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Teaching Matters, Volume 2: Essays by the faculty and staff at the University of Maine at Farmington

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Teaching Matters
Volume 2:

Essays by Faculty and Staff
at the University of Maine at Farmington

Edited by Linda Britt

With a Foreword by Kathryn A. Foster

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Foreword, or
Teacher, Teach (and Learn) Thyself

Kathryn A. Foster

I taught myself to touch-type when I was nine years old, long before the day of electric typewriters. The manual was full of sets, reps, and other muscle-strengthening exercises anticipating today's weight-room workouts. *Adjust your posture. Position your hands correctly. Curl your fingers. Strike down sharply. Repeat five times: f-d-s-a-[space]-j-k-l-;-[space].* By lesson 8: *the quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.*

It was one of many autodidacticisms. At age ten I memorized Ernest Thayer's 13-stanza poem, "Casey at the Bat," an amusement that has since come in handy as an Opening Day bar trick and bet winner. In college I bought ink and lettering nibs and taught myself calligraphy. An especially urgent self-teaching came in my mid-twenties in the half hour after I bought that really cute used Mitsubishi. It had a manual transmission. I didn't know how to drive it. (*You better learn fast, lady,* the seller said, handing me the keys.) It's funny only in hindsight.

There were also failed attempts to teach myself something. Juggling never took, nor did French. (Still, a lesson learned: audiotapes are wasted on visual learners.) The corn I planted one summer in California never got higher than my shin. Three years after its installation I still haven't taught myself how to use the DVR.

The advantage of being one's own teacher is that you know just what the learner wants. Tough love or patient encouragement? Written manual or hands-on lesson? Ten more reps or a ten-minute break? The disadvantage is that you don't yet know the field, haven't mastered the techniques, and may not be, despite all you know about yourself, a particularly accommodating or high-quality instructor.

That's where learning from others enters the picture. Most of us learned as classroom students from kindergarten onward. "Being a student" could

imply passivity, as if ones waits for the teacher to deliver the goods. But being a student was and still is for me a cherished and profound activity. Even in the earliest grades it felt luxurious to have someone offer me knowledge, notions, inspiration, technique, time, patience. Teachers have unsurprisingly played oversized roles in my life, including as Muses for diligence and effort, objects of intense crushes, and sources for professional envy and ideas.

Teaching and learning don't require a traditional classroom, though, and a liberal arts college is a good place to see that. As the essays in this volume attest, we're all in the business of teaching and learning. Faculty by definition, but also athletic coaches, academic advisors, health professionals, career counselors, custodians, faculty, theater directors, club leaders, administrative assistants, work supervisors, yoga instructors, student leaders, peer evaluators, public safety officers: the list goes on.

In August 1993 I and other incoming assistant professors at the University at Buffalo, a group of novice teachers but highly trained learners—we'd each been in school, formally, for at least twenty years—gathered for our mandatory four-day Teaching Workshop. We were to learn how to teach.

Assignment one, a softball for this group, was to describe our favorite teachers. For me: Mr. Morris (5th grade) who turned every subject—Venn diagrams, The Pied Piper of Hamlin, the President's physical fitness test—into a game; Mrs. Fryer (11th grade) who demanded excellence in writing and reasoning, and made me rewrite "Pilgrims: Bigots or Builders?" (and all other history papers) until they were college-level; Dr. Hamilton (college, microeconomics) who captivated a 200-student lecture hall with backward-bending supply curves and vigorous wit; and Joyce (college, varsity tennis and squash coach, grad student in psychology) who deftly used results from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality test she made us take to tailor her coaching and relate to us individually.

In the workshop we readily synthesized lessons from our favorite teachers, talked through why one style, technique or approach might work for some learners but not others (Mr. Morris's games must have been torturous for

some, perhaps many), and tried melding and matching our personalities and skills to the awesome possibilities and immense responsibilities before us.

So much of teaching—attitude, comfort level before a crowd, passion for one's subject—can't be taught. Yet at least some of teaching— perceiving one's bearing and tone, what to do on the first day of class, how to oblige visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and logical learners—can be. Such tips and techniques aren't the exclusive province of formally trained teachers, of course. It's what all of us draw upon as parents, partners, and professionals.

Sometime during the workshop our instructor handed a five-iron to a golfer in our group and told him to teach a non-golfer classmate how to hit a golf ball.

It occurred to me later that if I'd been the one assigned the task, I'd have told my charge to watch carefully while I gripped the club, fixed my stance, and took a good swing. Then I've have handed over the club and instructed my student to repeat what I had just done. Ego, yes, I know.

The first thing my more-attuned classmate did was to hand the golf club to the learner. We never saw him swing the club. He helped place her hands on the club, helped position a comfortable stance, all the while checking in to see how she was doing. He then guided her swing from behind so that she, and not he, was learning and demonstrating the skill. It was so egoless, direct, and powerful. It was my abiding lesson from that week.

As I write this essay I am also putting finishing touches on the course syllabus for "Stand and Deliver: The Art and Practice of Public Speaking." The class, the first I've taught at this university, is organized as a workshop in which each of us simultaneously teaches and learns. Like dancing, public speaking isn't something you learn from lectures nor can you speak in public by yourself. We stand to learn a lot together.

That's the point. All of us are ever teaching and learning, delivering and receiving, from and to ourselves; from and to one another. The essays in this

volume reveal the many shades of this universal experience and celebrate its practice at the University of Maine at Farmington.

Kathryn A. Foster is President of the University of Maine at Farmington and a lifelong teacher and learner. She knows that autodidacticism isn't a word but believes it should be.

Editor's Note

Linda Britt

What makes a good teacher?

If you read the essays contained within this volume, you'll find as many answers to that question as there are essays, and perhaps more.

One thing is certain: good teaching is not confined to the classroom. The important lessons we learn can happen anywhere. They might take place at a plaza in Italy, within library walls, on a theater set, on cross-country skis, in an office, on a leaf-strewn lawn, or even in an online discussion forum.

Nor is it confined to traditional faculty. The University of Maine at Farmington is a learning community. As such, it seems that everyone on campus is committed to this thing called education. We are all dedicated to helping the students who come here succeed. Sometimes it's about being in the right place at the right time; at others, it's about being the right person when the need arises. However and wherever it happens, teaching is what we do, and we do it well.

There's a lot of above and beyond in these essays. But the writers speak for themselves better than I can speak for them. I am grateful to them all for their contributions to this volume, and for all they do to make UMF this special place.

Raking the Leaves

Bryce Cundick

In the end, what is "teaching"? I've been turning this question over in my mind for the past few months, like a Rubik's Cube I don't know how to solve. It's one thing to use a word in everyday conversation, but as soon as you're asked to study that word—to *explain* it—things get much more difficult. There's a divide between the signifier and the signified. Language works well for everyday purposes, but look under the hood, and it can be a pretty messy machine.

This essay's had more than its fair share of false starts and dead end arguments. I thought about what teaching means to me, how I approach teaching, how others have taught me, how I've taught others. Teaching students, children, spouses, friends. And as I'd come across a new idea, I'd bound down the trail, hoping it led to a short, succinct essay on why teaching matters.

Let's hope the fifteenth time's the charm, shall we?

Teaching is the act of taking knowledge from one person and putting it inside another person. If you do it well, then the copy in the new person is almost as good as the original. The wonderful thing about teaching is that sometimes—every so often—the copy in the new person is *better* than the original. In the act of teaching, the idea evolves. It takes on new meaning and life. Sometimes, teaching changes the thoughts and ideas of the teacher as well.

Sometimes teaching happens when both people are in the same room. The teacher presents the ideas in front of the student, who can then ask questions and explore those ideas in order to fully understand them. Sometimes teaching happens remotely. The teacher might post ideas to an online class, and they get bandied back and forth on a discussion board among students and teacher. It doesn't have to be so formal, of course. Teaching happens every day, through emails, phone calls, social media, and more.

And a lot of teaching happens through the written word.

People learned a long time ago that thoughts, once put down into a tangible form, don't decay over time. You can read the words of Plato or Socrates and still understand the point they were making. You can still respond to them (although they don't have the chance to respond back, or contribute to the conversation that's happened in the thousands of years since). For centuries, the written word was most closely associated with

printed books, and as such, I'd argue that librarians became some of the most important teachers in the world.

What good is information if it's hidden away? How much learning can happen if the student never has a chance to be exposed to those ideas in the first place? In the last decade or so, there's been a growing trend to dismiss librarians. "Antiquated" is the word I've heard most often, as if the profession were something headed in the same direction as the wheelwright or the milkman. In the world of the internet, with search engines and full-text, what could possibly be the use of a living, breathing person?

But as is quickly being discovered, there's more than one way to hide information. When that information sits on dusty bookshelves, it might take a librarian to ferret it out, to know just where to go to find it and how to search through it. But the same problem occurs when that information is sitting in the middle of millions of identical boxes. After all, to really learn, you need to be exposed to the *right* information. Those boxes are not interchangeable.

When you're lost in a sea of information, you soon discover that talking to someone with a map of that sea can be much more effective than simply asking a computer to bring you every red fish in the water.

As a librarian, I thought it might be useful to think over some teaching moments that have stood out to me, both as a learner and as a teacher, in order to better understand just what happens in the process.

First up?

Raking leaves.

I grew up in Pennsylvania, where there are more than enough trees to go around, and people have this unrealistic idea that all those leaves can and should be carefully corralled and maintained over the course of the year. My father was one such idealist.

I remember looking up across a wide span of grass. An army of red and orange had invaded our lawn the night before, and Dad had sent me out to curb the invasion. I was hardly an enthusiastic enforcer. "What's the point?" I had asked when he came and got me up early Saturday morning. "More will fall tomorrow."

Dad cocked an eyebrow, all the reason he needed to give. I was out raking within the hour, saving my mutters for a deaf audience. It wasn't the first time I had raked the leaves, and it wouldn't be the last. I cut through the grass in vicious strokes of my rake as I raged at the unfairness, sending a flurry of sound and color into the air. It was more than just raking—it was raking to my dad's standards.

"Plow the ground all the way to the fence."

Dad had grown up on a farm, and he had a number of sayings in his arsenal of encouragement. That was the one I hated most. It was the difference between a yard virtually leaf-free and one wholly rid of all blemish. In the windy Pennsylvania autumn, new attackers parachuted onto our home base by the minute. I couldn't understand then why I should focus so hard on getting all the leaves when fifteen minutes later my hard work would be erased.

It was only later in life that I started to understand what he was trying to teach me.

My father wasn't sending me out to rake. He was trying to get a lazy son to recognize one of the facts of life. It never stops raining leaves, no matter what size the yard. A clean house will be dirtied. A pressed shirt will get wrinkled. Even the laws of thermodynamics state that nothing becomes more ordered naturally—chaos always increases. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't do anything to try and control it. There's a big difference between doing a job and doing a job *well*. It's a shame that by the time we realize that fact, we're too old to have to deal only with leaves.

So ideas and concepts sometimes take a long time to be understood and applied. Teaching can happen over a drawn-out period of time. That tightly coiled principle ("plow the ground all the way to the fence") is really a complex philosophy that can be used to understand many different principles. At least, that's what I've been discovering as a father, as I try to instill the same work ethic in my children that my father tried to instill in me.

The next teaching experiences that really stand out to me happened in college, in a more formal setting. One period in my History of the English Language class, Professor Oaks got started on another one of his infamous tangents. He would always begin discussing the homework, but he would end up talking about linguistic studies on dialect or sociology. (Did you know that the original pronunciation of "ask" sounded like "ax"? Or that "apron" used to be "napron"?) That day's departure didn't have much to do with Old English, but as with most of his digressions, I learned more from it than I did from the rest of the lecture. "Everything is learned in curves," he said. "To go forward, you need to go back."

To illustrate his point he drew a giant U in chalk on the board and gestured to it a few times with short jabs, his shirt coming untucked in the back. I'll give you a quick rundown of his argument. When children first learn a language, they learn by rote, just like a parrot. And Mom and Dad are ever so pleased. They show their son or daughter off to the family and everyone makes a big deal over them. Then it all goes horribly wrong. Little Johnny starts to say "feets" and "childrens." Precious Susie stomps her foot and declares, "I amn't going to bed!" And suddenly Mom and Dad no longer

trot Johnny and Susie out in public and laud their skills. Something must be done. The parents start to correct their children. "Feet. Feeeeeet. F-E-E-T. Not 'feets.' Feet." As if saying it in slow motion will make them understand. But of course that has no effect. In a few months, their children are back to normal—on the road to becoming competent speakers of the English language.

When the children seem to regress, Professor Oaks explained, they actually make progress. It's a step forward to start to venture out on your own—to start experimenting with how you think the language works. Parrots don't start formulating sentences—they stay in the rut they're comfortable with. And once children have made the important step of experimentation, they truly begin to learn. That's where the U on the chalkboard comes in. The two peaks are the beginning and ending of the learning process; the trough is the apparent drop.

When I was little, I loved anything Disney, but the live action movies were my favorites. As soon as the crazy Technicolor Mickey Mouse outline would come on the screen at the beginning of the movie, I settled in to enjoy it—no matter what. I would watch the same movie again and again, with no care for plot, characterization or realism. The experience was everything. When the ghosts in *Watcher in the Woods* turned out to be caused by aliens, I opened my mouth in awe instead of objecting to genre mixing. When three innocent children were carelessly pawned off on a gambler in *The Apple Dumpling Game*, I wished I were one of them. When Elliott changed shape and sizes in *Pete's Dragon*, I only focused on his color. I was blind to any flaw, no matter how large or small. I didn't even mind the blatantly animatronic bird singing on Julie Andrew's finger in *Mary Poppins*.

This isn't to say that I didn't have my opinions. I liked some movies, and I disliked others. *Pollyanna* was complete anathema—to this day I still refuse to see it, not because I've heard it's bad, but because I've developed a mental block against it. After you've declined to do something a certain number of times, you convince yourself that there is a good reason you haven't done it yet. With *Pollyanna*, I'm convinced that the movie has a sad ending. Maybe it does—but I've never asked anyone. If someone brings up the movie, I change the subject. I don't want to be told that it's a good movie, because that would mean that I've been missing out all these years. It's not just *Pollyanna*, either.

Up at my family's cabin in Utah we had a whole wall filled with videos. Probably about a hundred movies, maybe more. Most of them I'd seen multiple times. *The Mouse that Roared*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*—we watched *The Sting* at least a dozen times. But there were other movies—*Stalag 17* or *I Was a Male War Bride* for example—that I never watched. The

Pollyanna effect strikes again. Of course, other movies I would watch once and never return to—I didn't like them. *E.T.* has given me the heebie jeebies ever since my brother broke out in tears when we were in the theater. But when people tried to corner me on why I liked or disliked a film, I couldn't give them a definite answer. Then I took English 345, Film and Literature.

The first time he entered the classroom, Professor Cutchins reminded me of Robin Williams more than anything else. Black hair that refused to behave, and a continual smile on his face. That semester we read and watched Cowboy Literature—*The Virginian*, *The Shootist*, and my personal favorite for oddest book I've been required to read for school—*Crow Killer—The Story of Liver-Eating Johnson*. The story about a man who hunts down Crow Indians, kills them, and then eats their livers raw. It's the basis for Robert Redford's *Jeremiah Johnson*, believe it or not. For Halloween, Cutchins dressed up in Cowboy clothes—hat and all—and brought in a Zucchini-lantern to celebrate. He even lit a candle inside it for all of three seconds. He's a good teacher.

On the first day of class, he warned us all of the trials to come. "You're going to hate me in a few weeks," he said. "You won't be able to appreciate movies for at least six months—you'll be too busy analyzing them for high angles and low angles and oblique angles, extreme close-ups and voiceovers."

I didn't pay any attention—I loved movies too much to be ruined by theory. After all, I was an English major, and it wasn't as if I had stopped loving literature because of it. And in the next few weeks, our class picked apart movies from *The Shootist* to *High Noon*. I didn't notice a change in me until I went to the theater next.

Battlefield Earth.

Granted, that movie was one of the worst to hit the screens in a long time, but it was based on one of my favorite books. I had read the reviews—I had heard the scorn, but I was still willing to chance it. And I hated it. Not just after it was over—from beginning to end. I tore it apart as I watched. Almost every scene had oblique angles, as though the cameramen hadn't had his V8 during the entire filming. The lighting was dominated by dark blues and greens that tried to be cool but ended up being nauseating after an extended period. The director had abandoned the book—ignoring established sci-fi conventions in favor of flashy explosions and special effects that looked like they came out of a Mr. Wizard episode.

When my cousin Dave, a fellow movie connoisseur, asked me what I had thought of the film, I unleashed a vindictive torrent. It wasn't until he started giving me odd looks that I realized it: Professor Cutchins had been right. And he still is.

I called my wife over to the television a few months ago—*Dick Tracy* was on. I had watched the movie when it first came out. "You're gonna love this, Denisa," I told her. "It's got everything—great make-up, slam-bang action, catchy music." She sat down to watch—and left half an hour later. I couldn't blame her.

I could swear someone had gone and ruined the movie I loved as a child. The acting was abysmal, the costumes laughable. And don't get me started on the plot line. There's a reason Madonna is primarily a singer. I guess I could blame Cutchins—but instead I thank him.

The other day I returned to *Mary Poppins* with some trepidation. I don't like to watch movies I enjoyed earlier; ever since *Dick Tracy* shattered before my newfound critical eye, I have tried to let my happy memories alone. For once, however, I was pleasantly surprised; I still liked the film. And better yet, I could say why I liked it. The pacing and the shots, the plot and the dialogue—everything worked together to make that movie a success. Sure, the special effects of the bird on her finger looked like they had been made in a garage—but that wasn't the point. When Dick van Dyke dances with the penguins, when the chimney sweeps shoot out of smokestacks like backfiring cars, when the toys go into stop motion frenzy—these are all moments that fascinate children in body and spirit.

After English 345, I took three other classes focused on exploring the relationship of film and literature; I even based my thesis around the idea, choosing to focus on how film can adapt point of view. I still love exploring the way movies can open up a text, showing the critic new themes and insights. I appreciate movies all the more by being able to see what's good about them—and what's bad. It's true that I can't watch *Dick Tracy* and enjoy it for its own sake—but I'm actually grateful for that.

As I think over these teaching and learning examples, a few things bubble to the surface. First, not all teaching happens in a classroom. That includes instruction and the learning itself. What starts in front of a chalkboard might finish years later outside, or in a different country or state. The information that's planted is something that needs time to grow, but just as information can be written down and understood later, it can also be experienced and then recalled at a later point in time. Both can be equally effective.

Second, much of what happens in teaching happens in that trough. (At least, that's what I tell myself when students come into the library asking the same questions year after year.) Ideas change people, but they don't change everyone at the same time or the same rate. Librarians end up doing a lot of "just in time" instruction. Students come to us in the middle of a research project, or when they're just starting their paper. We can give them

pointers on how to get the most out of a catalog or database, teach them how to find effective search terms and strategies, and steer them toward research topics that will better suit their purposes.

(There are, of course, the students who come when their paper is due the next day. While we have some last-minute tips for these cases, it's often too late. The biggest problems I see stem from very capable students who were able to wait until the last minute to write papers earlier on in their academic careers, but who are now facing topics in their upper-level classes that just can't be handled in the same cavalier manner. When this happens, the biggest teaching experience that occurs is generally one where they're learning from their mistakes. It's frustrating for them and for me, but it's a lesson that needs to be learned.)

The longer I stay a librarian, however, the more these "just in time" instruction sessions can feel the same. Like I'm just turning my wheels but never actually going anywhere. When I feel that way, I have to remind myself of the trough. Remind myself that the students I'm helping do go on to stand on their own. Just because the faces blend together doesn't mean I'm teaching the same students year after year. These are new faces that have yet to learn the same principles. They deserve the same quality of instruction.

There were things I didn't care for as much when I was "just" teaching: student feedback was always a dreaded occasion, mainly because of how intrinsic it was to my evaluations. Now that I'm a librarian, I approach that same feedback from a very different stance. It's important to us to find out what students are learning in our lessons: what they continue to struggle with, what they found old hat. When feedback is separated from perceived success or failure, it becomes much easier to be objective—to continually strive to improve the teaching process for students.

Most days, the structured teaching I do boils down to a single lesson plan done time after time. I show students how to use the library catalog and how to search databases to find articles. The first semester of a new school year, this goes well, for the most part. The students are new, and none have had the material before. But as the students go from freshmen to sophomores and from sophomores to juniors, things get more complicated. More and more of them have already had that introductory class. They have a tendency to want to check out during my lesson, despite the fact that when it comes time to do actual research, a good number of them still haven't mastered those basic elements I review each time.

How do you teach someone something they think they already know, but really don't? That's when I think back on raking leaves and remember what it felt like to be in the same position. It's leaves vs. books, but the principle remains the same. I can only hope they come to a similar realization

at some point in the future.

What is teaching? It's a process we're all a part of. It happens in classrooms and in yards, in books and online, and it's something that can affect the student and the teacher. It's taking an idea and sharing it with someone else. Librarians can serve as guideposts to new ideas. They can be the source of new ideas themselves. But as long as those ideas keep accumulating, libraries will be around to rake them up, sort through them, and make sure they're available for new people to consult and learn from in the future.

Bryce Cundick is the Manager of Instructional and Research Services at UMF. He is also the current President of the Maine Library Association.

When Conventional Reality Is Not Enough

Jennifer Reid

"I don't believe in God."

"That's okay," I tell them, these students who walk into my Introduction to Religion class for the first time, thinking they shouldn't be there. "Religion isn't necessarily about God," I add.

And then I ask them who they are. We spend the better part of the first class period talking not about religion, but about them, about who they are as people. I walk into the classroom needing to see them as persons with identities—and cultural baggage—so that I can approach them authentically and with the fundamental respect they deserve. They sense that respect, and they seem, for the most part, to trust me.

I trust them, too. I trust that they will persevere through the days when they hear me saying that things they thought they knew and understood about their world are not necessarily the way things are. Sometimes they get angry, and that's okay too (more about that later).

This is not what students expect when they first enter one of my classrooms. They expect that we will be talking about God or churches or synagogues or mosques—whether as believers wanting to do so, or as non-believers wanting to do anything but. My first task is to teach them about what religion is: the way that humans orient themselves in their worlds through recourse to ultimate forces. As such, it is intimately related to personal and collective identity. These forces can be identified as God, but they don't necessarily have anything to do with gods at all. I lead my students to an appreciation for the various modalities these forces assume—spirits, living ancestors, dreams, love—indeed, anything that transcends the normal parameters of time and space, yet is experienced within temporal-spatial existence, and gives sense to that existence. Religion is, along with language, the primary context for that particular human gift that may or may not be present in other species: the capacity for metaphoric thought. Religion and language, I tell my students, are what make us human.

I also try to have my students understand that religion itself was an invention of the West. The notion that there is something called 'religion' that exists as a discrete part of culture is a very unusual notion, and one that has not been—and is not—shared by most members of our species. Recourse to ultimate forces in negotiating issues of personal and social identity is not something that happens for an hour (or even a few hours) a week. It is a way of being in the world, and it permeates all aspects of life. The subcontinental Indians call it dharma. Simply translated. the word means a 'way of life'. Indigenous peoples in the Americas call it 'spirituality' when speaking English—a term that for them differentiates it from the Western notion of institutional religion. As the Historian of Religion Charles H. Long (my own teacher) never tires of saying, "religion is about the matters of the world and what matters in the world."

Once students appreciate the limitations of the idea that religion can be separated from the rest of culture, they are ready to think about the way in which religion provides a unique point of entry for understanding the nature of the human being, as well as the human's cultural creations and actions. And that, when all is said and done, is the point of the human sciences.

