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Developing a New College Course: A Journey Using Applied Critical and Creative Thinking Towards Philosophy, Decision Making, and Possibilities

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DEVELOPING A NEW COLLEGE COURSE:
A JOURNEY USING APPLIED
CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING TOWARDS
PHILOSOPHY, DECISION MAKING, AND POSSIBILITIES

by

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Master of Arts
Critical and Creative Thinking

Synthesis*
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Abstract: In recent years, certain events made me question the lack of training and preparation that many young adults have as they unsteadily exit high school (and even college) unable, and sometimes unwilling, to make real life/real world decisions.

This paper explores my journey through a master's degree from the University of Massachusetts - Boston in Critical and Creative Thinking, ending with a fully realized template for a brand new college 100/200 level course, tentatively titled: Philosophy: Making Better Decisions.

I start with the specific impetus that set me on my path: a “rotten decision” made by three co-workers that collided into my life, and how that event set me on the course of wanting to explore possible solutions towards better decision-making.

My two-year journey came to include using each of my thirteen master's classes as a framework from which I could better understand how we humans make decisions, critically, creatively, mentally, philosophically, in counseling and teaching, and as a student -- always looking and learning with a fresh approach. This post-graduate work of investigations, readings, and coursework brought me from insulted to inspired. My goal towards understanding decision-making soon became a quest to design an entirely new thirty-two class, one-semester college course, putting a modern and entirely fresh practical twist on teaching a decision making class. Decision-making is not exclusive to any one religion, nor to any one section of the commercial world. Yet the halls of academia endlessly couples decision-making with either a strict spiritual foundation or the corporate business world, along with a smattering of classes specifically for the likes of the medical profession, war strategists, foreign policy makers, public health officials, lawyers, and mathematicians.

Under the heading of the “Philosophy,” most colleges hold steady with their tried-and-true introductory classes on classical logic, values, reality, religion, and knowledge. In their goal to combine any of these basic curriculums with critical thinking skills, institutions usually teach via long lectures behind a lectern. These traditional courses allow little-to-no time to explore and integrate everyday skills into philosophy. This leaves students open to questions like: How do emotions help and/or hinder my ability to choose? What roles do critical and creative thinking play? What are options for generating possibility? How does self-awareness help? What is “The Big Picture?” What communication skills do I need? Do I have a cognitive bias? How do I know what questions to ask? Is reflection important? What does it mean to avoid distortions? How do I use evaluation skills? How does stress factor into decisions? Who sets the ground rules? What is individual vs. groupthink? What’s a paradox? How do I decide between right and right? How do I start to handle delicate subjects in the broader methodology of practical life decision-making?

My project combines my belief in the necessity for a real-world philosophical base from which young adults of any background can define their principles and understand how their thinking and actions can affect their world. I make a case that this can be done better with ideals such as non-maleficence, beneficence, veracity, and fidelity to that which is truthful, logical, debated, kind, and just. This paper reflects all aspects of my journey thus far on discovering the various elements that go into making better decisions.

Keywords: philosophy, practical decision-making, critical thinking, creative thinking, creating an original college course, cognitive thinking, language, listening, evaluation, justice, paradoxes, course outline, lesson plans, values.

* The Synthesis can take a variety of forms, from a position paper to curriculum or professional development workshop to an original contribution in the creative arts or writing. The expectation is that students use their Synthesis to show how they have integrated knowledge, tools, experience, and support gained in the program so as to prepare themselves to be constructive, reflective agents of change in work, education, social movements, science, creative arts, or other endeavors.

With gratitude towards:

My wonderful husband, Kevin McWethy
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My diplomatic & delightful dad, John Williams

My professors at UMASS-Boston.

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assisted me with research, and so much more...

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And to all my remarkable family and friends
who have been a part of my adventure-filled life.

*Oh, and to those rare rotten apples and poor decision-makers
that I've had the displeasure to know –
You stinkers inspired me to go on this thrilling journey!*

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Preface

What is Decision Making?

Decision Making is the process of choosing the best alternative for reaching objectives.¹

Decision Making is the process of making choices by identifying a decision, gathering information, and assessing alternative resolutions.²

Decision Making is regarded as the cognitive process resulting in the selection of a belief or a course of action among several alternative possibilities.³

So, it's a process. Got it.

What are the kinds of decisions we make?

Snap decisions.

Split decision.

Adaptive unconscious decisions.

Programmed decisions.

Non-programmed decisions.

Routine decisions.

Strategic decisions.

Tactical decisions.

Operational decisions.

Organizational decisions.

Personal decisions.

Major decisions.

Minor decisions

Individual decisions.

Group decisions.

Frontline decisions.

Decisions that are neither urgent, nor important.

Decisions that are urgent, but not important.

Decisions that are both urgent and important.

¹ Management Innovations. 8DEC2008 "Types of Decisions & Decision Making Process."
<https://managementinnovations.wordpress.com/2008/12/08/types-of-decisions-decision-making-process/>

² Board of Trustees of the University of Massachusetts – Dartmouth. First Year Course Modules. <http://www.umassd.edu/fycm/decisionmaking/process/>

³ Wikipedia

Decisions that are important but not urgent.
 Decisions whether.
 Decisions which.
 Contingent decisions.

Okay. That's a lot of kinds of decisions....
How do you feel when making a decision?

When you try to make decisions you might:
 vacillate or waffle,
 be in a quandary or a dilemma,
 have ambivalence,
 have positive or negative feelings,
 be "on the fence,"
 be indecisive, undecided, or torn between,
 be in two minds,
 be "on the horns of a dilemma,"
 be in abeyance or undecided,
 "at sixes and sevens,"
 conflicted or dithering,
 be "caught between a rock and a hard place,"
 be stymied, procrastinate, or (as a Scotsman once told me) swithered.

Holy cow! That's a lot of feelings!

The above lists, with all their terminology, gravity, and crisis implications make one wonder how we make any decision at all! In fact, in August of 2011, the New York Times Magazine featured the headline: *Do You Suffer From Decision Fatigue?* So that virtually confirms it! Making an everyday decision can be a taxing, crazy, and exhausting.

So why don't we just give up, crawl under a rock, and avoid decision making altogether?

Because we can't.

Even if we decide to live under a rock (and note: you already made a decision when you decided to live under a rock!), to stay alive you must meet physiological needs such as food, water, shelter, clothing, and sleep – all of which require some degree of decision-making and action. There is no way to live as a healthy adult human being and not make decisions. As we

leave our babyhood days behind, our brains take in the world, looking to make connections, adapt a conceptual framework, analyze data, question, organize, and make adjustments using critical and creative thinking. We practice all these skills, balancing our levels of good and bad information, knowledge, intuition, cognitive biases, examples around us, and social norms. And in the end, we “enjoy or suffer” the consequences of our decisions, from picking a wonderful restaurant (happy), picking which funeral home to use when a loved one dies (sad), and so on. As a collective, human beings are often on the lookout to find the magic elixir that would make all our decisions easy, clear and great. And when, on those occasions, a decision is devastating, can there be found an instant comfort for the fallibilities of man?

In an age when even the average citizen’s decisions can be universally known and broadcast to billions via the Internet and social media, I began a personal quest to understand decision making in 2014. That expedition brought me -- via the long and winding road -- to a journey of using applied critical and creative thinking towards a deeper understanding of philosophy, decision making, and all the possibilities there within.

This University of Massachusetts-Boston Master’s Degree synthesis paper outlines my “stops along the way” as I grew to a place where I not only answered many of my original questions on philosophy and decision-making, but came to realize that I wanted to create a college freshman/sophomore course on the subject.

This paper represents the treasure chest of my journey.

1. The Really Rotten Incident

“I have striven not to laugh at human actions, not to weep at them, nor to hate them, but to understand them. Do not weep. Do not wax indignant. Understand. Not to laugh, not to lament, not to detest, but to understand.”

~Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677)

“All cruelty springs from weakness.”

~ Seneca (4 BCE - 65 CE)

Most of us only begin to seriously study decision making after some kind of trauma. For best-selling author and Professor of Behavioral Economics at Duke University, Dan Ariely, it was after he sustained third-degree burns over 70% of his body following the explosion of a large magnesium flare on what started out a normal Friday afternoon in Israel. (Ariely, 2009)

For a man in Evanston, IL, it was after his childhood civil rights hero was sent to prison for grievously defrauding the clients he had once fought for to have equal housing opportunities.

For a professor of Business at the University of Oregon, it was after the endlessness of “policy making” and “resource allocation” seemed to get nowhere fast, until he found strength in substituting the term “decision making” to mean “the end of deliberation and the beginning of action (Buchanan et al. 2006).”

For me, my quest began in the late spring of 2014, while I was working at a professional acting job I loved. Like in most working environments, there was a colorful mix of characters, but three individuals stood out in particular. Their sense of humor and antics were not “my cup of tea,” but for many months, I, as a sensitive person, always felt comfortable walking away.

(Example: One man would always stand out in the hallway loudly telling extremely offensive “jokes” that were highly demeaning towards women. He wouldn’t take hints to stop.)

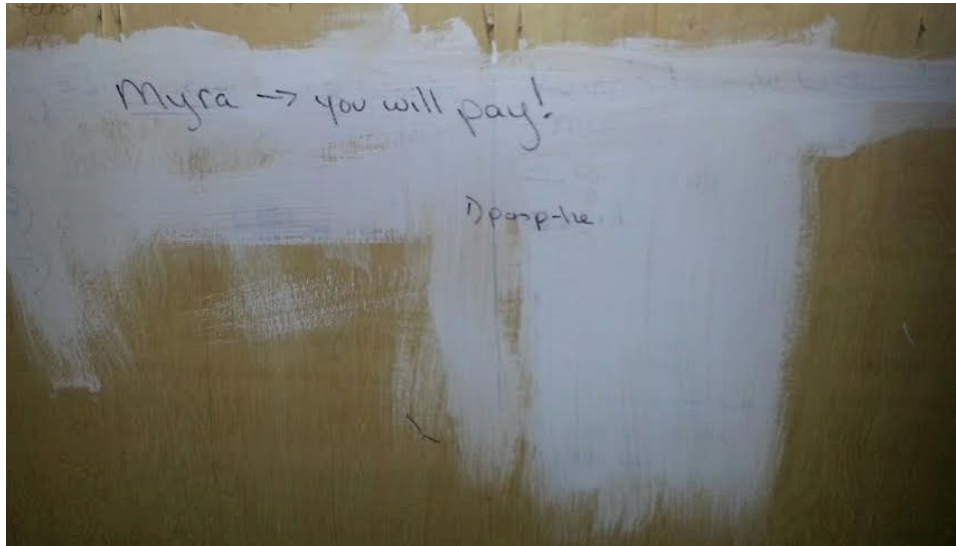
Then, one evening, a couple of people wrote on the set wall outside where I made the majority of my entrances and exits: “The 12 Swear Phrases Myra Would Never Use!” In permanent marker, the authors penned twelve vulgar expressions that I would never, in fact, use. I was aghast. I could hardly speak I was so shocked.

And then I read #12, which used the particularly foul word: c**t.

At that moment, my brain and heart seemed to explode.

After much private deliberation, I thought I would make a passive, but visual statement towards what I thought was a revolting, offensive workplace display, and painted over the words.

Hours later, someone wrote, “Myra, you will pay!” (See below)



I thereafter contacted my union steward and we met with our direct supervisor, making it clear that I was greatly disturbed by these two incidents and the employees openly involved. My supervisor’s feedback to me was that I was “overblowing the incident,” that “young people have a different way of thinking than someone of your age”, and that I should “just let it go.” Long story short, the company had NO policy about handling these types of situations, nor, in the

following weeks, did they ever take the time to look into the official state and federal legal policies, much less taking a lead position in quickly and efficiently rectifying the situation.

As these incidents went from bad to worse, upper management never stepped in, and middle management kept repeating to me that I should just forget the whole thing, let it drop, and be satisfied that they “had a talk” with the three employees who were “just being funny.”

Nothing was in writing, no warnings were issued to the offenders, and no official statement was published avowing that the company would not tolerate this kind of behavior. Nor did management say, “let’s sit down as a team, get professional personnel guidance, and set this right.” In fact, in the end, it was me who wrote a letter to my fellow employees and staff recalling (painfully, and for the first time publicly) that I was hypersensitive to detrimental language against women because I was assaulted when I was twenty-one years old in a Yugoslavian hotel room by a man who only knew a few words in English -- the “C” word being his primary form of malicious communication. And now, this work incident, without skilled resolution or arbitration, had triggered a violent case of PTSD in me.

I acknowledge that I personally didn’t handle the “Writing on the Wall” incident with the all the calm and integrity that I imagined I could. But in my defense, I was traumatized, and reacted more like a wounded animal than a wise woman. I couldn’t seem to make better choices, for the hot blur of hurt was like a chemical flush in my system that I couldn’t shake. For weeks, I was in a bad place, and my imagination went wild -- fearful that these people, unchecked, knew my fatal weak spot.

***“We are more often frightened than hurt;
and we suffer more from imagination than from reality”***

— Seneca (4 BCE – 65 CE)

In my trauma, I relied on others (in particular management⁴ and my co-workers) to make good decisions while my emotions were so muddled, but they didn't step up to the plate. Was I naïve to expect others to use their systems of fairness and good-judgment -- seeking out the best examples, laws, and codes of ethics, when I could not do so for myself?

Months after leaving that job, I still wondered about how people, including me, could make such a series of poor decisions. Then I began to wonder about how people in general made decisions, of any kind -- bad ones, much less good ones. And later I contemplated how do we know (or do we?) what kind of decisions we are making. Why would we choose to make a bad decision? Who even teaches us how to make decision? Frankly, I had a million questions...

So, I started a program of self-healing by reading a few best-selling books on decision-making. I was looking to understand ideas like: choices, assessments, values, distortion, paradoxes, evaluation...and so much more. I logged nights at my local library skimming through books on sociology, psychology, communication, humanities, and anthropology -- determined to examine the questions of decision making from every possible human angle. And finally, I began taking courses at my local college in philosophy.

This journey of discovery eventually led me to find the Critical and Creative Thinking Master's Degree program at the University of Massachusetts in Boston. There, I dedicated every class to exploring the ideas of practical, real-life decision-making. What began as a way to understand a bad work situation, soon turned into an examination of a fundamental life question, and finally, into the development of a brand new 100/200 level course for the University of California system, tentatively called: Philosophy – Making Better Decisions.

⁴ This was a Christian-based company, so I had certain preconceived notions of how they would handle this kind of situation. I was mistaken.

“Common sense is not so common.”

~Voltaire (1694-1778)

2. Moving from Feeling Really Rotten to Really Inspired

Topics: Early stages of exploration, reflecting on self, finding connections.

“Knowledge is power.”

~ Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) *Leviathan*

“The mind is a baby giant who, more provident in the cradle than he knows, has hurled his paths in life all round ahead of him like playthings... They are vocabulary, grammar, prosody, and diary, and it will be too bad if he can’t find stepping stones of them for his feet wherever he wants to go. The way will be zigzag, but it will be a straight crookedness like the walking stick he cuts himself in the bushes... He will be judged as he does or doesn’t let this zig or that zag project him off out of his general direction.

~Robert Frost (1874-1963) *“The Constant Symbol”*

What does it mean to make a “good decision?”

This question has been debated since the beginning of thinking humankind by philosophers, contestants on a TV game shows, families in crisis, friends out for a night on the town, students sitting in a dorm room, psychologists, counselors, heads of great armies, mothers with a baby in their arms, ethical think-tanks, and a father up late at night sitting at a kitchen table covered with his child’s medical bills. We are born with a full package of potentially usable tools, yet we sometimes have trouble finding our footing on solid ground, much less feel comfortable on this zigzag road called “our life.” In fact, there are many who think “we are

judged by the choices we make in life” (Pevehouse, 2010). If that is indeed so, our life’s choices are not a thing not to be taken lightly.

If making decisions were easy, I would not be writing this thesis. But decision-making can be, in fact, the stuff of legend. Great storytelling, magazine and newspaper headlines, award-winning movies, documentaries, and best-selling books are dedicated to it. The decisions made in history, fiction, and at his exact moment will vary in time from ones we applaud and celebrate with joy, to those that leave us in a disturbed confusion and sadness, shaking our heads as our souls seem to shred. Decisions, much less what we would generally call “good decisions” are so difficult to make because they involve the conscience (O’Rourke & Boyle, 2011): the possibility of moral consequences, options, pressure, culture, religion, other people, trivial details, a complete array of good, great, neutral, bad, and rotten qualities. As award-winning author and Professor at Cornell University, David Orr, (Orr, 2015) writes in his book, “The Road Not Taken,” when we make choices, “We observe, we consciously evaluate, we choose between or among competing options.” But the choice, in the end, is the responsibility of each person, alone.

My objective was to personally move from “Really Rotten Incident” towards “Really Inspired Human,” or at the very least, someone who understood herself, and her fellow humankind a little better. I wanted to engage in energetic self-reflection. My binge of reading decision-making self-help books directed and calmed me, and made me realize that a “scholastic look” at decision-making was a relatively new “science.” As a species, we’ve talked about right and wrong from man’s earliest days, from all-day discussions sitting under the shade of an olive tree in Ancient Athens to the “think-tanks” of today’s philanthropic organizations.

But the era of modern scientific and funded research into the “systems” of how human beings make decisions began in earnest after Chester I. Barnard published his landmark 1938 book, *The Functions of the Executive*. With American business looking for an edge in the global markets that opened up to the United States after WWI, Barnard’s book, and its promise of business executives who could become more effective and efficient via, in part, wiser decision making skills, fueled the modern phenomena of trying to better approach and understand this arena via scientific and thought-experiment research. Of course, as can be ascertained by the title of Barnard’s book, his focus was on corporate business theory, structure, and cooperative systems. But his classic work clearly deals with decision-making, bringing it in from the esoteric world of “what if?” and into the realm of “what is?” It was in Part Three of his book (Barnard, 1938), entitled, “The Elements of Formal Organizations” that Barnard reimagined the practical and critical nature of modern decision-making:

“The fine art of executive decision consists in not deciding questions that are not now pertinent, in not deciding prematurely, in not making decisions that cannot be made effective, and in not making decisions that others should make. Not to decide questions that are not pertinent at the time is uncommon good sense, though to raise them may be uncommon perspicacity. Not to decide questions prematurely is to refuse commitment of attitude or the development of prejudice. Not to make decisions that cannot be made effective is to refrain from destroying authority. Not to make decisions that others should make is to preserve morale, to develop competence, to fix responsibility, and to preserve authority.

From this it may be seen that decisions fall into two major classes, positive decisions – to do something, to direct action, to cease action, to prevent action; and negative decisions, which are decisions not to decide. Both are inescapable; but the negative decisions are often largely unconscious, relatively non-logical, “instinctive,” “good sense.” It is because of the rejections that the selection is good.

~ *The Function of the Executive* Original 1938 edition and 1968 edition, P. 194

“The making of decisions, as everyone knows from personal experience, is a burdensome task. Off-setting the exhilaration that may result from a correct and successful decision and the relief that follows the termination of a struggle to determine issues, is the depression that comes from failure, or error of decision, and the frustration which ensues from uncertainty.”

~ *The Function of the Executive* Original 1938 edition and 1968 edition, P. 189

In reading the above two quotes in particular, I started to consciously look at making decisions as a kind of a matchless human endeavor, one that can produce a range of feelings from elation to depression. Though, of course I had felt all of these worldly emotions, I never took the time to critically analyze their connection with decision-making -- as tasks buzzing with liabilities, and therefore fraught with the possibilities of both success and failure.

At this point, some ideas really clicked in my head like interlocking pieces of a puzzle:

I clearly saw that “Not to decide,” was actually a decision after reading a Ph.D. paper a friend in Ohio sent me (Otto, 2016). In the first part of Ms. Otto’s thesis, she outlines the way that sometimes we want a sense of closure so badly that we will sidestep making a decision, any decision, choosing avoidance of an aversive experience over reality. But, of course, an act of avoidance does not make a root problem go away.

On the other hand, in “The Functions of the Executive,” Mr. Barnard outlines a number of scenarios that show on occasion, not to decide is the right decision. (Examples include: when another is more qualified to make a better decision; when trying to train the decision making skills of someone coming up the corporate ladder; etc.) This theory came as a personal “of course!!” moment as a mother and teacher.

Barnard also wrote about positive and negative decisions (not “good” or “bad”), which gave me an additional framework in my mind at which to look at my study subject. Barnard’s

work inspired generations of young eager minds in both the emerging field of Management Sciences (Langley, Mintzberg, et al., 1995), and it also developed a new merger of decision-making, practical philosophy, and critical and creative thinking (LeBon, Arnaud. 2004).

The book, “How Good People Make Tough Choices,” by Rushworth M. Kidder, Ph.D., (Kidder, 2009) founder of the Institute for Global Ethics, brought me back to the world of personal decision-making (as opposed to corporate/business). My paperback copy is now dog-eared, underlined, highlighted and starred, for it also brought into focus the subjects of ethical living and functional morals. This thinking process reminded me of long-ago studies I made in an undergraduate philosophy course, with topics like ends-based thinking, rule-based thinking, and care-based thinking. Right away, in the introductory pages of Kidder’s book, concepts of tough decision-making were brought into clarity:

“Good” people...have some conscious sense of vision, some deep core of ethical values, which gives them the courage to stand up to the tough choices. That doesn’t mean they face fewer choices than other people. Quite the opposite...

~“How Good People Make Tough Choices” Rushworth M. Kidder P. 1

“The really tough choices...don’t center upon right versus wrong. They involve right versus right. They are genuine dilemmas precisely because each side is firmly rooted in one of our basic, core values. ...If we call right versus right choices “ethical dilemmas” we can reserve the phrase “moral temptations” for the right-verses-wrong ones.

