ALL ABOUT

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Our Grand Ways Reflecting on Our Core Values

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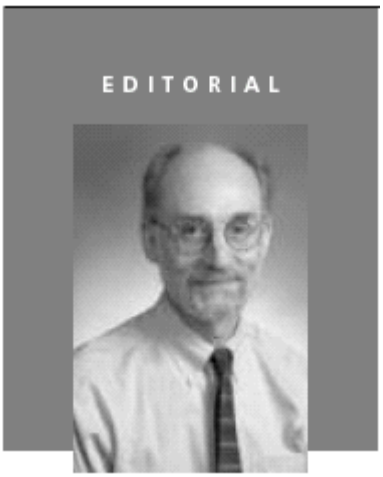

Recently, I was struck by some reflections on the life of Jacques Derrida published in *The New York Times.* The author of the piece made the claim that with Derrida's death has come the end of the tradition of grandtheory: the effort of the philosopher to take on the most basic questions of human life and with it, the responsibility to provide his/her fellow citizens with critical insights into the nature of social and personal existence. In the world of the social sciences, skepticism about "grand-theory" has resulted in a more limited focus on so-called "middle range" theory, or to very practical efforts to answer specific questions or solve concrete problems.

If it is indeed the case that we have become skeptical at best or completely cynical about big ideas that might not reflect base self- or group-interests; if we cannot imagine understandings of the world that transcend the instrumental, where are we? Even Richard Rorty, noted for exactly this kind of skepticism, poses this question: What happens when we lose a "vocabulary of shared social hope?"

These days, it is not unusual for universities to get trapped between seeking maximum market share and claiming rigorous academic quality. It is very rough to ride on the fantasy of being both a finely tuned economical machine and a community of people seeking to understand and improve the good of human lives. Thus, as pragmatic as any institution tries to be, the question of fundamental universal claims will not go away. What can happen is that we get mesmerized by the possibility of solving every problem as though

it were simply pragmatic, while at the same time making unexamined, even naïve, and hugely consequential assumptions about what is right. (For example, in a completely well-intentioned effort to create a perfectly fine-tuned system of admissions and schedule, we can forget to ask, with equal care, whom these systems include, exclude, and with what good reason.) That is, in such a context, it becomes harder to talk together about teaching and learning or to wonder about our obligations to our students and to each other. It becomes harder to think deeply about what we really love. That is, even with the best intentions, we are directed less by "social hope" than by the dazzle of instrumentalism.

What can we do about this? Is this movement an inevitable component of any process of institutionalization? We need to find time and space to ask ourselves what we are doing and why.

We need discussions that can encourage us to talk about the vision we have of our students' learning and of our own professional development. We need occasions to be with our students and to attentively listen to their ideas, their goals, and their fantasies about thinking and learning. We need to create opportunities to reflect on our work as teachers and on the direction of our college. And we need to find ways to challenge each other to think about the ideas and the experiences that animate our professional lives.

There is an understandable worry about spending time on something like what we at Empire State College have called our "core values." Many are concerned that such conversations can be pushed to a plane so far from the day-to-day realities of mentoring, that we might congratulate ourselves on the mere words we have struggled to agree on, even while we remain uncertain about the quality of our everyday teaching practices or about the direction of our institution. Yet, it's my sense that if such skepticism were to win the day, we would have found another excuse to remain suspicious of any process of reflecting on what we hold most sacred and debating the agreed upon values that we need to hold us together. We'd lose our connections to the very sources of what truly moves us.

What is so powerful about our college is that, like others, it was built on some rather "grand theories" - theories about access, experiential learning, individualization, collaborative learning, student ownership of their education, and about the social and personal transformative possibilities of learning. We need to recover our enthusiasm for and willingness to grapple with these big ideas. Of course they can be questioned. They're not absolutes. They can be refined or changed. They can be examined within the context of our deliberations on key topics - on instrumental issues - like the calendar or the "front porch," or "general education requirements," or "enrollment management." By critically reflecting on our everyday work, carefully listening to our students, and remaining attentive to the possibilities that emerge in our particular historical circumstances, we can alter what we do, shift our plans, and even revise our core. But this is exactly what the project of grand theory is all about. It demands, as Derrida describes, to "try to know more, to take our time and hold onto our freedom . " It demands that we not forget our responsibility as grand theorists even at our little college.

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Alisoun's Daughters: Gender, Transgression and Experiential Learning

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Note: Elana Michelson, the 2003 recipient of the Susan H. Turbin Award for Excellence in Scholarship, delivered this talk at the All College Conference in March, 2004.

One of the things I have come to understand in both my scholarship and my work with our students is that the short sentence "I know" is an autobiographical narrative as well as a knowledge claim. So I'm going to start with a bit of my own intellectual history. I started out in college and graduate school having fallen in love with medieval literature. The Middle Ages was a strange infatuation for a New York Jewish red diaper baby in the 1960's, and I've never quite unraveled all the psychic threads that took me there. In any event, I didn't get far as a medievalist. Instead, I began teaching writing in the Union Leadership Program at the Labor College. From there, I was sidetracked from composition to mentoring union leaders in degree program planning and portfolio-development.