As I mentioned before, students come into my classes with very different concepts of religion; and they enroll for all sorts of reasons (often simply to fulfill a distribution requirement). Philosophy/Religion majors, however, are required to take a few Religion courses. Like many of these, "James" came into his first class with me resenting this requirement, and the subject of religion in general. He had long believed that religion is anti-intellectual, and not to be trusted. While he became president of the Religion and Philosophy Club on campus, he was nonetheless convinced that the human mode of being was obsolete, that a post-human society was upon us (and desirable). He was planning on applying to graduate school to further develop and promote this line of thought.

In his senior year he enrolled in my Tibetan Buddhism class while taking a course on phenomenology from a colleague in philosophy. The combination of these two classes blew his socks off, and he walked away from his post-human agenda. Rather than going to graduate school, he joined Teach for America. After a couple of years teaching in poor inner city schools, he was promoted to supervisor, and still has that position. He tells me that he found his 'calling', that the study of religion helped him do that, and that he may never leave this position.

Other students I have mentored have gone on to pursue graduate studies in religion. One earned a PhD, others earned MAs. But only one is teaching in a university setting. Many others have become nurses, community outreach workers, social workers, high school teachers, etc. And they all tell me that it was their background in religion that took them into these diverse directions.

At the end of the day, I believe that teaching is much more than directing classes and grading assignments. To teach we must take on the task of ministering to the whole person standing in front of us. For me that has meant being engaged with students at every level—through their heartaches, sadnesses and losses, illnesses, hunger, isolation, even pregnancies. One cannot learn if one is distressed, since real education, when it is done effectively, can be terribly distressing at times in and of itself.

My experience teach REL 245 (Myth and America) is perhaps telling in this context. Without fail, within a few weeks of beginning the semester, the students mutiny. They feel angry and betrayed. Many of them have meltdowns, and they admit to having trouble getting through assigned readings. They say things like "why were we never told all this?" and "why have we been lied to?" It is not easy to learn "all this": that the history they have been taught is not necessarily true, that so many of their cultural assumptions are founded on metanarratives and 'histories' that have been created for political purposes, and that the study of religion offers them a portal through which to understand things differently. Cultural narratives—historical narratives—I tell them, are myths. They are not untrue, but they reflect the priorities and values of ascendant social forces. Often this means that these narratives do not speak to, or reflect, the priorities and values of large portions of a society's population whose voices are silenced by the very narratives themselves.

So we think about myth, and I introduce them to the notion that myths are the way in which a community defines its origins and ultimate purpose. It is not a big leap for them to grasp that the creation of cultural and historical narratives falls into the same mold. The problem with myths and historical narratives is, I suggest to them, that when these narratives cease to represent the deepest meanings of a society's people, they must be jettisoned and new ones created to replace them. If this is not done, one's experience of the world will not mesh with the narrative; and social cohesion begins to fray. In Myth and America we interrogate foundational American myths, confront both their efficacies and inadequacies, and then move toward the act of re-

imagining and discovering what narratives might be more appropriate to the space and time in which we find ourselves.

This is a critical stage of rebuilding assumptions after prior assumptions have been shown to be insufficient. Above all I want to empower my students so that they can become critical members of their society, and understand the necessity for going back into the world with clarity of vision and the motivation to speak and think in new ways. At the end of the day, I believe that the role of education is to give students the knowledge and critical skills they need to survive in any particular social and cultural context. And the role of an educator in the human sciences is to challenge them to work within their society at any and every level to change the narratives/myths that do not serve the best interests of their society as a whole.

In the American context this requires, first and foremost, a deep engagement with issues of race and religion. These two things are at the root of American culture and society, and yet they are two subjects that 'intelligent' public discourses tend to steer clear of. Race, we are told, is a fabrication. And religion, well, the Founding Fathers did away with that in political terms. Yet there is no aspect of this society that is not permeated by the legacies of both the racially-based reality of slavery and genocide, and the values of Protestantism. From the deep relationship between Protestantism and capitalism (á la Max Weber) to the Electoral College (a particular mess that has its roots in the conflict between free and slave states), race and religion are the warp and woof of the structure of the United States.

When I teach about the world beyond the United States, I take the same approach, always focusing on persons and communities who have been left out of historical narratives and mythologies, and whose experience has been of consistent disempowerment in the modern period. In the post-Enlightenment West this state of affairs is the norm, so there is a great deal to teach about—and a great deal that must be changed about our societies. I see these as companions in education. Teaching to me is about changing individual and social bodies.

I obviously believe in challenging students. Nothing is gained by coddling them, or assuming that the material with which they engage must be appropriate to where they are, how old they are, etc. I assign them authors I read when I was in graduate school: everything from Max Müller, the 19th-Century German scholar who founded the modern study of religion, to postmoderns like Jacques Derrida. I assign novels and poetry and music.

They read only primary texts, and they engage with cultural artifacts that would generally not come into their view. I never dumb things down for them. They need guidance in interpreting these various kinds of texts, to be sure, but that is what I am there for. In the end, my goal is for them to be able to walk out of my classroom and say "I've read and engaged with texts that others have not. I know something more than I did before." And, hopefully, this: "there's nothing I can't read or understand, there's nothing I can't do to make the world a better, more humane place."

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"The God Who Appears": An Inductive-Humanistic Approach to Undergraduate Education

Steven W. Quackenbush
Karol K. Maybury

This isn't quite the essay that we planned to write. As professors at a public liberal arts college, our original intention was to prepare a submission to the present volume of *Teaching Matters* that defends the values of our educational community against alternative visions of higher education primarily concerned with content mastery and skill development. Our argument ran something like this: The mission statement of the University of Maine, Farmington (UMF) makes explicit our intention to "graduate individuals who will live purposeful, ethical, and personally rewarding lives, and who will strengthen the social fabric of the communities they inhabit in Maine and beyond." The means to achieving this goal is to create a *nurturing, supportive*, *safe* academic environment where students feel free to be themselves and realize their potential.

Yet a polemic piece published in the September, 2015 issue of *The Atlantic* gave us reason to pause. The authors, Greg Lukianoff (a constitutional lawyer) and Jonathan Haidt (a social psychologist), draw attention to what they see as a disturbing trend in higher education: the need to protect students from "words, ideas, and subjects that might cause discomfort or give offense" (p. 44). According to Lukianoff and Haidt (2015), "this new climate is slowly being institutionalized, and is affecting what can be said in the classroom." (p. 44) "The ultimate aim," the authors suggest, "is to turn campuses into 'safe spaces' where young adults are shielded from words and ideas that make some uncomfortable." (p. 44)

We agree with Lukianoff and Haidt (2015) that an education organized around themes of protectiveness is inadequate preparation for a professional life that "often demands intellectual engagement with people and ideas that one might find uncongenial or wrong." (p. 45) Moreover, we recognize the possibility that the project of transforming a college into a "safe space" where students can simply "be themselves" is not a solid foundation for the psychosocial challenges of post-college life. Simply put, the experiences of the typical American college student do not seem to effectively align with the issues they will confront in the proverbial real world. This problem was cleverly documented in a recent episode of *South*

Park, when a villain named "Reality" reminds those of us seeking existential security that "the world isn't one big liberal arts college campus."

Inspired by the writings of Protestant theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965), we offer a constructive response to the dilemma facing contemporary higher education. Specifically, we defend a vision of college life that highlights *courage* – not *safety* – as our primary value. The courage that we envision, moreover, is not a skill that can be taught in the same sort of way that we discuss concepts in chemistry or mathematics. We are not here to teach our students *about* courage. Rather, our challenge is to help students *become* courageous. The realization of this ambitious project requires an academic community appropriately attuned to the values and concerns of the broader culture.

Toward an Inductive-Humanistic Philosophy of Education

Paul Tillich had a special interest in exploring the relationship between secular culture and the religious life. His so-called "method of correlation" establishes a correspondence between the existential questions posed by every authentic human being and the religious symbols that point in the direction of a viable response. On the one hand, we are perpetually haunted by the possibility that our most meaningful projects may be destined for failure. There is no guarantee that what we will ever achieve quite what we set out to accomplish – indeed, that our projects were ever truly worthy of commitment in the first place. After all, *why should we be active citizens in our community, express with confidence our own voice, and humbly – yet hopefully – seek wisdom from others? Why, moreover, should we invest our knowledge in meaningful personal projects while also seeking to foster the common good?*[1]

For Tillich (1952), preoccupation with questions concerning the meaning of life can be understood as "anxiety about the loss of an ultimate concern, of a meaning which gives meaning to all meanings. This anxiety is aroused by the loss of a spiritual center, of an answer, however symbolic and indirect, to the question of the meaning of existence." (p. 47)

Such anxiety, we believe, is a thread woven into the very fabric of higher education. Our students are all too aware that everything they believe – everything they are – can be brought into question. For some, this anxiety breeds what Lukanoff and Haidt (2015) describe as a perpetual need for protection (from threatening ideas, words, etc.). However, it may be possible to allow oneself to be challenged by alternative points of view (and ways of life) while also preserving a sense of wholeness and personal integrity. In other words, we may be able to appropriately *manage* – if never completely eliminate – our existential anxiety. But what role can a public liberal arts college play in this process?

Tillich (1959) outlines three possible "aims" of educational institutions: technical, humanistic, and inductive. Technical education involves the development of the skills and cognitive competencies that are valued by culture at a given point in history. All university faculty recognize the importance of this educational aim. For example, as psychology professors, we are concerned that our students acquire basic skills in the domains of statistics and research design, and also demonstrate competency in a broad range of topic areas (e.g., social psychology, personality theory).

Nevertheless, our ambition extends well beyond simple content mastery. We are also concerned with the second aim highlighted by Tillich: *humanistic education.* This includes the actualization of personal potential and the realization of personal values. There is much to be said about the importance of this dimension of our work, and we would certainly like to believe that our students acquire greater self-knowledge and find new paths to self-actualization (or self-realization) as a result of taking our classes. Yet, even here something appears to be missing. The behaviorist B.F. Skinner once asked the humanist Carl Rogers to defend the privileged status he grants the process of self-actualization. As Skinner ponders, "self-actualization – *for what?*" (Rogers & Skinner, 1956, p. 1065, emphasis added)

Humanism, however well-intentioned, carries with it the perpetual risk that human reality will collapse into a dynamic that Tillich (1952) describes as "empty self-relatedness" (p. 155) – a form of narcissistic self-involvement that lacks the power to ever really break out of itself. This sort of narcissism, we suspect, lies at the root of the culture of protectiveness described by Lukianoff and Haidt (2015).

The third aim of education – the inductive – pulls students out of themselves and repositions (inducts) them into a meaningful cultural group. As a simple example, Tillich observes that the purpose of American history (in the United States) is not simply to teach the content of American history, but to induct students into an authentically American way of life. As psychology professors, we encourage our students to see themselves as members (or potential members) of a broad range of possible social groups, including our psychology department, Psi Chi (the national undergraduate honor society), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the broader community of scholars (with the accompanying responsibilities).

But induction – despite the valuable role it may play in encouraging students to understand themselves as members of broader communities – is no more adequate a response to our existential predicament than is a naïve humanism. In our pluralistic world, no single community has a monopoly on moral truth. For example, the community of humanistic counselors has been challenged by social critics concerned that a preoccupation with the problem

of personal growth encourages a form of self-involvement that distracts us from broader – and arguably more important – socio-political issues (see Prilleltensky, 1994).

Embracing the norms of a single community – even a community with a reputation for making a positive difference in the world – is no guarantee that one is on the path to moral integrity. After all, the code of ethics articulated by the American Psychological Association (APA) – laudable in so many respects – allegedly failed to deter several prominent APA-affiliated psychologists from involvement in the torture of terrorism suspects. Indeed, it was recently discovered that the relevant ethical guidelines were manipulated in 2004 in such a manner as to leave sufficient ethical wiggle room for psychologists to provide assistance in "enhanced interrogation" projects (Risen, 2015).

If groups have the power to pull us out of ourselves, the enlightened soul may nevertheless find it necessary to challenge the moral climate of groups. As such, we understand the relationship between humanistic and inductive education as a mutually-enriching dialectic, with induction illuminating the social dimension of our existence, and the humanistic project drawing out the moral principles that define our core personhood.

While we certainly value technical training, the accent at a public liberal arts college is on the inductive and humanistic dimensions of education. Moreover, these dimensions *must be correlated*. That is, participation in a meaningful community can be offered as a response to (or correlated with) the personal limitations of students and faculty. For example, students who want to "help people" come to college with little power to realize this mission. Our task is not simply to provide our students with the relevant skills, but also to illuminate how achievement *requires* participating in broader academic and professional communities (e.g., peer review, sound scholarship, behavior consistent with standards of professional ethics, etc.). Of course, the communities into which we are inducted are fallible (as the APA torture scandal reveals), and thus it is important that community "induction" be tempered by a (humanistic) commitment to a *life of integrity*.

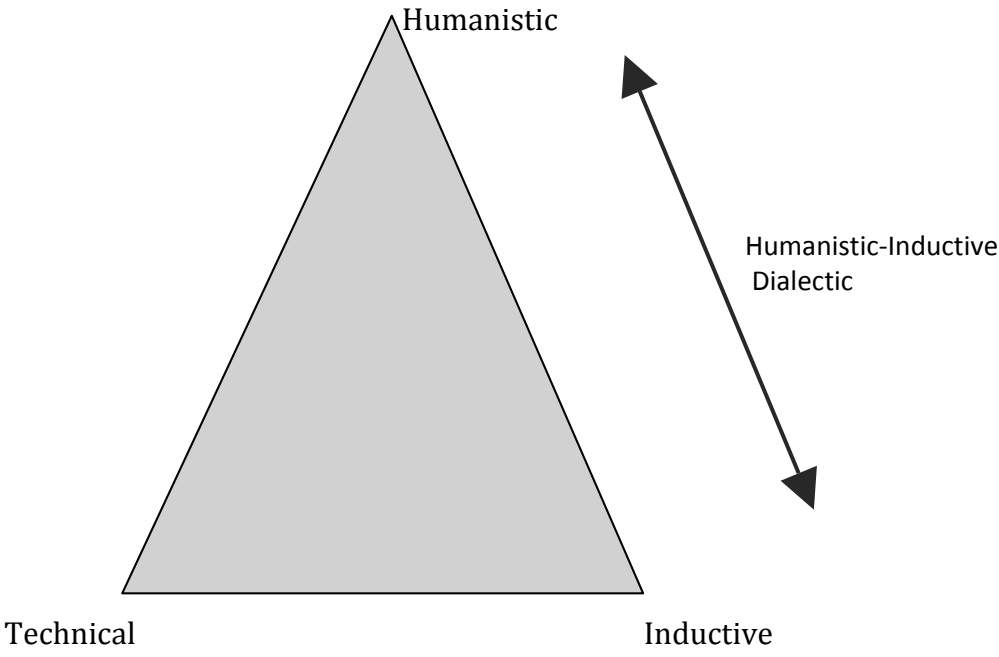

Figure 1: *The Three Aims of Education*

In his book *The Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer offers the metaphor of the "dance" to illuminate the dynamic interplay of the communal and personal dimensions of education. We involve our students in a "dance" that ideally integrates the personal (humanistic) with the collective (inductive), where each pole of this dialectic enriches and deepens the other. Like Parker, we conceive of education as a corporate experience, best achieved in a supportive community (e.g., via face to face and experiential learning). We fulfill our educational mission by (a) getting to know our students (and not just in one class), (b) situating our students in broader communities, (c) allowing these broader communities to effectively open up new questions and problems for our students, and (d) exploring the implications of engagement in multiple communities for personal and professional development.

As Palmer (1997) observes, "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique. Good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (p.10). Yet, for us, the identity and integrity of the teacher is never a finished project. Each of us is a flawed human being seeking to become

whole and make a positive difference in the world. Each of us is perpetually struggling with what Tillich (1952) describes as "anxiety about the loss of an ultimate concern, of a meaning which gives meaning to all meanings" (p. 47). If we cannot definitively resolve these issues for ourselves, we are hardly prepared to resolve them for our students. Even if we wanted to *protect* our students – to create a "safe space" in which they can flourish – we cannot yet agree on what they need to be protected *from*. All we can say is that our students share our deeply human need to grow stronger and wiser. We submit that we can achieve such strength and wisdom only by full participation in an inductive-humanistic dialectic.

The spiritual force that allows for such participation is appropriately dubbed *courage*. Our primary pedagogical challenge is thus to demonstrate what it means to be courageous – to be ourselves while also coming out of ourselves and finding our place in the world. Though we have no intention of teaching "courage" as if it were yet another skill set, we may nevertheless be able nurture the development of courage in our students.

Courage at a Public Liberal Arts College

Paul Tillich (1952) defines courage as "the self-affirmation of being in spite of the fact of nonbeing. It is the act of the individual self in taking the anxiety of nonbeing upon itself by affirming itself either as part of an embracing whole or in its individual selfhood. Courage always includes a risk, it is always threatened by nonbeing, whether the risk of losing oneself and becoming a thing within the whole of things or of losing one's world in an empty self-relatedness." (p. 155)

As we immerse ourselves more deeply in various social groups – and allow ourselves to be transformed by the demands they make upon us – there is a perpetual risk that we will lose the very self that willed such engagement in the first place. Reciprocally, as we reflect critically on the social dimension of our existence – for example, when we question the moral integrity of the civic and professional communities to which we are committed – we risk retreating into an "empty self-relatedness," cutting our ties to the very world that conditions the possibility of meaningful life projects.

In essence, courage implies the power to preserve a sense of personal integrity while simultaneously expanding the range of our social relationships. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to fully explore the dynamics of courage in higher education, we offer three examples of the nurturing of courage in the psychology program at the University of Maine, Farmington:

1. In Spring 2016, we are piloting a course entitled *The Psychology of Marathon Training* (co-taught by Lilyana Ortega and Steve Quackenbush), which includes the simultaneous participation in an academic seminar and a marathon training program. Clearly, initiating such a project requires considerable courage. As one of the students enrolled in this course recently observed,

   "Joining the marathon training class required a huge leap of faith, especially since I am not a runner in any sense. There are many obstacles that are working against me - I could get severely injured; I might not meet weekly training expectations and meet my goals; I might not be mentally prepared for the run, and I might never complete the marathon. Whether I succeed or fail, all I know is I am taking the opportunity to become more physically and mentally fit, and that is worth the risk." (Alicia Higgins; UMF Class of 2016),

   The course also requires courage on the parts of the professors. One of the present authors (Steve) offered the following reflections about the upcoming course:

   "We have many challenges ahead, including managing students with different levels of ability and differing goals. Also, I'm afraid that the snow may hinder training (by dramatically limiting places where we can safely run). But I'm pleasantly surprised by the level of interest many students are expressing about a class of this sort. I think they truly <u>want</u> this sort of challenge (which is at once physical and mental) -- and they <u>want</u> to find the strength to succeed. So, even as we express concerns about "the coddling of the American mind", it remains the case that most of our students (in their heart of hearts) don't want to be coddled (and they don't want to be psychosocial 'couch potatoes')"

   It bears mentioning that this course would be virtually impossible in a non-face-to-face learning environment. What makes this class special is that a community of students and faculty are embarking on a challenging project *together,* in the spirit of mutual support.

2. Our popular *Death & Dying* course was developed at UMF in 1988 by the late, long-time department chair Bert Jacobs, and is now taught by Assistant Professor Natasha Lekes. The class introduces undergraduates to the daunting topic of death and dying, and includes such activities as walking reflectively through a cemetery and visiting a funeral home. In her syllabus, Lekes observes that '*death is an emotional topic and one that brings out our feelings and sometimes challenges*

our values.' The class requires courage from all parties: (a) *the professor*, who shares her own perspective on death, (b) *guest speakers*, including *counselors and clergy* providing solace and companionship to the dying and grieving, and *community members* willing to share their perspectives on life, death, and the afterlife, and (c) *the students*, who work through their own discomfort with death and embark on a journey exploring some of the most profound questions about human existence imaginable.

The intimacy promoted in this class pulls students out of themselves, fosters a sense of connection, encourages courageous sharing, and promotes a keen awareness of others' perspectives on this highly sensitive topic. As such, *Death & Dying* at UMF nicely illustrates our thesis that higher education should be a *visceral, three-dimensional* experience (at once technical, humanistic, and inductive).

3. Students at UMF become more courageous as they make connections across disciplines and engage with communities beyond the college. For example, in 2013, 85 UMF students from three undergraduate classes engaged in a collaborative effort to raise funds for Kiva, a global micro-lending program designed to alleviate poverty through person-to-person loans. Students from Anthropology (*Social Change*: Dr. Nicole Kellett), Economics (*Behavioral Economics*: Dr. John Messier) and Psychology (*Positive Psychology*: Dr. Maybury) met outside of class to develop ideas (ranging from t-shirt sales to a date auction) in order to raise funds for Kiva. The students eventually raised $1,700, which has now been loaned, repaid, and re-lent over the ensuing two years. As of December 2015, the original loan has resulted in 203 individual loans to people in need (a total of $5,100) and it continues in perpetuity.

While the objective of the project was to analyze a social problem (poverty) and directly enact social change, the students acquired hands-on experience with community organizing and a host of other skills, such as persuading local businesses to donate space. Participating students thereby enhanced their leadership and collaborative skills, learned about various efforts to enrich the lives of global citizens, raised awareness of social and economic issues worldwide, and become empowered to make positive change. All of this occurred by way of induction into a unique cohort of social activists (alleviating poverty through micro-lending). This project would not have been successfully realized if we were primarily

concerned about protecting our students from the issues and challenges they are likely to face in the proverbial real world.

Conclusion

There is something demonic about higher education in the United States. While we need not question the value of technical training, the identification of education with technique (e.g., the acquisition of discipline-specific skills) risks losing sight of *the person* responsible for the wise deployment of established knowledge. Yet, if we reify *the person* as the final end of higher education – as if our only task is to help each student achieve personal fulfillment – then we effectively stall the person-culture dialectic that represents the only real possibility for meaningful social engagement.

According to Tillich (1963), demons "are not simply a negation of the divine but participate in a distorted way in the power and holiness of the divine" (p.102). Higher education assumes demonic qualities when any individual element of the humanistic-inductive dialectic (the technical, the personal, or the cultural) demands special allegiance – as if it were a God in its own right.

Lukianoff and Haidt (2015) have expressed concern about "attempts to shield students from words, ideas, and people that might cause them emotional discomfort" (p. 51). Theologically speaking, such attempts are demonic insofar as they emphasize the importance of the *personal* dimension (or, more specifically, *the emotional life of the individual)* at the expense of the *cultural* and *technical* dimensions of human existence. Feelings do indeed matter, but it remains possible that other people (participating in the *cultural* dimension of our existence) may have *good reason* (thanks to insights acquired within the *technical* dimension) to disseminate ideas that many students find emotionally disturbing.

But we have no wish to throw our students into a den of wolves. *Mere exposure* to challenging ideas and people will never nurture the courage necessary to get the most out of higher education. Rather, full participation in the inductive-humanistic dialectic is best realized in *relationships* that give students reasons to break out of cycles of "empty self-relatedness," discover their place in the world, and – if necessary – make meaningful changes in their local and global communities.

For us, higher education must aspire to the divine, even as it loses faith in its original mission and is tempted by the false gods of the Academy (e.g., the idolization of content mastery reflected in many online degree programs). But if the divine appears to us as an unrealizable ideal, it may

nevertheless be foreshadowed by the positive relationships fostered at a public liberal arts college.

We do not believe that we are in any position to resolve the existential issues confronting our students. However, we submit that a liberal arts community has the power to nurture a *certain sort* of courage – the courage *to be* in the face of "anxiety about the loss of an ultimate concern, of a meaning which gives meaning to all meanings" (Tillich, 1952, p. 47).

Such is the God that appears to us, even as we are perpetually haunted by the possibility that higher education in the United States is fated to dissolve into an endless proliferation of techniques and political agendas. If higher education is presently in a state of crisis, we may find some sustenance in the memorable words of Paul Tillich (1952): "The courage to be is rooted in the God who appears when God disappears in the anxiety of doubt" (p. 190).