~ as above P. 3-4

By the fourth paragraph of Kidder’s books, I had had another awakening: Being a good person didn’t mean that I would have less hard decisions. I, like others who try their best to lead what they consider ethical, socially just lives, don’t have a magical free pass in this world. And those of us who have a tender heart are going to get bruised – badly at times. Our decision then

becomes: do we hide away from the realities of our world, or do we begin to exercise the muscles of ethical fitness and the forces of courage and action?

After reading Dr. Kidder's paperback, then two more of his books (Kidder, 2006. Kidder, 2009), I had found a real love for the complexity of daily decisions. I dove into more books like "Smart Choices" (Hammond, Keeney, and Raiffa, 2009), "What's Your Decision?" by two Jesuit Catholic priests (2010), and "The Practice and Philosophy of Decision Making: A Seven Step Spiritual Guide," by Neerja Raman (2003), based on her study of the Bhagavad Geeta. And while driving, I listened to a series of lectures by The Great Courses on the topic of "Moral Decision Making: How to Approach Everyday Ethics" (Martin, 2014).

At this step in my search, I realized that reading and listening to these books, while moving me forward, did not address what I needed most next: to find out what my own personal moral foundation was based on, to analyze it, and lay down a solid footing from which I could re-look at the world. To this end, I enrolled at my local community college, Mesa College, in San Diego, California, and took four courses in philosophy: Logic and Critical Thinking, Reality and Knowledge, Values, and the Philosophy of Women.

Going to these classes gave me a chance to get a broad overview of our greatest philosophical thinking and reasoning. In this exploration, I found some philosophies, arguments, and ideas that resonated deeply with my sensibilities, while others were irritating in their contrarian diatribe to my particular systems of logic. And yet, after all this study, something was still missing: that while I was indeed well-versed in what the great thinkers had thought about decision-making, I still had little understanding of how to actually use philosophical theory as a groundwork for everyday decisions, and build my own personal scaffolding of rational.

An exhaustive Google search led me to discover that there was almost no college class anywhere in the United States, no thesis, nor scholarly article on decision-making unless it was either connected to the business world, conservative religious thinking, job specialization, or the context of historical erudite philosophical ideals. I wondered, as someone who had done K-12 substitute teaching for many years and had seen very little emphasis on teaching students any real-life decision making (besides on the subject of bullying) -- were we graduating a generation of students that had little to no instruction on thinking critically and creatively in everyday decisions? Was this why I seemed to be living in a world where children learned negotiation skills by watching a congress and political system that bitterly argued and got very little done (Calvert et al. 2014) (Rehshon & Duckit, 2000)? Was there a generation growing up with personal relationship abilities guided only by the bickering and snobbery demonstrated by the likes of "The Housewives of Atlanta" (Bland & Montemurro, 2015), and the examples of parents (whether married, divorced, or single) who have their own grievous faults in modeling good decision-making skills (Gentile, 2014) (Sanchez, 2016)? Were the "trolls" of society, once relegated to a small sphere of influence, now spreading stagnating doubt, indecision, a crueler world-view, etc., with the ever-growing influence of the World Wide Web (Todd, 2014) (McGuire, 1999)? Since the new K-12 curriculum realities of today leave little time for the teaching, discussion, let alone the practice of real-world decision making, could this be one of the reasons that college age students, and young adults in general, are having an unprecedented wave of poor judgment (Workman, 2014), a widespread tendency to put off or avert major decisions, and a trend in carrying low confidence as part of their baggage?

Yes, many of the above listed factors, and more, play into these traits in today's generation of young adults (along with examples like: insufficient sleep, an exponentially

complex world, distractibility, normal societal changes, etc.). But there seems to be a wider disjunction between the trends of an older generation who virtually ‘hit the ground running’ after high school and college, and those today who wear their pajamas out in public (Blackman, 2016), are unskilled at compromise, and at times, appear less empathetic in their sphere of consideration. Some young adults seem to skirt all modes of accountability, and lack in the gift of appreciation and gratefulness (McBride, 2016). Could they have missed out on parts of the essential lessons of growing up: that knowledge and wisdom bring us experience, and experience makes our decisions wiser and more grounded? Have we all contributed to this by not making the point, not taking the time, not being determined in the teaching, yes teaching, to every student the meaning of good decision making? Am I guilty myself, as a parent of two millennials, in displaying their “participation” trophies, and possibly not challenging them to understand true winning and losing, not making sure they took individual responsibility more seriously? Was I the epitome of my generation’s tendency to be a “Helicopter Parent” (Schiffrin, Liss et al., 2013), trying to shield my children from harsh realities and make their path too easy?

Somewhere in the middle of all this thinking/pondering/worrying, I began to yearn for a way to bring all the above parts together into some coherent picture. On a whim, one day I typed into my Google search bar the things that were now overwhelming my curiosity: “critical thinking, master’s degree, creativity, and philosophy.” The second entry down, I found the University of Massachusetts-Boston link to their Critical and Creative Thinking program. And miracle of miracles, it was an interactive online program, so I could study from my home in San Diego, in person during the summer, and use the tools of the master’s coursework to further my study of why and how people make decisions.

And so, I began, at the age of fifty-eight, I began a master’s degree program.

3. Starting my Master's & Developing a Theme

Topics: Being mindful. Setting myself up for success.
Clarification of key issues. Organizing a theme and vision.

“It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters.”

~Epictetus (341-270 BCE)

***“We are like chameleons, we take our hue and the color of our
moral character from those who are around us.”***

~John Locke (1632-1704)

Setting the Stage:

I, like others, know the general personality of those we work and play with (the easy to read aspects like: serious, shy, energetic, charming, funny, capable, confident). Yet, for almost all of us, we only see true “character” (traits like honesty, virtue, kindness, benevolence, tolerance, self-control) with time and a wide variety of experiences that motivate observable actions. “We unconsciously tend to connect personality to character for two main reasons: we want to like people we already like, and the more reliable way to assess a person’s character is laborious and time consuming,” writes Dr. Alex Lickerman, in article entitled “Personality vs. Character” (Lickerman, 2011) published in Psychology Today. He goes on to say, “We have an uncanny predilection for observing attractive *personality* traits and manufacturing out of them the presence of positive *character* traits.”

From this reading, I knew that I had to “set the stage” of my new journey into the world of critical and creative thinking by bringing forth the best of my life experiences, examples, and positive beliefs. Equally, I had to clear away the clutter of preconceived notions and judgments based solely on feelings, habits – and friends -- that no longer served me well. I cleaned my desk, bought a stack of fresh college-ruled notebooks, sharpened #2 pencils, dusted off my Pocket Style Manual (Hacker et al. 2015), and a got my head ready to listen, learn, and actively participate.

In my studies, I had to separate the wheat from the chaff, actively doing this with every reading, every class lecture, and every classmate discussion. I also had to do this in my everyday listening and speaking – learning to hear with ears that decoded language for hidden meanings, learning to speak with precise words that conveyed a targeted message. This process was, and still is, a work in progress. I have always tended to assume the best and give people the benefit of the doubt, and that will probably remain my home base. But as I have learned, in many situations, my “home base” has left me stymied -- inactive to the prospect of deeper thinking and analysis. In truth, sometimes, for almost all people, we tend not to go deep because we are afraid of what we might discover that would, say, ruin a casual friendship, cause over-worry, or veer us off a main project or goal.

My new objectives as I started this Master’s program included becoming a functioning agent of positive change, and I knew that meant I had to start with myself. As motivational speaker, Dr. Rick Brinkman, says in his book, “Dealing with People You Can’t Stand,” (Brinkman, 2012), “Sometimes the most important and useful elements of communication are hidden, not just from the listener, but from the speaker as well. Identify these to get a positive outcome.”

To pursue a master's degree in Critical Thinking, I had to learn to distinguish positive from negative (or subversive) intent. I needed to identify what criteria to value, and what criterion simply puffed up my pride. I needed to exercise conscious, deliberate communication to bring out the best in others and myself. I could, and had to, learn to control my own behavior, because that was something I could truly be responsible to and for. I needed to reassess how I projected myself to others. My friend, the Los Angeles based Life Coach Barbara Deutsch (Deutsch, 2011), has two favorite quotes that I kept front and center during my adjustment into the sphere of being a graduate student: 1.) Ask for what you want. ...and 2.) You teach others how to speak and treat you with everything you do and say, and everything you don't do and don't say.

To pursue a master's degree in Creative Thinking, I (as a person who has made most of my adult living as an actor, playwright, producer, director, and writer of fiction and nonfiction) had to open myself up to looking at creativity from entirely new viewpoints – like finding the creativity in fields like biomedical ethics and cognitive science. I was curious to see how my love of both the scientific/critical and the ethereal/creative would come together for this two-years course of study. Eventually, I got to the point where reading something others might seem like cut-and-dry text -- an example being: *The ASCA National Model (2012)* from the American School of Counselor Education – stirred all sorts of resourceful questions and inspired ideas.

From readings and discussions on such subjects, I gave myself permission to color even farther outside the lines, and those methods set my mind ablaze with creative and inventive thinking.

Crystallizing the Objectives and Focusing the Goals

From the start of my master's program, I had a sense that I might want to really create a curriculum for a college class combining Philosophy and the craft of Decision Making, but I was still not sure if that was indeed where my road would lead me. So, I began with classes I hoped would help me shape my rational, and with each semester, I became surer that using the Critical and Creative Thinking program was the best choice for my questioning mind, heart and soul.

My main goals were to explore two basic questions: 1.) "How do people make good decisions?" and 2.) Can practical decision-making be taught? It soon became obvious that my tentative objective of forming a college course would not only answer my goal questions, but also bring me on a journey that had real measurable and tangible results. From there, I began to use every class assignment, if and when possible, to support my yearning to write the curriculum for a new class. With this objective, I continually looked at my core goal questions from different angles, no matter the topic of the day. My courses, therefore, were chosen with care to meet my intangible knowledge quest, and my tangible objectives:

- Creative Thinking
- Critical Thinking
- Seminar in Creative Thinking
- Holistic and Transformative Teaching
- Dialogue Process
- Collaborative and Organizational Change
- Philosophical Thought
- Biomedical Ethics
- Advanced Cognitive Psychology
- Professional School Counseling
- Research and Engagement Process
- Action Research for Change
- Synthesis Theory and Practice Seminar

Some of my classes were not in the order I would have wished because of my own schedule and the teaching schedule at the university, but in the end, I found that my adaptability to adjust to the “zigzag path” was part of my personal challenge to deal with an unpredictable world. My ability to rally, and see this class ordering as an adventure, was emboldening.

I shortly realized that if I wanted to understand how decisions are sometimes made under less-than-perfect circumstances, I would use my own graduate student experiences as a “lab” from which to investigate frustration, adaptation, and forward movement.

There was also a sense of direction and destiny in my master’s ambitions. In the back of my mind, the possibility of teaching again at a university level became a visualizing target. Therefore, my goals became more and more specific as I worked my way through the first semester of classes at UMASS-Boston. As unfamiliar as I was with decision-making theory and philosophy, I always knew I had a couple aces up my sleeve when it came to developing a college course from scratch: Between 1989 and 1994, I created eight different adult education courses after seeing a void in my local college writing course offerings. What started off as writing and presenting a one, all-day seminar, soon blossomed into a full schedule of development and teaching at eventually two community colleges and one major state university. In addition, I spoke about writing at bookstores and writers conferences around the Midwest.

From all these varied experiences, I knew the challenges of developing educational products from idea to class, the trials of teaching a new course, making changes and adaptations, and the rewards when a class resonated with students. So, in spite of the occasional panic for attempting to approach a decision-making curriculum for which I had only a couple years of study, I had the confidence that comes with a successful history.

4. **Assembling Information, Establishing Foundations**

Topics: Building a Decision-Making Library.
Fundamental answers to the “Who” and “Why.”

*“Divide each difficulty into as many parts
as is feasible and necessary to resolve it.”*

~Rene Descartes (1596-1650)

Assembling the Right Information

With every UMASS master’s class, and the assignments therein, I began to collect a wide breadth of information that either directly or indirectly inspired my work, guided my efforts towards specific requirements, or motivated me to continue along my path. These resources came in the varied forms of teachers, my fellow students, peer-reviewed articles, niche magazines/journals, videos, websites, conversations during and after class, and new exchanges with old friends based on something I had been made aware of in my studies.

I have always loved to read, but this journey pushed me to new heights. I amassed a treasury of books inspired by assignments I read, my classmate’s suggestions, and my own blossoming curiosity. At the end of this paper, I took the time to list all the major works that influenced my master’s degree journey, for they were, except for a handful, readings I would have never been enlightened by under normal circumstances, and so many were truly magical:

See Appendix J: Books That Most Enlightened My Path.

Foundational Question... and the answers

I had objectives and a goal, but I was often asked one particular question over and over again during this journey: “Why are you so determined that this class of yours should be for college freshman and/or sophomores?”

Since I did have some background in curriculum development, I understood that these kinds of strong foundational questions should be asked and answered. In fact, I knew that at any point in the progression of formulating a new class, much less the arduous process of seeing it all the way through to being approved and funded, I would be asked by many more: “Why? Why this class to this age group?”

After my first semester at UMASS-Boston, when I truly knew that my “germ of an idea” for a class, then tentatively titled: “Philosophy and Real-World Decision Making” might have some “legs,” I dove deeper and began some personal research as to what my “Why?” answers would be. I queried friends, fellow students, teachers, my family, high school kids in my neighborhood, college freshman and sophomores, small business owners, and corporate personnel staff as to why they might want to take a class like the one I imagined, or hire people who had taken this class. Upon reflection of the data I gathered, I came up with six areas that needed to be addressed:

A.) The Money An\$wer

In some ways, it pains me to put the money question and answer first in answering the “Why?” -- but the truth is I’m formulating a class to be taught in the modern world, and the western world at that, so the factor of money plays heavily into decision making.

When polled about the top ten qualities interviewers want to see in college graduates applying for a job, the skills used in decision-making are involved in at least three answers: they want people who have the decision-making skills to make quality business judgments; they want people who can cooperate with groups to create, problem-solve, and generate quality decisions; and they want people who make good overall life decisions that are reflected in their personality, work relationships, and as a de-facto representative of their company to the outside world.

So, I deduced by this, that the target group that would best be served by my class would be either high school seniors, or at some point during the college experience. And since statistics show that up to 40% of students who begin at a four-year college do not go on to graduate (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008), and less than 40% of students who begin at a two-year college complete their AA credentials (CUCCRC, 2009), I deduced the best time to reach the largest amount of students that could benefit from this class had to be during the freshman or sophomore college years as a 100 or 200 level course.

B.) The Millennial Answer

It is the reality of our times that many countries in the world today rely heavily on standardized testing. This leaves teachers with little time to have (or teach) generative dialogues, much less have thriving conversations with their students. The real world, however, has no fill-in-the-circles, A-F, T/F, or #2 Pencil answers. Yet, most high school graduates, unless blessed with a flourishing amount of brave, stimulating, and/or challenging dinner or outside conversations with people of all ages, nations, and viewpoints, have been trained to think narrow, and “pencil inside the circle.”

So it became very clear that my class idea should be geared toward college freshman and sophomores, out in the “real” world alone for possibly the first time, who need a class like the

one I was developing so they can hear stories, receive targeted lessons, and then practice the art of good decision making at a crucial time in their lives.

C.) The Media / “Submit To Fear” Answer

The culture of fear as a method to control and persuade is one of the cyclical features of human history. Unfortunately, we are living in a time where the fear card is not only being played, but being played 24/7, 360 degrees, 365 days a year, virtually everywhere on earth.

We can't seem to escape the message of fear unless we cut ourselves off from the modern world. So how do we make good decisions when “facts” are skewed, “spin” has replaced truth, certain policymakers tell us to be wary of the media, and most modern examples of “decision makers” are trumped up politicians playing games with our economy, health, and government. Impersonal big business, selfish codes of conduct, and looking out for “number one” have become the status quo. We're taught to react to what seems like a perpetual crisis syndrome -- and then we're plagued by those rash and often dangerous decisions.

We all have our examples of being pulled by the “Be Afraid” claws, yet, we often feel ill-equipped to fight the good fight. A class like the one I am writing is meant to be headway in this conundrum.

D.) The Balanced Life Answer

One of the things I've learned in my study of history and philosophy is that almost every human who has ever, or now does, walk the earth, yearns for a healthy balance in their lives. That can range from having a family, a career, exploring their spirituality, holding true love dear, creating a community, staying healthy, finding adventure, seeking serenity, and so much more.

When making decisions seems too overwhelming, too remote, too out of personal control or imagination, the balance of life goes haywire. And, of course, there are times when life will be out of control, and times when it may have to be micro-managed, but these are usually phases we endure, with the hope of restored balance.

With the ability to see tens, if not thousands of paths out of darkness, comes the confidence that comes with sunrise each morning, and a warm cup of tea in the evening.

E.) The Human Concepts Answer

Beyond balance, there's the desire to understand larger human concepts like justice, responsibility, reality, structure, language, good, bad, logic, metaphysics, epistemology, what is...and so on. (Sandel, 2009) (Kidder, 2005)

We even long for an understanding of such seemingly everyday questions about art, music, theatre, science, the mind, faithfulness, actions, reactions, the human condition, framework, technology, artificiality, our planet, our solar system... the earth beneath our feet. We want to decide what we like, what is real, what is just... We long to deliberate.

All of the above and more require an active, thoughtful mind, an organized method of study, and the ability to put forth ideas, be pro-active in debate, and make decisions that seem appropriate to you, in your world, as you understand it, with the best of intentions.

F.) The Deeply Human Answer

We all know that we have a short, precious run on planet Earth, and almost all of us want to make our time here the best of all possible. I know that's what I want for my family and

myself. Since making better decisions seems to lead to better days, better experiences, and better times – why wouldn't you crave to understand the simple skills needed to choose wisely?

We live in the safest time in all of human history (Ostroff, 2015) (Pinker & Mack, 2014). Yet we seem to be squandering away this gift by ignoring this golden opportunity to think globally and act locally, think smarter and react with care, and reason towards a magnificent future and act in ways that ensure the betterment of all future generations. Now seems a perfect occasion to teach a class on Making Better Decisions!

In order to achieve the goals I've listed on the previous pages, I decided to start with an unofficial survey of friends and peers. I asked if people really did want to learn how to make better decisions, and if so, how could receiving that information improve their day-to-day lives?

Well, it turns out, if you just bring up this subject, people crave the opportunity to talk. The biggest trend was that most felt they were stuck in their usual decision-making skills. They're tired of the pro/con list, the brush off when you don't have any fresh ideas, the deep potholes that only allow black or white thinking, the oft-repeated expressions like, "Our religion says it is so," "Our father says it's so," "It's just easier to do nothing," or "It's just simpler to keep your head down..." And of course there are the groupthink mentalities that you don't even realize that you are a part of, the "me" decisions that give temporary happiness, and the aching loneliness of tough decisions made without help... All of these statements, I concluded, begged for a class in practical decision-making.

5. The Methods and Milestones

Topics: Journey through CCT. Revelations through coursework.

“To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom.”

~Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that every has.”

~Margaret Mead (1901 – 1978)

Direct lines can be drawn between my UMASS-Boston Critical and Creative Thinking methodology/classwork/lectures/discussions/readings/ and projects to milestones that lead up to my final complete 32-Class Lesson Plan for a brand new college course, at this point titled: Philosophy: Making Good Decisions.

In this section, I highlight some of the most pivotal links in the chain from inspiration to exploration, investigate some of the revelations I found through the coursework, and how I strategized my way towards thirteen completed projects that would eventually lay out the foundation for what my thesis zenith project would finally become.

With lofty, yet real, ideals like beneficence, veracity, fidelity, truth, logic, generosity, non-maleficence, genuineness, liberation, edification, and practicality, I approached each master’s degree course with growing self-confidence. I think this showed in how each class served as inspiration, and the pride I felt completing each unit project.

#1: CRCRTH 615 Holistic and Transformative Teaching

My General Goals in This Class: If I was going to spend the time and effort coming up with my very own original class, what would be the point if it wouldn't be transformative in the lives of my students, and holistic in my teaching methods, my chosen examples, my style, and other inclusive details? So I began with a Holistic and Transformative Teaching course was to see if what I was thinking of teaching could be something more than ordinary. With Professor Jeremy Szteiter at the helm, and the company of classmates from around the world, I began to imagine the possible.

Inspiration: I discovered that there were a huge variety of learning paths out there that I never knew about (examples include Quaker, Democratic, Waldorf, Folk, etc.). This got me thinking about all the different ways that people learn, and that led me to remember my niece and nephew, who have major learning challenges. From there, I challenged myself to find alternative ways to rethink basic class handouts such as the syllabus and the homework assignment lists.

Project: I collected information on font types, colors, styles, designs, etc. that made text easier to read for students with learning disabilities⁵. With this information, I created two distinct pieces that I added to my brand new "Class Ideas Workbook." 1.) I completed a new style of class syllabus addressed specifically to work well in printed form, on line, and if read by a computer to someone who was blind or severely dyslexic. I also wanted to create a syllabus that reflected the tempo, style, and goals for the class, encourage deep learning, enthusiasm, and a true guidepost towards attention and collaboration. 2.) I completed a new style of "Class Homework" assignment page. In my version, with the direction of the Learning Disabilities Association guidelines, and an awareness of how homework today is done on many different devices, at home and on the go, I devised an easy format that promotes homework not only completed on time in entirety, but lessons learned well.

See Appendix B: Vision for a New Kind of Syllabus

⁵ This was the clearest site: <http://www.ldau.org/ld-facts/guidelines-for-font-size-color/>

(Sample)

See Appendix C: A New Vision for Homework Assignments

#2: CRCRTH 602 Creative Thinking

My General Goals For This Class: After balancing my entire working career as an actor, writer, and teacher, I was looking forward to this class to not only re-awaken my creative artistic inventiveness, but also to give me inventive perspectives on looking at decision making and how to better teach decision making.

