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Teaching Matters: Essays by UMF Faculty

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TEACHING MATTERS

Essays by UMF Faculty

Edited by Linda Britt

With a Foreword by Kathryn A. Foster

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Foreword, or The Toughest Job You'll Ever Love

Kathryn A. Foster

I can still remember what I was wearing.

It was a navy blue suit, with a high-collar, off-white blouse. Around my neck was a small scarf, navy blue paisley with white, gold, and orange accents, tied with a bow in a 1983 schoolmarm-ish way. My shoes were navy blue. I wore hose. I was 25 years old.

In what I later understood as a common rookie mistake, I was over-prepared for my first day of class. In my bag, along with a stack of mimeographed syllabi, was a lecture on the origin of cities. The lecture was to kick off “Intro to City Planning,” a course for undergrads at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo where I was, as of that moment, an adjunct instructor assigned to a twice-per-week evening course.

My plan for the opening session was to include an anticipated defense: a few words of personal introduction to the person listed only as “staff” in the course catalog, an explanation for why the person standing before them was not much older than they were. I was a regional planner—newly minted, but that could go without saying—working for San Luis Obispo County, California. The planning post was my first full-time professional job, a position altogether different from what I’d envisioned two years prior when I’d headed west to UC Berkeley for a master’s in city planning. After that, the vision insisted, I would return east to save Baltimore or maybe Newark.

But I made friends, felt hip, liked avocados. The brown hills of California and life without a winter coat had grown on me. The job in San Luis Obispo County was a good entry-level opportunity, a decent second best after I lost out on my dream job for an architecture and planning firm in San Francisco. I had borrowed a car and headed south.

San Luis Obispo County was then the most rural area in which I had ever lived. It had septic tanks, unincorporated territory, ranchettes, and a sheriff (*a sberiff!*). I thought I’d give it a couple of years before getting back on track with my Plan A to rescue East Coast cities.

Yet there’s this thing about small towns. You meet people sooner than you would in the big city, and the pathway to opportunity is uncluttered. About a

year before I stood in front of the expectant class, I had attended an after-work event for professional planners where I met the chair of the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cal Poly. Over a sip of wine he idly asked if I thought I could teach a planning class at the university. “Oh, yes,” I said with all the hubris of a lifelong good pupil who had spent all but one year of her remembered life in a classroom, “I’m sure I could do that.”

Now here I was. Before introducing myself I passed out the syllabus—this gave me something to do to calm my rumbling nerves—and started to talk about the course.

And then it happened, about 35 seconds into the no doubt rat-a-tat, adrenaline-fed, spit-fired introduction. A baseball cap-wearing student sitting in the front row picked up his pencil and began to write down what I was saying. A couple of others followed suit. As with epiphanies, for that’s what this was, the ceiling parted, the light streamed in, cosmic alignment occurred. At only 25 I felt a certainty that some covetous friends of mine in their 50s have still never felt: I knew what I was meant to do.

I was meant to be a teacher. I had to be a teacher. The cities would have to wait.

For that first course at Cal Poly, and then for five additional evening courses over two years before quitting my day job and taking a pay cut to become a full-time lecturer for Academic Year 85-86, I worked harder at being a good teacher than I had ever worked at anything. I learned to use the first session to get people talking and to set the tone for the rest of the course. I spent hours in the library, losing sleep to learn new material, then presented it the next day as, I confess, gospel. I labored over slide shows to illustrate key points. I experimented with projects, tests, essays, and other forms of evaluation to reinforce the material and understand how well the students and I were doing. I pushed and pulled my students, learning to sense when bolstering and encouraging were better placed. A few missteps aside, I got the hang of ordering books, putting materials on reserve, preparing interactive lectures, writing fair and meaningful tests, grading, and, as a corollary, learning Lotus 1-2-3, whereupon to store course records on floppy disks.

There is a lot of ego in teaching, at least in the kind that I wound up doing at Cal Poly for three years and later at the State University of New York at Buffalo for almost twenty. Large lecture classes, even classroom courses

with more than a couple dozen students, can tolerate a good bit of performance. Of course, not all teaching involves the teacher at center stage animatedly engaging a large group. As the essays in this volume attest, teaching—fine, creative, brilliant, effective teaching—comes in many forms. Seminars, studio courses, one-on-one tutorials, lab classes, art critiques, online class discussions, and other pedagogic modes play to instructors (and students) of particular strengths and wiring. For people like me, though, who as children dreamed of being actors, who enjoy speaking in public, who apparently get off on having someone write down what they're saying, teaching to big numbers is awesome.

Shortly after my extraordinary year as full-time lecturer—no research, no service, no formal advising, just teaching—I joined the Peace Corps. An academic career in my field required a Ph.D., but a Ph.D. required having something more specific than “I’d like to be a teacher” as motivation. In the summer of 1985, shortly before my lecturer duties began, I had taken an Asian Grand Tour—Tokyo, Beijing, Bangkok, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, and Hong Kong—and had “taught” these cities—with *lots* of slides—the following year. Heading to the Peace Corps instead of straight to grad school would fulfill two yearnings: living overseas rather than simply traveling there, and understanding more clearly whether I wanted to study international cities or domestic urban policy for the Ph.D.

The tag line for the Peace Corps is “the toughest job you’ll ever love.” It’s a given for this tin-eared urban dweller that a job requiring a snakebite kit and functionality in a complex language with eight noun classes—as the posting in Swaziland did—will be tough. Still, I got a lot out of Peace Corps service and it changed my life. I speak highly of the opportunity and promote it to others.

But Peace Corps wasn’t the toughest job I ever loved. Teaching was. Teaching was the hardest, most daunting, demanding, and taxing job I’d ever had. It was also the greatest, most rewarding, consequential, and noble thing I’d ever done.

After the Peace Corps, I got that final academic credential, opening the way to many years of classroom teaching. Career choices have recently veered me away from the classroom; the last time I taught a full semester’s course was Spring 2008. Nowadays, my teaching fix comes from making guest appearances in classes or speaking to public gatherings.

I love my position at UMF. Yet no matter how lofty my title or gratifying my job, it isn't teaching. A clever poster advertising a course, an e-mail about cool teaching techniques, students speaking passionately and reverently about the class just finished or the teacher much admired: these stir my envy. For I understand and value what it takes to be a fine teacher. It takes the dedication and attributes I see every day amongst superb UMF faculty, evident in this volume's essays and in teaching spaces across campus.

A. Bartlett Giamatti, then President of Yale University, said of faculty, "they are the heart of the place, the texture of the place, the essence of the place." They have the toughest job one could ever love.

Kathryn A. Foster is President of the University of Maine at Farmington. She wouldn't mind if someday her tombstone read "Teacher."

Editor's Note

For me, it started in kindergarten. That's how long I've known I wanted to be a teacher.

It doesn't happen that way for everyone. Some of the writers here took an unexpected turn into academia from entirely different careers. Some started in one academic pursuit and ended up in an unrelated field. Some never intended to teach at all. Some are veterans like me, having taught twenty-five years or more. Some are in the infancy of their careers. They teach math, philosophy, anthropology, biology, screenwriting... they teach first-year students and students taking their last college course. But following different paths, they all ended up here, in this institution of higher learning, teaching UMF students.

What was striking to me as I was editing these essays was how common a certain thread was: how much we learn from our students and from each other. And another: how special a place the classroom can be.

It has been my privilege to work on this volume, learning as I have read, marveling at the creativity of my UMF colleagues, wishing I could take classes with each one of them.

We teach. It's what we do here. And this book is a tribute to that work, and to this special place.

Linda Britt is Professor of Spanish at UMF. She also teaches literary translation and writes an occasional play.

The Cult of the Classroom

Kristen Case
-for my dad

My childhood was entirely inscribed within the life of schools. My first home was the undergraduate dorm my parents ran while my father was in graduate school. My second was a mile from the campus where he got a job as a professor. My mother was a high school English teacher, then a guidance counselor. I don't remember a time when there were not students living with us or storing their stuff in boxes in our basement. I don't remember a time when September was not the beginning of the year, or when I didn't know the significance of academic regalia. I am most able to sympathize with people of strong religious backgrounds when I imagine that religion has been for them is something like what school has been for me: the master metaphor, the organizing principle. During the very few times in my life I have not been in school, I have kept up the rituals--hoarding office supplies, taking notes.



My first powerful classroom memory is of my father's classroom on the first floor of an old castle-like building. Maybe school was cancelled, or the babysitter was sick. In any case, I was probably seven or eight. It was a warm day; the windows were open. I remember the rows of desks and the effect of sunlight on the chalk-dusty air and watching the students copy my father's mysterious diagrams—intersecting curves and letters—into their notebooks. It all had the feeling of something occult.

Though I can recall little else that happened to me in the dismal years of my early adolescence, I can remember my ninth grade English class with Mr. Connolly in cinematic detail. I remember the texts we read (Robert Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays"; Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent"), the smell of the room (pipe smoke mixed with cologne—*Paco Rabanne*, an older girl told me), the sheen on the heavy wooden table that was reserved for upper-level students and at which I stole longing glances from the circle of desk-chairs to which we freshmen were consigned. I remember being taught about irony and the objective correlative and dangling modifiers. Mostly, though, I remember learning how to read poems, how to mark the page and work the words until by some mysterious transfer from the poem to me, phrases were forming in the margins and then sentences in the lined blue notebooks dispensed to us for these ceremonies. But though I can reconstruct whole class periods in my mind, the details of the transmission are lost to me. How did he do it? It's as if the knowledge just

somehow emerged from the atmosphere, from the pipe smoke and the polished table and the Paco Rabanne.

In college I stumbled accidentally into a seminar intended for graduate students. I didn't understand course numbers, and the enigmatic and sophisticated German instructor, Professor Müller, didn't understand that I was an undergraduate. In every session I sat quietly, frantically filling my notebook with the elements I could glean from the mysterious code in which the class was conducted: "cogito," "dialectic," "structuralism," "symbolic order." After class I frantically looked up words and read the assigned pages of impenetrable theoretical texts over and over, scribbling in the margins, copying out passages--hours of understanding *nothing*, illuminated by brief moments, tiny phrases of recognition. But finally -- how?--the light flooded in.

§

I want to say something real about the classroom and what can happen there, about the real heart of it, but the mystery dissolves on my approach. It is no less enigmatic now that I am a teacher; the only difference is that now I know that the mystery isn't a product of knowledge, that the secret isn't among the rights and privileges conferred alongside a doctoral degree.

I started teaching college during my first semester as an MFA student. I'd been out of college for four years, teaching first grade. I didn't know *anything* about teaching a college class. I had no plan, no preparation, no supervision, no clue. I conducted my first class (Composition, 8 AM) by doing a semester-long impression of my own favorite English teachers. This remained my basic strategy for my first few years in the classroom. I tried at length and in vain to recreate the alchemy of the great classroom moments of my memory. But the lead stayed lead.

Gradually, though, and not at all on purpose, I developed a pedagogy of my own. My teaching philosophy is grounded in the principles of ignorance and incoherence. I'm joking a little, but not much. Unable to sustain the performance of wisdom, I started admitting to not knowing things. It was such a thrilling relief the first time (I think I confessed to never having read Chaucer, or maybe to not knowing French), that instead of feeling defeated, I was glad, excited even, when the next opportunity arose. And then a happy discovery: my not knowing things in front of my students allowed them some comfort in not knowing things in front of me, and that comfort allowed good things to happen. (Charles Sanders Peirce, the pragmatist philosopher, reminds us that genuine philosophical inquiry entails the "confession that we do not know already" (8:282).) I became a

connoisseur of moments of confession and confusion, and especially of moments of collapse.

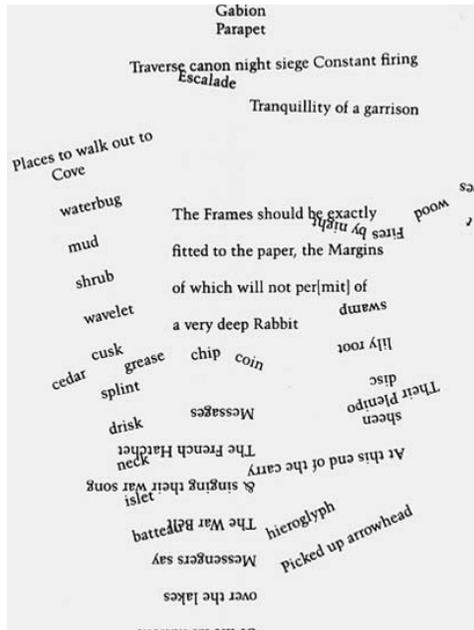
§

A student comes to class after reading “Economy,” the first chapter of *Walden*. Like many students, he was initially resistant. He felt preached at, judged. But something about the following passage unsettled him. He wants to talk.

I used to see a large box by the railroad, six feet long by three wide, in which the laborers locked up their tools at night; and it suggested to me that every man who was hard pushed might get such a one for a dollar, and, having bored a few auger holes in it, to admit the air at least, get into it when it rained and at night, and hook down the lid, and so have freedom in his love, and in his soul be free. This did not appear the worst, nor by any means a despicable alternative. You could sit up as late as you pleased, and, whenever you got up, go abroad without any landlord or house-lord dogging you for rent. Many a man is harassed to death to pay the rent of a larger and more luxurious box who would not have frozen to death in such a box as this. I am far from jesting. (29)

He’s a back-row kind of student, not particularly vocal, not exceptional, not an English major. But in this class, he repeats over and over: “we just...I mean...our houses...they’re just *big boxes*...” His face has a look I’ve started to watch for: it’s a kind of shocked look, a blank, open, spooked animal kind of look. Because it is a frightening thing, if you really do it, to re-imagine a thing like that, like the value of houses: it entails a re-imagining of everything else.

Then this moment, in a class on Susan Howe’s long experimental poem “Thorow,” which explores the complexities of the first-person in American literature, its relation to the colonial project and specifically to the mapping and renaming of Indian lands around lake George in the Adirondacks. When the students get to this page



their reaction is usually one of outright hostility. One student this semester described her response to it in terms of that scene in *Harry Potter* when Harry stabs Tom Riddle’s diary with a basilisk’s fang. Another student, this one a high-achiever, always articulate, is rendered utterly incoherent in her attempt to make sense of Howe’s project. I’m going to give you this verbatim—I copied it in my notebook: “I mean...it’s like...the words...there’s something...weird...and the words....are like ...not working...the way words are... supposed to work.”

This isn’t the place for an extended engagement with the history of language poetry, the particular experimental tradition out of which Susan Howe emerges, but let me just say that making words not work the way words are supposed to work, and thereby drawing our attention to the ways that language and meaning are structured, is a pretty good summary of what these poets seek to do. What I love about this moment is that the student isn’t just talking about the breakdown of language, she is experiencing it: she is feeling the words collapse as she tries to speak them. This moment changes her relationship to language.



Emerson says, “Literature is a point outside of our hodiernal circle through which a new one may be described. The use of literature is to afford us a platform whence we may command a view of our present life, a purchase by which we may move it”(173). The feeling of moving outside our lives, or overturning what we thought we knew, is not a comfortable one.

Peirce called this feeling “doubt” and believed that the only reason we are motivated to think at all is that doubt is such an uncomfortable feeling that we are driven to resolve it any way we can. Everything about the experiences I just described, the frightening approach of the unfamiliar, the difficult encounter itself, and the collapse of an old thought or idea or picture of the world in the wake of the encounter – all of it is potentially uncomfortable. All of it is risk. Frequently in these moments we cannot speak clearly, and so in addition to emotional risk there is social risk: there is stuttering and sounding foolish. Real thinking is a risky business.

But the other side of the moment of incoherence and discomfort is freedom. Between the falling away of an old world and the recognition of a new one, we possess a real power. Emerson in “Self-Reliance” calls it “power not confident but agent” (44). Our courage in the face of the collapse purchases this power of agency: the capacity to re-imagine the possibilities of life and to determine for ourselves how to live.



What strikes me now, looking back at my great teachers, is not so much their wisdom but the way their classrooms felt: like sacred spaces, spaces apart. I don’t think there’s any single doctrine all my great teachers held in common. Some of them were lecturers; others facilitated discussions. Some spent time with us outside of class; some barely acknowledged our existence when we weren’t in our designated seats. But they were all believers. They all believed in the sacredness of the classroom, in what could happen there.

I’m more or less agnostic about the existence of God, but I have noticed lately that when I talk about these classroom moments, these moments of what Jonathan Edwards called “apprehension” – to which you can open yourself but cannot yourself effect, which may be supplemented but not replaced with mere learnedness, and of which you can never have total epistemological certainty – I sound a lot like a 17th-Century Calvinist theologian talking about the phenomenon of grace. But I don’t want to push the Calvinist metaphor too far: the Puritans were also heavily invested in determinism, and what I most want to argue for and to preserve is probably best described as a kind of classroom antinomianism. That is, the belief (a dangerous one to hold, as the histories of Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams attest) that grace doesn’t observe social orders and can happen anytime, to anyone who believes.

I don’t think you can measure classroom grace or make it happen. I don’t think you can maximize it by varying your ratio of whole-group to small-group activities, or by including new categories of evaluation on your rubrics, or by adding a paragraph to your syllabus. I don’t think it’s accurately

measured in course evaluations. I'm pretty sure it doesn't happen at all via webcam. None of this is to say that these pedagogical strategies and ways of measuring are not valuable. What I do want to suggest here is that they are not what matters most, that they don't get at the heart of it because the heart of it is a mystery. The heart of it is what happens in another human being's mind, an event to which we will never have complete access, but which we can nevertheless witness if we are watchful, if we care to. This kind of bearing witness is a sacrament. I think the only rule of good teaching is not to forget that.

Kristen Case teaches and writes, mostly about American Literature, at the University of Maine at Farmington.

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Teaching College Ecology in the Anthropocene

Andrew M. Barton

I became an ecologist when I was 10 years old. I remember that day well. Mark Taylor, a budding 12-year old naturalist, led me and two friends into the neighborhood woods in the Kimberly area of Asheville, North Carolina, to a rocky, shallow creek about five feet wide. Tall, rod-straight tulip poplars surrounded the stream, which ran through the middle of the several-acre tract. Lifting one streamside rock after another, we soon found a fat, bright red, 6-inch long salamander, which I later learned was officially named the red salamander or *Pseudotriton ruber*. We held it, stroked its slimy skin, and then watched as it undulated away in the water. We then tipped another rock, and out wriggled the smaller, dull-looking seal salamander, *Desmognathus monticola*. I was hooked. For the 10-year-old me, here was the mystery of life and the excitement of the chase. I *knew* those two salamanders and came to love and care about all salamanders and wild creatures in general. That deep attachment was the springboard to a life in nature as an academic ecologist and teacher.

The world in which I teach today is ecologically very different from that of 1967. The number of humans has doubled from 3.5 to 7 billion. Species-rich tropical forests have declined in area by more than 50%. Perhaps most importantly, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was 322 parts per million then; this year, it will pass 400 ppm, a level higher than at any time since the Pliocene era, more than three million years ago. This 25% increase is the result of human activities, primarily the burning of fossil fuels. The planet is already feeling the consequences of CO₂ enrichment: higher temperatures, more dangerous heat waves and droughts, melting glaciers, rising oceans, ocean acidification, to name a few.

These physical changes are causing biological ones: species are on the move, escaping conditions that no longer suit them, and long-ingrained annual cycles are shifting as spring comes earlier and autumn later. The web of interactions among species—predation, pollination, parasitism, etc.—is beginning to fray as the chronological synchrony that binds species breaks down. The projections for the future are, frankly, dire, with potentially disruptive warming, more and stronger storms, species extinction, flooded cities...a long list. And climate change is not the only pressure on the biosphere. Habitat destruction, toxic substances, non-native invasive organisms, fresh water extraction, and other forces also threaten the viability of species and the ecological services that support people. Humans have permanently altered the systems that make Earth a habitable planet. So dominated is the Earth by *Homo sapiens* that ecologist Eugene Stoermer and

Nobel-prize winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen have suggested that we officially designate the 21st century as the end of the Holocene and the beginning of the new *Anthropocene* geological epoch.¹

How does an ecologist teach college students in such a climate of fear and catastrophe, when the very subject matter of his or her field is at risk and the solutions are not clear? A recent article in the *Yale Forum on Climate Change and the Media* reminded me of the similarities between teaching and parenting. Authors Allison Guerette and John Wihbey express the difficulty of parenting in this new age as follows: “Climate change offers a unique parenting challenge: a steadily-rolling disaster to which we all contribute, punctuated by periodic events and mounting scientific evidence. It calls into question the very way we live and the world we will leave for our children.”² Like the many parents interviewed for that article, I’m still struggling for an answer about how to teach my college students at the dawn of the Anthropocene. Here are some thoughts, personal in nature, but perhaps helpful to other teachers (and parents).

Tell the truth but...

I don’t restrain the truth about the state of the planet. That may seem obvious, for my job as a teacher is to help students explore, synthesize, and comprehend the most up-to-date version of truth offered by my discipline, to help them better understand the way the world works through the lens of the ecological and environmental sciences. This means teaching about how organisms operate in the environment in which they live; the ecological and evolutionary principles that govern the natural world; the methodological and philosophical approaches by which we learn how nature works; and the application of this knowledge to the interactions between humans and the rest of nature, i.e., using, conserving, and preserving nature. These elements—content, methods, and habits of mind—help students place harsh realities like climate change into a rigorous scientific context.

Students don’t respond well to doom and gloom – who does? But I am committed to telling the unvarnished truth, and I must tell it through the clear voice of a scientist. Adam Schneider, speaking of his father, Stephen Schneider, one of the world’s foremost climate scientists, commented, “He didn’t really sugarcoat things. He gave us enough detail that [global warming] was a serious problem. One thing he really prided himself on was that you

¹ Paul Crutzen, Geology of Mankind, *Nature* **415**, 23 (3 January 2002) doi:10.1038/415023a

² Allison Guerette and John Wihbey, *The Yale Forum on Climate Change and the Media*, April 23, 2013, accessed on 6 June 2013 at

<http://www.yaleclimatemediaforum.org/2013/04/parenting-in-an-age-of-climate-change-communicating-the-tough-truths-to-children/>

have to be honest about these things. You have to trust [children]. And you can't spoon-feed them so that it reduces the reality."³ The challenge in telling the ecological story of the planet is finding the right balance: enough gravitas, enough reality without excessive foreboding and pessimism. Isn't it enough, for example, to have students study the already frightening range of projections for temperature rise by the year 2100 without phrases such as "point of no return"? (Isn't every moment in history a "point of no return"?)

While hewing to the truth, I find that I must also hold out some measure of hope for students, even when the solutions are not forthcoming, as in the case of climate change. As environmental psychologist Rajiv Ramil argues, "scaring people can be counterproductive."⁴ We have to show students possible ways out of the problems we've created, and actions, even small ones, that will contribute to solutions. It helps to emphasize that these changes in behaviors and policies can lead to other benefits for people and society: improved health, self-sufficiency, enhanced communities, etc. The truth is that we don't know how bad it will be. Climate change projections are probabilistic in nature, not certainties. We also don't know whether solutions are in the offing; when in history have game-changing solutions or inventions been accurately anticipated before their creation?

How an interdisciplinary approach can help

An interdisciplinary approach to teaching can be especially effective in providing hope, context, and perspective for big, serious subjects like climate change and the ecological state of the planet. This goes far beyond pedagogy, for climate change is *not an environmental issue*, or, at the very least, it is not *just* an environmental issue. Climate change and the state of the planet is an *everything* issue. What I mean is that a full analysis of the causes, the mechanisms, the impacts, and the solutions connected to climate change requires multiple disciplines, perspectives, and ways of knowing and expressing. How can we understand the roots of climate change without the help of historians, the impacts without economists, the failure of civilization without artists, the personal consequences without psychologists, etc.? Climate change will in time affect everyone on Earth, and all scholarly disciplines will in time take on the issue in one form or another.

In my teaching, I don't pretend to be a psychologist or an artist, but to the best of my ability I tap other disciplines to help frame the science of

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

ecology generally and climate change specifically. There are great benefits to this, I think, for my students. Philosophy, for example, can lead us to ethical guidelines about living a meaningful life in a world in which we all contribute to a problem that will harm future generations. An understanding of physics helps us distinguish real solutions from mere hot air. History tells us that humans can change their behavior and that societies in the past have adapted to environmental stress, as well as the characteristics of those that did not.⁵ These broader perspectives provide authentic raw material for hope. They also help non-majors realize that issues like climate change are within the purview of their own disciplines, not just something natural scientists do.

I am no different than my students when it comes to needing hope in the face of environmental damage. Perhaps I need it even more than they do, for as Aldo Leopold wrote in the 1940s, “One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise.”⁶ I can be that doctor and I believe that our students can also be that kind of doctor if they perceive that there is hope, and a chance to make the world a little better through understanding and personal action. Neil MacGregor, historian and Director of the British Museum, considers “Hope as the defining human quality—an encouraging thought.”⁷

Teaching climate change with an interdisciplinary approach also offers profound educational benefits. Is there an issue that is more far-reaching, that touches so many disciplines, that matters so much to the future of humankind and the planet? In other words, isn't climate change and the state of the planet the quintessential liberal arts topic, one that not just encourages but requires a synthetic, interdisciplinary approach? I am emboldened by this realization to exploit this silver lining, to use it to demonstrate for students the core nature of knowledge: it is continuous across academic disciplines, dynamic, exciting. The issue of climate change plays to the strengths of small liberal arts colleges such as UMF that foster a

⁵ See, for example, Jared Diamond, *How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, Viking Press, New York, 2005.

⁶ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, England, 1949.

⁷ Neil MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, Viking Press, New York, 2010, page 30.

sense of community and innovation, where faculty members reach across disciplines to enhance their scholarship and teaching. UMF has already started the process of using climate change as a central interdisciplinary theme; I advocate that we build on that foundation.

Why do I have to teach this stuff?

I sometimes wish that I could go back in time and teach an older, “purer” form of ecology, unblemished by sad stories of endangered species, polluted lakes, forest destruction, etc.⁸ You know, just focus on the old notion of a “pristine nature” apart from people. But I am beginning to feel differently. In the spring semester of 2013, I was part of a faculty group that developed and coordinated an interdisciplinary speaker series on *The State of the Planet, Intergenerational Justice, and Our Collective Future*. The series was revelatory and inspirational for many, including myself, because of the wide range of perspectives, the immense context of geography and time, and the sense of hope. Charles Langmuir, a Harvard geochemist and author of the book, *How to Build a Habitable Planet*, delivered a provocative talk, using multiple disciplines to contextualize and plainly describe our current predicament.⁹ After Charles’ talk, I asked him whether he found it difficult to teach and write about such depressing topics. After his usual contemplative pause, he firmly replied that, above all, he found it a profound honor to be that person, that teacher who tells this most important story at this most important time in the history of human civilization and the Earth. I feel similarly. Maybe it helps to be an intellectual, for who could ask for a more fascinating time to be a professor—a time marked by immense complexity, dynamism, and import. The honor of teaching during these turbulent times inspires me to consider the role of colleges like UMF in the age of climate change. What is our collective responsibility? What should we be teaching? Can UMF be a model for western Maine, for the state, for academia? What sort of force does UMF want to be at the beginning of the Anthropocene?

Inspiring students to care

Truth, rigor, perspective, honor, and hope: heady words and I think

⁸ Of course, since 1866, when the discipline was defined and named by Ernst Haeckel, such a discipline of ecology, pure and disconnected from damage to nature, has not really existed. See, for example, *Man and Nature* by George Perkins Marsh (Scribner and Sons, NY, 1865).