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Karol Maybury is an associate professor of Psychology at the University of Maine at Farmington. Her academic interests include adolescence, communities and families.

Footnote

[1] The italicized sentences are adapted from the Mission Statement of the University of Maine, Farmington.

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You Want To Go Where Everybody Knows Your Name

Shana Youngdahl

I. How I Begin (These Days)

At the beginning of each semester, students in my English 100 courses introduce themselves, make table tents with their names on them, and then are immediately set to the task of responding to a short poem or flash fiction related to our course topic. At the end of the hour I pass out the syllabus and assign it as homework. I also instruct them to notice that in one week there will be a quiz on the names of everyone in the classroom. This is generally the only quiz in my course, and it is doubtless the most important, and the most fun. For the first week of class we devote time at the beginning and end of the hour to getting to know one another and learning one another's names. It is the most valuable thing I do in my classroom.

I hold a unique position at UMF, as someone who works primarily with first-year students, and as a result much of my teaching practice arises out of considering how students transition to college. Through recognizing where these students are coming from emotionally, geographically and educationally, I am better able to acculturate them, not into my own field, but into the culture of the University, as they learn the writing skills necessary for their educational journeys. In my classroom, it all begins by building a foundational community in which we all can refer to one another by what-we-like-to-be-called. On that first day, it is possible that a few students feel like the name quiz is hard-core. Certainly, they take it seriously, and many are even nervous about it on the day of the quiz. On quiz day they learn that what they need to do should they forget someone's name is to describe them in detail; this often eases some of the pressure. Rarely do students need to write a description (the majority of the class passes with 100%), but the descriptions are equally wonderful, "plaid shirt and glasses, seems like a really nice guy," "short brown hair, quiet voice, said she had cheerios for breakfast." The description option arises because unknown to the students prior to the taking of it, the purpose of this quiz is not that they get 100 %. The purpose is to make students aware and accountable for their peers in class. The quiz and the games leading up to it create the basis of a community in which we can discuss serious topics of academic merit, and which ultimately allows students to trust and humor me, resulting in a room where students sustain their focus through short lectures on claim formation and comma usage. The bonus, of course, is that the name quiz holds me

accountable as well, for learning my students' names before too much of the semester has passed me by.

It's simple stuff, heralded in books like How To Win Friends and Influence People. We like to hear our names; it makes us feel comfortable. Once we've learned names, we begin to form a community in which we can learn other things, and safely admit our failures and our accomplishments along the way. In writing, it is important to be able to do this in a group setting, especially in a class where the art of revision is the key to success. Humans make mistakes, and revise and learn from them. We do it in life, and this is also the writing process. When I started teaching, I was terrified that students would mutiny if I spelled a word incorrectly on the board. I've never been a good speller. I was tested for learning disabilities and held out of advanced reading groups as a child because my spelling did not match up with my other skills. But one day in class I simply decided to embrace this. I tell students the fact that I've learned to be a better speller through practice, but that it isn't natural for me. I am bound to get something wrong over the course of the semester. And instead of eye-rolling or a resulting undermining of my authority as an English Professor, I've found that students love to catch a spelling error that I've hastily written. It means I'm human. I'm not the suited English Teacher slapping a book down in their face crying "Poetry is life!"--but when I still feared making mistakes on the board, I was. I know not to be that person anymore, and though I'll still spout poetry from time to time, I'd like to think I do so in a way that will cause students to what to read the stuff, rather than run the other way in fright.

II. The Failure of The Blue Suit

The first time I taught College Composition, I was twenty-four years old. I wore a navy blue vintage suit and black-square heels. My hair was pulled into a severe bun at the nape of my neck. I was prepared to strike fear into the hearts of the thirty-or-so college freshmen crammed into a hot room on the third floor of a shabby building on the campus of the University of Minnesota. That year, the Twin Cities campus surpassed the University of Ohio as the largest public institution of high education in America. More students attended the school than populated my home-town, not to mention the home-towns of many of my students, who hailed from places I'd only laughed about when I heard them on the weather-report: International Falls, Bemidji, anywhere in North Dakota. On the first day, before calling roll I stood on a chair, towering in front of them and belted out John Berryman's 14th Dream Song, the one that opens "Life, friends, is boring. We must not say so" to the stunned lot of them. I probably said something about how

writing is a passion and then we spent the rest of the hour reading through the detailed syllabus, where I hammered the importance of my policies on attendance and late paper. They left without looking at me. I'd hoped that I'd managed to instill both fear and awe into their little hearts, that I'd presented myself as a person who was a bit stern, but also passionate and willing to listen, someone from whom they would learn to love the all-illusive semicolon. Probably, I only achieved one of these—they were just scared. Fear, though still an embraced pedagogical technique in the teaching assistant's basement, was ill-suited to me, and I owe my transformation largely to the first student who changed my life and taught me the true value of my vocation. Let's call her Karen, one of the students I would get to know well over the next two years.

Karen called absolutely no attention to herself that first day, or even during the first several weeks of classes. When she handed in her first paper, it earned a generous D. During paper conferences she cried, but to her credit she placed the blame not on me, but on the fact that she was ill-prepared for the demands of college. Karen listened to my advice and through multiple meetings and drafts she turned the paper around. The second paper earned a C, and again she was not content; she revised and revised. She met with me. She noticed that I'd scheduled my appointments through the lunch hour and she brought me cookies. She wasn't trying to buy my affection, but just doing what nice shy girls from Wisconsin seem to do—notice and try to help. I don't recall what grade Karen earned at the end of that semester, but I do recall that though she'd struggled in my class, she elected to take my Introduction to Creative Writing Course the following fall and then my Introduction to Poetry in the spring, courses which she joyously struggled through. One fall she'd begun my Intermediate Poetry class and I was looking forward to working with her again. She'd impressed me with her ready acceptance of a challenge, and we'd developed a comfortable rapport. A few weeks into the semester she set up an appointment with me. I thought perhaps she was concerned about the workload. Instead, she sat down in my cubicle in the TA basement, passed me a muffin and announced, "I'm dropping out of school." When she saw my face she looked at her lap and burst into tears, "because I'm pregnant," she said between sobs.

I fought back tears myself. I didn't want this girl who I'd watch struggle so hard to achieve passing grades in college give it up to move home to rural Wisconsin and early motherhood, but I recognized those as my own unhelpful judgments on a difficult situation which she was clearly struggling through. I reached out to her and said, "Let's get out of here, can I buy you lunch?" As we ate I told her that I believed she was capable, and that whatever she did she had my full support. I hoped she would stay in school,

as her drive promised her wonderful things. I asked if she'd considered finishing the semester, returning to school in a year. She shook her head. She needed the support of her boyfriend at home and her family to get through this. Besides, she'd already lined up full-time work, and she needed to save money for the baby. In the months that followed, Karen sent emails and cards. The first came at Thanksgiving to tell me she had lost the baby. Then an email came a few days later informing me that her boyfriend had been hit and killed by a snowplow that ran through an intersection during the winter's first bad storm. Fortunately, she mentioned, her boyfriend was organized and provided for her in a will. Now, she was able to get a new car, and was coming to Minneapolis to pick up some things that her friends had been storing for her. Could we get lunch?

We ate together and she laughed as she attempted chopsticks for the first time. She was still the shy girl I'd met a few years earlier, and she felt bad about surrendering to the fork. I tried to reassure her. At some point during this meal she looked at me and said, "You know when you walked into class that day in your suit with your bun, I was so afraid of you. You terrified me." I was struck deeply by that in two ways: how lucky that Karen had, through her Midwestern perseverance, overcome her fear of me to become one of my most cherished students; and what about all of the students who were never able to overcome that fear? Did they even learn how to correctly join a compound sentence in a class taught by someone they feared?

For a few years Karen continued to write to me. She didn't return to school at the University of Minnesota after her miscarriage and subsequent loss of her boyfriend, but she had a great job working at the building supply company in her town, and after a while they began paying for her to resume her education at the local community college. She wrote me to say she had thought of me because she was back at night school, that she still had hopes for a family, and in the meantime was spoiling her Godchild by buying him every Dr. Seuss book. She didn't want him to grow up with what she viewed as her own disadvantage, caused, in part, by growing up in a household that didn't value books. My relationship with Karen was perhaps the most important part of my education as a graduate teaching instructor. It benefitted me far more than the Teaching of English Practicum course in which I enrolled, or the Teaching of Creative Writing support group I attended weekly. It taught me that real human contact is essential for learning. Had Karen not spent so much time in my office, she'd not have passed Composition or subsequent English courses. It caused me to think about ways to bring the conference-like experience into the classroom itself, and it also taught me a harder lesson: even if I lose them, if they drop out, if their life takes them in a different direction, it does not mean that they didn't

learn something of value in my classroom. It does not mean they aren't carrying it with them. Karen, because of her quiet persistence, was able to thrive in my classes despite my stern in-class persona, one that at the time I felt I needed because I was young. She also taught me to throw out pretense and get down to being human in order to accomplish real teaching, but it would take me a while to figure out how to do that once I realized it was the goal.

III. "I'm Sick Of This Sh**" (or Hope)

A few years later I resumed my teacher education at Kirkwood Community College in Iowa, where I worked as an adjunct faculty member for nearly four years. It was here, with the help of a remarkable faculty, and the innovative KCELT center—Kirkwood Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching—, which provided faculty development to adjuncts and full-timers alike, that I was able to figure out in a practical way how to evolve--from my outward aspect as a disciplinarian in the classroom to an active participant in a community-minded culture of learning. When I began at Kirkwood, I thought I'd learned quite a bit as a graduate student. I loved teaching, had consistently good evaluations and was engaged in a critical recursive examination of my own methods. I knew that I wanted to be more human in my approach, but I wasn't sure how, and Kirkwood presented an entirely new set of challenges. If I had thought that many of my undergraduates at the University of Minnesota were underprepared, I was completely blind-sided by my Kirkwood students. It was not uncommon that my students had never read an entire book (even for school), and once I encountered a student who did not know the difference between a library and a bookstore. (This would have been understandable had this student's first language not been English, but sadly this was not the case). My first semester at Kirkwood went fine, I suppose; despite my original misreading of the needs of the students in my classroom, I was able to make adjustments and have things go all right. I even had one student give me possibly the oddest compliment of my teaching career. When I ran into him in the hall a year later, he said "Hey, Shana, I just wanted you to know I've taken Comp 1 four times and your class was definitely the best."

Then one day, a woman answered her phone in the middle of a class discussion, and was upset when I told her to leave (despite the clear phone policy written in my syllabus). She shouted "I'll call you back" into the phone, flipped it down and violently threw it into her purse. Then in front of the entire class she yelled, "I'm sick of this shit, I don't need to take this from you, you're younger than my son." Quietly, I asked her to go into the

hallway with me, where I informed her that though she might have children my age, there was a reason she was in my class. I had the education and ability to teach her, if she would listen and try to learn. In this conversation I explained not only my credentials and teaching experience, but let her know that I understood that she probably knew lots of things I didn't, about raising a son for example. She calmed down, but the impact on the class was palatable, and the classroom felt disordered for the rest of the semester, despite my attempts to get everyone back on board. This was just one incident of several that caused me to go to my Dean and ask for a teaching mentor. The Dean assigned Hope Burwell, a veteran professor who was just returning to the classroom after running KCELT. Hope became an incredible personal role model and mentor for me over the next year. She single-handedly transformed my teaching with several relatively easy tricks. She observed my class and noticed that my vocabulary was likely too advanced for the students in the room, a fact that hadn't even occured to me, as I believed I was speaking simply. She invited me to attend her classes, where I watched her students all respectfully engage in their work, and I watched her warmth as students walked in late—they clearly understood that they should be on-time, that there were consequences for tardiness, and they apologized, then after some light-hearted teasing from Hope got straight to work. Hope's classroom, built on the principles of trust and community, became a place where students felt comfortable asking if the professor used a word they did not understand. How did Hope achieve this community? When I had students yelling in my classroom? Telling me they were "sick of this shit?"

She did several things, of course--no one thing is the magic ticket--but she did say that the one thing she did which was consistently noted on her teaching evaluations was requiring all students to learn the names of the others in the classroom, and of devoting the first week of the semester, or even the first two, to creating and building classroom community. I realized that in my attempt to "get the first paper done," and harping on syllabus policies in the first weeks, I was actually keeping myself from achieving a positive community. The next semester, I began my course with a name quiz on the syllabus, and activities in each course that were designed to help us get to know one another. Hope pointed out part of the reason the name trick worked was that many Kirkwood students were from high schools that numbered fewer than 200 students total. In the large environment, they felt lost. After beginning the semester with the learning of names, and the name quiz, I discovered that the classroom became a place of true human experience. Suddenly my students became willing to share, in ways that were related to our course content, deeply personal concerns with the large group.

When we read an essay about a man with mental health issues, a student in the back row raised his hand and talked about how he connected to the piece because he suffered from a severe personality disorder. After he admitted this, another student raised his hand; he suffered similarly, and was particularly struck by a specific passage that we were all able to unpack together. Suddenly, my students felt free to bring their lives into the classroom, and students who usually saw their lives as completely outside the walls of school were engaged with their education in a new way, and as a result, their papers improved.

Remarkably, the effects of the name quiz included a positive effect on attendance. Students would say "Hey, where has Katie been?" and then often someone would say, "Shana, do you mind if I text her?" I'd allow this and then the student might say, "Katie was sick Tuesday and now her bus is late, but she's still hoping to make it," and ten minutes later Katie would walk in, apologize and get straight to work. In short, my classrooms went from rooms in which I was treated as an authority figure, and only the very persistent understood my humanity and compassion as a teacher, to communities in which everyone was aware that they were in a compassionate space, a space in which they were respected and real learning was possible. It wasn't that the class turned from a place for the task of writing coherent sentences to a therapy session, but that through creating a culture in which we could share with one another our true experiences, the task of writing became more important. Because they were in-community, they felt comfortable offering critiques during peer feedback, and because I was in that community too, they respected me, and the majority of the time offered up real, honest reasons as to why they missed class or had their phones on. It isn't a fool-proof system; I still have students I don't reach from time to time. There are still those who resist, or who don't want to participate in the classroom culture, but I've not been sworn at since, and no one has stomped out of my classroom either.

IV. And Now

When I moved to Farmington and began work at UMF, I found my students infinitely more prepared than those I'd taught the previous few years, and thankfully, far less skeptical of the mission of higher education. I was blessed to teach Composition classes capped at 16, ten students fewer per section than I'd had at Kirkwood. I was excited by the idea of teaching thematically-based courses, something I'd begun doing anyway, but the students had no ability to know about the theme before they entered my classroom on the first day. I knew the topic I'd most like to teach was

Pregnancy and Birth. I'd created an independent study on the literature of Pregnancy and Birth as an undergraduate, and wanted to return to the topic in a more formal way, though I'd consistently read books focused on this expanding genre in the intervening decade. There was some skepticism, I think, about the topic's potential, but there were enough students that Fall to fill both sections. The topic has proven of interest to students over the years, and the community I build around it has allowed students to feel comfortable to share their own experiences of pregnancy loss, abortion decisions, and the use of the morning after pill with the classroom community. Sometime during the first week of this course, I remind students that 3 out of 10 American women will become pregnant before their 20th birthday, and that even if there are not women actively parenting in the classroom, it is critical to remain sensitive about women's choices and to keep this statistic in mind. One of my proudest teaching experiences was witnessing a woman share with the entire class a paper she'd written about how she'd hidden a pregnancy for several months and then endured a miscarriage, alone, without the support of family or friends. She decided to share this with the class because she knew that people had questions about why women hide pregnancies, and she wanted to give a voice to that experience. She did this in a remarkably composed way, reading from a text she'd gone over with me several times as we ended the unit which addressed pregnancy loss. The result was not a therapy session, but a real learning experience for both the students and class members, as they were able to engage directly with the questions of the course, learn how young mothers are represented, and why some choose to hide this experience even in a culture that does not condemn premarital sex.

When students are connected to the community in which they learn, they are much more likely to connect to the texts and subjects presented to them. The more human I am in class, and the less severe I appear, the more likely students are to respect my authority on matters related to writing and even attendance policies, which after all exist not as a way for me to discipline students for missing class, but as a way to help them understand that presence in the classroom community is a valuable and necessary component of the learning which happens when reading an assignment or writing a paper. As with Hope, I've also often received feedback about how much students like learning the names of everyone in the room. The greatest gift in all of this, I feel, is that the more I allow community to form in my classroom, and the more they are willing to share, it is not just student-learning that increases, but mine as well. And after all, my love for learning from stories is what brought me here in the first place. It is what keeps me here; as students share their own stories in relationship to the literature we

read, I grow too. It is for that feeling that the beginning of each semester holds for me hair-raising excitement. That, and how good it feels to go where everybody knows your name.

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A Digital Pedagogy and Digital Human(itie)s: Shakespeare, Austen, and the UMF Student

Misty Krueger

A Digital Pedagogy

In the summer of 2012 I participated in a five-week National Endowment for the Humanities Seminar on Jane Austen and her contemporaries, and to my surprise it explored the impact of digital humanities (DH) research on the study of Austen. On a basic level, DH refers to the analysis of authors, texts, genres, etc. via digital technology. In its more complex manifestations DH draws on statistics and data mining, supports digital storehouses such as open-access websites or databases, and includes the digital publishing of texts, such as html versions of early modern works. I admit that before this seminar I had only a vague idea of what "digital humanities" meant. Afterwards, I began to think of ways to integrate it into my literature classes.

Throughout my teaching career I have pursued a hybrid pedagogy that blends face-to-face instruction with online components. Technology comes into play as students read digital texts, such as literature or scholarship, post questions and discuss them with classmates on Blackboard, and conduct research via databases or by searching the Web. In 2013 I initiated a digital pedagogy. As Jesse Stommel writes, a digital pedagogy is not simply about "using digital technologies for teaching"; "rather [it is] about approaching those tools from a critical pedagogical perspective." A digital pedagogy considers "the impact of digital tools on learning" and *how* students can use "digital tools thoughtfully" (Stommel "What is Digital Pedagogy?"). Part of this thoughtfulness comes in achieving digital wisdom. As explained by Marc Prensky, digital wisdom "refer[s] both to wisdom arising from the use of digital technology to access cognitive power beyond our innate capacity and to wisdom in the prudent use of technology to enhance our capabilities" (Prensky). I am interested primarily in the second half of this definition, in its attention to the ways in which technology can enhance our students' capabilities to find and produce information. This ability to produce information is a part of a praxis-driven pedagogy, for praxis is a kind of "thoughtful performance," as defined by Bethany Nowviskie, Jeremy Boggs, and J. K. Purdom Lindblad. While the product is not to be underrated, "the processes through which ideas become objects" is key to this pedagogy

(Nowviskie et al.). As such, a praxis-oriented digital pedagogy combines attention to process and product. It focuses on the means with which students create information, and what they learn from this practice, and the mode in which it becomes a real-world object that can potentially reach a wide audience.

To achieve this nexus, a digital pedagogy encourages students to share their knowledge with an audience beyond the classroom. Traditional printed academic assignments definitely have a place in a literature course, for they are valuable exercises in close reading and critical thinking that should include audience awareness. However, for far too long, undergraduate literature students have thought about these assignments as insular projects generated for a single reader: the professor. Knowledge is gained by the student and shared with the professor, but the buck stops there. What if literature students wrote with a larger audience in mind? What if these students created information for the entire world to see? Students might find themselves invested in projects that publicly represent their interests, show their creativity, and pass on their knowledge about a topic to people 'in the real world.' The stakes might be higher when someone miles or even oceans away is potentially watching. With these questions and ideas in mind, I began to devise a digital assignment in my Shakespeare class, and eventually created an online course on Jane Austen.

Digital Human(itie)s and Digital Assignments in a Shakespeare and an Austen Course

In my Shakespeare course I assign a formal project called "Digital Shakespeare." Students must create a publicly accessible website or video about some aspect of our course, and their projects must examine at least one of the works from the syllabus. The projects must have a thesis (some kind of complex driving idea), include primary and secondary sources, attend to design, and consider the needs of viewers. These elements do not depart drastically from traditional print assignments. Instead, they build on students' familiarities with these methods, while having the added intent of disseminating material to a wider, visually oriented Web audience.

Before students begin working on this assignment, I explain why I have them make the transition from a print project to a digital one. The latter encourages students 1) to become adept with digital tools beyond a word processor, 2) to share their work with readers outside of the course, and 3) to take part in a growing subfield of literary scholarship: DH. I want students to expand their technological skills, and working on Websites and videos gives them formal experience in combining words with images and audio. In this

digital age, readers crave dazzling visual and oral presentations, and I want my students to be capable of being the sources of this information. I impress upon students that in creating these projects they are not only entering a conversation about Shakespeare's works that has been long in the making, but also continuing and even changing the conversation. Often, this is groundbreaking news to students. They have something important to say about Shakespeare, and that information should be shared publicly. I want my students to realize that they have a great deal to teach people within and beyond our course, and that entertainment can play a huge part in this process. Thus, in addition to examining the academic merit of the work, I encourage humor and a sense of play in these projects. Further, I want to give students an awareness of the changing landscape of literary scholarship that has developed out of a DH initiative. In some way, this assignment is a lesson in literary studies, as it shows students the expansion of our research, its partnership with other fields, and its aim towards global accessibility.

I connect this growing interest in DH with the concept of the digital human. Students are surprised to be called digital humans, but many of us prefer digital interfaces over face-to-face interactions, log on daily to social media, send daily multiple text messages and emails, and find it difficult to silence or turn off our devices even for the duration of a single class meeting. The final project asks students to embrace what I am calling this digital humanity, and to stay connected to technology and share their knowledge about Shakespeare on the Web. Thus far my students have been excited about the opportunity to dabble in the digital, and they seem to welcome an assignment that encourages them to communicate their personal interests to the public.

Although the "Digital Shakespeare" assignment spans half of my Shakespeare course, my Jane Austen online summer course offers students an entirely digital experience. The course has two goals: 1) to study Austen's early works and 2) to explore a "Digital Austen." The course has two primary texts: 1) *Jane Austen's Fiction Manuscripts*, an open-access online archive of Jane Austen's unpublished writings showcasing facsimiles of the author's handwritten notebooks alongside transcriptions and 2) *The Text of Northanger Abbey*, a digital version of Austen's novel, *Northanger Abbey*, created by UMF alumnus, Cidney Mayes, as a part of a Wilson Scholars project. Although it is not necessary to require students in an online course only to read digital texts, I want my students to engage with these online versions of Austen's work so that they can see actual images of Austen's manuscripts, replete with words and phrases crossed out, and so that as a community of readers, they can contribute marginalia to an Austen novel.

I also want students to enter a fully digital experience in terms of assignments, so most of the course work asks students to enter a kind of public sphere. Private emails and journal entries are the only exceptions allowed. Students contribute daily to discussion forums on Austen's unpublished writings and must comment on classmates' posts; they also annotate the digital *Northanger Abbey* and create a class conversation in the margins of the text. These activities imitate the kinds of interactions that students find in face-to-face courses. Further, to provide the semblance of personal contact, students share photos of themselves and autobiographical sketches, and I contribute photos and videos of myself as well as my own audio recordings on a weekly basis.

To encourage students to envision their writing as public discourse, I require them to blog and build wikis from scratch. I assign them a text and give some instructions, but they have to take the initiative to design the projects and devise the content. The wiki assignment also calls upon the public nature of writing, for by their natures, wikis are public sites that are open to editing. The wiki assignment also facilitates the idea of writing as a collaborative exercise, for three students manage each wiki and must add and edit content and images within the site. The wiki assignment also aims to allow students to generate knowledge on Austen's understudied *Juvenilia*, and thus, this project is something of a public service. The student projects are created in Blackboard so that I can see every contribution made to each wiki, but the final products are going live this summer on a public wiki.

