is more. What is often dismissed as style and ornamental forms in buildings—domes and arches in Italy, for instance, or the circular kivas and D-shaped city-houses of the Anasazi—have become, over time, symbols of cultural identity. Architecture can not only embody the spirit of an age. It can stand for the spirit of a particular place and people. At the University of New Mexico, for instance, through the visionary imagination of UNM Presidents like William Tight and architects like E. B. Cristy and John Gaw Meem, the campus became a symbol of New Mexico regionalism through Pueblo Revival style buildings similar to the buildings found at Hopi, Acoma, and Zuni pueblos.

Just as architecture can stand for the spirit of a place and people, I believe that liberal education can stand for the spirit of higher education. It becomes the architectural foundation for building lives. Institutions with eccentric local identities have an immense value in the homogenizing world of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century—if they maintain their individuality.

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Irreverent, insensitive change, which is not a part of a process of continuing transformation but an abrupt disconnection with the past, destroys local character and identity. So, the idea of an education that simply gives individuals the methods and skills they need to get ahead in the world is almost certainly inadequate because “job preparation,” in an advanced technical economy, requires morally and socially sensitive people capable of responsible action. It is even more inadequate in preparing citizens for active participation in a complex world. Obviously, with a technologically advanced economy, a skilled and educated work force is essential, but in an enormously complex and interdependent world, a baccalaureate-educated and informed citizenry is even more essential.

The current scrutiny of universities comes from outside of the academy. State legislatures, some feeling the pinch of less funding on the federal level, call for greater accountability. Interest groups on both ends of the political spectrum press their agendas through the power of the dollar and their political clout. Trustees want to apply the principles that made them successful in business to the university, often to the displeasure of the faculty. Within the university, departments and colleges skirmish over shrinking budgets and bridle at the criticisms being aimed at them. Administrators walk the tightrope between working with those who hold the purse strings and those who think they know the best ways to spend money. Notions of a liberal education will be displaced by politically motivated gifts and endowments that increasingly determine what will be taught and who will do the teaching.

Besides concerns about the “educational enterprise” as maneuvered by the marketplace, education in most colleges and universities is fragmented. Students experience the curriculum as a collection of courses rather than as an integrated plan of learning. This encourages students to compartmentalize their learning rather than to make connections. Universities graduate students who are primarily focused on one field but who will need to function in an increasingly complex and interdisciplinary environment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Universities emphasize choice through a distribution of core requirements that are often not more than a smattering of isolated courses. Our universities are composed of isolated little houses—departments of culture, geography, language, politics, occupation and economic class. A positive transformation would be to break political fiefdoms of separate departments by extracting scholars from each department for interdisciplinary courses and programs.

In addition, uneven preparation of entering freshmen makes the responsibility of teaching more challenging. Some students entering our universities and colleges were afforded a vast array of privileges allowing involvement in the arts, literature, science, and other fields. However, for other students now entering colleges and universities, experiences are limited. As educators we are aware of the differences and revise our thinking and curricula in ways that will bring the liberal arts lessons into lives lacking the valuable experiences that we enjoyed and through which our lives were enriched. Students with previous experiences are often enrolled in general education courses with students who have minimal or no academic background. Consequently, instructors must deal with vast gaps in knowledge and understanding between the most advanced and the least prepared.

Another obstacle that we must overcome has to do with the idea of liberal arts as rooted in the cult of uselessness. I’m sure that, once the industrial and residential

skyscraper developments around the “little house” that Sam describes made the little house obsolete, unfashionable and outdated, it was characterized as worthless. We are often faced with the same dilemma. As corporations push toward technical/vocational curricula and as more and more students believe that the mission of universities and colleges is to prepare them for the marketplace, liberal arts curricula are attacked as antiquated and useless. Almost everything about “practical” education today is still based on the centuries-old assumption that useful work is all that can possibly matter. Indeed, the work ethos in the United States has probably been the culprit in the long decline of the liberal arts. But as automation threatens to make even ordinary jobs an anachronism for thousands of people, and as medical science continues to prolong the human life span, the technological future may also be one in which work is no longer the key factor in dignifying human life. This ominous prospect is usually ignored by curriculum planners in job-oriented programs.

Liberal learning skills are important throughout the university curriculum. We should strive for a more systematic and integrated learning experience for our students. We need to instill in our students those abilities, skills, ideas, and dispositions that shape their actions. Critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving strategies, effective communication, and computer literacy are some of the transferable skills necessary to function as educated persons. In addition, I see historical perspectives, global awareness, human behavior and social institutions, literature and the arts, natural sciences and technology as essential liberal arts objectives. A liberal education can also be characterized by a climate of openness and inquiry.

In his essay Sam Schuman writes, “The problem was not inherent in either type of structure: it derived from the competition over limited turf between entities which were created to do very different things, and hence took very different shapes and made incompatible demands on the space they occupied together.” The human world of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century seems caught between two dominant and conflicting forces: first, the desperate need to minimize human conflict by using modern technology to help establish a worldwide community; and second, the urgent struggle on the part of minority cultures and fragile ethnic environments to protect themselves from the homogenizing influence of world states. We, therefore, need to design a human habitat of much better character and quality than the mess we’re actually stuck with. We arrive at the recognition that civilization needs an honorable dwelling place, and that the conditions of making that place ought to depend on what is most honorable in our nature: on love, hope, generosity, and aspiration.

Educational institutions have a special social responsibility to be future-oriented. The present path of human development is unsustainable, inequitable, and therefore unstable. Decisions made will be crucial in determining the human prospects on planet Earth for the next thousand years. Changes in the direction of that path will require entirely new ways of thinking about individual responsibility. Major innovations will be necessary in the institutional arrangements by which the affairs of society are managed. Totally unprecedented levels of interdisciplinary collaboration will be required among the physical, biological, and social sciences, engineering, and the humanities. New modes of communication and cooperation will have to be forged among government, business and industry, higher education, and private organizations and between industrial and developing countries.

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The vitality and spirit of the “little house” must remain an important component of a baccalaureate education. Perhaps even the little house itself, which can serve as the Honors Center on many campuses, can remain. It can serve not only as a symbol of liberal learning but a place where it actually takes place.

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# Creating a Common Voice for Liberal Arts Education

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As Sam Schuman so eloquently argues in his lead article, these are challenging times for the liberal arts. A society that owes so much to graduates of liberal arts colleges has come to see them as an education for a simpler time.

Why does a liberal arts education now seem out of place? Perhaps it is that, in times of rapid change, an education that offers the certainty of “textbook solutions” is more comforting than one that promises creative, thoughtful, and flexible “improvisation” in the face of a complex world. It may be that a narrowly focused, carefully applied education seems to provide a solid anchor for our fast-paced lifestyle. Does the quick exchange of information and experiences favor an education that offers certain, immediate, and visible rewards? Certainly it takes an element of faith to pursue the counterintuitive promises of a liberal arts education in a results-oriented society.

The irony of this situation is considerable. The character and outcomes of a liberal arts education are more relevant now than ever before. The timeless nature of the liberal arts is the perfect antidote for the diminishing shelf life of information. An education that transcends specific content and culture is crucial in a time when we must find a way to educate an increasingly diverse student body. An education that promotes understanding of self and others is invaluable as we strive to create a global village. An education that goes beyond disciplinary boundaries remains valuable as we tackle those problems that have resisted the best efforts of our scientists and philosophers.

But in the absence of widespread public support, fewer and fewer colleges are willing to stake their viability on the hidden potential of liberal arts. Even longtime advocates of the liberal arts seem to be losing faith in face of the increasing popularity of professional programs. Colleges that have traditionally focused on the liberal arts are adding programs whose essential end is a well paying job. In too many cases these institutions have become bipolar, holding fast to a shrinking liberal arts core that must be “gotten out of the way” so students can move on to the valued professional courses.

At the same time, we face uncertainty from within. Faculty members in liberal arts colleges observe the success of their students and are tempted to attribute it to the quality of the disciplinary training being provided. This leads some to respond with an even greater emphasis on specialization at the expense of a liberal arts focus. Even some of those institutions that have rigorously maintained their liberal arts tradition shy away from a discussion of this aspect of their character. It is much easier to attribute remarkable outcomes to excellent facilities, gifted faculty, large endowments, supportive

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alumni, ubiquitous technology, and inspiring architecture than to an educational philosophy that defies definition.

Nonetheless, the recognition that the liberal arts philosophy is imperiled is sufficiently widespread that we must move from considering the problem, to creating solutions. What can be done to reestablish the liberal arts as the centerpiece of American higher education? What can be done to promote the value of the liberal arts to prospective students and rebuild the confidence of faculty and administrators in this kind of education?

The search for solutions to these troubling questions led Wabash College, with generous support from the Lilly Endowment, to create the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts. The primary objective of the Center is to establish a strong, common voice for the liberal arts. Except for occasional articles and symposiums, those of us who are dedicated to providing and continually improving liberal arts education are not truly accustomed to thinking of ourselves as belonging to a unified coalition. This stems, in part, from the diversity of institutions that are committed to the liberal arts. There are private liberal arts colleges, public liberal arts colleges, liberal arts colleges with religious affiliations, men's and women's liberal arts colleges, historically black liberal arts colleges, and liberal arts honors programs within larger institutions. No doubt we are leaving out a few varieties. While we are all committed to liberal arts education, for many this defining characteristic has become so familiar that it goes unnoticed and is rarely nourished. Instead, we focus on our unique roles within the liberal arts community.

By focusing more strongly on an educational niche and less on our shared commitment to the liberal arts, we have created an institutional mindset that makes it difficult for our many and varied programs to work effectively together. As a result, we have neglected the rhetoric and evidence that promotes the liberal arts, and we have failed to create a strong national voice that can promote our common enterprise.

As we have worked to launch the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts, we have visited with representatives of a wide range of liberal arts colleges. We have been struck by the fact that faculty and administrators from one kind of liberal arts institution do not readily see themselves as sharing in a common endeavor with faculty and administrators at other kinds of liberal arts institutions. For example, faculty and administrators from small, private liberal arts colleges are unlikely to see their colleagues who staff and direct honors programs at comprehensive state universities as sharing in the same good work and commitment to the task of teaching the liberal arts. Faculty at independent liberal arts colleges don't see themselves as sharing common concerns with faculty at faith-based liberal arts colleges.

The result is that, rather than seeing ourselves as allies, faculty and administrators at liberal arts institutions often see themselves as competing with different kinds of liberal arts institutions. The competition is not only about different visions of the liberal arts, but for the shrinking population of prospective students who are attracted to liberal arts education. We, therefore, find ourselves in a precarious position. As our challenges continue to grow, we find ourselves, more and more, pitted against one another to grab our piece of the shrinking pie.

Despite this state of affairs, we believe that the liberal arts are in a far better position than we realize. While institutional diversity is a barrier to common work, it could become our greatest strength as we work together to again make liberal arts the centerpiece of our

educational system. There are associations that are bringing liberal arts colleges together for common work. The liberal arts institutions of the Great Lakes Colleges Association, the Annapolis Group, the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges, and the Council of Independent Colleges, to name just a few, manage to work together despite the fact that institutions within these consortia may compete against one another for students.

We believe that the Center of Inquiry can form an even broader coalition that celebrates and promotes the many ways that the liberal arts are practiced in this country. We believe this is possible because, regardless of the particular liberal arts institution we are devoted to, we are all committed to providing an education that transforms our students' lives and improves the world in which we live. This shared labor of love should bind us together.

This is not to say that we should form an unwieldy coalition that diminishes the unique character of our institutions. Rather, we believe that liberal arts colleges should come together to work on common problems that will enhance the success of all of our institutions. At the Center of Inquiry we hope to catalyze the good work of many by bringing together individuals from disparate institutions and consortia. We are organizing our work, or "inquiries," around shared problems and concerns. We are bringing admissions staffs from different liberal arts colleges together to explore ways to expand the number of students who are interested in pursuing a liberal arts education. We have begun to investigate more deeply how the residential environment that is often characteristic of small private liberal arts colleges impacts the educational success of these institutions. We study this not only to make residential liberal arts colleges more successful, but also to determine how we may enhance the residential experience at larger institutions, or improve the experience of more diverse part-time students that many of us are beginning to enroll. We will consider ways of restructuring extra- and co-curricular activities, from athletics to theater, to maximize their positive impact on the different student populations that we serve and wish to serve.

These inquiries only scratch the surface, but we hope that each will help bring elements of the liberal arts community together to once again reassert leadership in higher education. Liberal arts colleges have a tradition as laboratories and think tanks for innovative practices in undergraduate education. We are uniquely qualified to assume this role. We are often small places with a deeply embedded understanding of our students. We are positioned to quickly and flexibly create experiments that create and test the innovative practices that will benefit all forms of education.

If we don't recognize the strengths of our innovations, others do. In 1998, the Boyer Commission issued a report, "Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities," which took larger research universities to task for ignoring undergraduate education. A recent follow-up study<sup>1</sup> found that these large institutions had made significant progress in overcoming many of the criticisms of the initial report. How did they do so? By involving more students in undergraduate research, by creating first-year seminars, by increasing writing requirements in courses, and by asking faculty to place a greater emphasis on teaching undergraduates. In essence, they improved

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1 Wilson, R. (2002). Boyer commission says colleges have been making improvements. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 8, 2002.

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the quality and effectiveness of their education by adopting the stock and trade of liberal arts institutions everywhere.

Despite the concerns that we raised in the beginning of this article, the Center of Inquiry was built on the optimistic premise that liberal arts institutions, in all of their diversity, remain an enormously potent positive force in higher education. In the last chapter of the *Origin of Species*,<sup>2</sup> Charles Darwin reflected on how his theory of evolution by natural selection made sense of the enormous diversity of plants and animals. He wrote, “It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us...” While we could never be as eloquent as Darwin, we do believe it is interesting to contemplate the many kinds of institutions that are deeply committed to providing a liberal arts education. Women’s colleges and men’s colleges, small private colleges and larger public liberal arts universities, historically black liberal arts colleges and church-affiliated liberal arts colleges, honors programs and the Clemente course in the Humanities—all are so different, yet so dependent on one another in a complex manner, and sharing in a commitment to a uniquely American form of higher education. May we come together and regain our rightful place in the leadership of higher education.

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<sup>2</sup> Darwin, C. (1859). *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. <http://www.literature.org/authors/darwin-charles/the-origin-of-species/chapter-14.html>



# The “Little House” That Can

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Thanks to the Association of American Colleges and Universities, I have recently been given the wonderful opportunity to direct a project that brings together both regional and specialized accreditors to reflect on some of the challenges to American higher education as they busy themselves with revising their standards and processes. It seems to me that we have some grounds for being optimistic about the “little house,” as we’re calling undergraduate colleges, but there will be two or three intermediate steps in reaching that conclusion.

The first challenge, I think I’ve learned, is to be very clear about the difference between earning a degree and getting credentialed in something or other. The major difference between these two, as very well explained by Judith Eaton at CHEA, is general education. So, secondly, degree programs will be more what they ought to be and thus perhaps more successful the more they emphasize general education and a major together, rather than the major alone. That will require (third step) a highly integrated approach to student outcomes, curriculum design, and faculty responsibility. Finally, there will result a deeper and wider appreciation for those institutions that can do this best. And I think—to mix the metaphors shamelessly—that undergraduate colleges definitely have a leg up on this approach to higher education.

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With this Presidents' Campaign for the Advancement of Liberal Learning (CALL) and the forthcoming Greater Expectations National Panel report on the learning students need in the 21st century, AAC&U is urging, in effect, an "honors" education for all students. AAC&U released the following statement in January 2002. As of June 2002, over 415 campus presidents and ten higher education organizations have signed on in support of the Presidents' CALL. AAC&U welcomes additional signatories.

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

# Presidents' Campaign for the Advancement of Liberal Learning (CALL)

CAROL SCHNEIDER

PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

**As educational leaders and presidents of colleges and universities, large and small, public and private, two-year and four-year, we call on our colleagues around the country to ensure that every college student experiences the full benefits of a twenty-first century liberal education.**

Especially since September 2001, Americans have been catapulted into a powerful sense of engagement with peoples, places, histories, and ideologies that many of us previously knew only dimly. Our entire society is now caught up in quests for deepened understanding, and in re-examinations of the most basic questions about social trust, civic duty, international justice, world cultures, and sustainable health.

While much in our present situation is unprecedented, our intense need for both knowledge and wisdom also reminds us of essential truths that we have long known, but recently neglected.

Chief among these is the Jeffersonian recognition that democracy depends for its vitality upon education, while education serves democracy best when it prepares us for just the kinds of questions we face now: questions about the wider world, about our own values, and about difficult choices we must make as both human beings and citizens.

Our new hunger for deepened understanding, however, finds Americans standing at an educational crossroads. For the first time in our own or any nation's history, the

great majority of Americans not only desire higher education for themselves and their children, but actually enroll in some form of postsecondary education. We have become the first nation to encourage near-universal participation in higher learning.

Yet even as students of all ages flock to college, many of them are not enrolled in the kind of studies that will prepare them well for the challenges of our turbulent and interdependent world.

**The approach to higher learning that best serves individuals, our globally engaged democracy, and an innovating economy is *liberal education*.** Liberal education comes in many shapes and forms in the contemporary academy, but in every one of those forms, its aims include:

- developing intellectual and ethical judgment;
- expanding cultural, societal and scientific horizons;
- cultivating democratic and global knowledge and engagement; and
- preparation for work in a dynamic and rapidly evolving economy.

In recent years, however, public attention has focused mainly on the last of these aims. Both public policy and popular culture have strongly encouraged students to view college learning as work preparation exclusively. This trend has been reinforced by the new practice of describing students as consumers who should study in college only what they want to learn, even when their preferences may leave them largely unprepared for the complex challenges they will face in their lives, as human beings and as citizens.

Many college students continue to seek, nonetheless, both the intrinsic and the societal benefits of a wide-ranging and liberal education. When they do, they find that a strong liberal education significantly expands their economic opportunities, while also fostering intellectual resilience, civic capacity and knowledge of the wider world.

Growing numbers of college students, however, never experience the richness of a liberal education. Misled by the public equation of college learning with job preparation alone, they view the liberal arts and sciences as, at best, a luxury, and at worst, a set of obstacles to be gotten out of the way before moving on to job-related studies. Or they choose postsecondary programs and institutions that omit liberal education altogether. As a result, these students—the majority of whom come from less advantaged backgrounds—gain much less from college than they deserve and our society requires.