Inspiration: Professor Luanne Witkowski and her team put together an amazing thrill ride of creative thinking experiences. These helped me in three unique ways: 1.) Helped me finish fully plotting two plays I had been tinkering with for over ten years. 2.) Began to understand the vast array of creative modeling systems that could help me with convergent and divergent thinking. 3.) Began to understand how to bring creative elements into serious subjects so that they are easier to understand, absorbed fully, and stay with you for a lifetime.

Project: I put together a PowerPoint presentation showing a number of creative models, and how they could be used for supporting better practical decision-making.

As we made our way through an array of imaginative exercises in class, I was really captivated by the unit on Creative Thinking models that were used to discover and uncover fresh, forward-thinking creative ideas. Upon reflection, it occurred to me that the essence of these models was to take in facts, feelings, and intuition, and give the brain the freedom to find a million new pathways – like white light refracting through a prism. In my mind, looking for options at a critical decision-making junction was in essence the same – giving a problem that seems narrow and restricted a place to break into more than just pro and con, this or that, my way or the highway. I saw the chance to teach creative critical thinking modeling in my future class.

Appendix D: Using Creative Thinking to Solve Critical Problems
A Slide Show (Sample)

#3: CRCRTH 612 Seminar in Creative Thinking

My General Goals For This Class: Since two-thirds of my past work experience is directly in creative fields, I wanted to stretch my reach, tapping into the vital essence of who I am now, as I approach another phase in my career.

Inspiration: Dr. Orin Davis, our professor, earned the first doctorate ever in the field of positive psychology, and with that background, he wanted us to push ourselves far beyond ordinary, far beyond our comfortable boxes, and find our most creative core places. In an assignment, I read about an epic drug trial failure, that when reexamined a year later, a passed over fact led to the invention of the most profitable new drug in history: Viagra. I'm now writing a play about it!

Project: "The Itch" was a thought experiment towards recognizing and understanding in detail our "core itch" which brought us into the CCT program.

In the end, after detailed examination, I found that I didn't just want to develop a new college course combining philosophy and practical decision making – no, I NEEDED to create this course. I felt an immediate societal need for such a class; I knew that all my life experiences had brought me to the point where I had something of usefulness to add to the "conversation." I hit the milestone of certainty. What "itched" me was the necessity of a class that might make the world a little better place, where people used the better angels of their nature to create less chaos, less hurt, less sadness, and less really rotten incidents. I wanted, for myself, to understand the baselines for making better real-life decisions, find a way to teach them effectively, and then pass that "value added" information on to others. I sought to champion a "growth mind set" over

a “fixed mind set.” I aspired to seek truth, even unto its innermost parts. I fancied slaying a few dragons in service of impacting the world to make it a bit kinder, a bit better.

Appendix I: Allegory of the Cave A Slideshow (Sample)
#4: CRCRTH 618 Creative Thinking, Collaboration, & Organizational Change

My General Goals For This Class: For most of this master’s degree, I was on-line from my home in San Diego, CA. But this condensed summer class offered me a chance to travel to Boston and take this course in person on campus.

Inspiration: My most striking remembrances were ideas like the “Circle of Allies,” making a “we” without losing “me,” the art of listening, and all the amazing ideas put forth in our textbook, “The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook” (Senge et al. 1994).

Project: This class, our amazing on-campus and off-campus students, Professor Jeremy Szitzer, and our textbook brought me to the solid conclusion that lecturing on decision making, while a valuable part of my college course plans, would be more transformative/memorable if I could include a 30-minute per-class workshop exercise actively involving the students. Therefore, when I went to write the entire 32-session course proposal, you will note that each subject starts with a story, continues with a lecture, and then moves into a variety of workshop activities, mostly in small groups, but also some individual, and sometimes the class as a whole. I also reserved 5-10 minutes at the end of each class to come back together, to allow students report to each other what they learned. This is something that I did not experience in any of my own personal 100 or 200 level philosophy courses, and one that I realized that was critical to what I wanted to achieve in a philosophy-based practical decision making class.

Appendix A: The Complete 32-Class Lesson Plan
 In my full curriculum, please note my ideas for activities.

#5: CRCRTH 601 Critical Thinking

My General Goals For This Class: Although I see my life's work, both in business and on the personal side, as a series of critical thinking decisions, many who see only the outside “wacky” side of my creative personality know little of my quiet-but-deep side which includes a serious study of history, science, and social justice causes.

Inspiration: Early in the class, I asked our professor, Dr. Arthur Millman, if I could do a term paper beginning actual work of starting to look for the hundreds of ideas I wanted to collect that would be used as a template for putting together the class I wanted to present in full for my CCT Thesis project. I started with folders labeled: Class Objectives, Themes, Basic Outline, Background, Procedures, Materials Needed, Class Group Exercises, Pre-Class Homework needed before beginning of class and Post-Class Homework that would reinforce the lesson.

Project: I saw in my class notes that I had casually written that I must come at projects with a “full tool box.” At the time, it was just something I wrote in a spiral notebook, but later, I, along with my 88-year old dad, made my own tool box from scratch, and today it sits on my desk, the physical embodiment of what I want to accomplish as a creative person, and as a leader in making better practical decisions. It served as the “mascot” of my term paper in this class.



#6: CRCRTH 651 Advanced Cognitive Psychology

My General Goals For This Class: I wanted to understand how the brain works when making decisions. I realized that a potential class session on this subject in my course could provide a key element in helping students understand the pathways of their decision-making processes.

Inspiration: Our textbooks, “Cognition” (Reisberg, 2013) and “The Cognition Workbook” (Reisberg, 2013) were the starting points for an extensive laypersons journey into understanding the theory of choice, problem solving, cost benefit, framing, risk, reason-based choice, utility maximization, somatic markers, emotions, forecasting, excuses, rationalizations, adaption, and paradox. The text was very scientific, but presented in a way that was easy to comprehend.

Project: With the special permission of my instructor, my term paper in this class was an entire “class lecture” envisioned for what would eventually become session #14 of my complete “Philosophy: Making Better Decisions” course proposal. My lecture begins with a basics lesson in the parts and terminology of the brain, highlighting those that are used in decision-making functions. From there, I incorporated the case of Phineas Gage (1823-1860), whose accident while working on the Vermont state railway that shot a tampering iron through his cheek and out the top of his head opened the first modern understanding of how brain functions in decision making. Gage miraculously lived, but lost his ability to make decisions. His case, followed for years by Gage’s local doctor, left observations to the emerging world of brain science. From here, my lecture follows how input into the brain is affected by beliefs, values, reason, emotions, and memories, and how that lets us make decisions that we express to the world in our behavior. Finally, I found six active things we all can do daily to help our brain function better, which in turn can help our decisions come from a healthy mind fully capable to analyze and be rational.

Appendix E: Lecture: “The Brain, Cognition, and Decision Making” (Sample)

#7: CRCRTH 692 Process of Research and Engagement

My General Goals For This Class: This was my first opportunity to sink my teeth into a semester-long research project, learning the finer points of scholastic examination and engagement skills from our professor, Dr. Peter Taylor.

Inspiration: As stated earlier in this thesis, one of the main questions that started me on this quest was basically, “Why do good/normal people sometimes do bad/nasty things when given a choice?” I had high hopes that I could be the person to finally figure out this never-ending human mystery. Sadly, I was not that hero, but in my term paper, my research led me to a few amazing conclusions, but left billions of anomalies that make the subject of “good” people who chose to do “bad” an eternal issue. The semester-long process gave me deeper understanding of the grey area of personal motivations, and with that scholarship, I feel better prepared to add real moments of depth to my decision-making lectures.

Project: For my term paper, I conducted over 40 formal interviews with people who had been on the victim-end of good people doing bad things, and actually a few others who had been the perpetrators of bad things when they generally thought of themselves as good people.

This project was very profound in my life, and in the lives of those people I questioned. Over 70% of my volunteers had never told anyone before of what they told me. My ten questions were deceptively simple, designed to open the floodgates, steer them back on topic if necessary, provide a chance to start healing, and know that I would share their experiences yet keep their secrets. The sessions lasted anywhere from twenty-five minutes to four hours, but I generally wanted to keep their storytelling specific, focused, and revealing. The most interesting thing I discovered was that everyone but two individuals used the term, “I feel bad for him/her.” When I asked “Why,” all people could say was, “I don’t know, I just have no other words to describe the aftermath...”

See Appendix F: “Story Time” for Lesson #24

#8: CRCRTH 616 Dialogue Processes

My General Goals For This Class: After a truly life-changing small-group experience we did in our CCT 618 class which involved concentrated speaking, deep listening, and an observer, my mind was sincerely opened to the disconnect in human dialogue processes. I was motivated to take an entire semester to examine this subject fully.

Inspiration: 1.) Professor Olen Gunnlaugson is a citizen of the world. His teaching on dialogue followed the standard theories of such notables as David Bohm and Otto Scharmer” (Scharmer, 2009), but Gunnlaugson’s lectures and notes brought a global perspective to how we all communicate. 2.) I was introduced to ideas like “The Undiscussables,” which eventually became the subject for my class #26 of my proposed curriculum. 3.) My class “buddy” was a young woman who lived in Borneo. Our long conversations about the dialogue differences in her life and mine were profound. Most notable were our exchanges about societal expectations. To make her parents proud, she was teaching at an elementary school during the day (where, being the youngest teacher, she spent her break time serving tea to the other teachers), getting concurrent master’s degrees at UMASS and in Borneo.

These three inspirations led to the perfect mixture of readings, teaching, and connections which allowed me to request special permission to adapt the required term paper to add another full element to my thesis project.

Project: Using all the resources opened to me from taking this class, along with more individual research, I wrote the entire class #9, titled “Dialogue Skills.” This included the opening remarks, the “story”, the lecture entitled “Listening, Speaking, and Thriving Conversations,” the outline and instruction sheet for the class interactive workshop, and the closing remarks.

See Appendix G: Lecture: Lesson #9 out of 32. (A Sample)

#9: CRCRTH 693 Action Research for Educational, Professional & Personal Change

My General Goals For This Class: Although I have worked in the past as a journalist, editor, and nonfiction magazine writer, action research was not something I had knowingly done. For me, this class left me at times discouraged, anxious, and in the end, frustrated because I could not seem to find a project that addressed the true scope of action research.

Inspiration: After doing an interesting study on how colleges evaluate new courses, I eventually took a bit of a left turn, and completed a study of my professional and personal change, attempted to understand who advocated for me and why, how I might want to someday build a constituency, and looking ahead to do proactive research. (Schmuck, 2006)

Project: My term paper helped me assess where I was in my educational and Master's project quest, and what and whom I needed to help me make better pathways towards my hopeful vision of changing the world for the better. While this assignment did not add specific elements to my completed 32-class lesson plan, it did give me the opportunity to review each session of my UMASS journey, updating my class goals now that I was nearing the end of my master's work. It also gave me the opening to review how my original inspirations at the beginning of this program had evolved into something richer and deeper than I ever could have imagined.

In addition, during this project, I took the time to re-organize into one computer format, all the information I had highlighted, underlined, and starred in material along the way. I began developing my "white wall" (see section 6) of class ideas, student activities, lecture topics, and broader philosophical connections to the materials that I wanted to teach someday.

Most of what you are reading in this section of my synthesis project is based on the reflections I did during my Action Research project.

#10: CRCRTH 619 Biomedical Ethics:

My General Goals For This Class: In my role as someone who will hopefully be teaching decision making, I fully realize that medical decisions are some of the most complex and traumatizing we humans make during our lifetimes. I took this class to widen my philosophical base to include the ethics of our medical system, and the complex reasoning that goes into how the business of medicine moves forward in a world that has a vastly complex intersection of ideas on the concepts of health, life, and death.

Inspiration: In this class, we read dozens of historical investigations and current articles on the last one hundred years of modern medicine and the triumphs and ethical quandaries that led to the emerging field of biomedical ethics by the 1970's. Professor Mark Robinson's careful guidance led us through a complex trail of reasoning, fresh ideas, and classic principles, but left us making our own ethical code, and thinking how that will play out in the course of our lives.

Project: I wrote a term paper that recapped the sentient ideas from this course that I wanted to bring with me into the world of teaching practical decision making. Topics included: historical perspectives on medicine and healthcare; deontological ideas; teleological ideas; the principlism of Beauchamp and Childress including autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice; veracity, fidelity, utilitarianism in health care theory, and feminist ethics in health care.

My work in this class is reflected in two specific places in Appendix A. In unit #10, "Asking the Right Questions," I know from personal experience that asking the right questions in any medical situation can run the gamut from seemingly silly to inconceivable. Still, asking good questions in an area that will touch every human being is vital to life and death decisions.

Then in unit #13, "Evaluating the Options," we actually do a small group exercise to practice evaluation skills in medical decision-making.

#11: CRCRTH 603 Foundations in Philosophical Thought:

My General Goals For This Class: Take more time to read, discuss, and delve into more philosophical viewpoints.

Inspiration: Our book, “Twenty Questions” (Bowie et al. editors, 2011) had hundreds of essays I had not read in my other philosophy classes. I was inspired by them, and the three-hour long weekly discussions we had with a group of master’s students who were not philosophy majors, but from such fields as music, science, filmmaking, banking, teaching, social justice, painting, and more. This brought a “real world” perspective on the twists and turns of our explorations, that I, in turn, took copious notes on for my curriculum based on the practical framework of philosophy. The level of exceptional conversation inspired me to read deep and more carefully than I had ever done before. This, in turn, made me realize that if I wanted get my future students to converse richer, think broader, and want to be there for each other and every discussion, getting them to do their homework would be easier. If they could conceive of their homework out of class as making their 90-minutes in class more thrilling, it would be a win-win.

Project: The two major projects to come out of this class were: 1.) A term paper examining my reasoning for using philosophy (as opposed to religion, or any other study) as the foundation for my curriculum wanting to teach college freshmen/sophomores the practicalities of real-world better decision making, and 2.) The idea of the “Le Penseur Lunch.” In the tradition of the Socratic thinkers, I imagined a future on-campus bi-weekly meet-up under the shade of a large tree where students, faculty, and outsiders could meet and discuss philosophical decision making theory, hear lectures, exchange positions, and build strong, civil friendships.

See Appendix H: “Le Penseur Lunch” Topics (A Sample)

#12: COUNSL 630: Orientation to Professional School Counseling

My General Goals For This Class: Once it was made public that I was soon to receive a Master's degree in Critical and Creative Thinking with a thesis emphasis on "Making Better Decisions," I got a rash of emails and calls from mostly young adults (friends of my children, or former students) who found themselves at serious crossroads (suicide, an abusive relationship, alcoholism, etc.). I felt confident in giving my advice as a mom and friend, but very shaky on any other level. After sincere reflection, I realized that as someone who aspired to teach making better decisions, I would, most probably, be contacted about real-time critical situations. I sensed it was in my best interest to take a master's level class to introduce me to the general precepts of school counseling, and in particular, models of legal responsibility. (Baker & Gerler, 2008) (ASCA National Model, 2012)

Inspiration: An assignment to meet and interview two working counselors. I chose to interview a high school counselor who specialized in helping seniors make the transition from high school to college, and then interviewed a community college counselor who specialized in helping freshmen deal with the challenges of their first year in higher education.

Project: A forty-page term paper analyzing the psychological and philosophical differences of students leaving the only world of education and family that they have ever known, and the range of culture shock, temptations, disappointments, obstacles, and positives and negatives of making your first real-world decisions without the safety net of being under legal age. In my research and writing, I tried to be openly reflective, compassionate, curious, counter-culture, inquisitive and relentless. In the end, I came to understand that in my connection to each of my CCT classes, and the journey, have given me an enormous amount of confident, yet careful judgment. I also value this project for giving me courage to continue my goals after graduation.

#13: CRCRTH 694 Synthesis of Theory and Practice Seminar

My General Goals For This Class: Completing my original goal for this Master's program.

Inspiration: As outlined in the pages above...

Project: The complete 32-Class Lesson Plan for a new college course.

See Appendix A: The Complete 32-Class Lesson Plan

6. Creating a Curriculum

Topics: Preparing a Curriculum. Instructional design considerations.
Sources of Content.

“I cannot teach anybody anything. I can only make them think”

~Socrates (469-399 BCE)

***If we are to achieve things never before accomplished,
we must employ methods never before attempted.”***

~Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

In my efforts to build a college class from scratch, I knew that to do my best I needed to find approaches that would encourage students to think in ways that would always create opportunities to make better decisions.

In a typical 32-week session, three-credit California college course, taking out one class for a mid-term exam and one class for the final examination, that left 30, ninety-minute sessions for me to work with. On the huge blank white wall in my office, I put a strip of blue painter’s tape vertically in the center. On the left side I marked horizontally, Classes 1-16, and on the right, Classes 17-32. Then I got out the blue painters tape and cordoned off each class vertically. (And yes, my husband was a saint with this blue, white, and yellow collage up for months on end!) Class #15 and #31 I marked as “mid-term” and “final exam” prep periods. I also knew that these “prep periods” would give me a little class time buffer both at the halfway point and the end point to pick up on any subject I might have missed, or go deeper into any issue my students wanted to examine further. I marked off Class #16 as “Mid-Term,” and Class #32 as

“Final Exam.” I also marked off half of Class 1 as “Welcome and Class Syllabus Introduction Time.” That left me with the template for my course.

Now, as I have written, I had slowly gathered the major topics that I should be addressed in order to explore the fundamentals of decision-making, and in the development the “muscles” students would need to build for a lifetime of decision-making fitness. The term paper I had completed in my CCT 693 Action Research class gave me a huge list of general subjects I thought would make for good class titles (such as: “Dealing with the Undiscussables,” “Making Decisions Under Stress,” and “The Big Picture”) and the supporting files listing every idea that I thought would be transformative, visceral, and illuminating. Between starting my master’s degree at the University of Massachusetts – Boston, and the writing of this final thesis, I had collected over 300 topics that I thought might be worthy of inclusion in a class on Philosophy and Making Better Decisions.

To get them in an order I deemed logical, I wrote each possible class topic on a Post-It note, then stuck it on the wall in general areas of my 1-32 class tape lines. Every day for weeks and weeks, I would go to that wall first thing when I entered my office, stare at the hundreds of Post-It’s, and move them around. I worked on logical order (as in a subject like “The Big Picture” would be close to the beginning and “Handling the ‘Undiscussables’” was a matter that would understandably better talked about be near the end of a semester). Eventually, many topics seemed to be part of a larger picture, such as the eventual grouping of topics like Discrimination, Law, and Kant’s Freedom as Autonomy, under the major theme: “Justice.” Eventually, I winnowed down my wall to what you will find in my curriculum in Appendix A. When I think back on the process, though it was not easy, the final subjects deemed “essential”

for my course seemed uncannily easy to pick out – maybe because I finally “saw” what the logical path must be!

I repeated the same general agenda for each section of my class, listing ideas on Post-It notes whenever and wherever an idea struck me, putting it up on the wall, and then narrowing everything down. I got ideas everywhere.

Inspiration came from:

The Weather Channel:

Their series on “Why Planes Crash” became the “United Airlines, Flight 173” story for Unit #9 on Dialogue Skills

The Internet:

I found a video on Facebook making the rounds called “High School Love” will be the interactive discussion starter for Unit #22’s “Comparative Methodology: This or That” topic. – the gunman is in the background and we never notice, because we don’t tend to see beyond our regular patterns.

Songs:

“Bring on the Rain” Sung by JoDee Messina and Tim McGraw

Composed by Billy Montana and Helen Darling

Heard this in my car one night, and it became the perfect idea for a lecture during Unit #30 I titled, “Open Mind, Open Heart, Open Will.”

Books:

The Topic for Unit #30, “Open Mind, Open Heart, Open Will” was on the cover of our “Theory U” textbook for CCT 616, “Dialogue Process”

My High School Driving Instructor:

He would always say: “You can’t drive on the road unless you learn to see ‘The Big Picture!’” He said it so many times, it became my mantra, and now it is what I do without thinking. And I thought, that’s how I want this class to sit with my students. I want them to learn to see the big picture of life, so they can choose better decision options.

I got wondrous ideas from my sister-in-laws: a Lutheran minister, a special education teacher for ages 18-22, a breast cancer surgeon, a university nursing instructor, a health-care equipment specialist, and a personnel director. I got strongly felt positions from my brothers and brother-in-laws: A tax accountant, a chief financial officer, a banker, a chemist, a customer service manager, a nuclear plant operator, and an energy specialist. Other ideas poured in from former teachers (from high school onwards!), Facebook contacts, my dad, relatives and friends who live around the world, and my husband, son and daughter... on an on. I asked for what I wanted, and people were beyond generous.

From there, I started to divide each unit into a basic seven-step “daily program” template, which was based on a prototype I designed for a Holistic and Transformative Teaching class assignment early in my Critical and Creative Thinking program:

- A.) Welcome and Roll/Class Business
- B.) Story Time
- C.) Lecture
- D.) Interactive: Small Group Activity
- E.) Activity Retrospective
- F.) Lesson Review/Homework
- G.) “The Charge”

I based this template on both my time in the 1980’s and 1990’s designing college writing courses, and from the inspiration of holistic and transformative class studies.

I started at the top of the hour... As someone who had been a K-12 substitute teacher for many years in a school district that served both the children of the homeless population as well as the children of movie stars, I knew the true meaning of actively saying “Welcome!” to students as they come in every period. It acknowledges that you have noticed them, take an interest in them, and are happy that they are a part of your teaching world.

Next, of course is the business of class business, which includes taking roll.

And with business (hopefully) quickly taken care of, I wanted to jump-start each session with storytelling. As a writer and actor, I know all too well the transformative value of a great story told well. I scoured to find treasured stories that contained wise decision-making lessons that had a proven record of opening people at a core level.

To this, I now added my short lecture, using that time to reframe the preceding story onto a wider scale, organizing a chain of logic (or the illogical), adding visual aids, making the material accessible/relatable, sparking curiosity and debate, bringing in new facts and layers of information, enhancing the ideology with warmth and human understanding, and finishing in a way that would logically lead into the small and large group activity.