Whereas the wiki project focuses on making available summaries, analyses, and further reading on Austen's early writings, the final project explores the theme of the latter half of the course: parody. In the final project, students choose to either analyze instances of parody in *Northanger Abbey* or create a parody of scenes or characters from the novel. In keeping with the idea of openly accessible digital information, the projects must be products that can be posted to the Web. Options include Websites (professional and/or social media-based), videos, infographics, Prezis, podcasts, and songs. As in the Shakespeare course, I explain to my Austen students the value of digital wisdom. I want students to understand why I assign these digital projects and what they can gain from completing them. It is my hope that students will gravitate towards the media they most enjoy or feel comfortable *using*, especially in the limited time of a summer term, and that they will also enjoy and feel comfortable *sharing* these projects with someone besides the professor. In this "like"able, "share"able, "retweet"able age, it seems easier than ever to get students on board with such an idea, for many of the projects end up being parodies of Facebook and Twitter sites, as well. In these cases, students use social media to create versions of

characters that behave as digital humans who also believe in publicly sharing information about themselves and others.

Something Old, Something New: What is Retained and Gained in the Digital Leap

While the adage "the medium is the message" applies to a digital pedagogy, there are benefits for instructors beyond assessing how knowledge about Shakespeare and Austen can be produced and with whom students can share this information. Much of what underscores a digital pedagogy is derived from the critical pedagogy that shapes the methods we began implementing as young teachers. In Stommel's comparison of a digital and a critical pedagogy, he elaborates on the "critical" as "providing definitions and interpretations" and showing "reflective and nuanced thinking about a subject" (Stommel "Critical Digital Pedagogy"). Whether the assignments are printed on paper or grace the screen, they retain the practices encouraged in literary studies for centuries. As in traditional critical papers, digital assignments capitalize on the practice of close reading and interpretation, the inclusion of scholarship, and the shaping of a distinct thesis and argument that demonstrate reflection and the student's thoughts on a subject. These projects show students making decisions beyond the analysis of texts or the inclusion of secondary sources, though. Students also have to think about design and about incorporating a variety of resources that their Web audiences will enjoy viewing, such as links to other sites, videos, and files or slides with text or voiceover narration and stunning graphics. The digital assignment calls on students to think outside of the box about course materials, and to show their creativity in projects intended for the Web.

These digital assignments also harness a kind of *joie de vivre*. I have seen the excitement and creativity that these projects generate in students. It means a lot to me to hear a student say that he is having fun in making his project, or that she cannot remember enjoying an assignment as much as this one. With every batch of digital assignments turned in I see such beauty, cleverness, and intertextual connections that show me how much energy students have invested in the project and how much students have learned. I particularly enjoy the ways these assignments help students make works from centuries past seem completely relevant to our twenty-first century world. With Shakespeare, and even Austen, sometimes that it is not an easy task. I feel proud of my students who come to realize that modernizing Shakespeare or Austen helps them better understand and relate to the authors and their works, and that their projects can help other people do the same. I am blown away by students who find ways to make Shakespeare relevant for K-12 students, and by students who place Shakespearean and Austenian characters in a modern

world, tweeting, posting on Instagram or Facebook, and blogging. Sometimes students even create projects from the author's viewpoint, and suddenly we find an Austen or Shakespeare as a digital human using technology to comment on the world around her or him. No longer do these students see the author or work as a relic of the past. Long live Shakespeare, that social media loving hipster! Hello, Austen the blogger!

Besides making Shakespeare and Austen seem twenty-first-century cool, which in my humble opinion is amazing, digital assignments retain the goals of praxis—and this is always important to me. After all, a digital pedagogy and praxis:

> can encourage students to look beyond academic literature in developing an understanding of the content of a course. It can inspire them to contribute to knowledge representation and creation in new ways, and to move with confidence across disciplinary and professional boundaries. […] It can also foster life-long learning, as students learn to negotiate more fluidly and at earlier stages between practices of classroom spaces and those of the working world. (Nowviskie et al.)

Students' successful negotiations between learning *about* something and producing information *on* it, fulfilling course assignments and creating real-world objects, and transitioning from the classroom to the working world are key to my pedagogy. I understand that creating a Website about Shakespeare or a podcast on Austen is only a small step in this process, but I am proud to be able to help my students find ways to tap into their creative and analytical skills and to see that the work done for a class can mean so much more than a letter grade. In addition to fine critical thinking, research, and writing skills, our students need digital literacy, experience with digital technology, and digital wisdom when they leave the walls of the university and enter the world beyond UMF. If it so happens that a project on Shakespeare or Austen got them started on this path, all the better!

Misty Krueger is Visiting Professor of English at the University of Maine at Farmington. Shakespeare and Jane Austen (separately? together?) rock her world.

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The Third-Floor Mom

Angela Carter
(with Linda Britt)

There are students who arrive at UMF knowing exactly what they want: they've chosen their majors, they know the classes they need to take, the clubs they want to join, the careers they plan to pursue, maybe even the graduate schools they will apply to.

Then there are the others, the ones for whom college wasn't necessarily on their radar all through high school, the ones who end up at UMF only because it is close to their hometowns, or perhaps because a wise guidance counselor convinced them to apply. They might have enjoyed one of their history classes in high school, or they caught an episode of "Bones" on TV and think anthropologists do cool things, or maybe a parent thought a business major would guarantee her daughter a job after graduation. If these students are lucky, the first office they wander into in the Roberts Learning Center belongs to Angela Carter.

"There was this one student. A transfer student from a community college, who was driving up the day before classes started in January. He had no housing, no classes, and no idea what he wanted or needed to take. He was supposed to arrive in the afternoon; there was a raging snowstorm, and what should have been a one-hour drive stretched to over three hours. It was now 7:00 p.m., two and a half hours after offices closed. I had communicated with Kirsten Swan from Student Services, and she, too, was still in her office, waiting for this poor young man who was on his way. When he finally walked in to my office, bedraggled, looking lost, I said to myself that there was no way this guy sticks it out. But we managed to find him some classes that still had openings, and Kirsten found housing for him.

Fast forward several years, and at least one change of major, from History to Business Economics. He graduated last May. And you know what? The cool thing is, they come at the end. They come to my office and they say 'Thank you so much.' I hear from them still, years later.

That is why I stay here."

Angela Carter is an Administrative Specialist for the Division of Social Sciences and Business. Her official job is to help the Chair and the faculty with the course schedule, the budget, registration, photocopying, and more. She's been at UMF for eleven years. And for eleven years, students have found their way to her office on the third floor of Roberts. They gravitate to her warm presence and easy laugh.

"There was a set of twins who always came in together. Drama from day one. One or the other would break down crying. There was a lot of crying and consoling in my office. I couldn't see how they were going to make it through even one semester of college, let alone four years. I became their college mom, their safe house.

She knows, too, when it's too much, when it's time to walk a student over to the Counseling Center. And she's done that, too.

"It's just happenstance. The Maine kids, in particular, they all connect differently with me. Maybe because I'm one of them.

I love my job. And I love helping them succeed."

She doesn't only take care of the students. When beloved history professor Walter Sargent died suddenly, her office became a gathering place, a refuge, where students and faculty alike could share their grief.

Her empathy is what led her to this line of work. Angela had other careers, followed other paths, before coming to UMF. She went to school to be a Medical Lab Technician. But two short months before she was to graduate from her program, she left.

"The problem, when you're a technician, is that you can't be compassionate. It's going to hurt when you have to draw blood from a baby, from a young child. You know you are hurting them, but you can't think about the pain you're going to cause. I was pregnant. I couldn't help but think about the babies."

So she took a different career path. And she never looked back.

One time she was in Boston, waiting for a bus to return to Maine. She saw two young women, college-aged. One she recognized as a confident UMF student, International and Global Studies major, clearly comfortable in her surroundings. The other was wearing a UMaine sweatshirt, looking around nervously and not talking to anyone.

"I'm not afraid to talk to anybody. So I walked over to her and struck up a conversation. We chatted all during the bus ride home. Turns out she was also a UMF student, with an undeclared major, for which she apologized. I told her that was nothing to be sorry for; that's what college is supposed to be, a place where you find what you want to study.

But I did tell her she was wearing the wrong sweatshirt, and that she needed to get herself a UMF shirt at the bookstore when she got back to campus."

Angela laughs.

But they're not all success stories. She hears the other kind, too.

"I hear about their break-ups, about their failures, about their parents' divorces. They tell me when they're struggling, when they've run out of money.

She understands when someone says "I can't do it any more." But that doesn't make it easy to hear.

"I am crushed every time one of them says 'I'm not coming back.' I hate to see a student fail in his own mind."

Because that's what it is, to the students, a sign of their own failures. The thing is… the students make it a point to go see Angela and tell her. They make the trek to the third floor, down the corridor, through the outer office into her office, and let her know that they're leaving. They thank her for what she's done for them, but tell her they have to leave UMF.

She thinks she hasn't done enough for them. She thinks *we* haven't done enough for them.

"It's about finding the right motivation for that student. It's piecing the puzzle together, you know? Finding the right piece at the right time. The right fit. One class can make a difference, one professor. Sometimes it takes a little time."

She speaks of students who leave for three years or more but then return, and pop into her office to let her know. They know she'll be glad to see them.

There's only been one student who ever scared her. A veteran, still dealing with what he had seen and done during deployment, would tell her war stories, complete with too many disturbing details.

"He's the only one. The only student I ever felt uncomfortable with. But it just took him some time, and some patience. He grew up, processed what he needed to process. He just needed someone to listen to him.

When he was a senior, he still had stories, but now they were different. Now I was glad to hear them."

He graduated, too.

"Did I mention that after the twins graduated, both became academic advisors at Kaplan University? They arrived at college needing all kinds of help; when you think about it, they ended up helping students very much like themselves."

In part, surely, because they met Angela.

The students are different now than they were eleven years ago. They are glued to their cell phones, texting more than they talk. But they still gravitate to the third-floor mom.

"I love my job. It's something different every day; every day a different scenario. The students all need something. And they're all my kids."

Angela Carter is an Administrative Specialist at UMF. She has an unexplained fondness for flamingos and for pranking the Social Sciences and Business faculty.

Living Differently, or
The Value of Short-Term Travel Courses

Scott Erb

We had just arrived in Rome and went to check our 40-person group into the hotel, dragging our luggage about a mile down from the train station. A large group of elderly Swedes had just arrived, and we were told that due to some late departures our group couldn't get to our rooms for three more hours (it was already 2:00 PM). At that time one student who had been floored by a medical issue the whole trip said things had gotten worse and his doctor in Florence recommended going to a hospital in Rome. Once he left with one of the four faculty members on the trip, another student suddenly exhibited stroke-like symptoms, and would ultimately go to the hospital. Luckily she turned out to be fine, but it felt like the whole trip was collapsing into crisis. Students were grumpy about the wait, and the fact I had to use my personal credit card at the hotel that morning when the university card didn't work now seemed like a really minor problem.

Welcome to leading a short term travel course! Yet for all the headaches, injuries, lost passports and mini-crises, it is worth it. Student-faculty bonds are tight and every moment is a lesson with educational outcomes far beyond those that a normal classroom course can provide. That night, a walk through Rome by the Colosseum, Trevi Fountain, and Pantheon rejuvenated student morale. As always, we worked through the problems.

I led my first travel course in the winter of 2000/01. Aside from Professor Ralph Granger's annual photography courses to Great Britain, travel courses were then virtually unknown at UMF. Some in the administration worried we were "competing with travel agencies;" others wondered if such activities really deserved academic credit. Unlike today, there was no administrative guidance on how to set up a travel course. Sharron Nadeau in the business office worked closely with me to arrange finances, put the airline tickets in the safe, and provide a university purchasing card – she even gave me her home phone number in case I ran into problems. I contacted hotels in Venice, Florence and Rome, and with 18 students, left for Italy on December 29, 2000.

My most recent travel course returned June 1, 2015, with 36 students and three other faculty members. It was my 12th short-term travel course to either Italy or Germany/Austria. The Italy trips always involve multiple

faculty members, usually four. The Germany trips are more focused on the political history of Germany and I usually do them on my own. Of all the things I do at UMF, I think the travel courses provide the most intense and meaningful learning experience with students and fellow faculty members.

UMF now has a process laid out for planning these courses, including guidelines, paperwork, a set of official policies, and administrative support. Moreover, the number of travel courses has proliferated, with courses now going to places like Spain, Peru, Costa Rica, Senegal, Nicaragua, New Zealand, Ireland and the Caribbean. Over 100 students participated in some kind of short-term travel experience in May term 2015 – the number rises as new courses are offered and word gets out about how amazing the experience can be. Yet many of the same questions arise – is this really worth academic credit? What educational benefits do the students receive? What are the challenges for those who lead such courses?

A Life-Changing Experience

Of the nearly 300 students involved in one of my travel courses, none has ever expressed regret—quite the contrary. Even as they struggled financially upon their return, they often said it was the best money they had ever spent. Many scraped up funds to participate in other travel courses, others started to plan a semester abroad, and a few even managed to move overseas for work. At a fundamental level, the act of traveling to a different culture and being forced to don a new perspective changes a person. For me, that is the prime motivation for this course—to put students in a position to discover the joy of learning about new cultures, along with the ability to see other countries and the US through a new lens.

However, these courses are worth either two or four academic credits, so as noble as that fundamental goal might be, seeing other countries doesn't necessarily make the experience worth academic credit. While we do gather students together for mini-lectures—one of my favorite experiences was discussing Italy in the EU at the amphitheater in Pompeii—the noise and space restrictions mean that lectures or even group discussions can be difficult. Luckily, travel courses provide other exciting ways to create powerful learning opportunities.

Exploring Interdisciplinarity

In 2003 I was co-teaching a course with Steve Pane (Music History) and Sarah Maline (Art History), a pilot for what would become known as the first year seminar. We'd meet often to discuss that course with Luann Yetter (Literature and Writing), who was offering an ENG 100 partner course with the same students. We started talking about how great it would be if we

could offer a travel course to Italy with all four of us going along to provide a true interdisciplinary experience. The goal was to allow us to approach Italy from a variety of disciplinary perspectives for a richer appreciation of the culture and history of the country. We met often to build a proposal, discuss the cities and places to visit, and brainstorm about how to structure the educational experience. Once we had a full proposal, we had to recruit students; to warrant four faculty members we needed at least 36 participants. In May 2005 forty students signed up to take the course. It has been offered six more times during the decade since.

The structure of the course is built around "seminars." Seminars are formal sessions with students and faculty covering a particular issue, usually connected to a location. A seminar on the history of the Catholic Church might take place outside St. Peter's in Vatican City, for example. Students are not required to attend all seminars, so often they take place with one or two faculty members and five to fifteen students. This allows students to structure the experience around their interests – though with multiple seminars each day, some students have to make a tough call on which to attend! Students are expected to participate, then respond in their academic travel journals to prompts given in the seminar.

We also offer "excursions"—informal visits to landmarks or interesting places such as the glass works on the island of Murano near Venice. These also split the students into smaller groups, and allow faculty members to interact on a more individual basis with students. While excursions lack the formal structure of seminars, they often host some of the most interesting conversations about the course and Italy. Much of the learning takes place between faculty and students (or just among the students themselves) informally. Beyond that, students can explore the area on their own, often in small groups.

For every trip, every excursion, students must keep a travel journal. This is the most important document of the course, and students often carry their journals with them so they can jot thoughts down throughout the day. The travel journal serves multiple purposes. First, it allows students to document their experiences. Since not all activities are required, students have the opportunity to strike out on their own to explore. But they are not supposed to go to an internet café and chat with friends back home. So reading these journals allows us to see what students have done—and some of them do amazing things—with their so-called free time.

The journals also allow the students to reflect both on their experiences in general, and on the subject matter of the seminars and excursions in particular. The journals also allow us as faculty to see if the students took the seminar seriously, followed through on prompts and

activities assigned, and showed an understanding of the material. Most importantly, the journal is for the students themselves, though they might not understand that at the moment. It will allow them to read 30 years from now about the places they visited and the things they did, and have the trip come alive in their minds. This can only happen if the journals are well done, explaining their reactions, reflections, thoughts and details of the experience. We spend time talking about how to journal, and explaining why it's not just a chore to list what they did, but part of the process of traveling, of making the experience meaningful.

The problem with having journals so central is time—students might be out and about from morning to night. So strong is the desire to experience the country and culture that they put off writing their journals. Moreover, we fill each day with activities, encouraging students to participate as much as possible. Luann Yetter taught us the importance of not only giving students time to work on their journals, but even holding sessions—maybe in a park or along the canals of Venice—where they can sit and write, getting tips on what constitutes writing a quality entry. Students need to understand the process and importance of journaling. Thanks to Luann's influence, we make it a point to give tips and ideas, and most importantly to allow students time and opportunity to make it a quality learning experience.

During that 2005 trip, we realized that our efforts to replicate the classroom, even in the smaller seminars, did not work well most of the time. So rather than replicating classroom learning, we learned to use the unique atmosphere of the travel course to our advantage. One example is *how to be a traveler, not a tourist.* By showing how knowing the history of a place, painting or building can increase one's connection and appreciation, students develop a love of learning about what they are experiencing. Although we aren't able to delve deeply into the methods and theory of the various disciplines, the practical connection of experience with knowledge impresses the information more deeply in the students' mind. The information has more meaning, and students start making profound connections.

For example, a central point in the city of Florence is the Duomo--Maria del Fiore. Near our hotel is a different church, Santa Maria Novella. I recall living in Italy for a year when I was 22 years old. I'd go in, look around, think, "cool old church," and be done. Now I realize how my lack of knowledge limited my experience! The dome of the Duomo, designed by Brunelleschi, becomes a central point for discussing the politics and economics of the city (the rise of the Florentine Republic and the Medici family), the causes of the renaissance (Brunelleschi's methods and the importance of art), and the impact of humanism. Students start connecting that humanism to Dante, the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, and the capitalism

of the Medici banks. And by tying in Santa Maria Novella, students learn about renaissance Florence as a multi-dimensional community with complex political, economic and cultural issues.

As students learn all this, the buildings take on new meaning, as do the artifacts within them. One student summed it up this way: "I'm not just walking through Italy, I'm traveling through time!" The past comes alive; instead of this just being an old town with cool churches and excellent gelato, Florence is vibrant and meaningful. We see the past; we see the present. Seeing the city in this way allows us to make the important connection of the present with the past. The cities we visit are not time capsules, but living, continuing, cultural stories.

Inevitably as we share meals and spend time walking with students, we talk about their entire college experience, ranging from their interests and other courses they have taken, to their study habits and pet peeves. This opens up the kind of one-on-one teaching *about learning* that idealistically a student gets from having an advisor as a mentor. Students often return from the trips with a new attitude about college in general—and about UMF in particular.

The power of place

On the Germany trips, we visit some places that have a profound emotional impact on students. Perhaps the most powerful is Dachau, the first concentration camp opened by the National Socialists after Hitler came to power in 1933. Though it was not a death camp like Auschwitz, the present-day memorial documents how prisoners were treated there, as well as how they lived, and what the public perceptions were of the outside world. Some student journals report intense emotions. More than one student reported having to go sit alone with tears. One can read about the horror of the Nazi regime, but being at a place like Dachau makes it real.

The Berlin Wall is another example. The wall is gone; except for a brick line showing where the wall once stood, it's hard to imagine that over a quarter century ago Berlin was a divided city. As we visit museums with exhibits about what life was like in the old East Germany (including one on the secret police—Stasi), and we talk about the Wall, and how unification occurs, being there, where it happened, makes it come alive.

Simply, it matters that we are there. Simply talking about the same material, even if we can go more in depth and involve a reading assignment, does not connect with students emotionally. Too often, classroom material is just stuff to learn long enough to regurgitate on exam day. Here, it acquires real meaning. They are where it happened. It is no longer abstract. In Munich, visiting the memorial for Sophie and Hans Scholl—two students

executed by the National Socialists in 1943 for distributing leaflets opposing Hitler--makes their story more poignant, especially after having just visited Dachau.

Living differently

In Italy, especially cities like Naples and Rome, life runs on a different pace. Students have to beware of pickpockets, and they need to understand that expectations are much different than in rural Maine and adapt to those differences. All travel courses require that students learn the basics of the culture they are visiting, so that they behave appropriately (don't point at what you want, gesture towards it palm up, and don't grab the fruit, but tell the vendor what you want so that she can get it, etc.) Part of the trip is spent teaching about how the culture operates, often with explanations about the historical significance of various practices. Students might be annoyed that you can't reveal bare shoulders or show your knees in a church, thinking that this an unfair anachronism. We want them to understand why these rules exist and why they should be respected.

On the surface this appears to be a very pragmatic lesson—it assures that students understand their context and don't behave like "ugly Americans." However, the lessons are profound, and as important as anything else they might learn in college. First, they are learning to understand the world from another perspective. Most Americans think that the way we do things is "normal," and other modes of operation are "strange." Now these students realize that "normal" is different in another context, and that some of the things that are "normal" to us can be seen as strange to others. At some point students start saying things like "this makes so much sense, why don't *we* do this?" Something as simple as learning that waiters in restaurants will leave you alone unless you request something, and won't try to hurry you away so someone else can have the table, can leave a real impression. More than once, students have been annoyed at not being given the bill, not realizing they needed to ask! Later, they stop by my office and tell me they now get super annoyed at American wait staff for their constant interruptions!

Two weeks is not enough time to really learn another culture, but the snippets experienced open the door to thinking with a more open mind about cultural practices. This, along with learning the perspective of being a traveler and not a tourist—a time traveler in a way—helps promote a way of thinking that will help in almost all their coursework once they get back home. We consciously and overtly make this a very important part of each travel course, because while it isn't academic *per se*, it promotes thinking about perspective in a manner that reflects a mature academic mindset.

Coherence

One thing a travel course needs is coherence. On the surface, a travel course is composed of snippets. In Germany these might be visiting Wittenberg (where Luther hung his 95 Theses), the Dachau concentration camp, the new Reichstag building in Berlin, the Stasi museum, and perhaps a trip to a Polish border town to compare it with Germany. These places may reflect over 500 years of German history, ranging from the reformation to the holocaust, comprising completely different eras and types of events.

In Italy we may talk about the Venetian maritime Republic, which lasted from 697-1797, about Florence during the reformation, or Galileo's fight with the church, maybe the politics of the Catholic Church, and the complex rivalries between Italian cities and regions. Moreover, since the Italy trip is taught by multiple faculty, the perspectives involve music history, art history, literature, and political history. In all cases, trying to make the course a coherent experience and not just a smorgasbord of interesting snippets is a challenge.

Rather than simply imposing coherence, we provide some concepts that connect the experiences and invite the students to join us in a search for coherence, or common themes. For instance, in Italy there is a focus on *humanism*, ranging from the writings of Dante and Boccaccio, to the art of Giotto and the growing materialism of the Catholic Church. They learn about the realism of Machiavelli, and the desire to create new forms of music like opera. We still get a variety of perspectives--Mussolini and Gramsci may not tie in easily with Dante—but many diverse subjects can be connected, and as we make those connections over time about how changes in culture and history occurred, it creates a sense that we actually know Italy—and we have coherence.