⁹ Charles H. Langmuir and Wally Broecker, *How to Build a Habitable Planet: The Story of Earth from the Big Bang to Humankind*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2012. Professor Langmuir’s presentation can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/66365818>.

powerful tools for helping students to navigate the complexity and uncertainty of these times. But are these enough? This may sound strange coming from a *scientist*, but I also want them to *care* deeply. I want them to care not just about themselves and their families and other humans—most of us do—but also about wild creatures and, well, to put it sentimentally, *Mother Earth*. How can I encourage such *feelings* as a teacher?

Aldo Leopold, one of the founders of modern conservation, wrote in his classic, *A Sand County Almanac*, “We only save what we love. And we only love what we know.”¹⁰ *Knowing* in this context means seeing, touching, learning to identify, and exploring the lives of real organisms in their natural habitat. At the beginning of all of my courses, I take my students outside and teach them to identify 25 common Maine tree species. I’ve recently expanded the taxonomic breadth in the spring semester to include frogs and salamanders that breed in vernal pools. My goal is to help students *know* the sugar maple and the red spruce and the spotted salamander and the wood frog. Perhaps, as Aldo Leopold argues, if they *know* these creatures, they will *love* them and by extension *care* about them and all of life on Earth. I know this to be true: “Natural history encourages our conscious, respectful relationship with the rest of the world and affirms our sense of beauty and wonder. When we engage in this practice of attentiveness, we reaffirm our commitment to nurturing hope.”¹¹

I seem to have come full circle in my life as an ecologist from *knowing* the red salamander in the mountains of North Carolina to teaching my students to *know* the blue spotted salamander at the other end of the Appalachians. Does my *knowing-loving-saving* approach actually work? Have I assessed the effects of this teaching strategy? I wouldn’t know where to begin. I can only hope that it does.

Drew Barton is Professor of Biology at UMF. He is the author of the recent book, The Changing Nature of the Maine Woods, and once, on a dare, licked a poisonous salamander.

¹⁰ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, England, 1949.

¹¹ Thomas L. Fleischner, “Why Natural History Matters,” *The Journal of Natural History Education and Experience*, Volume 5, 21-24, 2011.

Reform, Assessment and Magical Thinking

Paul J Gies

A new teacher takes over, at the beginning of the academic year, a class of students who are all middling majors in an old, well-established discipline. She looks at the past record of these students and this class as taught at this institution of learning, and concludes that the course material needs to be both shaken up and firmed up. There is no coherence in the sequencing of topics; there is no continuity in teaching methods; for four prerequisite courses in this sequence, there have been four different teachers with four different styles and concepts. The instructors have been inconsistent and some of them downright unstable. The only thing they all seemed to agree on was that theory should be ignored in pursuit of practice. The concept of curriculum organization beyond the level of the individual day's lesson seems entirely absent.

So the new teacher, who is a veteran of both administration and real-world practice, sets about reforming the curriculum. She concentrates on the class before her, but, like any good administrator, she has one eye on the big picture, the broader fit of the course and even the sequence of courses into the whole curriculum of the school. She can see all the way up from the student to the class of students to the course to the sequence to the school's whole concept to the way it fits into the society which it serves. And she is in no doubt that the point is to serve society. She feels very strongly that the faculty around her have missed the forest for the trees. Some of them are blissfully unaware of any real world out there. Some feel that they have earned, through their erudition and their scholarship, a free ride from society. Some feel that society ought to do more to pay them back for their intellectual brilliance. Some, indeed, have allowed their teaching and their scholarship to wander off into regions of discourse and study that their peers outside of academia, people just as intelligent and educated as they are, would not even recognize. Many have simply ossified. Like the proverbial barnacle, they have found a safe place to settle and attach for the rest of their lives, they have built an impenetrable shell, and they have let their brains atrophy. They already know what they need to know, and no one other than them is qualified to say they're wrong.

And among these gargoyles of education, the students wander half intimidated and half scornful, scrabbling for good grades on pointless assignments as they move along the conveyor belt of education toward their inevitable graduation.

So our professor, who fortunately has plenty of backing in the outside community and especially in the leadership of the nation's educational body politic, tears off the old sheets in the book of curriculum and starts afresh on a blank page. Students will receive a thorough grounding in theory before they're turned loose on practice. Sequencing is vital: the big picture must be visible at all times. The tangle of undergrowth must be cleared. The forest must be seen, even if it means some trees have to be taken down. No more will the students be turned loose on things they don't understand, sent out to play in the mud with dangerous mental tools.

And it's vital that their progress be assessed: you can't tell if they're ready to walk until you have real data on their crawling ability. Since education serves society, and since society pays huge amounts for educational institutions, society deserves a clear accounting. Is all that wealth going to accomplish anything worthwhile? And what that means is that before students can move on from one course to the next, or graduate and enter the service of society in whatever form, they need to be thoroughly tested. Those tests need to be carefully aligned with curriculum, which in turn needs to be carefully aligned with the testing strategy.

Needless to say, this endeavor does not go unchallenged. The new instructor's backing in the outside world protects her from attack by the other faculty members, who respond with a predictable range of hostility, indifference and ineffective sabotage. The leadership of the institution, in particular, suffers loss of face and then loss of power as it tries to deal with the perceived threat from her reforms. Everything they try to undermine her serves only to increase her power and prestige.

The students are a different story. Their resistance is more like a guerilla war. They liked most of their previous instructors in the specific curriculum she's reforming, and they like most of the other faculty of the institution. She tells them, in an unguarded moment of anger, that the whole point of education is for them to do well on the tests. What she means is that since the tests assess things that society and the bureaucracy—and their own parents—think are important, lessons must be aligned with those things; a lesson or a unit or a course or an entire program can only be considered successful if the students do well on the assessments. That's what she means. But what they hear is that practice no longer matters, and they simply know that's not true. To them, her concentration on theory isn't a ground-laying for practice; it's a substitute for it. Society doesn't want to prepare them to use their tools to challenge its current structure; society wants their brains filled up with meaningless angels-on-the-head-of-a-pin questions so that they *won't*

challenge its structure. They see society with the eyes of the young; its problems seem enormous, full of monsters and demons rooted in the past, their tentacles and tendrils infiltrating every institution of society with the possible exception of their own beloved school. They can't wait to get out there and use their education to fight the battles that need to be fought. The tests seem to them mere trivia contests; all this educational reform seems an endless hall of mirrors; the new faculty member herself seems just another little tyrant, a bully in the schoolyard dressed in the garb of authority and academia. They know she doesn't belong here, but why she doesn't belong isn't that she's an outsider, a bureaucrat, an administrator; why she doesn't belong is that she doesn't, for all her plans and ideas, understand the basic mission of the institution.

So, in rebellion against her laser-like focus on theory and her intensive application of assessment and her insistence on the rule of Rules above all, they set up their own classes in secret. They choose the overall best student among them—not exactly the most academically gifted but the one with the best combination of skill, knowledge, experience and leadership—and ask him to organize lessons that will concentrate on Practice. The straight A students line up behind him, and soon most of the B and C students are there too. He tries to refuse but they won't let him; so he throws his whole brain and heart into the effort, teaching by doing, splitting them up into groups to work together and then going from group to group, offering lots of encouragement, lots of compliments, lots of suggestions. Each lesson, each session, he teaches them a particular technique or skill, and soon they are all teaching each other. The worst students are brought far upward, accomplishing things they had no idea they could accomplish; the best become almost co-teachers, learning the theory by having to teach the practice.

And so, side by side, two systems teach two sides of the educational highway. The “reformist” teacher hammers home the abstract without attaching it to practice at all, ruthlessly assesses, and then rewards and punishes on the basis of performance on tests. The rebellious students practice and practice and practice and start to see the theory by organizing the practice. Eventually, of course, the conflict between the two tracks bursts into the open, and while I would like to say that they all recognize the value of both views, that's not what happens. Ugly scenes ensue, the faculty mostly sides with the students, parents and the government get into it, and in the end the reformist teacher loses out. Her place is taken by a disliked but familiar veteran faculty member with a mandate to return to basic principles and stern, but not oppressive, discipline. The students are not victorious but feel vindicated. The institution and the forms of outer society turn with renewed purpose to take on the still

menacing problems of the world outside the school's walls.

Needless to say, this is not a story about the virtues of supplemental instruction. No one in the above corresponds to the U. S. Secretary of Education or the Provost of the University of Maine at Farmington. Nor is this a story of the failure of reform, because both sides are reformist in a general sense. And it's not about the No Child Left Behind system, or attempts to extend it to the college level. No, the reformist instructor is named Dolores Umbridge; the student leaders are named Harry James Potter and Hermione Granger; the institution is none other than Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

I teach mathematics. It's the job I was hired for by the University of Maine at Farmington in 1995, and it's the job I still do and love, in particular teaching math to future elementary teachers. That area is one especially prone to the types of conflicts described above—society has a lot of expectations of elementary teachers, often conflicting, and college faculty are peculiarly difficult to directly influence and peculiarly frustrating to bureaucrats and administrators. Assessment is understood to be both vital and dangerous. (But it should be emphasized that the story, which summarizes one major plot line of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, is not in any way an allegory of life at UMF or education in Maine!)

But the embarrassing fact about me as a math teacher is that I went all the way through college once without taking a single math class. I earned a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Iowa in 1978. (I went back for a bachelor of science in education degree, with a concentration in mathematics, at Northeast Missouri State University in 1986.) Thus I was always somewhat of a spy in graduate school in mathematics. My best experiences were in courses like C. Everett Dade's Representation Theory class, where there were a few assignments that were so hard and so large that the students were forced to work together—we actually organized informal seminars to grapple with the concept of the character table. Instead of Harry and Ron and Hermione, we had Wally Dabrowski and Tom La Framboise and Mary Lynn Reed. When I taught classes as a teaching assistant, I gravitated toward programs like the Merit Workshop and Unit One: in the Merit Workshop, all teaching was done by giving students practice work in class and telling them practically nothing to begin with, and in Unit One, students were taught by a variety of methods in a classroom in the residence hall where they lived, right outside their cafeteria and across the hall from a room full of Macs with Mathematica software, and far away from the supervision of the Department of Mathematics.

Nonetheless, when I arrived at UMF, I found myself on Square One, because I was assigned to teach half my load in elementary education math courses, and I had not been in an elementary classroom since I was there as an actual child. But UMF was clearly a place that nurtured the use of imagination in teaching. That's why I had applied here in the first place, though I was supposed to be looking for jobs within a few states of my graduate alma mater, the University of Illinois, and of my parents and my in-laws, in Michigan and Iowa respectively. That sense about UMF was reinforced by my interview visit to Farmington, which was the first time I was ever in Maine or in a state adjacent to Maine.

I got here and I was surrounded, dare I say *even* in the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, by imaginative, playful, innovative teachers like Pete Williams, Gail Lange, Maggie Wyckoff, and of course the Great Scribner. (That would be David Scribner. The first time I met Theo Kalikow, who had become President the year before I arrived and who only just retired, she rounded the corner in the basement of the Computer Center, saw me and cried out, "Where's Scribner!?") Pete Williams, in particular, taught me pretty much all I needed to know to start teaching elementary teachers: I sat in on his MAT 104 class and drank in his style, his method and his attitude. Among other things, this included art projects that made the students use their geometric learning to make something of their own devising, an abstract design, a 3D object, a clever tiling. And from Scribner I learned the value of teaching elementary majors with math concentrations the complexities and simplicity of abstract algebra.

And that brings me to the actual heart of what I wanted to say in this essay. Every fall, with just one exception since the late 1990s, I have had the privilege of teaching MAT 213 Algebraic Structures or its 4-credit successor MAT 313 Introduction to Abstraction. As 213, I used Scribner's in-house text; as 313, I used my own, *Examining Abstraction*. The purpose of the course always needs to be explained; it's a sort of Canada of math courses, where questioning the very identity and purpose of the course is part of its identity and purpose. I take people who want to teach math to children in kindergarten through eighth grade, and teach them mathematics that normally is reserved for junior or senior college mathematics majors or graduate students. They learn about groups, Abelian and non-Abelian, cyclic and non-cyclic; they study rings and fields and hear terms like zero divisor and idempotent and centralizer. They get very good at identifying generators and when there are no generators; they get comfy with the Dihedral Group; they know just about all there is to know about Z_n . But *why* do they learn these things? Why do we make them learn abstract algebra when they're never in their most bizarre nightmares going to need to teach that stuff to anyone?

There are a dozen or so reasonable answers to these questions—for instance, if you’re going to be not just a math teacher but your school’s certified Math Expert, shouldn’t you know what it means for an operation to be commutative or not commutative, to have inverses for all elements or not? But my favorite explanation goes as follows. These students are going to be my colleagues and are going to do what I do, but their job is much harder than mine. They will be teaching basic operations to kids who have never seen anything like them before. They are the teachers who are going to take their kids past the comfort of the intuitive math that practically everyone knows by a sort of instinct, and into the math that is full of inscrutable rules, impenetrable justifications and inexplicable procedures. Why is it that when you multiply 42 by 29, you take 2 times 9, which is 18, write down the 8 and save the 1 to add to the next column? Why are there even columns? And it’s not that these future teachers need to learn just the right answers to all these why questions. What they need is to be prepared to think at that level of *why*, and think reliably and consistently and fast, and they can’t learn that without learning content that is beyond anything they’ve ever seen before.

So here we have, in several ways, the conflict between abstract and concrete, between theory and practice, between testable and realistic, between the beauty of higher mathematics and the grimy work of teaching and learning. And the question for me is not whether it’s even worth learning the theory, but how you should go about climbing from the material world in which numbers are numbers up into the theoretical world where, as we all know, suddenly one finds oneself adding letters to letters.

Here are two examples: one from the lower end (MAT 103 Math Content for Elementary Teachers) and one from the upper end (MAT 313).

If Umbrage were teaching about exponents—and Goddess knows there are plenty of Umbrages teaching K-16 mathematics—she would make her students memorize facts like $x^m x^n = x^{m+n}$; students who had the right side of this as x^{mn} would get detention with those tormenting quills. No, you little fools, it’s $(x^m)^n = x^{mn}$!! This nice emphasis on theory above all has one major advantage: learn the formula, and you automatically learn every instance of the formula. If all you know is that 3^2 times 3^3 is 3^5 (that is, $9 \times 27 = 243$), then how do you ever know that 5^7 times 5^9 is 5^{16} ? It’s like having minted money instead of bartering for everything. Except that this *efficiency* is totally *ineffective*. Students tend to be perplexed by all the formulas, because they look so alike. Sums, products, what’s the difference? And if the point of the formula is to help students understand algebra, it’s peculiarly dependent on algebra itself to do so. If I don’t get how you can even add two letters

(shouldn't $m + n$ be some new letter that has five legs?), then how is this going to ever get across to me? Students make mistakes on this in MAT 103 even *though* I tell them to check by putting “real numbers” in for the letters. It's not because they do the numerical work, the arithmetic, wrong: it's because they just don't do it. They've been taught by Miss Umbrage in high school to rely solely on the letters. I can't get them to do otherwise even though they're prone to error.

On the other hand, if you learn just a few instances like 2^3 times $2^3 = 2^6$ ($8 \times 8 = 64$, as most 4th graders know) while $(2^3)^3 = 2^9$ ($8^3 = 512$), the abstract follows. The Egyptians knew the Pythagorean Theorem (in a right triangle with legs a and b and long side c , $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$) but they phrased it somewhat like this: “If you have a triangle with sides 3 cubits, 4 cubits and 5 cubits, it's a right triangle, because $3 \times 3 + 4 \times 4 = 5 \times 5$. And that always works even if the numbers are different.” In other words, they focused on practice and let the theory follow; you can see the same sort of thing in other cultures new to complicated math, all the way to Fibonacci introducing Arabic numerals and mathematical ideas to Europe. The emphasis on theory over practice is just backwards. People get to theory *through* practice, not the other way around.

The other example is a contrast between my own grad school experience of non-Abelian groups—mathematical structures where the operation doesn't satisfy the beloved and familiar “commutative” property, that AB has to be the same as BA —and the experience my MAT 313 students get. I was taught that there was such a thing as a non-Abelian group, I was given lots of very brief examples, and I would have known that some operations are obviously not commutative: $10 - 3$ is not the same as $3 - 10$. But I wouldn't have been familiar with the details of any simple example. My students, on the other hand, in Week Two of the course, in fact on Day Two of the course, learn about the thing we call D_4 , the dihedral group of the square. D_4 consists of all the ways you can move a square around and put it back in the same space it left: you can, for instance, rotate it one quarter-turn to the right (we call that R_1) or flip it top-to-bottom across its horizontal midline (we call that Flip Horizontal or F —). They make little squares and number the corners and put an arrow pointing up on both sides so they can tell what they've done to the thing. Then they turn them and flip them and write down what happened and correct each other and laugh at each other and themselves and have fun with it. And pretty soon they know a bunch of things that I would never bother to make them memorize: rotations are commutative among themselves; R_2 commutes with everything; R_1 times any flip is going to be different from that flip times R_1 .

That's Week Two. By Week Three, my students are all over the dihedral groups. It's almost as though they'd been doing them since grade school. They are learning things that are totally abstract—the things in D_n aren't even things, really, they're not even as concrete as numbers are, they're verbs for gosh sakes. But students learn them with actual physical objects, and they learn about the elements by playing around with them.

It's not that we're avoiding the theoretical. It's that we get there through the concrete. We start in the real world and take the path up the mountain, stepping from rock to rock. We don't lie on our backs gazing at the clouds, talking about what it might be like up there.

When I was fifty years old, J. K. Rowling was already an astronomically successful author. I resisted her allure, oh, how I resisted. But at UMF, because of the sort of place UMF is, I got to teach an English class, on the New England horror writer H. P. Lovecraft, and inevitably other writers wandered into the figurative room—Rowling, Tolkien, Douglas Adams, Stephen King, and behind them Shakespeare, Dante, Homer. At one pre-fall-semester faculty meeting, I found myself having lunch with Theo Kalikow, Mary Schwanke and Pam Mitchel, and the topic of their conversation was which of the Harry Potter novels was the best. They had opinions and they debated them, grounded, as any good academic opinion is, in both their theories about literature and what happened to be their views of the stories. (Kalikow, our former University President, is a Philosophy of Science expert; Schwanke has a PhD in biology and is a former chair of the Department of Natural Sciences; Mitchel has a PhD in physics, and teaches both science and math classes at UMF.)

That was when I realized that, in the Star Trek phrase, “resistance is futile.” The next year's Lovecraft class happened to consist entirely of students who had made it through at least three of the Harry Potter books; half had finished Book Seven; a quarter, according to my survey, had read them more than once. And now they could put Lovecraft's economy of description, his drapery of almost impenetrable darkness and his stretches of centuries of time next to Rowling's carnival of wizards and witches and wild action and her half-buried deep past. Many of them could compare those to Tolkien's millennial history and tightly woven tapestries of myth, to Stephen King's blood and emotion and deep character study, to Adams's brightly colored characters thrown together in the midst of ironical tragedies and looping threads of connection.

Of course the point was to get them to write. I would never propose to force

a college student, as a requirement of graduation, to read Lovecraft or Rowling or Tolkien (well, maybe Tolkien), but they need to be able to write, and their lives will be better if they can write imaginatively. But I have no intention to present them with the One Hundred Greatest Works of Literature and lecture on What These Immortal Geniuses Have to Tell Us. What I do, and I'm hardly alone in this, is turn them loose on as much good (if flawed) fiction as possible, and ask them to make their own connections, and express those connections in writing (and talking).

And the point is, dear reader, if you have made it this far, that theory doesn't *not* matter. It's just not a good place to start. Everything we know from our own experience of learning, from history, and from Piaget and others, says that you start with the concrete and climb up it to the abstract. And just to nail that down, let me tell one more little story.

When the Internet came and changed everything (except how we eat, how much we sleep, what we drive, most of the jobs we do, how we have and raise children, and how we maintain our residences and our vehicles, that is) there were plenty of people in my business who were all about jamming this year's innovation into their classes. Graphing calculators. E-mail. Mathematica. Power Point. Laptops. Databases. Blogs. Skype. YouTube. Ten percent of your grade will be based on how often you post to the chat room. I was in the middle of the pack: I did manage to incorporate Mathematica a little, e-mail a lot. Graphing calculators are handy little gadgets, and cheaper than a new Kindle. I use my laptop people, as I call them, the students who always have a laptop open in class, as sort of volunteer internet checkers. "Hey, what's Wikipedia say the definition of 'necrophagous' is?" Well, it's a use of technology in the classroom, okay?

But there was once, not long ago, a certain math class in which all the students were struggling with material that they not only did not understand, but also did not understand the point of. The professor had been teaching that class for many years and had changed little of his method. Still, some of them had had him for other classes, and they were not afraid of him anymore. Some were his Facebook friends. At that time, being recently divorced, the professor was on Facebook more often, perhaps, than is good for one's mental health. In any case, one of them, then another and another, found it quicker to message him on Facebook when they had a question than to send him an e-mail. This began to happen so frequently that the students resurrected an old Facebook group for the class, which had hardly been used even the year it was created. The professor began answering questions there, for all to see. Within a week, every student in the class was in the group, and

often by the time the professor got to see a posted question, it had been thoroughly digested and then answered correctly by other students. They began posting YouTube videos there—not educational ones, just fun ones that reminded them of the class. Math-related Facebook “memes” jostled against congratulations for student teaching placements and happy birthday wishes. The prof recorded a couple of video demonstrations of how to move a cube or an octahedron around—see? This is an edge flip. Let me do that again—clearly order two, right? All of this was informal in the extreme. There was a complete lack of coherence, of planning, of structure, of assessment, or of incentives such as grading.

It was, in short, learning done by whatever method worked. It was students (incentivized, of course, by their overwhelming desire for good grades in the class) who put all the air into the balloon. All I could do was react (and look upon them with increasing admiration): of course, this was my class and I was the old professor. And the students learned one more thing beyond the material of the class and the value of working together: they could perfectly well see the use of the Internet as adjunct to the classroom. They could see it better this way than by four straight years of being required to make a certain number of blog posts or a certain number of contributions to online course chat rooms.

J. K. Rowling, I think, did not write *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* as a white paper on education reform. Clearly she had a point of view, but it was secondary to the story line. Years ago, when asked about his educational philosophy, one old education professor of mine said he was an “eclectic pragmatist.” All that means is that he knew a number of approaches and took the one that worked. The content isn’t the method; the method is chosen to fit the content, and whatever method works is the correct one. But then how do you assess your work? The question is the same as it’s always been: Are the graduates going to be able to do what you need them to do?

That is the one and only learning outcome that matters, whether it’s solving linear equations, writing a decent memo, knowing how to attack a problem they’ve never seen before, or saving civilization from tyranny. Or, even better, teaching the next generation to heal the battered world.

Paul J Gies has been a professor of mathematics and other things at the University of Maine at Farmington since 1995. He aspires to be a writer and also a better teacher.

Frost Heaves: Change and the Teaching Life

Beth Hatcher

In frigid zones such as Maine, the ground freezes each winter. In the spring, as the sun's rays begin to warm the earth, the ground rises up and expands. Frost heaves cause problems particularly with our rural roads... the ground breaks up the pavement. The edges of boulders appear in mid-road as if pushed by a magical force from within the earth's core. Frost heaves are the source of minor frustrations and major repairs. The results of frost heaves can damage cars and cause accidents. Eventually, however, the frost heaves settle down. As the ground responds to the warmer days of spring, the bumps and holes even out. The pavement is never quite the same, but the bone-jarring encounters lessen. The road crews assess the damage. Perhaps only minor repairs may be needed... at other times, more extensive work may be required.

As a new faculty member coming to Maine from a milder southern climate a few years ago, I had never experienced frost heaves... never lived in a place where the ground froze and remained frozen for months at a time... never even heard the phrase *ice heaves* or *frost heaves*. Of course, like any other driver in the 21st century, I was familiar with potholes and rough roads. The idea that the ground heaved up in spring, breaking the road surface, with resultant stress to both cars and drivers, was completely foreign to me, not unlike the new experience that I tackled by entering the academic life in mid-career as an early childhood professional.

Change is like that... like the frost heaves that break up the solid pavement, causing us to proceed with caution. These frost heaves rise up in unexpected places. Change breaks up the solid and smooth pathway of our lives. Change, whether the result of our own choices, or springing from events beyond our control, disrupts our daily patterns, and introduces the unexpected. The process of change may challenge or damage, may be healing or hurtful, but is, in its very essence, never static. We are never quite the same after major change; we always bear the imprint of it. Whether we embrace the change or avoid it, settle into a new normal, or rail against the damage done, we are forever impacted by this change. Stephen Pinker, in his provocative book *How the Mind Works*, says "mental imagery is the engine that drives our thinking about objects in space... imagery drives the emotions as well as the intellect." (p. 285).

The mundane frost heave, thus, became a significant mental image for me—a way of thinking about change in my own life, linking emotion to thinking, and then expanding to making connections with the learning

process itself. Frost heaves are those elements that catch our attention, break up the status quo; they may rattle us to the core. We incorporate these changes into our new shift in focus. In the best of worlds, those frost heave experiences cause us to remain alert and adaptable to what lies ahead.

Although I've been a teacher in one form or another most of my adult life—with my own children, with preschool children, as a mentor and supervisor—shifting from the more informal world of classrooms full of young children to the high expectations on college campuses has certainly been a *frost heave* for me—a self-designed break from a more familiar career pathway to a more uncertain, but more exciting, future. Frost heaves need not completely stymie us. They can break up our lives in meaningful ways (whether for good or ill) and allow us to take stock of where we are and how we are approaching our particular pathway.

Environment and Learning

It is obvious to those of us who live in Maine, but perhaps not as much to those who live elsewhere, that frost heaves only occur in the context of a particular environment. While drivers everywhere are plagued with potholes, Floridians may experience sink holes, and hurricanes and flash floods may wash out roads, the frost heave is a unique phenomenon of a cold climate—more particularly a cold climate that also has an accompanying spring thaw. While frost heaves can and do occur in many places, the ones that particularly affect our personal well-traveled roads are the ones that call for our attention. The jarring jolt, the sudden compression of the shocks on our cars, the rough ride—all combine to get our attention. An environment that includes frost heaves is one that is carefully designed to incorporate change. Carter & Curtis (2008) are early childhood experts in establishing environments for creative learning. Their work on creating a “nourishing classroom culture” (p. 35) informs my own teaching every day. Such ideas as the teachable moment, experiential learning, and open-ended activities contribute to the unique early learning environments that I try to re-create in my college classroom.

My academic training occurred in a family studies program, and the ecological systems view of life integrated in all coursework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) helped me to see the interrelatedness of learning, and the environment that surrounds each of us in unique ways. I suppose as a function of my early childhood focus, I have always paid particular attention to the learning environment as I teach. The types of learning that we wish to encourage, the deep discussions or active explorations that we find so important with young children, i.e. the constructivist approach (Piaget, 1954) occur in settings that are carefully constructed to allow this type of thinking to emerge.