**The college and university presidents who sign this CALL pledge ourselves to help build public understanding that what matters most in college—for every student—is the successful experience of a *liberal education*.** With the Association of American Colleges and Universities, we agree that:

liberal learning is not confined to particular fields of study. What matters in liberal education is substantial content, rigorous methodology and an active engagement with the societal, ethical and practical implications of our learning. The spirit and value of liberal learning are equally relevant to all forms of higher education and to all students.

CAROL SCHNEIDER

In this spirit, we commit ourselves:

- to reclaim the language of liberal education in our writing and speaking;
- to help all our constituents understand the purposes and the benefits of liberal education;
- to take steps to ensure that our own educational programs address all the aims of liberal education, including intellectual and ethical development, knowledge of science, culture and society, and preparation for all the dimensions of a full life;
- to examine, in dialogues with our campuses and neighboring communities, ways of strengthening the quality of liberal education from school through college, so that every student graduates strongly prepared for the complexities and challenges of our interdependent world.

We urge all college and university presidents to join us.

**SIGNATORIES**

*Current and former members of the AAC&U Board of Directors and other college and university presidents and educational leaders. A full list is available at [www.aacu-edu.org](http://www.aacu-edu.org).*

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# Liberal Learning At Its Best

Each year the Portz Committee reads and selects the top three research/creativity papers by undergraduate honors students who are nominated by their institutions. The winners present their papers at the NCHC conference and receive a \$250 prize. The editors of JNCHC read the winning essays and determine if they are suitable for publication in the journal. We are very pleased to include the following excellent essay by Erin Osborne-Martin in this volume.





# Understanding Caesar's Ethnography: A Contextual Approach to Protohistory

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## INTRODUCTION: PROTOHISTORY, CLASSICAL TEXTS, AND COLONIAL DISCOURSE

The Celts of western and central Europe<sup>1</sup> flourished during the height of Greek and Roman civilization, and yet there is a methodological schism between the study of the Mediterranean world and that of the “peripheral” Europeans. Our appreciation of classical society stems primarily from the plentiful written texts – texts that provide us with minute details of society, religion, and politics from the words of the people who actively participated in that culture. The study of the Celts, on the other hand, is more oblique: our primary source is archaeology, and what little textual evidence we do have derives from Mediterranean historians and geographers. In anthropological terms, classicists study sources written from an emic perspective, while archaeologists study sources written from the etic.

The European Iron Age is unusual because it requires a methodology that bridges the familiar divisions between historian and archaeologist. In early investigations of the Celts, archaeological excavation was seen as a tool used to give physical illustration to classical accounts of Celtic life. The ancient texts were thought to hold the real *truth* of Celtic society – a truth that was archaeology's job to unearth.

In the past two decades, however, this perception has changed dramatically, and archaeologists use Greek and Roman texts rarely, if at all. This is in part a reaction to criticisms of the reliability of ancient sources and a realization of how these texts have been used to distort our perceptions of the archaeological record. Much ink has been spilled on this topic, with the result that many archaeologists now choose to gloss over or simply ignore documentary evidence. This is not a result of ignorance but rather a result of methodology having failed to keep pace with theory. I would like to try to redress this imbalance and begin a debate on how to use the ancient texts correctly, so that they are a help rather than a hindrance to the archaeologist.

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<sup>1</sup> While many would argue against the use of the term 'Celt' (see Chapman 1991, Merriman 1987, and Fitzpatrick 1991, 1996), for convenience and readability I will use 'Gaul' to refer to native peoples of modern France and 'Celt' to refer to the loosely connected peoples across Iron Age Europe.

## THE NATURE OF PROTOHISTORY AND THE CLASSICAL TEXTS

Our most complete textual sources for the European Iron Age come from Greek and Roman authors. While the Celts had some ability to write, the exact nature of their literacy is uncertain. Caesar mentions that the Helvetii kept extensive lists of supplies and people during their migration (Caes. *BG.* I.29). He later notes (Caes. *BG.* vi.14) that the Druids were capable of writing but used the Greek rather than an indigenous alphabet and preferred to transmit important information orally. It seems that the Celts also used rather ephemeral materials like clay tablets (Caes. *BG.* I.29) and papyrus (Prosdiscimi and Solinas 1991) for writing, which suggests that they may have been more prolific than our surviving examples indicate. While we have evidence for a somewhat literate aristocracy, only fragments of indigenous writing remain, and those do not provide significant cultural insight.

Our reliance on foreign sources for information on the Celts creates a unique situation. We study the relationship between these two cultures largely from the perspective of the more literate, dominant society because conquerors are the writers of history. While archaeology has given this period a great deal of illumination, for many the classical texts provide the Celts with the kind of nuances not available in the examination of postholes and bones. At the same time, however, it must be remembered that these texts do not come from the Celts themselves but from an outside source, one with biases and self-interests rather than any modern notion of ethnographic objectivity.<sup>2</sup>

Christopher Hawkes (1951, 1954) drew an important methodological distinction for the European Iron Age and for similar situations throughout time. There is a practical difference between the “text-free” mode of archaeology, which is necessarily employed in prehistoric studies, and the “text-aided” investigation of periods that—at least in part—rely on historical texts, whether they are direct or indirect (Hawkes 1954:155-156). At the same time, however, we must keep in mind that not all texts were created equal. The term *protohistory* was developed by Hawkes to demonstrate the limitations of the texts available and to illustrate the necessary conjunction of anthropological/archaeological and historical logic in these contexts.

Protohistoric archaeology is challenging because it lies between history and prehistory. While classical archaeology is approached largely from a historical perspective, with written sources dominating the archaeology, prehistory can rely only on archaeological and anthropological methods. Protohistory is not so much a chronological period of transition between the two as a combination of different approaches to understanding. The overwhelmingly dominant position of written sources is not acceptable in this context, but neither can these texts be ignored; rather, the informed use of both history and archaeology is necessary.

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<sup>2</sup> One could certainly debate the objectivity of even modern ethnography. However, the ideas of objectivity and scientific pursuit at least provide a model for research that was not in the awareness of ancient authors.

## CLASSICAL TEXTS AND COLONIAL DISCOURSE

The study of colonial archaeology has begun, in our postcolonial/postimperialist age, to focus on the native cultures involved rather than simply on the colonizers. Critical examination of “colonial discourse”—texts written by colonialists about indigenous peoples all over the world during many different historical periods—is a part of this larger interest. Its study focuses on colonial and imperial texts as the products of general perceptions of the Other, the savage, the barbarian. Rather than looking only at the historical context, post-colonial theory suggests that texts written by imperialist actors form a genre created from shared beliefs about conquest and “barbarians.”

There is also a tendency on the part of the colonist towards ignorance or denial of the impact that their presence often has upon indigenous societies. Contact with a more complex or more powerful culture frequently disturbs native life in a number of ways that are not always obvious. Settlements may grow or they may disperse, while mining, farming, and production often increase in response to trade with the imperial nation, only to collapse a generation or two later. Colonial discourse does not recognize that phenomena like these are a result of outside influence, but instead portrays the native culture as having always existed just as they are observed (Miller, Rowlands, and Tilley 1995).

This attitude is common in Roman ethnography. The Roman concept of barbarians focused on the idea of bounded, homogenous societies in which only migration or invasion could produce change (Webster 1996:8). Strange or “alien” customs were explained through contacts with foreign and exotic peoples, so that barbarity increased with one’s distance from Athens or Rome. To the classical historian, the static boundaries of geography easily became the immutable boundaries of demography and ethnicity.

### THE CASE OF CAESAR’S GALLIC WARS

Caesar wrote *De Bello Gallico* in a very clear, concise way that departed from the elaborate prose that was popular in contemporary Roman rhetoric. This *commentarius* style was commonly used for military and official correspondence with the Senate, and reflects Caesar’s main purpose of keeping the Senate and aristocracy, as well as the *plebians* who were his largest supporters, continually informed of his military actions. Caesar’s texts were not meant to be a history, or a geography and ethnography in the style of the Greeks. The fact that his *Commentaries* include even a small amount of ethnographic material on the Gauls is largely accidental—Caesar’s focus was the conquest rather than the conquered people.

Embedded in his narrative of the war are scattered observations on Gallic society and culture. Caesar was a general above all else, and his emphasis on Roman military actions colors every aspect of his descriptions. Thus we learn a great deal about how the Helvetii organized themselves because their migration across Aeduan lands supposedly gave impetus for war, not because Caesar found them intrinsically interesting. The Aeduan are described similarly well, as they were close allies of Rome from the start and became a focal point during the rest of the campaigns. Outside of these militarily directed observations, Caesar had insufficient time and experience to focus on what most ethnographers, both ancient and modern, would consider the essentials of understanding a foreign society. And so we are left with a brief section in Book 6 (sections 13-30) as

## UNDERSTANDING CAESAR'S GALLIC ETHNOGRAPHY

the only fragments of Caesar's text meant purely for description and clarification of Gallic society.

There are a number of unique considerations when it comes to Caesar's ethnographic section. One seemingly endless argument centers on the possibility that Caesar borrowed much of this material from the earlier Greek historian Posidonius (see Tierney 1960, Nash 1976). While only small fragments of Posidonius' texts remain, Strabo and Athenaeus borrowed large sections of his works. Several excerpts from Book Six of *De Bello Gallico* are similar to Posidonius' work; it is possible that Caesar borrowed the material from Posidonius because the latter was so well known for his ethnographies, a subject that Caesar had little knowledge of. This is certainly a contentious suggestion, however, and it has garnered considerable resistance (Tierney 1976, Dunham 1995).

Why, with all these problems of interpretation, do archaeologists focus so closely on Caesar's words? Caesar spent more time in Gaul than any other ethnographer of his time. He lived in the Aeduan settlement of Bibracte during the winter of 52 B.C. and camped throughout the Gallic countryside for seven years. He negotiated with Gallic leaders and fought alongside the soldiers of Gallic tribes allied with Rome. His texts are also relatively early; only Strabo, Diodorus Siculus, Poseidonius, and Caesar himself provide information on the pre-provincial history of Gaul. Of these sources, Caesar offers the most complete and lengthy account of the Gauls, giving us a plethora of observations on all aspects of life in Gaul.

I will explore Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* as a case study in the usefulness of classical texts in Iron Age archaeology. A more developed sense of the meaning of protohistory and its necessary practical application is needed if we are to grasp the full importance of the information that is available to us in the ancient sources. In this study, I hope to create a working model for utilizing ancient sources so that they may be applied in their historical and archaeological context. The careful and appropriate use of Greek and Roman texts can only help increase our knowledge of Celtic society.

## CAESAR'S COMMENTARY ON GALLIC SOCIOPOLITICAL ORGANIZATION

When considering Caesar's ethnography, it is important to remember that "Caesar used Roman terms to define Iron Age Gaul" (Dunham 1995:110). In the investigation of foreign cultures, there is a basic linguistic barrier: the culture must be interpreted and filtered through the language and cultural assumptions of the observer. Caesar's observations on the Celts utilize a Roman vocabulary and were meant to be read by a Roman audience. A large part of correctly interpreting Caesar's narrative lies in understanding how he used the Latin language to describe totally foreign customs and institutions. To do this, we must consider how a Roman audience interpreted his words while keeping in mind the historical circumstances behind Caesar's comments.

### POLITICAL UNITS AND ORGANIZATION

Caesar's most complete mention of the basic organization of Gallic society occurs in the first sentence of his ethnographic section:

*In Gallia non solum in omnibus civitatibus atque in omnibus pagis partibusque, sed paene etiam in singulis domibus factiones sunt....*

(Caes. *BG.* vi.11)

In this sentence Caesar demonstrates the influence of factions on every facet of life in Gaul, from “every state and every village and district [to] practically each individual household as well” (Caes. *BG.*, trans. Carolyn Hammond). In this deceptively simple statement, Caesar divides all of Gaul into three political units: the *civitates*, *pagi*, and *domi*.

The *civitas* is generally translated as state or tribe, although state seems to be the more accurate of the two (see Arnold and Gibson 1995). While there is some degree of self-defined distinction between *civitates*, as suggested by the word *tribe*, there is also a sense of larger cohesion, particularly in the organization of *concilia*, which we will explore later. The term *state* more fully describes the extent of social complexity and political organization and lacks the implication of ethnicity and boundedness that *tribe* insinuates.

The *civitas* is the largest permanent social unit, where political councils are held and most negotiations, particularly those with Rome, are made. This is the highest level of organization, power, and stability within Gallic society. The *civitas* of the Helvetii included nearly 300,000 people (*BG.*i.29) who had joined the migration into Gaul and even more who had stayed behind in their homeland.

*Pagi* are the next unit of organization. As smaller segments within the *civitates*, the *pagi* held similar functions but on a more local scale. Caesar mentions *pagi* only when they are directly involved in the war as independent actors, separate from their governing *civitates*. However, we can see that they had a good deal of political power. We see *pagi* separate themselves from the *civitates*, and they can even arrange treaties on their own (*BG.*iv.22). The *pagi* must have had some degree of autonomy and internal leadership in order to accomplish either of these actions.

The third social division suggested by Caesar is that of the *domus*. Roymans suggests that the *domi* are essentially extended families, incorporating slaves, clients or patrons, and friends (Roymans 1990:17). He also contends that simply because Caesar mentions the existence of factions among the *domus* they are politically meaningful. However, this is the only time in his commentaries that Caesar uses the word *domus* in the sense of a familial household rather than a physical residence or a homeland. Given the context, it is likely that Caesar is merely trying to emphasize the extent of factions and internecine fighting in Gallic society rather than to define a significant political unit. We can be sure that *domi* were socially influential, as family ties and kinship are in any society, and were probably somewhat involved in the political sphere. However, they are never mentioned as having political power or authority separate from that of their *pagus* or *civitas*, and it seems a safe assumption that the *domus* had no more than the usual importance given to families.

## SETTLEMENT ORGANIZATION IN GAUL

Caesar mentions two definite divisions of settlement: the *oppidum*, or town, and the *vicus*, a village or hamlet. Most commonly, however, Caesar refers to settlement organization in a hierarchical expression: *oppida*, *vici*, and *aedificia* (commonly translated as either private buildings or country estates), suggesting a three-tiered system of settlement. This expression is most often used when burning is taking place (*BG.* i.5, ii.7, viii.5), either by Caesar or the Gauls themselves.

Caesar speaks most often of the *oppida* as central places of administrative importance. He does not directly relate them to the *civitas* or *pagus*, but his descriptions show several *oppida* occurring within a single *civitas*. It therefore seems that *pagi* controlled their own territories and built *oppida* as central places for these territories (Roymans 1990:30). The existence of several *oppida*, each acting as its own administrative center, within a *civitas* certainly fits this theory and explains the autonomy enjoyed by the *pagi*.

Caesar places much less emphasis on the *vici* and *aedificia* in his accounts, presumably because they lack the official authority of the *oppida*. Caesar mentions *vici* and *aedificia* together, without *oppida*, more often than he mentions all three, showing that he saw a strong similarity between the two smaller types of settlement. His descriptions of the two suggest a rural setting; *aedificia* are connected with fields several times (*BG.* iv.38, vii.64), and he mentions that Gallic settlements are often surrounded by trees (*BG.* vi.30). Thus we can see that the *oppida* acted as large governing units while the *vici* and *aedificium* were smaller, agricultural towns and private rural settlements.

*Government and Political Institutions*

Caesar has a relatively refined vocabulary when referring to Gallic leadership that reflects the Roman preoccupation with law and order as well as Caesar's familiarity with the upper classes of Gaul, the aristocracy with whom he negotiated and among whom he lived. His commentaries display a thorough knowledge of the leadership systems of Gaul that proved essential to his victories in the region.

Caesar mentions two governing assemblies in Gaul, the *concilium* and the *senatus*. Caesar uses the term *concilium* most often to refer to large conventions that exist above the level of *civitates* and that include either all Gaul (*BG.* i.30, i.31, vi.3, vii.75) or regions therein (*BG.* ii.4). Generally speaking, the *concilia* were grand councils, formed out of necessity or in relation to a specific need rather than permanent governing bodies (*BG.* i.30, i.31, ii.10, iv.19). Caesar uses the adjectives *omnia* or *multitudo* when speaking of a council of all free men in Gaul, and Roymans has suggested that, essentially, this was a way for the leadership to test public opinion, particularly in times of antagonism with Rome (Roymans 1994:30).

The *senatus*, in contrast, was certainly a more firmly established governing body, operating at the level of *civitates* or *pagi*, with somewhat regular sessions, whose importance Caesar equates closely with the Senate of Rome. He uses the same term for both institutions and gives the Gallic *senatus* definite prominence as he negotiated entirely with the senate in the case of the Remi and Senones (*BG.* ii.5, v.53). Their importance is also shown in that the senate is mentioned often in conjunction with the *principes*, or leading men, of a *civitas* (*BG.* ii.5, iv.11). We can conclude that the Gallic senate was a primary source of leadership, governing a *civitas* alongside an elected official or, occasionally, a

king. It has been suggested that the *senatus* was a council of elders or nobles within a *civitas* (Roymans 1994:32, Dunham 1995:113) but, as Caesar mentions this specifically only once (*BG.* iii.16), we cannot accept it as commonplace.

## POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Caesar also gives us an overview of upper-level leadership positions held by individuals in Gallic society, the individuals with whom he worked most closely. His most commonly used terms, and probably the most enlightening in terms of political organization, are *magistratus*, *princeps*, and *rex*. We cannot determine a great deal about the magistrates beyond the fact that they were elected officials whose duties ranged from chief magistrate with the highest power among their people (*BG.* i.16, i.19) to a group of elected officials with jurisdiction limited to organizing troops and acting as judges (*BG.* i.4, i.17.). The Aedui annually elected a *summus magistratus* or *Vergobret*, who maintained highest authority among them (*BG.*i.16, i.17, vii.32). Of course, while the responsibilities and power of magistrates varied between *civitates* and *pagi*, it seems that much of Gaul had adopted the custom of electing public officials in some capacity by Caesar's time.