Another theme we discuss is the Italian word *camponilismo*. The Camponile is the church tower, and the concept means essentially that the only things that matter are what can be seen from the tower. This is an expression of Italian localism, or the importance of regional identity in Italian life. We can relate back to this as we discuss how Renaissance art in Florence wasn't just about great art; it was the Florentines competing with artists in other regions of Italy to prove that they were the most advanced, innovative and important. Moreover, this great art was made possible by the first European megabanks, which emerged in Florence due to the success of the wool industry. This leads us to look at how regions have different wines, different specialties, and how it is often insulting to Italians if one does not prefer the specialty of their particular region. One night in Naples, at a

restaurant without a printed menu, I ordered Spaghetti Carbonara, a Roman specialty. The waiter looked horrified, and said, "no, no, no…"

I was lucky that this was a waiter who knew I was American and that I meant no insult—he said in fact that while they usually don't prepare that dish, he would make an exception for me (and it was delicious). But that's *camponilismo*. This theme allows us to take into account fragmented Italian politics, late unification, art and architecture as part of civic pride, and the unique nature of Italian life and culture. By inviting the students to build on their ideas of coherence, and integrating concepts like this into the conversations, the Italian experience develops the sense of coherence that we seek.

In Germany, with a more narrow focus on political history, the process is a bit different. Students are asked to seek coherence by asking if there are commonalities in German political history that can explain things as divergent as the reformation, the holocaust, the Berlin Wall, and now German leadership in the EU. Inevitably, issues of identity and German localism (like Italy, Germany unified late, and has a strong sense of regional identity) come into play. However, unlike Italy, philosophical issues such as enlightenment thought, romanticism, and rationalism often connect to at least the last century and a half of German history. Since the Germany course is smaller (usually 15 students) and we do most things as a group (something we can't do with nearly 40 in Italy), the coherence is easier to develop, and again a task given to students—with guidance.

In sum, travel courses provide a unique pedagogical experience. Faculty and student bonds are deep and powerful, with virtually every minute of the day part of the learning experience. On the multi-faculty trip, faculty members learn from each other, often modeling for the students that sense of curiosity and excitement when new connections are made. I am convinced that for both students and faculty the travel course experience is uniquely valuable.

Challenges of a travel course

For all the benefits, pulling off an effective travel course is hard work. It starts long before the vans depart UMF with eager students. The planning is extremely important; careless planning could mean disaster on the ground.

This almost happened in 2005 with 41 of us on a train from Rome to Venice. We had flown into Rome, and I had reserved passage on a train to Venice two and a half hours after our flight's arrival. Unfortunately, it took too long to get our baggage, find transportation to the train station, and then reach our train—it was leaving as we arrived. We boarded the next Venice

train, but without valid tickets. This could have cost a lot money; at a minimum we didn't have reservations, meaning it would cost us 20 Euro apiece, over $1000 total. I tried to explain to the conductor that the plane had been late, but he insisted that we pay. He finally gave up, saying "stupido Americano!" But we avoided a financial hit. I learned then that planning had to take into account a lot of uncertainty about timing!

The first task is to figure out the timing of the trip, and the locations to visit. Generally we've traveled the first Monday after graduation if it's a May term trip, and shortly after Christmas if it's a January trip. There have also been ten-day trips that coincide with February break. Students are given permission to miss a couple of days before and after the break for academic reasons, much like athletes are able to miss class when they have games.

Purchasing tickets can be a challenge, as students must pay the cost of the ticket before it can be purchased in their name. The easiest way to handle this is to go through studentuniverse.com, which holds tickets with a $100 deposit, demanding payment only 60 days before the trip commences. When I've purchased them on my own, I've often had to make payment in full five months before the trip, which means chasing after students and constantly asking Chris Deon at Merrill Center how much money has been paid so far by students.

Chris and her colleagues at Merrill are incredibly important in the whole process. They take student money for the trip and keep track of how much is paid, answering student and parent questions about the fee structure. Determining the destination cities and finding hotels can also be difficult, though over the years we've developed relationships with various hotels who appreciate the fact that every couple of years they'll have a large number of usually well-behaved guests. Purchasing train tickets for transportation between cities at group rates, and planning the itinerary, all takes time.

Another challenge involves the students themselves, and the new freedoms they find in a different country. While students are usually curious and eager to explore another country, they are also young adults going to places where for the first time, they can legally drink. Usually on the second night this temptation to party in paradise overcomes them; when we've had incidents of student misbehavior it's almost always been the second night. However, being proactive can put students in a state of mind where they choose moderation rather than excess.

We start working on that even before the trip commences. If you want a "spring break" experience, we tell them, you can do that for a lot less money. They are paying a lot of money for a unique experience, one that will not be meaningful if they are sick or hung over. We note how wine is a part of Italian culture—and drinking excessive amounts is looked down upon. We

emphasize the sense of community and how the behavior of one student can blemish the whole group.

During the trip, we have mandatory morning meetings, dragging people out of bed if need be. We keep students active all day, and almost always they are tired at the end of the day, so their plans to go to the disco fade. Since we are a close-knit group, students tell us if some are being excessive. This isn't so much as tattling, but concern for the safety of others and a desire to protect the group's reputation. Our first response is to pay attention to potential problem students, dining with them, talking about their experiences, and essentially showing them we care. Almost always this works; students don't want to disappoint us.

Still, there are sometimes problem students. One problem we saw early on was that students inexplicably would decide to go off their medication during a trip. This has included two students with bipolar disorder, and one with severe ADHD. After nearly sending an especially disruptive student home early from one trip, we now make a point to tell students how dangerous it is to go off your medications while putting your body and mind under the stress of travel and new experiences. Since emphasizing this multiple times before the trip begins, we haven't had any recurrence of that problem.

Another problem is petty theft. Two students have had their passports and some money stolen, and one person left her money in the hotel, where it disappeared. It is imperative that students provide a photocopy of their passport before the trip; with that, replacing a lost passport is relatively easy. One makes a police report, then visits the closest US consulate. The worst case was a student who didn't notice her passport missing until hours before departure. Luckily it was during a multi-faculty Italy trip, and Steve Pane was able to stay behind with the student and help her replace the passport and get another flight home. The two of them actually arrived at Boston Logan just five minutes after the rest of the group got there!

Lost money can be traumatic. On one of the first trips, a student paid for something with a debit card, entering her pin. It was a shady business and apparently they used that pin to drain her account, leaving her penniless. All one can do in such a situation is lend the student enough money to get by until he or she can call home and arrange a wire transfer of emergency funds. Again, learning from experience, we now have a protocol of how students can avoid theft, and where they should use their cards. ATM cards are the best way to exchange money (bringing dollars is expensive, while traveler's checks are obsolete and not accepted anywhere). Luckily UCU sells Euros at

a good rate and students often bring cash to use--again with our advice on how to keep it safe!

Illness and injury can also be problems. We have had trips where the worst event was a bad sore throat and an after-hours visit to a local pharmacy, but quite often there is at least one major event. We've accompanied many students to emergency rooms, and one student missed the entire trip, bed-ridden by a complication from an earlier surgery (even though his doctors okayed the travel). The key to handling these is first, knowing if students have potential problems such as food allergies or recent health issues. In the past, students have given us that information; now there is a required UMF form that they complete. That helps, but sometimes things happen anyway. We have a list of local hospitals in every city, and usually the cab ride ends up costing more than the health care. The key is to stay calm and in good spirits with students who are stressed, often afraid, and angry about losing out on trip activities. "It's part of traveling," we tell them, assuring them that everything will work out. How many people get to experience an Italian hospital, after all? Or the wild cab ride to get there?

The challenges are not limited to practical concerns; there are also academic complications. We may plan a seminar at an iconic location only to find it loud and crowded. After a failed attempt at trying to yell above the crowds, and getting strange looks from passersby, we realized that seminars must take place in a quiet setting. We shifted to preparing students for all the places we would visit, meaning we could mingle and talk to small groups while there if seminars were impractical.

Planning academic content can also be a challenge. Since we are on the move, it is hard to provide reading assignments to go along with the experience. Traveling with multiple books is ungainly and impractical. Having students read material before the trip sometimes works, but students busy with the semester and finals week often don't follow through. We are currently in the process of writing our own book that we hope to print and give students so they have tractable reading assignments on or before the trip, helping to augment experiential learning.

Conclusion: Travel Well, Live Well

Perhaps the most important lesson we constantly reinforce on the trip is not to let things create stress or frustration. We'll get lost, the Trevi Fountain might be under repair, the museum we've been looking forward to visiting might be closed, you might get separated from the group or even miss a couple days while sick—something will always go wrong. The key is not to let that get one down—just roll with it, know we'll get through it, you'll have a story to tell, and even when things go wrong there can be

positive and sometimes even amazing experiences. Once, a group heading out on its own for Garmisch-Partenkirchen never made it—they misunderstood my instructions on how long to stay on the train. Instead, they got off at another town with a name starting with "G." There they met a baker and his wife, and ended up getting fresh Bavarian breads and having an amazing conversation. Garmisch will always be there; that experience with the locals was priceless!

More than once, we seemed stymied by problems at the start. On one February trip to Italy, a snow storm delayed our Portland-New York flight. We landed at 5:30 PM, at the exact time that our Rome flight was scheduled to leave. Sarah Maline and I had started to strategize about activities to keep students from being upset, when a voice came over the intercom: "There is a group on this flight heading to Rome tonight. There is a bus outside the plane to take you to your gate." The bus rushed us to our flight, we ran through the airport, were given boarding passes, and the plane took off as soon as we boarded. Our luggage was transferred as well. There is power if you have a large group! Another time we were stuck in London because of a late departure due to volcanic ash in the air. Once they realized we were a large group, they changed their afternoon flight to a larger plane so that we could make it to Vienna that evening.

If you travel well, you live well, we say. If you can handle the ups and downs of traveling with grace and a can-do attitude, you'll bring that to life and find it easier to persevere in the face of the problems and crises that inevitably arise. Moreover, there seems to be some magic involved. The number of coincidences and good timing that have occurred over the years goes beyond what one would normally expect if left to chance!

On the 2005 trip, the first time we offered the big four-faculty/40-student course, we had the bright idea to have a picnic using our trip funds. We planned to meet at Piazzale Michelangelo atop Florence at 7:00. Steve Pane and I had two hours to get food for the picnic. We searched for a grocery store, and finally got directions from our hotel owner. We bought bus tickets to get there, but couldn't find the right bus, ultimately taking a taxi. Running late, we raced through the store, piling bread, cheeses, jams, meats, spreads, filling up two carts with food—with no time to think whether we had the right amount. Then the two of us, each carrying two full, heavy, large bags of groceries, left the store. Now what?

It was nearing 7:00. There were no taxis in sight. We had no phone to call anyone, nor did we know what to do. Gallows humor set in as Steve and I joked about our apparent dilemma. I saw a bus stop across the street and said, "Well, we have bus tickets, we may as well go somewhere." We crossed and got on the first bus that came. That bus headed right for the Piazzale

Michelangelo. When we got off the bus, right at 7:00, we saw our class walking towards us, just arriving themselves. The amount of food we bought was perfect and we had an amazing picnic. The lesson? Yes, there can be problems galore on these courses, but just like in life, they are balanced by times when everything comes together perfectly.

Scott Erb is a professor of Political Science specializing in International Relations and European Politics. Having grown up on the South Dakota prairie, Scott remains in constant awe of the beauty of rural Maine, even after more than twenty years here.

First Rule

Stan Spilecki

What do they see before them as I stand up? Bleary eyed, early on the first Saturday morning of fall semester, they still seem asleep. For some, this is a continuation of being strangers in a strange land, recently arrived to the rarified shores of academia, eager to learn, and excited about the future on the one hand, but disoriented and anxious from the tumult that was their first week, on the other. For the veterans, self-selectively returning to a work study job that requires both physical and mental exertion, and often more than just a little of both, it is a return to a rare mission, a home away from home, and possibly, an esprit de corps that gives them a sense of where they can belong in the world in which they live for a few short years.

It is the beginning of the semester, so when I rise there is still energy in my movement possibly; and in my late middle age, I try to convince myself, a sense of athleticism and vigor. There are furrows in my brow, nurtured by decades of life experience and intense concentration on a wide variety of subjects. I have been told that these are often taken, at first, to indicate anger (when no anger is present). Sometimes they are interpreted as annoyance, while I try to figure out a new way to explain something I have explained six other ways, as the clock ticks down to an immutable deadline. I am rarely annoyed at them, but often with my own inability to communicate. I have been told, in part because of the fact I am a very large man with a deep booming voice and an intense and often definitive attitude, that I can be terrifying to the uninitiated…

So how do I begin? Do I explain the realities of who I am and how in working for me they may learn skills that will help them with every boss they ever have? Or do I just terrify them?

"For those of you returning to the crew, could you please tell the new members the First Rule?" I say with poker-faced seriousness that the veterans know by now to emulate in this moment.

As a chorus they repeat the well-learned mantra that is our slogan each first semester: "Don't Die!"

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Some jobs are about life and death, but not always those jobs that seem the most obvious. When one is young, and feeling immortal, it is not always clear that your actions can lead to this result. In a smoke-filled office, back when smoking was allowed, one day could teach you the difference. After the first worker filed in and left, they all knew that each individual's fate was about to be decided. A worker reduction was mandated long ago, and had been ongoing. For months, the herd had been winnowed, the weak separated and eliminated by their own foolishness. Cause is one thing. Letting someone go because they have stolen something or abused the system, aren't willing to work hard when called upon, or are simply not team players, even based on an arbitrary definition of what that means, can at least seem justified, which provides some solace to the one wielding the axe (me). Days like this one when, one by one, each and every person had to come in the door and face a job execution, were different. Days like this one were difficult for all, including the axeman.

Maybe some people in this position can be dispassionate and uncaring. It is easier in youth, but gets increasingly harder. As the years go by, I still see the faces as if it were yesterday. In that particular smoke-filled office, of that particular discount--some might say junk—store, it was not the practice to hire the most talented or gifted people. A few educated people were needed to run the various departments, but most were merely labor, cogs in the machine, to be ground down and discarded. Many left of their own accord, after a while, either to seek brighter futures or because they just could not hack the concept of work. Some were easy to remove for cause. But it was always those who were already at the bottom of the ladder, hanging on to the last rung tenaciously by always showing up and doing the very best, if naturally limited, that they could. It might be a man old enough to be the father of the the axeman, with the beginnings of a yet-undiagnosed failing of mental capacities, or maybe a woman struggling with addiction for every hour of the day she isn't at work, or a younger person, with no prior guidance as to proper behavior in public, that always failed in just enough ways to be an irritant but not in ways that could really be considered cause. The last rung…with nowhere else to go, those are the faces that you remember when pushing them off.

Years go by and the difficulty, at least for me, increased each time and in each company I had to look down that ladder to the last rung and, with false dispassion, shove. Eventually it catches up. Empathy is a mysterious thing.

Empathy is what makes live theater so dynamic and provoking. Watching the pathos of others, while sitting in the same room, can only evoke empathy if one is emotionally alive…but this was not theater…this was real life.

When one of the last-rung-hangers fell away, a man I had found a comradeship with and who was of a similar age, and later came back into my life as a friend, it was both heartening and disconcerting. The connection we found, based on his knowledge that I had treated him as well as I could have in the situation, gave me some solace. When he moved away and was still struggling to find a job, struggling because of being much older than most new hires and in poor health in a desperately bad economy, the solace faded away. Offering to look at his resume, to give advice, seemed to be a good idea, until I saw how far he had fallen, and how unprepared he was to be re-entering a workforce that had moved far on without him. When someone like that tells you that you were the only true friend he had—and then dies suddenly--it can change your perspective.

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Early Saturday morning work crews begin, ideally, with a lesson, though I am not a professor and these students are not mine. For me they are my crew, workers, albeit student workers, hired to run a theater and a performance venue and occasionally an art gallery. They did not sign up to be lectured, but lecture I must. "Don't die." It indicates the potential of physical peril and it must. Power tools, electricity and heights are not to be taken lightly. These students are about to learn life lessons that can be translated into many other things, if they pay attention. By the end, they will not only learn how to create new worlds in which beings, *characters*, live for a brief moment in time, but also how to make and hang a shelf in the home they might buy thirty years hence. They might learn how to think about an assembly process and the importance and use of a jig, the cornerstone of most, if not all, manufacturing and/or, and maybe "or" is the better and more important point, they may learn confidence in themselves. No matter what they learn, they must learn it properly and in a way in which will prevent injury to themselves or others.

Sitting before me, some quietly sniggering at the looks on the new faces, others making the faces that indeed could inspire such sniggering with their shocked expressions, are a rather motley microcosm of the campus, carefully selected by gut instinct and a feeling of hoped-for balance in all things

including gender. Some before me are theatre majors, but not all, or frankly even most. Fledgling teachers, creative writers, psychologists, biologists, musicians fill out the ranks. Each year is different, of course, as people and majors change. Some might study English, others politics or business, but that really means nothing in the grand scheme of things. They are here to work, some for the first time in their lives.

Today, after teaching the First Rule, we move on to many others. They learn my expectations, which are not far from the expectations of many bosses they will have in the future, but much more clearly stated in this particular moment. Proper attire, attendance, respect for the space, the work, and each other are covered, and yes, I say a little about what it means to work for me.

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In the winter, sometimes the time of day never appears to change. When it is overcast, a cold morning just seems to continue until the darkness falls once again. After the ambulance leaves, there is still the paperwork, the accident report. Being numb has little to do with the temperature on a day like this, when you have to check off "no" in the box asking if the employee lived.

Warehouse work is dangerous. Unloading trucks in the dead of winter has specific perils, but most, or none, should require such notation. Is it better or worse that the employee was brand new? His first day on a much-needed job, trying to prove himself "a go getter" and "willing to go the extra mile," he had decided to help guide a tractor trailer into a rather perilous spot in the back dooryard of a mill, long ago converted to a warehouse. Unfortunately, he did not know what he was doing, or if he did, considering that all information about skills learned in previous jobs are hardly vetted on a one-page application form for a minimum wage position, he had made a mistake. The fact that it had been "one of those winters," and that the dooryard was mostly just one continuous sheet of hard-packed ice, didn't help. OSHA would eventually have a field day, but that wouldn't help the employee, crushed as he was between a wall of stacked pallets and the back of the trailer, when he slipped out of the view of the driver's mirrors, and the trailer slid back on the slight incline, past where the driver had meant for it to stop. Of course, it also didn't help either the employee or the driver when the tractor-trailer couldn't get traction to pull forward, as the shouts of horror and alarm began.

Numbly glancing later at the application in the file, more questions than answers came to my mind. If he had been truthful in the qualifications he had listed, he had once managed a successful restaurant and had gone to college for a culinary degree. His emergency contact name and number shared the same phone number he had put down for himself, but not the same last name. The quick smile and firm handshake, from our introduction earlier in the morning, has stuck with me for more than just a little while.

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It always surprises me when the media complains about this generation and its lack of motivation. I am not sure if it is the normal generational prejudice, or something more. Maybe these writers, many of whom are of my generation and older, feel guilty about gutting the potential of the country through greed and corruption, or perhaps about their own lack of exposing, and thus stopping, those trends. I watch my crew and see no lack of motivation. In one corner, a young woman is tugging at a platform that weighs more than she does, and I have to go over and carefully explain that the First Rule applies to hurting oneself as well—not to say she shouldn't try, or that she can't do something, but to let her know that grabbing another person to help is the smart choice. In another area, a young man, brilliant but maybe a bit overeager, is trying to fake his way through reading the lighting plot and not ask too many questions. I make a general call out for attention, in a voice that has delivered lines from *Lear* and *Mockingbird*, and carries over the din. In a general way, I suggest that it is okay to ask each other for help, and more than okay for them to ask questions—after all, how else will they learn? I put it in terms of gruff cynicism, that if they don't ask they will just mess things up and it will all have to be done over—or the structure will fail and someone might get hurt. Of course, my language, as I warned them on the first day, might be slightly more colorful.

For many students, this is their first real job. Even those who scooped ice cream or flipped burgers for pay in the past have not really had this same kind of experience. I do not treat them exclusively as students, though teaching moments are exploited as often as I can manage, but that is not the goal. They are workers and I am their boss. I expect them to learn the skills that I need them to know, and as I teach them, I expect them to retain them. I expect them to think and be smart about things. In my mind, the fact that this is not a class does not mean that they are not in college. But

I also expect them to follow the First Rule, and over time I try to make them understand the nuances of what that really means. Moving things that are too heavy, or too awkward, can be done and, in real life, sometimes has to be done. I try to help them understand that there are always better ways, if one takes a moment to think before doing. Manual labor does not mean labor without thought; it only means labor done with one's hands. I warn them, sometimes as I stumble from fatigue at the end of the day, that they can use their brains to limit the damage they do to themselves—and offer myself as a cautionary tale.

The lessons do not stop there. They learn how to use power tools, and they learn the differences in wood, practical uses for math, and occasionally, on the most rudimentary level, physics. They learn light and color theory, basic electrical skills, and often, because I can tend to run on about my favorite subject, the aesthetic nuances of theater and how it informs life. As the semester continues, I watch for signs of strain, whether physical, mental or emotional, and mostly as casual asides in general conversations, I reiterate the need to ask questions and maybe even ask for time off. They are students, many of them in their first or second year, and most not having spent a lot of time away from home or having to be responsible for themselves. I can usually tell when they are overwhelmed. I push them, no doubt, because life will not be fair, and it will not be easy as they go out into the world. I also know, however, that they have to figure out how to cope with these things gradually, and it is sometimes within my power to assist them in this process. Can I do some jobs by myself, or short-handed, when a big paper just has to be written? Of course I can, and will, though often not as easily as I imply, but first I quiz them as to when they knew about the paper, and why they had not gotten to it sooner. The new ones feel the pressure, as I point out a conflicting point of view, regarding the immutable time we have prior to opening night, and how maybe, just maybe, they are trying to do just a little too much or not using their time wisely. The new ones don't know that I will relent, and let them off the proverbial hook, with the admonition that I have spent too much time training them to be able to afford them flunking out, or maybe, that this eventuality is the same as dying, in the First Rule that they had sworn to uphold. They don't yet realize that I will tell them to do what they have to do, and will make light of the huge amount of work we still have before us, but warn them that they will not earn all their work study allowance if they have these kinds of issues often. Do they understand, or does the sudden

rush of relief, and the escape, wash away the lesson? Hard to say, and it depends on the student, but there is nothing I can do about that except make the effort.

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A capital equipment salesman has to be on top of his game when he enters the room. Often, he is not selling to just one person, but to a committee. Confidence is a key element to his success. He needs to be able to take in all the players, and take their measure quickly, from the beginning, but also to be able to navigate the changes in attitude as the meeting progresses. It does not matter whether the company he represents is on the verge of failure, even as he has one of his best years. It does not matter that his livelihood is threatened by a skewing of priorities, which has resulted in his being the only salesperson in a sales-based company that now boasts three accountants. It does not matter that his divorce, and subsequent dedication to maintaining his responsibilities to his children, have left him with a mountain of debt that will come crashing down if the company fails. What matters is leading this group of stakeholders through the process of understanding that, though they are the biggest in their industry doing what they are presently doing, they can get bigger, do more and do it more easily and at a higher quality. It has taken seven years to get here, to this board room with this company, since first contact, and a quarter of a million dollar sale would go a long way toward keeping things teetering forward, or at least I had to convince myself of that.

Not even six months later, the machine had been sold and delivered, the installing technician had already made the mistake that made it inoperable, and the company I worked so hard for had failed, or at least, was in the final death throes. First Rule. It was time to reinvent myself once again, and I was trying to make the sale of my life, pacing back and forth on my sweltering porch over a holiday weekend while my daughters watched cartoons inside, in the air conditioning. I would rather have taken them to the beach where, not too many summers ago, I can remember having a perfect day with them collecting sand dollars, exploring tidal pools, and body surfing in the frigid Maine water. I could have taken one of the several jobs in my industry that had been offered to me, but that would have meant moving away from my girls which, to me, was not an option. Instead I clutched two phones, one a cell, one a portable landline, and I made calls round the clock. The chess

pieces were literally placed all over the world. I had to negotiate with eight companies, in four countries, in three time zones, over the next two weeks to make it work. I also would have to insure that my book of customers will not abandon me, or the line, while trying to reassure my two new partners as we struggled to start a fledgling business.