The work that I have actually ended up doing as a scholar has been located in what we at the college call credit by evaluation, specifically the question of what it means to "learn from experience." That question, as I have tried to tease out over the years, emerges from a series of prior questions. How is that some knowledges - and some knowers - are given legitimacy and not others? What is the relationship between the subject and object of knowledge? What is the relationship between epistemological authority and other forms of power? Who judges whose knowledge? And on what basis? In whose interest? At whose expense? Those questions have taken me at various times into reading feminist theory, postcolonialism, the critique of the Enlightenment, science studies, queer theory, and theories of situated cognition. And now, the wheel having come full circle, as it were, I am writing a book named for one of the pilgrims in *The Canterbury Tales,* a middleaged cloth manufacturer named Alisoun whose favorite activities are sex, gossip, travel and self-justification.

Alisoun, Wife of Bath

From the point of view of medieval Christian doctrine, Alisoun - the Wife of Bath - is utterly outrageous. She has been married five times and grown wealthy trading marital favors for control over her husbands' businesses. She lies when it suits her, treats pilgrimages as a pleasant form of packaged tourism, and happily excuses her sexuality on the grounds that "Venus yaf (gave) me my lust" (III:611). Yet she has no hesitation in challenging venerable textual authorities on the grounds that her life has taught her to know better than such preeminent authorities as St. Paul and St. Jerome.

As a medieval set piece, Dame Alisoun is the incarnation of a long tradition of patristic and clerical denunciations of women: garrulous, greedy, scolding, hungry for both money and pleasure, and happy to fight the war between the sexes using either seductiveness or talk. At the same time, as a member of the new middle classes, she has rights of property, ownership and contracts that had become commonplace among the bourgeoisie but that were denied to women in medieval common and canon law (Carruthers 1979). As a woman claiming agency in a highly gendered game of power, as a commodities manufacturer among the feudal estates, and as a loudly opinionated layperson in an environment still dominated by the Church, Alisoun of Bath is a transitional figure. She is both a medieval cliché and, in effect, English literature's first modern. And the first word she utters in *The Canterbury Tales* is "experience."

One of the things I have been attempting to trace in my scholarship is the invention of "experience" as a foundational move in the emergence of the modern subject. I believe strongly that how we "learn from experience" is not simply a question of cognitive theory or theories of adult education. Rather, it is a question of understanding the forms of personhood enabled and required by liberal capitalist societies and thus a question of culture and politics. I want to argue that "experiential learning" as such is the product of a particular social and intellectual moment that is personified by Alisoun of Bath. In contrasting experience and "auctoritee" and in insisting that "Experience, though noon auctoritee/ were in this world, is right ynogh for me/ to speke" (III:1-2) Alisoun represents a particular historical moment in which "experiential learning" is an insurgent and transgressive claim.

This afternoon, I want to start with the Wife of Bath as the prototype of the transgressional experiential learner who represents a threat to the ideological and social status quo. But then I want to trace the way in which this threat is tamed so that, in the intervening centuries, "experience," or, rather, the claim to "learn from experience" becomes the new authority. I am going to sketch a good bit of history as briefly as I can, because I also want to raise the question of what this has to do with day-to-day life at Empire State College and what some of the implications of our practices are. Finally, I want to raise the question of how and under what conditions the claim to have "learned from experience" might regain its insurgent and transgressive

power. I should say from the start that I think I have some partial answers to most of those questions, but that I do not know the answer to this last one.

In the famous Prologue to her tale, the Wife of Bath lays claim to experience as both a corrective to received truth and an alternative authority. Churchly dogma can say what it likes - that the sole proper use of the genitals is "for purgacioun of uryne," for example - but experience "woot (knows) wel it is noght so" (III:120-124). This not only changes the nature of evidence but also the site from which knowledge can be generated. It is not so much that Alisoun - or Chaucer, for that matter - holds this or that heterodox opinion; rather, what is being reflected here is a new relationship between personal experience and belief. Alisoun's most radical statements are not about sexual license - the Middle Ages could easily accommodate sexual license. They are the claim that "I am expert in al myn age" (III:174) and that "I woot (know) as wel as ye" (III:63).

In insisting that her own life experience provides a corrective to the authoritative texts of Christian doctrine, Alisoun is echoing a broader debate concerning knowledge and interpretation. This is a period of rebellions against both religious and civil authorities: the Great Schism, the Peasants' Revolt, the uprisings to depose both Edward II and Richard II, and, perhaps most significantly, the Wycliffe movement for vernacular translation and lay access to the *Bible.* Chaucer is writing at an historical moment in which hegemonic ideologies no longer seem to adequately account for people's experienced lives (Leicester, 1990; Knapp 1990). *The Canterbury Tales* present a variety of individuals holding opinions in contradiction to each other, and the meaning of their tales, like the pilgrims themselves, can no longer be prevented from "wanderynge by the weye" (I:467).