The *principes* have a more defined role as "first men" and aristocratic heads of state (*BG.*i.30). For the Nervii, the Remi, and the Treveri, *principes* were the primary leaders, and there is little or no mention of magistrates among them (*BG.*ii.3, ii.13). The *principes* were certainly widespread, as Caesar mentions taking with him one *princeps* from each *civitas* on his voyage to Britain. Many are mentioned as descending from aristocratic families and several tried to regain the kingship that their ancestors supposedly held, as with Orgetorix, among others (*BG.*i.2, ii.6, vii.39). This suggests that the *principes* are nobles who have gained authority and influence over the people of their *pagus* or tribe (Dunham 1995:112).

Ironically, the most complicated of Caesar's terms is the one that translates easily into our own tongue: *rex*. The idea of kingship in modern society, as well as in Roman society, generally focuses on a hereditary (aristocratic) central ruler with a considerable amount of power. In republican Rome, it also carried the connotation of tyrannical rule, as the half-mythical Etruscan kings of early Rome were thought to have been oppressive and dictatorial. In Gaul, however, "kings" rarely fit this notion of a hereditary, all-powerful ruler, and indeed they often defy it.

Caesar mentions ten kings in Gaul by name, of whom only a few are actually hereditary monarchs. Commius, for example, was appointed king of the Atrebates by Caesar when they were defeated, having been chosen for his loyalty to Caesar and his influence in the region (*BG.* iv.21). Ariovistus was appointed king and friend by the Roman senate, an honor which Caesar makes clear was to be repaid by loyalty and other "signal services" from the Germans (*BG.* i.31, i.35, i.42). Caesar also appointed Cavarinus to the kingship of the Senones. His brother had been king before Caesar's arrival, and the Senones were so upset by the new appointment that they attempted to assassinate Cavarinus (*BG.* v.54).

Even when the kingship was not imposed directly upon the Gauls by Rome, the Roman influence was felt among many Gallic kings. Teutomatus of the Nitiobriges, for example, was a hereditary monarch, but his family connection with the Roman senate (*BG.* vii.31, vii.46) certainly helped him to retain his power. Indeed, there are only two instances in which Caesar does not mention the influence of Rome or the senate. The first



## UNDERSTANDING CAESAR'S GALLIC ETHNOGRAPHY

is the dual kingship of Ambiorix and Catuvolcus, where Ambiorix complained that he had no more authority over his people than they over him (*BG.v.24*). Caesar (*BG.ii.4*) also talks of the Suessiones, whose previous king, Diviciacus, had enjoyed the greatest power of any man in Gaul. By Caesar's time Galba had been elected to replace Diviciacus and was entrusted with control of the war, due to his "just and cautious nature" (*BG. ii.4*).

There are also a few instances where *rex* refers to power that is accumulated over time, rather than simply inherited or appointed. Elected officials are sometimes called *rex*, perhaps because their office replaces the institution of kingship in that they hold more power and "kingly" duties (*BG. vii.32*). It also seems that at this time it becomes easier for aristocratic families to gain enormous power and wealth through the system of clientship. In this way, local leaders or chiefs could gain wider and more "kingly" power. So it seems that, even in areas where Caesar and Rome had not had a direct impact on the Gallic kingship, the hereditary office had lessened in power and supremacy.

Caesar repeatedly demonstrates that the strongest kingships during the conquest are those that he himself appointed and that were close allies of Rome. Thus it seems that most Gallic kings were not established hereditary monarchs at all, but leaders who used their patrons and friends in Rome to political advantage. At the same time, Caesar mentions only one case (Cavarinus) where the people rejected his choice, and he repeatedly emphasizes that many of his appointees were descended from nobility and even that their ancestors were kings.

It is probable that in most (but certainly not all) Gallic tribes, a kingship had existed in the past that lapsed in the previous generations. From Caesar's actions, and from the general lack of resistance to them, it seems that it was politically beneficial to Caesar as well as to the local aristocracies to reconstitute the monarchy in order to develop close ties between Gallic leadership and Rome. Rome instituted a similar process in nearly all of its provinces, where the sons of the aristocracy (the next generation of leadership) were sent to Rome for schooling. Roman control over the aristocracy was vital, and Caesar's references to his appointed kingships are more enlightening in terms of Roman techniques of political control than as an accurate reflection of the situation in Gaul.

### THE PEOPLE: CLASS AND STATUS

Caesar very clearly states that there are only two classes of men among the Gauls worth consideration: the *druides* and the *equites*. The rest are merely laborers and slaves without status or political power (*BG. vi.13*). His description of druids states that they were not simply priests but also fulfilled a wide variety of public roles, in particular that of judge (*BG. vi.13-14*). It is difficult to appreciate druids fully in the grander scheme of Caesar's observations because they are only mentioned in his ethnographic section. While he emphasizes their dominance in society here, Caesar never mentions druids during everyday observations in Gaul. This limited use of the term 'druid' has been suggested as a way of acknowledging debt to Poseidonius (Tierney 1960), but Caesar also mentioned that the druids did not involve themselves with matters of war, and it is possible that he rarely mentioned them because they never entered his sphere.

There is a great deal of overlap in descriptions of *druides* and secular public officials like *principes* and *magistri*. While Cicero describes Diviciacus as a druid (*De Divinatione*



1.41.90), Caesar refers to him as an Aeduan *principes* (BG. i.3). Caesar also describes members of the Aeduan *senatus* as *sacerdotes*, or priests (BG. vii.33). Ancient historians repeatedly mention the mixture of secular and sacred duties; more recently, Nora Chadwick (1966) noted that no classical author refers to druids exclusively as priests.

While Caesar tells us that extensive training (as long as twenty years) was a requirement to become a druid, there is no mention of birth as a factor in this. It is possible that druids, who were extremely influential in all areas of Celtic life, gained their position entirely through achieved status rather than birth. However, since Caesar points out such a great divide between the common laborers and the *druides* and *equites*, it seems more likely that one had to be born into a certain status in order to begin druidical training.

The *equites*, commonly referred to as knights or warrior-princes, are more easily investigated, as Caesar routinely makes reference to them throughout his text. He explicitly states that they derive status primarily from birth and wealth as well as an extensive system of clientship (Caes. BG. vi.15). Here we can have little doubt that ascribed status, stemming directly from kinship ties, is the first determining factor in determining *equus* rank. Personal achievement is not without its influence here, however, and wealth and clientship make up the other two factors. The number of clients an *equus* has is based largely upon the first two factors, birth and wealth. This suggests that wealth was injected directly into the patron/client relationship in order to gain support and influence in the community, and that in addition *equites* were due, or even inherited, clients based on their ancestry (Crumley 1976:15).

Caesar's commentary reveals a highly stratified aristocracy. Some level of parentage was probably necessary in order to be either an *equus* or a druid. The importance of birth, however, was certainly greater among the *equites*, as was the importance of wealth. The druids gain nearly all of their power and influence through extensive training; wealth and clientship are never mentioned among them, although the druids held great power among their people. Among the aristocracy, we see a complex web of achieved and ascribed rank, where kinship is the most basic prerequisite but the attainment of wealth and prestige (sacred or secular) is the true basis for power.

Overall, then, Caesar presents us with a much more detailed, hierarchical view of Gallic society than is obvious at first glance. Once we confront both the meaning of the Latin and the unusual context of many of the observations, we see a complex social structure and a complex people emerge. This is a highly stratified society, from the variety of settlements to the internal divisions among the powerful aristocracy. Perhaps the most important point that Caesar illustrates, however, is that social and political structure, and therefore the basis for power and leadership, differs among the various *civitates* and *pagi* across Gaul. *Druides* and *equites* are classes that he sees as spreading across the whole of Gaul, while kingships, *magistrati*, and *principes* are regional leadership institutions, formed sometimes as a direct result of Roman intervention. It is this diversity of leadership and governance that made the Gauls such an unpredictable foe and what makes them a formidable subject for study today.

## ARCHAEOLOGY AND SOCIOPOLITICAL ORGANIZATION IN GAUL

Many aspects of culture are ephemeral. Social organization, political alliances, unwritten languages, and religious beliefs disappear with the people who create and maintain them. Archaeology often cannot reveal these important elements, and thus the classical texts become useful as a means of filling in the gaps. However, the study of the Iron Age has been largely "text-led" rather than "text-aided." Until the early 1980s, archaeologists accepted without question Greek and Roman accounts of druidic religion and human sacrifices without looking critically at the remains of sanctuaries and cemeteries across Europe. There have been more attempts lately to explore more deeply, particularly through archaeological investigation, statements that in the past had been accepted without question.

This exploration has been particularly successful in France, where most *oppida* have been investigated to some extent due to their prominence in the texts.<sup>3</sup> Regional surveys have led to the discovery of smaller settlements, contemporary with the *oppida*, situated in the lower-lying valleys across France. The combination of intensive investigation of *oppida* and large-scale surveys of the hinterland has allowed for a broader sense of the variety within Gallic society. This is part of a larger trend in archaeology of looking beyond the wealthy and powerful elite in order to more fully understand every aspect of a culture. In this way we become less dependent on the ancient sources for insight into the more problematical areas of culture.

### SETTLEMENT EVIDENCE

Caesar's most-mentioned settlement type, the *oppida*, are so large and visibly defended that many have been correctly identified with his textual references for more than a century and a half. Unfortunately, those *oppida* that feature most prominently in Caesar's text were excavated very early on using antiquated techniques. The sheer size of these sites ensures that there is plentiful evidence for modern re-excavation to discover, but a fuller understanding of the true function of *oppida* awaits the complete excavation of one or more of these monumental settlements. Work in this direction is being carried out at Mont Beuvray, Caesar's Bibracte, and will continue for many years to come.

In order to understand *oppida* more completely, we must consider earlier settlement types. The earliest Iron Age (Hallstatt period, c.700-500 B.C.) brought with it large, heavily defended hillforts very similar in appearance to the *oppida*. These massive sites, like the *oppida*, have not yet been completely excavated, but the general conclusion is that they housed a much smaller population and focused more intently upon agriculture than their later counterparts. Both the settlements and the graves of this

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<sup>3</sup> However, due to the enormous size of the oppida, none has been excavated completely, and nearly all have been only briefly examined.

period point to huge material wealth (often linked to salt mines) among the aristocracy - so much so that the richest graves are commonly referred to as “princely” tombs.<sup>4</sup>

The La Tène period (c. 500 B.C. to the Roman conquest) is considered to be fully Celtic and is named for a common metalworking and art style found across Europe. By 500 B.C. most of the large hillforts had been abandoned, and there is a shift towards far less ostentatious settlements. In fact, settlement evidence is quite rare in much of France during La Tène I (c. 500-250 B.C.), although “systematic micro-regional surveys” of the Aisne valley suggests that settlement density was actually much higher than previously thought (Demoule and Ilet 1985:203). These settlements, however, are mostly small, dispersed villages that remain largely unexcavated. Thus most of our knowledge of La Tène I France is limited to cemeteries, of which over 400 have been found.<sup>5</sup> More people are buried with prestigious grave goods than in previous periods. Two-wheeled carts, Greek and Etruscan vessels, beautifully made weapons, and elaborate gold jewelry become increasingly common (Collis 1984a:114). The fabulous wealth of the Hallstatt burials was slowly being distributed over a larger number of people so that individual burials seem poorer compared with the earlier examples, but their number increased dramatically. La Tène I burials are also organized and ranked according to family grouping rather than being segregated by sex as in the Hallstatt period (Buchenschutz 1995:557), suggesting a developing aristocracy based more on descent than wealth.

It is not until the middle of La Tène II, in the late third century B.C., that we see a marked increase in settlement complexity in most of Gaul and particularly in eastern central Gaul. Towns appear along the Saone, Doubs, and Rhine that show flourishing trade and craftsmanship activity. Most are relatively small (4-5 hectares), while the well-documented site of Levroux (Indre) represents a larger, more centralized example at 20 hectares (Buchenschutz 1988 and 1995:568 – 570). The houses on these sites are generally poorly preserved, but the nearby refuse pits contain evidence of highly skilled artistry in bronze, iron, wood, and glass. Indigenous coin production first occurs in the more southern sites at this time, indicating the beginning of a movement away from bartering with raw materials towards more sophisticated and extensive trade with the Mediterranean (Fitzpatrick 1993:274). A major part of this trade, amphorae, mostly of Dressel Ia type imported from the ports of Cosa and Pompeii, also occur in large quantities at towns and other sites along the rivers. Thus we can see that small, largely agricultural villages and hamlets were gradually replaced by more complex towns, where craft production and trade existed alongside agriculture.

In many ways, these towns foreshadow the emergence of later Iron Age *oppida*. The French *oppida* (heavily fortified, largely urban sites at least 25 hectares in size<sup>6</sup>) emerge

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4 This wealth was not limited to ‘princes.’ The most lavish Hallstatt burial found, the Vix tomb (Côte d’Or), belonged to a woman.

5 The impact of illegal looting has been felt heavily in the Champagne region, where it has been estimated that less than 5% of the total burials are able to be investigated

6 25 hectares is roughly equal to 60 acres. Most *oppida* fall between 100 and 250 acres, while the largest can measure up to 1,500 acres (P.S. Wells 1999:51).

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in late La Tène II and early La Tène III (c. 125 to 55 B.C.), at which time many of the earlier trading and agricultural towns had been occupied for only a generation or two. The abrupt move was a result of deliberate planning, as *oppida* completely relocated the convenient and profitable lowland settlements to inaccessible hilltops with no previous settlement evidence. Levroux, for example, was abandoned for an *oppidum* built two kilometers away. Aulnat, in the Auvergne, was similarly replaced by the *oppidum* of Gergovie, a site more than twice the size (150 ha). This shift towards truly enormous, heavily defended sites occurs at roughly the same time across France.

While the *oppida* are similar to the Hallstatt hillforts in form, they are more like the La Tène II towns in function. Because such a small percentage of each *oppidum* has been excavated, it is difficult to estimate the population living in these sites. We do know, however, that the *oppida* are largely urban in nature (Collis 1984a, 1984b, 1995). For example, there is evidence (from household middens) of complex manufacturing, with a much larger scale of production than previously seen (Wells 1999: 111-113). Perhaps more telling is the shift from elaborately decorated, highly individual commodities towards more standardized, mass-produced, and purely functional goods.

Adouze and Buschenschutz (1991) have gone so far as to suggest that the development of such enormous, specialized manufacturing and trading settlements—arising in response to Roman economic demands—essentially constituted the first stage of the Roman conquest. Certainly, a large economic surplus was required to support the creation of these sites—the ramparts alone at Kelheim took an estimated 1.5 million manhours to build—and it is likely that this surplus came from a complex system of trade intensification across Europe and the Mediterranean (Haselgrove 1988 and Brun 1995) starting in the second century BC. Coinage was also produced in the *oppida*, with each minting its own coins. The enormous breadth of trade in this period can be seen in the wide distribution of Gallic coinage, which stretches across much of Europe.

There is a certain amount of evidence that the *oppida* were spatially segregated, with differentiation between areas of craft production, from iron and bronze to wood, glass, and pottery manufacture. Manching has produced several long rectangular buildings, most likely warehouses, and smaller buildings near the center of town that seem to be craftspeople's homes and workshops (Collis 1984b: 104-111), much like the medieval burghage system. Villeneuve St. Germain, situated near Soissons, was divided into four quadrants, one of which was reserved for industry (Collis 1995: 165). Again, trade seems to dominate all aspects of the organization and creation of the *oppida*.

While the *oppida* have dominated archaeological research for over a century, contemporary low-lying villages are only just beginning to be uncovered and as such are difficult to compare to the *oppida* in terms of function. However, we do know that they exist and can be found across most of France. These smaller, nucleated settlements seem to fit well with Caesar's mention of *vici* (Roymans 1990:11). At this early stage in investigation, these sites do seem to fit the basic description of villages, although we can only conjecture about the specifics.<sup>7</sup> Even with this superficial investigation, we can see that

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7 Knowledge of and interest in these sites have only really grown in the past five years. Because there are such enormous amounts of land between the *oppida*, fieldwork in the lowlands has mostly focused on surveying at the regional level instead of intensive excavation at the site level.

Mediterranean prestige goods were not limited to the *oppida*, but occasionally occur in the more rural sites also. It remains to be seen whether these goods were distributed from the elite living in the *oppida* or whether they represent direct contact with Roman traders. The answers to many other questions will also likely be answered in the next decade as investigations continue.

While evidence does exist for *oppida* and *vici*, identifying *aedificia* in the archaeological record is more difficult. Aerial photography has located small, square double enclosures that occur mostly in northern Gaul. One of these, a 22m x 12m structure that appears to have been a single large dwelling, has been excavated at la Verberie. Other sites have revealed two or three smaller nucleated buildings surrounded by double ditch-and-rampart constructions that are often connected to extensive field systems. These are, however, isolated findings as many of the excavated sites either date to an earlier period or have not produced complete plans (Wightman 1985:16). There is another problem in that the sites discovered so far have been restricted largely to Belgic Gaul. It is not certain whether the *aedificia* represent a regional development or simply have yet to be found in the rest of Gaul.

Some have suggested that these country villas did not actually exist, and that *oppida*, *vici*, and *aedificia* occur only in the same pattern because they are formulaic rather than factual (Ralston 1988:790 and Dunham 1996). Since they are only used together in describing burning programs, it is possible that the phrase is simply an expression emphasizing the extent of the devastation.<sup>8</sup> A more compelling argument is that the *aedificia* are no longer visible because, like some ritual centers, they continued to be in use through the Roman period and were replaced by more permanent stone structures, which obliterated the remains of wooden buildings (Buchenschutz 1995:236). Their existence as rural farming estates would also explain how the *oppida* were supplied with food and how large areas of agricultural land were used.

## POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND LEADERSHIP

Unfortunately, the most intriguing aspect of Caesar's commentary, the political leadership, is not archaeologically visible. The burial evidence, which can be helpful in detecting complex, rigid hierarchies (see Saxe 1970, Parker Pearson 1999), is largely restricted to cremation, and grave goods are lacking during this period. There is also very little evidence for public buildings or even centrally located open fields within the *oppida* that would indicate a permanent governing body like a senate. Mt. Beuvray (Bibracte) is one site where public buildings were thought to be found, but most scholars agree that the evidence is not conclusive and indeed probably stems from pre-World War II excavations in which multiple strata of habitation were taken as a single layer that appeared more complex than the likely reality (Ralston 1988).

However, a lack of evidence does not necessarily disprove a hypothesis, and this seems to be an occasion where we can accept Caesar's comments without too much dissent. The senate, magistrates, and "kings" were composed of the very people that Caesar

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<sup>8</sup> This is similar to the references to *civitates*, *pagi*, and *domi*, where the mention of families was probably inserted to emphasize the existence of factions rather than to highlight their political importance.