My next step was to move the pupils on to challenging “interactivities” for each topic, breaking students (most times) into small groups with guided worksheets to enable them to practice decision making in a safe environment, where mistakes were welcome, and listening was championed. This was also an opportunity for each student to subconsciously build a coalition of friends, smart, meaningful challengers, and like-minded advocates to bond with during their college experience (and hopefully beyond).

And finally, I decided to end each class with “The Charge.” As a non-denominational minister, I know that last words matter, and the idea of “The Charge” started to become more and more important. I wanted my students to leave each class knowing I expected them to take the best of what they learned and apply it in the real world. I reasoned if the scholarship and skills practiced in this class were to become a holistic way of life, I believe that a “call to action” would be a gentle reminder that making better decisions is essential.

A complete example of how I put a class session together:

Title/Theme: Why Be Good? Lesson #4

Original Ideas Came From:

The origin story of why I started this master's degree in the first place.

My CCT 692 term paper on "Why do Good People Do Bad Things."

A combination of Post-It Notes that had written on them:

Why make better choices?

Isn't it easier to have no moral compass?

Deciding to be good? Are their rewards?

Will I always be fighting an uphill battle?

Is there a point?

Life without rules?

Are we born good, bad, or neutral?

Do we have a duty to others?

Is human nature evil?

Deciding to do right is sometime hard.

Philosophical Support System - Questions, people, ideas.

Does religion lie at the bottom of all that is good?

Without religion, can we be good?

Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens

Socrates, Plato, Aristotle.

Xunzi, Herodotos.

Hume, Rousseau, Kant

Schopenhauer, Churchland

Storytime Ideas:

"The Ring of Gyges"

J.R.R. Tolkien

Eastern European story of "The Old Lady and the Table"

Fairy and Grimm's Brothers Tales

Lecture Ideas:

Start with bare: Dawkins, Hitchens, and the like

Add layers.

What is a worthwhile life to most?

How do we all fit into that puzzle?

Is there a point?

What is my personal motivation to be good?

Is it religion/social pressure that keeps us good?

Is that bad or good?

Are we born sinful?

Why do we never have peace?
 Why can't all people be nice?
 Can we ever be perfect?
 Utopian societies – all never work.

Interactive Ideas:

“What would life be like without rules?”
 “If you could write your own 10 Commandments to the World,”
 (either starting fresh, or adding on to where your religion left off),
 what would that look like?
 Write 10 reasons you choose to be “good.”
 Share with small group and discuss.

Activity Debrief Ideas:

A member of each group gives 1 minute summary of their discussion to class.

Review/Homework:

Teacher reviews top 5-8 things we learned/talked about.
 These are topics that students should learn for test and life.
 Solidifying lesson.
 Homework “What?” and “Why”
 To give focus and purpose.

The Charge - Ideas:

“Be good to yourself, and be good to others – it’s important.”
 “Take a long look at the good in the world around you, and be astounded.”
 “I really believe being good is a wise, happy, and kind choice. Don’t you?”
 “Be good to someone today and everyday. It is the best free gift you can give.”

In the appendix attachments beyond the curriculum, I have selected pieces that I think will help readers of this paper further understand my approach to this curriculum design, my mindset for adapting traditional course features (like the syllabus and homework guides) for a broader field of special-needs students and modern methods of doing homework, along with samples of my slideshow sensibilities and lecture styles. My “Le Penseur Lunch” appendix samples the brainstorming thought I had to bring the ideals we studied in our Philosophy: Making Better Decisions class outside, where students, faculty, and locals could mix and talk philosophy, ethics, morality, and more while munching on a sandwich under the shade of a campus tree.

7. Conclusions

Topics: Summary. Request for ideas.
Plans for bringing work into a real setting.

“The highest activity a human being can attain is learning for understanding, because to understand is to be free.”

~Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677)

The object of reasoning is to find out, from the consideration of what we already know, something else which we do not know.

Consequently, reasoning is good if it be such as to give a true conclusion from true premises, and not otherwise.

~ C. S. Peirce (1839-1914)

I stayed on at UMASS-Boston after my official Critical and Creative Thinking Master’s coursework was finished to take an extra two classes – one in Philosophical Thinking and the other in Professional School Counseling. I felt that I needed a bit more time to study, a few more months of the luxury of an academic existence to dig deeper into philosophical debate and make some inroads to strengthen my qualifications to teach at the college level again. In turn, this thesis has gone thru some dramatic revisions and valuable improvements.

The focus work of my master’s program and this thesis, the outline for a 32-session college course, will be revised and improved as time goes on. I would like to encourage anyone who reads this paper and has an interest in the subject of practical decision making to contact me with their suggestions and experiences. The basic idea of creating this course is to fill a colossal gap in education that is directly related to well-being, social and employment accomplishments,

and personal happiness. I intend for this to be a meaningful, practical, and deeply transformative class in the lives of every student who takes it. I envision a world where this class is offered nationwide, and every coed, no matter their faith, political convictions, sex, race, nationality, etc., can build the groundwork from which they can both remain strong, yet pivot when facts, sense, and profound contemplation compel a different direction. In a world that is accessible to any destination by plane within twenty-four hours, and via the internet in seconds, we all need decision-making skills that are deep and wide, local and global, hard and direct, yet kind and compassionate. It is essential to make choices that will embrace the concept of “seven generation stewardship” (Constitution of the Iroquois Nation, Part 24) in addition to making better instant and short-term decisions.

As I write this concluding section in December of 2017, the United States is torn by an election cycle that was rife with hate speech which targeted women, women’s rights, minorities, the disabled, the LBGTQ community, the bashing of professionally researched and written news stories. There was an excess of people who conned the weak by playing on their fears and belief in what is yelled loudest – not proved beyond a doubt – might just be true. There was destructive hate mongering, fake “news” stories that were repeated ad nauseam, targeted “trolling” to intimidate and spread fear --- well, the list just goes on and on. But there is still a majority of Americans who base their efforts on kindness, reality, truth, fairness, cool under pressure, hope, and friendship. To solidify those values, once learned in kindergarten, and add to them the adult responsibilities and pathways yet to be explored, I believe that those of us who educate, counsel, love, care, act, and advocate must believe in the power of better decision making, and that through story, lecture, practice, and encouragement, the art of crafting improved choices can be not only a college course, but a way of life.

Where I will go from here...

Between January and May of 2017, I will be working on my “College Counseling Certificate” at the University of California – San Diego. In my coursework over the past two years, I see the value of adding such a credential to my “tool box.” I will be taking the nine credit hours of coursework and three credit hours of practicum in order to set myself up for success in finding gainful employment at one of the local colleges or universities.

In addition to working and continuing my education, I hope to work on all the paperwork that will be necessary for me to submit my idea for a new class for accreditation in the University of California (UC) and California State (CSU) systems. I realize this process takes months-to-years to go through the vetting process, but I am passionate and optimistic.

So, what is Decision Making?

It is critical thinking.

It is creative thinking.

It is a solid foundation on which to pivot.

It is the stuff of legends.

It is the stuff of ordinary days.

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APPENDIX A:
THE COMPLETE
32-CLASS
LESSON PLAN

Philosophy: Making Better Decisions

**A curriculum outline for a
32-session 100 or 200 level
philosophy college course.**

**Created
by
Myra McWethy**

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#1	A Whole New World	Aristotle Plato Kierkegaard: "Life must be understood backward, but lived forward."	"Allegory of the Cave" Appendix J: Slide Show (Sample) Plato's classic story of coming into the light.	"Out of the Cave and into a Wider World" The Philosophy of this class.	1) Welcome/Check In 2) Course Preview and Syllabus Review Appendix B: A Vision for a New Kind of Syllabus (Sample) 3) Interactive: The 9 Questions – What is your current thinking? 4) Story Time 5) Lecture 6) Discussion/Questions 7) The Charge "Have a great day, and make it great for others as well!"	The first class of any semester always starts off with introductions, ideals, the syllabus review, expectations, questions, and angst over parking/finding the right classroom -- leaving little time for actual teaching. But I wanted something to help my students to understand my style, my focus, and my basic thinking in teaching this class, and from the start, I knew that this must include my original PowerPoint presentation retelling "Plato's Allegory of the Cave." It's my personal philosophy that everyone, in some way, lives in a "cave" of current understanding. I thought it important that in my class, my students know I'm going to expect them to come into the "sunshine" and witness all the light, shadow, illusion, and reality they can comprehend. What they do with this information is up to them, but the journey into the light will forever change them in ways they can only begin to imagine.


	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#2	WWSO/ WWPD/ WWAD	<p>The SPA guys! Socrates Plato Aristotle</p> <p>Building a foundation from which you can pivot.</p> <p>Decision Theory: Mark Kaplan Frank P. Ramsey</p>	<p>“In the Vineyard”</p> <p>A story of conversations, questioning, and seeking answers.</p>	<p>“Under the Olive Trees”</p> <p>Socratic thinking, looking for truth... A beginner’s guide to using Philosophy as a foundation to pivot from.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Welcome /Check in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4) Interactive: Who Am I Now? Why do I believe what I believe? Could I be wrong? What are the connections between my self-identity and my beliefs? Am I open to change? 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge “This day is gift. Go seek universal truths – and spread camaraderie as you do!” 	<p>The SPA Guys (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) are not only the basic underpinning of Western philosophy, but also one of the richest sources we have of man’s search for wisdom, truth and reason. Long ago in the cool courtyards under the olive trees of Ancient Athens, and all many points around the world, our ancestors finally made the time to think about the unexamined life. Aristotle taught, “It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.” It was an official invitation for the generations to come to be courageous in the breath of what they listened to and considered. It was the troubadour’s call to those who wanted to examine bigger problems, challenge the status quo, test old legends, and even question the gods.</p> <p>The SPA Guys influenced millions of thinkers, along with the pre-Socratics, Lao-tsu, Confucius, and Sun Tzu in China, Buddha in India, Confucius in China, Heraclitus of Turkey, Anaxagoras of Ionia, and Parmenides of Elea, to spread the news that, among other things, nothing comes from nothing, that in everything there is a share of everything, and that “you cannot step twice in the same river.”</p> <p>By discussing the methodology of these early seekers of truths, I hope to set up a culture of exploration, courtesy, awareness, recognition, discovery, and camaraderie.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#3	The Big Picture	<p>Maslow -Needs Charles Darwin – Change is inevitable John Calvin – Predestination... Has god already chosen? Wittgenstein –Are we here to enjoy ourselves? Kahneman Einstein Maurice Merleau- Ponty – Mind and Body. Theory of the Meek Anaximander of Miletus –Alpha and Omega, Beginnings and Endings. Justice and recompense.</p> <p>Humanities Sociology Anthropology Delayed Gratification</p>	<p>“The Driving Lesson”</p> <p>Open your view of the world and see a new version of reality.</p>	<p>“Actualizing Yourself: Where are you now? Where do you want to be?”</p> <p>You make choices depending on where you are on the pyramid, how your brain processes, and other very human functions.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4) Interactive: “What Did You Observe?” 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “See The Big Picture and Pass Along Something Wonderful to Someone Else!” 	<p>As my driving teacher at Bradley-Bourbonnais community High School in Illinois told me long ago, “You can’t drive on the road unless you learn to see ‘The Big Picture’” He was right! In the driver’s seat, you need to get to the point where you know what is behind you, on both sides, and up ahead – not through constant effort, but eventually through the skill of taking in the big picture both consciously and unconsciously.</p> <p>In starting down the road to Making Better Decisions, you need to assess where you are now, keep an inventory of your current surroundings, baggage, assets, and weather conditions, and have an idea of where you are going – where you want to be. In all the class stories I chose, lecture progression, and interactive exercises, my goal is to set off my students prepared for the journey, ready to snap some photographs, change a tire if necessary, and have a great trip!</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#4	Why Be Good? Why Make Better Choices?	God/god/Gods Hume -Altruism Schopenhauer -Will Herodotus – Circumstances rule men, men do not rule circumstances. Patricia Churchland – Acting Cooperatively and Natural Selection. Rousseau – Humanity naturally inclined towards goodness. Aristotle – To be truly happy, a person needs to be virtuous. Socrates – Habit or cultural pressure? Plato –World of Forms, Ring of Gyges. Mencius –Humans are born with a moral instinct. Kant – Duty to act so that the principles on which we act could be Universalized without contradiction. Xunzi – Human nature is evil; its goodness derives from conscious activity. Richard Dawkins & Christopher Hitchens	“The Ring of Gyges” Who would you be if there were no consequences?	“Why Decide To Be Good?” Is there a point to the whole scheme of things if choose to be good or bad – or even make no choice at all?	1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “What would life be like without rules?” 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Be Good to Yourself, and be good to others – it’s important!”	Before we spend a minute more together, at this early point in the semester, it’s important that we discuss the reasoning behind a class in Philosophy and Making Better Decisions. Why be good? It’s a question we ask ourselves when tempted, when the easy way seems worth the bypass, and when the truth is hard and a lie, or white lie would just be easier. Is it religion that keeps us good? If so, why have we never had a time of pure goodness last very long? Is it that we are all born sinful? Or is it just human nature? Can we even really be good, great, or even perfect? No attempt at perfect living has ever succeeded. All seem to implode within two to four years. (Calhoun, 1973) So if we can’t be good easily, why bother? In this class we’ll discuss our core beliefs, where they come from, who we are at our core and why, and begin the reasoning of why being good really matters.

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#5	From Whence Cometh My Strength?	<p>Religion Self-Awareness Solipsism – Is there actually an external world beyond your own internal world? Is the world as you perceive it reality? How does this play into how you make decisions? Introspective Illusion – We can only really know what we perceive (vs. the dark side of the moon). What do others perceive? How do these points effect decision making? Tim Williamson Eric Schwitzhebel Fiery Cushman Daniel Kahneman Amos Tversky Jeremy Bentham – Utilitarianism Mary Wollstonecraft- The Rights of Women</p>	<p>“Prison in Vietnam”</p> <p>When all hope seems lost, where to we find our strength to carry on, much less make good choices?</p>	<p>“How to Build a Solid Foundation”</p> <p>How can we find the strength to plant a healthy solid foundation? Why is this necessary in the craft of decision-making?</p>	<p>1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “What are the true universal/eternal truths? What are your personal 10 Commandments?” 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Love with all your heart in every way you can, in big huge ways, and the smallest gestures to yourself and your fellow humankind!”</p>	<p>Where do our core values come from? If we want to make better decisions, we have to understand the methodology our brains, hearts, and souls take in setting our personal “line in the sand.”</p> <p>To choose wisely, we have to understand the morals and values that have been taught to us, and make conscious decisions to review them at least every seven years with an open mind as we continue on the path to better understanding of ourselves, others, and how we fit into the world.</p> <p>This session is not meant to debate the tenants of one faith over another, just to help, through the story of a Vietnam prisoner, a “constructive” lecture, and a series of eye opening exercises, exactly how we see the world through the lens of our codes, beliefs, illusions, and harsh realities.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#6	Cognitive Biases	<p>Gender and Egan – Arguments that implicit bias creates a conflict between our ethical and epistemic aims.</p> <p>Pascal’s Dilemma</p> <p>Immanuel Kant – Categorical Imperative, and does Ought imply Can?</p> <p>Hilary Putman – Words and environment.</p> <p>Ethics:</p> <p>1.) Are people morally responsible for their implicit biases?</p> <p>2.) Can people change their implicit biases and/or control the effects of these attitudes on their explicit judgments and behavior?</p> <p>Prejudice</p> <p>Social cognition</p> <p>Belief & Skepticism</p>	<p>“Which Bags are Yours and Which Bags are Mine?”</p> <p>Acknowledging and dealing with the luggage we carry – A Civil Rights story...</p>	<p>“I Don’t Have Bias...or Do I?”</p> <p>Can we take an honest look at our process of thought, or is it just safer, easier, and/or better just to turn a blind eye?</p>	<p>1) Welcome/Check-in</p> <p>2) Story Time</p> <p>3) Lecture</p> <p>4.) Interactive: “A closer look. What are my biases, and how do I let them divert my attention to other opinions, or even the real truth? Confirmation Bias, Framing Bias, Overconfidence Bias, Clustering Illusion, Gambler’s Fallacy”</p> <p>5) Activity Debrief</p> <p>6) Review/Homework</p> <p>7) The Charge: “The measure of intelligence is the ability to change” ~Albert Einstein</p> <p>“A mind is like a parachute. It doesn’t work if it is not open.” ~Frank Zappa</p>	<p>Continuing with the study of self, we examine the baggage we knowingly and unknowingly carry with us.</p> <p>In this class we will talk about decision making using the background structure of prejudice, social awareness, bias, hedging our bets, our true motivations when acting, how we are part of the world, responsibility, and more.</p> <p>After the civil rights story and lecture, the students will break into small groups to practice decision making exercises putting them in different era, places, and social strata. From this, it is my hope that they grow to understand how factors, both in their control, and outside of their control can broadly swing your version of a “Better Decision.”</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#7	Critical Thinking	Logic Modeling Robert Ennis – Critical Thinking Matthew Lipman – Reasoning through Philosophy Arthur Schopenhauer – Pessimist Getting to the Base Richard Paul Michael Scriven Steven Toulon Socratic Logic Logic Modeling Rules of Logic Honesty	<p>“Le Penseur”</p> <p>The Thinker. What’s the difference between a dreamer and a thinker, much less a thinker and a critical thinker?</p> 	<p>“Philosophy, Critical Thinking, and Reasoning”</p> <p>Why think critically? How do we learn to think critically?</p>	1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Socratic Dialogue – practice at getting to the absolute truth.” Worksheet 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Think for yourself.”	<p>It has taken us six class periods to get here, but by now, the students should know both themselves and many of their classmates on a more personal level from which they can begin the heavy lifting of logic modeling, base theory, and hard, careful, thoughtful reasoning.</p> <p>August Rodin’s “The Thinker,” (aka: Le Penseur) is a famous French bronze sculpture that has for generations stood as the symbol of critical thinking and philosophy. His pose of deep thought will serve as our inspiration to learn about the concepts and principles on which complex critical thinking is based. Our small group exercises will present scenarios where the students must choose a model on which to think through the problems critically, show their lines of logic, and understand the freeways, toll ways, and blocked lanes that sometimes jam up even “simple” answers.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#8	Creative Thinking in Decision Making	Kant – Critique of the Power of Judgment Plato – Ion. Collected Dialogues Aristotle – Ethics John Searle – Mind/Brain Edward De Bono Dweck Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi Creative Modeling August Comte – Positive Philosophy	“A Thousand Answers” The genie gives a thousand answers to every question – and everyone is correct!	“What Color Hat Are You Wearing?” Are their just a couple good pathways – a thousand – infinity? How can I click into the creative thinking side of me when I need to make a critical decision, much less any ole’ decision?	1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Creative Modeling Worksheet” 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Think creatively!!”	Using the Power Point presentation I created in my UMass-Boston Creative Thinking class, (See Appendix D) I will introduce my students to the major problem solving creative thinking models. In the story, using an old Jewish story, I will outline the advantages to opening yourself up to thousands of creative pathways. The lecture, named after Edward de Bono’s “Six Thinking Hats” model of creativity, I will discuss the benefits of beginning even the most daunting decisions with a bent towards positive philosophy. In our small group breakout session, the students will have fun trying out some of the creative models to problem solve local and/or campus real-life situations.