Paradigm shifts

I'm not original in thinking that teaching college students is not all that different from teaching 4-year-olds. Although I spent many years in the preschool classroom, the shift to the college classroom was not a complete shock. Is it too much of a stretch to think of one aspect of a frost heave (change) as a paradigm shift? Certainly that is how my own journey into academia occurred, as I began to re-frame my research interests of creativity and school readiness into avenues to explore with teacher education students at UMF. I shifted from the direct influence model, which included daily encounters with young children, to training future teachers of that same preschool age group. I recall the absolute silence and blank looks (or, at best, looks of confusion or disinterest) of the seniors in my UMF research class one fall semester as we began to discuss the idea of learning paradigms and shifts in thinking. Identifying a common learning paradigm seemed the first step, and we struggled through this idea—I, helping the students to recognize the constructivist paradigm that permeates our UMF early childhood program—they, (students) beginning to show glimmers of understanding. Undaunted, I continued in my quest to challenge students to examine their own learning frameworks, with the goal of embracing change. I now use my early childhood math course as an opportunity to achieve a sort of paradigm shift for the students. Often, students enter the course with varying degrees of math phobia, expressing a dread of math, and feelings of inadequacy as a future teacher of math. Just as often, a few weeks later they leave with a shift in their paradigm. This frost heave of change surprises the students. Unexpectedly, they begin to view math as essential and integrated into life, and have shifted their self-image to include a fresh approach to the topic. I can only hope that shift becomes permanent as they venture out into their careers.

Interruptions

In my former role as a school administrator, I spent my days dealing with problems and crises, large and small. Feeling particularly frustrated with the inability to “get something done,” I began to read and think about the role of interruptions in my work. A colleague shared a new idea with me—her realization that, instead of interruptions side-tracking her work, the interruptions WERE her work. At the risk of seeming somewhat trite or simplistic, this idea seemed to have a direct link to the teaching life. I brought the idea of welcoming interruptions into my own academic career, both in the classroom and in peer and student relationships. While interruptions are not always generative, I have found that the frost heave of interruption may lead to serendipity, that unexpected discovery that moves a

discussion along, or transforms classrooms into places of authentic learning (It can also lead to a very long work day...)

Risk-taking

Often we approach a frost heave with trepidation. We don't exactly know what to expect, but we do know that something has changed in our normal route. By taking a risk, the excitement of something new is possible. Whether teaching for five years or twenty-five, the newness of teaching remains enticing. Each semester offers the opportunity to start over; each fresh face represents another chance to create a learning environment that stimulates and stretches. While Ayers (2001) describes teaching as "creative and dazzling" (p. 1), in all honesty it is rarely such. But those moments, those precious moments, when a student reaches beyond her own self-consciousness and risks sharing her disagreement—these are the elements of teaching that energize. Essentially, all learning is about taking a risk. Some experts in reading instruction have suggested that the struggles that current-day children have with reading may be a function of their unwillingness to risk error as they attempt to master this complex skill (Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff (2003). Taking risks with our own teaching does mean examining our own pedagogy every single semester, with every single course. This may not be comfortable or safe, but the unpredictability of each encounter is the reward.

Relationships

The final aspect of teaching that comes to mind is relationships, and this is a bit of a stretch for my present lens. At first glance, it doesn't fit into the symbolism of a frost heave at all. The startling and amazing thing about teaching is the opportunity to establish some sort of connection with students that goes beyond transmitting information, judging the worthiness of essays, or commenting upon practices. In early childhood education, in particular, we emphasize that true learning cannot take place without an underlying relationship of trust and security that allows children the courage and resilience to step out on their own, to try new things, in essence: to risk failure. Alison Gopnik studies infants, looking for the roots of relationship-building, and finds it in the basic connection of emotion and cognition. She states that even very young infants can demonstrate empathy, asserting that "Real empathy isn't just knowing that other people feel the same way you do; it's about knowing that they don't feel the same way and caring anyway." (Gopnik, Meltzoff & Kuhl, 1999 p. 181) Isn't this type of interconnectedness what we strive for in our work? Thus, I near the end of my discussion on the teaching life with the most important factor, the underlying foundation that will eventually become the bedrock of any venture-how to connect the

emotional aspects of learning to the cognitive ones, how to form the relationships with students that will help them to make authentic meaning, and—dare I say it—how to inspire those students to love the relationship with the learning process as much as they might wish to master content or complete course requirements.

Aaah... now I see a somewhat tenuous connection that will allow me to continue my metaphoric look at change and teaching. The relationship is what is left when all other elements have disappeared, been filed and forgotten, or when content has changed so much that a field or profession is hardly recognizable. It is the relationship that we remember, after all, when recalling certain courses. Rarely do we point to amazing content, or if we do, we couch it in terms of the teacher who made that content come alive. When I ask students to recall a “math memory” from their school years, content is almost never mentioned. It is the relationship with the teacher, for good or ill, that shaped the memory, and either fostered or hindered the learning that took place.

In its most basic form, then, this is the teaching life for me: stripping down to the essential underlying elements that allow learning to happen. Shifting perspectives and breaking up accepted practices — yes, that is important. Designing environments that are contextual, invigorating and surprising—again, essential. Embracing interruptions and taking a risk—foundational ways to incorporate new ideas and examine long-held beliefs.

All of these things are some form of change... and it is when the change happens and the subsequent “settling down” process is over that the strength of the underlying foundation makes the difference. It is change and the unexpected encounter that enables me to continue in a profession that is often misunderstood, vilified or discounted, yet rarely praised. Bouncing along or bottoming out, detouring or pushing through, the journey continues. Spring frost heaves settle into summer repair work, patches are made and new pathways established...and the road continues. I have not been disappointed.

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Two Small Sticks

Katrazyna Randall

As I set out to write this essay I began with a very linear and logical organization of my thinking about contemporary curriculum development in the arts and the dialog surrounding it. However, I wanted to write about the act of teaching. Teaching is an extension of my conceptual and creative process, which is a perpetual and integrated process, and is never linear in form. As an artist I am constantly focusing on observation, translation and contextualization, or more accurately re-contextualization. I, and many like me, pull things (objects, images, histories, theories, thoughts) from their original and rightful context, and use them and their associative language to construct meaning. This process is rarely linear. So I went through this carefully organized essay and pulled out some essential bits without the long-winded rationales. I mixed them up, and followed with some stories that inspired my thinking, in hopes of conveying the real passion I feel for these life-long experiments we call teaching, learning and art.

Reflections and Provocations

Why I teach, what I teach, how I teach and/or why I teach the way I teach.

Some may argue that the most essential skill of the artist is observation; others might argue perception or translation. Some might rather say such things as joinery or life drawing. I think that each and every artist defines their own list of essential skills, and these can range from writing to sculpture, from rhythmic spitting to painting, from movement to a single word. To me it is the idea that demands the medium and if the important skill is joinery, then it seems that a good work would demand that there be a good reason for two things to be joined.

If the role of art is to observe, then it must observe everything. The sunrise, the sunset and all that happens in between, everything just and unjust, everything beautiful, everything weak, everything wrong, everything sloppy, broken, poetic, funny--everything. Its viewing angle must be wide and it must be honest even in its lies.

If the role of art is to reflect our existence, to document our lives, to draw the lines of history, it cannot afford the time to be overly self-reverent. It must reflect upon everything that is happening around it.

If the role of art is to present models of thought, to move culture forward, to engage in a cultural dialog as it has throughout the centuries, than it must be all-inclusive. Art must acknowledge difference but it must also acknowledge

the linguistic roots of difference or it becomes a tool of destruction rather than celebration.

Many theorists argue that art is dead, that it has conspired against itself. Many call for the playing of taps while others call for a new definition. To me it means simply acknowledging what it has always been, language.

Language is power.

Image is language and carries with it a great responsibility.

Art above all else must shed the tastemakers, or its history and purpose is lost.

Definition of art = Intent + Audience

Good art = Purpose

1745–55; translation of Latin *artes liberales*: works befitting a free man: those subjects which in classical antiquity were considered essential for a free citizen to study.

The private liberal arts institution continues this tradition from antiquity but the PUBLIC liberal arts demands democracy. It empowers the people with the freedom due to all men and women.

Visual art is, in my view, the crux of the persuasive or free arts. As an educator, I am not interested in training young artists to entertain or delight their benefactors. I am interested in cultivating the minds of free thinking, responsible, and committed citizens.

The focus on the individual is counter-intuitive to the survival of the individual.

Today's students are too polite, too reserved, too quiet, too passive. They let their education happen to them. If they let their education happen to them, they will let anything and everything happen to them. They must learn to make it happen. "It": meaning their education, everything, and anything.

Human beings have a natural proclivity toward creative behavior.

To teach is to offer up the world in all of its physical, social, emotional and intellectual intricacies and complexities to curiosity and inquisition.

We are social animals; everything we do or don't do is a force with an equal

and opposite action or reaction. Everything we do or don't do is a political act.

Art is a political act!

Interdisciplinarity is essential in fostering good citizenry.

We often ask our students if they have had an interdisciplinary experience in a class, knowing that if it were truly interdisciplinary they wouldn't identify it as such.

The creative impulse isn't enough.

It is essential to create a reading list that is open to a variety of contexts and perspectives, that is self-referential in its parts, that is born from diverse cultural and economic perspectives, that is shrouded in enough mystery to propel a desire to seek more information, that reflects a common human experience or understanding, that casts a wide net, offers an open view, and is cyclical in its approach.

I depart from investigations that are self-referential within the discipline, and view art as a multidisciplinary social inquiry and interaction. Students must acquire an ability to grapple with, internalize, respond to and problem-solve in a dramatically changing and complex world. They must be able to carry the central dialogues in a variety of disciplines such as the natural sciences, economics, political science, philosophy, sociology, psychology and literature. They must also acquire a working knowledge of the complex subtleties that lie on the periphery of these central dialogues, as this is where life happens and where art lives.

In a contemporary post-structural environment, there are no absolutes, there is no singular voice or primary dialogue, but a variety and diversity of experiences and perspectives born of individual backgrounds, interests and understandings. Acquiring a working understanding of the textual differences in varying dialogues is fundamental in understanding one's own interests in research and making.

One can no longer teach art without teaching about the work of African American artists, Latino and Native American artists, women, gay and transgender work, or any other cultural group, as they make for the core of the conversation. However, it is imperative that we also study the very recent

history that exemplifies a stark and eerie absence of these voices. It is also imperative that we investigate the rage and candor in which these voices forced themselves to be heard, as it marks a fundamental change in the study of aesthetics and the demise of beauty as the central dialogue and concern of the practitioner. Art is, and has been for centuries, the study of beauty and aesthetics. The absolutes contained within this dialogue have marked the life and purpose of the artist throughout the ages. The pursuit of such has represented authority, power and privilege. In the contemporary dialogue, one must be able to grapple with its rather sudden absence.

The complexity of intertextuality forms the human experience, the learning experience, and the art experience.

Diversity in the reading list, democracy in the classroom, and fostering a respect and curiosity for each other's ideas lay the groundwork for the building of a learning environment, but cultivating a sense of responsibility toward each other's education and growth functions as the adhesive.

Within teaching, there is an assumed hierarchy, which I find completely counterintuitive to fostering curiosity and inquiry. My biggest challenge in the classroom is to transfer the power over their education to the students.

Failure is the perpetual confidant of the artist. Each successful piece of work becomes a collection of failures that spawns the next piece of work. A fear of failure cripples experimentation, limits the depth of one's investigation and makes for a shallow and superficial dialogue. As artists, our job is to communicate something to the world, or have a dialogue with our community. As our audience is a complex and ever-changing animal, failure is inevitable. People who do not embrace the failures in their work separate themselves from their audience and limit their own personal growth to small isolated strokes. Failure is what separates art from craft. It moves the artist from methodical isolated practitioner to active participant.

I often say that you don't learn to teach from having been taught, because each student, each classroom, and each course presents its own teaching challenges. Teaching is where I continue to learn to teach.

I am most acutely aware of fostering an introspective and responsible culture of active citizens.

Art is by my definition the point of social interstice.

Teaching isn't about delivery; it is about collaboration and conductivity.

Interdisciplinary Foundations

Many years ago, between my undergraduate and graduate work, I taught high school art on an island in Micronesia. A close friend of mine, with whom I shared a love of Shakespeare, taught English and was struggling with a group of belligerent boys who refused to read Hamlet. These boys were about to be thrown out of school and the principal asked if I would give them something “hands on” to keep them out of trouble. I agreed to help out, and started to meet with these students every day after school. We sat down to investigate their interests and, not surprisingly, we discovered a shared interest in rap. So, predictably, we set out to turn one of Hamlet’s soliloquies into a rap song, which they performed beautifully, with baggy jeans, backward baseball caps and hibiscus flowers behind their ears. It was great fun, but I still hadn’t gotten them to read Hamlet.

After some thought I decided that we would write a script based on a Public Enemy song, and perform a sort of one act play. This was amazing, but I still had not gotten them to read Hamlet. So we sat down and talked and I tried to explain to them that Hamlet and many of Shakespeare’s plays were in many ways similar to origin stories. We began to talk about some local Chamorro myths and contemporary tragedies in the community. We talked about how these things related to different Shakespearean plays.

In the end I asked them to read Hamlet or another Shakespearean play and combine what they learned from it with a Chamorro myth or a contemporary tragedy, and either write a play, a rap, or carve a story board that investigated at least two of these things in a contemporary context.

I finally had them engaged in a way that connected to their lives. In this moment the whole world blew apart. They read Hamlet! Well two of them did, two read Romeo and Juliet and one read Othello. They researched inner city life in the US, and they took a new look at their own traditional stories. They began to recognize the connective tissue among all of these forms, and the social role they played historically and in contemporary society. The work that came out of this project was wonderful, but our conversations provided the foundation for my interest in teaching.

Representation and Experience:

While studying as an undergrad, I was instinctively interested in creating images that examined issues that I thought were important. I had a painting professor who insisted that I simply paint for the sake of painting, that I reflect on and pull inspiration from the material itself. She said, “If you want to have an impact on the world, become a farmer. Feed the poor. Art doesn’t have that kind of power.” Many of us have heard similar declarations, and many of us continue to believe in them. It certainly hit home for me, and it took some time to resolve.

Years later, while traveling with a friend, I ended up in an area of the southern Sulu Islands in the Philippines. These islands were strife with violent political, religious and socio-economic crisis. We had traveled to this area for the sole purpose of diving a virgin reef. Discovering such a stretch of reef means traveling to parts relatively undiscovered, undocumented and without reports of current activity, so I did not know nor was there any way to find out that I was stumbling blindly into a war zone that would become almost completely blocked off from the rest of the world because of rising violence.

We were soon whisked away to a remote island by a Muslim matriarch who promised us safety and distance from the conflict. While she worked very hard at keeping her promise to keep us safe, she did not, by any means, provide us with distance from the conflict. Nightly we heard machine gun fire outside of our reef hut. In the mornings there was little evidence of the nocturnal skirmishes, save a few bullet holes and the occasional bloodstain. Except-- one morning we woke to find a woman's body floating in the water near the sea gypsies' trading dock. The body remained there for days, and when I inquired about why it remained there, floating and decomposing in the village, I was told that no one dared to claim it, as it would identify what side of the conflict they were on, and bring trouble to the whole village. I inquired about the dueling sides, and discovered a very complex web of internal conflict. Economics was clearly at the foundation. People were hungry; children's bellies were inflated with the gases released in the last stages of starvation. Large international fishing fleets were undermining the sustenance-based economy, their life style traded away in an international conference room. The story was complex, with 3 different indigenous groups: the animist sea gypsies, the pirates, and the Tausug Muslims, along with the Christian Philippine government. As I sat there, looking at the woman's body sandwiched between piles of shucked sea shells, I noticed that she was completely surrounded by a colorful band of American snack wrappers, and her t-shirt was emblazoned with the familiar Nike swoosh. Someone had claimed her body after all. Somehow, at that moment, I was struck by the power of image, and simultaneously those long-forgotten words came back to me. "If you want to have an impact in the world become a farmer, feed the poor" There below me, Nestle, Kraft, Pepsi... American brands going to the furthest reaches of the world and feeding the poor. After several weeks, a revolutionary sect of the Tausug Muslims discovered that Americans were in their midst; that a real hostage opportunity had presented itself to them out of nowhere. We were snuck out of the village in the middle of the night, hiding under a tarp at the bottom of a fishing boat. Passed from one sea gypsy to another, I finally found myself safely back amongst the "civilized" on the island of Mindanao.

Before leaving the southern parts of the Philippines, my travel partner wanted to see one last thing. Off the southern tip of Mindanao was an “authentic” Tausug Muslim village known as the slum on stilts. This village, like most we had seen throughout the southern Sulus, was built completely on stilts over the waters stretching off the coast of Mindanao. This village was particularly heralded as a place to see because of its intense poverty and its complex system of construction. I didn’t have any interest in it. I had seen enough. I wasn’t going to invade this community of struggling people to see their poverty. My friend insisted, so I waited on the shore while she ran off with her camera.

As I sat there, a woman approached me. She said, “Why does your friend want to see poor people?”

“I don’t know,” I said.

“You don’t like?” She asked

“No, poverty? No, I don’t like.”

“Who are you?” she asked

“Teacher,” I said.

“Ah, teacher. She teacher?”

“Yes.”

“Stupid teacher.” She said.

I didn’t reply.

“What you teach?” She asked

“Art.”

“Art?” She asked. “Real art? Come, come” she said, “the artist good, plenty, plenty good. Come with me.”

I went with her into the village. She took me around to meet people and told them I was an artist. They held my hand; they bowed; they said “good, good art good”.

Finally she took me to a small shack, and a crowd had grown around us. We sat down on the floor. They gave me a bottle of water. I was introduced to a woman who I presumed to be a matriarch. She asked me if I knew who Martin Luther King was. I said yes, of course.

She said “Hero, yes”

“Yes,” I said.

“Freedom fighter,” she said.

“Yes,” I said.

“You?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“Me too.” she said, “we freedom fighters, Christian, Muslim, we don’t care.” she said. “Freedom, equality, good life. Artist best freedom fighter. Artists see. Artists make good change.”

I was so overwhelmed from the experiences of the last few weeks that I just

broke down at this point and cried. She kissed my forehead and held me and I wept like a baby.

What I knew was that the prisons in the Philippines had seen their share of revolutionary artists. Put there for the content of their work. I also knew that just as many had been buried in the ground for using their work as a tool to question the inequalities and injustices in their midst. I had been told that they were imprisoned, tortured and murdered for images demanding change, and for simple images of hope. I, and my profession, acquired credentials amongst these people through the bravery and sacrifice of their national heroes. But I was American, and the truth of my heritage lay in the refuse of candy wrappers and packaging that littered the surrounding waters nearby. Perhaps farming was the answer for the idealistic western artist, or perhaps the role of the artist needed to expand to include the world.

The Power of Semiotics

While living in Micronesia, I became friends with the woman who worked for my landlord. She was a domestic laborer and worked all hours of the day and night, taking care of children, cleaning, cooking, managing everything that had to do with their home, as well as their rental properties. As a courtesy she was sent to my apartment to clean once a week. I did my own cleaning, so I would invite her in and give her that time to rest. I would make her some tea, and we would talk. At first this was nearly impossible for her; she was scared, and she insisted on cleaning or leaving. After some time she began to trust me, and she relaxed. Some days we would talk; other days she would fall asleep sitting up her chair. She worked around the clock and was paid a meager \$300.00 a month, and provided a bed in the corner of a pantry and some food. Over time we became good friends. I found out that at some point she had become pregnant, and was sent home to have her baby in the Philippines and then brought back after the birth. This was done so that her son would not acquire citizenship in Rota, an American Commonwealth. Over the time that I knew her, I witnessed several violations of labor laws, and offered to help her in the pursuit of a fair salary and fair working conditions. It was also highly illegal for her employers to force her to go back to the Philippines to have her baby. I offered to help her bring her child back to the island. She refused, out of fear.

At some point I decided to go to the Philippines. I asked her if there was anything she wanted me to do. Could I convince her to try and get her son back... anything? Perhaps just a visit? No, no, she said. A few days later she came back and asked me if I would buy a pair of Nike sneakers from the US and bring them to her son in the Philippines. I was perplexed but I agreed. I ordered a pair of Nikes from the US and paid \$110 for them, plus shipping, for a 4-year-old boy.

Her son and her sister met me in Manila to retrieve the sneakers, along with some boxes of clothes and gifts that his mom sent along with me. We visited for a while and he opened his gifts. When he opened the Nike box, silence filled the room, as though our eyes had set upon the Holy Grail. The sneakers were passed around the room for everyone to touch, and they were fingered like a precious and powerful object. It was during this adoration that I noticed the tag inside the shoes. It said made in the Philippines. Stunning. Over the next few days I discovered that there were street vendors on almost every block selling Nike sneakers for \$10 a pair. European and American tourists were buying them like hotcakes. A few days later, I was walking to the pharmacy, and I was suddenly surrounded by a group of street kids like a flash mob. They were asking for money, food, and trinkets--anything that I would be willing to give. They patted me down and then ran off when they discovered I had nothing. These children ranged from the age of 5 to 16. They were barefoot and barely clothed. They were all maimed, missing half a hand, an arm, an eye. When I reached the pharmacy, there was a French tourist in there asking the man behind the counter who these children were. He explained in a very disgusted tone that they were worthless criminals, injured in the factories. They couldn't work any more and their families couldn't afford to feed them, so they were shunned by their parents and left on the streets. What factories did they work for, she asked? Mostly Nike, he said.

Stunning!

Upon returning to Micronesia, I asked my friend why she wanted me to bring these sneakers from the U.S. to the Philippines since they were made in the Philippines and sold on the street for \$10.

"You don't understand!" she said, "Those aren't real! Only ones that go to America are real!"

...

While I was in Pai, my friend was trying to teach me to speak Thai. She was very intense, and in Thai the word for "come" (as in "come here") is "maa." Apparently the way I pronounced it, it meant cow. Or at least Prachuan thought it sounded like a word that she thought was the English equivalent of cow.

At any rate, I never got it right, because I could never really hear the difference. When I wanted her attention I would say "Prachuan maa". She would yell back at me, "I not cow!"

"Don't get so angry," I said, "You know what I mean."

"You cannot change meaning," she said.

Soon everyone in our group of friends was calling Prachuan a cow.

"See," I said, "We changed meaning. Now Prachuan means cow."

"No, not we, you," she said, "I still not cow!"

Much to Learn

I spent a few months living in a little town in northern Thailand called Pai. It has since become a rather bustling tourist destination, but when I was there, it was a remote and eclectic mountain jungle village full of philosophy and art graduates from the University of Chang Mai. It was funky and laid-back, inquisitive and introspective: a reflection of the people who lived there. The occasional tourist or group of tourists would come through, and so I worked for a small Thai business that provided elephant rides, river rafting trips, and jungle expeditions.

Not long after it became evident that I was staying for a while, a variety of invitations arose. The first came from a group of men who met every Tuesday night for dinner and drinks. The core of this group was comprised of a retired philosophy professor, a monk, a businessman, a gay couple who called themselves the “glorious members of life,” roughly translated, and a young protégé who was found eavesdropping outside of their window. This boy was so fascinated with their conversations, they boasted laughing, that he hid beneath the window listening every Tuesday night for months before he was discovered and invited to join them.

Before I joined them for the first meeting, I asked my friend Pratchuan who they were and why they invited me. She said they were a group of observers and thinkers, and they knew I was an artist, also an observer and thinker. The discussion topic of our first meeting was the western concept of ID and its relationship to Buddhism. The conversation was slow as their English was minimal, and embarrassingly my Thai was much worse, but it was, for me, a glorious affair. I was stunned at how much they expected me to know, particularly about Buddhism, and I was blown away by how much interest there was in what I had to offer in the dialogue. The meetings continued, and were one of the highlights of my experience there. We played wonderful games. Two people would stand up and debate a topic, while the others would clap and yell out new challenges. In one such debate, about the ethics of business in a Buddhist community that was, they thought, soon to become a tourist destination, I was asked to perform as a Buddhist monk in opposition to the businessman. The monk in our group slapped his knee, laughed, and jumped up and down over many of my points.

Another debate, which I will never forget, was on the function of ID in the artist and the Buddhist monk. I was in the peanut gallery for this debate, and laughed and laughed while the debater performing as the artist was getting slammed by the monk for the unmanageable size of his ego, and the questionable morality of stirring the desires of possession. The more I laughed, the more ruthless they got. Then, between gasping for breath and

my laughter, I said. “But when one takes the teachings of an atheist naturalist and worships them as the words of God, isn’t this dependent on a robust ego as well? This kind of knowing would require the ultimate id, no?”

The laughter was uproarious. The gay couple fell to the floor, laughing, rolling around, kicking and wriggling like two playful kittens. The young boy jumped up and down, yelling yes yes yes. We all collapsed into a pile of laughter, and then, as it died down, someone said, “we know nothing, this is good feeling” and we all laughed again.

After a few moments, someone else said, “We have much to learn.”

Civics

When I was traveling in Bali, a young mask maker told me that all citizens had to participate in the arts, through painting, mask carving, sculpting, playing music, dancing or some other sort of performing. If they did not participate, they would have to pay annual taxes at the equivalent of \$2,000.00. Considering that the average citizen earned approximately \$20 a week, this was a significant financial burden. I have not been able to substantiate this statement, but a fellow traveler said, “Wow, that’s harsh.” “Harsh?”

“A difficult burden,” he clarified.

“No, no,” the sculptor said. “This is not a burden; this is our civic duty.”

“Art is your civic duty?” I asked.

“Yes, of course,” he said

Of course.

Why UMF

The first group of students I had the good fortune to work with throughout their entire degree program were gathered in front of the gallery with their parents, to make introductions, to present their work to their families, and to say their final goodbyes. Within this group was a single Mom who had ventured from her hometown up north for the first time to see her daughter graduate from college. She did not own a car and had never left the small village where she lived since she herself was born, worked, and raised her daughter. Farmington was the big city for her, and she was wide-eyed with excitement, wearing the glow of adventure on her cheeks. Her daughter, a first-generation college student, commiserated with her, describing a similar feeling that she had experienced the first time she went to Boston on a school trip, then New York City, and finally on an exchange in France. They talked about how she was returning to France to teach English in a few weeks, and her Mom literally gasped at the wonder of it all. Her daughter did return to France to teach, then moved on to a highly prized internship in Seattle, Washington, and is currently embarking on her first year of Graduate

School at the School of Visual Arts in NYC.

This particular student made feminist work. Her animations were full of female nudes, their breasts turning into balloons exploding and collapsing or losing air and zooming off into the ethers, turning into thought bubbles, and establishing a feminine intellectual voice. I expected Mom to freak out, but the gallery filled up with her laughter and her declarations of “isn’t that the truth?”

Toward the end of that afternoon, Mom pulled me aside and asked, “Would it sound ridiculous if I said I think I want to go to college? Do you think someone as old as me could be a student here?” I knew at this moment that I would probably retire at UMF. With all of the challenges of working for an underfunded institution, we are provided with an opportunity to truly have an impact in our community, and change people’s lives. As I look around, I know that that is precisely why most of us are here.

Conclusion

At night, I have this recurring dream. A massive colorful amorphous blob floats in the sky, some strange combination of a gooey children’s toy and the northern lights. Oddly, in this dream, I am a conductor reaching toward this unreachable shimmering blob, and trying to whip it into some kind of form with two small sticks. It is massive, filling the sky with its shimmer and color, its darks and lights, its whips and tails, its slithering skin, its airy tendrils. I am a cartoon, tiny, futile, hopeful and absurd; standing on a small stone anchored to the shore I work my little sticks into exhaustion. It is big. It is important, I am ill equipped and may never know if my little sticks and I have had any effect at all.