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was in contact with, the ones that he negotiated with. These are also the nuances of societies that are nearly always lost to the archaeologist and can only be illuminated through direct observation. The absence of public buildings is cause for concern, but entirely logical when we remember what small portions of *oppida* have been excavated. The important thing in this instance is not to attempt to test archaeologically the invisible aspects of culture, but to consider carefully the context and to place provisional trust in Caesar's observations.

### THE PEOPLE: CLASS AND STATUS

Archaeology is useful more for illustrating the everyday lives of all varieties of people than for providing the generalizations of behavior found in ancient ethnography. This is where we see the biggest flaw in Caesar's observations. As mentioned above, Caesar had a great deal of contact with the aristocracy and leadership of Gaul, but regarded those who were not *druides* or *equites* as "reduced to a condition resembling slavery, without rights and without any participation in affairs. Overwhelmed by the weight of debts and taxes, victims of the violence of the aristocracy, they themselves voluntarily passed into servitude to the nobles" (*BG.* vi.13, trans. Carolyn Hammond). In fact, the archaeological record provides us with a much more diverse picture of all classes of Gallic citizens.

To begin with, Caesar does not mention the emerging middle class, for which there is overwhelming archaeological evidence. This development is most often viewed from an economic standpoint, a model in which increasing trade, particularly with Italy in the late second century BC, led to increased wealth and competition and thus a more hierarchical society based on economic control (Crumley 1974:75, Collis1884a, Wells 1999, Brun 1995). High volumes of trade across Europe and the Mediterranean required a heavy investment in production for the Gauls, and we see this even in pre-*oppidum* settlements like Aulnat. As settlements shift their focus towards trade and manufacture, Gallic society becomes more stratified and accommodates a lower class of rural farmers, a middle class of artisans and merchants, and an aristocracy.

In the *oppida* this stratification is visible in the spatial patterning of structures. The smaller workshops are centrally located, densely packed, and seem to have had both a manufacturing and habitation function. On the other hand, the upper-class dwellings were larger, contained by a courtyard, and spread out towards the periphery of the *oppida* (Collis 1984b:150). At Villeneuve St. Germain, the largest dwellings are enclosed by palisades and located together in a separate quadrant of the site (Collis 1995:165). These wealthy living areas also show evidence of manufacturing, which indicates that the aristocracy had some amount of control over lucrative commerce. This and the spatial patterning of production within *oppida* suggest a very rigid social hierarchy based on trade and manufacture.

Caesar's comment that those people who were not *druides* or *equites* lacked status may refer to the rural population. Farming was negligible within *oppida* although we do find a great number of what seem to be storage units for grain (Reynolds 1995:190). It seems that the lowland settlements were used as agricultural centers that supplied the needs of the *oppidum's* inhabitants. The size of rural sites like la Verberie suggest that at least a part of the rural population were far above slave status, contrary to Caesar. His

misinterpretation of the situation could hardly be due to a lack of observation, as his military expeditions led him through large swathes of countryside. It seems likely, then, that he included this statement in order to gain sympathy for his cause in Rome (Levick 1998:71).

In contrast to his perceptions of the rural population, Caesar certainly had a good understanding of the aristocracy in Gaul. We can see this in his appreciation of the nuances of achieved and ascribed status. He mentions aristocratic status throughout his text, ostensibly because it is so often enmeshed in military and diplomatic affairs. However, even given that Caesar was primarily in contact with the aristocracy, it seems impossible that he would fail to miss the many merchants and craftspeople, especially while he lived in Bibracte.

However, the problems in Caesar's comments on social organization that are hardest to resolve occur in his ethnographic section. We should return to Nash's suggestion that similarities between Caesar and Posidonius exist only because they wrote within a few generations of each other (Nash 1976). This contention does not bear weight, due to the rapid social changes occurring during that time in Gaul. A span of sixty years, considering the historical and social context, would be sufficient for considerable changes to occur in the region. It is certainly plausible that Caesar did make use of Posidonius but failed to recognize changes in Gallic society because he shared the common belief that barbarian societies were traditional and timeless. To this, we should add the implausibility that Caesar would have had any contact with Gallic people who were not soldiers or members of the aristocracy, and we can see how easy it would be for him to repeat outdated material without realizing its inaccuracies himself.

At the same time, we should not go too far in disregarding Caesar's commentary on social and political organizations in Gaul. His texts illuminate many aspects of society that we would not be able to see from the archaeological record alone. We are able to understand an active and complex aristocracy that would not otherwise be visible. Caesar gives us details in areas where the archaeology can only provide an underlying skeleton.

Yet neither can we ignore the overlying context of the situation, both in Gaul and Rome. The Gallic state had developed very quickly and fell into the hands of Romans just as quickly. The situation that Caesar describes is a brief sliver of time; we cannot think of *pre-oppidum* settlements as fitting into the model of *civitas*, *pagus*, and *domus* because this complex hierarchy was the result of abrupt social change. Caesar's texts provide us with a snapshot of definite social reality, but a snapshot is just that: a frozen moment in time. The dynamic forces behind late Gallic society are neither mentioned nor deeply understood by Caesar, and they remain for the archaeologist to discover.

We must also accept that there are definite discrepancies between the archaeological and the textual evidence, even within this narrow chronology. Some of this is probably due more to simple lack of excavation than to any inherent conflict, but certainly Caesar's lack of recognition for the emergent middle class is puzzling. We must continue to actively pursue both an archaeological investigation and a textual investigation in order to find a happy medium where the two complement each other.



## CONCLUSIONS

With the current emphasis on the limits of ancient ethnography and the recognition of colonial thinking on perceptions of the Other, it has been tempting for many archaeologists simply to ignore the classical texts. In utilizing the words of Caesar and other classical writers incorrectly, one runs the risk of being termed old-fashioned or classicist by the archaeological community. However, this fear of misuse can easily be overcome by archaeologists' gaining a better understanding of the texts rather than discarding them as overly ambiguous. The ancient sources are far too valuable to the knowledge of Iron Age cultures for archaeologists to ignore them.

Caesar's *Commentaries* provide a perfect model of the usefulness and limitations of classical texts. For example, we've seen that his observations on Gallic settlements reflect a situation that matured largely in response to trade pressures from Rome. It was a rapid development, a response to contact with imperial society. His observations on the hierarchical settlements and their relationship to the divisions of *civitas* and *pagi* are not particularly useful in understanding earlier settlement patterns and social organization because they reflect a sudden change in Gallic culture rather than a long-term situation. Yet Caesar makes no mention of the newness of the *oppida* and very likely did not realize himself the impact that Roman trade had on the Gauls.

It is probable that Caesar's denial of the existence of a middle class and his diminution of the importance of the rural lower class stem from Caesar's borrowing from Posidonius. Drawing on earlier sources was certainly commonplace in the ancient world, giving us another consideration when investigating a text. As we've seen with late La Tène Gaul, cultural change and development can occur rapidly; thus an apparent anachronism within a text may indicate an instance of borrowing. This also leads us to the point that the classical sources should be used to illuminate the chronologically relevant time period. By taking a text to represent all Celts at all times, we falsify the reality and produce a timeless, static misinterpretation of a highly mutable and developing society.

Caesar's creation of a cultural barrier along the Rhine demonstrates how political, historical, and even intellectual developments in the classical world can influence attitudes towards the Celts. His manipulation of political ideology and propaganda led Caesar to create a false frontier that would become a reality under Augustus. The social climate of the classical world often colored views of barbarians. The Greek-Persian Wars (c. 490-448 B.C.), for example, led to a more strongly developed sense of Hellenism and a realization of the "barbarity" of all non-Greeks, Persian or not (Hall 1990). The popularity of Stoic philosophy, in which humankind is seen to have fallen from a state of primitive innocence, also had a strong impact on ethnographers from Posidonius to Tacitus. Civil and foreign wars, struggles for personal power in the late Republic and Empire, conservative or expansionist policies in the Senate: each of these are among the many historical circumstances that affected how barbarians were perceived among the Greeks and Romans.

The important considerations aside, Caesar's texts also demonstrate the true value of classical textual sources. His descriptions of status among the aristocracy and of senates and governing councils reveal an extremely complex ruling system that is completely invisible in the archaeological record. *Druides, equites, reges, principes, senatus*, and



*concordia* are just some of the social fixtures of which we would have no knowledge without Caesar's work. While the Roman vocabulary and context of his observations must be carefully considered in circumstances where the archaeology can neither confirm nor deny textual accuracy, Caesar provides valuable insight that would otherwise have been lost to us.

## A CONTEXTUAL APPROACH TO PREHISTORY

The case of Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* has shown that the classical texts, despite problems in interpretation, are indeed an extremely valuable resource in Iron Age archaeology. It has also shown that dealing with these texts requires a highly individualized approach, where context is key not only for the overall work but for every distinct assertion that is made by the ethnographer. This approach is undeniably labor-intensive and interdisciplinary (which creates its own problems). However, the information gleaned from a careful study far outweighs the work involved.

First, it is important to avoid restricting oneself to an overly historical or an overly anthropological approach. Archaeologists would undoubtedly benefit from more thorough study of classical languages and classical texts, while historians focusing on interactions with the Celts are often lacking in an understanding of archaeological and anthropological approaches. While a few recent publications (e.g. Mattingly 1997, Webster and Cooper 1996) aim at redressing the situation, there is still a great deal of room for a comprehensive integration of the two methodologies.

The process of contextual scrutiny can be reduced to a number of considerations that should be investigated for each assertion an author makes. These serve as basic guidelines only and have been created to encourage dialogue and further development:

- The historical background, in both the Mediterranean world and in temperate Europe
- The colonial/imperial context and the various ways in which Greek and Roman cultures impacted the Celtic world
- The historical, social, and political context of individual texts: how, why, and when they were written, and for what audience
- The meaning of the text for its target audience, how Greek and Roman vocabularies were used to describe Celtic societies, the context of the vocabulary in their original language
- The archaeological reality of the author's statements; this involves several of the above considerations as well as an understanding of the pitfalls in interpreting the archaeological record
- The use of literary motifs and appropriation of earlier authors' works that can result in anachronisms and factual inaccuracy

The classical texts, then, are useful tools that merely require a few more caveats than originally thought. By disregarding these texts archaeologists are robbing themselves of information that is often simply not available through excavation. Even when the archaeological evidence is strong, ancient ethnography (when used correctly) can help us to

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interpret the archaeology for a fuller understanding of Celtic society. Iron Age archaeologists must avoid the mistakes of the past by neither over- nor under-utilizing classical texts. I have used Caesar as an example of both the benefits and the pitfalls inherent in using classical texts in the hope that a more contextual approach will emerge in the investigation of the ancient sources. A careful study can only help our understanding of this enigmatic period.

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# **Pedagogies Of Learning**



# Design and Deception at Colonial Williamsburg

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The study of Colonial Williamsburg,<sup>1</sup> which celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary in December 2001, is a useful means of approaching the discussion of the ways interior decoration and garden design can be used as a means to promote political ideology. While the political role of these two areas of creative expression may not be immediately apparent in a visit to Colonial Williamsburg, they played an instrumental role in the restoration of the eighteenth-century town. They were also part of the original plan of the restoration's founders to promote in twentieth-century Americans a strong national pride and love of country. At the same time, the restoration's founders sought to downplay the importance of the town's less prominent residents, including white laborers and slaves. The result was an intentional deception that used interior decoration and garden design to foster an image of life in colonial Williamsburg that accentuated fine furniture, wallpaper, and draperies, as well as attractive gardens, while failing to represent the lives of the majority of the town's population and masking the inequalities of life in eighteenth-century Virginia. For the restoration's early visitors, this deception fostered a sense of the beauty and charm of the eighteenth century, without a discussion of the lives of approximately half of the town's colonial residents who were enslaved. For contemporary visitors from an Honors class at Long Island University, Colonial Williamsburg was an ideal site for studying not just colonial America but the historical contexts, goals, and agendas of a major restoration project.

The restoration of Colonial Williamsburg began in 1926 with the purchase of the Ludwell-Paradise House by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (JDR Jr.), the only son of oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller, and it has expanded over the last seventy-five years to include approximately 400 buildings, eighty-eight of which are from the colonial period. The other buildings, most prominently the Capitol, Governor's Palace and the Raleigh Tavern, are reconstructions of eighteenth-century structures. JDR Jr. was lured to Williamsburg by Rev. W.A.R. Goodwin, the rector of Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg. In the early 1900s, Goodwin worked to restore Bruton Parish Church to its eighteenth-century appearance in order to enhance the church's attractiveness and highlight its role in colonial history. Goodwin had the dream of recreating the whole eighteenth-century town of Williamsburg and imbuing the modern age with a respect for the values of yesteryear.

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<sup>1</sup> The term Colonial Williamsburg refers to the properties owned by the modern-day Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, a non-profit educational foundation geared to the presentation of eighteenth-century life. This is different from the term "colonial Williamsburg," which denotes the town of the 1700s

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Among these values was a belief in individualism, democracy, and representative government. Through the recreation of the colonial village, Goodwin hoped to instill these ideals in a modern generation that, he thought, had lost sight of these beliefs. Goodwin needed the assistance of a major philanthropist and finally settled on the son of the wealthiest man in America. JDR Jr. was the perfect choice to finance this endeavor as he shared Goodwin's vision about Williamsburg, and he also had a love of the charm, beauty and quaintness of the eighteenth century. In recreating the buildings of the past, the founders of Colonial Williamsburg sought to promote the town's relationship with individualism, democracy and representative government in order to enliven a sense of nationalism in the American public in the years of the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War (Lindgren, 226-233; Kammen, 359-370).

I used the example of Colonial Williamsburg in an honors class that I taught at the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University in 1998. Entitled "Perceptions of the Past," this class strove to educate honors students in the ways that the past could be used to promote modern political agendas. One of the most important ingredients in this class was the use of Colonial Williamsburg to understand the ways in which the past can be presented to encourage specific beliefs. In this way, students would gain a better appreciation of the ways a major philanthropist such as John D. Rockefeller, Jr. could use his extraordinary wealth to promote his belief in the importance of eighteenth-century life, culture, and values. Such a study would also demonstrate that there are other means to promote ideological agendas aside from direct participation in the political process.

Before the class visited the restoration, they traveled to historic sites in the New York area, including Theodore Roosevelt's home at Sagamore Hill and the Tenement Museum in the lower east side of Manhattan. I asked them to complete short reaction papers for these sites which were to explain how they were affected by what they saw. I also asked them to note any inconsistencies or errors they noticed in the presentation of these sites. Before leaving for Virginia, the students read the sections on Colonial Williamsburg in Michael Kammen's book *Mystic Chords of Memory* and viewed the film *Williamsburg – The Story of a Patriot*, the 1957 production that still serves as the introductory film for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. This background gave the students an introduction into the political origins of the restoration and its ideological goals. As a result, they were probably better able to analyze the flaws and inconsistencies of the restoration than the average visitor would be. Upon arriving in Williamsburg, I encouraged them to seek out anything that struck them as out of place. My goal was to hone their analytical skills and to challenge them to examine the ways in which historical restorations misrepresent the past.

In seeking to recreate the exteriors and interiors of the town that served as the capital of Virginia from 1699 to 1780, the founders of Colonial Williamsburg envisioned a museum that would present the very best values of the eighteenth century. Integral to the recreation of life in this era was a presentation of the interiors of the major sites in the town, such as the Capitol and the home of the royal governor, as well as the homes of the town's wealthier residents. While the exteriors of many of the town's buildings could be found in the historical records, the interiors were usually a mystery. It was in the interiors of these buildings, then, that the restoration's designers strove to demonstrate what they believed to be the glorious and dignified aspects of the eighteenth century. This



work entailed the recreation of the wallpaper, paints, draperies, and furnishings that were part of colonial life. This task required research into the materials that were available in the eighteenth century, along with an understanding of the use of decorating materials to create interiors for the various buildings that the restoration sought to present (Wright, 41, 45-56).

Indeed, the initial desire of the restoration's designers to create an ornate interior for the Governor's Palace later caused problems when an inventory of the palace's eighteenth-century contents was discovered. This revelation prompted an expensive redesign of the building's interior in the early 1980s in order to mirror the palace's colonial appearance. The result, which can be seen today, is far less ornate and more closely representative of the building's original interior. Here is a good example of an earlier perception of the past that was inaccurate. The assumption of early designers fit the common preconception that the eighteenth century was one of ornate grandeur and opulence. But later research on the Governor's Palace and other parts of the town revealed this earlier notion to be inaccurate (Fiske, X, 15).

Another instance of an error in interior design that was present when my students and I visited the restoration in 1998 was the portrait of George Washington hanging inside the Capitol in the same room as the portraits of the King and Queen of Great Britain. Clearly, in the middle of the eighteenth century there would not have been a portrait of George Washington in the Capitol in Williamsburg. My students noticed this obvious mistake and noted as well the failure of the restoration, even at that late date, to attempt to present a building interior that was more consonant with what might have realistically been present in the colonial era. The presence of Washington's portrait in the Capitol was clearly more ideological than historical. This example was further evidence of the restoration's desire to ensure that visitors associate Washington with Colonial Williamsburg, especially since he has traditionally been associated with the type of ideals that the restoration wished to foster.

The promotion of political ideology through interior design was not confined strictly to buildings on the restoration site, however. Colonial Williamsburg manufactured many of the same products that were used at the restoration for purchase by its visitors. In this way, millions of Americans could bring a part of the restoration into their own living space. Magazine articles in the 1930s highlighted the efforts of the restoration to commercialize its products to attract income as well as to promote an ideological perspective of the past. Restoration officials hoped that, as Americans brought these colonial items into their homes, they would feel a stronger relationship to the era and the values that Colonial Williamsburg was trying to perpetuate in the twentieth century. The belief promoted by the restoration was that, if Americans purchased these items, it would promote a stronger love of country and Americans would be less likely to embrace communism (Brown, "Restoring Historic Williamsburg . . .," 74-5; Brown, "The Restoration of Colonial Virginia," 70-71).

As millions of Americans struggled through the Great Depression and World War II, Colonial Williamsburg presented itself as a stable and comforting place where traditional American beliefs and values were alive and well. During the Cold War, the promotion of Williamsburg products again surged as suburbanization increased and more

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Americans were painting, wallpapering and furnishing their newly-bought homes ("Fresh Antiques," 58).