How many times has this reinvention taken place? In between calls I struggled to remember. The fact is, with a liberal arts education, it all has always felt organic, the flowing of one stream into the next biggest, and then into the river. Some transitions have been tumultuous, the white water of life, while there have also been moments of peace in eddies of success, or at least stability. But the world is not stable, and unbeknownst to me, the world I was struggling to continue in was already stretched thin, on the glistening surface of yet another bubble. It would be five years before the surface ruptured, and four before I got out, just ahead of the end. But today was different; today I distantly heard the giggles of my girls, and felt the fear and exhilaration of nerves as I dared, again, to fight the tide.

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There is a picture in my office that I have placed on a shelf as a reminder for myself. It is there to remind myself of what it is like to be one of these students, because it is a picture of me when I was. Centuries ago, when I still had hair and my beard was not white, I worked in my college theater as a work study student. Next to me stands another member of the crew, a talented artist in his own right, and now a neural molecular biologist working to find a cure for Parkinson's disease. He has been my friend since almost my first day in college, and stood with me in both of my weddings. We two, with little or no commonality in our upbringing, bonded on a crew several decades ago, and still are there for each other when the world crashes down, as it sometimes does. The other man in the picture held the position I now hold, not in the same school but still with the same purpose. He was the designer and technical director for the theater in which I came of age, the man I consider my mentor in the theater. He introduced me to the modern thinkers in my art, and to the mechanical skills of my craft. I knew nothing of woodworking, electricity, or the mysteries of light when I started. But I was big and willing, and found quickly that I had a knack for it. I was not a great student overall. I put effort into the classes that I was interested in, and generally got A's in theater classes, B's in English classes and, well, worse

grades in everything else. As time went on, I have come to regret much of the opportunity I had not truly availed myself of, but some things I learned, and learned well. Do these lessons need to be passed on to my students? Maybe it is their parents' responsibility, but as I am not their parent, sometimes I think they might listen to me without the same resistance, just as I hope my children listen to other mentors in their lives.

There are many lessons in the picture in my office. I am self-aware; I know who I was, and I know who I have become, and all that happened in between. I can look at these students, this crew, and see the beginnings of their potential. It is awe-inspiring to watch them gain confidence and to slowly open up, to both themselves, and each other. I know from looking at the picture that there may be lifetime friendships forming. I also know that maybe, in this job, they may start to find a sense of self that is not a distillation of what their upbringing or society has forced upon them. Sometimes learning to do something tangible teaches them ways to consider the intangibility of the knowledge that an academic experience imparts. I try to remember how to be the man my mentor was for me at the same time in my life.

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On a Saturday morning, in the fall of yet another year, I think of other lessons. I am not faculty; I am staff in this little university in the shadow of the western foothills of Maine. Did I see the staff in my college, all those years ago? Do I remember any of their names? My mentor was a faculty member, so he doesn't count, and I am embarrassed to admit to myself that the answer is no. Yet here, I suspect, it might be different; here I see how often the staff of this little university interacts with, and makes a difference for, these students. I see how many people, not unlike myself, came to be here from other worlds, other realities. In my position, having to open the newest building on campus, while trying to re-invigorate and maintain one of the oldest buildings, I have both the necessity and the honor to work with many in the Facilities and Custodial staff. Here there are representatives of the slowly eroding manufacturing sector, men and women who worked in the mills and built things, who know a great deal about things that seem to be becoming less and less valued by the world. Smart, personable and dedicated, these people are known by many of the students and, I can tell, will be remembered by many. They are examples, mentors,

and protectors in this home away from home. Some of these, and others, are also former service people, who spent many years protecting us all in our country's military, and they bring that same rigor and sense of duty to the place. While I have never have served, I still recognize the value in such service, and respect these people because of the example of my own father, and many of my friends, who did. Do the students see this? Are they, like I was many years ago, so overwhelmed by all that they are experiencing and having to do and absorb, that such observations are impossible for them? I hope not, and I at least try to help them see the value of the people around them at all levels. I see people who worked hard to build our country now shoveling snow, sweeping floors, cleaning toilets. They are the oil to the wheels, often literally, of the university, and I learn, by example, the dignity of what we do. Do they resent where they are now? Maybe some do. But, in my experience, most see the value in what we do, in what we represent, and in how we keep these children struggling to be adults safe and protected, as they figure it all out.

I know some of these students better than others. Some I will continue to know, at least I hope, long after they have left here. Others, and often not the ones I initially expect, will become known to me, become important to me. Maybe the young man, off to one side, who struggles to drive a screw because he just really isn't that strong and simply can't seem to get the lessons I try to teach him about how to handle the screw gun correctly, will excel at hanging lights or find he has a knack for scene painting. Either way his good humor, quick smile and willingness to work will brighten the crew days and help build the team. In just two years, I have seen a huge amount of growth in him, in his confidence, and his potential. In another corner a leader has arisen. A young woman, who was so painfully quiet and shy her first year that she always left for lunch alone and sat off to one side while the others assembled for the day, now leads with confidence, sass and humor. She is the only one on the crew that can sass me and get away with it because she has the skills, work ethic, and intelligence to back it up. She insists on getting pictures of all of our sets and is always excited to tell her father, a millwright and carpenter, about all the new tools she has learned how to use. In another area, the young man I only wish was a theater major because he truly has a knack for it , but he, much like my friend in the picture in my office, is a scientist and athlete. He is a stalwart of my crew in his penultimate year of college and I know already that when he graduates I will miss his abilities, confidence, and his steadying influence on the others.

The First Rule. I look at them all and wonder. Will they find in themselves my love of the theater, and all that it can do for the development of human empathy? Maybe some of them will keep this ever-doomed art form from passing into oblivion. Will they find a love of self-sufficiency, and the confidence that knowing how to do tangible things can bring confidence to other parts of their lives? Maybe, if nothing else, it will help them see those who do physical work, those who do the building and creating, repairing and cleaning, with a different level of respect than they might have otherwise. Will they be on the ladder shoving another off or the one falling?

Maybe they will remember the times in their own lives, in these years, when they struggled and couldn't quite get it right, and will either have more empathy, or know that they can rise again. How many times will they have to reinvent themselves in the future--probably well after I have faded in their memory and probably after I am reinvented that one last and greatest time? If they remember the lessons, and hopefully pass them on, then somewhere, somehow, we are all remembered, and we will all have lived the First Rule through them.

Stan Spilecki is UMF's Resident Theatrical Designer and Technical Director. He is a true believer in a liberal arts education, which prepared him for his many careers, including his first, current, and favorite, the theater.

The Landscape of Digital Learning

Johanna Prince

As a teacher I am guided by the absolute primacy of the importance of relationships. I believe that learning in school is different than learning alone, because we engage in concert with other people. These other people breathe complexity, and infuse the experience with a richness that alone we cannot achieve.

I began my work as a teacher in outdoor classrooms. Often there were few instructional materials, and instead interactions among the students and social development were paramount to the experience. In the outdoor classroom, students were engaged with learning to observe the natural world, and the patterns and particulars of the woods and oceans. At the same time, I worked towards each child seeing herself clearly, and then being able to interact more deeply with those around her. I measured success through the discussion, role switching, and new attitudes that students displayed. Time spent identifying trees, hiking, eating, or taking a water break were each an opportunity to help students talk with each other, and in doing so, to learn more about themselves.

My work outside made me curious about teaching and learning. Making the transition into a public school classroom, and in my role as an elementary school teacher, I became more deeply grounded in the foundational role that relationships played in successful teaching. In a fourth grade classroom, these relationships are built over time, and I relished the planning of the first days of school, the moments when students came fresh to a new group, and a new experience. Observing students, I was able to take note of what each child brought to the classroom, and which areas he might still need to develop more. I was also acutely aware of the ways in which students interacted and regulated conversation, and how through everyday attention to the quality of our conversations, I was able to help students learn how to be with others. I adored their stories of the weekends, or an evening joke shared by a family, and the way I became a daily part of the rhythm of student's lives. One of the most important compliments I have received as a teacher was from the parents of a fourth grade student, who offered, "we appreciate that you see our daughter, and see her best self within."

Coming then to higher education presented me with new learning opportunities about what it means to be a teacher of undergraduate, and then graduate-level students. My current work involves teaching blended (partly online, partly in-class) and completely online courses for practicing educators. This work is done at the University of Maine at Farmington, which has both a small population of graduate students, and a small group of faculty who teach in these delivery modes. In a blended and online environment, I do not have access to the same type of information as I did when a child entered my elementary classroom. As a teacher, I design learning experiences for individual students. But as the kinds of interactions have changed, and as the amount of time I spend interacting with the students has shifted, I have had to learn new ways to cultivate relationships, not just my own relationships with each graduate student, but among the students themselves.

While learning happens all the time, in the classroom and outside of it, a school remains an organized space for specific types of experiences to occur. Within this context, the needs of the individual and the needs of the community intersect, and my goal is to support both individual independence and collective interdependence. Parker Palmer, in his book *The Courage to Teach*, presents the pedagogical paradoxes that guide his practice (p.74). In teaching online I continually struggle with two of my own paradoxes: learning is individual and collective; learning is public and private. In order to grapple with these paradoxes, and maintain the "creative tension" that Palmer describes, I am thankful to have available a huge array of technology choices that allow me to organize my course with attention both to the different needs of the students and to the content. For instance, a single shared Google Document allows the student to document individual and private reflections on a topic. With a quick change to the sharing settings, the student can make that same document open to a wider group, or even publish it to the web. In Google communities, I have the option of making the group private or public, and I leverage this choice depending on the goals of the course or group. Twitter becomes an excellent mechanism to make the classroom even larger than just the students within it. We can bring in experts, search for opinions, or suggest our own solutions. As part of my pedagogy and course design, I consider my paradoxes, and strive to interact with each learner to support individual growth, while continuously building a collaborative learning community. This learning community is built in part through reflection, dialog, and conversation.

I do have access to student voices, both through written and oral communication, and can amplify those voices. In a graduate class for teachers on new media, for example, we began the course with an autobiography from each student; in it they recounted their own experiences with literacy, and how their family engaged with literacy practices. They were asked to trace this story into the present, and explore their own experiences using technology for literacy—how now did they conceive of a fuller picture of multiliteracies? This project served as an important foundation for the students to reflect on the deeply personal development of literacy. One student shared how her parent's marriage proposal had been written in a letter during WWII; and she noted that while her mother thought this cowardly, she had accepted. This personal detail, told in her narrative, permitted me to see her background even in an online course, and helped me to understand more carefully who my student was as a learner. I have found that this assignment gives me the experience of hearing my students' stories, even while not sharing a physical classroom. This particular activity also gives me insight into the students' own visions of literacy, and the biases they may be bringing to their work as teachers. Finally, as I read their writing, it offers me the opportunity to come to know them as scholars. These stories they share provide important introductions to them as students and individuals as we begin our course.

However, school is not just about the relationship between a single teacher and a single student. School has historically been a social situation, and the lessons students learn from their peers are essential and important. In online learning, this can be difficult, and finding ways to replicate the chatter of students prior to a lesson or during a break is challenging. Multiple venues for expression are vital to this experience--and using video and other synchronous elements can help to foster these connections.

As teachers, we rarely get to see ourselves in practice, and when I began to teach online, it forced me to reflect deeply on the way in which I speak and present material. I increasingly make videos now—to give a tour to a new online space, to demonstrate a new tool, to change the way students hear me, and hopefully to give dimension to the flattened classroom. This is both exciting, and hard. Who wants to watch oneself and contemplate the public and reproducible nature of one's teaching? But it is informative in multiple ways. For example, I share a lot of my videos to YouTube, and can view the statistics of use—a more visible way of knowing whether a student

is ignoring me. In my online classroom, I also have varied the ways in which I ask students to interact, and the platforms that I use. I talk with students about the garden walls, and building our community within—respecting the shared information as private. But at the same time there are occasions when I want to celebrate and speak out from the classroom. Using a shared hashtag on twitter helps to celebrate success publically, or pose important questions to our peers.

I have struggled when teaching online to articulate and create the balance I want between formal and informal learning. In any class, there are times for the formal: production of content knowledge, or demonstration of skills; and there are times for the informal: discussion where we use the texts as mirrors for inquiry, or as reflection to process. And then as in any classroom there are the times of discovery: "Look what I saw," as an impromptu connection to what we discussed yesterday. In a physical classroom I have an easier time communicating and establishing this flow and equilibrium. In online teaching, it is harder to generate this balance. I can make clear the difference between an academic post and a conversational post, but describing classroom engagement is more challenging in online teaching. Newer platforms—like Google+—and a lot of modeling have helped to generate conversational elements in my online courses. At this point, creating this environment still takes constant attention, and I hope this too can become habit, just like walking down the hall with a student at the end of the day.

Rarely in online learning do I witness the experiences that help students engage and master content; I witness instead an artifact produced as a result of the readings, reflections, and exercises that students and I plan for learning. This has fundamentally shifted the way I need to prepare the learning experiences. This tension is significant for me, as I love the in-the-moment aspects of elementary school teaching, when students notice their own world with curiosity. As an online teacher, I have begun to realize, and harness, the power of metacognition. I now ask my students to make their learning visible in new ways. While I sometimes miss the ability to directly observe my student as he sits in class, and works his way through an experiment or a discussion, I now am able to hear or read my students' observations as they think about their own thinking. I cannot overstate how vital systematic reflection on learning is, and teaching online has allowed me to realize this powerful truth.

I stumbled into this finding by accident, while I was designing an assignment in which students were given enormous freedom in how to construct a project. As I examined my course goals, I was trying to map how each project would lead to mastery. But as I was designing these projects, I realized that if my goal was to empower my graduate students to create their own learning, I should also be encouraging them to express the connections. I should give each student the responsibility to articulate how she was designing the project, and thus demonstrate mastery of these course goals. As they submitted written reflections on their learning and process, I realized that these assignments were vital to all learners, and maybe even more so in online learning with graduate students who are ready to direct and reflect on their learning.

Now whenever I teach a class, students are engaged in this same process, and in an active construction of how the theory applies to their practice. All my students are educators, and they grapple with the shifts in conceptual understanding and practice as they seek to improve their students' learning. Hearing them engage in active metacognition about the kinds of teachers they have been, and how this might be sustained, or changed, in the future, has been a powerful learning experience for me. In my teaching I must embrace the tension between the theory of an expanded understanding of education and the intimate and deep richness each of these educators has in the daily practice of being a teacher. In an online classroom, this means that I must construct opportunities to open doors for knowledge, allow for opportunities to practice this knowledge, and for time to reflect on any new applications of this content, and how it becomes personal once integrated into practice.

I certainly believe that one of the values of graduate education is the systematic reflection on practice, but I feel that I had not fully harnessed this prior to teaching online. In a physical classroom, I could hear reflection in discussions, or conversations with students. But what I realize now is that I could only hear it from the students who were talking, and that was not all of them. Now, through providing mechanisms for all students to reflect and to make that reflection audible or visible, I feel I am finally helping my students engage with this critical aspect of the learning and becoming process.

In addition to establishing the social experience of learning, I believe that learning spaces must be designed to reflect the learning goals. In the

physical classroom, I took great pleasure in arranging the furniture to design the flow of learning. Where was my desk? How were students' desks grouped? What were the usage guidelines for pillows and informal learning? As the content and seasons would change, I could easily rearrange the classroom to reflect the needs of the new project. As my goals for social-emotional experiences shifted, so too did the furniture. My elementary school students showed less and less surprise as the year went on that the classroom looked different on a Monday morning than it had the previous Friday, or even perhaps when they returned from lunch.

In online learning, the physical design of the course is essential to learning as well. However, I have found that within a single course, it is far harder to change the location of the desk than it was in my room. Online learners are computer users, and as such are habituated to technology, so they expect certain elements. The thought I put into organizing and dividing content and learning experiences is now the equivalent to the thought I put into the physical design of the classroom, and in online learning I have come to be reminded that this is time-intensive and critical work to support learning. I spend a lot of time figuring out how to organize content: should it be by topic? by timeframe? Where should links be placed to help students navigate? I often judge how successful I am in this process by how few questions I get that ask me where to find something in our online portal. When designing learning experiences, I want students to spend cognitive energy on new information, processing dissonance, and reflecting. I therefore design the online elements carefully, and provide technical guidance through videos.

Within the classroom ecosystem, there is a delicate balance between challenge and support. As students work towards new goals, I must set high expectations and provide the necessary scaffolds for successful progress. As an educator, I believe it is my job to provide space and support for learners to challenge their own conceptions of themselves as students, as well as their potential for success. My students bring a great deal of experience to our classroom; they have taught for many years, been coaches, worked in other careers, are parents, and are committed to high quality education. These experiences bring a richness to our classroom, and bring high expectations for my practice. Graduate students are adults who have chosen to join a master's program, UMF's Master's program, and they are eager, both for content and for excellent pedagogy to inform their own practice.

Teaching in person, I felt more in control of the pace of student experiences. I wanted to ensure that all students worked with the same content, but I struggled with finding the correct pace for these same students. I can see now that sometimes I was impatient with the learning process, and I tried to avoid errors that might take time away from our learning. I unfortunately think I many have rushed a few students so that all could move on, instead of allowing those children more time and depth with the content. In teaching online, I am aware of the pacing and divisions of the content, but I also appreciate the increased flexibility my students have, and the increased control each one has to plan her own learning.

In order to maximize the control a student has of his learning experience, I have found that designing learning activities with extreme clarity becomes essential, because the in-the-moment instructions do not happen. While my students are not shy, and will email or call to ask "am I headed in the right direction?", I want those calls to be genuine questions about content. I seek to provide clarity regarding the goal, and their options for demonstrating mastery of such a goal. As an elementary school teacher, I spent a lot of time working on the routines in the classroom: Where do you hand in work? How do we keep our materials? and more. As an online teacher, I have found that it is essential for me to develop the same routines for students. I love to use a variety of tools to support learning in an online environment, but as such my students are sometimes juggling three or four tools--like BlackBoard, Edmodo, and Google Plus. Designing the use of these elements is a careful balancing act where I seek to place the cognitive load on the new content or skill, not on the experience of encountering it through a new medium.

Teaching online both contrasts and echoes my other experiences as a teacher. Palmer offered that "organizations...they are the vessels in which a society holds hard-won treasures from the past. Movements represent the principle of flux and change: they are the processes through which a society channels its energies for renewal and transformation. A healthy society will encourage the interplay between the two" (p. 164.) For me, to begin a career in outdoor education, and then move into a traditional elementary classroom, was the shift from a very open and fluid learning environment into an organized learning environment as in Palmer's definitions. Changing to higher education represented a new organizational structure, but a structure that was still bound by the rules of tradition. My shift into online education

has returned me to my beginning in some ways now, as the world of online learning embodies a flexibility that time-delineated structures do not offer.

This flexibility is not without challenges. The expanded classroom and access for students has meant that at times I have felt that I too need to be available to my students at all moments. This left me feeling tethered to my technology, and at times wishing to disconnect completely. Students too report new struggles with being learners in a classroom that feels as if it is constantly expecting engagement. This new flexibility requires our attention if we are to be fulfilled as teachers and students. We all need time to step away from our devices, and engage with our local and physical environment.

Sherry Turkle, in her book *Alone Together,* explores the complexity of the role technology plays in our social, emotional, and professional lives. Her analysis challenges common assumptions about who values technology and why, and instead presents a far more nuanced problem, and one that lacks a simple solution. It is unlikely that we will retreat from our fascination and use of technology, but instead, as human communities, we must struggle with the far more complex reality that has emerged in this technological world. She "suggests that we step back and reassess when we hear triumphalist or apocalyptic narratives about how to live with technology… [and] encourage humility, a state of mind in which we are most open to facing problems and reconsidering decisions." (p. 294)

The landscape of digital learning it is changing rapidly. In a recent article about higher education institutions adopting a digital strategy, the author Peter Stokes (2015) pointed out that "the shift to digital strategy will only be significant if it enables institutions to not only think and teach differently, but also to talk more effectively about who they are and what makes them different at the very core." As we grapple with becoming teachers online, I would argue that doing so has forced me to grapple with who I am as a teacher, and with what it is that makes my pedagogical approach effective for learning in this newly flexible and mobile world. Teaching online comes with freedom, agility, and creativity.

Teaching is a great source of joy for me, and the development of learners is an amazing process to be part of. I feel fortunate to teach, whether it's in person, a blended class, or online. I would imagine that teaching in different modes is similar to a tennis player who can master grass, asphalt, and clay. She may have a preference, and her skills on one surface may be

stronger, but ultimately the time she spends playing the game, and learning how the ball reacts in each environment, deepens her understanding of the mechanics of the game. As a teacher, developing versatility with the different environments has forced me to think more deeply about who I am, and about how I can support learning for students.

Johanna Prince is proud to be a teacher. She spends a lot of her time designing, experimenting, and reflecting on how we might use technology to enhance learning.

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God Willing and the Creek Don't Rise

Linda Britt

When I was five years old, I had my first Spanish lesson. My kindergarten teacher (whose name, I'm sorry to say, I don't remember) brought a record, an actual vinyl long-play record, into the classroom and played it for us. I have forgotten most of kindergarten, but I remember that day.

"Siéntate." That's the one word that comes back to me fifty-five years later: *"Siéntate."* It means "Sit down." There were other words on the record, of course, but my memories of them have long since faded into remote corners of my brain, and mingled with memories of other things learned and forgotten through the years. Still, that moment of comprehension remains, the moment when I became aware that somewhere, someone was using other words, unfamiliar words, words that were exotic and beautiful, to communicate familiar thoughts.

On the first day of class in the fall, almost every fall for over thirty years, my Introductory Spanish students have heard that same word (or a version of it—generally the plural) for the first time. Day one: Every student learns every other student's name. They learn how to ask (politely) what someone's name is *(¿Cómo se llama usted?)* They learn how to respond to the same question *(Me llamo Linda)*. They learn the polite response when meeting someone new *(Mucho gusto)*. They don't know that they're learning polite language; that will come in a future lesson. But they learn that being in this class means they get up and move around, meeting and greeting and talking to other people, using words that are exotic and beautiful. They learn to respond when I ask them to stand up or "Sit down." And they learn all of this without hearing a single word in English.

This always surprises them. Craig Glueck, a UMF graduate from the early 90s, used to walk out of the class shaking his head and exclaiming to no one in particular, "They're speaking a foreign language in there!" It's a common thought, as common as the look it represents, which can only be described as the deer-in-headlights look. "How can you expect me to learn this if I don't understand what you're saying?"

The answer? Because I know they will. And they do.

I have multiple goals when I teach Spanish. They kind of all boil down to one: to help students learn to communicate in this exotic, beautiful

language that I love. But there are multiple parts to this language: lexicon, syntax, culture, and philosophy.

Lexicon

Those exotic and beautiful words are maybe what I love most about Spanish. In grad school, perhaps my favorite class of all was Professor Horton's History of the Spanish Language. We traced the etymology of words; for me it was a delightful puzzle. I learned, for example, that the word in Spanish for "home" *(hogar)* was closely related to the word for "fire" *(fuego)*. As the language evolved, the initial *f* in Spanish words sometimes became *h*; the amusing part of this is that *h* is silent in spoken Spanish, and as a consequence there was a period in time when, as the written word became more widespread, scribes made mistakes: words that had not originated with initial fs, and thus had never developed an *h,* suddenly had one added as a sort of hyper-correction, so that the words "orphan" *huérfano* and "iron" *(hierro)*, for example, suddenly had an initial *h* (and they do to this day).