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A Film's Blueprint

Nathaniel Teal Minton

The first time I taught screenwriting after years as a working screenwriter, I was handed someone else's syllabus... and it baffled me. The major assignment for the semester was to write half a screenplay, and to me this seemed a bit like baking half a pie, the filling leaking out onto a bare pan as the half-moon crust collapses and the student is left with something ugly and unsatisfying that can hardly be called a pie. I understood why the syllabus was written the way it was; writing even half a screenplay is no small undertaking, and the students would have written scenes and dialog, essential ingredients for certain. But in my opinion, completion was the only way to learn that screenwriting is about creating a whole self-contained story-system. Professionals know this, but there is no academic field of professional screenwriting or pedagogical work on which to build a syllabus, so two weeks into that first semester I asked my students if they thought it might be possible not only to learn an entirely new form of writing, but to finish a complete draft, rough to be sure, but whole nonetheless. They were game for trying, and took on the project with gusto, managing to accomplish the nearly impossible task of writing a feature length screenplay (100-120 pages) in just sixteen weeks.

Now, my syllabus requires it, and every semester, something like magic happens in my classroom, or so it would appear to anyone visiting during the last four weeks of class, when students' complete screenplays are workshopped. What they would miss are the struggles, the false starts, the reevaluations of character, plot, and motive, and the self-discovery that comes with learning what one's story is really about. This visitor would perhaps marvel at the imagination, humor, and ingenuity of these works. What they wouldn't see is how it began, and every class begins with the same question.

What is a screenplay?

On the first day I tell my students that a screenplay is not a novel, it is not a play, and it is never meant to be read. A screenplay is a story told in pictures, a blueprint for a film, a sequence of scenes, a highly formalized expression of causality, and an instruction manual for actors, directors, cinematographers, property masters, set dressers, costume designers, and bankers, among the throng of professionals it takes to bring that story to life. Writing a screenplay is like composing music, and if you do it right, the audience will never see the notes, but view the work as a whole, with meaning created in the aggregate.

So how do you write one of these blueprints?

First, you need an idea, a foundation on which you'll build first the story and characters, then the scenes, and lastly the dialog. I can't emphasize this enough, and I spend time during the first few weeks of class showing examples from films and trying to prove that Hitchcock was right when he said, 'First we write the screenplay, then we add the dialog.' This is a counterintuitive idea for most people who watch movies and assume that words, the words spoken by actors, are where writers focus their craft, because what else is there for a writer to write? The answer is story, because the medium isn't language, but images and events in linear time — dialog is merely a tool for conveying that story. This is perhaps the most difficult concept to teach and learn because cinematic thought and logic are so different from the language-based genres in creative writing such as fiction, poetry, and non-fiction. Your audience will sit there for two hours, experiencing music, sound effects, images and sparse dialog, arranged by the writer in the engaging and evocative logical sequence we call story. And in screenwriting, the story premise is everything. If you want to write a screenplay you need a story.

Great, how do you come up with a story?

It is often said that writing can't be taught. That while you may be able to teach grammar, syntax, and technique, you can't teach talent, imagination, or creativity, and while this is true to some extent — you can't teach someone to be Mozart — my hope is to create a classroom environment where whatever spark of inspiration a student brings on the first day is nurtured, developed, and teased into fruition. When students come to class in the second week with their story ideas, some are vague notions of place, situation, or character, others draw from or comment on existing genres, but they are all based in the student's interests, sensibilities, and unconscious obsessions. They are wildly diverse, from intimate family dramas to science fiction epics and surreal comedies. The discussion is lively as we try to imagine the movies they might become — Are we interested, compelled by the story, is it something we want to see? Who's the main character? What do they want, need, or care about, and what's standing in their way to create conflict? What's going to happen? Does it make sense? Has it been done before? I always ask, 'How does your story end?' because without an ending it isn't yet a story, and without knowing the ending it is impossible to know how to begin. Then I ask if it's even something the writer wants to write because by the end of the semester they will have spent countless hours, many sleepless nights, and no small amount of cognitive energy trying to shape that idea into a hundred pages of dialog and description. If students have an ending, and can find some pleasure in writing

the story, I tell them, ‘Do not start writing scenes yet. Work the story. Create an outline. Look for opportunities to push the story further, increase the tension, or make things worse for the characters. Make sure the characters are making decisions and taking actions that have consequences. Try to learn what your story needs before you start writing scenes then find your characters meandering around discussing what should happen next, because a screenplay doesn’t have time to meander, adhering instead to the constant forward motion that is the defining reality of the medium.’

So what does a story need?

I tell my students to pick up any book on screenwriting, or visit the countless websites that offer advice, where they’ll find step-by-step methods to reverse engineer successful screenplays and assemble a reasonable facsimile from a formal structure that in broad strokes is defined as, ‘a strong central character overcoming obstacles to reach a goal.’ Dig a little deeper and you’ll find out that screenplays are told in three acts, or five, or seven, that comprise the set-up, conflict, and resolution, and are broken at the points when characters make irreversible decisions. These rules, instructions, diagrams, and conventions dictate on which page the initially reluctant protagonist must proactively embrace their goal, how at the midpoint the story must dramatically change course without changing the goal, and that on page ninety the protagonist must feel that all is lost before discovering the glimmer of hope that was foreshadowed in the first act. Spend enough time studying these structures and you’ll quickly realize just how accurate they are, that nearly every movie fits the formula precisely, and that once you learn them you’ll never watch movies the same way again.

So you just follow a formula? It sounds like hackwork.

Yes and no. There is a formula in the same way a sonnet has fourteen lines of iambic pentameter, a symphony has four movements, a ballad has thirty-two bars, and a house has walls, a floor, and a ceiling. While poets, composers, architects and screenwriters follow these forms, they aren’t simply filling in the blanks; they understand that creative expression is not limited by these constraints and that an artist can use them as a basis for transcendent work. We know too that these forms contain the truth, substance, and message of a story — journeys must come to an end, love must survive stormy weather, the killer will be brought to justice, and the destitute orphan will find a home, because there is good in the world, except when there isn’t — and defining those consequences, creating a logical and moral causality for their character’s actions, is how the writer articulates meaning. This balancing of form and imagination is the challenge screenwriters face, and while the books, websites, and weekend seminars

from screenplay gurus may nod dutifully to things like inspiration, diligence and creativity, their real purpose is to provide analytical tools that establish a screenwriter's vocabulary, a sort of professional shorthand, and an introduction to structure and form. These are tools of craft and execution, not imagination, and too heavy a focus on them can lead a beginner to a frustrating, paint by numbers experience, while not focusing on them enough will lead to a directionless screenplay that lacks narrative momentum and the characters are left to explain the story to each other in dialog. Spending time developing an outline before putting the first words down on the page will go a long way toward preventing that from happening in the first place, and by the fourth week, outlines in hand, the students begin writing, and suddenly the characters start speaking, taking actions, and making decisions. The world comes to life, rooms are furnished, sets are built, and the defining images of the film take root in the writer's mind before finding their way onto the page with as few words as possible. Screenplays are meant to be read quickly — at the speed of watching the film — and the astute writer will clip sentences, put paragraph breaks at the key moments of action or description, and be constantly aware that every page equals one minute of valuable screen time.

So you do get to write words after all?

Yes, by all means, now that you know your story, your scenes will have purpose, and it is time to delight in language, let your characters speak, give them personality, and engage with them as human beings, bring empathy, humor, and conflict to their conversations, reveal their inner workings through the careful choice of a phrase. Describe the locations with engaging details that move the story forward, and above all be flexible because as the scenes are fleshed out, discoveries are made, plans are hatched, and things may go awry — a minor character might catch the writer's interest and assert some influence on the plot, getting two characters in the same room at the right time can create a geometric puzzle of timing, location, motive — and the outline is reworked. Scenes are written and discarded. More often than not, the writers in my class will write the first ten or even twenty pages before realizing how much needs to be introduced, explained, dramatized, and set up in so few minutes. So they scrap it and start over with a clearer focus on writing toward the act breaks, the dramatic moments, the turning points and ultimately the ending. At this point they are sprinting a marathon and the job of the class becomes that of coach, letting them know they're running in the right direction, offering guidance when necessary, identifying problems and working through them together, while being mindful to nurture their inspiration for running in the first place, because it can be a lonely, confusing, and terrifying race to the ending. In

discussions we break the traditional creative writing workshop protocol of not letting the author speak during discussion, because this is a collaborative form, and while the script may begin in a single mind, the final product, the film itself, is not the vision of one person, but many. Everything the writer puts on the page must be understood by these collaborators and justified in terms of budget, because along the way things will change. A location might be unworkable, the weather won't cooperate, and dialog that might have been necessary on the page becomes extraneous when visuals can do the work for you. Learning how to talk about your story, engaging the ideas of your collaborators, and being willing to sacrifice the aspects you may have come to love, in the interest of making the story stronger, is vital for the screenwriter, because at the end of the day what the writer has created is a foundation of story, a formal expression of their ideas, a sequence of events that leads an audience through time to a meaningful conclusion, and while the specifics may change through the collaborative process, it is this structural intent that will survive, create meaning, and define the film.

For me, the last four weeks of class are an absolute joy as the students race to the finish, feel the satisfaction of handing in a complete work, and come to understand the form as a whole. We read four screenplays a week and discuss them in depth with an eye toward what is working, what is memorable, and what the writer might focus on in their next draft. Screenwriters think in terms of drafts, and revising a screenplay is not a matter of polishing dialog, cleaning up the typos, or trimming a few scenes, but a full-on reevaluation of the story and how the parts work together. This may involve adding or cutting whole subplots and characters, reworking the plot points, and rewriting the beginning to fit the end.

This again is no small task for student, but when they are ready, I am waiting in Advanced Screenwriting to show them how it's done, to guide them through the process, and once again delight in seeing the fruits of their imagination come to life.

Nathaniel Teal Minton is Assistant Professor of Screenwriting at UMF. He has written screenplays for Paramount and Columbia, and his fiction has appeared in McSweeney's, Torpedo, Zyzzyva, and others

Wandering Together through History

C.S. O'Brien

"I've decided what I'm going to write my senior thesis on."

"What's that?"

"I want to look at women."

"And?"

"I don't know. It's just an idea. Do you think I could do something like that?"

"I'm not sure I know what 'that' is. When and where? What questions would you ask? What have you read on the topic? What have other historians said?"

"I don't know. I guess I'd have to know those things, huh?"

"Yep."

"I guess I'll have to think about it."

"OK. If I can help, if you need someone to bounce ideas off of, or need some help finding readings, let me know."

"Thanks. This was really helpful. Maybe I shouldn't write about women. It sounds complicated."

Historians live in boxes.

It's true of all disciplines, of course, but as I am what I am, I can readily acknowledge that historians' view of the past is not the lone means of understanding that territory. The dimensions of that box for historians are relatively easy to define. The subject is the past, the documentary record is the guide, and all guesses to fill in the gaps must be modest and readily defended by the materials available. To fill those gaps, historians are amazingly catholic in their borrowing from other disciplines. Sociological and economic models are common, scientific and literary methods filter in, insights from psychology, law, art, and innumerable other ways of understanding are all incorporated. And what emerges is not quite the past,

but our creation of what we believe or want the past to be. Did Lincoln ponder the appropriate words for the Gettysburg Address? The answer is almost assuredly “yes,” as he wrote several drafts of the speech. Yet there is no way to get to “pondering” other than this somewhat sideways approach. Imagine how much more difficult it is to get into the mind of a president facing a major decision when he does not write his own speeches. Or, worse yet, contemplate the difficulty of understanding the mind of an ordinary American in the past. Presidents live their lives in the pages of newspapers, leave extraordinary troves of documents behind, and are surrounded by people who place the White House at the center of their own recollections. Ordinary individuals do not live such lives. Thus the past that students confront is contested territory in ways they often had not anticipated. Ferreting out what happened, and why, is a process of discovery, of best guesses when the evidence is spotty, and of judgment calls about whether a verb might apply.

For most, the process begins when the student walks into that first history class in college. If all goes well, there is a moment, when standing at the front of the room, looking out at a sea of surprised faces, that the joys of the historical process become apparent. It’s that moment when they find out something new about the things they had always believed to be so, when the past grows much more complicated than they had imagined, and when it dawns on them that history is not simply a list of facts to memorize, but an argument about meaning that continues to speak today. The best of them also realize that a mutable past need not be Orwellian. Instead, in asking questions of the past, we are not changing it so much as defining ourselves. As a field, US history was fundamentally transformed when we began to look again at the documentary record, and discovered that the Pilgrim Fathers were accompanied by Pilgrim Mothers and Pilgrim Children. The people they met were actual people with histories and stories of their own and not mere victims of European expansion. It doesn’t sound very revolutionary now, but it roiled the field as our understanding of the past grew more complex and more inclusive. It is always thus within the field. New evidence and new understandings are perpetually recasting the past.

“I’ve been thinking again about my senior thesis.”

“Yes?”

“I’ve decided I want to write about women.”

“What about them?”

“They were important.”

“Sure. When? I mean, always, but when do you want to look at them?”

“I don’t know. Maybe France?”

“When?”

“When the Romans were there?”

“That’s interesting. What have you read about it so far?”

“Nothing. I thought you could loan me some books.”

“I’m a historian of the Cold War. I look at politics, economics and society, mostly of the US, from the end of World War II until about 1992.”

“I know. I was in your class.”

“Then why would you think I’d have a book about women in Gaul when Julius Caesar was wandering around?”

“I don’t know. You have a lot of books.”

“None on that, I’m afraid. It is an interesting idea for a topic. Have you been to the library?”

“Not yet. Do you think they’d have anything?”

“We can check online from here. Or you could go talk to a reference librarian. They live for moments like this. Tell them I sent you, although my guess is that they will have already figured that out before you even tell them.”

“Are they nice?”

“Yes, but I do think that ‘helpful’ is probably more important in this case. But they are very nice.”

“OK. Thanks. Can I come back and talk to you about this later?”

“Sure. That would be great.”

The field of Cold War history is, of course, relatively new. The phrase, popularized or invented by the journalist Walter Lippman (depending on which scholar you believe), generated a first wave of what might politely be termed “court histories” by Americans in the 1940s and 1950s. Assuming that the United States had acted both rationally and altruistically to save the world from the communist threat, these same historians nonetheless were divided early on the question of Soviet intentions. Was communism a quasi-religious force bent on global domination, or was it merely the fig-leaf for a state that behaved as other large powers always had? As historians are bound by the sources that are available, and the Soviet Union was notoriously unwilling to share the documents of its internal workings, the early historiography now appears pockmarked with conjecture, speculation, and one-sidedness. And yet, this early material remains incredibly important—and for many Americans, forms the basis for their understanding of the field.

The first breaks in the narrative arrived relatively early: Nikita Khrushchev’s eventual consolidation of power in the post-Stalin years forced reconsideration, at least temporarily, of the communist threat. The power-struggle that saw his ascension had left the Eisenhower administration cautious but hopeful. As we know, it left many in Eastern Europe feeling the same. Khrushchev, however, proved unwilling to consider a peaceful dissolution of the Soviet sphere and, mild American protestations aside, little was done publicly when again and again Soviet tanks pushed down liberation movements in East Germany, in Hungary, and elsewhere. In fact, historians, once hopeful that the ebullient peasant who had taken power would be different than the totalitarian Stalin, increasingly came to believe that Soviet leaders were incapable, either psychologically or institutionally (depending upon which historian one reads) of change, and that thus fundamental rapprochement with the communist state was impossible.

What emerged in both American politics and in Cold War historiography was a “consensus.” In politics, that bipartisan consensus was that the Soviet Union, nominally an ally since WWII, represented an existential threat to the US. Both Democrats and Republicans agreed that the Soviets were the cause of American woes abroad, and US historians agreed with that agreement. It was not always a happy fit, of course. That thread of fear was evident in the broader population, as evidenced by the second Red Scare that saw a purge of schools, universities, labor unions, and other organizations. Those targeted in the scare tended to be politically liberal (or at least they had been so during the 1930s) and outspoken. Even the American Association of University Professors, normally a bastion for academic freedom and first amendment rights, denounced communists in the classroom. As the scare ebbed in the

wake of Joseph McCarthy's famous flameout, reconsideration began. Within the broader society, traditional peace, antiwar, and anti-nuclear testing groups occasionally coalesced to question America's role in continuing the Cold War. Their gradual success in pushing the world toward a nuclear test ban raised fears among some conservatives that "those commies" were winning in America, too. Historians of the Cold War rode these waves of public sentiment and often incorporated them as the subtext of their narratives.

"Do you have a minute? I've been to the library, looking for stuff on my thesis."

"Women in France during Roman times, right?"

"It was."

"Not now?"

"I found something else that's pretty cool."

"What's that?"

"I was watching the History Channel and they had a documentary on Vikings."

"Yeab?"

"I thought I'd write about Vikings. That has to be easier."

"There must be a reason you think that I'd believe that 'easier' and 'better' are the same words."

"I know. You say that all the time. I think it will be better because it will be easier to find sources."

"That's actually a good answer. Have you found sources?"

"Other than the documentary, I haven't looked. But there was enough to make a documentary."

"Yep. There's a lot of stuff on Vikings. What about them interests you?"

"I don't know. They are just cool."

“You need to define the project. What sources are there? What have historians already said? What do you have to say that is different?”

“I have to know all that stuff?”

“Why would I read a paper of yours if it is just telling me what I already know?”

“You know about Vikings?”

“Nearly nothing. But my point is that you are speaking to the scholars in the field—not to average readers. You have to join the conversation, not simply repeat what others have said. The task is original research. What sources will you look at that others have missed? Or maybe, if you are looking at the same sources, what is within them that other historians have overlooked?”

“That sounds hard.”

“Again, there’s a word that you must think I believe is a bad thing. ‘Hard’ is a good thing. This is college. Stretch your brain. This is the project you should be most proud of.”

“OK. You know I don’t like talking to you.”

“I know. See you next week.”

“Next time, I’m going to know all the answers to your questions.”

“I take that as a challenge to ask harder questions.”

“That’s what I like about you. See you then.”

At a small university with a teaching focus, professors are expected to be both specialists and jacks-of-all-trades. Our students research the topics that interest them, be that atomic bombs, baseball, women in France or Vikings. Often, we know nearly nothing about the topic when they pick it, and only learn about it as the student wades into the materials. Thus, our teaching focus becomes about methods. Historians are storytellers, and that means picking heroes and villains, tracing a narrative that will engage the reader, and remaining faithful to the facts. The realization that this is the goal often troubles students enormously. They assume that the craft is merely uncovering “truth,” and the story will tell itself. In doing so, they embrace a historically brief, but psychologically powerful myth—that of history as “science.”

From the late 19th century until the mid-20th, historians pursued, in the phrase of the historian Peter Novick, “that noble dream” of objectivity. Yet, as Novick explains, the pursuit was ultimately undone by the nature of the observable past. We are limited to the sources we can find (and historians remain perhaps too heavily committed to written sources), and to the inferences we can draw from those. Yet not everything of importance in the past was recorded in a way amenable to discovery. A course on the history of American children, for example, will necessarily privilege the tale of the literate middle and upper classes through time. In the United States, that usually means focusing on the story of white children. Yet, one would not have to be very observant to realize that this is only a subset of all American children—and one that is not necessarily representative of the whole. Uncovering the lived experience of slave children, to take but one example, is more difficult. It is not an impossible task: oral histories of former slaves were gathered in the 1930s by the Works Progress Administration. Yet these are interviews with adults recalling their childhood years. Given the human tendency to hone our memories over time, these documents present stories a step removed from the experience. The past, thus, remains murky and objectivity elusive. Yet there is good news to be had. The famed biologist E. O. Wilson claims that the best scientists have the soul of both a poet and bookkeeper. The best historians surely share the same traits.

“Hi. I’m back to working on women in France.”

“Yes?”

“The Vikings were cool, but I really don’t have anything to say about them.”

“OK. That makes sense. What did you find out about women in France?”

“There are a couple of books that I’ve got on order. I also started reading Julius Caesar’s Conquest of Gaul. There are a surprising number of women in it. Not as characters, really, but more like he is describing what the Celtic peoples are like, including women.”

“Like what?”

“He talks about arranged marriages to cement alliances between the groups, about women pleading for their men’s lives, and pleading not to be sent into slavery.”

“What do you make of that?”

“Clearly, women were important to bind together people through marriage and kinship. They had a role in speaking up for merciful treatment. That’s not like being treated as equal to men, but it still shows the importance of their role in society.”

“Very good. What else did you find?”

“Not much yet. I got off on a sideline looking at marriage patterns and relations between states. I knew that English kings married off their daughters to create alliances with Spain and France later, but I guess I hadn’t really thought about how important that practice was in the early period. I guess it does make sense.”

“That’s really good. What’s your plan for next steps?”

“I’m going to read the books on Celtic women when they get in. How long do you think it will take?”

“If they came from within the system, it usually just takes a couple days. If the library has to go further afield to borrow them, it might take a week or so.”

“That’s no good. I’m kind of interested in this now. What do I do while I wait?”

“Look at articles. Historians tend to write those more than books.”

“I’ve already scanned the databases, but I’m not finding much.”

“You’ve tried all the basic search terms? Women, Celts, Celtic Women?”

“And about a hundred more.”

“Time for a specialist: go talk to the reference librarians.”

“I already did. They didn’t help.”

“Did you talk to a regular librarian or a student worker?”

“I think a student.”

“That’s good. That means you have already done so much work that you need somebody with years of experience. You’ve got to skip the student and go right to the professional staff.”

“OK. I can do that. I’ll get back to you. Maybe later today.”

“You’ve got time. You don’t need to rush for me.”

“It’s for me. I want to get this going.”

“OK. Let me know what you find.”

How do historians practice the craft? They approach the materials with ideas and an open mind. What research questions, we must ask, are likely to yield answers? How far can one stretch a conclusion when the evidence is thin? Those questions remain the same, although the answers vary dramatically depending upon the subject of study. A very wise professor I had in graduate school used to tell me that the task was to be certain about your conclusions and to be humble about them as well. That seems quite good advice in all areas of life.

As I write this, I sit in the archives at the John F. Kennedy Library, poring over documents about children’s experiences in the Cold War. It is a topic that has only recently begun to interest historians, and the university has been a supporter of my forays into the topic. A series of fellowships from other institutions, and some release time from teaching, allows me to be a better researcher, a better writer, and thus a better guide to students as they write theses on topics that go well beyond any one person’s ability to master. Yet, as I sit here, looking at documents, I ask those same questions that I demand of our students: what do the documents say? What have historians said? What do I have to say that is different? That is the box that historians occupy and, if we are lucky and good, our students join us there.

“I’ve got it.”

“What’s that?”

“I know what I want to argue.”

“What?”

“I’m going to argue Celtic women during the Roman invasion played a critical role in defending their societies. I read three books on the Roman conquest and two on Celtic women. It’s weird that those books do not talk to each other at all.”

“What do you mean?”

“The historians of the women do not talk about war. The historians of war tend not to talk about women. I think I can connect the two.”

“That’s very, very good. What sources do you have?”

“I’ve looked through the footnotes of both sets of books. There are lots of primary documents out there. I’m not sure what they say yet, but that’s my next task.”

“That’s excellent. You’ve come a long way on this.”

“What if I find out that I am not right?”

“Historians do struggle with that. You have a great idea, but then the documents lead you another way. Here’s the good news: You always have the right to change your mind if the evidence persuades you that you should.”

“Well, yeah, I guess it sounds obvious when you say it.”

“Then write it.”

“Really?”

“Yep. Sounds like you have an excellent start.”

“Thanks.”

“It’s OK. They pay me for this. And, in a roundabout sort of way, you pay me for this. And, I like doing it. In fact, it’s a pretty good gig. I get to read books and talk about them. I was going to do that anyway.”

Chris O'Brien is associate professor of History. He writes about Nuclear America and has held fellowships in popular culture studies and in the history of science.

In This Charmed Circle of Light

Daniel P. Gunn

For years I have begun every semester in Literary Analysis and Interpretation by writing the opening lines of Donne's "The Sun Rising" on the board:

Busy old fool, unruly Sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains, call on us? (1-3)

What, I ask, makes this difficult to read? Language, to start with. We have to know what the words mean. And although they have a vague notion that this is "old-fashioned language," many of my students do not understand that "thou" means "you" and that "dost" is an inflected form of the verb "to do." Restoring these meanings is a first step toward clarity. And what exactly does "thus" mean? We frequently start with "therefore," a false lead, and sometimes have to resort to a dictionary to get to "in this way." Next, we try to construe the sentence. The inversion in the third line turns out to be a significant barrier. Seeing that "call on us" belongs with "Why dost thou" is the breakthrough moment for a lot of students. A light goes on; what was a collection of words becomes a sentence; "Through windows, and through curtains" falls into place as a modifying phrase. I try to linger over this moment, because it establishes an essential precondition for the course: we cannot read the poem until we can understand it as a sentence in the English language. Most beginning literature students, I have come to realize, do not look at poetry (or any challenging textual material) this way; they think that reading poetry is about vague associations and feelings, untethered to actual sentences.

Once there is a sentence, the real work of reading can begin. There is someone speaking here, I say, asking a question. To whom is that question addressed? There is a clue in "unruly Sun," leading us to discover that both this phrase, as well as "Busy old fool," are directly addressing the sun. Once that is established, I ask how the sun is being imagined. We might begin with "unruly," which suggests that the sun is somehow disorderly or not subject to control. But eventually we get to "Busy," and a second small recognition. Sometimes someone thinks of the word "busybody"; sometimes we find "meddlesome, prying" in the dictionary. But somehow we come to understand this word as characterizing the sun as nosy and intrusive—a prying neighbor, say—and one who is old and foolish, to boot. It is not far from there to seeing "call on" as suggesting a social visit—

unwelcome, it seems, in this case, as it would be from a prying or meddling person. Again, I want to stay with this moment of recognition for a while. To recognize that “call on” and “Busy” echo and reverberate against each other, unlock meanings in one another, is to *hear* these words in the organic context of the poem. It is the whole point of what I am trying to do in this course. It is what our whole semester is going to be about.

When we have followed out some of these semantic suggestions, I try to encourage the students to imagine the question posed by these lines in human terms—that is, to hear the speaker’s *tone*, in a particular implied dramatic situation. At this point, we are usually in a position to hear the opening line as exasperated and impatient; the speaker shows that he is upset by attacking the sun, calling him an “old fool,” “unruly.” It helps if someone notices that there is something like exasperation in “Through windows, and through curtains,” as well: it is as if the speaker is annoyed that the sun would have the nerve to move past a double barrier, windows *and* curtains. But what *is* the implied situation, I ask? The speaker is indoors, someone says, because there are windows and curtains; it is morning, because the sun is “rising.” And then, finally, someone will notice “us”—the speaker is not alone—and everything we have been talking about makes sense: these are lovers, resentful of the morning. When I give them the next line—“Must to thy motions lovers’ seasons run?” (4)—it emerges naturally from the scene we have imagined, and we might go on (“go chide/Late schoolboys” [5-6]! Exactly!), but I have to talk about the syllabus and the course requirements, so we stop.

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Literary Analysis and Interpretation is our department’s introductory close-reading course for English and creative writing majors; I think it is the most important course we offer, and it is the course I most enjoy teaching. In other courses, we situate texts in generic, historical, and cultural contexts; we talk about eighteenth century satire, bourgeois ideology, gendered discourses. But in Literary Analysis and Interpretation, we focus on careful and attentive reading, which is the necessary prerequisite for all modes of interpretation in English studies. There is no agenda, beyond work in multiple genres and some rudimentary terms, no requirement that a set amount of material has to be covered. If we want to spend two classes on a sonnet, we can. Such *luxury*—and so important for our majors. It is strange to say that one teaches a course in reading to college students, who have been reading for most of their lives in school. But it is absolutely necessary.