One of the most important properties owned by Colonial Williamsburg which illustrates the ideological implications of interior design is the house at the Carter's Grove plantation. Built in the middle part of the eighteenth century by Robert "King" Carter, the house was one of the largest Virginia mansions constructed in the colonial period. The home was purchased and furnished in the colonial-revival style by Archibald and Mary McCrea in the 1930s. Carter's Grove is a representation of the aims that Williamsburg sought to foster in home design in the middle decades of the twentieth century. The patriotic decor at Carter's Grove, which includes a wide variety of colonial antiques as well as a part of the house painted in red, white and blue by a prior occupant, may appear by modern standards to be a bit overdone. But the open promotion of one's love of country and the belief in American institutions were often seen as virtues during the first half of the twentieth century. Through the examination of sites like Carter's Grove, students can gain a better appreciation of the ways in which people in the earlier decades of the twentieth century expressed patriotic feelings in a creative fashion and, in so doing, encouraged other Americans to follow suit and demonstrate their love of country through their own interior designs (Boulton, 82-89).

In addition, those who developed the eighteenth-century look for Williamsburg in the 1930s and 40s believed that issues of creativity and style extended to areas outside of the home. Thus, the gardens of Colonial Williamsburg represented an artistic attempt to create the quaintness and beauty of a forgotten past. As with the building interiors, however, little hard evidence was available to the designers as to what the gardens in much of the town actually looked like. The English landscape architects who were hired by the restoration created a series of ornate designs that would likely have been out of place in what would have been considered a backwater for eighteenth-century Europeans. More than likely, many of the town's original gardens would have served primarily a utilitarian purpose, providing food and a pleasing addition to the home's exterior (Wright, 51).

Gardens also helped to represent the goal of the restoration's founders to promote the beauty of the eighteenth century. In fact, JDR Jr. was often more concerned with aesthetics than with historical accuracy when it came to exterior design. In one instance, for example, he suggested placing a bench in a particularly attractive spot so that visitors could admire the view. He was told, however, that the likelihood that such a bench existed there in colonial times was very small. If the desire for accuracy won out over appearance in this instance, the search for a proud aesthetic was always present in the minds of those who founded and designed much of Colonial Williamsburg (Kendrew, 613-14).

The disregard for historical accuracy is certainly evident in the streets and sidewalks of the restored village. While in colonial times these would have been dirt, or often mud mixed with animal droppings, the sidewalks of Colonial Williamsburg are brick, and the main streets are paved. This obvious inaccuracy was quickly noticed by students, as were the small green fire hydrants which the restoration had attempted to hide from view with varying degrees of success. Certainly, these additions were needed to permit the approximately one million visitors a year to see the town in greater safety. Yet they do serve to distract from the verisimilitude of the restoration and its attempt to transport its visitors back to the eighteenth century.

By providing interesting presentations both inside and outside their restored and rebuilt buildings, restoration officials hoped that visitors would be lured back to the ideals of the eighteenth century by the beauty of Williamsburg. Restoration officials also hoped that visitors would sense the importance of the political ideals of the restoration and that they would implement them in their daily lives. If they were successful, the restoration would be able to promote these traditional American ideas for years to come through the use of Williamsburg paints, furniture reproductions, and gardening books.

While the modern presentation of Colonial Williamsburg has sought to rectify its earlier failure to present an accurate portrayal of the past through its social history programs, many visitors probably still take away with them the emphasis on the town's gardens and building interiors. Many books are still published on the gardens of Colonial Williamsburg, and restoration-produced paints and furniture reproductions are still available for sale. These aesthetic elements of the restoration overshadow the less accurate historical and social components of the site. While there were African American interpreters at the restoration, for instance, my students noticed that they were far from being 50 percent of the interpretive staff. Thus, Colonial Williamsburg was still misrepresenting this part of its presentation.

Exposing students to the inherent contradictions at Colonial Williamsburg was beneficial for them and for myself. It demonstrated to me the ways that students use to examine the past. They enjoyed the challenge of seeking out the town's inconsistencies and discussing their cause. In doing so, they were quick to spot misrepresentations and disparities which plague all attempts to recreate the past. These exercises developed their analytical abilities as well as their powers of observation. They helped my students to think critically about historical presentations and not to immediately accept what they were offered at Colonial Williamsburg. Nevertheless, many of them still experienced an increase in patriotism and a sense of the beauty and grandeur of eighteenth-century life—ideals which the restoration was trying to portray. In the end, then, the restoration was clearly successful in achieving its goal of luring modern Americans back to its idealized version of the eighteenth century, even those who had been forewarned to look out for Colonial Williamsburg's obvious deceptions.

A successful Honors course should lead students into an exploration of why they are attracted to comforting representations of their country's history even when they know—and have discovered for themselves—the inaccuracies of these representations. In this way they can better understand not only history but the lenses through which they see it.

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# Teaching “The Other Legacy,” Learning About Ourselves: Latin America in Honors

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Education as the practice of freedom denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from men. Authentic reflection considers ... men in the relations with the world. (Freire, 58)

These words, written in 1968 by Paulo Freire in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, were current in the 1960's and still are at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For Freire, the ultimate goal is that students should learn to practice freedom in the classroom and to be committed to the society in which they belong. According to Freire, values and ideas should be a topic of discussion in the classroom in order for students to reflect on how to transform or create a better society. He states,

Teachers and students, co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. (56)

In this process of “discovering themselves,” the exposure to “the other” is a crucial part of students’ learning experience. We are who we are in relation to others. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that, through the study of other cultures with which students are not familiar, they learn about themselves, about the historical memory of their own community, and about their connection with the world regarding decisions in a global as well as a personal context. They also learn about their responsibility as citizens, as voters, and as members of a society that is not isolated but is connected to the world’s urgent social and political issues. In this learning process students also reflect about human values. From the perspective of the teacher, the teaching of human values helps students to understand unfamiliar topics. As Stanford Ericksen states,

The ability to relate subject matter with the student’s own aspirations and values is probably one of the defining characteristics of the master teacher ..... it is the constellation of interests, attitudes, and values the subject matter can help to formulate that will remain with students long after factual information and concept labels are forgotten or found to be

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obsolete or irrelevant. The instructor must therefore accept the further responsibility of defining attitudes and values that he (she) believes to be appropriate goals of his/her course. (7, 11-12)

The objective is for students to feel comfortable with “the other” and learn about tolerance and diversity while they explore themselves. Students can learn this through the study of Western and non-Western cultures. Reading Shakespeare, for example, could be a good way to analyze others and ourselves if we learn to study his writings exploring the otherness in them. Someone of non-Western heritage can learn to read Shakespeare looking for those issues and sectors of society that are misrepresented. As Lori Schroeder Haslem affirms in her essay “Is Teaching the Literature of Western Culture Inconsistent with Valuing Diversity?”

It is in the very nexus of your agreements and disagreements with the text that you can learn not only to read Shakespeare or any author but, most important, to read and to understand yourself as a unique person with unique values. (121)

Teaching topics on Latin America is a great way to expose students to the study of the “other.” Since 1996 I have designed and taught six different seminars with Latin American content at the University Honors Program of the University of New Mexico. I have been challenged in my approach to education by the interdisciplinary emphasis used in Honors courses and the fact that students come from many different backgrounds and fields. Because of the nature of this teaching experience I have almost become an expert in simplifying concepts and looking for examples by using different techniques.

The list of seminars that I have designed and taught include titles such as: “Fiction and Non Fiction on the Screen: Latin American History and Literature in Films”; “From Sweet Daughters to Revolutionary Sisters: Women in Latin America”; “Evita: the Woman, the Myth, the Truth”; “Latin American Legacy”; “Race and Mixture in Latin America”, and “Elusive Justice: Human Rights in Latin America.” It is impossible to explain here how I teach each class, but I will summarize the methodology that I have used in some of them by giving specific examples of readings, topics, and students’ products in the form of journals, presentations, research papers, and projects.

Perhaps one of the classes that explore more in depth the concept of “the other” is the Latin American Legacy course. The objective of this seminar is for students to be exposed to, and understand, some of the most important works and writers whose ideas have left a legacy in Latin American and world cultures. The course explores major ideas in literary, historical, artistic, socio-political, and scientific sources that represent the most important characteristics of Latin America, as well as its contributions to the world. Music, literature, cinema, and other forms of art are also part of this course. We finish with the legacy of Latin America in the United States, studying the presence of *latinos* and their cultures in this country.

During the semester students read, reflect, discuss, and write about these issues. We begin the semester getting familiar with the map of Latin America and researching each country’s population, economics, religion, society, ethnicity, and customs. The readings are placed in chronological order and are selected to represent different

moments of history, different places, and different cultures in order to show the diversity and the development of Latin America. At the same time, students use the readings to explore what is unique to Latin America and what it has in common with other cultures. Each reading contributes to these goals.

The reading of the *Popol Vuh* is an effective introduction to indigenous mythology and the creation of the world according to Mayan culture. Through the reading of *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, by Bartolomé de las Casas, students understand the consequences of the European conquest, the violation of human rights, and the importance of voices such as that of Las Casas, who was part of the conquest and denounced its abuses. With this reading students begin to explore themes such as the encounter of different cultures and the beginning of imperialism in Western history. The reading of the writings of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz exposes students to one of the many literary examples from Latin America, in this case from Mexico. The writings of Sor Juana and her life as a woman, living in a patriarchal society and repressed by some of the patriarchal institutions such as the Church, are excellent early examples of feminism in Latin America, as well as the beginning of a national literature. We also read a selection from the book *Facundo or Civilization and Barbarism*, by 19<sup>th</sup>-century Argentinian writer Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, which is a classic in Latin American literature. Through this reading, students reflect on the following issues: rural and urban cultures, national folklore and foreign influence, nationalism and protectionism versus liberalism and free market, “barbarism” versus civilization.

Contemporary writings on Latin America by U.S. scholars give students other perspectives that contribute to class discussions. The book *Tales of A Shaman's Apprentice* by Mark Plotkin, an ethnobotanist who in the 1970's and 1980's searched for new medicinal plants in the Amazon Rain Forest, exposes students to the benefits, controversies, and possible negative consequences of the Western presence in the Amazon Rain Forest today. A selection of readings on the African presence in the Caribbean gives students another perspective of the legacy. In this case, the legacy of African people in Latin America compared to that in the United States is a valuable lesson. The last part of the class is dedicated to exploring U.S.-Latin America relations and the presence of Latin America in the United States. Many students are surprised at reading for the first time about U.S. military interventions and support to military dictatorships in Latin America in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These topics lead us to discuss and express more personal opinions and take a political position on issues such as immigration, political and civil responsibility, human rights, ethnocentrism, and imperialism in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

Students' final papers are a good example of the results of this course, for the themes selected are very related to learning about the “other” while at the same time researching topics of their own interest. Students choose the field in which they want to do research. The topics are familiar to them (in many cases related to their majors or minors) but add the Latin American component within the idea of legacy. Papers such as “Sculpture, Society and Politics in Latin America,” “El Barzón: Legacy of Latin American Popular Resistance in the Context of World Globalization,” “Pablo Neruda: A Legacy in Literature and Life,” “Silence, Dehumanization, and Oppression: Indigenous Women in Guatemala,” and “The Latin American Dream in a Globalized-Market Economy” are some examples of the array of topics on which students chose to write.



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For the class “Evita: the Woman, the Myth, the Truth,” one of my students wrote in her journal (fall 2002):

I have never been much for or about politics... I have only begun to understand the importance of Politics in response to Argentina. I guess I just want to first state how much this all makes sense and relates to me now. I see humanity in a whole new view.

This is one of the many comments made by students about how much they learn in this class. Teaching biography is an excellent way to explore the life of a human being and at the same time analyze other issues. (Some of the characteristics of this class and its results were presented in a short article I published in 1998 in *The National Honors Report*.) The lives of Evita and her husband Juan Perón open many topics for discussion. Their biographies create a larger context in which students can express their own views about politics and society. The themes students explore include: charismatic leaders, dictatorships, democracies and populism, presidents’ wives and their roles, and feminism and the women’s movement in Latin America and the United States. Such a context is also an opportunity for students to develop their personal perspectives on other themes such as: gender issues, female and male power, myths, ambition, passion, and fanaticism. The nature of these topics puts students in the position of exploring their inner selves in order to define these concepts and to relate to them.

To teach the class on charisma, I use a technique that has become very successful. Students are asked to create their own individual definition of charisma and to choose one historical or contemporary charismatic leader. Students look for information about the life of the chosen leader and an image of him or her. They then create a one-page handout with all this information. Each student gives a short oral presentation about the leader and writes on a strip of paper his or her most important characteristics. The list is taped to the wall. After the presentations, students go through what was written on the strips and create their own lists of charismatic characteristics. Finally, students compare their lists with the specific cases of Eva and Juan Perón and apply to them all that we have discussed on charisma.

In another activity each student must interview a woman who is old enough to talk of her life or remember the lives of women in the United States during the 1940’s and 50’s, which was the period of Evita’s public life. Each student gives a short oral presentation about the interview, and the class period concludes by summarizing the lives of women in the United States at that time. We then analyze Argentinian women and Evita in this comparative context. This assignment has been successful for many reasons. Some students interview their own grandmothers or other relatives, and they discover and learn about their own family history. In these cases, students have expressed surprise about stories that they learned from their grandmothers. In other cases, students interview women in nursing homes and start close relationships with women they did not know before.

In teaching a biography, all the senses can be involved. Aids such as documentaries, movies, slides, music, recorded speeches, tango lessons, food and *mate* tasting (an



Argentinian tea) help create a more engaged learning experience.<sup>1</sup> Students' final papers and projects showed a diversity of themes and creativity.<sup>2</sup>

Teaching biography leads us to reflect about many different aspects of human nature. In this seminar we have lively discussions about love, ambition, power, and manipulation. In other words, students learn to reflect on human values. This idea of teaching a biography from different perspectives with the use of multiple strategies can be applied to any other seminar designed for the study of a famous personality (for example, a political leader, a president, an artist, a writer) in Western and non-Western Cultures.

Of the Honors courses that I have taught on Latin America, perhaps there is no other subject to which students can better relate their own experience than the course on human rights. The topic, in itself, is interdisciplinary. The focus can be different each time that the seminar is taught—concentrating, for example, on political issues, economics, social and racial issues, or art. The combination of readings from different disciplines has been very successful in this course. Articles written by historians, anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, and art historians help give students different perspectives on the same topic. Students also become familiar with the different terminologies used by the specialists in each field. In addition to this selection of readings, there is a primary reading list that includes examples of different literary

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1 Regarding the use of recorded speeches, even though they are in Spanish, students follow Evita's speeches through an English translation that I provide. The speeches are in chronological order. Students analyze her voice and message in different times of her life and circumstances. In this way, students learn to do a critical analysis of political oral communication, even in a different language. There is also a section of the class called "Evita in Fiction." Students have the opportunity to watch two films on Evita and to read a novel about her. Fiction helps many students understand reality. By the time students watch the films and read the novel, they know the real story of Evita. For this section of the class I also assign a two-page fictional essay called "I was there. I met Evita." Students write in the first person and convey stories about how, when, and in what circumstances they met Evita. It is an effective assignment in the way students go beyond history and feel free to use their imagination.

2 One student's project, for example, was the creation of a radio soap opera in the same style as those of the 1940s (as an actress, Evita performed in this type of radio show). The soap opera was called "Heroines of Revolution" and involved research about three revolutionary women in 20th-century Latin America (one of them was Evita). The student wrote an introduction with information about the historical context and a play based on dialogues. The dialogues were recorded on a cassette tape, complete with sound effects and voices. Another project in the same class was the creation of a "zine" called "The Other Half"; in this case the student researched women's issues in the 1940s and 1950s (Evita's era). Among the topics this student researched were health issues, fashion, women in politics (Evita and others), and poetry written by women. One of the most creative research papers written for this class was called "Tango and Eva," in which the student researched how tango is danced. The paper combined the topics of dance and politics in three areas: the life of Eva Perón called "A Dance in the Life"; the meaning of tango and the roles that male and female dancers play called "The Politics of the Dance"; and Juan and Eva Perón's relationship in this context called "A Dance of Politics."

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styles (history, testimonial fiction, journalism, a novel, and a book of poetry).<sup>3</sup> Readings are combined with documentaries. A Latin American Human Rights Film Festival featuring seven films connected to the themes of the class is also organized.<sup>4</sup>

One of the most interesting topics included in this seminar is that of art and human rights. Since art has a universal value, it becomes an excellent tool in a classroom on a subject that is unfamiliar to students. In Latin America, art is a very common way to contribute to the process of healing and recuperation after many years of systematic violation of human rights. The use of film in the course demonstrates that cinema has been one of the most powerful artistic methods of informing people about this issue. The reading of poetry and the creation of a collaborative poem in class is another successful exercise. A Latin American artist who personally has suffered repression visits this class. She uses her paintings and poems as a way to reflect and educate. An art historian is also invited to speak to students about his research on art and revolution in Latin America.

There are other ways for students to be involved in a course that has topics with which they are not familiar. Students keep journals and reflect personally about the issues that are discussed in class. They feel free to connect the issues to their own lives. They also review the topic of human rights in the daily news. The use of current information about human rights violations in the United States and in the world is beneficial. Students make comparisons between current news and what they are learning about Latin America. There are frequent discussions about human rights issues in the United States and comparisons with the type of violence that exists in this country. Students begin to realize that it is important to take a position on this issue, that we have responsibilities as human beings, and that we should find a way to live up to those responsibilities.

Students’ final projects and papers for this course have been outstanding in content and creativity. Because of the specific nature of this class, students feel connected to the issues about which they choose to research and write. Some students have created interesting and artistically well-done paintings using the topic of human rights in Latin America. They complete their assignment with a paper connected to the main theme of the painting.<sup>5</sup> In a research project called “Drawing Justice: An Investigation of Children’s Perspectives on Children’s Rights,” a student interviewed Mexican children in a bilingual class and asked them to draw illustrations based on the Declaration of Children

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3 The texts that I use are: Bartolomé de Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*; Miguel Barnet, *Biography of a Runaway Slave*; Tina Rosenberg, *Children of Cain: The Violence and the Violent in Latin America*; Isabel Allende, *Of Love and Shadows* and *Poetry Like Bread: Poets of the Political Imagination* (an anthology).