This more fluid marketplace of ideas, as it were, is both cause and effect of a second form of fluidity: that of the marketplace itself. As a cloth manufacturer, Alisoun is a participant in the most highly developed capitalist industry of the day, the one that, by the late 14th century, has moved furthest in the direction of wage labor and a monied economy (Carruthers 1979). What this allows is a subjectivity less "fixed" in and by the medieval social hierarchy. Greater mobility of social status is matched by greater freedom of movement. The fluidity of money matches the fluidity of thought. Seen in this regard, Alisoun is not only championing the rights of her gender, but also those of her class (Paterson 1983).

At the same time, it matters that Alisoun is a woman. In placing the claim that one can learn from experience in the mouth of a female character, Chaucer inscribes "auctoritee" and "experience" as another set of gendered Western dualisms in terms of which knowledge has traditionally be authorized: mind and body, reason and emotion, objectivity and subjectivity, and in the case of the Christian Middle Ages, eternity and history (Michelson 1996a). I have titled the book I am writing *Alisoun's Daughters,* not only because I am interested in women's knowledge (which I am), but to tease out how knowledge gets legitimated or marginalized for all of us variously gendered beings. By "daughter" I mean the state of being marginalized within - or in rebellion against - epistemological power relations, being subject to the (male, or white, or European, or middle class, or social scientific, or academic) gaze of power of those who claim, as Bell Hooks has written, "to know us better than we can know ourselves" (Hooks 1990:22).

The Knowing Subject

Historically, the use of experience as an alternative authority must be understood as both an epistemological and a political innovation. It is a product of the period in which the individual was being born as an autonomous, rational subject and in which the modern relationships among experience, reason, knowledge and individual liberty were being formulated, initially in Chaucer's day and more fully in the course of the Enlightenment. The knowing subject and the democratic subject not only emerge simultaneously, but are in many ways creations of each other. The right to argue for individual truths becomes foundational to claims for the full range of bourgeois freedoms, from the right to private property to the right to overthrow the king.

Foucault (1979) famously argued that the development of internalized norms - and the categorizations and measurements with which to enforce them - was the underside of the political and judicial framework within which the bourgeoisie arose. While every society has had ways of controlling the body, the management of inner experience became crucial at a point at which the threat of violent coercion was being replaced in some contexts with internalized standards of discipline and self-control. It becomes reason's task to fit "man" into the economic and political order. The relationship of the mind to the unruliness of experience is essentially a power relationship, in which the ability of reason to exercise control mirrors political authority (Michelson 1996b).

In many ways, the key to that internalized power relationship becomes the management of experience. First, experience and reason are set apart as first and second-order activities. According to John Locke, for example, experience is the foundation of all knowledge. "Whence has [the mind] all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from *experience"* (Locke 1964 [1689]: II, I, 2; emphasis in original). At the same time, for all his valorization of experience, Locke imposes a chronology in which experience, like the female, is seen as a passive resource that must be acted upon (Michelson 1996b). Second, the new forms of experiential knowledge are based on the careful distinction between experience and reason and on closely managing the algorithms for making knowledge out of *raw* experience. Experimental science, of course, is one obvious example. Utilitarian economic self-interest is another. More broadly than that, and consistent with it, are new forms of personal and social identity based, not on the unchanging status of birth and blood but on propriety, self-ownership, and the careful distinction between *having* experience and having the ability to learn from it. Experience has won the battle with authority, but at a price.

What happens to Alisoun's daughters in the meantime? As experiential learning, in the form of enlightened economic self-interest and experimental science, becomes the new authority, the insurgent voice that Alisoun represents becomes subject to new constraints and regulation. The new experiential learner is inscribed as a particular kind of human being, an emphatically male human being, who claims a place in the new world order by vanquishing the irrational and disorderly. It is a nice move. Having been marginalized for centuries through Church dogma as being less capable of virtue, women become associated with irrationality at precisely the moment at which virtue is being replaced by reason as the new ideal.

On various fronts and across a number of centuries, an extraordinary amount of attention has been placed on excluding different categories of people from the ranks of "experiential learners," distinguishing between those who can and can't make meaning from their own experience, and then denying people economic and political rights based on their supposed inability to interpret their own experience.

The move, in effect, is as follows: now that it is laudatory for men to learn from experience, not only they can, but they are the *only ones* who can. In the rise of experimental science, "a Canterbury tale" becomes synonymous with an old wives' tale to mean a silly superstition with no experiential foundation or evidence.