What does it mean to read, in the sense I am defining here? It means to pay attention to every word—to hear the full range of meanings and associations in every word. It means to construe the syntax—to understand

the sentences in the text completely, to comprehend what subject goes with what verb, what the antecedents of the pronouns are, what modifies what. It means to hear a human voice behind the sentence, a voice inflected with a tone, an attitude, feelings. Finally, it means to hear the words respond to one another, vibrate against one another, create patterns and clusters of sense—to follow the way figurative associations are repeated, echoed, passed around from word to word and phrase to phrase. All of this sounds so simple—elementary—but in practice, it turns out to be complex and challenging. There is no way to overestimate how hard the work of reading is, class by class, conference by conference. This is because it requires intense, focused concentration. As we struggle with a line in conference—we have been at it for fifteen minutes, it still doesn't make sense—I often sense a mixture of exhaustion and confusion in my students, and I sympathize with them. It is a challenge to concentrate so intently, for so long, on one thing. But we carry on—because, for our students, now, especially, I have come to believe that concentration is valuable for its own sake.

To read with full attention, to concentrate fully, is like prayer or meditation. Simone Weil articulated this beautifully in “Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God”:

Of course school exercises only develop a lower kind of attention. Nevertheless they are extremely effective in increasing the power of attention which will be available at the time of prayer, on condition that they are carried out with a view to this purpose and this purpose alone. Although people seem to be unaware of it to-day, the development of the faculty of attention forms the real object and almost the sole interest of studies. . . . If we concentrate our attention on trying to solve a problem of geometry, and if at the end of an hour we are no nearer to doing so than at the beginning, we have nevertheless been making progress each minute of that hour in another more mysterious dimension. Without our knowing or feeling it, this apparently barren effort has brought more light into the soul. The result will one day be discovered in prayer. (105-106)

I am not religious, but I was raised in a religious tradition, and I value the attitudes of prayer, the receptiveness and attention that prayer requires, the bringing of light into the soul. And so I think of reading as a discipline—and part of the work of an introductory literature class as encouraging disciplined attitudes of attention. This is why the frame of mind necessary in an introductory literature class is so antithetical to contemporary culture, to

“multitasking” or reading while listening to music playing through earbuds or as a chat unfolds in another open window. Reading means paying attention to the words on the page, nothing more. It requires a certain emptying out of the insistent self and its distractions. Years ago, in *Practical Criticism*, I. A. Richards cataloged the obstacles to reading he encountered in students: stock ideas, irrelevant associations, sentimentality. Students still struggle against these same obstacles. They see a reference to “love” and bring to bear all of the available popular discourses and narrative patterns about love. These are what the poem must be about. But it is not—and these discourses and narrative patterns prevent them from actually hearing what the words on the page are saying. Real reading requires receptivity, openness to the text, unobstructed listening. Weil was right about this, too:

Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty and ready to be penetrated by the object. It means holding in our minds, within reach of this thought, but on a lower level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of. . . . All wrong translations, all absurdities in geometry problems, all clumsiness of style and all faulty connection of ideas in compositions and essays, all such things are due to the fact that thought has seized upon some idea too hastily and being thus prematurely blocked, is not open to the truth. The cause is always that we have wanted to be too active . . .
(111-112)

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To pay full attention to the words on the page, nothing more, without wanting to be too active. What does this mean in practice, in the introductory literature classroom? We work with pieces of text, class after class, trying to hear and understand the language:

When I consider everything that grows,
Holds in perfection but a little moment . . .
(Shakespeare, 15.1-2)

We try to focus on particular lines, phrases, words, to hear them fully before moving on to something else. What is included (or excluded) in “everything that grows”? Why does it have to “*hold* in perfection”? What feelings are suggested by “*but a little* moment”? Reading aloud is a constant, every class. I read the whole poem or the passage we are working with, sometimes twice, then re-read smaller portions several times as we work with them.

When I perceive that men as plants increase,
Cheered and checked even by the selfsame sky . . . (15.5-6)

I try to read clearly, enunciating each word, with just enough inflection to make the syntax clear, but without being dramatic or theatrical—in other words, without offering an interpretation by reading. I write lines on the board and stand back and look at them:

Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
And wear their brave state out of memory . . . (15.7-8)

What does it mean to “vaunt,” exactly? How can you “wear” a “state”? How are “they” being imagined if they are “in their youthful sap”? As students make comments, I underline or circle words, draw lines and arrows from one word to another. Sometimes I ask students to work on lines or images in pairs or groups and then show the rest of the class what they have seen as we build toward a reading of the whole. One group might have “the conceit of this inconstant stay,” another “but a little moment.” If they can talk to each other about the way these phrases echo one another, we are getting some place. Another group might point out that “this huge stage presenteth nought but shows” (15.3) has the same shape as “everything that grows,/Holds in perfection but a little moment” (15.2), helping us to see that the poem attaches the same sense of limitation to the stage and to the realm of growing things. If we have paid attention to the language about plants and organic life, one phrase at a time, then whoever has the couplet might be able to explain the power of “ingraft”:

And, all in war with Time for love of you,
As he takes from you, I ingraft you new. (15.13-14)

But we will have even more if we have noticed the passivity and detachment in “When I consider” and “When I perceive,” which now are replaced with “all in war with time,” the speaker finally up on the stage himself, vaunting and wearing his brave state, fully engaged, fighting for his beloved.

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All in War with Time is the title of the book my mentor, Anne Ferry, had just written when I studied Shakespeare’s sonnets with her in 1976. And so perhaps it is time to acknowledge that I am working within a tradition, teaching an introductory close-reading course the way I do—and that I read Sonnet 15 (and may other poems) as Anne taught me to. As a graduate student at Boston College, I taught in the “staff course,” Introduction to

English Studies, under Anne's guidance, at the same time that I was studying poetry with her. Anne had worked with Reuben Brower at Harvard, in Humanities VI, the famous close-reading course on which the Boston College staff course was modeled. I had been trained as a close-reader by Jesuits in high school and at Holy Cross, but Anne's version was more extreme—particularly in its approach to irony, which she found everywhere. I remember resisting her readings in class after class, but being drawn closer to the text by these arguments. As one of my other professors said, Anne made you set up your barricades closer to the poem's language. When I taught Introduction to English Studies, at the age of twenty-three, it was my first experience with college teaching, and I worked closely with Anne and her colleague Donald Gertmenian. We taught the same texts, wrote and gave the same assignments, and talked about what we were doing. There is no way to overestimate the influence of this early experience on all of my subsequent teaching.

A lot of what I do in class is what I learned to do from talking with Anne and Don. When students move into generalities (or familiar discourses and narrative patterns) I ask where—in what particular words and phrases in the text—they are hearing that? That one question—"where?"—becomes the underlying refrain of all discussions, to the point where it becomes a joke, and students ask themselves and each other for me, half-ironically, before I have a chance. The discipline of tying interpretive comments to language in the text emphasizes that I want comments to grow out of observations about the language. Students often talk to me about developing ideas for a paper and then "putting quotes in to back up the argument." But this is backwards. There should not *be* ideas without textual referents: the idea (or insight or comment) should always be tied organically to something the student has noticed about the text. I learned this from Anne Ferry.

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I love to lecture, in brief bursts—to stand in front of the room and develop a connected series of ideas as a way into a text. Trying to prepare half an hour on the Prelude to *Middlemarch* or Pope's dexterity with rhyming couplets is exhilarating, rewarding, intellectual work, and I think framing discussion in this way is helpful in most of my courses. But not in this one. Because I want the students to encounter the text on their own, as readers, to learn *how* to read it, I do not lecture at all in the close-reading class. I simply ask questions, and I try not to explain *for* them. I ask additional questions prompted by the student responses; I ask where in the text they are hearing what they have said; I rephrase and summarize comments or tie comments to one another. Of course, I am not pure enough to maintain this discipline for myself. Students listen for the inflection in my voice or for other tells to

see when they've got it right or wrong; I ask questions about counter-evidence in response to wrong-headed interpretations but not always when I think the interpretation makes sense; my summaries can begin to sound like explanations. But I strive for neutrality, equanimity, inscrutability, to allow students as much space as possible in which to do the work of interpretation themselves.

Oddly enough, I have found that one of the most helpful things I can do in this course is simply to bring a dictionary to class. The larger and clumsier the book is, the better: it is a prop. When we get to a word that we can't satisfactorily define, I pull over the book and look it up—and not just the most available sense, but all of the others, too. When we are working on “Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace” (8) in Sonnet 33, for example, and examine the verb, it helps to have not just “to take the property of another without right or permission” or “to draw attention unexpectedly by being the outstanding performer,” but also “to move . . . stealthily or unobtrusively.” There is something about having this large book on the table that keeps words and their meanings in the foreground, emphasizes them. It starts out as something comical—Dr. Gunn and his obsession with the dictionary—but eventually becomes symbolic. As the semester progresses, they begin to ask me to look up words—and I can only hope that they look up words on their smart phones and laptops on their own as they work on their essays.

At its best, this course creates a kind of magic, particularly with poems, early in the semester. Students are excited about what they are able to read. They say things like, “I feel as if I have never actually fully understood a poem before.” Seeing that light go on is what I most enjoy, what I find most fulfilling. It gives them a basis for understanding a text—an appreciation of what the goal is. But, as I say, the class is also really hard work—not just all of the papers and journals, but the insistent focus on reading, class after class. It is plodding, unglamorous. After about five or six weeks, they often want to change the channel. At the same time, they are trying to learn how to write analytical papers about literature—again, the same work, paper after paper, and they often grow frustrated when their grades don't improve more rapidly. I try to talk to them about this, tell them that reading at this level is demanding, that it requires sustained concentration, that it will pay off by the end of the semester. I try to mix in a few individual conferences, act out a scene from a Tom Stoppard play, but eventually we are back at it, writing words on the board and looking at them, trying to read.

Usually, they come around after a few weeks of grumbling, and their work really does get better. (Anne used to say that this course was “a

machine,” and she was right.) More often than not, it is the novel that saves us, as they realize that you can close-read a paragraph of narrative prose, too:

But the poetry of that kiss, the wonder of it, the magic that there was in life for hours after it—who can describe that? It is so easy for an Englishman to sneer at these chance collisions of human beings. To the insular cynic and the insular moralist they offer an equal opportunity. It is so easy to talk of ‘passing emotion,’ and how to forget how vivid the emotion was ere it passed. Our impulse to sneer, to forget, is at root a good one. We recognize that emotion is not enough, and that men and women are personalities capable of sustained relations, not mere opportunities for an electrical discharge. Yet we rate the impulse too highly. We do not admit that by collisions of this trivial sort the doors of heaven may be shaken open. (Forster 20)

The run and the rhythm of the line may not be there, but the challenge is the same: to hear a human voice, with full attention to shifts and turn in meaning and tone, phrase by phrase. Like a poem, this passage from *Howards End* is impossible to summarize or reduce to a “message.” The narrator moves back and forth between a kind of ecstatic, lyrical wonder and something far more detached and worldly. I want students to experience that movement back and forth, that oscillation, sentence by sentence—to hear the way “chance collisions of human beings” undercuts the lyricism of “poetry,” “wonder,” and “magic” in the first sentence—and then to hear these two strains later in the passage, in “opportunities for an electrical discharge” or “how vivid the emotion was.” I want students really to hear “insular,” which refers back to “Englishman” (via its Latin root, *insula*, n.f., island) and at the same time suggests the limitation and provinciality of both cynical and moral viewpoints. I might ask, “What feelings do you hear in ‘It is so easy?’” hoping to draw out the impatience and criticism in the phrase—we say “it is so easy” when we think another, harder course is preferable—but this only makes it more of a surprise when the narrator says, baldly, “Our impulse to sneer, to forget, is at root a good one.” Only hearing the small qualification in “at root” can prepare us for the final turn: “Yet we rate the impulse too highly.” So much of reading, I have found, depends on listening to the logic implicit in words like “Yet,” “Therefore,” or “However.” Here “Yet” suggests the final turn, away from the detachment that the narrator has simultaneously embraced (not least in the first person pronouns) and rejected. When the lyricism of the opening sentence returns in “the doors of heaven may be shaken open,” it is both beautiful and chastened, because of

the journey of the previous sentences. They follow this journey thoroughly in order to learn something profound about *Howards End* as a whole. The movement of this paragraph echoes what the narrator describes as the movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, where the final triumph of romance nevertheless acknowledges the presence of "goblins," who say that "there is no such thing as splendor or heroism in the world":

[Beethoven] brought back the gusts of splendor, the heroism, the youth, the magnificence of life and death . . . But the goblins were there. They could return . . . (27)

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Later in *Howards End*, the narrator notes that Margaret's effort to teach her husband to "connect" fails, because of his "obtuseness": "He simply did not notice things, and there was no more to be said" (135). Whatever else it may be, Literary Analysis and Interpretation is a course about noticing things—about paying careful enough attention to the object of study, without distractions, without the pressure of preconceived notions or the self--to notice things about it. Sometimes I ask just that: "What do you *notice* about this passage? What do you *see*?" Or, one might say, the course is about being fully present, around a table, contemplating words. Sometimes, this sense of presence is palpable, in a small room, with light streaming in through a window, as I read a few lines of *Paradise Lost* aloud, and there is a resonant silence, earned by our collective attention and focus:

. . . Sing, Heavenly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,
In the Beginnings how the Heav'ns and Earth
Rose out of Chaos . . . (1.6-10)

I cannot imagine duplicating this in an online class: the sense of everyone being there, responding. It is one of the great things about college, that it carves out a space for us to read together, really *read*, slowly, patiently, in this charmed circle of light. Where else does this happen—except, perhaps, in church? To me this is when I feel most fully human, alive: listening to something rich and deep, about the doors of heaven being shaken open, about Oreb's secret mountaintop, in this charmed circle, reading.

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The Restless Nature of Sound

Steven Pane

It is my proposal that in the promiscuity of sound, its reproducibility, in its anxious and restless transfiguration, we might identify a means for occupying and exploring the multiple perspectives of the present.

Brandon LaBelle¹

I teach music history mostly, a repertoire of promiscuous sounds that I have engaged as a pianist and listener since I was a child. As I reflect on my past twenty years of teaching, it is not surprising that the nature of music—the restless, transfiguring sound—has shaped my teaching philosophy. Learning, like music, unfolds over time in a performative space, so why not approach teaching as one approaches music? Can, as Brandon LaBelle suggests, sound and its musics be a way of knowing multiple perspectives of the present? For me, it has, and this essay reflects on the ways sound, and its restless transfiguring nature, has shaped the teacher I have become.

Musicians have an unusual sense of time. When playing, say, Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, I am always simultaneously in the present, past, and future. Each phrase must hold the phrase to come in embryo--the future--yet the structures of the music are embedded in the past, from their point of creation in 1741 to my performance in this moment; all of this plays out in the present—my body in a space shared with others as we experience a performative present in time.

On the other hand, music history has privileged what we could call the horizontal conception of time. Horizontal time is linear, organizing history as a chain of chronological cause-and-effect events. Horizontal time allows us to place life under the lens of observation and parcel out the moments of the past in pursuit of a particular understanding. Temporally, the present is all that exists, with past as memory and future as history to come.

Yet time is also vertical. The verticality of time, by contrast, is about simultaneity, recasting the present to include past and future. As during a performance of the *Goldberg Variations*, we are what we were, are, and shall be—all in the same present. Vertical time demands that we think deeper into the moment—that where we have been shapes how we live the present. As Walter Benjamin writes “a historian who takes [a past simultaneously with a present] as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has

¹ Brandon LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories Sound Culture and Everyday Life*, (New York: Continuum, 2010), xxvi.

formed with a definite earlier one.”² The past in vertical history is not comprised of the long-gone moments of horizontal time; it is the structure that holds present and future. It is an active, living past.³

Teaching and learning about horizontal and vertical histories can be daunting. This is not ‘the text is whatever I wish it to be,’ but a rigorous requirement that we negotiate meanings within contexts. We hear Bach in the horizontal, how Bach sounded in Bach’s time, as well as the vertical, how Bach sounds in the moment at hand. The music of Bach, or for that matter the blues of Bessie Smith, plays by Voltaire, paintings by Artemisia Gentileschi, philosophy of Dōgen, the songs of a slave, or the timeless folk songs of Southern Italy—are ancient *and* contemporary. How we contextualize them—the questions we pursue, the meanings we derive, the conclusions we draw—will tell us as much about our present as it does their past.

Patience is essential. In order for vertical thinking to take root, students, all of us actually, need to engage a simultaneity of conflicting and often unfamiliar sounds, ideas, and perspectives—most of which might not be immediately evident. John Cage helps: “if something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, then eight. Then sixteen. Then thirty-two. Eventually one discovers that it is not boring at all.”⁴ Staying with the music, engaging it in a performative time, “tolerating it in spite of its strangeness . . . and kindhearted about its oddity”, as Nietzsche writes,⁵ are requisite for vertical history. Nietzsche goes further, connecting music to learning and beyond: “but that is what happens to us not only in music, that is how we have learned to love all things that we now love. In the end we are always rewarded for our good will, our patience, fairmindedness, and gentleness with what is strange; gradually, it sheds its veil and turns out to be a new and indescribable beauty.”

Love. Love of difference. In teaching vertical histories, I need to value the simultaneity of conflicting voices among my students, particularly when they seem odd to me. Paulo Friere writes “the teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it

² Walter Benjamin, and Hannah Arendt, *Illuminations, Essays and Reflections*, (New York: Schocken, 1988), 263.

³ Ideas such as the horizontal and vertical nature of time are common themes in phenomenology. Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Heidegger deal, in different ways, with a present that holds a past and future. Phenomenology’s study of perception and experience resonate with the experiential nature of music and sound.

⁴ John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T Press, 1966), 43. According to Cage, this saying is a Zen koan.

⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, and Walter Arnold Kaufmann, *The Gay Science with a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 334.

possible for the students to become themselves.”⁶ During my years of study at Manhattan School of Music, the greatest teachers were those who helped students develop their own style of pianism. Writing, music’s sibling, is a case in point. Like learning notes to a new sonata, a first draft gets the roughest of ideas into the world in any way possible. But rather than seeing all the inchoate and odd sentences as weak, a mentor helps students identify the future ideas in their primordial state, so that they can begin the struggle to hone them through multiple drafts. Similarly, in piano, these are the countless hours spent not building technique, but using technique to sculpt sonic ideas into intelligible existence.

Yet unique voices are never in isolation and never fully original. Our voices always emerge within communities—or audiotopias, a kind of vertical history. Josh Kun’s exploration of the individual-community dialogic in his 2005 book *Audiotopia* has transformed my teaching. Kun defines an audiotopia as an aural space where we encounter multiple others. He describes how “listening to a song’s whole was always listening to its parts, to the crossings and exchanges and collaborations that went into its making. Music can offer maps in this way, and when I was younger the maps I heard were not just the maps of the song’s cultural and historical genesis, but the map of my own life, a musical ‘You Are Here’ that positioned me within the larger social world.”⁷

Classrooms are audiotopias. Created for a life span of three months, a course becomes a unique community of beliefs, histories, and cultures that shape how its members experience—map—music. Furthermore, this kind of audiotopic learning changes students from passive receptors to creative participants. Even when simply listening, students in music history courses are performers—*musicians*. This kind of thinking is new to my field. Over the past two decades, musicology has undergone a paradigm change as it has sifted through the embers of modernism. While the twentieth century brought the death of the performer, composer, and, finally, the death of the audience, the twenty-first has brought back all three, but with a blurring of the lines between their respective roles. “Musicking,” as Christopher Small writes, “is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing, or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing.”⁸

⁶ Paulo Freire, and Myles Horton, *We make the road by walking: conversations on education and social change*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 181.

⁷ Josh Kun, *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 3.

⁸ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998), 9.

Teaching audiotopias, vertical histories, and musicking seems almost out of step in a time when liberal arts colleges have to defend their existence, funding is tied to test results, and politicians measure learning on a spreadsheet. Yet places like UMF still thrive. I am fortunate to have had my teaching shaped by extraordinary colleagues who value, in their own ways, the unique voices of our students and our communities. This offers hope for our future. In a world facing significant challenges such as climate change, students who welcome alternatives to the norm will be better prepared to make connections where others don't and grapple with problems bigger than the available tools. We need more liberal arts education, not less.

I often tell my first-year seminar students that we need one another. Brand new to college, they help me transition toward the world to come as I help them transition toward the world at hand. Through this multi-temporal space, my students shape my vertical history, introducing new and unfamiliar sounds with their contexts. In particular, student musicking continually demonstrates how technology is changing the way we hear and think. In music, we can now curate our own listening experience, organizing and even manipulating its sounds with sophisticated software. Furthermore, the easy access to a plethora of musical styles enables us to be fans of almost anything—in one of my recent classes a poll of favorites included J-Pop, Captain Beefheart, Schubert, Indonesian Gamelan, Renaissance music, video game soundtracks, Taylor Swift, and Debussy. It is not surprising that this rich and changing world of audiotopias has caused many to rethink what we mean by history as well as our experience of lived time. And while it is difficult to predict where these changes will lead us next—and what new experiences of the past they will offer—I know my incoming first-year seminar students, holding the future in embryo, will have an idea.

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The Bridge

Grace Eason

There is a bridge tucked away in the woods of western Maine. It's not a big bridge, just a simple bridge that crosses a rapidly flowing stream. I watch my students cross this bridge barely even considering it. But to me that bridge signifies something very profound—you see, it's more than just a structure to get someone from one side of the stream to the other; it is a structure that takes you from one version of our world to an entirely different version on the other side. This other world, the Koviashuvik Local Living School, is a place where the old blends with the new, a small school whose mission is to help create a world that is socially just, physically healthy and spiritually alive, by teaching skills and life ways that connect people to the Earth and their local community. UMF's connection to this school is through some of its instructors who choose to share with their students this unique vision of the world, a vision that must be experienced, where traditional life skills that used to be passed down between generations are revived and, if the students choose, integrated into their current lives.

Every time I cross that bridge with students it's always the same—they excitedly walk down the road where we leave the university vans, and the entire way they are talking, not really paying attention to where they are, only to where they are going...that final destination. I find this very similar to how they must view my teaching—always a destination in mind, whatever that might be: the test, the paper, the lab report, the presentation, the final exam, the grade. If only I could cut out everything in between and just get to the grade, things would be so much more “convenient” for them. I can't blame them really...it is how education has evolved over the years. Yet to get them to appreciate the journey to that destination is the essence of teaching for me.

That hasn't always been the case—far from it actually. I never thought I would be a teacher; I mean, why would anyone choose a profession where you are asked to solve a myriad of societal problems with little to no resources? However, once I found myself teaching high school science, I discovered my passion and excitement for a profession that is absolutely unpredictable, chaotic, monumentally complex, and one that has the capacity to stir every emotion within me, each and every moment of every day. It really is a profession that catapults you into a realm of self-discovery where you must ask yourself “what is the meaning of it all and how do I fit into all of this?” And of course these questions: “is what I am doing even making a difference? Do the students even care?” Those same questions have persisted as I transitioned from being a high school science teacher to an environmental science educator at UMF.

Parker Palmer once said, “we teach who we are.” I interpreted that to mean that our past and present experiences leave us with an imprint that sets the stage for how we interact with our students, colleagues, and our institutions. Palmer called it the “Who” question, which he presented as part of a series as follows:

1. “The question we most commonly ask is the ‘what’ question—what subjects shall we teach?”
2. When the conversation goes a bit deeper, we ask the ‘how’ question—what methods and techniques are required to teach well?”
3. Occasionally, when it goes deeper still, we ask the ‘why’ question—for what purpose and to what ends do we teach?”
4. But, seldom, if ever, do we ask the ‘who’ question—‘who’ is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my selfhood form—or deform—the way I relate to my students, my subject, my colleagues, my world? How can educational institutions sustain and deepen the selfhood from which good teaching comes?”
(Palmer, 1998)

My bridge analogy really aligns with how I see myself teaching and working at UMF. With my students, I act as the bridge to carry them from the world of the unknown to that of the known (or at the very least a world of greater awareness). How I interact with my colleagues and institution is that hidden part that most people might not notice, but being a bridge between two divisions (natural sciences and secondary education) has truly influenced my teaching. My colleagues have helped me to aspire to continually perfect what I consider a very elusive craft, and those interactions helped me to redefine myself. It can be challenging as I walk up and down the “road” between these two different cultures (science vs. education), two different worlds really. I could not have done it without having an amazing mentor.

When I first started at UMF, I was hired under a grant in a dual appointment position to facilitate communication between scientists and educators and to promote science education in the public schools. My friend and mentor, Mary Schwanke, a biologist, was in charge of the grant, and she worked with me on this project for six years. In that span of time, we conducted a variety of meetings, workshops, and conferences. As we would debrief and discuss how we were progressing, Mary observed that perhaps one of the reasons that we even needed a grant to facilitate communication between scientists and educators is because the people who choose science as their profession have very different personalities than the people who choose to become educators. Scientists have personalities that seem to be more introverted, whereas educators are definitely more extroverted. This all came

to light when Mary and I attended a science education conference in St. Louis. We attended a variety of sessions both together and individually over a period of three days. Our last conference session was at 5:00pm on a Saturday. As we walked into the room we were handed a raffle ticket and Mary said to me, “You have raffles at your conferences?” Since it was my first one, I excitedly said, “WOW! I guess we do! How cool is that?!” I coaxed Mary into sitting down near the front, because that would greatly increase our chances for yet another “participatory” session. Apparently at science conferences, there really isn’t a lot of group sharing, whiteboard writing, post-it note sticking, color-coded paper passing or hands-on participating. But I think the straw that broke the camel’s back was when I jumped up as though I’d won the lottery, and traded in my raffle ticket for a sweatshirt. Right after that, when everyone was getting up to leave, a very perky science educator, Rebecca, asked me “Grace, are you and Mary going to join us for the Women In Science Education dessert social this evening?” Before I could say anything, Mary immediately replied, “Uh, NO, we are going DRINKING”, as she quickly walked out of the room. As I stood there torn between networking and saving my friendship with Mary, it finally dawned on me that there really is a difference between these two cultures, a difference that explained a lot. That one instance helped me understand that if I were going to survive in this position, I had to be sensitive to the fact that teaching is a very personal journey and that there is much more to it than just technique.

As I write this and I think back even further, I have actually been navigating between these two cultures since graduate school. As a graduate student I worked with seven science professors on a grant funded by NASA to develop an integrated Earth systems science course. Part of that course included working with some of my former undergraduate professors. One such experience was a travel course that I was asked to develop with a former ecology professor I called “Doc”.

There were four graduate students, including myself, and twelve undergraduates enrolled in the course. I was to lead the graduate team that included Connie and Mike, who were finishing their doctoral degrees in ecology, and Tony, who had been in the graduate program in biological sciences for over twelve years. When Doc indicated that Tony was going to be on the trip, I had my reservations... because, to be honest, one wonders about someone who is a perpetual doctoral student. Despite my reservations about Tony, we really worked well as a team. We developed straightforward objectives, clear assessment criteria, and each day we debriefed to brainstorm ideas as the course magically came together. We had three days on campus for student orientation, gear preparation, and getting students to identify a total of 300 different varieties of wildflowers. In the field, all of us would be

camping for a week. During that time we would take students on a variety of hikes all through the Smokey Mountains. They would learn to map out each ecological zone focusing on various geographic, geologic and ecological components.

One day stands out above all others. On this day we were to tackle the Bull Head trail, approximately thirteen miles round trip, going up the mountain and then back down. We would start before dawn and get back around dusk. On that morning, as the graduate students prepared breakfast and gear, we also met to discuss the day's goals and what areas we would highlight for students. One of our biggest concerns on these trips was student safety, and each morning we would review safety procedures in case we were ever separated while on a hike. Students have a tendency to separate out on these hikes. On one end of the spectrum you have your "challenge-the-mountain and run-up-the-trail" students; on the other end are the "let's just sit here for a bit and enjoy the scenery" students.