4 The films are: *The Last Supper* (Cuba), *The Official Story* (Argentina), *Men With Guns* (United States), *Missing* (US), *Romero* (US), *Che Guevara: the Bolivian Diaries* (Switzerland), and *The Night of the Pencils* (Argentina).

5 One student created a painting with different symbols and images of historical figures who have been leaders of human rights in Mexico. He wrote a paper explaining the painting and giving factual information about each leader. Another student did a painting reflecting the idea of globalization and the foreign debt of Latin American countries that in many cases do not permit them to develop and results in human rights violations. The painting was combined with a paper titled “Debt Relief: Is It An Option?”

Rights which was read to them. In the project “For All Eyes To See,” a student reflected on the importance and influence of Mexican muralists (Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros) on the muralist painters in the Albuquerque area in New Mexico. The student combined her paper with her own photographs of murals all around the city. In the paper and in the selection of murals to photograph, the student focused on those themes related to social, political, and cultural rights. The project titled “When Mothers Fight for Justice” involved research and performance; the student recreated the walk of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who protest their “disappeared” children during the last dictatorship in Argentina.

In the course “Fiction and Non Fiction on the Screen,” students explore Latin American history, literature, and cinema. The readings, discussions, research, and writing on these topics give students the opportunity to reflect about artistic expressions and their interpretations of historical events. Films are selected based on novels that have an historical context. The course became an interdisciplinary introduction to Latin America. This idea can work well for the study of any region, country, or culture.

Art, history, politics, and economics, as well as social, ethnic, and environmental issues, among others, are universal themes to apply to the study of any culture or region in the world. The main goal is to give students a sense of connection with the world and reflect on issues and values that can be applied to any, as well as their own, culture. At the same time, as Honors teachers we cannot forget the importance of emphasizing critical thinking in our students. Throughout all the courses mentioned above students are encouraged to constantly ask questions, to always go beyond the “obvious,” and to be intellectually curious. These classes on Latin America are designed to develop critical thinking in its broadest sense as “the mode of inquiry that challenges cultural biases, inherited assumptions, and uninterrogated ways of viewing the world” (Wiegman and Glasberg, 399, 1-2).

Latin America’s Nobel Peace Laureate, Alonso Pérez Esquivel, reminds us that: “We must understand human rights as being integral, not only the human rights of individuals but the human rights of people, their cultures, roots, and historical memories.” I like to apply this concept to the dynamics of the classroom and look for ways to teach Latin America that can help students to search in themselves for their own historical memory, their own identity; and to exercise in the classroom the practice of freedom that Freire stresses. I strongly believe that these courses can create a huge impact on students’ minds and lives in the same way that Pérez Esquivel has described for all people in the world: “When people assume their history, their historical memory, they stop being spectators ... .”

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# Student-Led Quality Teams In the Classroom

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*The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase involvement in learning.*

*—Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education*

## INTRODUCTION

The central aim of all honors programs is to produce the highest quality of learning experiences possible to students with high motivation and exceptional academic ability (Brown, 2001). The assumption has been for many years that a high quality learning experience is ensured in the traditional (honors) college classroom by small class size and a seminar format.

However, some of these classes are inevitably higher quality than others. Recent teaching innovations open additional instructional options to honors and other courses as well. Process evaluation or assessment can help course instructors learn how to make course adjustments while the course is still underway. Repeated data points can also help to ensure course improvements. This kind of input can be particularly useful when: a course is new and in the development phase, an instructor tries new teaching techniques, an instructor changes, or more simply, an instructor is looking for fresh insights into a course taught many times before. The Innovation Quality (or IQ) program was developed and implemented at Penn State for the past four years to meet these assessment needs. IQ student teams help faculty appraise the quality of teaching and learning experiences in one course across the entire semester. The purpose of this paper is to explain how the program was developed, what its key elements are, and the potential applications it has for honors and other classes on any college campus.

## BACKGROUND

Spence (2001) challenged the assumptions of traditional teaching that equate teaching with telling, learning with absorbing, and knowledge with subject-matter content. He points out that professors should be in the business of creating environments where learning occurs rather than professing words in front of an audience. Considerable research backs up this notion as well (see, for example, Donovan et al, 1999; Bruer, 1993; Bransford, et al, 1999). In addition, Angelo and Cross (1994) stress the role of authentic assessment, which is critical in the “new” classroom. More specifically, (1) students need

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the opportunity to give and get feedback on their learning before they are evaluated for grades; (2) assessment should involve active student participation in the process; (3) learning can be enhanced through improved teaching; and (4) active collaboration between teachers and students enhances student satisfaction with the course as well as the teacher's satisfaction with teaching. These ideas coupled together demand a form of process evaluation while the course is in session rather than relying solely on summative or outcome evaluation reserved for the end (Angelo, 1999).

Penn State did not have any process in place whereby process evaluations could be implemented on a routine basis, especially if the course instructor desired input on new teaching innovations. This gap was first recognized by Elizabeth Kinland, an honors student, who took it upon herself to develop a student-led evaluation process (Kinland, 2000). The first class assessed was an honors class of 12 students. Later, the student initiative was institutionalized in the Schreyer Institute for Innovation in Learning (or SIIL), still relying almost exclusively on student volunteers. The ultimate goals were to create a low-cost course assessment model that could be transferred to a wide variety of courses or subject matter, scaled up to large enrollment courses as well as honors courses, and which would be generalizable to other campuses. Student engagement was a core concept in this program from the outset.

### METHODS

IQ Teams have been implemented in a wide range of classes at Penn State. The impact of the program has been felt in calculus classes with enrollments of over 250 students, math, statistics, political science, and forestry classes with enrollments of approximately 50 students, and honors seminars of approximately eight to ten students. Although the overall IQ Team process at Penn State has a mission to serve the entire university, many honors classes have worked within the IQ Team program. The honors core business curriculum, honors core political science curriculum, as well as honors seminars in sociology and information science and technology have benefited from the Innovation and Quality Team Process.

At our institution, honors classes are often experimental and test new teaching innovations before they are integrated into the larger university curriculum. This model of testing innovation is common across many four-year honors programs. On their honors college informational web-site, for example, the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill states, "we regard the Honors curriculum as a learning laboratory, where new course ideas and new ways of teaching constantly stimulate teachers and students." Innovation and Quality Teams can provide constructive feedback to honors classes as well as other seminar-style classes that are newly developed, especially those that include active and problem-based learning methods of instruction. The central idea of student Innovation and Quality (IQ) Teams was: a small team of 4-6 students enrolled in each participating class would collect data from all the students enrolled in the class at least 5 or 6 different times during the semester, tabulate the results, and report them to a team leader who, in turn, would share the results with the instructor. The team leader is trained and supervised by the IQ Team Coordinator located at SIIL. It should be noted that SIIL is analogous on many other campuses to Centers for Excellence in Learning and Teaching or

other university offices with a mission to support teaching or faculty development. The IQ Team Leader works as a consultant to the IQ course quality team, advising them on survey questions and data interpretation. He or she also meets with the professor, ensuring “grade safety” to any students participating. The IQ teams present their results to the class on a regular basis as well. Presentations generally last only 5-10 minutes every other week.

Through trial and error over several semesters with volunteer professors, SIIL and student volunteers worked out a functional model (see Figure 1). It costs the institution approximately \$3,100 to staff and manage seven course quality teams each semester. The costs are covered by small donations from alumni to improve undergraduate education. Suitable preparation is key for team leaders, team participants, and participating faculty. Student leaders need to know general education principles, how to form and guide a team, basic survey construction skills, and data analysis/presentation skills sufficient to guide student volunteers enrolled in a class. This preparation occurs at SIIL the semester before students become team leaders; training is done primarily by peer instruction with oversight by staff at SIIL. Students are awarded one academic credit for their learning and effort. Student team members are recruited on the first or second day of class and are trained by their team leader. Participating faculty also need to be introduced to the concept, assisted in understanding how to utilize the data, and prepared to receive criticism in a positive manner. This preparation generally occurs in tandem with the team participants and team leader in a joint meeting with other team leaders and professors at a single evening meeting within the first two weeks of the semester. Readings are provided in advance to focus the questions and discussion during the meeting. See Kinland, et al. (2001) for further description.

An extensive evaluation of the program was also accomplished as an honors thesis (Kinland, 2000). Currently, the entire initiative is student-run and student-led.

## **CASE STUDY IN ONE HONORS SEMINAR: GLOBALIZATION AND WORLD TRENDS**

A case study of the progression of IQ Teams in an honors course entitled “Globalization and World Trends” illustrates the progression of constructive criticism that students can deliver to an individual professor or team of professors over the course of a semester. IQ Teams have been used in this seminar during two out of the four semesters that it has been offered. The class averages 20-25 students per semester and travels to Washington D.C. to a major think tank, the Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS), for a four-day immersion and policy-making experience mid-semester. The course is team taught. The coordinating instructor decided to use an IQ team in order to learn how each part of the class was working and to continually build the course over time. The first semester the seminar was offered for one credit (see Table 1). It has now progressed to a three-credit course, based largely on the student feedback from these course evaluations (see Table 2). Each semester that IQ Teams worked with the “Globalization and World Trends” class, at least three surveys were administered. Table 3 provides examples of IQ survey questions as drawn from the first year a team worked in the class and then again in a subsequent year. The first survey in 2000 focused primarily

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on process issues in this class. Based on the results of the first IQ team survey, the participating professor changed the mechanisms of the class, clarifying homework assignments and adjusting the pace of class discussion. In contrast, the second survey administered to the fall 2000 class focused on providing feedback on the innovative elements of the honors seminar. Two of the questions focused on a United Nations simulation as well as the weekly *New York Times* discussions held by the class. Based on these survey results, the professor revised the UN simulation and a discussion group was created to focus on *New York Times* discussions outside of class. In other words, the focus of the IQ teams questions shifted from surveys designed to change the class process to a survey that focused on the learning process of the class.

When the first and second surveys were administered in the second year of IQ team involvement, the quality team moved directly into providing suggestions on meaningful learning. Because of the work of the IQ team in the previous semester, several surface learning issues had already been addressed. Therefore, the first survey in 2001 immediately addressed learning issues relating to a “Star Power,” a social policy simulation as well as the role of international Humphrey Fellows who visited in the class. The second survey of fall 2001 again focused on learning issues (see Table 3). Altogether, the students wanted more content, more class time, and more activities, hence the revision of the course syllabus in 2001 (see Table 2).

This case of the Honors Seminar “Globalization and World Trends” illustrates that IQ teams address the technical issues of class dynamics as well as provide feedback on innovative teaching techniques, field trips, homework, and ideas for class enhancements. The benefit to both the students and professors in the “Globalization and World Trends” was also probably maximized through implementing an IQ team in two consecutive semesters of the class.

### OVERALL IMPACT OF THE IQ TEAM PROGRAM AT PENN STATE

At the end of calendar year 2002, over 334 students had worked in IQ Teams to improve the educational experience of over 4,000 students enrolled across the university in a wide variety of courses. The program worked to improve the basic or mechanical aspects of the classroom, but also addressed the learning outcomes for the students in the classroom. In addition, the program heightened the students’ own self-awareness of their role in the learning process. Honors students also learned how to lead and manage change as team members whether they worked in honors or non-honors course sections. It should be noted, however, that these IQ Team evaluations supplemented but did not replace required end-of-course evaluations. It is also important to point out that this program is not positioned as a program for honors students. Rather, student volunteers are solicited. However, virtually all volunteers are honors students, but, because the program is open, honors students do not suffer any isolation or criticism for their roles or initiative.

We found, however, that faculty tend to be reluctant to volunteer their courses for IQ Teams, in part because the experience is different, it demands change, it is voluntary and “unrewarded” in terms of promotion and tenure consideration, and it can be threatening to



receive continued criticism for 15 weeks. However, most of the professors who participate one semester do so again because they place a premium on the value of what they receive from the experience. In addition, as the case study above illustrates, IQ teams are a continuous quality process. Through detailed records and innovation logs, professors and new team leaders can refer to past survey results to shape the direction of the subsequent IQ team involvement in any given class. Because students and faculty benefit from continuous quality improvement, initial reservation has turned into warm enthusiasm as both students and faculty learn together how to make the classroom a more effective learning environment. Although the benefits of IQ teams are by no means exclusive to honors classes, they are amplified in honors classes due to the innovative, challenging, and often experimental nature of honors curricula and the immediate feedback provided by the IQ Team on innovative class elements. Table 4 provides a sample of reactions to the IQ team experience.

The paragraphs below provide more detail about participation in IQ teams from student, team leader, and faculty perspectives.

### **THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE (EMILY WHITBECK):**

*Overall, my experiences have improved my understanding of my own learning process and given me the confidence to be a leader in my own education. When I first participated in an IQ Team during my freshman year, I was skeptical of the program. I couldn't understand how I would make an impact on a class led by a full professor. It was their class, so why would they listen to my input on how to teach? I slowly realized that I had a stake in the class and my team and the professor could work together to make the class our "ideal class." Because my professor was enthusiastic about student suggestions, my IQ team was able to implement changes to my class that improved the learning environment for everyone in my class. I began to feel ownership for my education and others in the class were open to give me their suggestions to bring to the IQ team. Over the course of the semester, I became much more aware of how I was learning material in all of my classes. I continue to apply what I learned in my IQ team to other classes and to critique and contemplate how I am learning, and to adjust my own work and approach to maximize the potential of the course for me. In addition, it fostered a close relationship with my professor that has led to several opportunities for me to become more involved in projects and leadership roles.*

*The next semester my interest in the program led me to become a student team leader. Through my role as a team leader I continued to learn about the learning process and developed my organizational leadership skills. I was trained by the team coordinators to facilitate quality team meetings and to communicate effectively with the participating professor. I observed how many different approaches students on my team brought to the learning process. As a team leader, I facilitated weekly team meetings and acted as a liaison between the team and the professor. I had to keep the students on task and ask questions that would stimulate their thinking about their learning in the course. I was also confronted with the fact that many students learn material in different ways and that each should have a stake in how the learning takes place in the class. I was nervous to begin with because my particular team was made up of freshmen that were participating in a*

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*relatively innovative course and I wasn't sure what to expect in terms of maturity and self-awareness. Luckily, I was surprised by their thoughtfulness and willingness to discuss the tougher "learning" issues such as the advantages of group work versus a lecture style classroom, as opposed to surface issues such as "too much work." Through negotiating between the team and the professor I learned to compromise so that the suggestions of the team could be implemented positively both during that semester and in the following semester.*

### **THE STUDENT DIRECTOR AND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR PERSPECTIVE (AMANDA WETZEL):**

*As an IQ team coordinator, I was initially involved in the program as a team member and team leader and share a similar learning experience to that described above. As the Student Director, my role is unique because I oversee the progress of all the Innovation and Quality Project Teams (n=7) throughout the semester (two student directors can handle up to 10 teams). The Director and the Assistant Director provide leadership training for the student team members and team leaders. The directors are the "watch-dogs" over all of the teams to make sure they are discussing the learning process, and to mediate any misunderstandings that may occur between professors and teams throughout the semester. All parties including student team members, leaders and professors have a unique stake in the IQ team process. As a Student Director, I ensure that the benefits that the team members, team leader, and professor have described take place through each Innovation and Quality Team.*

*Through my experiences as an Assistant Director and now a Director, I have learned a great deal about team dynamics and peer mediation. Some IQ teams progress very quickly through the stages of student criticism. Other teams, typically teams with freshman and sophomore level students, tend to need more coaching to discuss meaningful learning issues in their class. IQ team directors learn to identify problems with individual team dynamics and to coach team leaders to facilitate discussion effective to maximize the potential of the group. As the program director, I have learned that even when professors and students have the best intentions, sometimes misunderstandings occur. An undergraduate student director is needed to mediate these misunderstandings and to insure that the partnership between students and professors is successful.*

*Overall, through working as the Director of the Innovation and Quality Team program, I have continued to expand my understanding of the learning process as I coach each team leader to guide their team through the stages of student criticism. I clearly observe that the learning environment improves for all students in participating classes, professors are satisfied with the feedback of the IQ teams and the learning gains their students experience, team members critically think about how they learn, and team leaders improve their facilitation and mediation skills. From my perspective, learning truly takes place on every level of the IQ team program.*

### **THE INSTRUCTOR PERSPECTIVE (CHERYL ACHTERBERG):**

*The point of IQ teams is to help me to improve as an instructor. Sometimes I merely need to clarify directions on a class assignment, other times I need to provide better*

*support to out-of-class teams or provide better orientation to guest speakers, but I always learn how to make mid-course adjustments that improve the course, increase student satisfaction, and maintain motivation. A typical survey question, for example, might ask students to react to the statement, "Better connections should be made between class lecture and group projects for a better understanding of course material." If 82% of the class respond "agree" or "strongly agree," then I know I have to do some work to build stronger connections between in-class and out-of-class work. If, on the other hand, 82% of the students "disagree" or "strongly disagree," then I know what I'm doing in that realm is working and should continue.*

*On a qualitative level, there are other results worth noting. I have noted at least four in my teaching experience. First, students gain some ownership of the course through the IQ teams and become invested in its improvement not only for themselves, but as a legacy for the students who follow. They tend to engage more deeply in an innovative course because they feel they can (and do!) help direct its development. Second, whether the course is taught on a first-time basis or not, students who participate in IQ teams also learn a lot about teaching. Many have visited with me afterwards to talk more seriously about pursuing a career in teaching, particularly in higher education. Third, whether or not they decide to pursue a career path in teaching, they become better "consumers" of the education they receive. That is, they are more critical of the teaching they receive in other settings, but also more appreciative of the difficulty of the task and the quality they observe. Fourth, and this may be the most important point, they become more vocal about teaching with other students as well as with faculty. They tend to come to office hours more often, ask substantive questions in class (particularly on the first day when the syllabus is handed out!), and encourage other students to become more involved in classes by taking more responsibility for what happens in class. In other words, the students' meta-learning about learning may be as important an outcome as the instructors' learning about teaching.*

The Innovation and Quality team model provides the above-mentioned gains to students and professors due to its nature as a student initiative. The success of the IQ Team Program was showcased last year at the National Consortium on Continuous Improvement Annual Conference (NCCI) in New York City. The presentation was the result of research conducted by the director and assistant director on learning gains to IQ team members. Team members were surveyed at the end of the semester regarding the impact of IQ team participation on their learning. The results of the surveys (n=25 team members) indicated means above 4 on a 5-point scale agreeing with the statements that, because of their IQ team involvement, they are now better critics of the class, can make meaningful changes in the classroom, and value good criticism to improve their own weaknesses. A more qualitative evaluation of student quality teams was also carried out last fall. Several participating professors, team leaders, and team members were interviewed regarding their IQ experience.