Thus, Galileo invokes Alisoun's old nemesis, St. Jerome, to dismiss "the chatty old woman" (Reeves 1999) who would presume to practice philosophy or science. Robert Boyle holds his experiments late at night to ensure that women cannot attend (Haraway 1997). The case of Johnannes Kepler is perhaps the most ironic. Kepler claims that "untutored experience . is the mother who gives birth to Science as her offspring" (cited in Reeves 1999:347) while defending his own mother from the charge of witchcraft by calling her a silly and ineffectual old woman who is much too powerless to be a witch.

On various fronts and across a number of centuries, an extraordinary amount of attention has been placed on excluding different categories of people from the ranks of "experiential learners," distinguishing between those who can and can't make meaning from their own experience, and then denying people economic and political rights based on their supposed inability to interpret their own experience. Robert Boyle's writings, for example, eliminate nearly everybody. Only leisured gentlemen of wealth were seen to have the credibility to take part in experiments; women were too dependent, workers too servile, merchants too self-interested, and Catholics too crafty to be trusted witnesses (Shapin 1994). With the emergence of democratic government, the denial of political rights - the withholding of the franchise from women and workers, for example, and the appropriation of the non-European world - was similarly justified by the claim that those whose rights were being denied could not learn from experience. Women's greater emotionality precluded a reasoned understanding of the world and would play havoc with the deliberations of public life (Gatens 1988). Members of the working classes were children in need of instruction, not adults who could learn from their mistakes (Vicinus 1974). Africans could not make inferences based on experience and observation and thus were incapable of governing themselves (Masolo 1994; Mumbime 1988). Arabs were too backward to understand their own best interests or else too degenerate and lazy to try (Said 1978). A series of social practices arose for the management of the unruly experience of the "Other:" anthropology for the natives, sociology and scientific management for the working class, and medicine and psychiatry for the three closely related categories of women, homosexuals and lunatics.

In one sense, then, the claims of experience that were once foundational to radical changes in the world have come to serve the opposite function. Where once Alisoun's insistence that experience was "right ynogh" was an act of epistemological insurgency, the algorithms we've inherited for making meaning out of experience serve quite conservative functions in the world. They allow us the insights of science, to be sure, and I am not underestimating the importance of that. But they also constrain us as social beings who struggle to make our own experience *fit* into stable truths and social identities. One might characterize the Enlightenment project as first stealing Alisoun's best lines and then creating a world in which it was again possible to shut her up.

Bringing It Home

Empire State College was founded in a tradition of adult learning that can be traced through the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and liberal humanism to the humanistic psychology of the 1960s and early 1970s. While that tradition has evolved over the years, and while this college was founded at a moment in which that tradition was pushing the educational envelop in many ways, our practices and assumptions still have the marks of their origins. We practice a form of experiential learning that presumes:

- an integrated self that, in the proper environment, can explore and articulate its own learning and be empowered in and by the process; and
- a philosophy of learning that holds the unit of learning to be the individual, the organ of learning to be reason, a process called self-reflection in which experience comes first and learning is a second-order activity.

The ideological foundations of Empire State are an interesting and rather contradictory jumble of assumptions concerning, on the one hand, the radical possibilities of "experiential learning" and, on the

other, a tendency to cast those possibilities in terms that are more than comfortable to the social and epistemological status quo. The "adult learner" of mainstream U.S. practice is a motley blend of John Locke's rational, self-aware knower; Rousseau's noble savage; Dewey's democratic citizen; and Maslow's authentic, self-authorizing self. If you read Malcolm Knowles (1974), for example, experiential learning is cast in terms of individual choice, self-awareness, freedom, rational self-interest, good old American know-how and a disembodied knowing mind. If you read Jack Mezirow (1991), you find rational self-reflection and dialogue as the basis for both legitimate experiential learning and the practice of democracy. Moreover, the terms under which experiential learning is legitimated at Empire State College are the same paradoxical terms of the Enlightenment and liberal humanist knower. Students' learning must be the product of individual reason and something we own as owners of ourselves. At the same time, this knowledge must be "transferable" to and meaningful within the knowledge-practices of the mainstream. We "admit" experience, in both senses of the word, but the paradox is that we then require that experience to be packaged appropriately. Our students thus become subject to the power-effects of the academic gaze. To steal a good line from Simone de Beauvoir, one is not born a student, one becomes one.