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
<p>#9</p> <p>Dialogue Skills</p> <p>Appendix H: Lesson #9 (Sample) – a sample of the complete lesson plan, story, lecture, group activity, and notes.</p>		<p>Jacques Derrida – Deconstruction and words that are more “privileged” over others.</p> <p>Bertrand Russell – The Philosophy of Language.</p> <p>C. Otto Scharmer – Theory U</p> <p>Ludwig Wittgenstein – Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent. The boundaries of my language are the boundaries of my world.</p> <p>J.L. Austin – Ordinary Language</p> <p>John Searle – Philosophy of Language.</p>	<p>“United Airlines, Flight 173, 1976”</p> <p>A catastrophic failure to speak clearly, listen with care, and communicate fully resulted in the unnecessary and tragic loss of lives.</p>	<p>“Listening, Speaking, and Thriving Conversation”</p> <p>We can’t make good decisions if we don’t know how to really listen, really use our words carefully and precisely, have amazing conversations, generative dialogues, look for truths, and seek deep answers.</p>	<p>1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: Small group activity – “Speak, Listen, Observe” 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Speak in such a way that others love to listen to you. Listen is such a way that others love to speak to you.”</p>	<p>Yes, we have been talking since the first class session, but now it’s time to take a reflective look on just how we really listen to each other, convey our thoughts, rise above basic conversation, seek the truth through hard questions, and generate actions through dialogue.</p> <p>The black box recordings of the last 30 minutes of United Airlines Flight 173, from Denver to Portland on December 28, 1978, are the most heart-wrenching, unforgettable example of what can happen when we don’t communicate. This tragic even the perfect story to share in order to forever holistically change how students understand the “simple” skills of listening, speaking, and having real dialogue.</p> <p>In the small group exercise, we will do a “Speaker, Listener, Observer” exercise that I learned in the Critical and Creative Thinking program, which stays with me powerfully to this day.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#10	Asking the Right Questions	<p>Is/Ought Problem Avicenna of Persia – Conjecture vs. Evidence Francis Bacon – Knowledge is Power John McDowell – Is there really a Question at all? Hume’s Law. G.E. Moore – Open Question Argument Avicenna of Persia – Conjecture vs. Evidence Francis Bacon – Knowledge is Power John McDowell – Is there really a question at all?</p>	<p>“Myths, Legends, and Tall Tales”</p> <p>Asking the right questions opens doors.</p>	<p>“Asking the Right Questions and Listening to the Answers That you Actually Get – as opposed to the ones you want...”</p> <p>In the emergency room of the E.R. to the boardrooms of corporate American, asking the right questions is a pivotal skill towards making better decisions.</p>	<p>1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “What are the Right Questions for this Situation, Right Now?” A small-group workshop. 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Ask the right questions if you want to know the true answers.”</p>	<p>Sometimes we are so caught up in the drama, that we fail to separate the truth from our emotions. Is there even a question at all? If so, what is the right question(s) to ask? In what order? At what time? Is this so, or ought this be so? What are the myths, legends, tall tales that we take as “fact” that keep us from asking the best questions? In my lecture, I examine that we not only need to address the points I just brought up, but we also have to deal with the answers that we get --- and they might not balance with our sense of right and wrong, truth vs. belief, and more.</p> <p>Our class will put our assumptions to the test in a guided exercise that will test each student’s ability to deal with harsh truths, and how we decide to, or not to, deal with them.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#11	Reflecting	<p>Existentialism Idealism George Berkeley Nietzsche Albert Camus Arthur Dano - Art, History, Action. Jean-Francois Lyotard – The Sublime – the quality of greatness, whether physical, moral, intellectual, metaphysical, aesthetic, spiritual, or artistic. Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia – Being a worthy philosophical interlocutor. John Locke – Severe limits on what it is possible to know. No innate knowledge implanted in us by God. Knowledge is derived from experiences. Locke in contrast to Hobbes. Augustine – Original Sin Peter Singer – Applied Ethics</p>	<p>“The Stone, Samuel Johnson and George Berkeley”</p> <p>Misunderstandings, and more.</p>	<p>“Now that We Have the Information We Need, What Next?”</p> <p>Having a good foundation, having good information, and having good critical and creative skills are great, but how to you put them all together and come up with a good answer? Let’s think on it!</p>	<p>1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Let’s Think on It!” Worksheet 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Reflection gives you a center, and from that spot, you have a 360 degree view!”</p>	<p>Is changing the truth as easy as kicking a stone? What are material goods? What do we need vs. what do we want? What is the best way to reflect on all that we are learning – all that we are encountering – all that we are facing? Once we have information, rarely does the truth magically reveal itself. Making Better Decisions usually requires reflection. But what if you only have three minutes to make a decision? What if you have a week, a month, or a year?</p> <p>In this class we will talk about reflective thinking as it pertains to making a decision. The lecture and group work will highlight some of the greatest philosophical ideals on how to process information during reflective periods. Our work will also ask if reflection is pointless, if it changes anything in the end, and if so, is it worth the effort?</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#12	Being Aware, Avoiding Bias, Distortion & Traps, and Dealing With Reality as it Really is Right Now!	Relativism Daniel Kahneman John Stuart Mill – Can You Have it Both Ways? Pascal’s Wager – To be Safe Either Way. Burke – All that is necessary.... Relativism Aristotle’s Egregious of Spontaneous Generations Descartes – What Can We Know for Sure? Spinoza – Deductive Reasoning Leibniz’s Sufficient Reason Nietzsche’s Guilt Hypatia – Levels of Reality Popper – Falsification Principles De Beauvoir – Gender Bias Chalmer – Properties of the Mind are significantly different from the properties of the rest of the physical world.	“O” Rings and Other Things” The Challenger Accident and other stories of catastrophic assumptions!	“Nothing Comes From Nothing!” There are so many competing views! What is the right answer? How can I sift through all the information? What lies in my subconscious, nudging me in good/positive directions vs. poor/negative directions?	1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Judgment and Bias” Small Group Worksheet 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Walk a Mile in Another Person’s Shoes – well, not actually, but metaphorically!”	Do we look at the world through a glass darkly? Is what we see a distortion of the human brain and our limited breadth of understanding? Is what we experience real? Are we making errors because we are destined to make egregious errors? From the story of the Challenger accident and the O-rings, to the ideals of the properties of our mind, levels of reality, and more. We talk about the variable paths humans must walk, and what we can do in a ever-changing world where real decisions must be made with sometimes imperfect, distorted or half-baked evidence. In small assemblage, students will review and analyze some of the most unusual decision-making cases in recent history, and see if they can identify where the mistakes in judgment/bias were made.

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#13	Evaluating the Options	<p>Daniel Kahneman</p> <p>John Stewart Mill – Can you have it both ways?</p> <p>Socrates – Examining Life</p> <p>Pyrrho – Humans can never know the truth</p> <p>Blaise Pascal – better safe than sorry.</p> <p>Edmund Burke – His original idea that let to “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good people do nothing.”</p>	<p>“From Polaroid to The Tuskegee Experiment: A Short History of Error, Choosing Poor Options, and Hell Being Truths Realized Too Late.”</p>	<p>“Seriously – What are My Options Here?”</p> <p>If you grow deep roots, and have a solid foundation, you are most steady. But that doesn’t mean the perfect option magically reveals itself to you. Decisions are hard. So, how do you evaluate options in a thoughtful way?</p>	<p>1) Welcome/Check-in</p> <p>2) Story Time</p> <p>3) Lecture</p> <p>4.) Interactive: “Biomedical Ethics – From Grandma is Sick to telling your partner you are HIV positive.” Worksheet</p> <p>5) Activity Debrief</p> <p>6) Review/Homework</p> <p>7) The Charge: “Be kind and thoughtful in all you do and say. Kindness and thoughtfulness are always good decisions!”</p>	<p>Can you have it both ways? We all wish it could be so. So do you hedge your bets so you will be safe either way? Do we stay to the path of tried and true? In the story of Polaroid, I’ll talk about a successful company that decided not to decide. And with the tragic Tuskegee Experiment, we will talk about the decision to ignore. We will discuss the hard reality of evaluating the options. Sometimes the only choice is the least bad way, but never is there no way. To understand and act on decision making options you must have a level of bravery and responsibility. It also takes the ability to live with your decisions.</p> <p>During group time, students will debate some of today’s most tricky world decisions, specifically medical decisions, evaluating the options, and coming up with decisions that they can “live with.”</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#14	Making Decisions Under Stress	Distortion of the Framework. Time. False Efficiency. Mulla Sandra – Truth is only true to the concrete facts in existence. Friedrich Nietzsche – God is Dead Michel Foucault – Historic Circumstances	“The Rain, the Soil, and the Trees in Southern California” When you think of a tree, you think of a solid foundation – but one huge rainstorm in southern California, and all the trees are toppling over and sliding down the hills? Why? They aren’t built for stress. Are you?	“Conditions in the Field” In times of stress and duress, it is easy to fall back into patterns that are less critical and creative. And your decision-making capacity crashes. How can you hope to function well in traumatic situations – whether they are just traumatic to you, or a wider crisis?	1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Crush Time – All Hands On Deck!” Small Group Worksheet. 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “The Secret of Crisis Management is to Build a Bridge.”	The hard, cold fact is that many decisions are made at times of great physical and/or emotional stress. We will talk about how these factors distort time, framework, and one’s perception of reality. Here in Southern California where I live, the Eucalyptus Tree grows straight and tall, perfuming the air with a calming scent, and shading us in what is essentially a desert. Yet let it rain a couple of inches, and these 40-50 foot tall trees come crashing down. When I moved to California, I knew of nothing save a tornado or hurricane to bring down a mighty tree. Without knowing what the conditions are “on the field,” knowing where the roots are deep, and where they are not, can make a huge difference on what you decide. Group time will be spent exploring these ideas – using real-life scenarios to test students decision-making skills.

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#15	Making Better Decisions: Part 1 – A Review	Jeremy Bentham – Utilitarianism Confucius – Analects John Locke – Good and Evil, Reward and Punishment – These are the only motives to rational creatures.	No Story... except if the students have one to tell – see the notes column.	“Building a Scaffolding” Rome wasn’t built in a day, and too, becoming better at making good decisions takes months to years of study and review. We work with this class to set up a memorable system, a Tool Box, if you will, of techniques and lessons that you can use throughout your life.	1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Lecture 3) Review- We will review the past 14 class sessions and homework to reinforce ideas, talk about transformative moments, and prepare for the midterm exam. 4) The Charge: “Think for yourself.”	<p>Besides the welcome, check-in, and lecture, this period is an open format, to reinforce ideas, clarify any questions, give students an opportunity to talk about any transformative moments that have come out of their learning in this class, and prepare for the mid-term exam.</p> <p>This entire period is dedicated to understanding the “scaffolding” we have been building throughout the first half of the semester, guided by some of the world’s best philosophical minds, shaped by stories, and crafted with the strength of lectures and practical group activities.</p> <p>Students will receive a worksheet to take home with them so they are fully prepared for the mid-term examination, which is a choice between answering 6 out of 8 essay questions, <u>or</u> a 100-part combination of a few basic true/false, A-F questions and one short essay question.</p> <p>This will address those students who prefer to write their ideas at length, or like a more “puzzle” format.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#16	Mid-Term Exam				1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Test 3) The Truth: “I love taking mid-term exams.... said no one ever! Yet, every day, we seem to get a few of them in the real world.” 4) The Charge: “Have a Great Day, and Make it Great for Someone Else.”	The mid-term examination. This test is designed to make students feel empowered by the decisions they write about, or the answers they mark, knowing I am looking to understand their logic, their reasoning, and their goals for each answer.

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#17	Decisions and Your Brain	Thales of Miletus – The most difficult thing in life is to know yourself.	<p>“The Curious Case of Phineas Gage”</p> <p>How the brain makes decisions began in earnest scientific study after the accident of Phineas Gage.</p>	<p>“How Does My Brain Work When I Decide?”</p> <p>In deciding, it helps to know how your brain works, what helps your brain, and what hurts your brain.</p> <p>Appendix F: “The Brain, Cognition, and Decision Making” (Sample)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Fun With Grey Matter.” Group Worksheet Project 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Sitting on top of your shoulders is the most complex, awe-inspiring decision-making machine ever invented. Use it daily, rinse, and repeat!” 	<p>As we enter the second half of this course, it seemed the right time to look at the human mechanics behind decisions. In my continuing effort for my students to learn from as many angles as possible, I think that spending a session understanding how the brain functions will broaden their worldview. My story will tell the tale of Phineas Gage, whose tragic brain injury enabled scientists to study the decision-making areas of the brain for the first time. My lecture will cover all the essentials that students need to know about how their brains work as they attempt to make decisions, and we will later break into small clusters to do some interesting brain related tasks and teasers.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#18	Reading The Situation	Grameen Bank – seeing deeper than a tourist. Kant Bentham Berkeley, Native American Philosophy Derek Parfet’s Who Am I Today? Saul Kripke- There are no true statements. Empirical discovery. Modeling Decision Making Strategies.	Video: “Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank.” Good intentions are only a start. You have to make decisions based on real-life details.	“Little House On the Prairie – Two Perspectives” Laura Ingalls Wilder has one tale, the Native Americans have another. Depending where you are in the world physically, in real time, taking in backgrounds (cultural, religious, etc.), and more, you may well be reading the situation entirely wrong. Can you put worldview into your life?	1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Third World Situations – How Would You Help” Small Group Worksheet 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Make the effort to think in 3-D!”	During this session, we will focus on understanding decision making from different current worldviews. We will understand how the experts try and get a true “reading” on situations, using examples from the Secretary of the State, the Navajo Nation, life on a garbage dump in South America, small town politics, to family dinners. Story time sets up the vast difference on how most Americans read the book, “Little House on the Prairie,” versus how the Native Americans view that same time period and that same location. In our breakout worksheets, we will be reading about a variety of situations, learning about the old saying, “There are two sides to every story,” and practicing the process of finding the best answers.

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#19	Setting the Ground Rules	<p>Mediation Charles Sanders Peirce – battles and consequences. Thomas Aquinas – Just War Baruch Spinoza – God or Nature C.S. Lewis – Rational Discussion The Bhagaved Geeta – Making One Decision, One Choice. Arbitration Rules of Order Chaos Theory</p>	<p>“Meer Things”</p> <p>On the train tracks, seconds before the tornado hits, the family supper... mere things can make the difference between disaster and order.</p>	<p>“Here’s How We Are Going To Proceed.”</p> <p>Trying to get everyone on the same page so that you can make a decision, let alone implement and sustain that decision take an understanding that the world has changed, and they must change too. And here are ways to set the ground rules.</p>	<p>1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Let’s Set Up a Committee and Make Some Decisions” A Class Workshop 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “The debate for what is good and right is the meaning of human freedom.”</p>	<p>Without the most basic rules, human interactions, especially when decisions must be made, can quickly descend into chaos. Even people who hate rules, or are maverick rule breakers, know that sometimes the only way to move forward is to lay down guidelines.</p> <p>In our story, we will talk about the aftermath of a situation when no one could or would agree to even the smallest system of order, and of course, nothing but chaos was left in the remains of the day. (Or was that the desired outcome by one or both sides??)</p> <p>My lecture will review some of the most fundamental systems of rules of order, from informal settings, to Robert’s Rules of Order. I will then talk about the techniques arbitrators use to bring different factions together.</p> <p>As a class, we will practice the skills of mediation and negotiation, with the goal of a decision made and agreed upon at the end of the session.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#20	Individual vs. Group Think	Irving Janis Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi Gregory Feist Religion The Computer Age Social Norms The Cost of Breaking Norms. Jean-Jacques Rousseau – Man is born free, yet everywhere in chains. Martha Nussbaum – Feminism Cornel West – Race Matters.	“On the Top of a Rocket Ship” Tales from the Gemini Space Program.	“Who Do You Listen To?” Everyone from your father to your company wants you to “collaborate.” What does that really mean, and who, in the end, makes the decisions?	1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “What Behaviors Lead to Groupthink Decisions? What can be done to build a better Groupthink Circle.” Small Group Worksheet 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Stand-up and Say to Someone - What you Did, What you are Going to Do, and if Anything is in Your Way.”	<p>As a decision maker, you can only be as great as the information you get is true, as clear as your personality, preparation, and skills will allow, and as smart as the people you surround yourself with for advice and guidance.</p> <p>Our story about being encircled by people you can yet trust, and the difference that comes with trust, a better team, and different strategy and methodology.</p> <p>The lecture will cover making your own choices with little outside help versus the other methodologies such as “group think” that must be carefully analyzed. In the end, whether you make a decision entirely on your own, or with a team of “experts,” the proverbial “buck” stops with you.</p> <p>We will practice these concepts in small group format.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#21	Research Towards Resolution and Change	John W. Burton Michael Sandel Socrates – Can you handle the truth? Guru Nanak Dev – Humanity and the safety and well being of others. Thomas Paine – Common Sense and The Age of Reason Shamer – Communication Conflict Resolution – not possible if you only think in terms of winners and losers: Us vs. Them. Neerja Raman – Solution vs. Conflict	“Follow The Money” Money and Greed tend to lead. Is this good? Is this the root of all evil? How can we get resolution and change when conflict makes cash?	“Hitting the Books, Hitting the Streets” Sometimes, to make a better decision, you must do the work it takes to get the real answers. That means doing the research, on the street, in the library, on the internet, in person, etc...	1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Research 411” Small Group Worksheet 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Do the work. There are no shortcuts to resolution and change!”	<p>Students are used to doing research on line, at the library, or in person for a school paper, or even for a pet project. So how does research differ when the end result is a decision that you may have to live with for the rest of your life? To get to resolution and change, there are a million tiny decisions that must use common sense, along with practiced research aimed for deep truths.</p> <p>In my story, I will tell the take of health care “decisions” by the families of patients that were based on information from tainted sources, and false logic that was “sold” to them in their time of trauma.</p> <p>The lecture will encourage pathways toward research, base-line truths, and the hard separation of what “is” from what seems to be “what is.”</p> <p>Breakout sessions will focus on the attitudes that block students from getting at the truth, especially now, during a time of epidemic on-line false news stories.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#22	Comparative Methodology : This or That	Maslow – Wants vs. Needs. John Rawles – Veil of Ignorance. George Santayana – Impulse Hobbes Modeling	<p>“The Smoke Jumpers”</p> <p>The tragic tale of wisdom that defied logic – how does the world seem to be upside down?</p>	<p>“Getting Down to the Nitty Gritty”</p> <p>In the end, it’s the little details that tend to get lost. How can you avoid the pitfalls that are either so large you miss them, or so small, you barely notice them at all?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “http://www.adweek.com/adfreak/can-you-figure-out-mystery-inside-remarkable-ad-about-high-school-love-174933” Full Class, watch video and discussion. 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “If you see something, say something.” 	<p>The Smoke Jumpers is a 1949 study of how a decision can result in actual life or death. Sometimes the right answer defies common sense! Sometime the right answer goes against everything you have been taught to believe in throughout your life. How can you choose between this or that when nothing seems to make sense?</p> <p>Through my lecture and then watching a video about what is hidden in plain site, as a full class, we will explore wants vs. needs, the veil of ignorance even the smartest human lives under, our strong impulses, and our sightlines which often miss the pitfalls, both small and large. We will learn some of the basics of comparative methodology that can be used in daily decision making.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#23	Win/Win, Win/Lose, Lose/Lose	Game Theory Fuzzy Sets Bertrand Russell – analytical philosophy. Lao-Tau – Harmony with Nature. Sun Tzu – The Art Of War. Adam Smith – The Invisible Hand. Sigmund Freud – Nothing escapes human criticism and resentment. Kinsey & West – Moral Arguments.	“The Monte Carlo Simulation” A story based on the technique used to understand the impact of risk and uncertainty.	“Best Case Scenario” Economics, Psychology, Business Models, the Military, Conflict Resolutions, Math, Game Theory.... What can guide you to making better decisions?	1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Game Day – Dollars and Cents, War and Peace” Small Group Worksheet 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Money doesn’t buy happiness. The richest people I know reach to the top of Maslow’s Pyramid, not a pie in the sky.”	So much of decision-making is based in ethics, a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and concerned with the examination of “right” and wrong” conduct. In this class we will review in depth the most prominent philosophical and religious structures of what is a “best case scenario,” in particular when money and business are on the line. In my story about an infamous incident in Monaco, we examine the strategy of gambling, winning at all costs, and the ideas of win/win, win/lose, and lose/lose. The lecture will feature how some of the greatest minds of the ages have tried to find the sweet spot in decision making, using a variety of methodology, from taking cues from nature, to making it all about dollars and cents. The class will divide into teams to wage “dollars and cents, war and peace.”

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#24	<p>“When Good People Do Bad Things”</p>	<p>Epicurus Jean-Paul Sartre Buddha – Detachment. Niccolo Machiavelli – Better to be feared than to be loved. Henry David Thoreau – Both nature and people are inherently good. Hannah Arendt – the Banality of Evil. Alvin Goldman – A Theory of Human Action. Martin Luther King Mahatma Gandhi</p>	<p>“Mr. Frey, the Civil Rights Win in Housing in Illinois, and the Aftermath”</p> <p>This comes from a historical incident in my home state, and tells the tale of a heralded and successful civil rights lawyer who fought and won for the housing rights for millions of marginalized Americans in the 1960’s, and his tragic fall from grace that made headlines.</p>	<p>“Hell Can Be Other People”</p> <p>What is good? What is bad? Psychopaths and Saints. When we have no final control over the behavior of others, why bother at all?</p>	<p>1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Why?” Small Group Worksheet 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Be the Good in the World.”</p>	<p>Once again, this is a subject that I personally was interested in understanding on a deeper level. After reading everything from Jung’s “Shadow” to “The Sociopath Next Door,” I came up with my own versions of this conundrum, with my own theory on “the neutral position.”</p> <p>My story this class is about a civil rights champion I looked up to as a young adult, who later spent years in prison for crimes against the very minority groups he had once advocated.</p> <p>It is said that heaven and hell can be found in other people, so how do we live with a world of people whose ethics and morals can vary 180 degrees from our own? Sometimes it seems nearly impossible to make good decisions in the face of evil, chaos, and hurt.</p> <p>Our small group worksheet will help students come to their own conclusions of how and why people make hurtful decisions. It won’t make this subject magically clear, but it will give students “weapons” to fight against the dark.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#25	Justice.	<p>Michael Sandel – Justice.</p> <p>Susan Haak – Laws. Dharma’s What is Right?</p> <p>John Rawls – Theory of Justice – What is fair?</p> <p>The Introspection Illusion: We can only really know what we perceive. Is this what others perceive? If not, how can we judge others? Make laws and judgments for and about others? We base our evaluations on the intentions of our own motives, but should others be judged the same? Labeling can lead to disaster.</p> <p>Robert Nozick – Anarchy, State, and Utopia.</p> <p>Jurgen Habermas – Human Condition and Public Sphere.</p> <p>Jacques Derrida – Justice Can never be achieved.</p>	<p>“The Great Venture”</p> <p>One human’s journey for justice. Is this a fool’s errand?</p>	<p>“The Dark Side of the Moon.”</p> <p>If you make bad decisions, what happens? What is justice? What is the right thing to do when faced with an impossible situation?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Nine Judges, One Case, One Big Decision.” Small Groups of Nine - Worksheet 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Think for yourself.” 	<p>I was deeply impressed by Michael J. Sandel’s Harvard University online course, TED talks, and books about decision-making within the field of Justice. Since the quest for perfect justice is an imperfect venture, it is important for this class to talk about the law, rights, evaluating, and judging. And what about the laws and rights for peoples around this planet, much less throughout history? How can we understand what is fair in the real world?</p> <p>In this session, we attempt to cast a light on this subject through stories about legal conundrums, a lecture about the things that seem as illuminated as the “dark side of the moon.”</p> <p>During our Interactive time, we will break into small groups working in teams of nine to try to put themselves in the position of a supreme court judge, and how they would decide the fate of human beings.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#26	Dealing with the Undiscussables	Sophia – The Dark and the Hidden. Xenophanes – Men create gods in their own image. Albert Camus – Absurdist. Emmanuel Levinas – Intersubjectivity. How do we relate to each other on a core level? Downs, Sartre, Singer -Is Free Thinking Free?	“Bill’s Funeral, 1988” This is the story of the death and funeral of my friend Bill, who passed away of AIDS in 1988 – and how his family, and many of friends, couldn’t or wouldn’t bring themselves to talk about it, much less care for him, or even bury him.	“In the Silence and in the Noise – What is, and What is Not Being Said” Secrets and Lies. We have a right to our own private thoughts and opinions – so when does secrecy and opinion destroy? When is everything just too absurd? When do we know it’s time to deal with issues at a core level?	1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Skeletons in the Closet.” Small Group Worksheet 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “You are brave enough to be kind, and to be fair.”	I find myself thinking about my high school and college graduating classes – they were the first generation to get a mysterious new disease called AIDS. I bathed friends who couldn’t tell their parents they were gay, fed them when their “sunny-day friends” left, and I buried too many alone because their families were frightened of the disease, yes, but even more frightened by the fact that their neighbors might find out that their child had (as one person bluntly told me) “the evil gay gene is in our family.” Now, gay marriage is legal and AIDS has effective treatments. Yet that doesn’t mean we should not be vigilant about using condoms, and making wise sexual decisions. In this country, and around the world, there are family secrets that destroy. There are truths we don’t want to face. This session is about secrets and lies, making decisions when those around you refuse to deal with core issues, and the hard decisions that must be made when skeletons inevitably come of the closet. Our small group interactive lets students talk openly about hard issues, and the decisions that they have made/ might make.