## CONCLUSION

Synergy can be defined as the cooperative interaction among two or more agents that creates an enhanced effect. Synergistic decision-making is a process that blends people of

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differing skills and knowledge together to work as a team with a common goal. It depends on interpersonal skills and a rational approach to problem solving. The IQ team is a model of synergistic energy, one that directly supports Gardiner's (1998) advice: "One of the most valuable actions we could take to improve learning—and thus the productivity of both our students and our institutions—would be to teach our students how to learn."

The evaluation and three years of Quality Team experience at Penn State clearly indicate that participating students and professors have worked in a partnership based on trust and confidentiality at all levels in the Innovation and Quality Team program. Students in the program do not feel threatened that any feedback they provide will affect their grades, and professors are confident that the result of IQ surveys will have no negative impact on the tenure process. The undergraduate student leadership of the program has been vital in maintaining this sense of partnership between students and professors. The take-home message, simply stated, is that the results of the IQ program improve meaningful learning for all students in participating classes, improve team members' understanding of how they learn, and create a sense of dual responsibility between professors and students in the IQ program. The only cost incurred by participating professors is the time they spend meeting with the team leader. The benefits accrued to the time invested by all parties in the IQ Team program are tremendous. As students are empowered and led by other undergraduate students to participate in dialogue about their learning, students become leaders at all levels in the classroom through partnering with professors to improve the learning process.

The IQ team model should be readily transferable to other institutions. If honors programs initiate the IQ model, it can provide feedback on innovative honors class elements and attract institution-wide attention. Honors students who participate as team leaders can import it into non-honors as well as honors courses they enroll in. Their involvement in non-honors course sections increases their commitment to, and engagement in, those courses while simultaneously providing a benefit to all students in the course. The course instructor can use the lessons learned to improve that course, but also all other courses he or she teaches. In this grass-roots, bottom-up fashion, university teaching and learning can be improved over the span of several years at a low cost and with relatively little resistance. We encourage you to try the model and let us know how well it works in your institution.

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## STUDENT-LED QUALITY TEAMS IN THE CLASSROOM

**Table 1. Initial Class Schedule for Globalization and World Trends, Fall 1999**

<b>Schedule of Class Meetings</b>
<p><b>Week 1:</b>                      Introductions; Trends Activity;                      Distribute Books and Syllabus: Course expectations                      Kosovo Activity by TAs                      5-minute reflection</p>
<p><b>Week 2:</b>  <i>Global Trends</i> discussion and activities based on reading.                      Team building activities with IQ                      5-minute reflection</p>
<p><b>Week 3:</b>  <i>Clash of Civilizations</i> discussion (Ch 1-6)and activities.                      CSIS Interns Presentation: Mohit Bhende, Tom Bonsaint, Jason Weiss                      5-minute reflection</p>
<p><b>Week 4:</b>                      Finish discussion on <i>Clash of Civilizations</i>                      Guest Speaker: Syedur Rahman, Director of Humphrey Fellows Program                      5-minute reflection.</p>
<p><b>Week 5:</b>                      Discussion of <i>China 2020</i>.                      Guest Speaker: Dr. Richard Stoller on Latin America                      5-minute reflection.</p>
<p><b>Week 6:</b>                      Discussion of <i>China 2020</i> and <i>Getting to Yes</i>.                      5-minute reflection.</p>
<p><b>Week 7:</b>                      Guest Speaker: Dr. Terrell Jones, Vice-Provost for Educational Equity: “The Star Power Game” about distribution of resources in three-level society.                      5-minute reflection.</p>
<p><b>Week 8:</b>  <b>Sunday to Wednesday</b>  <b>Seminar in Washington, DC at Center for Strategic and International Studies</b></p>
<p><b>Week 9:</b>                      Each student must schedule an appointment with one of the TAs to discuss their intended research project.                      No class meeting.</p>
<p><b>Week 10:</b>                      Independent research and writing. No class meetings. You may make an appointment (optional) with the instructor(s), or with a TA for consultation on your paper.</p>
<p><b>Week 11:</b>                      Independent research and writing. No class meetings. . You may make an appointment (optional) with the instructor(s), or with a TA for consultation on your paper.</p>
<p><b>Week 12:</b>                      Complete draft of your term paper is due. We will be working on the drafts in class. Please turn in all of your reflection journals.</p>
<p><b>Week 13:</b>                      No class. Pick up paper drafts.</p>
<p><b>Week 14:</b>                      Thanksgiving: no class.</p>
<p><b>Week 15:</b>                      Final Papers Due in class on Wednesday, December X, 7:00 –9:00 p.m.</p>

**Table 2. Current Class Schedule for Globalization and World Trends, Fall 2001**

Schedule of Class Meetings
<p><b>Week 1:</b>                      Introductions                      Distribute Books and Syllabus: Course expectations                      Class pictures for Web site                      "Future Horizons" – Dean A                      "Future of Leadership" – Dean B                      Class Discussion on World Issues (handout)</p>
<p><b>Week 2:</b>                      Discussion of <i>Global Trends 2005</i> (with team presentations)  <i>NY Times</i> discussion and activities based on newspaper reading                      CSIS Interns Presentation</p>
<p><b>Week 3:</b>                      Discuss: <i>The Clash of Civilizations: The Debate</i>                      Discuss <i>New York Times</i> articles                      Identify interest areas; formulate briefing teams</p>
<p><b>Week 4:</b>                      Discussion of <i>Blown to Bits</i>                      Discuss <i>New York Times</i> articles                      Identify interest areas; formulate briefing teams</p>
<p><b>Week 5:</b>                      Guest Speaker: Dr. T., Professor, IST, "The Digital Divide" – information economics, gender issues and the digital divide                      Guest Speaker: Dr. Terrell Jones, Vice Provost for Educational Equity, "The Star Power Game" + Humphrey Fellows</p>
<p><b>Week 6:</b>                      NY Times Discussion                      Guest Speaker: Erik Peterson, Sr. Vice President and Director of Studies, CSIS                      Name of presentation: "The Information Revolution: Personal, National and International Security."                      Primer on Public Policy:</p>
<p><b>Week 7:</b>                      Panel Discussion with Humphrey Fellows</p>
<p><b>Week 8:</b>  <b>Sunday to Wednesday</b>  <b>Seminar in Washington, DC at Center for Strategic and International Studies</b></p>
<p><b>Week 9:</b>                      No Class Meeting</p>
<p><b>Week 10:</b>                      No Class Meeting</p>
<p><b>Week 11:</b>                      Journal Due                      Paper Outline and Annotated Bibliography Due</p>
<p><b>Week 12:</b>                      Bio-Simulation: Turmoil in Titi</p>
<p><b>Week 13:</b>                      Team Presentations – Policy Briefings                      2<sup>nd</sup> draft of paper due</p>
<p><b>Week 14:</b>                      Thanksgiving: no class.</p>
<p><b>Week 15:</b>                      Team Presentations – Policy Briefings</p>
<p><b>Week 16:</b>                      Final Paper Due                      Course Evaluation                      Debriefing Discussions</p>

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**Table 3. Sample IQ Team Survey Questions**

<b>A. Survey 1 sample questions, Fall 2000</b>			
“A written, in-class summary of homework assignments/expectations for the upcoming week would help me to be more prepared for class?”			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
“The pace of class discussion is:”			
Too Quick	Just Right	Too Long	
<b>B. Survey 2 sample questions, Fall 2000</b>			
“Background information about the scenario and my role would have allowed me to participate in a more realistic “UN” manner.”			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
“An upgraded small-group meeting outside of class to discuss current global trends on NY Times articles with designated group topics would make class more efficient and be a more educational way of using <i>New York Times</i> articles.”			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>C. Survey 1 sample questions, Fall 2001</b>			
“A better understanding of the Humphrey Fellows’ role in the course and how to engage them would make them a more valuable resource.”			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
“If the “Star Power” simulation had a more direct connection to international affairs, then the game would be more connected to the focus of the class.”			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>D. Survey 2 sample questions, Fall 2001</b>			
“The presentation of <u>Blown to Bits</u> would have been more effective if it focused on how the new economy is shaping world issues as opposed to focusing on how to make a business net-ready.”			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Reading, discussing and analyzing <u>Blown to Bits</u> along with differing perspectives on the “new economy” would enhance our understanding of technology’s role in globalization.”			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
“The interviews with the Humphrey Fellows would have been more helpful if we had interviewed them as policy groups.”			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
“The interviews with the Humphrey Fellows would have been more helpful if we had interviewed them outside of class.”			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree



Table 4. Sample reactions or “snapshots” to the IQ team experience.

*“Through my first experience in quality teams, my conception of learning changed by moving myself from memorizing facts and figures to realizing what it actually took to learn something and make it a part of me.”*

— Mike Fazio,  
Innovation and Quality Team Leader

*“Students can become very creative about how they deal with problems. Once they get off the point of simply looking at it as if they are passive recipients of something, they become proactive.”*

— Larry Spence  
Schreyer Institute for Innovation in Learning  
Associate Professor, College of the Liberal Arts

*“Throughout the course of the semester, there was a greater and greater acknowledgment of what the team and the professor could do to make everyone’s understanding of application and of appreciation of the material better.”*

— Mary Beth Oliver  
Associate Professor, College of Communications

*The IQ teams allowed me to “go behind the ‘set’ of the classroom experiences and find out what is going on in the minds of my fellow classmates and also in the mind of my teacher.”*

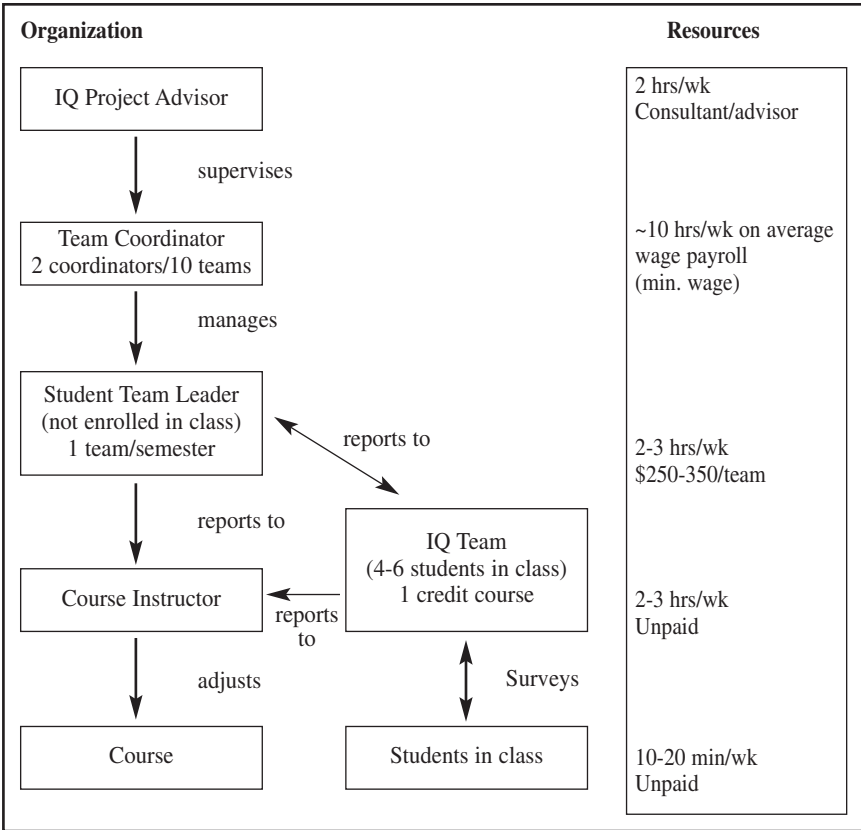
— Dayna Weinhold  
IQ Team Member

*Through the IQ Team, students “gained some ownership over this innovative, experimental course.” They “felt in fact, that they could direct its development.”*

— Cheryl Achterberg  
Dean, Schreyer Honors College  
Professor, College of Health and Human Development

## STUDENT-LED QUALITY TEAMS IN THE CLASSROOM

**Figure 1. Flow chart depicting student innovation and quality (IQ) team operations (adapted from Kinland et al., 2001).**



# **A Defense Of Traditional Learning**



# *Collaborative Learning: Higher Education, Interdependence, and the Authority of Knowledge* by Kenneth Bruffee: A Critical Study

JAMES S. KELLY

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In his very readable book on collaborative learning, Bruffee tells us, “[f]or a decade or more, reports on the state of American higher education have complained that many undergraduates tend to be authority-dependent, passive, irresponsible, overly competitive, and suspicious of their peers” (8). Bruffee’s hope is to help overcome these ills by arguing that “knowledge is a socially constructed, sociolinguistic entity and that learning is inherently an interdependent, sociolinguistic process” (8). While I tend to agree with this characterization of the state of higher education, I shall argue that Bruffee’s postmodern turn, according to which knowledge is a social construct, is a theoretical dead end.

Despite some contrary advertisement, Bruffee is not merely calling for a change in the process of education by providing, for instance, more interdependent student-centered activities. In asking that we re-conceptualize our understanding of knowledge, Bruffee’s focus is not merely on method, for his concept of process is heavily theory-laden. In what follows, therefore, I examine not his many excellent techniques for encouraging interdependent student activities, but his postmodern assumptions. Unearthing these assumptions and their logical implications brings out the flaws in Bruffee’s view that his “pedagogy of cultural change” is an educational, social, or cultural improvement. My method in what follows is to embed Bruffee’s theoretical project in a larger context and distinguish, as he does not, between humanistic and materialistic needs. This will aid us in recognizing that educational woes are not due to a foundational understanding of knowledge, but to a faulty foundational understanding.

In classical culture there was a community of interdependent inquirers believing in and seeking a shared, objective common good, which we now seldom do. What dominates in our culture is an objective mode of knowing where the paradigm of successful explanation focuses on manipulation and control, a paradigm that has been described by E. M. Adams in *The Metaphysics of Self and World* and in an anthology entitled *Naturalism: A Critical Appraisal* edited by Steven Wagner and Richard Warner. This culturally dominant epistemological stance leads us to concentrate on materialistic needs, the

kind of human needs that can be satisfied by manipulatory action. It also forces us to seek the kind of knowledge that will increase our power to satisfy these needs. As a result there has been a shift in emphasis from humanistic to materialistic interests and values. Humanistic needs, human needs beyond the realm of manipulatory power, are thus ignored. Included among humanistic needs are the need for an identity, the need for inter-subjectivity, the need for self-respect, the need for meaningful relationships, the need for meaningful experiences and activities, the need for self-expression, and so on. What we should realize is that the satisfaction of humanistic needs does not result solely from the scientific mode of knowing that emphasizes the manipulation of factual structures aimed at the control of the material conditions under which we live.

For the satisfaction of our material needs, we seek knowledge that enhances our power to manipulate and control our environment. To rebuild a decaying neighborhood, for instance, we rely on the methods and procedures of the natural sciences to acquire knowledge of the factual structures in need of modification. Thus we bring in the engineers, the city planners, the architects, the demographic experts, and so on. But the methods that enable us to rebuild do not enable us to know whether we ought to do what we are able to do. Recognizing that we ought to rebuild our physical slums requires a well-functioning society intent on satisfying both our material and humanistic needs.

To be morally aware of all the reasons why we ought to rebuild a physical slum requires that we focus our attention on the humanistic as well as the materialistic needs of those living in the slums; it is this dual attention that drives the moral decision to rebuild. It is this kind of attention that also prevents development of a social slum, which begins to root when societal structures fail to operate successfully to meet human needs. Humanistic needs, which are involved in the development and sustenance of self-hood, are tied to the categories of meaning and value. Rational selves, after all, seek to live meaningful and worthwhile lives. Traditionally it has been within the humanities that we find the home of value and meaning questions, and it is the humanities that have provided content to moral and civic education aimed at advancing society.

Unfortunately, the humanities, partly in response to the epistemological stance that subordinates humanistic to materialistic needs, are flirting with a postmodern view. In what follows, my argument against the postmodern turn will focus on Bruffee's *Collaborative Learning*. Bruffee makes clear many of the highly charged postmodern assumptions that those who identify with the postmodern turn often attempt to elude. This postmodern turn, despite Bruffee's contrary advertisement, will not overcome the ills that result when the community of interdependent inquirers seeking a shared common good is replaced with a discourse community of self-interested individuals seeking satisfaction of material or self-serving interests. This is because, I shall argue, the relativism associated with postmodernism, by pushing tolerance beyond rational limits, eludes questions of value and meaning and leaves the humanities barren.

Modern culture, whether enamored by the epistemological stance of the hard sciences or the flash of the postmodern turn, has for the most part replaced the sense of community concerned with humanistic and materialistic needs with the community of interest in which materialistic needs dominate. As one illustration of how this change in community manifests and promotes itself today, consider the following three contemporary educational assumptions. These assumptions indicate how the educational system evi-

dences and promotes a relativistic or nihilistic renunciation of engaged intellectual and political life that frustrates the goal of civic and moral education. This renunciation is not to be overcome by manipulation and control, by epistemological sleight of hand, or by the denial of epistemology, but rather by a rational process of critical, normative assessment.

First is the assumption that excellence is best achieved by competition among individuals. Albert Shanker has addressed the claim that increased competition in educational institutions would bring about excellence, by arguing that “[t]he experience of colleges and universities shows that competition can force achievement down rather than improving it” (1-3). Competition, as a dominant stance toward life’s activities, runs contrary to the human need for intersubjectivity and interdependence. This, I suggest, is why increased competition among individuals forces achievement down in the long run. Although there is a great deal of pedagogical interest and discussion afoot about these ills, meaningful educational transformation remains an uphill battle. Bruffee’s *Collaborative Learning*, for instance, offers a response to the competitive view of teaching by focusing on learning and its interdependent, social nature. This is a plus. Nonetheless, as I will make clear, his reliance on “nonfoundational social constructionist thought” serves to muddle rather than enlighten educational theory.