Just last week, as we were talking in class about cars and learning the relevant vocabulary, my students discovered the word *parachoques*. They looked at the diagram of the car and figured out that this word means "bumper" in English. It is possible to memorize the word without really thinking about its components, but where's the fun in that? *Parachoques* is a compound word, its two components being *para* and *choques*. Students learn early on in Spanish class that *para* means "for". It does, but in this case it doesn't; this *para* is a form of the verb *parar* ("to stop"). And *choques* means "crashes", so the combined word means "stop crashes", or, I guess, the "crash stopper." In the same way, *paraguas* ("umbrella") means "water stopper," and *paracaídas* ("parachute") means "fall stopper." Sometimes the discoveries are wondrous. But sometimes they are mundane. The translation for "hatchback," for example, I learned just the other day, is *coche con una puerta trasera—"car with a rear door."*

I also teach a course in literary translation from time to time. This, for me, is often a rather mystical experience. I have the sense, maybe unfounded, that when one speaks only one language, one tends to view the world in a kind of one-dimensional way (linguistically speaking, anyway). Even though a word in English may have synonyms, discovering a new one doesn't provide the same kind of sheer wonder that I felt in that kindergarten classroom. With literary translation, suddenly a student is challenged with framing someone else's thoughts (initially written in another language) in her own language. And this challenges in a way the essence of what she knows. Shanna McNair, UMF alumna and editor of *The New Guard*, a literary journal,

as well as founder of "The Writers' Hotel," wrote to me that the course "changed the way she thought about language." I am pretty sure I had never looked at translation thinking that it might change the conversation about one's own language. But now I do, because of this: Because we **think** in language, learning a second language also changes us.

Syntax

Grammatical gender is a difficult concept for English speakers. Even in these days when gendered pronouns are a charged issue (he? she? ze? they?), and thus a familiar topic, students struggle with the concept that *everything* is "gendered" in Spanish. A table, the desk, the book, a house, the clothing they're wearing. Their hair: is *his* hair masculine, but *hers* feminine? Their noses: is *his* masculine, but *hers* feminine? And the answer is "no"; all hair *(pelo)* is masculine, and all noses *(narices)* feminine. Arms masculine, hands feminine, fingers masculine. Legs feminine, feet masculine.

What does any of this have to do with gender? Nothing, really. Not in the way English speakers look at gender. There is nothing inherently feminine about a table, nothing inherently masculine about a glass. Gender in language, at least in Romance languages (French, Spanish, Italian, any language derived from Latin) determines a class, a **kind**, not a sex. It would perhaps be more understandable if we referred to it as grammatical "genre," rather than gender, because that's what it is. But we still talk about adjectival agreement in terms of gender: feminine noun, feminine adjective *(casa blanca,)* masculine noun, masculine adjective *(libro nuevo)*. It's rather mind-blowing to students who've never thought about language in those terms.

Siéntate. When I tell my students to sit down on that first day, I do not explain the grammar I am using. I far prefer the "deer-in-headlights" look to the glazed over "you-lost-me-at-second-person-singular" look. I show them, instead. The secret to teaching introductory language is gesturing. You want students to stand up? You show them. You want them to open their books? You show them. You want them to have a conversation with a fellow student, on the second day of class, when two days earlier they couldn't speak any Spanish other than the few words they learned from Dora the Explorer? You show them. I find that this has spilled over into my daily life as well. When I talk about the future, I have caught myself pointing in that direction (what direction, you ask? In my mind, the future is in front of me, so I point away from me, toward something. When I talk about the past? Right. I point behind me, where I've already been.)

But eventually, they need to know. They need to know that *sentarse* is not just a verb, but a reflexive verb. They need to know that *levantarse* works

like *sentarse.* They need to learn that if they want to say "I get up," they have to use the reflexive pronoun *me (me levanto),* but if they want to say they "I lift weights," they don't *(levanto las pesas).* They need to know that reflexive pronouns, while they may look a lot like indirect object pronouns, are not the same. (Not that they know at first what an indirect object pronoun looks like or what its function is, but they will learn). While they may not understand why, their lives will be better if they understand the difference between an adjective and an adverb. It may not bring them fame or fortune if they know the terms subject and direct object, but they sure need to know how to use them in a sentence.

Culture

I always greet my students with the appropriate salutation: *Buenos días* in the morning, *buenas tardes* in the afternoon. It seems simple. But it isn't. One's masculine even though *día* ends in *a* and most words like that are feminine. Both are plural. *Buenas tardes* is actually used until fairly late at night, say, 9 or 10 p.m. in Spain. *Buenas noches* is only used when you're off to bed, or you're saying your final goodbye to someone for the day. One could just say *Hola* instead of the more formal *buenos días* or *buenas tardes,* but that would not be appropriate in many circumstances. It's too casual to use with mere acquaintances or people you pass in the street, or the local shopkeeper, say. It means "hello" but it's like saying "hi," or, in my lexicon, "hey."

It might be an anachronism in these days when students I've never even met begin emails to me (as Chair of the Division of Humanities; generally they are looking for my signature on some form or other) with "Hi, Linda," but this language register nevertheless is a cultural phenomenon they need to learn. Unless you are seeking to offend, or don't care if you do, it is wise to learn which greeting to use when you are a visitor in someone else's culture. (That said, I haven't found a satisfactory answer to the question: Why plural? Why is it good afternoons instead of good afternoon? I did read that it is roughly the equivalent of God Be With You, which I suspect few of our students recognize any more as the long form of goodbye, or just bye. But I haven't seen a linguistic explanation for the plural.)

Speaking of God, it is always interesting when I teach my students the word *Ojalá,* which is an entire expression abbreviated into five letters. I use it when introducing them to the subjunctive (mood, not tense. That's a good one. It's difficult to explain why verbs have moods). A quick refresher: In English, we rarely use the present subjunctive; we prefer the infinitive. Rather than saying "I want that you do your homework," we say "I want you to do your homework." But even should we use the subjunctive form, we

can't tell the difference in English… after all, it's "do your homework" in both examples. A better example comes from the past subjunctive: "I wish it were warmer in Maine in January." We call this an "if clause contrary to fact". It's not warm in Maine in January, no matter how much we wish it so. But you can tell it's the subjunctive, because if that sentence didn't begin with "I wish," the verb would be different: "It was warmer in Maine in January."

All of that is merely a preface to *Ojalá,* which always requires the subjunctive mood in Spanish. It is the equivalent to that most Southern of expressions, "God willing and the creek don't rise," but it comes from Arabic. What does it tell us? Well, first of all, it tells us that one can take nothing for granted. You say you're going to study for only 20 minutes and still make an A on the exam? Maybe so. But if I were you, I'd put a qualifier in front of that. You can't be certain, can you? So you say *Ojalá que saque una A en el examen.* Another example: your friend isn't feeling well? "You'll feel better soon." But you can't know that for sure. Rather, *ojalá que te mejores pronto.* God willing.

What else does it tell us? It tells us that for more than seven hundred years, Spaniards lived under Arabic rule. *Ojalá* comes from the Arabic expression, "Inshallah," ("if Allah wills it.") So teaching this word is an opportunity to teach history, and culture, and to think about the Alhambra and beauty and Southern Spain. Maybe some of it will stick. Because these days, Hispanic culture isn't so exotic any more. It's here among us. And more important than ever to my students, so it is vital that they see its worth.

Philosophy

It wasn't until about fifteen years ago, when an English major named John Schoen was taking my 101 class, that I began thinking about the philosophy inherent in a language. (Someday I should take George Miller's "Philosophy of Language" at UMF.) The lesson that particular day was on the verb "to be" in Spanish. Now, unlike almost every other language on the planet (okay, obviously there are many languages that I don't know, but certainly most Western European languages, the exception being Portuguese, which is closely related to Spanish. But the rules about "to be" are simpler in Portuguese than in Spanish), Spanish has two verbs that mean "to be": *Ser* and *Estar.* They are not interchangeable. You cannot use one when you mean the other. Though there are some instances when you can use either one, the meaning changes when you do.

This was something that John could not get his head around (though he was one of the smartest students I've ever known.) "To be" is "To be," right? Either "you are" or "you're not," but how can one "to be" mean

something different from another "to be"? I can still picture the look on his face as he tried to convince me that this couldn't possibly be right.

But they are different. And the reason goes back to the etymology that so fascinates me in the study of language. One "to be" verb, *estar,* comes from the Latin "stare," which means "to stand." "Standing": moveable, changeable. The other "to be" verb, *ser,* comes from the Latin "sedere," which means "to sit." "Sitting": sedentary, motionless. So one means status, and the other means essence. When Descartes said "I think, therefore I am," he would have used *ser* if he had said it in Spanish *(Pienso, así que soy).* Essence. Hamlet would have said *Ser o no ser.* But if you were to ask someone "how are you today?", you would use the verb *estar: ¿Cómo estás?* Because you want to know someone's condition, not someone's essence. Or say you want to find out where Waldo is. You use the verb *estar*, because someone will tell you what Waldo's current status is, or rather, his location, which isn't essence at all, is it?

Many iterations of students have followed John. A lot of them just accept what I tell them: use "ser" in these situations; use "estar" in those. Why ask questions? But for some, it goes deeper. And John Schoen, like Shanna McNair, made me think about the language I love in a different way.

Conclusion

It is probably obvious, if you've read this far, that I find the Spanish language intriguing and wondrous. All of it: its culture, lexicon, syntax, philosophy. Its essence. *SER.*

It is my hope that my students understand some of this. I know that they will, by the end of the year, be able to speak Spanish, and understand it. They will lose that deer-in-headlights look a few weeks into their first semester. They will tolerate my quirks (using stuffed animals and Barbie clothes and photos of dogs driving cars, to name a few) in their quest to learn the language. I don't require that they ask the deeper questions. They don't have to want to ponder the deeper meaning of "to be" vs. "to be" in order to have a conversation. But I think they will anyway. Or at least I hope they will. I want them to think about the cultural and linguistic significance of even the little pieces of this new language. And in the process, to think about their own. *Ojalá.*

Linda Britt is Professor of Spanish and Chair of Humanities at UMF. She hopes she never loses her belief in the magic of language.

The Irresistible Force and the Immoveable Object:
Literacy Theory vs. Developmental Writing at UMF

Pete St. John

Arguably, I set about this the wrong way: after twenty years of teaching English in western Maine secondary schools, I studied Literacy at Orono for three years. Then, armed to the teeth with pedagogic theory, and bristling with the latest methodological thinking, I set about teaching developmental Writing at UMF. What follows is how it went: how I structured the course based on the teaching principles I had constructed from my experience and coursework, what worked, what floundered, and where the jury is still out.

Grad school was great fun! I spent a lot of time working with the Maine Writing Project (MWP), an offshoot of the National Writing Project (as is the Southern Maine Writing Project, based at USM). The MWP's primary function is to provide teacher development in writing literacy. The work provided many, many eye-opening insights, along with frequent validations of what I had known for some time but hadn't put into words.

Developmental writing at UMF appears as a 4-credit Intensive Writing course. Students are placed into it based on their results when they take the Accuplacer. The course is a prerequisite to mandatory First-Year English courses. Not surprisingly, students can be impatient with their placement: this course is costing them money, and is conceivably lengthening the time they will spend in college; and besides, why should they need extra coursework when their high school English grades were C's or better?

It's also fair to say that, for most of these students, English class has seldom been a fun and exciting place. There are usually some good reasons why they need developmental coursework; often their study skills are rudimentary, or perhaps English is for them as Math was for me: a reckless squandering of time and energy spent on irrelevant things, like quadratic equations, the practical use for which I have yet to get a satisfactory explanation from anybody. That our high schools have asked these same students time and again to plow through yet another Shakespeare play and write a *re*-search paper on it has done little to improve their outlook.

So, in addition to helping students develop their written language skills, I also need to help them acquire writing-oriented intrinsic motivation, intellectual curiosity, and a work ethic, if they are ever to break out of the mindset that writing is something they can't do well and have little use for--otherwise they will repeat the cycle of failure. Candidly, I think in all of our classes we have to teach intrinsic motivation, intellectual curiosity, and a work ethic, since without these things, our course content has no value for students, and most of them arrive here without having fully developed these qualities.

In my course, students construct a portfolio of writing. They are required to put their work through a thorough drafting process, ideally consulting the writing tutors at the Learning Commons, although I occasionally approve alternates when circumstances dictate—like when the student commuting from Greene has a mother who is an able and merciless editor. Each piece must have three separate drafts, and in our conferences, students should be able to demonstrate how their piece changed as a result of the drafting process. I conference with students every two weeks to review and discuss their work, and to let them know my perception of how they're doing in class.

Why a portfolio? Because my primary purpose is to help students discover they are *writers*, as I am, and as writers we will encounter many different types of writing beyond the 5-paragraph essay and the *re*-search paper—narrative, analytic, expository, etc.—and we will shape our writing to the task. It is a central tenet of the MWP that the best teachers of writing are *writers*--seems pretty obvious, but so few of my own English teachers or English department colleagues ever defined themselves in that way. Writing Project participants spend a great deal of time on their own writing, which gives them insights into what our students might also struggle with: syntax, voice, deadlines, etc. When I discuss their writing with students, I share their perspective on these challenges, rather than hack at them with a red pencil.

In addition to the long-range, 5-page papers, students also complete a 2-page journal every week (free writing, although I provide recommended topics), and at least 40 minutes each week is spent practicing on-demand writing to a specific prompt, usually based on the week's reading. Whatever genre the students are currently writing in, expository, narrative, argument, etc., determines the type of in-class readings and writing prompts.

100% of the assigned written work must be completed to pass the course. All their written work is posted to a Google Docs folder, which they share with me--I found early on that printing creates a financial hardship for many students. Students organize their Docs folder by assignment: the subsequent drafts of each paper are found within the same document, so when we conference, I can quickly call up the paper and discuss the editing/drafting process with the evidence right at hand.

I step back from the bulk of editing. Too often the amount of writing students are assigned is limited by the amount of papers teachers can 'grade' or 'correct'—and I don't do that stuff. Students get formative assessment—feedback on how they're doing—from me when we conference every two weeks. We keep our focus on the process they are using, rather than on the relative fluency of their paper. If their interactions with the writing tutors are meaningful, and result in substantive improvement of their drafts over time, if students learn to edit and revise their own text using the tools in Word, if students become familiar with the principal genres in writing by writing larger and smaller pieces in each genre—as well as reading and discussing samples of each--and if all of the above enables students to own their writing as an important aspect of themselves, rather than an odious chore—then I think my writing class is doing what it should.

Here's a look at the portfolio requirements:

#1. *Autobiography: 5 pages*

Your autobiography should highlight those life events that have influenced you the most. You should also complete the Myers-Briggs personality test, available online. Read the descriptions accompanying your four-letter group, and reflect on them in your piece, giving specific examples illustrating your personality traits- perhaps they explain why you were so influenced by those life events?

I find this topic useful for a number of reasons: students may feel they don't know much, but they do know about themselves. They have enough material at hand to generate five pages—for many, a rare and very challenging experience. I've found the Myers-Briggs test to be a fun mirror of one's personality—one description told me I was the sort of person who'd correct someone on their grammar! Just prior to conferencing, it's helpful to review the autobiographies briefly to remember stuff about each student (lives in Dexter, raises snakes, etc.), and they can give me a heads-up on

particular obstacles to success the students may be facing--like anxiety, PTSD, family issues, etc.

One drawback I discovered was that in some cases, in accordance with the last-possible-minute, least-amount-of-effort, shortest-amount-of-time principle, the students merely resubmitted their college application essays. Fortunately, the drafting process requires them to engage more fully with the assignment.

Lots of people can give you an excellent argument against using the Myers-Briggs test, a fact that gives great fodder for class discussion. I don't insist on the profile type; I just want their reflection on the sort of person they are, especially on what their strengths are. If they are to market themselves to the professional world, students need to build a compelling narrative about themselves that identifies their strengths, the challenges they've met, and the contributions they can make.

In class we read an excerpt from Ben Franklin's autobiography, in which he describes how he methodically set about acquiring moral perfection! It does get them thinking.

#2. *Poetry: 1 sonnet*

The sonnet is traditionally a 14-line, rhymed poem in iambic pentameter. While you are welcome to write a variant, it should still be recognizably a sonnet.

The sonnet is easily the most challenging writing assignment for students, most of whom have rigidly been taught that poetry is a sort of free-for-all that can mean whatever you want, and to write it, all you need to do is scribble down some pseudo-profundities and hit 'return' periodically in mid-sentence. Ideally, I'd like students to arrive at the awareness that writing is often sculpted sound, that cadence is a powerful tool, and that our prose often requires the same careful selection of the *mot just* to fit the line. In practice, I have found that success with this assignment—writing in rhymed iambic pentameter—depends largely on students' innate musical ability. Regardless, it is an excellent opportunity to show what a meaningful drafting process looks like, since it's either iambic pentameter or it isn't—and if it isn't, well, go back and try it again.

We read several sonnets together, from Shakespeare to Keats to Edna St. Vincent Millay and Conrad Aiken--and some cadence-filled oratory from Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King as well.

#3. *Expository: 5 pages*

An expository piece provides information about something to the reader. Choose your topic, research it, and write about it in an interesting manner. Provide a Works Cited page.

The peril lurking in the *re*-search paper is that students will combine several Wikipedia articles to create a new Wikipedia article, a lifeless lump that nobody would ever want to read—as opposed to a re-*searched* paper that demonstrates effectively the writer's grasp of a topic, couched in compelling language. Just because it's an academic paper doesn't mean it has to be boring and stultified.

The in-class readings provide vibrant examples of the genre, like E.B. White's *Farewell, My Lovely*, a nostalgic look back at his Model T Ford.

To prevent students from submitting some earlier *re*-search paper that's still cluttering up their hard drive, I required that it have something to do with Norway (having just acquired a Norwegian neighbor). Student papers included works on the Sami, the Sako M85 L .300 Win Mag, and Norwegian Death Metal bands (a really grisly subject, actually).

#4. *Narrative: 5 pages*

You may write fiction or non-fiction. Tell the story of something- but with a clear reason for so doing. Capture reader interest!

Narrative is at home across the disciplines, and whatever sequence of events the students are relating, whether it's the evolution of the wombat, the steps in disproving Fermat's theorem, or Lassie's rescue of the little child in the well, the stark truth remains for students that they are running out of people who have to read what they write--so what they write about had better be interesting. Not cute, not whimsical, not painfully idiosyncratic, but carefully constructed language with a compelling purpose.

In class we look at the Grimms' *The Juniper Tree*, drawn from ancient oral tradition, juxtaposed with something more modern, perhaps out of a recent *Best American Short Stories* or *Best American Essays*.

#5. *Analytical: 5 pages*

Select some raw material: some data, a poem, a painting, clothing styles, etc., and analyze for meaning. Provide a Works Cited page.

Generally, this is further up the Maslow hierarchy than students have gone, to any length, and we spend a lot of time discussing the nature of re-*searched* analysis. The challenge—drawing original conclusions, with supporting evidence—is a steep one, and stems largely from students' complete lack of confidence that any conclusion they draw will be worth repeating—or, worse, that their from-the-hip summary judgments don't *need* supportive evidence.

#6. *Argument: 5 pages*

Choose a divisive issue confronting society today. Present both (or all) sides of the argument, and persuade the reader of your own conviction.

The central component of critical thinking is the initial assumption of objectivity before coming to a firm, reasoned conclusion. Generally, students charge right in, their SAKO M85s a-blazing—or they remain tepidly on the sidelines, and here is where the conferencing/drafting process is especially effective, as the pep talk does so much more than the comment in the margin to change students' attitudes towards their writing.

It's fun to read Swift's *Modest Proposal*, and then to have students come up with one of their own in an in-class piece.

#7. *Weekly Journals*

Without enough pre-teaching, these can be pretty ghastly, ranging from an uninspired narrative of the previous day when nothing much went on, to copies of letters written to the boyfriend (no, *really*), but what I'm actually after is for the students to develop their powers of observation, and to think about their observations. Free writing helps students acquire written fluency just by spending time writing.

I used two books in teaching this course: Stephen King's *On Writing* and Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird*. They get at much the same sorts of things: the challenges writers face, some strategies for success, some hard-bitten advice—all based on an unflinching look at their own failings and, at times, their spectacularly dysfunctional lives. Students find much to relate to in

these texts. I also assigned Strunk and White's *Elements of Style,* but couldn't really figure out how to use it as a course text. I guess I've always taken it too much for granted as a great reference.

***

We use the term 'developmental' rather than 'remedial' for courses like this, since 'remedial' supposes an earlier wrong that is being righted, and 'developmental' reflects more the idea that all of us are on some spectrum of fluency, with some further along than others. It would be nice to think that fifteen weeks is enough to bring all students up to where we think they ought to be, but the reality falls short of the ideal: students stop coming to class, they don't complete their assignments, they doze off in class now and then, some forge editors' comments, some submit somebody else's work, etc., etc.

When I studied in Germany all those years ago, it struck me that the lectures given by professors were always packed, even though nobody took attendance. Seminars distributed few if any grades—just a certificate of participation, but students were thoroughly prepared for class, every day. An all-Bach pipe organ concert absolutely jammed the Cathedral with the motliest assortment of unwashed, even odiferous students, who weren't going to miss an event like that. On a Friday night, dissipated 'Ami' that I was, I looked around for some company for an evening's recreation—and they were all studying! The twist was that at the end of their college careers, students faced two weeks of written exams in their subject, followed by a week of oral exams. Diplomas were awarded to the students who knew their stuff cold. These students had arrived at intrinsic motivation, intellectual curiosity, and a work ethic.

I cannot recommend we stop taking attendance and issuing grades to raise the caliber of our students—I don't think anarchy is the right way out here. I can only suggest we all share the responsibility for doing it, by asking students to reflect, in writing, on who they are, what they are doing in this class, and how they are doing it- and talking about their writing with them.

Pete St. John has been arguing in favor of the semicolon in western Maine for the past twenty-five years. He is currently serving as Coordinator of the Student Learning Commons.

Why It Is Good To Be A Hedgehog

Joel King

As I look around the campus of UMF, I've come to the realization that I have reached the milestone of having been here at UMF longer than most of the faculty. This status brings with it the privilege and burden of carrying the institutional memory. Fantasy or reality, I still remember "the good old days". With the full knowledge that my memories are tainted by my personal experiences and entrenched perspectives, this essay will discuss what has made UMF special and the challenges we face today to keep it special.

I must confess, I can do only one thing at a time well. In a world of multi-tasking, I'm a dinosaur. During the day, I keep my cell phone in my office and then at the end of the day, pick up any messages I might have received. In essence, I've reinvented the home phone at about four times the price. Contrast this with the students (and other faculty) whose phones have become an additional body part and who feel a responsibility to respond to a text immediately (even when they're in class) for fear that the person on the other end might assume that you have died and resent not having been informed just prior to your passing. I, on the other hand, still can't answer my phone while I'm driving. Thank God I have a car that answers it for me. Although I often feel this "multi-task-less-ness" of mine is a weakness, I realize there are at least two examples where this is not the case. In the first example, students in my Child Development class learn that a child who has developed "selective attention," i.e. the ability to shut out extraneous stimuli, has made developmental progress. Most everyone agrees that developmental progress is a good thing.

The second example, which is more germane to this essay, is when an organization (and according to the Supreme Court, corporations are people) has a single focus, a "hedgehog concept," this proves to be a real strength. Jim Collins (2001) identified from a comprehensive study of organizations that the hedgehog concept was a crucial factor characteristic of companies that made the jump from "good to great." These companies had sustained stock market returns 6.9 times greater than the general Market for a period of 15 years. One of the characteristics of these companies was that maintaining a single-focus was a key characteristic necessary for success. Collins called it the Hedgehog Concept, from the Greek parable, "The Hedgehog and the Fox" by Archilochos (c.680-c.645 B.C.), a Greek lyric poet. As the story goes, the fox has many complex strategies as he waits for the right time to

attack the hedgehog. He keeps changing his strategies in order to "out-fox" his next meal. Meanwhile, the hedgehog has just one strategy. He simply rolls up into a little ball of spikes when the fox attacks. For hedgehogs, all challenges and dilemmas are reduced to simple hedgehog ideas, and anything that does not correlate to this is irrelevant. Hedgehogs see what is essential and ignore the rest. Similarly, companies that have sustained excellence over time clearly identified what their purpose was and stuck to it. They answered the question, "What can I be the best in the world at?" (and its equally important corollary, "what you cannot be the best in the world at") (Collins, 2001, p. 95). After the focus of a company was determined, all decisions were made in support of the hedgehog concept. Those companies that moved away from their hedgehog concept floundered and drifted into mediocrity or failure.