It all started around lunchtime. Since it was going to be such a long day, Tony decided to begin happy hour early by pulling out a package of double stuffed oreos and a very large can of Foster's beer. As a former high school teacher who understood the meaning of the term L-I-A-B-L-I-T-Y, I was responsible for explaining to Tony (all 6 foot 4 and 350 lbs of him) why his choice of lunch items was not "modeling best practices" for our undergraduate students. He apologized quickly, chugged the Foster's beer and let out a belch on the top of that mountain that scared all the wildlife out of the vicinity within a 2-mile radius. The students thought it was SPECTACULAR! In fact, that was one of the main highlights in their field journals for the day— not the type of trees we saw, or wildflowers we identified, or even the amazing mountain hike with the stunning overlooks— a 6 foot 4 belching behemoth is what they remembered.

After lunch, as we descended the mountain, Mike led the students back down the trail, followed by Connie, Doc, Tony, myself and the Chair of the science department, Dr. Gary. As always everyone spread out a little bit along the trail, and then, I heard screaming and yelling. As I left Dr. Gary behind and ran up the trail to find out what was going on, what I saw was something out of a Discovery Channel documentary, emphasizing what can go wrong in the wilderness. Doc, Connie, Tony and six undergraduates were huddled under an uprooted tree on its side while a black bear was bouncing up and down on the root ball of the tree attempting to get Tony's backpack. In a moment of panic—the kind where all rational thought escapes your mind—I tried to get the bear's attention. As the bear bounded up the trail toward me, Dr. Gary was just coming around the corner. I slid along the mountainside to help everyone out from under that root ball while the bear chased Dr. Gary. At the same time, a small scuffle broke out between Connie

and Tony, in which she was pulling on his backpack and screaming at him to ditch the Fosters and oreos. Tony was yelling back that no bear was going to get that Foster's.

You know how it feels, in a classroom, when things begin to spin out of control and go sideways and you realize that you are not in control...of anything? That changes a person, that kind of experience. And what happened next was a disaster, akin to the kind of disaster that only cockroaches survive. As we got everyone back onto the trail, here came Dr. Gary running with one arm in front of him and the other hand held against his chest with his heart, as if to say "I'm comin', Elizabeth!"—absolute panic on his face. So instead of waiting for him, what did everyone do? They ran down the trail! As I tried to catch them, I was yelling "WAIT! WAIT! We have to figure out where everybody is..." thinking that Doc, our supposed leader, would step up and help with this emergency. On the contrary, he was the first one down that trail ahead of everybody else—so much for safety training! It was here that all of my emotional coping skills that I gained as a high school teacher were thrown out the window. When I caught up with Doc, as we were trying to catch our breath, through gritted teeth, and dissertation-be- damned, I yelled, "I just want you to know that you violate every educational principle that I have ever learned!"

"Oh really?" he said, "well, give me one of those principles you are talking about." "OK!" I said, "how about you put your students before yourself?!" "Well, that will never happen, give me another one. Oh, hang on" he said, as he began again to run down the trail because he saw Dr. Gary coming around another corner on a dead run, still in a panic! Every time Dr. Gary came around another bend in that trail trying to catch up with all of us, we would also continue to run down the trail because we thought the bear was chasing him. So the entire six miles down that mountain was a series of screaming undergraduates, scattered graduate students—two of whom were still fighting—one rogue professor who did not give a flip—and a science department chair who might have been dying of a heart attack.

The scene at the end of that trail looked as though we'd fought some sort of battle. Everyone was scraped, bloodied and tired. And then there was Tony, who reached into the back of his truck, pulled out a large cooler and began distributing Foster's beers to everyone, which of course helped negotiations with Connie, who you'll recall told him to "give the bear the Foster's." Tony went around and gave students a hug or patted them on the back and before I knew it, he had everyone laughing. I, on the other hand, sat down and reflected on the whole experience as I moved rapidly through Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) and then rejecting them all except anger, of course. I accepted that I would not graduate and contemplated that I would be

spending the rest of my life paying off student loans working at a Taco Bell. And then Tony, who sat beside me, popped open that Foster's, nudged me in the shoulder, put his arm around me and said, "Gracie, do you want a beer?" After a very deep surrendering sigh, I said, "yes please, Tony, I would LOVE a beer."

Stories of that hike have persisted through the years, and as I write this I can't help but smile, because I was not the one who held our group together in the end. It was Tony. Tony who taught me that you don't teach from your head, you teach from your heart.

We teach who we are, and the lessons we learn from our experiences are with us each and every time we work with our students and with each other.

I think all those who teach are bridges in one sense or another. Students may not recognize how we help them cross over to the other side. What matters, though, is that we support them as they make the journey. So here's to you, UMF, for being the premier teaching institution in Maine, happy 150th and... I think I will have that Foster's beer now.

Grace Eason is professor of environmental and science education. Her passion is connecting students to the earth and their local communities.

Acknowledgements

For my husband Glen, for supporting me so I can support others; my daughter Maya, my spirit warrior; Mary Schwanke, for being an incredible mentor and friend; Chris and Ashirah Knapp, for the gift that is the Koviashuvik Local Living School.

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Teaching Anthropology through Others' Eyes

Nicole Coffey Kellett

What is anthropology?

A few months ago I was on an airplane making small talk with the woman next to me. After I explained that I taught at a university she asked what I teach. I responded, rather hesitantly, “cultural anthropology,” expecting the typical perplexed look I was used to seeing: as if I had just started speaking a foreign language and should have a bone in my nose. Surprisingly, she lit up and exclaimed, “I love anthropology! My anthropology class was my favorite in college and I think everyone should be required to take anthropology!” In talking with her further she told me that she was returning to Colorado after visiting her son who was about to be deployed to Afghanistan. Her other son’s fiancée had recently been wounded in the mass movie theater shooting in Aurora, Colorado. She explained that her anthropology course had opened her eyes to different cultures around the world and also helped her better understand her own culture, which she felt was more necessary than ever in today’s world.

Even more recently, I had a brief conversation with a young man who was working in Colombia. His job was to encourage youth not to join the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarios de Colombia* or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia).¹ In discussing our professional lives he commented that he actually wished that he was an anthropologist, claiming that the tools and theories of anthropology are vital to addressing so many of the issues facing our global community.

So what is anthropology and what exactly do anthropologists do? We anthropologists often ask ourselves similar questions. For example, at the end of five hours of presentations on gender-based violence at an anthropology conference this spring, someone raised a question about the role of anthropologists in addressing such pressing and often overwhelming issues worldwide. One participant shared her perception that oftentimes anthropologists provide a forum for a deeply unmet need to be heard. Unlike therapists, anthropologists are not trained to address personal problems, but we do listen, as well as observe, participate, and ask questions that allow us to learn why people think what they think and do what they do. It entails not only learning *about* others, but fostering an *understanding* of meanings, values and behaviors that can expand our own modes of thinking and enhance compassion towards others. In many cases, such

¹ FARC emerged in 1964 from a peasant movement seeking self-governed communities and is believed to be one of the world’s most powerful guerrilla armies (Petras 2000; Saab and Taylor 2009).

comprehension is applied to larger decision-making that guides public policy, program creation, and aid and development programs, among others.

The work of anthropologists often opens others to a reality distinct from one's own and in turn a greater understanding of self and society. Therefore, I am using this essay as an opportunity to share a brief story about a woman near and dear to my heart, Gabriela, that I had the privilege and honor of meeting while conducting dissertation fieldwork in the south central Peruvian highlands. It is my hope that through a brief glimpse of her life, greater cross-cultural awareness may be fostered, as well as a better perception of cultural anthropology and how it guides my teaching at the University of Maine Farmington.

Gabriela

So who is Gabriela? Gabriela is a woman who would likely go unnoticed in a crowd or along the street. She does not dress in what could be considered "traditional clothes," but she does not wear pants.² She wears a skirt and a t-shirt, occasionally a blouse. She wears a black hat to guard against the sun and usually a tattered sweater she knit herself. When she wears shoes, they are *ejotes*, or sandals made out of used car tires, non-descript from any others roaming throughout the Andes. She always has her hand over her mouth when smiling. For every pregnancy she has had, six to date, she has lost a tooth. So her hand covers her mouth. There were rare times when her laughter precluded her self-consciousness and I was able to see in all its glory her true smile. But above that rough, dry, puffy hand, I saw her eyes. They were always sad, even when she was laughing. That is what does not allow me to forget Gabriela.

Gabriela is originally from a small community in the Department of Ayacucho, a long journey by foot and horse which takes most of a day, but she no longer lives there. Gabriela resides outside of the town of Andahuaylas. She has not lived in her birth community since she was a young girl because it was burned down by some combination of the Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*), a Maoist revolutionary group, and government forces.³ Does it matter which one? For Gabriela, no, as in her opinion they were equally brutal.

² "Traditional clothes" in the region of the Andes in which Gabriela lives typically consist of a knee length brightly colored skirt (pollera), rubber sandals made out of used car tires (ejotes), a woven belt (chumpi), a square cloth worn over the back (lliqui), lacy blouse, hand woven sweater, and a black brimmed hat.

³ *Sendero Luminoso*, or the Shining Path, was a Maoist guerrilla organization that gained currency in Peru in the 1980s and early 1990s. The actions of *Sendero Luminoso*, along with the violent government backlash, caused the death of more than 22,000, with some estimates running higher than 70,000, making Peru the country with the world's worst human rights

When I first met Gabriela in 2005 I was the typical enthusiastic, and in retrospect, probably annoying foreigner. I was just beginning my dissertation fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology and was thrilled to meet her. Little did I know at the time she was terrified of me (welcome to fieldwork!). All I knew was she was going to be living in the same house as my husband and I and I could not wait to get to know her, find out who she was, where she was from, what brought her to Andahuaylas, and what life was like in the rural Andes. I longed for a close relationship, but did not anticipate the impact Gabriela would have on me.

“Happy Birthday!” I exclaimed holding out an obnoxiously large chocolate frosted cake with candles on top, a two-liter bottle of coca-cola and some plastic cups. Gabriela was shocked and mortified. How did I know it was her birthday when she was not entirely clear on her birth date, and what were my true intentions? From my perspective I was hoping to “break the ice” and provide something for Gabriela that I knew she could not provide herself. I wanted to treat her, as she had never had a birthday cake in her life. That was the first time I saw Gabriela smile. I am not taking full credit for that smile, and in reality, what I officially did with my seemingly benign, ever delicious chocolate cake, was tip the balance. I was someone who had and Gabriela was someone who had not. This detail was spelled out in pink frosting right in front of our faces.

Thankfully we moved beyond the somewhat botched birthday celebration to develop a most beautiful friendship – one for which I am forever grateful. Gabriela shared many stories with me about witnessing the death of loved ones at the hands of the violence that plagued the south-central Peruvian highlands throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. I listened to heart-wrenching accounts of fleeing her community and struggling to survive and raise her children in the jungles of Peru, and more currently in the city of Andahuaylas. But hearing stories is one thing; seeing their lasting impact is another.

It was a big event, the graduation of her second oldest child, Marybelle, from junior high. Though such an event would not likely evoke elaborate pomp and circumstance in many regions of the United States, for a mother who only attended one year of formal schooling, it was an

record at the time (Strong 1992: 222, 142). *Sendero* was led by Abimael Guzmán, who founded the Communist Party of Peru while working as a professor of philosophy at the *Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga*. He belonged to the Communist Party of Peru-Red Flag until 1970, and then led the splinter movement, that became *Sendero Luminoso*. For more information on the Shining Path see Berg 1992; Bourque and Warren 1989; Chávez de Paz 1989; Degregori 1998; Isbell 1992; McClintock 1983, 1984; McCormick 1992; Mitchell 1994; Palmer 1986; Starn 1995, 1999; Stern 1998; and Strong 1992.

unbelievable accomplishment. My husband and I had been chosen as Marybelle's *padrinos* (godparents) even though we barely knew her. We had met Marybelle only once before, as she was attending school in another city, but *padrinos* are chosen not by the child, but by the child's parents—by Gabriela and Theo.

I had never seen Gabriela in such a daze. We traveled to the town in which Marybelle was staying with her aunt, a small community north of Andahuaylas that was at a much lower elevation and known for being in the cross-hairs of a burgeoning cocaine trade. We stayed with her aunt, we helped Marybelle dress for the event, we ate at the school, we danced, and we drank too much alcohol, as socially required. Many of those details are surprisingly fuzzy for me, but the look on Gabriela's face is crystal clear in my memory. Gabriela was like a walking ghost. There was no light behind her eyes. It was even worse than her usual sadness. It was as if there was a space that had refused to be filled with any emotion at all – not even darkness.

I know Gabriela was thrilled for her daughter, proud, and when shopping for her graduation dress in Andahuaylas, even somewhat giddy. Yet during the event itself, and while traveling home afterwards, Gabriela was gone. I did not witness even a feigned smile throughout the entire trip. I was deeply concerned and confused, thinking something fundamentally had shifted in Gabriela and I no longer knew this person sitting in front of me in the van bouncing back to Andahuaylas. Yet once we returned to the city and began the business of our lives, the sadness returned. I was almost relieved to see that darkness, as at least it was familiar and it was something to grasp on to – the vastness in her eyes before was beyond reach.

I wondered what had happened. What was it about that trip that turned Gabriela into an empty woman? Was it the loud music, armed guards in the plaza, the somewhat more tropical environment? I did not know what exactly about the graduation trip traumatized Gabriela, as there were many possibilities, but I knew that I had seen someone shutting down, blocking out the world, becoming afloat, even amidst a moment of deep joy.

I had witnessed the lasting power of trauma.

After this trip Gabriela described how upon hearing fireworks, she would instantly fall to the floor, mistaking them for gun shots. For this reason she avoided festivals that entailed fireworks or loud noises of any kind. She also expressed the fear she would feel when seeing officers in uniform in Andahuaylas. She explained how her heart would begin to pound, she would move to the opposite side of the street, and she would perspire until she was a safe distance away, and even then the experience would take some time from which to recover.

At a later point I witnessed this residual and innate fear during a conversation between Gabriela and a police officer. The police officer was scolding Gabriela because her dog had bitten a man (my husband!). To use Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1977), it was in the way that this man carried his voice, his body, his literal and figurative position *against* the voice, the body, and the literal and figurative position of Gabriela that is worth noting. He pointed his finger in her face as if she were a child he was disciplining. He failed to make eye contact except when verbally reprimanding her in a loud voice. And he placed blame on her without allowing her to explain her situation. Gabriela followed his lead. Although she had never carried herself with pride, I had not seen her curl up inside herself to such a degree. Her head was held low, eyes downcast, and she only spoke when commanded to and then barely audibly. She agreed to all he ordered in a manner more obedient than that of an abused child.

Anthropological Insights

Gabriela's story is just one of hundreds of thousands from what is referred to as the "lost generation" throughout the Andes. This generation cannot be quantified and is often overlooked, yet is essential to comprehending social relations within Peruvian society. By building a relationship with Gabriela I was able to comprehend more fully the lasting impacts of both the Shining Path and government forces on countless individuals who have been displaced from their natal communities and left awash in what were once foreign cities within Peru. More importantly, by sharing Gabriela's quotidian experiences I gained insight into how the tightly knit yet frayed and complex social fabric in the Peruvian highlands, shaped by a complex history, led to decades of violence and continue to dictate how history unfolds and social and political foundations shift. The success or failure of social, economic, and environmental programs aimed at redressing failures of the past and building promises for the future largely resides within this social fabric. For this reason, anthropologists strive to discern the patterns of such fabric, which is an often painful, thus rewarding, process.

Throughout my fieldwork I gained insight into how social relations embedded in a deep and fully alive history impact lending programs designed to empower women. I learned how labor exchange practices are shifting in rural communities, with profound impacts on community cohesion and stratification. I also found parallels in women's experience with domestic violence that transcends class, race and gender. I took my findings to a local nongovernmental organization with the hopes of bridging gaps in understanding. In the end I believe some small holes were filled, though others remain deep, which merely illustrates how the work of anthropologists

continuously unfolds into greater levels of understanding, yet is never complete. This can be endlessly frustrating and forever inspiring.

Bringing anthropology to students

So, how does all of this guide my life as a professor? It is hard to put into words, but I feel strongly that as a professor I need to draw from those who have taught me and those who continue to educate me about life beyond my own – those who have revealed their stories with me, be it in Peru, prison or the trash dumps (yes, I have had some interesting and bizarre fieldwork experiences!) and share them with my students to make presumably strange cultural practices comprehensible. I also find it imperative that I learn about the beliefs and behaviors of my students to foster a realization that their own culture is an object worthy of analysis. Ultimately I aim, as is often stated in anthropology, “to make the strange seem familiar, and the familiar seem strange,” thereby building cross-cultural knowledge and respect.

My husband and I recently had the privilege of introducing students to a different way of life through a travel course to Peru. During our time in Peru, we visited Machu Picchu and numerous other majestic Incan sites. We climbed peaks with breathtaking views of endless skylines and layers of watercolor fantasies. Colonial churches, cysteine chapels, and markets saturated us with previously incomprehensible sensations. But what stood out to students at the end of each day, and ultimately at the end of the entire experience, were these: the little boy and his mother who played with us in the park, our dinner with the grounds keeper, conversations we had with a man on the bus, our soccer games with children in the village, and the little girls who held our hands while singing songs in Quechua. The students were also repeatedly struck by a grounded sense of community amongst those they met in Peru. In other words, what stayed with students were the small acts of human connection that allowed them not only to better comprehend, but more importantly, to transcend, difference. I could not have asked for a better introduction to anthropology.

In sum, I believe my teaching is ultimately guided by my role as a student. As an anthropologist I am perpetually placed in the position of learner from those around me, which serves as a continual reminder of how little I know. As odd as it may sound, I believe it is my job as a professor to pass on this lack of mastery to my students. If I can teach my students enough to realize they know dreadfully little, perhaps they will be inspired to learn more. They then can be open to stories such as Gabriela's, so that false barriers between ourselves and others can be eroded, and we can achieve greater understanding and compassion...one relationship at a time.

Nicole Kellett is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at UMF. She is originally from the heartland of Nebraska, but is forever seeking new adventures near and far.

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The Gallant Student

Michael Molinsky

Over the past twenty years I have taught for many different audiences: mathematics and computer science majors, secondary and elementary education majors concentrating in mathematics, as well as students seeking to satisfy general education requirements. These students have varied considerably in terms of their level of mathematical ability, their enthusiasm for the study of mathematics, and their level of motivation as students. When I think back, it is very often students with the third quality that stand out in my mind. Some of my most rewarding teaching experiences have been with students who were not exceptional mathematical thinkers, nor students who were personally very interested in mathematics as a subject, but nevertheless worked to the very best of their ability in my classes.

Below is the story of one such experience, which took place early in my teaching career. To protect the identity of the student (and as a tribute to the children's magazine *Highlights*), I refer to the student by the name "Gallant."

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At the end of the first day of class, Gallant approached me and introduced herself. She told me that she had some learning disabilities, including dyslexia, and that she wanted to discuss some accommodations with me and make sure that they would be all right.

My expectation, based on many negative past experiences, was that she was going to let me know that she couldn't "do" mathematics, and ask that I have pity on her and not grade her as harshly as the other students. I soon found that I was completely wrong in my assumptions. Instead, these were the requests that she made:

- Because she had trouble listening to the lecture, reading material on the board, and writing notes at the same time, she was going to have a friend (another student also enrolled in my class) take notes for her so that she could pay full attention to what I was saying. She wanted to make sure that if she didn't take notes herself, it would not be a problem to me.
- Because she found herself easily distracted by other students during tests, she asked for the opportunity to take the test in my office by herself, rather than taking it in class.

- She could understand spoken material easier than written. Because of this, she asked if it would be possible to have a reader available who could read questions aloud if necessary.
- She recognized that it was going to take a lot of effort and work to earn a passing grade. So she asked if she could come by my office to get help outside of class.

No self-pity. No argument of "I can't do math." No questions about the minimum amount of work she needed to do to pass the class. Instead, here was a student acknowledging her weaknesses, but asking that I give her every opportunity to do her best to learn the material as well as she possibly could. I told Gallant that I saw no problems with any of her accommodations, and that I would be glad to give her as much assistance as I could outside of class.

Gallant was obviously not a strong mathematics student, but she did not give up. She asked questions every day if something in the lecture did not make sense. When she would ask questions, other members of the class would frequently sigh, or roll their eyes, or otherwise signal their displeasure with someone asking questions. I did what I could to discourage these students from this rude behavior, but Gallant was well aware of it and it clearly made her uncomfortable; however, she never let it intimidate her into not asking questions. (The real irony is that most of the students who were so offensive every time Gallant asked a question scored much lower than Gallant on the tests, and many of them failed every test. I suppose they felt insecure about their ignorance, and rather than trying to correct the problem, they put on a front of knowing everything. It would have turned out far better for them if they had asked a question or two.)

Gallant spent at least three hours a week outside of class in my office hours. She spent most of that time working problems on a chalkboard. I would watch and stop her if something was going wrong in her solution. I usually didn't have to correct her; instead, I would just say, "I'm not sure I believe that step," and she would stop and think about what she had done and figure out on her own what she had done wrong. There were two non-traditional students in the class who found out what Gallant was doing and asked to participate. Having the other students there helped Gallant by making it clear that she was by no means the only student in the class having difficulty. It was a lot of fun, and really represented more of the way teaching should ideally be done, although obviously giving that same level of feedback and personal attention to an entire class is far more difficult than it is when working with three highly motivated students.

Gallant passed every test of the semester. She worried that her grades were not high enough, and I did my best to allay her anxiety. But no matter how worried she was, she never asked me to boost her grade. She wanted to earn a grade. She wanted the grade to mean something. In the end, Gallant earned a C. And she was far more ecstatic about that C than any student with an A that I have ever had in my life. That C meant that despite her disabilities, she had learned the material and succeeded on her own merits.

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I have had many Gallants in my classes since the one described above. And my regret with each one is that I couldn't give them a grade far more deserving of their effort, their motivation, and their true improvement in ability. These students are a major reason why I have remained a teacher all of these years.

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We Read A Book And Then We Talk About It

Jonathan Cohen

The title of this essay is shamelessly borrowed from a colleague in literature who succinctly summarized his teaching style this way some years ago. I have held on to it because it succinctly summarizes my pedagogy too. Each word is significant, and together they form my educational philosophy.

“We” – Education can happen solo, and I think all of us educate ourselves about some things some of the time. But at some point education requires companions. One needs to meet other minds not only in the form of authors of books or deliverers of lectures or producers of videos – all of which one could do on one’s own – but also in the form of fellow learners. It’s a psychological truth that one becomes a self only in the presence of other selves, and I think it’s true too that one becomes a learner only in the presence of other learners.

Part of the salutary effect of the socialization of learning is that the student imbibes the ethical standards of the field along with its content knowledge. Being a CPA, for example, is more than a matter of knowing how to work with numbers; it also involves internalizing the ethical standards and practices of the field. Similarly, engaging in the study of philosophy in a class involves more than becoming aware of the thoughts and concepts of the material at hand. One is also learning standards of proof, when and how to cite texts, and how to engage with others in the conduct of the field.

But even more, in a class a student gets to observe other students going through the learning process at the same time. How does one prepare for class? Ask questions? Organize one’s thoughts? Synthesize ideas? Challenge someone else’s ideas? Respond to disagreement? Connect the current subject with other things one knows or thinks about? We sit in a circle in my classroom in order to be able to see each other, because other students are crucial parts of the learning experience.

In this model, the professor is simply the head learner, one more chair in the circle. To be sure, in my classroom the circle of chairs (or seminar table) has me at its head. I am, after all, more experienced as a learner, especially regarding the material in my own courses. And on a practical level, I often need to be able to get to the whiteboard quickly. But still, I am part of the circle. What I am doing in the classroom is modeling learning – how to ask questions of a text, how to cite textual support for one’s interpretation, how to synthesize ideas with each other and with real life, etc. – as much as I am supplying knowledge. The latter anyone can get from the Internet; the former requires a relationship with a live human being.

The philosopher who, more than any other, defined what it means to be a philosopher, famously professed his ignorance: “The only thing I know is that I know nothing.” Often in Plato’s dialogues it seems that Socrates does know more than he’s saying – this is the feature of his work known as Socratic irony – and some readers find it infuriating and disingenuous when he pretends not to know. But what he’s doing is modeling the stance of the learner: One should assume that one does not know, and then be open to exploring the matter with a companion via dialogue. I try to model that too, in my own way – to be interested in whatever my students say and to be open to finding out something new that I didn’t expect to hear.

In Plato’s *Symposium*, there’s a remarkable exception to Socrates’s usual claims of ignorance. When the topic of love is raised, Socrates says “Oh, *that’s* something I know something about!” And later in that same dialogue the word *philosophos* is used in its precise etymological sense to describe a “lover of wisdom.” Philosophers don’t claim to know more than other people do (or at least they shouldn’t). We claim only to be lovers of wisdom.

And I am, in actual fact, always learning in my own classroom. Every so often the discussion comes to a new point, or a student says something that I find novel and interesting, and I take a moment to jot it down for myself. The students find this surprising – “wait, aren’t you the teacher?” – but I am in fact learning from them at the same time they’re learning from me. That’s what being a teacher means to me, and that’s part of the magic of the college classroom.

“Read” – Presumably, my students have been reading for at least a dozen years before they take my course. But I’m not sure they’ve ever read this particular way before. Reading philosophy is not like reading the news, a textbook, etc. In those cases one is reading for information. When reading philosophy one is *working through* the material. First one has to work to elicit the text’s message. Then one has to work to think through the ideas and formulate challenges to them. It takes time – I tell students that when I’m reading new material, taking notes, underlining, etc., it takes me about an hour to work through ten pages, and I hope they will be similarly thorough. The process is crucial not only to be sure we understand what’s being said, but also to be able to use it as a springboard for our own thoughts. We are not just finding out what the author thinks and swallowing it whole – that is to say, accepting it unquestioned – rather, we are finding out what the author thinks and chewing it over – that is to say, considering it. For the ultimate goal is to learn not what the philosopher thought, but what *we* think. That may sound paradoxical, but it’s really what’s happening: We may think we know our views about something, but when confronted with a particularly

intriguing philosophical challenge, we have to rethink what we believe. We may well come back to the same belief, but now we know why we hold it, what the arguments for and against are, what the view's strengths and weaknesses are. And every so often, it happens that what we read, or a discussion we have in class, changes our views. That's a remarkable thing, to change one's mind about something fundamental. But it's part of the magic of studying philosophy – the possibility of arriving at new thoughts, new vantage points, a new self.

“A book” – How old-fashioned this sounds! But bear in mind that when I use the term “book,” I'm not assuming the student will encounter it in print – plenty of books are available on-screen these days (although print is in fact easier when one has to point to a specific passage – one can say it's on page 17 and all of us in the room can find it together, whereas most texts on-line come up on different computer screens in different formats).

The key here is that a book is a *work*, an assemblage of words meant to hold together and last (no matter how cheaply printed or, as I've said, e-mitted): “hold together” around a central, complex idea, and “last” because it's a deeply relevant, timelessly important idea. The course reading I assign consists mostly of classic texts that have rewarded repeated readings with ever-new and ever-valuable insights over a prolonged period of time. Those are the books that have proven their value and are, in my view, best for undergraduates. Such a background in the tradition will stand them in good stead if they go on to graduate school, where they will encounter cutting-edge ideas and be able to take part in the ongoing dialogue through which the field moves forward. And if they don't go on to graduate school – which is the case with the vast majority of my students – they will benefit most, when using philosophical ideas to better understand their lives, from having been exposed to philosophical texts that have proven their usefulness over time.