A second assumption our classrooms also, for the most part, have adopted is the empty bottle model of education in which students are the empty bottles and teachers pour in truth, which consists of empirically verifiable propositions about phenomena. This is perhaps the one assumption that has been most challenged in recent years, especially at the postsecondary level. But the postmodern turn in education, evidenced by Bruffee’s text, is far from satisfactory when it comes to overcoming faulty educational assumptions and their effects. Postmodernism, in the broadest sense, questions the logic of foundations. Postmodernists see all theories as historical and social constructions, and too often view the subject as constructed, but without responsibility for agency. There is a clear danger in adopting the view that, as Bruffee states, “reality, objective facts, subjective selves, minds, and inner worlds” are social constructs (222). Despite unsupported claims to the contrary, the postmodern turn encourages a very damaging relativism. Thus the empty bottle model of education is replaced by the nonfoundational social constructionist view in which there are no hard facts or objective values to be passed on. Neither model is acceptable.

Finally, more often than not it is assumed the universe is hostile and needs to be controlled by manipulation in order to satisfy human interests. Such an assumption has led many in the humanities to think we can build communities. But this language is troublesome for it still evidences an aggressive attitude that breeds habits inimical to community. Administrators may be tempted, for instance, to build a better educational environment by simply expanding the curriculum to include courses on cultural diversity while failing to integrate the themes of these courses into the remainder of the curriculum. As a result a small percentage of the students will actually be exposed to diversity. Similarly, cooperative education techniques may be instituted in classrooms while leaving underlying issues unchallenged and unchanged. The question that needs to be addressed here centers on the goal of cooperative education. Is it to discover or to construct truths?

Community must be allowed to emerge from a process of rational, critical investigation aimed at discovering the common good. Postmodern theorizing, as evidenced by Bruffee, leads us astray by frustrating the rational justification of the educational goal of critically evaluating and improving upon tradition. For how can we have criticism, political, social, pedagogical, theoretical, historical, or moral, without standards by which to adjudicate conflicts that arise in communities of diversity, or between or among conflicting discourse communities? What results instead is a politics-of-interest focused on material rather than human needs. Rather than think of the community project as one of constructing truths, as the postmodern turn advocates, we need to focus on discovering particular, contextually bound truths and the shared common good.

As a result of these three assumptions, the world studied is not the world lived in, for the world lived in is a world of experiences, not a world of propositions. It is also a world in which we must recognize our interdependence and our need for intersubjectivity and meaningful experiences and activities that stand up to a process of rational, critical assessment. Rather than think only of satisfying our own particular or group interests, we need to focus on satisfying humanistic as well as materialistic needs where those needs are not being met.

Active student participation in the learning process is often seen as a method for overcoming some of these educational assumptions since it focuses on the interdependent, social nature of education. Bruffee tells us that:

Collaborative learning is a reacculturative process that helps students become members of knowledge [discourse] communities whose common property is different from the common property of the knowledge communities they already belong to...We gain access to the common property of one or another community by reacculturating ourselves so as to acquire the special characteristics of its members. (3)

At first glance this sounds like an interesting way to overcome bias and increase tolerance for difference. Thus, for Bruffee, our job as educators is to “represent the knowledge communities of which [we] are members in a way that will most effectively reacculturate potential new members” (3). Although I applaud collaborative learning, that is, learning that involves students as active participants in an intersubjective process of discovery, my concern here is not with the mechanics of the classroom. My concern is that, even in the classroom that practices the postmodern version of collaborative learning, education as rational, cultural criticism is too often lacking. How can rational criticism, as opposed to persuasion, occur in a classroom context in which it is assumed there are no objective standards for normative decisions? I have suggested above and have argued elsewhere (in “Semantic Presence” and “Wide and Narrow Interdisciplinarity”) that education as rational, cultural criticism is also lacking where the dominant epistemological and metaphysical stance is that of the categorically impoverished natural sciences. But to take the postmodern turn in response to this stance leads to a dead end.

Education as rational, cultural criticism fails to root within the framework of either the postmodern turn or the epistemological and metaphysical stance of the scientific naturalist because there is a theoretical reluctance to rationally and critically appraise tough



moral, political, and social issues. These are issues springing from common features of humanness that, as Martha Nussbaum has discussed, cross discourse communities or arise within communities of diversity. Where there are conflicts within, between or among communities with competing interests and no standards upon which to launch a rational debate, there quickly arises a politics of power brokerage. What results is discussion centered on what degree various interest groups receive of their supposedly fair share as political consumers. The outcome of such wrangling is typically a set of thin procedural rules aimed at protecting competing interests. As the critical evaluation of value issues dissolves into the wrangling of interest-group politics, plurality of voice turns into cacophony. Too often our educational institutions merely add to the noise because many faculty have fallen prey to “nonfoundational social constructionist thought.”

Although the above is polemical for those encouraged by the postmodern turn, it does serve to set the framework of my concerns. My limited task in what follows is to examine the implications of this postmodern constructionist position and argue that they are devastating to the view of education as cultural criticism. Two questions immediately present themselves. (1) Why think a crucial aim of education is cultural criticism? (2) Why think “nonfoundational social constructionist thought” is inimical to this aim of education? If I successfully argue against “nonfoundational social constructionist thought” as a theoretical underpinning for educational theory, a third question arises: What is to replace it? Since my aim in this paper is the negative one of arguing against a trend in postmodern education, I will only glance at the third question.

To begin with the first question, as educators our concern is not only with the limited goal, even in vocational and professional education, of training students to develop the required competencies to be an accountant, carpenter, lawyer, architect, or the like. Our concern is with the education of human beings. A carpenter, lawyer, and so on, however competent, does not satisfy the goal of education if she practices her trade or profession in such a manner as to be open to condemnation as a person. Persons are, or should be, engaged in moral, civic, and economic activities. In our culture, however, the moral and civic enterprises have taken a back-seat to the economic since it is the latter that are most salient to the satisfaction of materialistic needs and interests. A major aim of education recognized by the founders of our democracy is to equip students so they may participate in a critical democracy by making sound moral and practical judgments and decisions in order to advance the culture. Teaching students to be members of a society where they make such judgments requires that educators ensure that students fully comprehend the context in which they live and have the appropriate tools for its critical appraisal.

The postmodern turn in education, however, brings with it the view that there is no foundational framework that constrains knowledge claims. Bruffee attacks the foundational understanding of knowledge where, according to him, the paradigm is the empty bottle model of learning. He claims that for his social constructionist view “[c]ollaborative learning assumes instead that knowledge is a consensus among the members of a community...something people construct by talking together and reaching agreement” (3). Nonfoundational education, as Bruffee calls it, does not assume that the teacher has a set of predetermined answers the teacher has decided are correct. This has a favorable ring to it since it appears antithetical to the “empty bottle” conception of education as merely

passing on empirically verifiable propositions or hard facts. While I take it that sensible educational theorists are not maintaining that there are no empirically verifiable propositions, many, like Bruffee, do waffle on just what ‘empirically verifiable’ means. Bruffee suggests that it amounts to negotiating toward an acceptable consensus which, when reached, constitutes “social justification.”

But if “reality, objective facts, subjective selves, minds, and inner worlds” are all social constructs, it seems that it is consensus itself, rather than consensus on truth, that is the theoretical underpinning of knowledge claims. Some enamored by the postmodern turn may wish to spare science from this social construction view of knowledge, but while the motivation is clear enough, this is not the path Bruffee and many others follow. According to “nonfoundational social constructionist thought,” all knowledge claims lack foundation. Lacking firm footing, knowledge claims, therefore, have given way to political maneuvering aimed at the satisfaction of material interests. With the new voices of those rightfully arguing that the texts and visions of dead white males no longer fully answer all the interests of all members of our diverse society, comes the politics of power brokerage. As a result the resolution of value issues between or among different discourse communities, or within communities of difference, typically becomes a matter of the negotiated satisfaction of competing interests, rather than a joint undertaking with the common goal of satisfying humanistic and materialistic needs. Rational moral and civic education have been replaced, for those with a “voice,” by interest group politics, or by silence for those lacking “voice.”

Bruffee promotes the view that “knowledge is a consensus: it is something people construct interdependently by talking together” (113). While the so-called foundationalists maintain that, according to Bruffee, “we justify our beliefs by testing them against reality,” the postmodernists “say we justify our beliefs by testing them socially, against other people’s beliefs” (115). Or to phrase this somewhat differently, Bruffee’s antagonist maintains that language involves a word-world relation, while Bruffee views it as a word-word relation in which the world, it seems, is well lost. The educational task, says Bruffee, is the reacculturation of our students, which involves “giving up, modifying, or renegotiating the language, values, knowledge, mores, and so on that are constructed, established, and maintained by the community one is coming from, and becoming fluent instead in the language and so on of another community” (223). Since there is no reality against which to measure the value of one community over another, this reacculturation takes place when “[a] community persuades outsiders...to accept one or more of the community’s beliefs, justified in the way the community justifies them” (222). And if the beliefs and so on are “socially justified” by, for example, being handed down by the rich and powerful, so be it. There is no theoretical room for rational, critical appraisal. As with Hobbes, I suppose, there can be revolution. But any revolution will be “justified” only if one discourse community is successfully replaced by another. Although we may wish to say that the beliefs and practices of one discourse community are better than another, without any standard against which to measure this, all that can legitimately be said is that the discourse communities are different. Once the postmodern turn is taken, we lose any method for the rational justification of objective standards grounding both moral judgments and the belief in a shared, objective, common good. What remain are the local “truths” of particular discourse communities and the impossible task of their rational integration.

In what sense, then, can education help produce persons who will be engaged in moral and civic enterprises aimed at the advancement of culture and society? Consider the following from Bruffee:

The nonfoundational understanding of knowledge provides a language with which to redescribe and talk coherently about college and university education as an enterprise engaged in promoting change. It assumes that we construct and maintain knowledge not by examining the world but by negotiating with one another in communities of knowledgeable peers. (9)

As an educator, I agree with the desire to promote change. I want my students to become rational, critical thinkers who can engage in moral and civic enterprises for the betterment of the culture and society. My guess is that Bruffee would agree with me. But his theory involves him in a paradox if he does, for on his own nonfoundational social constructionist view, there is no firm place to stand, no foundation upon which to launch his value judgment that his approach is better. It is only different. Moreover, Bruffee tells us that the community of knowledgeable peers who construct and maintain knowledge are those who think alike, who share a common language and set of beliefs. This sounds like a recipe for maintaining the status quo. The tough integrative task of crossing the boundaries of different discourse communities grinds to a halt as a rational process. Postmodern theory does not allow for “social justification” to be a rational, critical process.

Rational appraisal talk presupposes an objective value structure as a causal force in the psychological realm. Thus reasons really do have a causal influence on behavior. Moreover if some reasons are to be justificatory as well as explanatory, then they must be good or correct reasons grounded in reality as opposed to merely a discourse community. So when we ask the question, “Why did Nora do that?” an adequate answer that allows for the rational appraisal of her action would not be a scientifically discovered causal condition, say a brain tumor or a certain pattern of neuron firings (or its functional equivalent). An adequate answer would be Nora’s reason for the action. Rational appraisal terms, that is, apply only where reasons are or may be causes of a person’s actions. Whenever we discover that reasons are ineffective in a person’s behavior—that what she experiences, thinks, and does are causally independent of and unresponsive to truth, logic and rational considerations in general—we withhold rational appraisal of her. Under such conditions she would be merely caught up in the non-semantic causal nexus where things simply happen to her. Or she would simply be “acculturated” into the prevailing culture as the result of being “initiated” into this culture where her “self” is constructed, partly by her teachers who stress the status quo of the particular discourse community. In this latter case, we are back to persuasive techniques aimed at causing students to adopt the practices and beliefs of the prevailing culture. Even reacclutration will be a process involving only scientific causality, as opposed to a rational process of instilling practices and beliefs.

Anti-foundationalists like Bruffee reject a particular view of what grounds language and symbol systems to the world. Scientific epistemology, which provides no epistemic weight to normative concepts, will not ground rational appraisal language. Rational appraisal language deals in justificatory reasons for judgments, beliefs, feelings, attitudes,

decisions, and actions. Talk of human attempts to know, for instance, presupposes an effort to get things right, an intention or inherent structure of meaning, on the part of the person making the attempt. This is not so for the description and explanation of natural events. It can't be: the categorial presuppositions of the scientific naturalist are minimal and do not allow for inherent meaning (see Kelly, "Semantic Presence"). But rather than reject only scientific epistemology, the anti-foundationalist rejects the possibility of any foundations. As a result, language is not tied to the world. Knowledge, for the postmodernist, is no longer tied to rationality. In fact, it is no longer clear what is meant by the term "knowledge."

All of this reflects upon the concepts of agency and responsibility. Anything that does not embody a structure of meaning, or does not respond to that which is semantically present, is not the kind of thing shaped and moved by reasons. Persons have an existential and a semantic environment. At home, I share the same existential environment with my wife, daughter, books, computer, pots and pans, and so on. These items in my existential environment are present with me. But I also have sensory experiences of the things around me; I think about them when I am away from home (at least some of them), and I can imagine what my daughter will look like in her new dress. Such items of my existential environment can thus be the semantic content of some mental state or act. It is through the semantic content of experience that language is tied to the world. So in the case of the rational appraisal of persons, reasons, which involve a semantically present end in view or purpose, are causes and often serve to justify as well as to explain human activity.

According to Bruffee, the self and "intention too" are socially constructed. But if one's actions are not the result of one's intentions, one cannot be held accountable, that is, one cannot be rationally appraised. If what are thought of as one's intentions are actually socially constructed through a process of acculturation or reaccluturation, then there really is no self to be rationally appraised, no self to assume responsibility. For Bruffee, we are entirely the products of the non-justificatory causal process of social construction, where reasons not framed by one's particular discourse community do not serve as causes. As with the epistemological and metaphysical stance of scientific naturalism, postmodern theorizing leaves no room for thick rational activity on the part of persons, for there is no theoretical room for the critical assessment of frameworks of thought, including one's own. We are back to relativism and the view that, although discourse communities may have different practices and beliefs, their rational appraisal as better, advanced, worse, or evil is not an option. As a result, an educational system based on postmodern theorizing fails in its effort to promote engaged intellectual and political life aimed at improving upon tradition.

While some teachers focus on the culturally diverse learning strategies of our students (a very worthwhile goal), all too often many teachers fail to also reflect on what we are teaching or modeling to students. Educators are too often caught by the flash of the postmodern turn because it offers much needed criticism of the dominant metaphysical and epistemological stance of the scientific naturalists. But when content is focused upon, given the confines of the postmodern constructionist view, critical assessment skills are typically used as persuasive tools of power brokerage rather than as tools for the rational assessment of value issues. Critical thinking, that is, becomes figuring out how to satisfy one's interests in the most efficient manner.

Instead of a rational investigation of what our societal goals and educational image ought to be, discussion and decision making too often focus on the means to the satisfaction of community interests. Given the constructionist stance, this is our task as educators as we reacculturate students. As a result teachers and students are more likely to refrain from the critical and rational assessment of our present moral commitments and to instead substitute the popular trends found in our local discourse communities.

What is needed to promote community, to allow for participation and involvement centered on the rational discussion of substantive societal goals and educational images, is a vision that will avoid relativism and will ground moral language, let alone factual language, in reality. But as long as our ontological categories are thought limited to the categories in terms of which the scientific naturalist must delineate reality and our epistemological access to reality is restricted to sensory observation, resolution of value disputes will be logically tied to Hobbesian power brokerage. Recognizing this, those enthralled by the postmodern turn have simply denied the relevance of epistemology and metaphysics. But in so doing, they have instituted an avenue that circumvents knowledge. For, as I have argued, if the dominant view is to become the postmodern view that there are no objective values, it will follow that decisions about the structure of society and its institutions are to be based on a politics of constricted rationality rather than knowledge.

How are we to prevent cacophony as all the voices from diverse discourse communities vie for an equal hearing? I assume that reliance on blind faith in a benevolent evolutionary process without conscious design, or faith that the “politically correct” group will gain power and by force or deception impose their will on the rest of society, is not acceptable. Rather, we need evidence that persons have epistemic powers enabling them to appropriate normative reality, thereby showing that persons have the capacity for goodness—the capacity, that is, to know, through a process of deliberation and critical assessment, what is required in particular situations. And we need to do this without a return to the grand narrative that promises metaphysical guarantees.

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- Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning
- Teaching and Learning in Honors

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# NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL MONOGRAPHS

Institutional members receive one copy of the NCHC Handbook (with annual updates) and one copy of all other NCHC publications, free. Additional copies of NCHC publications may be obtained by writing to the address listed below. Make check or money order payable to National Collegiate Honors Council and send to: NCHC, Radford University, Box 7017, Radford, VA 24142-7017.

***A Handbook for Honors Administrators*** by Ada Long (1995, 117pp.) Everything an honors administrator needs to know including a description of some models of Honors Administration. Members \$2.50. Non-members \$5.00.

***Beginning in Honors: A Handbook*** by Samuel Schuman (1989, 53pp.). Advice on starting a new honors program. Covers budgets, recruiting students and faculty, physical plant, administrative concerns, curriculum design, and descriptions of some model programs. Members \$2.50. Non-members \$5.00.

***Evaluating Honors Programs: An Outcomes Approach*** by Jacqueline Reihman, Sara Varhus, and William R. Whipple (1990, 52pp.). How to evaluate an existing honors program. Members \$2.50. Non-members \$5.00.

***Honors Programs: Development, Review, and Revitalization*** by C. Grey Austin (1991, 60pp.). A guide for evaluating and revitalizing an existing program. Members \$2.50. Non-members \$5.00.

***Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges*** by Samuel Schuman (Second Edition, 1999, 53pp.). How to implement an honors program, with particular emphasis on colleges with fewer than 3000 students. Members \$2.50. Non-members \$5.00.

***NCHC Handbook***. Included are lists of all NCHC members, NCHC Constitution and Bylaws, committees and committee charges, and other useful information. Members \$10.00. Non-members \$20.00.

***Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning*** edited by Bernice Braid and Ada Long (2000, 102pp.). The theory and practice of numerous models of active learning developed within the NCHC, including City as Text®, Honors Semesters, and Faculty Development Institutes. Members \$2.50. Non-members \$5.00.

***Teaching and Learning in Honors*** edited by Cheryl Fuiks and Larry Clark (2000, 128pp.). Discussion of central pedagogical issues in an honors context. Members \$2.50. Non-members \$5.00.