Let me use as an example one of Alisoun's daughters who might well be sitting in one of our offices, having just come through a wrenching losing battle for custody of her children. We ask her what she knows that might serve as the basis for credit by evaluation, and she tells a horrific story of her battle with the legal system, tears running down her face. What would we tell her when the conversation came back to the question of credits? We would say, compassionately to be sure, that, to be accredited in an academic context, knowledge has to go beyond the self. Has she read anything about the legal system, perhaps about the double standard for working mothers, or about current trends concerning gender, sexuality and the law? Does she have the broader view? Has she run workshops, perhaps, for other women who could learn from her experience? Moreover, can she separate her rational understanding from the morass of her rage and pain and grief and from the physical sensation of being torn apart when losing custody of her children? We would not say: what is it that your very body is screaming that no judge or legal scholar or feminist theorist of the state can know? And we would probably not ask her - or each other - how the subjugated experience of that daughter of Alisoun could be claimed as an alternative knowledge-base and thus a form of intellectual and social insurgency. We would suggest, implicitly or explicitly, that she distinguish something called "learning" from the totality of what she has been through, and we would make those distinctions through the same binary categories that once marginalized the Wife of Bath: public versus private, reason versus emotion, creditable - and the pun is important - and unaccreditable.

Alisoun's Claims

I must say that I am more than a little torn about talking about this. I think that suspicions concerning the assessment of experiential learning have always been an undercurrent in the college. Some of us have long thought that it is a second-rate practice, something we do to give adults a leg up in getting degrees and fine for things like computer programming or accounting, but with very little legitimacy in liberal arts fields. As Generation X faculty are finally coming into the college in larger numbers, most of you are coming from traditional graduate programs and have come of age in a world in which buzz words such as "access" and "relevance" are no longer very much in the air. Many of us are happy to leave CBE to the assessment professionals and get it off the table as an academic function. All of us have our favorite anecdotes about the sometime shoddiness of our assessment practices. I am afraid of giving ammunition to those of us who, for any and all of those reasons, find experiential learning less than interesting and perhaps even less than respectable.

But I also want to raise these issues because, as many of us know from our scholarly work, Alisoun is at it again. If the insistence that we can learn from experience is at the heart of the world the Enlightenment made, it is also at the heart of the ways in which the meanings of that world are being contested. The claims of experiential learning have again become central to the struggle for a redistribution of social and economic

power and epistemological authority. Contending views of what and how we "learn from experience" (Fenwick 2000), the re-examination of the relationship between "reason" and the body (Grosz 1993); and attention to the politics of knowledge suggest that the meaning of "experience" is again at the center of a widespread and deeply felt debate.

First, greater attention to experience has been claimed both by women and by a variety of cultures as foundational to their particular "ways of knowing" (Gilligan 1982; Collins, 1991; Masolo 1994). In opposition to masculinist and European-normed epistemologies that value abstract observation and technocratic potency, alternative epistemologies also acknowledge the emotional and embodied qualities of knowledge and hold personal testimony and shared experience as epistemologically valuable.

Secondly, the experience of disenfranchised groups has again been used as a corrective to forms of knowledge produced within the social institutions of the powerful. One important aspect of the women's movement, for example, has been to reclaim the knowledge available from "our bodies, ourselves." Similarly, anti-racist and postcolonialist scholarship has challenged the anthropological construction of "primitive minds" in which "for too long our experiences have been told by others . , our reality has been claimed by 'foreign' authorship" (Jansen 1991:5). Standing their ground as agents of knowledge, those who have been marginalized by Western knowledge practices are again making Alisoun's claim.

Those claims, to be sure, are not uncomplicated because we are less naïve these days about notions of unmediated access to "raw" experience. Whether we put it in terms of Althusser's ideological state apparatuses, Lacan's unconscious as a displacement of consciousness, or a host of other materialist or postmodernist notions, a lot of people seem to be agreeing these days that, 2,500 years of philosophy aside, we cannot know ourselves. Experience is preconditioned by the mediating influences of language, ideology, structures of power, and received understandings of both self and world.

Caught Between Poles

I find myself caught between two alternating poles that I understand are in some ways mutually exclusive. On the one hand, I want to participate in reaffirming the subjugated knowledge made available through the experience of life in marginalized social categories. On the other, I accept the debunking of any naïve beliefs concerning an authentically experiencing self. There are times at which I am more attracted to or swayed by one of these poles than the other, but it is certainly problematic to hold both views at once. I am thus trying to tease out how "experiential learning" can regain its aura of insurgency and possibility even if we don't take for granted the authenticity and reliability of the experiencing self.

What I have noticed is that there also seems - across many 20th century intellectual perspectives - a kind of hankering after a transgressive space in which experience, or something like it, can stake its claim. What is posited is not so much an authentic self innocent of history and power, but an excess, a residue of something left over that cannot be held captive by social order. It is a space in which transgressive experience can reside. That space is variously called the unconscious, carnival, border-crossing, hybridity. It is a liminal space in which binary categorizations break down into a kind of epistemological cross-dressing. It is a space that cannot be tamed by reason, that is not fully transparent to itself, and that cannot be accounted for through notions of socialization and hegemony.