A recent news release from dailybulldog.com stated:

> For the 18th year, the University of Maine at Farmington has been recognized as a "Best College" by the U.S. News & World Report. Once again, the national rankings have named UMF a "Top Public Regional College" in the north, where it garnered the No. 6 position this year—behind only military and marine academies--- and No. 19 among both public and private colleges in that category. (Sept. 15, 2016).

Eighteen years of "Best College" ranking would seem to earn UMF consideration for the status of a "good-to-great" institution. Two of the factors identified by Collin's (2001) research characteristic of good-to-great organizations that have been critical elements of UMF's success were 1) UMF's commitment to its hedgehog concept and 2) UMF's ability to confront the brutal facts. The conclusion to be drawn is that either walking away from the hedgehog focus or avoiding the brutal facts could have devastating effects on an organization (Collins, 2001).

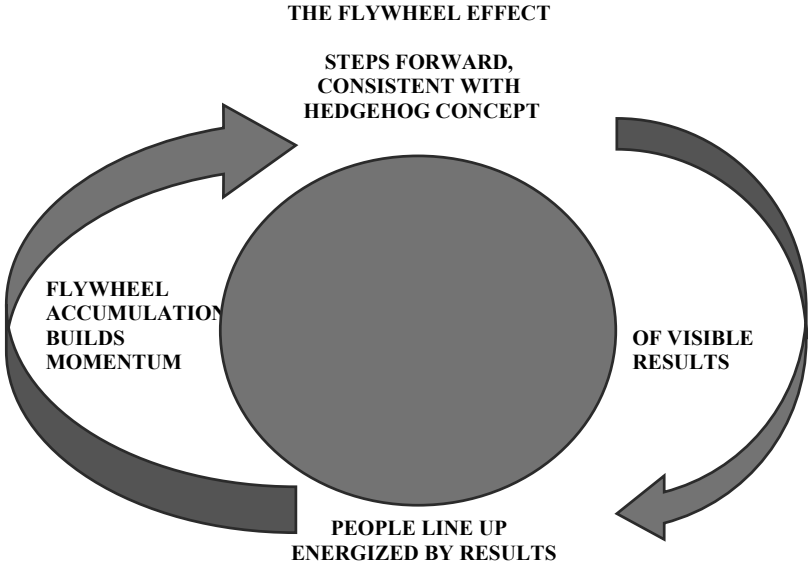
When I came to UMF in 1988, I felt that UMF did indeed operate on a Hedgehog principle, and this is what attracted me to the culture. My perceptions about the institution were heavily influenced by the Chair of the UMF Psychology Department, Dr. Bert Jacobs. I was coming from Cornell University, and some faculty in the Department feared I'd be too interested in research. It was clearly explained to me that my purpose here was as an educator, not a researcher. Most students coming to UMF were typical Maine college bound students who were from small communities around the state

with little exposure to the world of ideas outside their towns. Our job as faculty was to provide a variety of viewpoints and perspectives to help unfold the knowledge about the many different opportunities and goals the student could achieve. This was the hedgehog concept. Open your doors, be available, and provide opportunities for connections to be made between students and faculty. It was through the mechanism of frequent contact that change would be possible.

This face-to-face, interactive culture, which involved the sharing of minds and experiences, was what UMF offered its students. This was the secret to UMF's success. The students left with fond memories, and the faculty felt that they were part of something really special.

> "The good-to-great companies understood a simple truth: Tremendous power exists in the fact of continued improvement and the delivery of results…….. When you do this in such a way that people see and feel the buildup of momentum, they will line up with enthusiasm. We came to call this the flywheel effect (Collins, 2001, pp. 174-175). (This appears in the Figure below.)
>
> What do the right people want more than almost anything else? They want to be part of a winning team. They want to contribute to producing visible, tangible results. They want to feel the excitement of being involved in something that just flat-out works." (Collins, 2001, p.177)

UMF provided that gift. By sticking to our Hedgehog Concept, we were able to see visible results: successful students and national recognition. This energized the faculty, leading to higher motivation and a stronger sense of purpose. This became contagious which led to more energy and greater commitment.



As members of the Psychology Department, we were singularly focused and became part of a team with a common cause. And this feeling reached across the campus. As part of a team, I saw the accomplishments of other faculty members as my victories as well. I never resented having more students in my class while other faculty brought prestige and recognition to UMF.

During my first few years, for example, Creative Writing professor Wes McNair was being recognized nationally for his poetry, and Philosophy professor Mark McPherran, for his Socratic scholarship. They received release time while other faculty and I took up the slack by taking extra students in our classes. We were not in competition with each other, but worked together to achieve a common goal. All our contributions were appreciated and, we faculty educators, although not being recognized nationally, were valued internally. This was the Hedgehog Concept at work.

A second characteristic of "a good to great organization" was its ability to confront the brutal facts (Collins, 2001). As a mismatch between the current model and the changing world occurred, companies confronted the brutal truth head-on. Instead of denying the problems, they confronted them using the frame of reference provided by their Hedgehog Concept. This was initiated in a climate where the truth could be heard and the attitude was to "Never Lose Faith." Today, higher education must face some "brutal facts."

The Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2014 from the Federal Reserve identified that 47% of respondents claim that they either could not cover an emergency expense of $400, or would cover it by selling something or borrowing money (Press Release FRB, May 27, 2014). Median wages for American households in 1989 were $51,681. In 2013, the median wage was $51,939. The median net worth for families in 2010 was $77,300 compared to $126,400 in 2007. Poverty rates rose in 46 of 50 states during the same time period. The percentage drop in average real income since 2007 was 8.3%. With flat wages, increased health care costs, and job insecurity, many middle class families have struggled to meet financial demands. As middle class resources diminished, the costs of college tuition increased, making college unreachable for many Americans. In her book, DIYU, Anya Kamenetz (2010) reports from a 2008 document from the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education that the average cost of a four-year public education was now more than 25% of household income, up from 18% in 2000. For the poorest one-fifth of Americans, public university tuition would represent 55% of their income. The report graded each state on affordability, taking into account state aid, state median income, and loan debt. Aside from California, which earned a C- rating, every state received a failing grade.

The seriousness of this crisis in Higher Education has resulted in this becoming a national political issue. Both Hilary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, Democratic Presidential Candidates for the 2016 election, have addressed this issue, suggesting either debt-free tuition (Clinton, 2015) or tuition-free public higher education (Sanders, 2015) as important issues in their election campaigns. The brutal facts for UMF are that UMF cannot run without students and is heavily dependent on tuition dollars to operate. Across the board, the costs of college have skyrocketed while middle class salaries have remained stagnant. Students and their families are finding it harder to afford UMF at a time where UMF is already running on a bare-bones budget. Students are required to work more hours in their part-time to full-time jobs in order to stay in school. The economy in the Town of Farmington has not grown to meet the demands for more employment opportunities, leaving many students without sufficient funds to stay in school. A Portland Press Herald article from October 10th 2014 reports that Maine graduates carry an average debt of almost $30,000, meaning that the students of Maine carry the seventh highest total debt in the nation. The article reports some statistics from the Maine Sunday Telegram's investigation as to why college tuition is increasing. The average annual tuition at a four-year state university has

increased 231% in the last 30 years. From 2000 to 2012, inflation-adjusted price for tuition, room and board rose 40%, while median family income in Maine dropped 4%. Between 2008 and 2013, state funding dropped 23% nationwide, and 15% in Maine. Forty-two percent of the University of Maine's operating budget now comes from revenue generated by tuition. The combination of higher tuition and the shortage of jobs for college graduates has resulted in the inability of graduates to pay college debt with earnings from low wage jobs.

The rising costs of education and the reduced ability to pay among our students has resulted in serious challenges to UMF's Hedgehog Concept, which depends heavily on providing opportunities for student-faculty interactions and student-student interactions. For one thing, many otherwise eligible students can no longer afford to attend UMF. For many of those who do make it here, the economic challenges have also interfered with their ability to access the optimal UMF experience. Students have tight schedules--moving from class to work and then from work to class, leaving little time for meeting with the professors, attending university events, and interacting with their fellow students. Based on the 2010 U.S. Census Report, 72% of college undergraduates were working while in college (www.census.gov). Twenty percent worked year round and full-time. Of those who worked less than full-time, more than half of them worked over 20 hours per week.

Whereas professors are still in their offices with their doors open, fewer students can take advantage of this opportunity for exposure to different ideas, to present their own ideas, and engage in meaningful dialogue. Our brutal facts are that we exist in a situation where we send our students off to work to pay the bills, and as a result, many of them are missing out on the college experience. Driven by economic necessity, many students have no opportunity to partake of the "UMF Experience." UMF is just a place where you stop and take classes for 12 to 16 hours a week while you are on the way to somewhere else. As this becomes the student's reality, they will never know the rich experience UMF was designed to offer. My longevity provides me with the knowledge that college life at UMF used to be different. For students and faculty who have been here for fewer than five years, the present situation is the only reality they know. Institutional forgetting has set in.

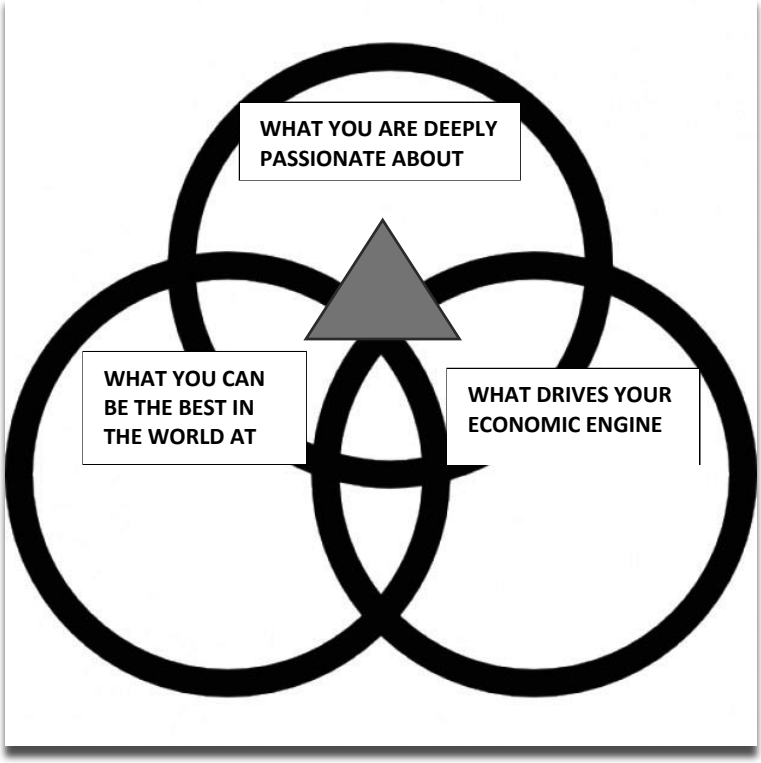
Faculty-student interactions require that students have the opportunity to participate. I find that in our building, the professors are still there with their doors open, but the halls, the student lounge, and the department office no

longer echo throughout the day with the bustle of students. These students are unaware of what they are missing, as spending time with their professors has never been part of their college experience. As we have not protected students' opportunities to interact or the importance of these interactions, i.e. our hedgehog concept, the students have found other, more appealing solutions. A student can go to a community college, which is far cheaper. A student can take an online course, which is far more convenient. Students wouldn't ever know how a UMF experience is far superior to the Community College or online alternatives. Even students who have attended UMF don't know this. A parallel situation might be the way we have replaced the stay-home mom and the benefits of young children staying in a caring, nurturing, home, with the stressful life of the working mom who struggles to balance work and family responsibilities. Similarly, we have given away the college experience of exploration, interaction, stimulation, nurturing, and support, by minimizing the time and opportunities that this could provide. So often students can't attend a class, and send an email that typically reads: "Sorry I wasn't in class on Monday. What did I miss?" How does a faculty member answer that? "You missed the opportunity to be part of a learning experience which would have been enhanced by your presence." If they miss work, they know exactly what they missed: $7.35 X 4 = $29.40. As one of my students said to me, "If I miss class, there's another class, but if I miss work, there's no more work, and no more classes." And so, "I'll see you next class!"

I have always believed that UMF was a strong candidate for "good to great" status. Since there are several other criteria identified by Collins (2001) that we do not meet, maybe Collins would disagree. But Collins would argue that it is essential for us to stick to our hedgehog concept, or else face serious consequences. The consequence for the hedgehog is becoming lunch for the fox. What are the consequences for UMF? Before answering this let's explore the hedgehog further.

The concept consists of three intersecting circles as illustrated by the figure below.

THREE CIRCLES OF THE HEDGEHOG CONCEPT

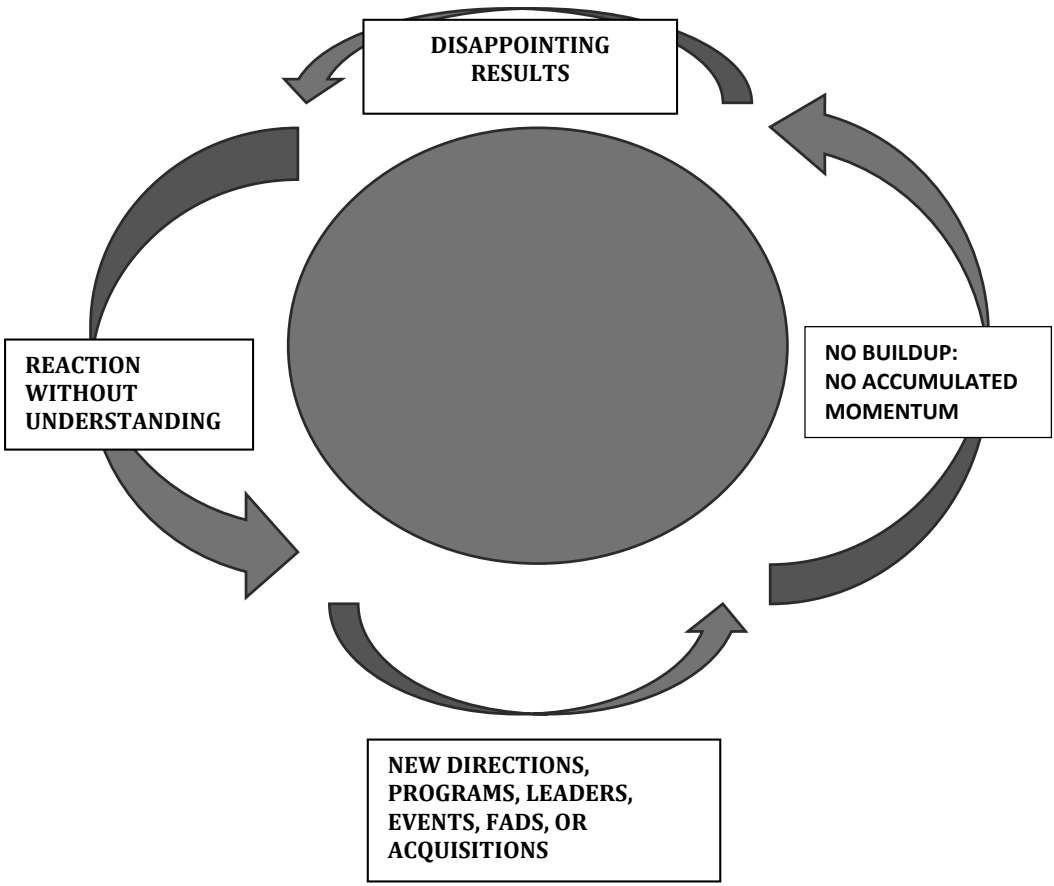


(Collins, 2001, p.118)

The hedgehog concept lives at the intersection of these three principles. It is critical to understand all of these: what you can be best in the world at, what you are deeply passionate about, and what drives your economic engine. Collins (2001) suggests applying this to someone's occupational choice. An individual example of following the three circles could be applied to my career at UMF. I chose UMF because it allowed me to focus my attention on teaching areas that I loved (Child Development and Parenting) and teaching was something I could do well. At the same time, it provided the economic engine that allowed me to do something I was passionate about while still supporting my family and myself. I have thus been fortunate to have a career that has brought me both joy and fulfillment for the last 28 years.

When making decisions as to how to address the brutal facts, the potential answers must remain true to the hedgehog concept. As stated earlier, our particular hedgehog concept was to provide a variety of viewpoints and perspectives to help unfold the knowledge about the many different opportunities and goals the student could achieve. It was through the mechanism of frequent contact that change would be possible. It is crucial that each decision we make remain consistent with our hedgehog concept, or it might lead to the Doom Loop (Collins, 2001).

THE DOOM LOOP
(Collins, 2001, p.179)



Collins (2001, p.183) identifies signs that you are in the Doom Loop. Some of these are:

- Lurching back and forth and straying far outside the three circles
- Implementing big programs, radical change efforts, dramatic revolutions; chronic restructuring—always looking for a miracle moment or new savior
- Jumping right to action without disciplined thought
- Running about like Chicken Little in reaction to technology change
- Spending a lot of energy trying to align and motivate people, rallying them around new visions.

Facing recent issues of declining enrollment, budget cuts, and limited resources, there is a tremendous threat that we may adopt some of the doom loop strategies. Our decisions must be continually couched within the three circles of our Hedgehog Concept. Under present conditions, we need to focus on how we can re-connect with our students. What are the mechanisms by which we can create more face-to-face interactions between faculty and students and between students and students?

We need to begin asking the right questions about our past, present, and future policies, staying within the three circles. We need to obtain the necessary data to make informed decisions. For example, Dr. Jamison did a study to explore whether requiring students to participate in office hours affected their performance in her class. Her study may provide the answer. Is this an effective way to promote additional interaction? What would be an effective method? In my class I asked how many students made $15 an hour or more. Out of 30, only one student raised his hand. Will supporting an increase in the minimum wage or tuition-free public higher education reduced the number of hours these students need to work to support their education, opening up college-related opportunities? Will it increase the number of qualified high school graduates who believe they never could afford to go to college? It seems like the answer would be "Yes," and yet

UMF is silent about these issues that could have dramatic positive effects on our Hedgehog Concept.

Change is inevitable; thus UMF is not immune to change. But will it change in a way we feel is beneficial to our students? The students whose lives permit them to have the UMF experience are still getting the benefits that were once shared with many more of our former students. But there are students now graduating who will never know of the opportunities they missed. To me, this seems like a sad turn of events. This is one of those times that it is good to be a hedgehog. We need to fight to maintain an interactive community with the same passion we felt when we decided that a small, under-funded, liberal arts college that trains teachers, and emphasizes teaching above all else, was the place we wanted to call home.

Joel King is Professor of Psychology at UMF.

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Fit for Life

Alison Thayer

As far back as I can remember my mother told me I was going to be a teacher. How or when she decided this I am not quite sure. As a child, I demonstrated a strong desire for reading and very often could be found with my face buried in a book. Maybe this convinced her, or perhaps it was that my mother was raised in a time when women still had limited career choices. Regardless, I was destined to be a teacher.

So on to the University of Maine at Farmington, a very well-known teacher's college, for the four year program that would teach me all I needed to know to be a successful high school teacher. Given my aptitude for reading and my lack of interest in small children, it seemed logical to choose the path of a high school English teacher. Enthusiastically I enrolled in all the required courses and all seemed like I was on a path of great success to become what my mother had decided so long ago.

Not to be. Fortunately, I did my required practicum early in my college career and very quickly realized that teaching was not going to be for me, and that I strongly disliked being in the classroom with a bunch of uninterested, self-important, hormone-imbalanced teenagers. So what could I do now? Already two years into my college education, what path could I take that would lead me to a career of fulfillment and satisfaction? Fitness!

Also it was very fortunate that the HEA requirement came early in my college education. This was a three-credit course that awarded 1.5 credits for one lecture on health-related topics and 1.5 credits for three 60-minute workouts each week. It was/is the equivalent of the current PHE (Physical Health Education) program. And it was a life-saver for me. An unhealthy teen with poor exercise, nutrition, and almost all health-related behaviors, I of course resisted this forced look in the mirror at an unhappy and self-destructive person. But, because it was something I had to do and do with consistency, benefits naturally started to be noticed. I started to feel great—physically, mentally, and emotionally. I felt awesome! I started to wonder how could I make this a career?

Teaching matters. Teachers matter. Teachers come in many forms. Many teachers influenced my choices, my thinking, my direction—but none more than those that led my fitness classes and taught me the value of health, and

the value of taking care of myself, and having self-respect. My HEA instructors, teachers, had a profound effect on my life and I will forever be grateful for them and the UMF requirement of a course that teaches the benefits and value of regular physical activity. The class and the requirement saved my life—at least the quality of my life.

I pursued the path that would help me be that kind of person that had inspired me like my HEA instructors. I wanted to be part of teaching others how to make healthy lifestyle choices and feel the amazing benefits of regular physical activity. I started teaching group fitness classes, earned the credentials to be a certified personal trainer, and immersed myself into the fitness industry. And I have never looked back. I have been a fitness instructor/fitness specialist for 25 years and have been blessed to work with a diverse range of people from nine to 98 years old, ironman competitors to post-polio adults, the angry at the husband gift card recipients to the eager let's get started today! exercise enthusiasts. And many others, with their own unique goals, fitness, and experience levels, likes and dislikes, personalities and learning styles have been my students. Thousands of UMF students have participated in my PHE classes and fulfilled the UMF PHE requirement. Hundreds have participated in my training programs and classes. I have been a teacher of health and fitness. Gyms have been my main classroom, along with the outdoors and the place where often people feel the safest and least vulnerable—their homes. My job, my goal is to teach others the components of a safe and effective exercise plan and how to make healthy lifestyle choices. And to teach others how to teach that same thing. An important part of my job is to teach future fitness instructors, personal trainers, and athletic conditioning coaches how to build safe and effective exercise programs, and to give them the practical experience to acquire and refine the skills required to teach fitness.

Every day I teach. It might be a fitness class, or a single client about safe form and technique. It could be a PHE class about healthy eating at the cafeteria, a formal class with future trainers studying to take the international certification exam, or sometimes even a conversation in the lobby with a member struggling with finding ways to fit exercise into a busy life. I am a teacher of health and fitness.

The classroom is still my least favorite venue. I struggle on those days to find the confidence and bravery to face twenty-plus inquiring faces and share my knowledge and passion. But like all the roles I play as a teacher, I find that after I take a deep breath and just settle down to the task at hand, my passion

and enthusiasm for what I do overrule all other factors. I remember why what I am doing is important. I get inspired by the students that ask questions, the students that want to know more, that seek their own path in the fitness industry. I think about it like a snowball, starting with just one person that feels the passion and excitement and how once he or she passes that along, the snowball gets bigger and bigger. It is very rewarding when I can influence or persuade a client to change behaviors or find their own passion for fitness. But it is even more rewarding when I can teach a student to do that as a future trainer or instructor, because I know that snowball is going to keep on getting bigger and bigger.

Looks like my mom knew what was best after all, as she did about most things in life. And even though I tried to move away from the teaching profession, it is exactly where I am now, just not in the traditional sense. I am thankful to have found a passion that could be turned into an extremely rewarding career. What began as something I dreaded and resisted very quickly turned into a passion and necessity in my life. Books are still a very important part of my life too; I take great pleasure in sticking and keeping my nose in a book. And even though I never became an English teacher, I still value the education I received. I have heard it said that English majors can do anything they want—it was true for me for sure.

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