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#27	Systems Thinking	David Hume –Proofs and Sceptics Emma Goldman – Anarchist. John Rawls – Entitlement and Merit Martin Heidegger – He who thinks great thoughts, often makes great errors. Peter Senge & al. – the 5 th Discipline Fieldbook. Can I use Ethics, Morals, and Logic in thoughtful and creative forms? What would a lifetime like that look like?	“Red Emma” The story of Emma Goldman, writer, lecturer, feminist, and social justice advocate was jailed for distributing information on birth control, among other ‘Crimes.’ What was she thinking?	“Models of Thinking” Looking deeper into the models of Critical Decision Making and testing them out. Are they helpful, and if so, how, why?	1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Modeling a Decision” Small Group Worksheet 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “A Cog in the Wheel is necessary to make the car go, but a cog in the wheel of progress makes the world stop.”	“The 5 th Discipline Field Book” by Peter Senge had a great deal of wonderful exercises and thought experiments worthy of discussion in a systems thinking decision-making class session. After a quick story about the systems thinking and philosophy of one unique 20 th century woman, and a lecture to introduction to some new models of thinking, we break into small group work. Teams will be practicing such techniques as “Moments of Awareness,” “Tiger Teams,” “Organizational Gridlock,” “Accidental Adversaries,” “Shifting the Burden,” “Choosing an Archetype,” “Balance Links and Loops,” “The 5 Why’s” “The Problem Is...,” “The Ladder of Inference,” and “The Left Hand Column.” At the end of class, each team will describe the pluses and minuses of the systems thinking processes they tried with the rest of the class.

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#28	Paradoxes and Phases	<p>Lucretius – Swerves and Fortune.</p> <p>G.W.F. Hegel – Reasonable vs. True, Rational.</p> <p>Karl Marx – Economic Structure of Society. Opiates of the People.</p> <p>Heraclitus – One cannot step twice in the same river.</p> <p>Mao Zedong – Efforts to wipe out art, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution.</p> <p>Beauty/Ugly</p> <p>Sin/Choice</p> <p>Art/Crap</p> <p>Us/Them</p> <p>Albert Camus</p>	<p>“: The Myth of Sisyphus - The Stone and the Hill”</p> <p>Why do we push the stone up the hill? Is the world futile and hopeless, or is there meaning in the struggle to continue?</p>	<p>“In a Crazy World, What Can I Do?”</p> <p>With all the paradoxes, phases, and ever-changing landscape, how and why does better decision making matter?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Lost Causes, and Why You Won’t/Can’t Give Up.” Small Group Worksheet on our passions, that we decide are worth our every last effort. 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Hope is exhausting. But Faith is calming, centering, and true.” 	<p>The only thing that stays the same is the fact that nothing stays the same. In a crazy, ever-changing world full of paradoxes, phases, and consequences, how can I make better decisions?</p> <p>In our session today, we will try to understand why we push stones up hills, why we try despite the odds, and why we still yearn for truth, faith, companionship, and reason. No two people see eye to eye on everything, a fact that sometimes doesn’t bother us, and at other times, drives us crazy.</p> <p>We look at the philosophical support structures that strive to balance all of this into human existence, and do a worksheet together that explore the puzzlement of paradoxes, and the perplexity of phases.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#29	My Life, My Choices.	J.L. Austin – Performative Utterances. Is Self Identity logically Consistent? Voltaire – I may disagree with what you say, but I will defend your right to say it. Elizabeth Anscombe – Action Theory. Sandel & Bernstein – Righting past wrongs. Discrimination vs. Membership.	“I Do.” The story of a life lived with no boundaries. Is it a tale of empowerment of wanton disregard?	“Creating Your Own Life, One Decision At A Time” Your decisions create the tale of your life. Are you willing to deal with the real-life consequences of your decisions? Even when they affect others negatively?	1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Where Does My Right to Make My Own Decisions End, and the Rights of Others Begin.” Worksheet for small groups looking at the price of freedom. 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Be powerful in all the little things you do and say.”	Is there such a thing as free will? Great minds have debated this question for millennia. Yet most of us still want to hang on to the notion that at least some of our choices are not predestined, and that when we make a decision, it truly changes the course of at least our own life. In our story and lecture, we will examine the ideas of righting past wrongs, logic, justifications, and creating your own life - one decision at a time. The group circles will use their time to discuss the impact of creating your own unique life, and the bumps, road blocks, and trickle down consequences of saying, “I do.”

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#30	Open Mind, Open Heart, Open Will. Living Positive Thru Making Better Decisions	<p>George Edward Moore – Goodness.</p> <p>Confucius – Hold faith and sincerity as first principles.</p> <p>Gottfried Leibniz – We live in the best of all possible worlds.</p> <p>William James – the great use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it.</p> <p>Albert Schweitzer – Reverence for life.</p> <p>Maurice Mzerleau-Ponty – Body and Mind.</p> <p>Donald Davidson – The principle of charity.</p> <p>Practicing and Living Concepts.</p> <p>Meditation.</p> <p>Daniel Dennett – Who Am I?</p> <p>Cornel West – Real World Issues.</p>	<p>“Where is the Entrance? Where is the Exit”?</p> <p>It is the best of times, yet two explorers are at crossroads – one ready to start a new venture, one that knows this adventure must now come to an end. Why do they doubt the enduring strength of an open mind, and open heart, and an open will.</p> <p>Are we destined to always doubt, or are we willing to face the future with good decision-making?</p>	<p>“Bring on the Rain!”</p> <p>When you open yourself up to the world, you expose your mind, heart, and will to an audience sometimes ready to eat you alive!</p> <p>What is the worth in a worthwhile life?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Story Time 3) Lecture 4.) Interactive: “Where are You in Doubt?” Small Group Worksheet 5) Activity Debrief 6) Review/Homework 7) The Charge: “Courage is valued in every society around the world and throughout history. This is not the courage of just the lion, but also the courage of standing on the line alone, when done with an open heart, and an open mind.” 	<p>In our last official regular formal class, I wanted to leave time to talk about the “consequences” of making great choices.</p> <p>If we agree that we live in the best of all possible worlds, in a most interesting of all times, are we wired to truly live with calming faith, restful sincerity, reverence and awe, charity, an open mind, and open heart and an open will? Some say we self-sabotage when things get too good. Are we on a freeway always looking for a fast exit, or are we capable of living a worthwhile life in the grey, in storm, in sunshine, and in the colorful moment of sunset?</p> <p>After almost a semester of talking about making better decisions, are my students ready to live with the options of choice they now fully are capable of making? Are they brave enough, built strong enough, and have a support system in place to make to live strong, yet open, with their decisions and new directions?</p> <p>Students will spend the workshop talking with the friends that they have journeyed with during this class to discuss where they still have doubts, and where they have gained vision.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#31	Making Better Decisions – Part 2. Review for the Final Exam.	Cornel West – Real World Issues. Daniel Dennett – Who Am I?	No Story today	“Making Better Decisions – Where Do We Go From Here?”	1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Lecture 3) Review- We will review the past 14 class sessions and all homework to reinforce ideas, talk about transformative moments, and prepare for the midterm exam. 4) The Charge: “If you have taken the time to do critical and creative thinking, be confident in your decisions.”	<p>Besides the welcome, check-in, and lecture, this period is an open format, to reinforce ideas, clarify any questions, give students an opportunity to talk about any transformative moments that have come out of their learning in this class, and prepare for the mid-term exam.</p> <p>This entire period is dedicated to discussion about where the students go from here, now armed with a semester of decision making principles, guided and secured on a scaffold of sound philosophical ideals, shaped by stories, and crafted with the strength of lectures and practical group activities with friends, who were once strangers.</p> <p>Students will receive a worksheet to take home with them so they are fully prepared for the final examination, which is a choice between answering 6 out of 8 essay questions, or a 100-part combination of a few basic true/false, A-F questions and one short essay question.</p> <p>This due; format will address those students who prefer to write their ideas at length, or like a more “puzzle” format.</p>

	Theme	Philosophical Support System	Story	Lecture	Structure	Notes
#32	Final Exam				1) Welcome/Check-in 2) Test 3) The Truth: “All I expect from all of you on this Final Exam is your honesty.” 4) The Charge: “Go out in this world and do good. I believe in you.”	<p>The final examination.</p> <p>This test is designed to make students feel empowered by the decisions they write about, or the answers they mark, knowing I am looking to understand their logic, their reasoning, and their goals for each answer.</p> <p>After they students finish their exam, they will be invited to sign a book, giving “The Charge” they wish to send to their classmates, and the next semester of students who take: Philosophy: Making Better Decisions. I will have this book available in my office whenever students visit.</p>

APPENDIX B: A VISION FOR A NEW KIND OF SYLLABUS

(SAMPLE)

Note: In this document, I use fonts and all other methodology suggested for all students, including those with disabilities. In this sample syllabus, I worked with spacing, colors, graphics, distinctive sections, large print, and other techniques that online, will draw the eye to specific sections, and make it as easy as possible to retrieve the information student need quickly.

"Philosophy: Making Better Decisions"

SYLLABUS

PHIL 1XX

3 hours lecture, Units: 3.00

(Letter Grade or Pass/No Pass Option)

Instructor: Myra McWethy, M.A.

Email: mwmcwethy@edu

Campus Phone: 858-555-1000

Office: SB #411 Mondays 2-4 and Wednesdays, 2-4

Also available by appointment. Please email anytime.



Section 1

1.) COURSE CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION:

This course is an advanced introductory course exploring decision making for lifelong personal and professions uses. Lessons are grounded in the traditions of Philosophy, ethical thought, logic, moral theories, critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem solving.

This course that will of interest to all students wishing to explore an introduction to the philosophical groundwork enabling effect critical thinking and creative thinking in their quest to make better decisions. Students will also learn to appreciate a variety of cultural and minority views of philosophical foundations as they apply to logic and problem solving. Philosophy: Making Better Decisions will focus on the study, appreciation, and practice of making better decisions in family, community, and business situations. We will explore how the greatest philosophical thinkers of the past and present might help you build a core foundation of human values, attitudes, and ideals. We will investigate the variety of cultural, traditional, and modern interrelationships between beliefs, change, wisdom, philosophy, humanities, anthropology, psychology, and religion, and how they shape our lives. We will analyze, discuss, debate, and come to understand our own core beliefs through colorful class lectures, imaginative homework, active class projects and discussions, readings, and critical and creative projects.

2.) PREREQUISITES:

Advisory: English 101 or English 105 with a grade of "C" or better, or equivalent or Assessment Skill Level R6 and W6. It is highly suggested that this class be taken second semester freshman year, or anytime after, because of the higher level of discussion skills and experience needed.

3.) TRANSFER APPLICABILITY:

Associate Degree (AA/AS) Credit and transfer to UC/CSU and/or private colleges and universities.

4.) COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The primary objective of this course is to empower students by helping them identify the foundation on which they can make better decisions in everyday life, in business, from the local to the global level. Special emphasis will be placed on helping students understand the philosophical practicalities of 2,800 years of written history, and then adding to that an understanding of critical and creative thinking to make holistic and transformative changes in the way you make decisions. This class will foster habits of serious, imaginative, and insightful thinking and evaluation. Students will also practice, both in class and outside, the principals and concepts that they choose will work best for them.

5.) COURSE METHODS:

During any given class meeting, there will be a unique combination of traditional lectures by the instructor, work in small groups, class exercises, the use of multimedia and/or internet, discussions, debates, reflective writing, and questions pondered aloud that don't have a yes or no answers. Since we are studying critical thinking and problem solving, two areas of life

that are aided by a clear process, user-friendly techniques, and rehearsal, we will practice value-focused learning and thinking at all times.

6.) LEARNING GOALS:

A.) Recognize key points that ethical philosophy attempts to address and solve.

B.) Analyze these areas.

C.) Develop the ability and skills to think critically and creatively about problems.

D.) Develop the ability and skills to find solution techniques for problems.

E.) Develop the ability and skills to apply critical thinking and problem solving methods in any type of occupation, and for everyday life.

F.) Be able to evaluate the outcome of any given decision and learn/adjust/grow.

7.) COURSE COMPONENTS

A.) Understanding the structure of ethics and logic as laid out by the philosophers from ancient Greece to modern times.

B.) Understanding the basic structure of decision-making theories.

C.) Through case study, in large and small group settings, practice problem solving and critical decision-making.

D.) Through case study, review and analyze the results of decisions.

Section 2

8.) BASIC COURSE OUTLINE

Please see the complete course outline located at the Blackboard Page for this class. Refer to it for basic understanding of what each class period will entail. Note: Class outline subject to change if there are outstanding circumstances. If this happens, notice will be posted on this course's homepage, and you will get an updated notice. Each of our 32 class sessions has a theme,



philosophical inspirations and principles, and 6-8 class goals.

9.) COURSE CONTENT

- 1.) Ethics: Examination of "right and wrong" (Plato to Kant to Dawkins)
- 2.) Logic: Basic critical methodology of rational thinking.
- 3.) Morals: What is right to one person (or group of people) and not another.
- 4.) Decision Making: Ways to combine the above three & come up with answers.

Course Homework/Reading Assignments:

HOMEWORK GUIDELINES:

- A.) Every class session will be followed by 30 – 40 minutes of homework. This is a class on good decision making, so decide to do your homework on-time.
- B.) All homework assignments are at Blackboard, and all homework assignments (unless noted) can be turned in via Blackboard.
- C.) Blackboard can be accessed anywhere there is Wi-Fi, so you can do homework standing in line at the grocery store, in your car in a parking lot, on the bench outside your classroom building, or late at night. Because of this, all homework is due before you walk through the classroom door.
- D.) Class homework is laid out at Blackboard in an easy-to-follow, easy-to-complete format. There is a "Time Needed To Complete" Guide, check-off boxes, and tool to make homework a task to complete, a button on a lesson learned, and/or a starting point for our next session. There are usually 2-8 assignments due before each class. Don't panic. Assignments include such items as: Watching a video, writing a paragraph or two, reading 1-5 pages, writing down observations, making/doing something creative, thinking critically about an assigned subject, and writing in your "Thoughts and Jots" notebook. Again, total homework time is between estimated to be 30 and 60 minutes per class. You are required to complete all of it, on time.
- E.) I will check the times you enter your homework assignments. Any assignments completed after the start of class by timestamp, will be graded as a zero. (You only get a pass on this rule one class per semester, because, heck, there is always one bad day. But after that, zero's for every part not completed on-time.)

*"Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge;
it is thinking that makes what we read ours."*

~ John Locke

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS ONLY A SAMPLE OF THE SYLLABUS I CREATED.....

APPENDIX C:
A NEW VISION
FOR
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Homework due before start of class, Monday, February 2nd.

Use the Blue Box Symbol to “check off” when you have completed this part of the assignment!

1.) **Read:** From “*Rational Choices in an Uncertain World*”

13.2 – “Emotions in Decision Making” Pages 304 -318

Approximate Time to Accomplish: 15-20 minutes



2.) **Write:** Your ideas on what you just read.

At Blackboard, answer questions listed for Feb. 2nd homework.

Read the 3 questions, think, then write.

Approximate Time Needed to Write Thoughtful Answers: 8 minutes



3.) **Watch:** This online video.

“3-Minute Philosophy” – Immanuel Kant (On YouTube)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwOCmJevigw>

Exact Time to Accomplish: 3:31 minutes



4.) **Think About:**

The last decision you made where emotions were crazy wild.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwOCmJevigw>

Approximate Time Needed To Accomplish: 3 minutes



5.) **Jot Down:** What you thought about.

~In your Thoughts & Jots Notebook:

Jot down a news incident or event you thought about while you were in your shower or out getting your mail. Write least 5 points or moments that struck you, that you remember too clearly, that still bug, confuse, or astound you.

~These are just for you. They don't have to be full sentences.

Approximate Time Needed to Accomplish: 3 minutes



(Your total homework/prep time: 34-39 minutes. Make good decisions!)

Have a great weekend, and I look forward to seeing you on Monday!

APPENDIX D:

SAMPLE SLIDE SHOW

**“USING CREATIVE THINKING MODELS
TO SOLVE CRITICAL PROBLEMS”**

Using Creative Thinking Models To Make Everyday Decisions... And More!

Slide #3



Creative Thinking!

- Creative Thinking sounds fantastic when the sun is shining, the birds are singing, and all is right with the world.
- But can Creative Thinking be used when the clouds are dark, tough decisions have to be made, and all seems wrong with the world?



Slide #4

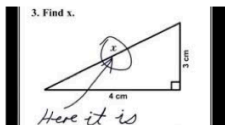
Efficient problem solving skills use both **Critical Thinking & Creative Thinking!**

- **Critical Thinking**
 - Uses logic, reason, fact, observation, patterning, interpretation, analysis, synthesis, inference, analytical skills, evaluation, explanation, patterns, theory, concepts, and highest-level thinking.
- **Creative Thinking**
 - Uses imagination, flexibility, originality, fluency, elaboration, imagery, curiosity, divergence, creation, adaptation, association, relationships, opposites, possibility, challenge, play, potential, combination, and emotion.

Slide #5

“Life is a giant 3-D puzzle. You need both art and science to solve it”

~Mr. Roscoe, my 7th grade biology teacher



$$\frac{dx_1}{dt} = -C_1 x_1 + \left(\frac{S_1}{V_1}\right) x_2 - \frac{C_2 x_1 x_2 P^{n-1} x_3^2}{k_1 x_2^2} - x_{10}$$

$$\frac{dx_2}{dt} = -C_2 x_2 - \frac{C_2 x_1 x_2 P^{n-1} x_3^2}{k_1 x_2^2} + \left(\frac{S_2}{V_2}\right) x_3$$

$$\frac{dx_3}{dt} = -C_3 x_3 - \frac{C_2 x_1 x_2 P^{n-1} x_3^2}{k_1 x_2^2} + \left(\frac{S_3}{V_3}\right) x_0$$

$$\frac{dx_4}{dt} = -C_4 x_4 + \left(\frac{S_4}{V_4}\right) x_0 - \frac{C_5 x_4 x_5 P^{n-1} x_6^2}{k_2 x_5^2} - x_{40}$$

$$\frac{dx_5}{dt} = -C_5 x_5 x_6$$

$$\frac{dx_6}{dt} = -C_6 x_6 x_5$$

(15)

Slide #10

“If opportunity doesn’t knock, build a door!”

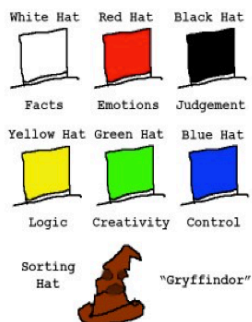
~Milton Berle, Comedian



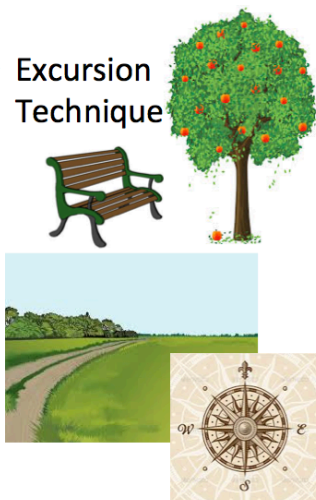
- Solving problems involves taking action.
- Solving problems involves becoming involved.
- Solving problems involves going into uncharted waters.
- Solving problems involves changes, and change is rarely easy.
- Solving problems involves finding new directions, and looking for different outcomes.

Slide #12

- Six Thinking Hats



- Excursion Technique



Slide #16

- Divergent Thinking



- Decision Chain



- Lateral Thinking



- SCAMPER

Substitute - what/who else instead?
Combine - what ideas can be combined?
Adapt - what else is like this? What can be adapted?
Modify and magnify - changed/made bigger?
Put it to other uses - new ways to use it?
Eliminate - what can be reduced/eliminated?
Rearrange - interchange components, other sequence...

Slide #18

"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

~Albert Einstein



APPENDIX E:
SAMPLE LECTURE
FOR LESSON #17

**"THE BRAIN, COGNITION,
AND DECISION MAKING"**

Decision-Making: The Brain and Cognition

Making decisions is one of the most important sentient functions that we have as human beings. We make countless decisions every day, some with the smallest conscious thought, and some take complex mental stimulation skills.

Let's Start with Some Definitions!!

Decision-making as a process (as opposed to "decision," which is the subsequent action) must meet these three conditions:

1. At least two different options must be available.
2. Each possible choice offers certain outcome expectations.
3. Possible outcomes can be evaluated.⁶

The Process of Decision-Making Can be Divided According to these 3 Levels of Awareness:

1. Decision-making without awareness. (Pulling back from a hot stove.)
2. Decision-making with partial awareness. (Hypnotic trance or hyper-stress situation)
3. Decision-making with full awareness. (What will I make for dinner? Should I marry?)