Such is the extent of my assigning old books that a student once asked me if all philosophers were dead. I *hope* not, I replied, implying that I hope I myself count as both a philosopher and alive, and the class chuckled. But there's a deeper meaning to the exchange – classics by old dead philosophers are, I believe, still very much alive. It is a convention that when we cite texts we use the present tense – “In the *Symposium*, Plato *says*...” – but in my view it is more than a convention: Plato and the others continue to talk to us today through their writings, and their thoughts continue to be relevant and useful for us today. Even when a philosopher dies, his/her philosophy is very much alive.

“And then” – These two little words connecting the two halves of the sentence conceal an obvious but important truth about college classes: There’s a time lag between the reading and the discussing. The reading happens outside class, and the discussion happens inside. And in fact one of the things I emphasize to first-year students is that, unlike high school, in which homework was a supplement to class, in college it is the class that’s a supplement to homework. That is, most of a college course happens outside the classroom, in terms of time spent. The federal definition of a credit hour actually enshrines this idea by requiring that a college course include two to three hours of preparation time for each hour of class time.

Does this contradict what I said above about learning requiring companions? Not at all. The companionship of the classroom continues outside it in three ways. First, the things we talked about, indeed the very personalities in the room, remain with you while you’re doing your private reading, back in your dorm room or in a library carrel. Your fellow learners are implicitly present even while you’re working on your own. Second, the authors in the books you’re reading become your companions as well – they’re speaking to you, and you’re formulating your response, and in the next paragraph they come back with their response, and so on – there’s a dialogue going on when you’re reading (assuming you’re doing the active sort of reading I described above). And finally, there are plenty of other, informal contacts with fellow learners you’ve met in the classroom. Maybe you form a study group with classmates – something I strongly encourage and, in some classes, formally arrange. Or maybe you just meet up with a classmate in the library or over lunch and chat about material. This too is a crucial part of the learning.

I try to ensure that my students do their reading by requiring reading response papers – only a page or so, usually with a prompt I give at the end of the preceding class (though sometimes on just an open subject) – enough to show that the students have at least tried the reading and, I hope, done enough to get the process of engagement described above off to a good start. And usually these response papers form the basis of discussion when we re-congregate for class.

“We talk” – The goal is for *everybody* to talk – those are the best classes, the ones in which everyone is an active learner and the community is synergistically supporting each other.

And even for a student individually, it’s good to participate in class discussion. Just as passive knowledge of a foreign language must become active, it’s the same with philosophy – you have to explicitly formulate your thoughts for yourself in order to really have them. I don’t believe in forcing people to talk – not only do I find such class discussion techniques awkward,

but I am also well aware that a wallflower can produce terrific written work and get the benefits of formulating his/her thoughts that way. But usually the talking that students do in class helps their written work, since the latter grows out of the former. In class discussion we've already made points and defended them and cited the text in support of our interpretations, and that's just what happens in a paper. So the talking leads to the writing, which by common consent is one of the most important skills students are expected to graduate with.

One day, when students were suggesting lines of interpretation and I was raising challenges, a student in the back blurted out, "It's like playing chess." That's exactly right – some moves are legitimate, some aren't, and you want not only to make legitimate moves but combine them in a sequence in such a way that they all hang together and result in the resignation of your "opponent" (an imaginary person who initially disagrees with you but is willing to listen to reason, which is who I tell my students to address their papers to). Kasparov would have made a great philosopher.

"About it" – The "it" in this particular sentence refers back to the books I mentioned above, but in practice "it" – an indefinite pronoun – could refer to anything at all, and this grammatical fact provides an opening for me to say that class discussions can wind up anywhere at all. That's part of the joy of a live class – unlike a canned lecture, in a live class even the teacher doesn't know where discussion might go, and that's because of the presence of other live people who have other perspectives and other experiences to connect their learning to. And thus this essay has circled back to that little word "we," the most important part of any class.

And what is this thing, "philosophy," that we're talking about? Philosophy is notoriously difficult to define; in fact, my graduate advisor liked to define philosophy as "that field which is constantly in the process of defining itself." This is something of a joke, but also has some accuracy about it. Because philosophy involves thinking about things at the most fundamental level, or, to change the spatial metaphor, at the highest level of abstraction, we are continually questioning our own activity and trying to define and redefine what it is we're doing. Thus philosophy has at various times meant, to some philosophers, thinking about the natural world; to others, thinking about the human world; to still others, thinking about the nature of thought itself; and so on.

I often find myself coming back to the root meaning of the word – love of wisdom. I talked above about the difference between having knowledge and loving it – and of course we all know from the ups and downs of our romantic lives that loving something and possessing it are two

different things. But here I want to point out that “philosophy” doesn’t mean love of *knowledge* (that would be “philomathy,” an old-fashioned word one still sees here and there), but love of *wisdom*. To my mind, wisdom differs from knowledge in that the former connotes an awareness of limits. Whereas knowledge is positive – I know such-and-such facts – wisdom implies a deeper understanding. Not only of what can be known to be true and false, but of what can’t be known to be either. It is awareness of the limits of our understanding that Socrates held to be crucial for the best life, and this, to me, is a crucial part of the life of philosophy.

In a Peanuts cartoon that hangs on my office door, Linus says, “Life is peculiar. Wouldn’t you like to live your life over, knowing what you know now?” Sally thinks about this for a panel and then replies, “What do I know now?”

It would be great to have Sally in a philosophy class.

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“But You Can Never Leave”: Deep Engagement in a College Classroom

Steven W. Quackenbush

I never really wanted to be a teacher. My profession fell upon me by accident. Throughout my college years, I was generally a motivated, conscientious *student*. But I do not recall ever having a desire to *teach* for a living.

I pursued graduate study simply because my intellectual curiosity was not fully satisfied by my undergraduate coursework. My interests – if not my talents – ranged across a broad range of disciplines. I settled on psychology because it appeared to lie at the intersection of many other fields of interest, including sociology, philosophy, mathematics, biology, and literature. If I studied psychology, I thought, no topic would be “off limits.”

The graduate program in *social-personality psychology* at Kansas State University was especially appealing because of its declared intention to train “scholar-researcher generalists” rather than “technical specialists.” When I enrolled in the program, I was well aware that my career path would likely require teaching in a university setting, but I viewed this as a necessary evil. I wanted to *do* “psychology.” If I had to *teach* it as well, this was something I would just have to learn to live with.

There was only one problem: I soon discovered that I was truly horrible in the classroom. In the second year of my graduate program, I was offered the opportunity to teach my first class: a small (30-student) section of *General Psychology*. At first, I had high hopes. “How hard could it be?” I thought. “All I need to do is walk into the classroom and talk about psychology, one of my favorite subjects.”

To be sure, I knew full well that my class preparations would require a considerable investment of time and intellectual energy. As a conscientious graduate student, I approached my first lectures in much the same way that I might prepare to give a presentation at a conference. I would carefully organize and review my notes, often scripting “word for word” my discussion of relevant theory and research.

They were competent lectures, at least for a graduate student making his start in the field. The theoretical claims advanced by prominent scholars were fairly represented and due consideration was given to competing interpretations of specific research findings. Further, I have always had a rather loud voice. I knew that everyone in the classroom could hear what I was saying and, just in case there was any confusion, I paused every ten minutes to solicit questions.

Everything *should* have gone well. But it soon became painfully obvious that my students were bored. They wanted out of that classroom as soon as possible. My lectures were lifeless and eventually I too could hardly wait for each class session to come to an end. Clearly, there was something missing in my approach to teaching, but I had no idea what it was. All I could safely say was that whatever I was doing was not enough. Thus did I learn my first significant lesson as a college professor: *it is never sufficient to simply “teach the material.”*

One of my mentors gave me some helpful advice: why not try to encourage class participation by integrating various activities into my lectures? For example, at a strategic moment during my lecture on self-esteem theory, I might distribute a self-esteem survey for the students to complete in class, and then we could discuss the theoretical and practical significance of their responses. This was excellent advice, and it might have worked if I were a better teacher. But in-class activities merely granted my students a temporary reprieve. They were probably less bored when they actually had something to do, but that did not change the fact that they had to sit through long stretches of lifeless lectures. Thus did I learn my second significant lesson as a college professor: *boring lectures cannot be redeemed by “fun and games.”*

When my first semester as a teacher was finally over, I began to seriously wonder whether I might have chosen the wrong career. At the very least, I thought, I should probably steer clear of any academic position that would require a heavy teaching load. I recall having the dim hope that I might get better with practice, or at least good enough to survive as a mediocre instructor at a research university. Fortunately, I received considerable encouragement from my graduate school colleagues and mentors, many of whom were presently experiencing – or had previously experienced – similar challenges in their own development as teachers. But I had no clear sense of how to make the project of teaching work for me.

I was entrusted with a second section of *General Psychology* the following year, and the semester began in much the same way as the first. There was little evidence of student interest, though several students in the front row made respectable displays of taking copious notes. Then, one October afternoon, something remarkable happened. I was walking back to my office after delivering an especially bad lecture, and I ran into one of my graduate student friends. As had happened many times in the past, he managed to say something I disagreed with.

I do not recall the exact argument, but that hardly matters now. What I do remember is that I took him to task and tried to demonstrate how his claims failed to hold up under close scrutiny. He was not impressed, and proceeded to document the logical fallacies and mistaken inferences that

rendered my own position untenable. Thus began a passionate, and not obviously friendly, debate. Within a few minutes, several other graduate students approached to see what we were arguing about. At first, they posed as curious onlookers but, within a few minutes, they too jumped into the fray.

Down the hall was an office utilized by Psi Chi, an honors society for undergraduate psychology majors. A few Psi Chi members, who could not help but overhear the commotion, left their office to join the small but growing mob of students. I even recall one of these undergraduates walking away – in apparent disgust over the fact that we were actually arguing in the hallway – but then suddenly returning five minutes later with one of the strongest arguments of the afternoon.

When it was all over, I found myself contemplating a rather sad irony. Just an hour earlier, my *General Psychology* students seemed to want nothing more than for class to be over as quickly as possible. But, within minutes after granting these students their wish, I was actually *attracting an audience*. How was that possible?

I knew full well that it was not “me” who was responsible for what happened that afternoon, nor was it my graduate student colleague. Clearly, there was something compelling about the debate itself.

But even this did not satisfy me. As a lecturer, I was certainly capable of presenting the “great conversations” in the field of psychology. In fact, I had discussed the Skinner-Rogers debate just the previous week. I had tried to explain to my students that these two theorists were wrestling with some very important issues (e.g., determinism vs. free will), but nobody seemed to care.

What I witnessed that October afternoon was something else entirely. We were not presenting a debate from the perspective of an omniscient narrator (a “teacher”). Rather, *we became the debate*. We both had something at stake in the discussion and the resolution of our conflict would affect us to the core of our being. I could no more “withdraw” from the debate than I could stop breathing. At first, our onlookers were merely curious, but they soon realized that they too were compromised by the very issues with which we were grappling.

In subsequent weeks, there was little noticeable change in my approach to teaching. Nevertheless, I think I was possessed by a new spirit. Rather than viewing myself as a “teacher” responsible for delivering competent lectures, I began to view my class as a *debate partner*.

Yet it should be understood that the shift in orientation I am describing here was not a newfound desire to “invite” students into a debate. Invitations, I had already discovered, did not really work. In class the previous week, I had reviewed the respective positions of B. F. Skinner and

Carl Rogers and then invited my students to share their thoughts: “Who do you think is right: Skinner or Rogers?” Nobody had much to say.

The problem is that debates are lifeless if the students do not already have a reason to find them interesting. The Skinner-Rogers debate seemed no more relevant to their lives than was the ancient conflict between Athens and Sparta.

My challenge was not to present the “great debates” but to find ways for the students to *have a real stake* in the arguments considered in class. In order to accomplish this, I had to finally come to terms with the commitments that my students *already have*. In other words, I had to *get to know* my students – as a group, if not always as individuals.

Thus did I learn my third significant lesson as a college teacher: *empathy is a necessary, if never sufficient, condition for teaching excellence*. If I am going to pull my students into a debate, I need to know what they *want*. Do they lean to the political left or right? Are they seeking happiness or wisdom? Are they more interested in finding an authentic sense of identity or a meaningful romance? Is there anything I could say that would actually *bother* them?

Trying to teach a class without empathic engagement is akin to baking bread without yeast. The dough never rises. The point here is not to “care” what students think (I do care, but that’s another matter). Rather, the challenge is to help students realize that they *already* have a stake in the discussion.

To take a simple example, after many years of teaching *Adulthood & Aging* at the University of Maine, Farmington, I have a fairly good sense of how my students tend to think about certain issues at the beginning of the semester. For example, on the first day of class, I ask students if they have ever heard of the “midlife crisis”, a developmental transition documented by Daniel Levinson and his colleagues (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978). Virtually everyone acknowledges familiarity with the concept (if not with the theorists responsible for popularizing it), and most seem to believe that it is quite natural for a middle-aged man to want to recapture his youth as he moves into the second half of his life.

My students are also generally comfortable with various ideas associated with the work of Erik Erikson, at least insofar as these ideas have permeated popular culture. In fact, it might be fair to say that most American college students are implicit Eriksonians. Virtually everything they believe about human development is consistent with – if not formally drawn from – Eriksonian theory. For example, my students generally agree with Erikson (1963) that human development can be understood as a progression through a sequence of stages, each involving a distinct psychosocial conflict. Adolescents struggle to work through the “identity vs. role confusion” crisis,

young adults confront the challenge of “intimacy vs. isolation”, and middle-aged adults must find a way to make a meaningful contribution to society if they hope to resolve the “generativity vs. stagnation” conflict. Moreover, most students are willing to support various corollaries of Eriksonian theory, such as the belief that “it is important to establish a clear sense of identity before you can know what you want in a romantic relationship.”

So, how do I teach these students? There is a very real danger that I will end up berating the obvious when discussing the work of Erik Erikson and other psychosocial theorists. What could be more dull than emphasizing the importance of “finding your true identity”, “achieving authentic intimacy”, and so forth. Of course, Erikson’s theory needs to be faithfully represented. The challenge is to help the students recognize that there may be more at stake in Erikson’s account of psychosocial development than they ever realized. But how do I demonstrate this?

For starters, it is always possible to “spice up” the most well-worn theory by drawing attention to themes or issues that are not easily accommodated by the students’ present schemas. When discussing Erikson’s account of the “Identity vs. Role Confusion” conflict, I know that most of my students already believe that “identity” is a good thing and “role confusion” is a bad thing. Thus, there is little to be gained by dwelling on this theme.

Far more interesting is Erikson’s notion of “negative identity”, which refers to the tendency of many adolescents and young adults to embrace an identity *at odds* with prevailing cultural values. An obvious example of this is the “rebel” who adopts an ethic of nonconformity and seems to enjoy his consequent notoriety. Clearly, such nonconformity cannot be assimilated into the category of “role confusion”, for the rebel knows full well who he is. On the other hand, embracing a negative identity cannot be quite the same as adopting a socially-sanctioned positive identity, for the rebel may eventually have to *pay a price* for his nonconformity. For example, the tattoos he has plastered up and down his forearm and on his neck may compromise his ability to obtain employment, at least in certain fields.

By grappling with the problem of the nonconformist, the students catch a glimpse of the true depth of Eriksonian thought. It is never enough to simply figure out “who we are”, for any such revelation may include dimensions of selfhood that are not socially sanctioned. Rather, the quest for identity is more appropriately considered as an ongoing *negotiation* between the developing individual and the culture at large.

Still, it is fair to say that Eriksonian theory – even in its most sophisticated form – “meshes” quite well with the worldview embraced by most of my students. Thus, it should come as something of a shock when –

several weeks into the semester – we begin to challenge many of the assumptions that students have accepted as a matter of course. For example, the work of Carol Gilligan raises questions about our presumed need to establish a firm sense of identity before we can experience true intimacy. Perhaps the order here should be reversed. Maybe we are most likely to discover who we *really are* in the context of a caring relationship.

A seemingly radical challenge to traditional stage approaches to adult development emerges when the relevant issues are considered in light of the five-factor model of personality. This model suggests that individual differences in personality can be understood in relation to five core traits: extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience. A substantial body of research suggests that these traits are generally quite stable in adulthood (McCrae and Costa, 1990). For example, a person who is introverted and neurotic at the age of 25 will probably still be introverted and neurotic at the age of 45.

McCrae and Costa's 1990 account of the implications of these findings should be disturbing to any student who uncritically assumes that adulthood is a time of significant growth and change:

Once we begin to think in terms of stability, it becomes increasingly intuitive....History tells us that Beethoven was a rebel at age 20 and at age 50, that Chairman Mao did not grow conservative with age. Hospital and prison records show that tendencies towards mental illness and antisocial behavior are dishearteningly stable. One begins to wonder how the idea of adult development ever arose to begin with. (McCrae & Costa, 1990, p. 107)

McCrae and Costa do not have the final word on adult development in my class. Nevertheless, their work does effectively throw some of my students' most basic assumptions into sharp relief. Given that many plan to pursue careers in the field of counseling, I ask them what they hope to accomplish. Do they actually think they can *change* people? Perhaps their chief responsibility is to help their clients develop strategies to deal with a constellation of core personality traits that are likely to remain stable forever.

Much more can be said here about the theoretical issues explored in *Adulthood & Aging*, but the point by now should be clear. My challenge as an educator is not to "teach the debate" as if it were a contest that my students merely *observe*. Rather, at every stage of the game, I need to show my students how they are *already in the debate*. They are *compromised* – and hopefully *bothered* – by every argument we discuss in class.

Significantly, this approach to teaching has implications that extend well beyond the planning of lectures. Throughout my career, I have employed a broad range of assessment techniques (e.g., essays, exams, homework assignments) to ensure that students have mastered course

content. Yet, I also believe that these same tools can be used to help students develop a deeper appreciation for how they are *situated* in relation to theory and research discussed in class. In other words, assessments do not merely provide students with opportunities to demonstrate *what they understand*, but also to document *where they stand*.

Frequently, the essay questions I write are explicitly designed to challenge views held by the majority of my students. For example, most seem to agree with contemporary attachment theorists (e.g., Hazan & Shaver, 1994) that (a) adults vary with respect to the extent they experience “security” in close relationships and (b) it is generally better to be “secure” than “insecure”. The first assertion is an empirical question that can be addressed by a review of the relevant research. The second assertion is more problematic insofar as it reflects – at least in part – a statement of value. To challenge this assumption, I prepared the following essay question for inclusion on an *Adulthood & Aging* exam:

Consider the implications of attachment theory for the understanding of adult relationships.

- a. *Discuss the three styles of adult attachment identified by Hazan and Shaver. Be sure to clearly and fully explain how these attachment styles relate to an individual's experiences in romantic relationships. Also, which style of attachment do these theorists consider to be ideal? Why?*
- b. *A friend says to you: “Really, when it comes right down to it, every honest adult recognizes that all human relationships are insecure. Sure, I want kids to think they are secure, but once you reach a certain age, it is important to recognize that true security is simply unattainable.” How would you respond to this friend? Defend your answer clearly and fully.*

Notice that the first part of the question requires familiarity with the relevant theory and research. The second part, depicting the views of a hypothetical ‘friend’, is designed to transform the values implicit in the work of many attachment theorists into a formal problem: why should we embrace *security* as a psychosocial ideal? The students are thus obliged to defend or modify certain assumptions they are already making about what it means to be an emotionally healthy adult in contemporary society.

So it appears that I finally found my way as a college professor. After taking several wrong paths, I think I now see the light at the end of the pedagogical tunnel. At the very least, I can report three significant discoveries from my journey: (a) *it is never sufficient to simply “teach the material”*, (b) *boring lectures cannot be redeemed by “fun and games”*, and (c) *empathy is a necessary, if never sufficient, condition for teaching excellence*. Yet, even here, something appears to be missing.

As I try to pull my students into the “great conversations,” there is a very real danger that I will remain aloof as a teacher, as if I were somehow above the fray. Of course, I could enter the debate as a participant and share my own views, but this tends to cause more problems than it solves. I want the students to remain focused on the course material, not worry about what I so happen to think about a particular issue.

Thus it is fortuitous that I was struck several years ago by my fourth (and hopefully final) revelation: *I am most effective as a college professor when I simply ‘disappear’ as a teacher. My responsibility is not to say what I think about ‘this’ or ‘that’, but to serve as a transparent ‘window’ through which my students can see the discipline of psychology.* From this point of view, I am always fully engaged as a participant in the debate, but not as ‘Dr. Quackenbush.’ Rather, I am playing the role of Erikson, Gilligan, Levinson, McCrae, Costa, or any of the other theorists who have something to say to our students.

I see no reason to generalize this fourth insight. It may not work for other psychology professors. Perhaps there will always be a place for the *professor as advocate*. Nevertheless, I have found that my classes are much more engaging when I simply *forget who I am* and actually *become* the scholars I am discussing.

In the beginning, I prepared for class as if I were heading off to deliver a conference presentation. Now I proceed in much the same way that an actor prepares for a stage performance: I try to “get into character.” Sometimes, I spend a few hours before class strategically regressing back to a period in my own intellectual development when I first grasped the significance of the work of a particular theorist or researcher. Then I can enter the classroom as though I have *just made a discovery* that I simply must share with everyone. On other occasions, I spend time reading the theoretical work of important scholars, with a special focus on how they think the field (if not the world) will change if everyone took their work seriously. I then I try to show students how their own lives would be different if they embraced this scholar’s worldview.

I cannot claim to have fully realized the ideals articulated in the present essay, but I think I have made progress. I am certainly more ambitious. I no longer simply struggle to make my lectures more interesting. Rather, I want my students to be *haunted* by the issues we discuss long after the class session is over. In the spirit of the famous Eagles song, *Hotel California*, I know full well that my students are free to “check out” of my class anytime they like. I merely want to remind them: “But you can never leave.”

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Beyond the Textbook and Outside the Classroom Walls

Lance Neeper

The University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) provides a unique environment for its faculty to teach beyond traditional methods. Two years ago, during my interview for an open Assistant Professor position in Special Education, I was immediately struck by how knowledgeable, collaborative, and welcoming the faculty were, as well as by how dedicated and hardworking the students were that I met across campus. During my visit, faculty members emphasized the importance of instilling best practices in the future teachers they worked with. Their pride in providing a wide range of learning experiences in and outside of the classroom, to best prepare these future teachers, was immediately evident. I was impressed by the small class sizes, the emphasis on quality teaching, opportunities to collaborate with faculty across campus as well as community members, and the support for conducting research and other scholarly activities for both faculty and students. The students at UMF appeared to be rigorously prepared to meet their future professional goals.

Over the last two years as an Assistant Professor here, I have realized that my first impressions of UMF were absolutely correct, but that even more, we offer opportunities here for students and faculty that I believe set us apart from other institutions of higher education. For example, in the area of special education, we are the only public university in the state of Maine that offers an on-campus undergraduate degree to prepare high-quality future special educators—an area that has been noted at the state and national levels as a “high-need area.” Faculty have also developed a new minor in special education to better prepare future general education teachers to teach students with disabilities. Additionally, we have revised our program requirements and electives in order to meet the continually changing needs in the field of education, resulting in a program that exceeds teaching standard requirements.

The faculty in Special Education have collaborated to carefully craft courses that align with teaching standards in an effort to maximize instruction and prepare future educators to teach students with a wide range of abilities. Each course purposefully builds on the others, to ensure that our graduates have both a solid understanding of best practices and the skills necessary to successfully implement effective teaching techniques in their future school settings. As part of that, UMF offers its students several different opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in the field. All special education majors participate in a practicum experience in their second year at a local school, and complete a culminating semester-long student

teaching placement as seniors. However, UMF goes beyond these typical teacher education experiences, in that we offer field placements in each of our methods courses (i.e., teaching reading, or teaching math), placements that provide each student with the chance to work in a local school with a student or students in those subjects. And first-year education majors have an additional opportunity to work with a local school, to help them confirm that teaching is the right career path for them, and to build their foundational understanding of the field of education. These hands-on experiences, directed by full-time faculty, ensure that students meet course objectives and can successfully apply their skills in authentic settings after graduation.

Within each special education course, faculty have developed projects that lead students to comprehend fully the material from that course, and to build on their previous experiences. In this paper, I will detail some of the experiences that students in my courses have noted as beneficial to their understanding of how to teach students with disabilities. These projects are possible in large part due to UMF's emphasis on quality teaching, its small class sizes, increased class time with four-credit class schedules, a collaborative environment, and the excellence of our students and faculty. When developing materials and assignments, my goal as instructor is to address as many course objectives as possible. The following are examples of class projects that students participate in at the introductory and advanced levels of their particular program of study.

Service-Learning Project

Students in their first year as education majors are required to take two seven-week introductory courses, one on special education and one on general education. Dr. Theresa Overall and I collaborate on the courses, and have further developed a service-learning project between UMF and Mt. Blue Middle School that was initiated before my arrival. Service-learning is a teaching strategy that provides opportunities for students to extend their learning beyond the university classroom through authentic hands-on experiences that benefit their community. Service-learning differs from volunteerism, in that service-learning is mutually beneficial to community partners and to students, directly tied to course content, includes on-going reflection, and reaches beyond the scope of completing service hours for credit. The service-learning project (referred to as Academic Mentoring) places first-year education majors in an authentic learning environment (the Middle School) based on their preferences, in an effort to benefit the school while increasing our students' understanding of course topics. Our students are given a variety of placement options to choose from, based on the needs of the school. Each student then spends approximately one hour per week at the school, providing a variety of supports including one-on-one tutoring,

homework support, book clubs, and additional support in certain classrooms. The goal of the project is to provide needed support to the Middle School while giving first-year education majors the opportunity to assume a “teacher role,” which can be useful in guiding them through practice as they learn introductory course content (e.g., appropriate academic support, classroom management, professional disposition).

Dr. Overall and I have partnered with two staff members from the Middle School to facilitate the Academic Mentoring project and to provide initial training before the students enter the school. During this training, all students are given a handbook outlining their roles and current best practices. Case scenarios, based on our experiences and feedback from former students, are used on potential challenges that one might face as an Academic Mentor. To reinforce the value of the experience, we also discuss some of the benefits of the Mentoring project that former students have shared with us. Once the project begins, students are responsible for maintaining communication with both their partnering classroom teachers and their course instructors. After each hour spent at the school, students complete written reflections on their experiences by answering questions about what went well, what challenges they faced, and how their experiences aligned with course content. In addition to these reflections and class discussions, students complete mid-term and final surveys on their experiences. Dr. Overall and I have been using the data collected over the past two years to enhance the project and to research the experiences of first year education majors.

Our students take their roles seriously and rise to the challenge. Several students have noted the positive interactions between themselves and their mentor teachers at Mt. Blue Middle School. These interactions emphasize the integral role that these expert teachers in our local schools play in the development of future educators. One student perfectly captured this important student-to-teacher dynamic:

“I loved interacting with my teacher and being able to have frank discussions about the world of education. These were vital conversations that I would never be able to find in a book.”

The majority of education majors have had positive K-12 school experiences. Through this hands-on experience they gain a broader perception, which leads them to a better understanding of the perspectives of students who are not excelling in school. These experiences will help them, as emerging educators, to develop interventions that better meet the needs of their future students. From another student:

“I now have a more mature, empathetic outlook on kids who struggle in the classroom, and I feel more ready to confront the challenges they present.”