Interestingly, this notion of an untamed space is still associated with Alisoun, that is, with the female, and with feminist critiques of binary logic and the "mastery" of reason. It is what Emma Goldman meant when she said "If I can't dance, I don't want to be in your revolution." It is what Audre Lorde (1984:110) meant when she said that the master's tools will never demolish the master's house. It is what Judith Butler (1991) means when she says that gender is a kind of performance art and that there is something interesting left over between the acts. It is what Luce Irigaray (1985) means when she says that woman is the return of the

repressed, offering a subversive, erotic boundarilessness in which inside and outside cannot be distinguished and that patriarchical discourse cannot represent or contain. It is what I mean when I say that I want Alisoun back, and not just because I have fallen in love again with the Middle Ages. "To speak as a woman means to undo the reign of the 'proper' - the proper name, property, propriety, self-proximation. It means to evoke rather than designate, to overflow and exceed all boundaries and oppositions" (Grosz 1989:132.) It is to say, outside of stable meanings, with Alisoun, that experience, though no authority were in this world, is right enough for me to speak.

Notes

1 All quotations are from *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1957) F.N. Robinson, (Ed.), second edition. Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

2 Chaucer's own view of the Wife of Bath has long been debated by critics, with her various characteristics and assertions read as so much evidence of his view. While I agree with those who argue that she should be read as an aspect of the contentious social realm of the 14th century and not as a sinner within Christian typology, I am less concerned with taking a position than I am with using the terms on which it rests. As Peggy Knapp argues, "The issue at stake is not what Chaucer intended, but how texts interact with the social formations within which they function" (1990:17). The critical debate itself is itself the mirror image of the *Tales* as what Knapp calls a "boundary text, . one whose environment holds more than one configuration of power contending for preeminence as the fundamental way for its society to see life" (8).

3 There is some controversy about whether or not Emma Goldman ever actually said those words. I, for one, hope she did and am content to believe she said them. The world is better for having the utterance, even if apocryphal.

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ALL ABOUT MENTORING
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The Story of My Creativity

Robert Congemi, Northeast Center

The story of my creativity - my name is Carl DeMarco, by the way - begins, I suppose, when I was 17 years old. Before that apparently I was interested only in athletics, particular the game of baseball. But, I remember, one lonely and dreary Sunday afternoon I went by myself to a movie, which turned out to be "Rebel Without A Cause" - do you know it? It was so long ago - and something happened to me. I have never been quite clear what happened exactly, but, curiously, the next week when my English teacher asked me if I would consider being in the school play, I said, "Yes. Yes. Absolutely." And then as if that were not enough, one evening, shortly afterwards, I was passing the time in the bargain basement of our local Macy's department store and found myself selecting a copy of Eugene O'Neill's plays from out of a bin of books which were on sale.

"Sometimes I think James Dean changed the lives of my whole generation," I told a friend years later. "And what did my teacher, Mrs. Hughes, see in me? Nor could O'Neill have been a more seductive accident."

After that trinity of occurrences in my life came a true whirlwind of changes. I was in all the school plays, every one of them, I read "Desire Under The Elms," "Mourning Becomes Electra," "Long Day's Journey Into Night," and most everything else America's great playwright wrote. I tried to write plays myself and followed the careers of James Dean, Marlon Brando, and, too, Elvis Presley, with great interest and affinity.

In short, I decided to be an actor, a writer, and if good fortune was to be my lot in life, even someone in motion pictures.

But, as I approached the middle of my senior year in high school, it soon became very clear to me that this dream was not to be - at least, not yet. I had reality to deal with. After all, at most, I told myself, I was merely a beginning young actor and still had much, so much to learn about the skill and art of creative writing. I would do the right thing and go to college - of course continue my interest in the creative world as much as I could - but it would be college I would work on first, an affordable college, to boot.

"Carl, go to a state school," my guidance counselor told me. I stood before her, a boy in jeans and long, dark hair. "They are free, and you can major in literature or drama. If nothing extraordinary happens, at least you can teach."

Which is what I did.

As I tell you what happened to me during and after college, I suspect you will not be surprised. I continued to be in plays, I wrote some articles for the school newspaper and stories for the literary magazine, even became its editor. I read and read, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Dostoevsky, Albert Camus, etc. But I also fell in love during that time, and then got married, had a child, became extraordinarily conscientious and practical because of these things, and accepted an available teaching position in a small rural town. Of course when I first went to that town, I assured myself that I had every intention of quite soon committing myself full-tilt, as they say, to my creativity. But, alas, that was also of course not to be. How did it happen? I worked hard at my new profession, at being a good father and family man, at securing the best living quarters I could for my young wife and children - until, suddenly, three years had passed. Indeed, I did not know where they had gone to. I remember, the summer after the three years, things somehow came to a head. In the coming year I would be considered for tenure, for a lifetime appointment, I had a second child, and when by chance I read an account of the rebel French poet, Arthur Rimbaud, in a book titled *The Day on Fire,* on a hot, summer, Sunday afternoon, I went to the fields behind the high school where I taught and stood face to face with my destiny. My young wife had come with me, at my bidding. My in-laws, who were visiting us, remained at our house, watching the children.