The Two Distinct Styles of the Decision-Making Process:⁷

1. Fast. Simple, evolutionarily older, non-dependent on prefrontal lobe, processed in sensory-motor parts of our brain, similar with animals, intuitive, automatic, quickly, works with little or no effort, no sense of voluntary control. AKA: System 1.

2. Slow. Complex, evolutionarily younger, dependent on the prefrontal lobe, limited with working memory capacity, reflexive cognitive-social process with elements of self-awareness, correlated with general intelligence quotient (IQ), deliberate, allocates attention when demanded, can do complex computations, experience of agency, choice, and concentration.

AKA: System 2.

All right. Now, Let's Go Over The Top Five Facts Should We Know Before We Can Really Start to Understand Decision-Making.

- 1.) Decision-making is a complex process.⁸

⁶ Pirtosek, Zvezdan., Georgiev, Dejan., Gregoric-Kramberger, Milica. (2009) "Decision Making and the Brain: A Neurologists' View." *Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems*. 9DEC2009. <http://www.indecs.eu/2009/indecs2009-pp38-53.pdf> *

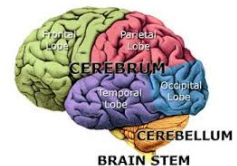
⁷ Kahneman, Daniel. (2011) *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

⁸ Nutt, Paul C., Wilson, David C. (2010) *Handbook of Decision Making*. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

2.) Thoughts are immaterial and vaporous in form. You cannot hold a thought in your hand, measure it with a ruler, or examine it in a glass jar. Thoughts are determined by the actions of specific neuronal circuits in our brains. They are abstract pieces of electricity.

3.) Science is still at the very infancy of figuring out how exactly the brain makes decisions. Much has been discovered in the past 50 years, and with the assistance of computers, special imaging machinery, and the valiant efforts of researchers and plucky volunteers, we are finding out more every day. The information given in this paper (or verbally in a class lesson) is the most current information available. But, if you are interested, please check out the newest literature every year at scholastic sites online and in the library to keep abreast of what's new!

4.) From the input of information needed to wade thorough the hundreds, even thousands of possible outcomes, the process of making a choice involves multiple computational demands. There are trade-offs, the what-could-have's, the what-should-have's, the sources of information on which to base a decision, self-control, timing issues, environment, circumstances, limitations of time, inadequate mental computational powers, the bounds of rationality, erroneous framing, bounded awareness, excessive optimism, level of risk, assignments of value, moral boundaries, resolutions, economics, probability (gain or loss), deliberation, etc. And even when we know what we should do (eat the veggies, not the cupcake!), we have the ability to suppress the advantageous choice even though we have a perfectly functioning mind. (Cupcakes!) We can even sustain the ability to override the “better angels”⁹ of our brain, sometimes leading to disastrous consequences.¹⁰ (Cupcakes for breakfast, lunch, and dinner -- all week long!) But in the end, there is only ever one choice: and that is the choice you make.



5.) Many of the things we have learned about how the brain functions in decision making is from research done on humans who have had traumatic injuries. (More on this later.)

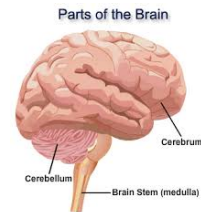
What are the parts of the brain involved in Decision Making?

⁹ Lincoln, Abraham (1861) I use these words in the spirit used in President Lincoln's First Inaugural Address as President of the United States. <http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres31.html>

¹⁰ Jollant, Fabrice, Guillaume, Sebastien, Jaussent, Isabelle, Bechara, Antine, Courtet, Philippe. (2013). When Knowing What to Do Is Not Sufficient To Make Good Decisions: Deficient Use of Explicit Understanding in Remitted Patients With Histories of Suicidal Acts. *Psychiatry Research*, 210, 485-490 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2013.07.011> *

Next are some of the very basics of the brain systems that have thus-far been identified as important in decision making.

Your brain is composed of two broad classes of cells called neurons and glia cells. Those cells are composed of molecules arranged by your DNA and the environment. Using electrical impulses and chemical substances to transfer bytes of information from cell to cell, decision-making is believed to involve areas of the brain involved in emotion (such as the amygdala and the ventromedial prefrontal cortex), and memory (such as in the hippocampus and the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex).¹¹ The brain's substrates of decision-making and determining value take place an extensive network of subcortical and cortical structures. As the process elaborately dances through your brain at blinding speed, each part is kept in check by your own unique set of signals for reward, punishment, and expectancy.¹² And all is kept in order within the laws of physics and quantum physics.¹³



Decision-making is an area of intensive study in the fields of Cognitive Neuroscience and Systems Neuroscience. Neuroimaging¹⁴ is finding new information every day helping us understand exactly how the brain works as we make decisions. The parts of the human brain are hugely interconnected, with the three main components being: the cerebrum, the cerebellum, and the brain stem (also known as the medulla).

So, In as Basic Terms As Possible, How Do Our Brains Make Decisions?

Decision Making is, without a doubt, a brain process.

Researchers who study the brain often compare problem solving and decision-making as a process of “search.” From the millisecond that your brain senses a problem arising or a

¹¹ Gupta, Rupa., Kosciak, Timothy R., Bechara, Antoine., Tranel, Daniel. (2011) The Amygdala and Decision Making *Neuropsychologia* 2011 March: 49(4): p 760-766

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3032808/> *

¹² Fellows, Lesley K., & Gottfried, Jay A. (Ed.). (2011) *Neurobiology of Sensation and Reward*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press/Taylor & Francis: 2011, Chapter 16: The Neurology of Value.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK92797/>

¹³ Coyne, Jerry. (2012) You Don't Have Free Will. *Opinion & Ideas Chronicle of Higher Education*, Vol. 58, Issue 29, P. pB5. <http://chronicle.com/article/Jerry-A-Coyne/131165/>

¹⁴ Walton, Mark E.; Devlin, Joseph T.; Rushworth, Matthew F. S. (November 2004).

"Interactions between decision making and performance monitoring within prefrontal cortex". *Nature Neuroscience* 7 (11): 1259–1265. doi:10.1038/nn1339

decision in the foreseeable future, it automatically starts to navigate through the maze of relevant brain areas to pull information out and prepare for what direction it needs to go.

There is a growing consensus that the brain makes simple choices by assigning value to the options under consideration, and compares those values to make a choice.¹⁵

Sometime we fool ourselves into believing that we can approach every day with rational, logical, linear thought. But even the most sheltered and well-controlled life has millions of bumps on the road, along with the occasional hill or mountain. Then add emotion, depression, or any kind of physiological or psychological handicap (temporary or permanent), and the decision-making process gets even more complex. For Greta, (in the example at the beginning of this essay) or any of us, decision-making uses your remembrance and analysis of previous experiences, your remembered observations, reading, life lessons, and your memories of the outcome of others who have been under similar circumstances before.

In an interesting side note: Your decisions are strongly pre-prepared by your brain activity. By the time you are consciously aware of the need for a decision, your brain has already done most of the work, says John-Dylan Haynes, a Max Planck Institute neuroscientist. In 2008, Hayne's et. Al. updated the late Benjamin Libet's study, using fMRI brain scanners to prove the brain starts working on decisions a full seven seconds before the test subjects were even aware that their brain was gathering information.¹⁶ Does this mean that we only perceive ourselves as having free choice, or do our unconscious mental processes make those decisions long before we get involved? Food for a discussion another day, perhaps!

¹⁵ Jenison, Rick L. (2014) "Directional Influence Between the Human Amygdala and Orbitofrontal Cortex at the time of Decision-Making." PLoSONE. 9(10):e109689. Doi:10.13171/journal.pone.019689 *

¹⁶ Soon, Chun Siong., Brass, Marcel., Heinze, Hans-Johen, Haynes, John Dylan (2008) "Unconscious Determinants of Free Brain Decisions in the Human Brain. *Nature Neuroscience*. 8JAN2008 doi:10.1038/mm.2110 http://www.rifters.com/real/articles/NatureNeuroScience_Soon_et_al.pdf *

APPENDIX F:

"STORY TIME" EXAMPLE FOR LESSON #24

"SENTENCING PORTION FOR D.S. FREY"

Understanding Why “Good” People Do “Bad” Things

“Tell a Lie Once, and All Your Truths Become Questionable”

-unknown

10 a.m. Thursday, December 23, 1976

Cook County Criminal Court, Chicago, IL

Judge Robert J. Collins, presiding

Sentencing Portion for D. S. Frey

(This summary includes a basic history, then summary of today’s events.)

On November 20th, 1976, Donald S. Frey was convicted by a jury of eight men and four women after two and a half hours of deliberation for defrauding his client, Virginia Moore, 46, Chicago, out of more than \$20,000 in insurance payments after the death of her husband in 1969. Other courts in and outside of Cook County still have outstanding cases against Mr. Frey for charges ranging from tax evasion, commingling of funds, other incidents of fraud amounting to more than \$92,000, charges from the Illinois Bureau of Investigation, and, in Winnebago County, IL, for failing to post bond. Other charges filed in 1974-75 have been dropped for insufficient evidence, or after satisfactory settlement of claims. Last December, Frey’s wife, Janet (aka Jean) Imbrie Frey was sentenced to one year on probation for perjury before a grand jury probe into her husband’s activities.

Today, in the downtown branch of the Cook County Criminal court system, Mr. Frey received his sentence for forgery and theft. Thirteen witnesses came forward, all telling the court stories of their friend, former Evanston attorney Donald S. Frey. These accounts recalled the ten years, between 1960 and 1970 when Mr. Frey led the Freedom of Residence movement in Illinois, fighting realtors, communities, towns, counties, and the state to change their regulations and laws so that people of all colors could be shown and/or purchase homes in their economic parameters no matter the neighborhood, no matter, period. Without the courage, fortitude, and intrinsic goodness of Mr. Frey, they declared, the state of Illinois, much less the entire nation, would have made no progress in the equal opportunity home-ownership area of the civil rights movement.

Mr. Frey's friends speaking on his behalf today are a somewhat "D List" of clergy, civil rights movement leaders, aldermen, civic advisors, and retired lawyers, both black and white, according to those in the press who would later rush to write their copy for the evening editions. Along with reminding the judge of Mr. Frey's litany of awards (including one given to him from Eleanor Roosevelt, and a nomination to the Supreme Court), the judge makes no indication of being swayed. The final witnesses, all clergy, remind Judge Collins that sentence should be delayed. "After all," one said, "Mr. Frey has an honorary doctorate in religion from the Evangelical Seminary in Evanston, and tomorrow is, after all, Christmas Eve." As if they were reading from a script, they also added that their friend should either get probation or a work-release sentence, and by all means, no sentencing should start until after the first of the New Year.

Finally, the disbarred lawyer took the stand. Frey pleaded for mercy and claimed that he was a target of revenge in a "campaign to kill me" because of his former civil rights activities.

Judge Robert J. Collins rejected all of these requests. He said that the character statements were inconsistent with the fact that blacks had, "entrusted to this defendant their troubles, and he repaid them by taking their money."

State Prosecutors Douglas Cannon and James Sternik argued for the stiffest jail term.

Then, in what one reporter described as an icy voice, Judge Collins calmly, firmly, sentenced Frey to ten years in jail and fined him \$10,000, imposing the maximum sentence. "You have dishonored yourself, your family, and your profession," the Magistrate noted.

When the judge passed sentence, Frey hung his head. His wife and daughter wept.

Frey's lawyer, Robert Bailey, again asked for a postponement of the jail sentence until after the holidays.

Judge Collins said: "Six years ago, Mrs. Moore had her money taken away about Christmas time. Justice has been delayed for too long. There will be no more delays. Mr. Sheriff, take him into custody."

Collins set January 13th for a hearing on the status of four remaining indictments.¹⁷

¹⁷ Sources for this section are a compilation from:

APPENDIX G:

A SAMPLE OF A FULL LESSON PLAN

LESSON #9 OUT OF 32

"DIALOGUE SKILLS"

William Juneau "Ex-Attorney Gets Maximum Penalty for Forgery." *Chicago Tribune* 24DEC1976; Section 1, Page 7. Print
Staff "Lawyer Jailed in Forgery Case." *Chicago Daily Herald* 24DEC1976; Page 4, Print
Staff "Disbarred lawyer, Frey, Sentenced to Prison." *Chicago Sun Times* 24DEC1976, Section 1, Page 2, Print
Interview with A.S., former wife of State Prosecutor James Sternik.
Staff "Freeport-Rockford Area Named in Indictment" *Freeport Journal-Standard*, Freeport, IL, UPI. 31JUL76, Sec. 1, P. 11, Print

Philosophy and Making Better Decisions

Class #9/32

Philosophical Principles /
Philosophical Inspirations for this lesson:

Edmund Husserl

-Natural attitude

Matin Heidegger

-Being in the world

Kitaro Nishida

-Love is the power by which we grasp ultimate reality

Jacques Derrida

-Deconstruction and words that are more “privileged” over others.

Bertrand Russell

-Philosophy of language

Ludwig Wittgenstein

-Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.

The boundaries of my language are the boundaries of my world.

J.L. Austin

- Ordinary Language

John Searle

-Philosophy of Language

Listening, Speaking,
Conversation, and Dialogue
Inspirations for this lesson:

Julian Treasure

Rob Franek

Mark Listner

Michael Warden

Catherine Jones

Kathia Castro Lazlo

Alexander Lazlo

C. Otto Scharmer

David Bohm

William Isaacs

The Class Begins...

(Slide #1) *(On screen as the students enter the room and settle.)*

Class Session Order

- 1.) Welcome, Check-in, General Class Business, & Attendance **(Did you sign in??)**
- 2.) Story Time: United Airlines, Flight 173, December, 1978
- 3.) Lecture: “Time to Have a Dialogue”
(Speaking, Listening, “Thriving Conversations,” “Socratic Dialogue,” & “Generative Dialogue”)

- 4.) Interactive: Small Group Activity and Worksheet "Speak, Listen, Observe"
- 5.) Activity Debrief
- 6.) Review, and
- 7.) "The Charge"

Welcome, Check-in, Class Business

Class #9/32 Section #2 (Timing: <10 minutes.)

STORY TIME:

It was just a few days after Christmas, 1978 when a United Airlines flight from Denver to Portland crashed six miles short of the runway amidst a suburban neighborhood, lighting up the darkness of a winter evening. Something obviously went wrong, when on approach, the landing gear went down, not with its usual purr, but with a loud thump. Had the wheels locked? The cockpit light couldn't confirm. The experienced captain aborted the landing, and went into a holding pattern. **(Slide #2)**

Note: This next part is edited, but the whole transcript is online...

Less than fifteen minutes before the end of UA 173,
...the First Officer asks the Flight Engineer: "How much fuel we got, Frostie?"
Flight Engineer: Five Thousand (pounds)."

Two minutes later.
First Officer: "Ah, what's the fuel show now, Buddy?"
Flight Engineer: "Five."
First Officer: "Five."

Captain talks about blinking lights.
Two minutes later.
Flight Engineer: "Fifteen minutes is gonna ---- really running low on fuel here.
Captain talks about warning ground crew, United's airplane mechanics, the descent check, the wind.

Three minutes later.
First Officer: How much fuel you got now?"
Flight Engineer: Four, four --- thousand pounds.
First Officer: "Okay"

The Captain orders Flight engineer to take a walk back through the cabin. Never does the captain acknowledge he heard the information about the fuel, nor do the first officer or flight engineer ever directly address the captain about the fuel situation – they address each other.

So, when the captain did not acknowledge the state of the fuel, (talking about reassuring the passengers and worried about their anxiety, and the possibility of folding landing gear, again,) his cockpit team says things like, "We got about three on the fuel," thirteen minutes before the crash.

Minutes goes by with the captain talking non-stop about the number of "souls" on board, the blare of the warning horn, re-seating passengers, making

sure the flight attendants have instructed the people how to open the exits, whether there are any "invalids" onboard, antiskid protection, the pretty stewardess, Ms. Jones, his worry about the landing gear, and his final decision to take a chance and land. Finally, as they make their final turn towards Portland airport...

The First Officer says, "We're going to lose an engine, buddy."

The Captain asks, "Why?"

First Officer: "We're losing an engine."

Captain: "Why?"

First Officer: "Fuel."

Captain: "Open the crossfeeds." (Valves for fuel tanks to blend.)

First Officer: "Showing fumes."

Captain: (Probably looking at gauges) "Showing a thousand or better."

First Officer: "I don't think it's in there. We're going to lose another engine in a minute, too."

Captain: "Well."

First Officer: "It's showing zero."

Captain: "Okay, watch engines one and two."

Captain: "You gotta keep 'em running, Frostie,"

Flight Engineer: "Yes, sir. It's showing not very much more fuel."

Then the Captain talks more about circuit breakers, gear lights, and brace positions. Precious minutes go by...

Flight Engineer: Boy, that fuel sure went to hell all of a sudden. I told you we had four ---."

Captain: "There's an interstate highway in case we're short."

First Officer: "Let's take the shortest route to the airport."

Captain: "What's our distance now?"

First Officer: 12 Flying miles."

Captain: "Well... about three minutes. Four."

Flight Engineer: "We just lost two engines, one and two."

Captain: "We can't make Troutdale." (A city 12 miles east of Portland with a small private airport.)

First Officer: "We can't make anything."

Pause.

Captain: "Okay, declare a mayday..."

***They started to send out a Mayday call on the radio, and a half second later, the plane crashed. 10 people were killed, and 24 gravely injured.*¹⁸**

¹⁸ Information for this section was taken from four sources:

a.) Cockpit Voice Recorder Database. 28December1976 – United 173.

<http://www.tailstrike.com/281278.pdf>

b.) United Airlines Flight 173. Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Airlines_Flight_173

c.) NTSB. Aircraft Accident Report. United Airlines, Inc. McDonnell-Douglas, DC-8-61. N8082U. Portland, Oregon. December 28, 1978. Report date: 7June1979.

<http://www.nts.gov/investigations/AccidentReports/Reports/AAR7907.pdf>

Class #9/32 Section #3 (Timing: Total of 20 minutes)

THE LECTURE

Speaking, Listening, Conversation vs. Dialogue.

So much went wrong in this cockpit.

For the almost 30 minutes, the Captain became so absorbed with diagnosing whether the landing gear was really locked (granted, a very important concern in itself), that he failed to listen to his First Officer or his Flight Engineer. In the fashion of the day, the lesser members of the crew did not speak in a direct manner to their captain. The voice recorders transcribe that instead of using clear statements, such as, “Sir, the fuel is at 4,000 pounds. We must land in the next two minutes,” they used passive statements, (to each other, not the Captain) like: “You’ve got another two or three minutes.”

Cockpit dynamics changed forever after that flight, but we all experience our own mini-disasters, wrong decisions, and misinformation because we discount the study that is today’s class topic: better communication.

“Making Better Decisions” many times means getting better information. Information is exchanged amongst humans in many ways: through writing, visual cues, smells, and probably most often – through speaking and listening. We’ve obviously acquired a general knowledge of communication during our years here on earth. But to make better decisions, let’s spend a class session re-training our brain and senses to seek a deeper level of truth, wisdom, and knowledge.

To seek intelligent choices, we must learn to speak truth, and seek truth from others and ourselves. Speaking to communicate, and listening to understand requires tolerance, humility, and persistence. Occasionally true hearing takes you out of your comfort zone. And sometimes, to hear another person’s truth requires empathy and understanding. It is always worth the effort.

You can’t make decisions, let alone good decisions if you don’t know how to do these four things well: speak, listen, have a conversation, and engage in genuine dialogue.

So, let’s break this all down. I always like to go back to the beginning....

A brief history... Yes, we have talked at and with each other for tens of thousands of years, but our earliest historical examples of how people really spoke and responded to each other comes from two sources: the ancient Sumerian Debates of India written down in the late 3rd century BCE,¹⁹ and the 41 books Plato wrote remembering the dialogues between his mentor, Aristotle,

d.) “Why Planes Crash.” The Weather Channel. Plane Crashes into a Field. Original air date: 17January2015. <https://weather.com/tv/shows/why-planes-crash/video/why-planes-crash-amsterdam-turkish-airlines>

¹⁹ The Sumerian Debates were compositions and short stories where the first surviving examples of debate, arguments (called a disputations when they did not promote consensus) and a colloquy, which is a formal conversation. Five of these were between people (including one

his students and friends in the 5th century BCE (and later Plato's own dialogues about his own ideas of Philosophy.)²⁰

The Sumerian Debates are more fanciful: for example, winter talks to summer, a bird debates a fish, and silver argues with copper. There are four accounts of disputes between two men, and a disagreement between two women.

With the Greek philosopher Plato, we have examples of dialogue more “real” in style, but edited as a playwright or writer of a screenplay would do, leaving us with the juicy bits, and crafted to make heroes of some characters, and fools of others.

Not until many centuries later did we have the time, the paper, the skills, and money to be able to write down true conversations and dictation, so in fact, the study of how we really listen, speak, converse, and have dialogues is a relatively new science. With modern study in such fields as communication, sociology, linguistics, marketing, quantitative and qualitative research, practiced and persuasive public speaking²¹, negotiation, psychology, and philosophy, we have taken leaps forward in the understanding of what seems to be some of our most natural skills.

But if we really all practiced what was preached, learned the lesson of speaking and listening carefully, why do we still have missed communications century after century, decade after decade, war after war, fight after fight – lost opportunities to be fully human in the most basic of ways...

The Art of Listening (Slide #5)

To Listen:

To give one's attention to a sound. An act. To pay attention to someone or something in order to hear what is being said, sung, played, etc. To Hear what someone has said and understand that it is serious, important, or true.²²

What does it take to really listen?

What does it feel like when you really listen to another person's position?

Why do we sometimes feel threatened by what we hear?