Exposing education majors to K-12 school classrooms in their first year provides better opportunities to explore the field of education as a career path, and this particular opportunity begins their transformation from students to teachers. I should note that not all students continue in the field. We have had a small number of students who, though they reported positive experiences in mentoring, decided that their talents would be better served in a different field. This outcome of the mentoring project is as valuable as having one’s desire to be a teacher reinforced. It should also be noted that we have had several student mentors continue to mentor on their own time, long after their course requirements ended. These two quotes illustrate these dynamics at work:

“The mentoring experience just cemented my desire to be a teacher. I enjoyed it so much, so I started mentoring another student at an elementary school in Farmington.”

“My favorite experience as a mentor was learning something new. It was exciting to be in a school not as a student for the first time in my entire life.”

As students develop a foundational understanding of education principles and become increasingly comfortable with their roles, they realize that the more prepared and knowledgeable they are, the better their students will perform. They quickly learn how satisfying it can be to assist a student with reaching their goals, and the hands-on experiences provide reinforcement to them. One student captured the essence of what it is to be a teacher:

“My favorite experiences mentoring were getting to know my mentee and watching her grow on an academic level. She continued to improve, which created a better atmosphere between the two of us. I had a lot of fun spending time and helping my mentee. We both felt extremely accomplished.”

Student Research Project

UMF has a strong focus on undergraduate student research, a focus that is showcased during the annual Michael D. Wilson Symposium Day celebration. As part of my course on preparing future general education

teachers to teach students with disabilities, I have developed a research project that meets a variety of course objectives. My belief is that increased exposure of education majors to the research process will translate to a better understanding of research methodologies and best practices, as well as greater appreciation for the complexities of the field.

The research project spans several weeks and includes many components. First, students learn about the differences between qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches to conducting research, as well as about the institutional review board (IRB) process. We discuss the importance of research in the field of education, and students have the opportunity to thoroughly explore peer-reviewed research on various special education topics related to the course.

For this project, students conduct an interview with a professional whom they consider to be a “model teacher” in their particular discipline. Prior to the interview, each student develops five questions for the teacher based on the concepts they have learned in class. The goal of the interview is to get ideas, recommendations, and advice on concepts that are often concerns for future teachers, such as preparing for an Individual Education Program (IEP) meeting, classroom management, and accommodating students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Students work in groups to winnow all the questions down to five that will generate open-ended responses from their interviewees. Once the questions have been finalized, students learn about and practice their qualitative interviewing skills. Students then follow the IRB protocol for contacting and interviewing their teachers, and analyzing the resulting data. After the students are proficient with the research procedures, each student, using the same five questions, interviews the teacher.

Once the interviews have been completed, students are taught how to analyze qualitative data, and then to use their skills to analyze the responses to a single question. The groups then present their findings to the class, and we discuss the overarching themes, and take away messages, limitations, recommendations, and areas for further exploration. At the conclusion of the project, students write a reflection on their experiences.

Students are given the opportunity to engage in research, so they will fully grasp the important role research plays in the field of education and the rigor of research methods. Additionally, students seek clarification from experts in the field on course topics that take time to comprehend and develop fully. One student described newly formed views on research:

“I didn’t realize how much work went into a research project to get good results. I now think about those journal articles differently because we completed a very small research

project. I understand the basic research process so the articles seem more interesting and easier to understand than they did before.”

As the saying goes, “good teaching is good teaching.” Students are drawn to effective educators that use best practices. The model teachers reinforce best practices that the students study in the course itself. When this reinforcement comes from an outside source that the students respect, it makes the course content more credible and solidifies their need to be life-long learners. Another student reflected:

“I was shocked by how many of the teachers use the techniques, strategies, and resources we learned about in class. It really reinforced the importance of understanding the material we learn in our courses and how important it is to continue to learn new methods to be a good teacher like the ones we interviewed.”

Students are required to reach out to teachers with whom they had a previous positive experience, whether the teacher is from their home school district or from a school where they were placed in the field. The process of talking about education with a mentor teacher can be a rewarding endeavor for both parties. It is extremely important for beginning educators to feel comfortable asking experienced mentor teachers for their recommendations or thoughts on teaching. Coming to the realization that you have developed a foundational understanding of the profession is key to building confidence in the classroom, as noted by a student-researcher:

“I really learned a lot from the research project, but what I didn’t expect was how much I enjoyed talking to an experienced teacher. I was able to use the terminology and felt more confident in my understanding of teaching.”

Expert Panel

Once students gain the insights of model teachers from the research project, we switch our focus to understanding the perspectives of their future students with disabilities. Over the course of my time at UMF, I have had the pleasure of meeting several of our students with disabilities who received special education services during their K-12 education. These UMF students are the true experts on disability-related issues and have incredible insight into advancing the educational system through their advocacy work. At the conclusion of the teacher research project, I assemble a panel of UMF

student experts on disability and have them share their experiences with and answer questions from future educators in my class.

Prior to the panel discussion, I meet with the experts individually to gain a better understanding of their experiences, discuss the panel, and get their advice on how future educators can better meet the needs of all students. This panel is an incredible learning experience for our education majors and for me. In preparation for the session, students develop questions and decide how to maximize the time of the experts. Using a mixture of large and small group discussions allows them greater ownership of this learning experience. After the panel finishes, we have a debriefing group discussion and then students write a reflection paper about their reactions to the expert panel.

As a teacher, understanding one's students, and as part of that including their voices and goals in the planning of instruction, is essential. Regardless of the perceived severity of the disability of a student, teachers should hold high expectations for their students and treat each student as an individual. Students find this culminating project, which reinforces those principles, to be beneficial and enlightening as they move toward their next phase in the education program—student teaching. The following quotes from the students' reflections illustrate some of these key themes:

“At first, I wasn’t sure how I should address the disability especially when writing the questions before we met the students. However, once we started talking, it became a conversation related to what works and what does not work for each individual rather than ‘I have this or that’.”

“I know we learned about including student voice and the importance of being positive, but when you heard each of the students say that a teacher along the way told them they couldn’t do something, it really hit home how those negative comments stayed with each individual. That being said, I was re-energized when each student said that they had a teacher or group of teachers that really had a positive impact on their lives. I want to be that type of teacher.”

“I was amazed at how each of the students worked with their teachers and family to develop a system of strategies that worked for them whether it be note-taking or reading. I now understand why you kept saying the more you know, the better off your students will be.”

“It was really interesting how the students with the same disability label had very different strengths, needs, and

perspectives. One student thought peer editing was great and another thought it created more problems for them. This is proof that one strategy doesn't work for all students."

Our education majors all write their reflections from the classroom projects outlined above before they even begin the student teaching process. These opportunities available at UMF improve the education majors' abilities to think critically while meeting the challenges of the field of education. Thanks to the students' reflections, and as new techniques emerge in the field, these course projects are also continually evolving. UMF provides a unique environment for preparing future educators because the faculty can develop learning experiences collaboratively, across campus and within the community, which allow the students to apply their knowledge and skills in new ways each semester. The dedication and commitment to quality teaching and to our chosen fields set the groundwork for what we do in the classroom; however, the bright and hardworking students that come to UMF drive us to do even more.

Lance Neeper is an Assistant Professor of Special Education at UMF. He enjoys learning about all things related to the field of Special Education and is thankful to be a part of the UMF community.

Team Teaching

Theresa Overall and Grace J. Ward

*"Alone we can do so little.
Together we can do so much."*
~Helen Keller

*"Coming together is a beginning,
staying together is progress, and
working together is success."*
~Henry Ford

What is Team Teaching?

Team teaching is a nebulous term. It is easy to describe a team teaching experience that one has been a part of, but it is actually hard to define it. Yes, it is two or more teachers working together to teach students, but there seem to be so many different types and situations. This paper describes the team teaching approaches, motivations, experiences, observations, and philosophies of two professors in the Secondary/Middle Education program at University of Maine Farmington known as Dr. Grace and Dr. Theresa. In good team teaching, there is a cohesiveness and unity, and yet the voice of each team member must be valued and heard. In this paper, the authors attempt to give the collective team voice as well as the individual perspectives of both team members. NOTE: the single-column, plain text is written in third person and represents the collective team voice, whereas the two-column, italicized text is written in first person and represents Theresa's voice on the left and Grace's voice on the right.

According to Goetz (2000), "There appear to be two broad categories of team teaching:

- **Category A:** Two or more instructors are teaching the same students at the same time within the same classroom;
- **Category B:** The instructors work together but do not necessarily teach the same groups of students nor necessarily teach at the same time."

Dr. Theresa and Dr. Grace team teach three different classes, two in category A and one in category B. This is not a requirement of the department, but rather a choice they made based on their teaching philosophies and past experiences.

Where We Have Team Taught in the Past

My first job out of college was not the job I was looking for, but it turned into the dream job I never imagined. The Lamplighter School in Dallas is an early childhood education school whose name was inspired by the A.D. Alexandrov quote, "A student is not a vessel to be filled but a lamp to be lighted." One of the ways that lamps are lit is by team teaching. I had never seen or heard of team teaching before, but I immediately became enthralled with its power and benefits. What we called "The Lamplighter Way" was the best of all best practices, including the team approach and the integrated units approach from the best of middle school philosophies. The day-to-day planning, assessment, refinement, and on-the-fly adjustments with my grade-level team made every day an exciting day to come to school and learn right alongside my students. I always knew I was destined to be a teacher, but through team teaching, I became a better teacher than I ever imagined. I had amazing role models who were in my classroom and I was in theirs. We all worked with the same students and as we shared our individual experiences with specific children, we gained insights into that child through our colleague's eyes. We built a collective understanding of each student that led to better teaching for us and to better learning for the students. When we designed interdisciplinary units, we found strengths we never knew we had and we grew in that challenge.

I wasn't sure where life would take me

Team teaching has taken many different forms during my career in education. When I was a doctoral student, every trimester a team of professors taught a cohort of students. This allowed us to experience a rich learning process through each course because of the collaboration between the professors. This program was unique, given that one of the requirements was to be employed as an educational leader.

As a principal of a public high school in Maine at the time, team teaching became my focus for the teachers because of this experience. The common approach of integrating two content areas with two teachers who shared the same students over a longer period of time was the most successful. The impact the teachers had on student learning was a rewarding experience for the teachers involved in the process of team teaching. Another approach we used was teaming a general education teacher with a special education teacher in the regular education classroom. In my role of evaluating the teachers and observing them in the classroom, I could see that a paradigm shift was occurring for both the students and teachers. During this time, the State Department of Education also invited us to participate in a grant for HIV education. The grant allowed us to select a team (school nurse, health teacher, a social studies teacher and an administrator) that was trained to team-teach the Listen to Students HIV curriculum to seniors. This was a most rewarding experience, which allowed us to challenge one another while learning the

next after 21 years at Lamplighter, so I decided to go to school full-time and finish the master's degree I had started. (It was really a stalling technique until I could figure out the next chapter of my life.) But graduate school turned into an entire "next chapter" and I went to work full time at a research institute on campus. I was asked to teach a course in technology integration. There were 10 sections of that course offered every semester. I established a listserv for all of the adjunct faculty who taught that course -- we shared resources and had conversations about our classes. I couldn't imagine teaching in a silo, so I just changed the status quo and created a team teaching experience.

ins and outs of HIV education. The need to support one another while team teaching in the classroom proved to be very beneficial to us as well as the students. As an educational leader it was important for me to create these opportunities for all teachers. Accepting a new position as an assistant superintendent of secondary education allowed this process to evolve with a different group of teachers. Team teaching and learning are passions that created the opportunity for me to return to teaching, this time at the university level. And as they say, the rest is history.

How We Started Team Teaching at UMF

The Practicum Block approach started during the fall of 2005. The secondary/middle pre-service teachers enrolled in one 9-credit class that consisted of three distinct courses: Curriculum and Instruction (taught by Grace), Technology Media (taught by Mike), and Practicum Field Experience (led by Beth). The cohort approach immersed the pre-service teachers in studying theory and approaches to education, and enabled them to apply what they were learning during the same semester, while providing a colleague support-structure. The pre-service teachers who completed this program developed stronger collaboration skills and had more opportunities to instruct in small group and whole class situations, as compared to pre-service teachers in prior semesters who had the three courses independently and not necessarily during the same semester. The three professors worked as a team and started to meet on a regular basis to plan what was happening on campus (the theory) and in schools (the practice). Sharing the same students made the whole learning experience authentic for both the pre-service teachers and the professors.

In fall 2006, the University converted to a 4-credit experience. Practicum Block was re-evaluated and the current Block was created, consisting of a 4-credit Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment course, a 4-credit Practicum Field Experience, a 2-credit Classroom Management course, and a 2-credit Technology Integration Course for a total of 12 credits. The three professors

continued the team teaching approach where they shared the same students and taught different courses, but were very interconnected.

During the fall semester, the search began for a new team member who would join us during the spring 2007 semester, when Mike would be on sabbatical.

Theresa walked right into a team teaching opportunity (Category B) when she joined the Practicum Team. Things gelled almost instantly and the three (Grace, Beth and Theresa) became “The Dream Team.” The team started to meet once a week and collaborated informally through email and phone conversations. The 1-1 laptop idea was formulated and technology integration became a focus in all sections of the block. During dream team meetings, “student learning” was always the goal. How do we continue to help pre-service teachers make the connections from theory to practice? Every cohort was different, which created opportunities for the students to expand their learning.

In summer 2007, The College of Education at UMF was finalizing its design of a graduate program in education. Grace was on the task force and she pulled Theresa in to some of the final planning, and then asked her to help design the blueprint for the two core courses on Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. The next thing we knew, the two had agreed to teach those courses. A course blueprint is barely a skeleton of a course. Designing a course from a blueprint is a major undertaking that Grace and Theresa took on with gusto. They met once a week for an entire semester (spring 2008) before they actually taught the courses in fall 2008 and spring 2009. The first year of the master’s program, there were two cohorts, so Grace taught one group on Tuesday nights and Theresa taught the other on Wednesday nights. It was sooo much easier to make it through that first year having a colleague down the hall who was teaching the exact same content to a different group of students (Category B). Together they fine tuned class agendas and even went to each other’s classes to help out on some nights. After that first year, there would be only one cohort per year. Theresa and Grace discussed different scenarios that would capitalize on each other’s strengths and help lighten their teaching loads. Each year, one professor could take the fall course and the other the spring course. They could alternate years--each professor would take a cohort through both classes in a single year. There were many possibilities. But through all the discussions, there was really ever only one option: teach it together (Category A). And so the next four cohorts had the combined experience of two master teachers from different levels (elementary and secondary) and in different settings (private school and public school) with different administrative experience

(technology coordinator and athletic director/ assistant principal/ principal/ superintendent/ etc.) working together to create a powerful learning experience. The master's students couldn't have asked for better creative support in designing a curricular unit--between the two of them, since Theresa and Grace had seen every kind of curricular unit imaginable. Presentations in class were easily divided between the two master teachers--whoever had the greater experience in that particular area took the lead and had a great support person right behind her. Some might say, "But you had to do all the work for half the pay because you were at all the classes and you both assessed all the work." The reply would simply be, "It flew by so quickly that it felt like half the time of a regular course with double the satisfaction."

In spring 2009, the mathematics methods professor for secondary/middle education retired, and her position was not filled. The department chair approached Grace and said that she should take on teaching math methods, since she had taught mathematics in high school. Grace knew that there was much more to math methods than just having had the experience. She often said that if she knew then what she knew now, especially after all her years of observing teachers and staying on top of best practices in teaching, she would have taught her mathematics classes very differently. In her best visionary way, she negotiated an interesting proposal with the department chair, who thought it unconventional but knew it was a good plan. Grace walked out of the department chair's office and right into Theresa's office with a "you're going to love this plan" look in her eye. She simply said, "Theresa, we are going to team teach math methods. We won't start until fall 2011 so we have time to develop the course and get the training we want." She then went on to explain all the steps that she had thought through. Theresa replied, "But Grace, I never taught high school math. I only worked in middle and high school math classes as a consultant. All my full-year math experience is with elementary school." Calmly, Grace answered, "Theresa, every story you've ever told me about teaching math, every story that students have repeated to me that they learned from you, are all about how you made math meaningful and relevant. They are stories of making learning fun and interesting. You understand what the foundational skills of good math education are because you laid those foundations for 21 years. Too many high school students flounder in mathematics because they didn't get a solid background. You can help future middle and high school teachers understand how to determine what pre-requisite skills their students are missing and how to fill in those gaps. That's what we need to bring to math methods." "So I'm in charge of fun and relevance? I can do that!" And so a new team teaching experience evolved (Category A).

Building on the success of the course design process from the grad classes, Theresa and Grace met once a week during the spring semester to start designing the math methods course. It was a fun experience--things flowed smoothly, and there was so much out-of-the-box thinking. Blueprints were not available this time, but syllabi from the two prior instructors had been given to us. Very quickly, however, the vision (which was based on interviews with graduates and student teachers as well as their own professional development expertise) outgrew the syllabi of colleagues and grew into something bigger than either of them could ever imagine. As they reviewed a myriad of math methods textbooks, they knew that simply passing on to future generation what had been taught in prior generations was not going to cut it. They found a collection of books that individually and collectively would contribute to new ways of thinking about math, encourage teacher leadership, and support math teachers in engaging students in mathematical thinking and mathematical practices. The team knew they needed to include current best practices, and the best place to learn what those were was through the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). Both Grace and Theresa renewed their memberships in this organization. As they found great resources for themselves, they realized that if these aspiring teachers were to become professionals, they should start their professionalism now and so membership in the NCTM became a course requirement for the students as well.

With support from the department, Grace and Theresa attended NCTM's first Interactive Institute on High School Mathematics during the summer of 2011. Not only did they learn current best practices, they were inspired to share them beyond their math methods course. They met and worked closely with two math leaders in the state who were in attendance as leaders of the Association of Teachers of Mathematics in Maine (ATOMIM). The four of them created an outline for a professional development experience to be carried out in four locations across the state of Maine. Theresa and Grace created and planned their session from the outline and hosted a "dine and discuss" event in which they team taught the information to in-service math teachers in western Maine.

The give and take throughout the summer, and during the weekly math methods planning meetings the prior semester, were exciting and invigorating for both professors. They couldn't wait for the next week's meeting--they were stopping into each other's offices, sending emails at all hours of the day and night, constantly communicating about what the course could look like, and sharing ideas. One person alone cannot brainstorm and

create with the energy the two of them had together. That kind of synergy is the power of team teaching.

Why We Like Team Teaching

In most any situation, if something goes wrong and I'm by myself, I might cry, and I only have my sad self to figure out a solution. If something goes wrong and I'm working with someone when it happens, we can laugh together and then have two calm heads to work together to figure it out. And that's only when things go wrong! When things are going right, I've got someone to bounce ideas off of, I can tag team and hand off something to the other one because I know it's a real strength of hers, and I end up doing things twice as well as if I did them by myself, usually in less time.

I think my two favorite parts of team teaching are the beginning and the end. In the designing and planning of the course(s), you can get some great creative juices flowing. But you also get to hear a lot of great stories... when someone has a great idea, I love to ask where it came from and there's almost always a story.

You build on your strengths and learn from your mistakes, and team teaching gives you the courage and opportunity to take the risks required to do both. In the assessment and reflection, you not only see the fruits of your labor, but you have someone to share those fruits with, someone who totally understands what you are talking about. You have a built-in audience who knows all the backstory. Talk about an empathetic listener--a good co-teacher is the best at empathy because

Teaching is my passion. Whether it's with another colleague or by myself ~ it's my life's calling. The pride of watching all the students learning new information and then transferring their learning to real-life situations is incredible. I love watching the pre-service teachers begin their transformation from thinking like students to thinking like teachers, and finally to thinking like educators.

Team teaching allows us to be more creative because of the rich conversations that occur during the designing of the course as well as the planning of the learning and assessment. The thinking process and problem solving that can happen in any of the classes we team teach has a lasting effect on both of us. Whether it's an undergraduate or graduate class, we are able to bring both the elementary and secondary perspectives to the learning process. Both of us being able to be present during class time adds a powerful component to assessing our students. When one person takes on the instructional role, the other is observing and is available to assist students.

Creating all the rubrics together and then assessing the student work collaboratively helps us with reliability.

And finally the reflective piece at the end of the course is so important: what do we want to do differently next time, and what should we consider adding or

she was there in actuality, or as close as you can get to that.

Joseph Joubert said, "To teach is to learn twice." I see that not as a motivation to teach but as a reward for teaching. And I believe that to team teach is to learn five- or six-fold.

removing? The planning involved in team teaching takes more time as compared to teaching a class by yourself. But team teaching is the way to go and I would not have it any other way. It's so rewarding and fun and doesn't feel like work!

Where Are the Benefits of Team Teaching for Students?

The pre-service teachers in the Practicum course have the benefit of learning in a cohort format and sharing three professors who have distinct teaching styles. Seeing team teaching in action provides many opportunities for pre-service teachers to get a deeper understanding of the various teaching and learning processes which are modeled in each of the individual courses. The orientation session for Practicum is led by all three (Beth, Grace, Theresa); students get their first introduction to the power of collaborating as a team. They experience it again at the conclusion of the semester where all three professors celebrate with the pre-service teachers as they share final reflections on how they're going to change and move education into the 21st century.

One of the previous professors who taught math methods provided a teaching experience for the students in the course in which students taught a lesson to gifted middle school students. Continuing this partnership with the nearby middle school was an important component of the course that Theresa and Grace wanted to keep. In order to capitalize on the limited amount of time that the middle school students could be available for the lessons, they decided to have the pre-service teachers team teach a lesson. It was impressive how easily the pre-service teachers worked together to co-design and co-teach the lesson. Then they explained to their professors that they just did what they had seen in Practicum and in the methods course. Though "how to team teach" had never been formally addressed in any of the prior coursework, these students knew instinctively how to pull it off.

The second year that Theresa and Grace taught math methods, they added another teaching experience: As a team, the pre-service teachers created learning centers (Algebra, Geometry, Probability) for English Language Learners (ELL). They built on and extended what they had taught to the middle schoolers, and experienced differentiated teaching as well as teaching to students with special needs. This opportunity was made possible when Grace and Theresa established a new partnership with one of their graduate

in-service teachers who teaches math to ELLs in her school district. Now a student from one team teaching experience is benefitting the students in another team taught class.

The two team-taught graduate classes have unique assessments that provide in-service teachers the opportunity to work collaboratively on projects in class as well as online. Again, they benefit from good role models of successful teamwork. They give feedback on each other's units in teams (elementary, middle, high, district, etc.), which allows them to have rich conversations about curriculum, instruction and assessment. As partners they present information from one of the textbook chapters. And as teams or partners, they select an educational book and create a book talk session for the class. During both courses, they work as leaders in their schools to create professional learning communities (PLC), where they integrate another content area into their unit. They also establish another PLC where they create a resource wiki to enhance the learning of the PLC and beyond.

We are often asked why we have two offices since we seem to always both be together in one office or the other. But the reality is that for students, if they can't find one of us, they look for the other because they know we'll pretty much know what the other would say. So they really have greater access to both of us.

On the other hand, we often start to answer students' questions and then send them to go see the other one. It's not that we're passing the buck, it's more like we're tag teaming and giving the students the benefits of both of us.

In Practicum the students can actually experience how each course connects.

They're always commenting on how we each know what's coming up next in each other's class. Or sometimes we get these blank faces wondering how all of it is going to really happen. We always hold the key to the vision we have created. The funny part (in Practicum as well as the other classes) is we seem to know how we're each going to respond to situations, and we tend to reassure the students that it's going to be fine.

When Team Teaching Led to Team Research

Prior to coming to UMF, Theresa worked for seven years at the Institute for the Integration of Technology into Teaching and Learning (IITTL) at University of North Texas (UNT). She couldn't imagine teaching a class on technology integration without giving her students a series of pre- and post-surveys about their attitudes towards and confidence in using technology in the classroom--she had done that in sixteen sections of technology integration courses that she taught at UNT and had analyzed the results of such surveys innumerable times in her work at IITTL. But she was still

feeling new to UMF and wasn't sure what the research protocol was or if that type of research was even allowed. Instead of letting such an opportunity go by, she started inquiring. It will come as no surprise that Grace and Beth were her greatest supporters. They all knew instinctively that the Practicum work and the laptop requirement were making an impact on pre-service teachers' abilities to integrate technology into teaching and learning. But here was an opportunity to quantify it and verify it. Theresa introduced Grace and Beth to the Society for the Integration of Technology into Teacher Education (SITE) and in spring of 2008, the three presented their peer-reviewed paper at SITE's International Conference. The magic of the Dream Team had expanded from teaching into research.

Not every teaching team becomes a Dream Team. And not every teaching team can evolve into a research team. Good teamwork takes a lot of work, patience, and luck. Good teamwork is a balancing act. Each team member has to recognize the strengths of her teammates and support them in being their best. One of the reasons for Grace and Theresa's success as a teaching and research team is that they both bring unique skills and talents to the team and each recognizes those in the other.

If I were doing research on my own, I would wait until summer. I would wake up each morning saying, "Today I'm going to start" and I would go to bed each night with that nagging guilt that I hadn't done it yet. What a waste of summer to feel guilt every day and to accomplish so little. Doing research with Grace, we get out our calendars in March and set aside summer dates. We pick 4 or 5 days in a row and dedicate 12 or more hours each day to getting it done. We get immersed in the work and have fun while we're doing it. Suddenly, the data is analyzed, the paper is finished and we're making lists of what we're going to do next. The rest of the summer is guilt-free.

Grace is a systems thinker. She can see the forest AND the trees as well as the implications of any move you're going to

Theresa is an amazing listener. She synthesizes information well when I'm thinking aloud and is able to ask the right questions.

Theresa thinks outside the box, brainstorms well, and creates outlines of the ideas and topics to consider as we begin a research project or plan a new course.

Theresa's experience with SPSS and data analysis makes the process enjoyable and fun. She's an outstanding editor and loves to complete the final edits.

Theresa is an incredible team player and is committed to completing the work we establish for each other within a given time frame.

make. Grace is also an organizational genius.

She is always willing to take on new adventures for the betterment of UMF and our students.

Who We Have Become Because of Team Teaching

Learning is an integral part of the personal teaching philosophy of both Theresa and Grace. Adding the vehicle of team teaching amplifies their learning as well as the students' learning in so many dimensions. The excitement and energy they draw from one another during the planning, the actual team teaching, the assessing of student work, and the reflection process, are very contagious and have inspired others to join in. They can't put a price on the value of team teaching, but internally they know it makes a big difference for everyone who's involved in the learning process. It creates joy and happiness, and they feel the enlightenment within themselves and pass it on to others.

"Given a choice between a peanut butter sandwich or a jelly sandwich, I choose a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I get peanut butter and I get jelly but I also get that magic that happens when those two flavors come together...a bonus that would never happen if they were each kept in separate sandwiches."
~Theresa Overall

Theresa Overall has taught mathematics, calligraphy, technology integration, camping skills, silly songs, reading, swimming, and calculus concepts (among others). A native Texan, she has come to love and appreciate her new home in Maine and firmly believes that it is "the way life should be."

"Team teaching in education creates opportunities to continuously learn, grow and allows us to reflect on our individual differences and the uniqueness we each bring to the experience of team teaching."
~ Grace J. Ward

Grace J. Ward is an Associate Professor in the Secondary/Middle Education Department at the University of Maine at Farmington. Her passions are teaching and learning.

Reference

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