"This book has made me crazy," I told my wife. "This kid of a poet, this teenage genius, with no money, no prospects, with absolutely no encouragement, runs away several times to Paris, each time gets brought back to his provincial home against his will, until finally he is able to free himself from the domination of his mother and society to do work that would make him immortal! He goes without eating, without a place to sleep, with hunters of humanity and vipers surrounding him, and yet has courage like steel - no, like diamond - to do what he was born to do! And, I, I worry about taking a chance in 20th century America, in my maturity, with a wife who would support everything I wanted to do!"

We sat on a grass knoll behind the school building.

"So, then do it," she told me. "We'll survive, Carl. Somehow."

I didn't do it. Instead I gained tenure, threw myself into my work, occasionally wrote something when it was more or less possible or convenient, raised my family, became a fixture and an admired academic in the rural town, and grew steadily older.

More years passed. My desire to create art remained, always there, but firmly at the back of my mind. My children grew up, I took a position at a university, and I grew more or less prosperous and what I suppose the world would call successful. My children went on to university themselves, I bought a second home, a tiny vacation home for my family - until, surprise of surprises, I realized one day, that indeed my life was more than half over, significantly more than half over, at least that part of my life which could still afford me health, energy and passion.

"I cannot believe it," I told a colleague. "Life is a mere second, isn't it? I think I always knew that was so, but I also think I never really believed it. But, my God, the other day I was 17, now I am in my 50s! How did this happen?"

More than that, people around me, people whom I knew, some nearly my age, even one younger than I, died - my brother, from cancer; a friend I had, playing basketball one Saturday afternoon, a woman I worked with, also from cancer. It made my head dizzy, and shook me to the bone.

And then there were the successes of other people, people my age, great successes. For some foolish

reason - I know it is almost impossible to believe, but it is so - I had always imagined that no one of my generation had really become famous yet, had really become one of the leaders of my society or of my times, had become a world-historical individual. Well, one night after work, I sat down in my favorite chair, turned the television on and was informed that the Nobel Prize in literature had been awarded to a man who was younger than I! Again, I was stunned. A Nobel Prize in literature for him; a supervisory job for me.

"What have I done?" I asked myself. "What have I been thinking? What extraordinary self-delusion have I submitted myself to?"

With this epiphany, however belated, I finally resolved do something. It *had* to be now. As they say, if not now, when? There could be no further hesitations, delays, postponements, ambivalence. I even had support for this self-defining adventure, which I did not have before - my now rather considerable bourgeois success, the children raised, a bit of money in the bank.

I told my wife, who looked at me curiously, who after years of my irresolution could not find it possible, I supposed, to any longer immediately respond with words of support and applause.

"I mean it this time, my darling," I said to her. "I know you don't believe me, nor should you. But you will see. Look at all I have lost. For just one thing, look at the books that have not been written."

Yet still, it was not quite to be, this deep and precipitous change in my life, this sudden withdrawal with all its real dangers from the ordinary world, whose time had come round at last. I'm not about to tell you that I lived happily ever after. No, not quite. For instance, shortly after I made my heroic pronouncement something happened that shook me again to my very core. I thought it probably would be a good thing to ask someone about what I was going to do, someone who had already done it, who perhaps might offer me some insight and comfort. It wasn't long before I found myself talking to the husband of one of my colleagues who I heard had had something of a career as a novelist. I visited the man and my colleague at their home and over a drink put *the* question to this man, whose name was Arthur.

"Arthur, tell me what has it has been like for you - to go off and to try and pursue a life of creativity? I know it won't be exactly like Gauguin - Tahiti, great works, immortal reputation, but it would be nice to know a little about what will happen to me."

To something of my surprise, Arthur looked at me archly, and asked, "Are you sure you really want to know? "

Arthur was a rather slight, pale man, obviously intelligent, intellectual, clever. He scrutinized me. "Do you really want me to be honest?"

I stiffened a little. "Yes, I'm sure. That's why I am here."

"Well, if that is the case," he said. "It has not been a particularly pretty experience. At least not for me." He glanced at his wife. "Not particularly pretty at all. I of course was just like you. For years I had struggled with the idea of leaving my old life and living as I told myself I simply had to. I was not especially proud of myself. I swore *I had to do something."* He glanced at his wife again, as if trying to survey what she felt about what he was saying. "And then I did, finally, do something. Oh, I had a little help from my employer - I said something unfortunate about him, which he learned of and which made him treat me rather badly afterwards. But, that not withstanding - I, a man of some mettle after all - did it. I left my work. I left my old life, my financial security . " He waved his arm. "The whole business."

"And what happened? What's happened?" I asked him.