Let's look at two wonderful charts that show two slightly different ways that we listen:

(Slide #6)

between two ladies) and seven were between non-human participants. Examples include a debate between a fish and a bird, and between summer and winter.

²⁰ Early Dialogues – Apology (Death of Socrates); Crito; Charmides or Temperance; Laches or Courage; Lysis, or Friendship; Eurhyphro; Ion. Middle Dialogues – Gogoiias, Protagoras, Meno, Euthydemus, Cratylus, Phaedo, Phaedrus, Symposium, The Republic, Theaetetus, Parmenides. Late Dialogues – Sophist, Statesman, Philebus, Timaeus, Critias, Laws, The Seventh Letter.

²¹ Franek, Rob. (2016) “3 Skills all Communications Majors Must Have.” From the Princeton Review <http://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/communications-majors-career-skills>

²² Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Levels of Listening: On and Off, Key Words, Generous

Level 1 Listening: Listening on and off

- More hearing than listening
- More interested in talking than listening
- Getting only the "gist" of the conversation
- Allowing yourself to be distracted (phones, the tree outside, another subject)

Level 2 Listening: Listening for Key Words

- Hearing words, but using little effort to really understand
- Listening on the surface, concerned with content, not deep understanding
- Following your own agenda – wanting only the bullet points

Level 3 Listening: Generous Listening

- Listening without judgment
- Focused on the present moment
- Fully processing what is said. A wider focus.
- Paying attention to words, tone of voice, and body language²³

(Slide #8)

Improve your listening by:²⁴

- 1.) Put your attention on what the other person is actually saying.
- 2.) Take in the scene and you will listen through smell, touch, sight, etc.
- 3.) Give others the gift of time, so they can say what they need to say.
- 4.) For a minute, put aside any personal agenda you may have.
- 5.) Visualize – create a 3-D model of timelines, people, places.
But remember this is your visualization, not theirs, so be prepared that the two might not match exactly.
- 6.) Try to believe what the other person is saying.
Their words are true for them at this moment in time.
- 7.) Turn off your internal commentator.
You cannot truly listen if you are running your own monologue.
- 8.) Take notes if appropriate, or a similar method, (if alright with the speaker) that will help you pay attention.
- 9.) Ask clarifying questions.

Class #9/32 Section #4 (Timing: <15 minutes)

Interactive: Small Group Activity and Worksheet

(Slide #15)

²³ Lister, Mark. Listening. The Co-Active Network <http://www.thecoaches.com/coach-training/resources/coaching-tools/listening> (I have written my own variation of this basic principle.)

²⁴ Jones, Catherine 7March2009 "Saying What You Mean." The Guardian Life and Style Section. <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/mar/08/language-exercise-mutual-understanding> (I have adapted a variation of this article)

Speaker, Listener, Watcher

- 1.) Break off in groups of three.
- 2.) Select a role: Speaker, Listener, or Watcher (You will play all 3 roles eventually)
 The speaker tells a personal three-minute story without interruption.
 (You were each assigned in your homework to prepare your story!)
 The Listener listens quietly, & the Watcher watches the Speaker speak & the Listener listen.
- 3.) After the three-minute story is told, the Listener re-tells it back to the Speaker, and again, the Watcher watches this exchange.
- 4.) Finally, the Watcher tells what he/she saw when the Speaker spoke and the Listener listened, and the Listener recapping the story with the Speaker hearing their story told back to them.
- 5.) Take one minute to write down notes about the experience.
- 6.) Switch roles until all have done the exercise in all three roles.
- 7.) Make notes on what happened on one piece of paper that all of you will sign and turn in at the end of class.

Class #9/32 Section #5 Activity Debrief (Timing: <10 minutes)

Class will discuss their reactions from the Speaker, Listener, Watcher exercise. What are the common themes? What did students learn, or realize in a totally new way? What can they / will they do with the results of this exercise?

Class #9/32 Section #6 Review / Homework (Timing: <3 minutes)

For this class, remember what went wrong in the cockpit of United Flight 173 and the lessons learned. Listen better, speak clearly, and try your hand at a Thriving Conversation the next time the opportunity arises. Review the six types of questions Socrates used. Consider the steps of a Socratic Dialogue, and the steps toward a Generative Dialogue. And take with you the memory of what it feel like to be heard, to really listen to another person, and finally, the joy that comes when you see people connect.

Section #7 The Charge. (Slide #22)

***"Speak in such a way that others
love to listen to you.
Listen in such a way that others
love to speak to you."***

APPENDIX H:

A NEW VISION

TOPICS FOR “LE PENSEUR LUNCH”

Topic Ideas for "Le Penseur Lunch:

For discussion under the "Olive Trees"

Bi-weekly lunchtime open invitation to any student, faculty, or community member to bring a sack lunch, listen to a 5-7 minute lecture or lectures (by pre-assigned guest speakers) on one of the topics below, then a general discussion.

The original list is 13 pages – Here is a 3-page sample of topics

Buddha

"What you think, you become. What you feel, you attract.
What you imagine, you create."

Confucius

"Hold Faithfulness and sincerity as first Principles."
"Whersoever you go, go with all your heart."

Heraclitus

"One cannot step twice in the same river."

Anaxagoras of Clazomenae

"In everything, there is a share of everything."

Sun Tzu

"Sometimes we need to lose the small battles in order to win the war."

Parmenides

"Nothing and being are the same thing."
Nothing comes from nothing."

Socrates

"The unexamined life is not worth living."
"To find yourself, think for yourself."
"I am a citizen of the world"

Protagoras

"Man is the measure of all things."

Al-Razi

"Let your first thought be to strengthen your natural vitality."

Plato

“Laws are made to instruct the good, and in the hope that there may be no need of them; also to control the bad, whose hardness of heart will not be hindered from crime.”

Aristotle

“All men by nature desire knowledge.”

“We are what we repeatedly do.”

“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.”

Mozi

“To accomplish anything whatsoever, one must have standards. None have yet accomplished anything without them.”

Rumi

“Lovers don’t finally meet somewhere. They’re in each other all along.”

“Stop acting so small. You are the universe in ecstatic motion.

“You were born with wings, why prefer to crawl through life?”

“Raise your words, not voice. It is rain that grows flowers, not thunder.”

William of Occam

“With all things being equal, the simplest explanation tends to be the right one.”

Mary Wollstonecraft

“I do not wish women to have power over men; but over themselves.”

“Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison.”

Hannah Arendt

“The banality of evil.”

Vine Deloria, Jr.

“In recent years we have come to understand what progress is. It is the total replacement of nature by an artificial technology.”

“Do we live with the land?”

Cornel West

“White supremacist ideology is based first and foremost on the degradation of black bodies in order to control them. One of the best ways to instill fear in people is to terrorize them. Yet this fear is best sustained by convincing them that their bodies are ugly, their intellect is inherently underdeveloped, their culture is less civilized, and their future warrants less concern than that of other peoples.”

Thomas Nagel

“What is it like to be something? What is it like to be a bat?”

Augustine of Hippo

"We are too weak to discover the truth by reason alone."

Ludwig Wittgenstein

"I don't know why we are here, but I'm pretty sure it is not in order to enjoy ourselves"

"The boundaries of my language are the boundaries of my world."

Niccolo Machiavelli

"The first method for estimating the intelligence of a ruler is to look at the men he has around him."

Thomas Hobbes

"Hell is truth seen too late."

Rene Descartes

"I think therefore I am."

Baruch Spinoza

"Peace is not an absence of war; it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice."

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

"We live in the best of all possible worlds."

Blaise Pascal

"People almost invariably arrive at their beliefs not on the basis of proof, but on the basis of what they find attractive."

John Locke

"What worries you, masters you."

"No man's knowledge here can go beyond his experience."

Voltaire

"If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him."

"Every man is guilty of all the good he did not do."

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

"Man is born free yet everywhere he is in chains."

Michael J. Sandel

"The way things are does not determine the way they ought to be."

Nick Bostrom

"There is about a 20% chance that we are living in a Matrix."

APPENDIX I:

**SAMPLE STORY TIME
SLIDE SHOW**

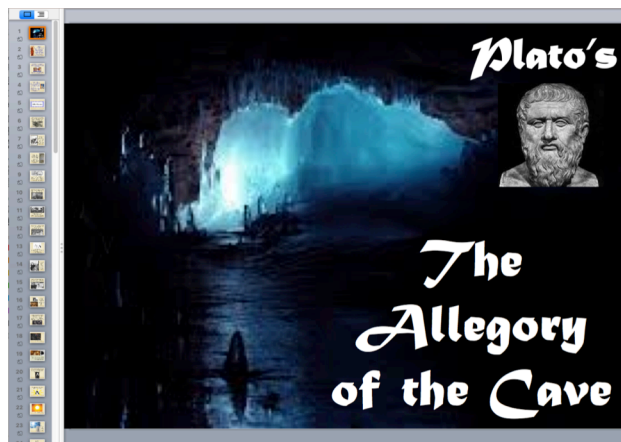
FOR LESSON #1

"ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE"

Alegory of the Cave


A Slideshow – Used During Class #1 (Sample)

Slide #1



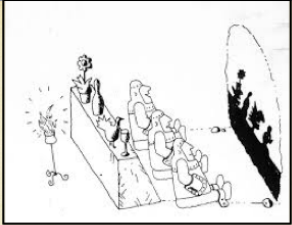
Slide #3

"THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE"
IS A STORY PLATO TOLD HIS STUDENTS
ABOUT HOW, SO OFTEN, HUMANKIND
IS UNENLIGHTENED,



TRAPPED IN THE DEPTHS OF HIS OR
HER OWN LIMITED PERSPECTIVE.

Slide #13



THIS WAS HOME.
THIS WAS THE WAY OF THE WORLD.
THEY SENSED NOTHING
ODD OR NONSENSICAL.


Slide #20

She was scared, but she was also curious,
so she moved on, following the strange
illumination that glowed past the fire.

Upwards she climbed.




Slide #22




"Too bright!" she cried.

Slide #32



Everyone here was unique.
Yet, they were also kind of the same.
Everyone breathed, ate, and
laughed, just like her cave people.


Slide #37



There was grandeur in learning, thinking, writing, contemplation, science, art, listening, debating, reason, reality and the quest for facts.

Slide #39

Finally, she understood the difference between illusion and reality.




Slide #43

So, she left the world of light and color...

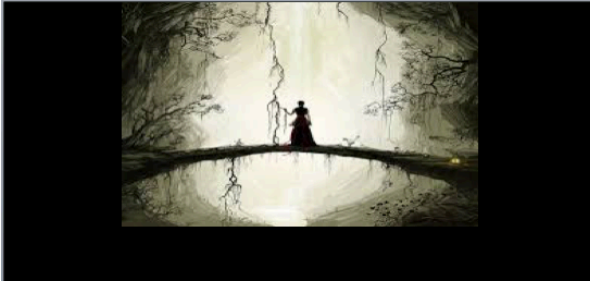
...and descended back into the dark cave.

Slide #48

BUT THEY DIDN'T WANT TO LOOK, LISTEN, OR DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES.



Slide #54

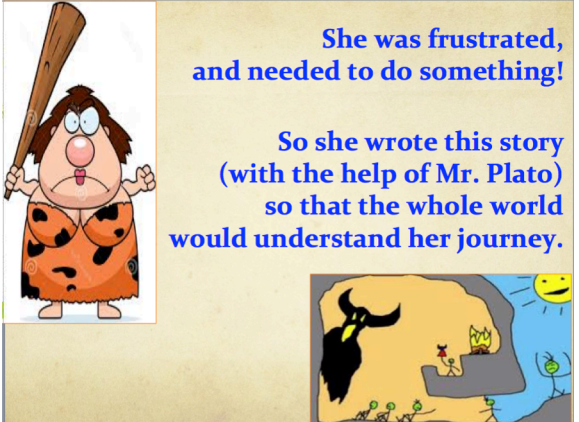


WITH A HEAVY HEART, SHE LEFT HER FAMILY, HER FRIENDS, HER OLD WAY OF BEING... AND BEGAN THE LONG, SLOW CLIMB TO THE WORLD OF LIGHT.

Slide #55

She was frustrated, and needed to do something!

So she wrote this story (with the help of Mr. Plato) so that the whole world would understand her journey.



Each phase of the story was carefully thought through, using subtle visual cues to change the location, mood, tempo, and lesson impact.

Note: I do not own the rights to any of the images used in this presentation. For demonstration purposes only.

APPENDIX J: RESOURCES

Books That Most Enlightened My Path And Supplemental Bibliography of Books Read During the Pursuit of Information to Better Understand and Deepen My Worldview on the Subjects of Philosophy and Decision-Making.

- 1.) *Developing Minds: A Resource Book for Teaching Thinking*, Edited by Arthur L. Costa
This book revealed to me (along with the class in Holistic and Transformative Teaching) to, for me, a staggering amount of ways to teach, and specifically for my subject of “Making Good Decisions,” teaching so that my efforts to open up students to better routes of conscious thinking and decision-making would be lasting and transformative. Everyone remembers the great teachers and the subjects they taught. I learned in this course, and from the examples in this book, that great teaching can be learned, shaped, re-shaped, and make positive subtle changes in students.
- 2.) *Creativity Is Forever*, by Gary A. Davis, fifth edition. After an adult lifetime in the creative world as an actor, writer, playwright, director, and producer, I kinda thought I had this subject in the bag! But this book which accompanied the brilliant class strategy by our two professors, re-awakened my artistic circuits, and awoke me to the connection between creative thinking and everything we do in the world, including heavy critical thinking. Combining creative thinking to open the narrow passages that critical thinking sometimes reverts to because of stress, socio-economic factors, and other roadblocks, can lead to a plethora of new ideas and better decisions.
- 3.) *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*, by Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, and Smith, was designed to be used by organizations as a strategic tool building primer for “learning organizations.” When I first signed on to a class called “Collaborative and Organizational Change,” I figured this would be made up of primarily business people, and I was not wrong. But what blew me away, was that the methods of systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, practice and frontiers, mirrored what my “future students” would be doing out in the “real world.” In addition, our in-class exercises crystalized how much can be learned, on a deep, transformative level when putting theory into real practice. From this class, I learned that any college class I designed must leave at least at least a half-hour per session to practice the principles preached.
- 4.) *Cognition*, by Daniel Reisberg, as my first deep exploration into the science of the mind. Fascinated by the subject, I focused my final paper in this class on better understanding just how the mind works when making judgments and in reasoning. This class, book, and final paper opened me to thinking how our brain plays into the process of decision-

making. It soon became apparent, that for my future students to understand how and why they make the choices I should include a class on how their brain makes connections, and how conscious and unconscious thought makes how you process information, and your resulting actions, a huge piece of the mystery of making up your mind.

- 5.) *Disrupt*, by Luke Williams, and *ReWork* by Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson were two books from my Seminar in Creativity that gave me ideas on how to disrupt old patterns, and re-work rote thinking into something conscious, active, and progressive. Reading and discussing these books gave me the resolution to include a unit on change in my prospective class – but not just change – change that has follow thru, disruption, re-evaluation, and long-term effects.
- 6.) *Thinking Fast and Slow*, by Daniel Kahneman, was a book I was aware of, but would have never bought if not for my course in Critical Thinking. Almost every inch of Chapter 23, entitled “The Outside View” with ideas that I used to focus a few of my potential class units (including the subjects of why we give up, why we routinely discard statistical information when it is incompatible with our pre-conceived notions, and delusional optimism.
- 7.) *Twenty Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy*, edited by Bowie, Michaels, and Solomon, was a return to the ideas that I had received in long lecture format in four classes at my local community college, only now, it was talking about these philosophies for three (too short) hours, with other students who wanted to seriously debate, decipher, and deliberate on a deep scholarly level. From this book of varied authors, I shored up some of the key players who have made historic-to-topical principles on the subjects related to making better real-world decisions.
- 8.) *Justice*, by Michael J. Sandel, was not an assigned book, but one of the many that now fill my bookshelves, that I found as I did my study and research. Sandel’s book and series of Harvard lectures, gave me something that I was missing in my search for potential class topics: the idea of justice, political philosophy, public morality, and how we make our decisions, today, in the western world. His examples are as raw as they are possible, forcing us to practice our linear thinking, and analyzing our prejudices, fallibilities, cultural outlook, and humanity.

Other Very Notable Books Along the Way Include:

A History of Western Philosophy, by Bertrand Russell (Book on CD).

Blink, by Malcolm Gladwell,

Ethics: An Overview, by Robin Attfield

inGenius: A Crash Course on Creativity by Tina Seelig,

How Good People Make Tough Choices, by Rushworth M. Kidder.

Moral Courage, by Rushworth M. Kidder,

Predictably/Irrational, by Dan Ariely,

The Art of Choosing, by Sheena Iyengar.

The Honest Truth About Dishonesty, by Dan Ariely,
The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology, second edition, edited by Lopez and Snyder,
The Philosophy of Childhood, by Gareth B. Matthews.

And One Amazing Speech:

Workman, Thomas, Ph.D. *In This Together: Collaborating to Address Alcohol and Other High Risk Problems*. International Town and Gown Association Speech published on YouTube on 12JUL2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wuSHg2pK4>

And the Best of the Rest:

Adaption-Innovation: In the Context of Diversity and Change, by M.J. Kirton.
Anger and Forgiveness, by Martha C. Nussbaum.
An Introduction to Decision Theory, by Martin Peterson.
ASCA National Model, from the American School counselor Association, Third Edition.
A Sneetch is a Sneetch and Other Philosophical Discoveries: Finding Wisdom in Children's Literature, by Thomas E. Wartenberg.
Adaption-Innovation: In the Context of Diversity and Change, by M.J. Kirton.
Community College Success, by Isa Adney.
Creativity, by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.
Creators of Creating: Awakening and Cultivating the Imaginative Mind, By Frank Barron.
Dealing With People You Can't Stand, Dr. Rick Brinkman & Dr. Rick Kirschner.
Decisions: How to Make The Best Choice Every Time, by Robert Schwartztrauber.
Decision Theory as Philosophy, by Mark Kaplan.
Decisive: How to Make Better Choices in Life and Work, by Chip Heath & Dan Heath.
Eastern Philosophy: The Greatest Thinkers & Sages from Ancient to Modern Times, by K. Burns
Ethics of the Fathers: Tractate Avoth and Taryat Mitzvoth, translated by Philip Blackman.
Eyes Wide Open: How to Make Smart Decisions in a Confusing World, by Noreena Hertz.
Five Dialogues by Plato, translated by G.M.A. Grube.
Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069, by Neil Howe and William Strauss
How to Make "Choice" Decisions: Discover How to Make the Right Decisions, by A. Morin.
Introducing Philosophy for Everyday Life: A Practical Guide, By Trevor Curnow.
Introducing Ethics for Everyday Life: A Practical Guide, by Dave Robinson.
Justice: A Reader, Edited by Michael J. Sandel.
Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation, by Parker J. Palmer.
Little Bets: How Breakthrough Ideas Emerge from Small Discoveries, by Peter Sims.
Make Up Your Mind: A Decision-Making Guide, by Hal Mooz.
Making Sense of People, by Samuel Barondes.
Moral Courage, by Rushworth M. Kidder.
Moral Decision Making: Approach Everyday Ethics, by Clancy Martin PhD (The Great Courses).

Mystic Chords of Memory, A Selection from the writings of Abraham Lincoln.
On Liberty, John Stewart Mill.
Practical Action Research for Change, by Richard A. Schmuck.
Practice for Life: Making Decisions in College, by L. Cuba, N. Jennings, S. Lovett, & J. Swingle
Power of Decision: How to Make Better Decisions Every Day, by Businessman Company.
Rational Choice in an Uncertain World, by Reid Hastie and Robyn M. Dawes.
Re-Thinking Reason: New Perspectives in Critical Thinking, Edited by Kerry S. Walters.
ReWork, by Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson.
Risk Savvy: How To Make Good Decisions, by Gerd Gigerenzer.
School Counseling for the 21st Century, 5th Ed., by S.B. Baker & E.R. Gerler, Jr.
Smart Choices: A Practical Guide to Making Better Decisions, by Hammond, Keeney, & Raiffa.
Theory U: Leading from the Future As It Emerges, by C. Otto Scharmer.
The Better Angels of Our Nature, by Steven Pinker.
The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory, by Roberta M. Gilbert.
The Ethics Recession, by Rushworth M. Kidder.
*The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy – What the Cycles of History Tell Us About
America’s Next Rendezvous with Destiny*, by Neil Howe and William Strauss.
The Functions of the Executive, by Chester I Barnard.
The Great Ideas of Philosophy, by Professor Daniel N. Robinson (The Great Courses).
The Happiness Project, by Gretchen Rubin.
The Philosophy of F.P. Ramsey, by Nils-Eric Sahlin.
The Power of Myth, by Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers.
The Practice and Philosophy of Decision Making: A 7 Step Spiritual Guide, by Neerja Raman.
The Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making, by Scott Plous.
The Psychology of Hope, by C.R. Snyder.
The Sociopath Next Door, by Martha Stout, PhD.
The Thinking Classroom, by S. Tishman, D.N. Perkins, & E. Jay.
The Transformative Workplace, by Carole and David Schwinn.
The Wisdom of Joseph Campbell: A Conversation with Michael Toms.
Think! Before It’s Too Late, by Edward De Bono
Traversing Philosophical Boundaries, by Max O. Hallman, 4th Edition.
Twenty Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy, by G. Bowie, M. Michaels, and R. Solomon.
*What’s Your Decision: How to Make Choices with Confidence and Clarity: An Ignition
Approach*, by J. Michael Sparough, SJ, Jim Manney, and Tim Hipskind, SJ.
Why Good People Do Bad Things, by James Hollis, Ph.D.
Winning Decisions: Getting It Right the First Time, by J. Edward Russo.
Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us, by R.D. Hare, PhD.
Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach, by Martha C. Nussbaum.
Zig Zag, by Keith Sawyer.
101 Creative Problem Solving Techniques, by James M. Higgins.