He smiled at me, curiously. "I embarked on doing all the right things, or at least all the right things as I understood them to be. I decided to be very clear up front about what I would do. I would be a novelist. I would write a first novel about my family history - they were missionaries - which would capture, fascinate the reading world. To that end, I followed all the usual writing advice, created my little writing room, developed a schedule that I would keep to faithfully and intensely every day, regardless, and I began to work. I worked away. I thought and I researched, I studied and I analyzed, I wrote and I wrote and I wrote. I spent an enormous number of hours in my room, despite noticing at the end of my consciousness that as time passed the world seemed to be drifting more and more away from me, inexorably becoming more and more a parade that marched farther and farther from me. Nonetheless, I kept manfully at my tasks, alienation be damned, hints of myself becoming odd, even a little strange, and looking at my wife as much as I dared in order to see whether she still loved, adored and supported me."

"I see," I said, which was all I could manage at the moment. "And . and then what happened?"

Arthur leaned back a bit in his chair, took a sip of his wine, and went on, rather mordant. "Well, ultimately, after a lifetime, it seemed, I finished my novel. The tome was done, and I began, of course, the process infernally known as trying to sell my work. I wrote query letters to editors, I sent outlines of my book, I sent sample chapters. It was all very professional. I got rejected and rejected and rejected, until, finally, as if it were a gift from a commiserating heaven, my book was accepted and finally published."

I perked up at this. "Yes?"

"But, alas, fame and fortune and self-fulfillment were still not to be. At last count, scarcely any copies of my book have been sold, I saw it once in a library going for 50 cents, and I remain here, in the discomfort of my home, wondering about what people, secretly or not, think about me, rather confused about my future, not clear about what to do next, a ward of my wife."

"Oh, dear me," I said.

"So, Carl, do you still want to give up your old life to live the creative one?" he asked me.

Well, you can imagine, dear reader, this was not at all what I had wanted to hear, not at all. Desperately, I asked other people what *they* thought about what I was doing and about what Arthur had said. In general, of course, they told me that this was only one experience, that it was probably just a statement about Arthur, obviously not about what happens to lots of other people - were there not people who have successfully done what I proposed to do? - not about what would necessarily happen to me. And as I thought about this incident more and more, that's what I finally decided to believe. In my mind, for Arthur the cost of living a creative life was perhaps more than he thought it would be, probably even more than he allowed me to know, but, again, this need not be the way things would turn out for me. I *had* to think that way. I simply *had* to deny, play down as much as possible, the thought that I was leading myself into some kind of catastrophe. I *had* to deny all the horrid possibilities - that I would fail, that I would become alienated and strange, that I would beggar myself, that I would hurt my family in some way, destroy my self-esteem, that it would all come to nothing except for failure and even shame. You understand that, don't you? As I have said: I simply could not do once more what I have done all my life! There is a point beyond which I cannot go. I will chance this all-important act of self-definition and meaning, and do so with as much courage and effort as I can. Surely, there have been moments of irresistible clarity in your own life when you have felt as I do, when you have known that there was no question about what you *must* do. Dear God, if I do nothing else but fail and perhaps suffer, I will turn these intimidating possibilities merely into grist for my wheel and write about them.

Actually, already some good things have happened. It has only been a short while since my stunning retirement and change of life, indeed already at some cost in money, to say nothing of the loss of my professional life, and even now some real poetry is coming to me. It is as if I am in a kind of zone. I am not such a fool as to be unaware that this inspiration may not last forever. That understanding is always near to me. But for now, I cannot stop writing. Recently, for instance, I have been thinking about human creativity itself as a subject for a poem, about putting into the best words I can a celebration of the power of this thing in our lives, how, if one thinks about it, creativity accounts for virtually everything that is of any real importance, good and bad. Here is my poem on this theme:

Ideas

Let's speak now of living
Things, ideas, for starters,
Those friends, human makers,

Epoch-fathers, AND enemies,
Evils, notions like hammers,
Beloved of Plato and Christ,

Holy Spirit, Sacred Mother,
Big Bang matrix of life,
God's yellow brick road gift,

The real gas of the universe.
Let us now speak, now tout
Glorious, furious, thought.

Also, a few days later, after writing this poem, another poem came to me. I'm not certain how or why it came. I was merely going for a ride on a Sunday afternoon, just to clear my head. But, suddenly, I had what I supposed was an Experience. One moment, I was coming out of a convenience store holding a container of coffee in my hand, and in the next I was looking at two men on a motorcycle who were shimmering in what I can only describe as a luminous light. It was absolutely extraordinary, wondrous, transporting - the kind of thing people have heard of, but know very little about, or may get glimpses of in, say, a church, but has never really happened to them. The apparent randomness of this vision, or perhaps this visitation of some kind Spirit that exists behind all things - if a person believes that way - took hold of me. The light was there! I couldn't deny it and I couldn't wait to write about it, either. This is what I finally wrote:

Luminosity

Suddenly, luminosity! To my surprise,
The world glows with meaning. Why?
Etched in air that body-builder,
That fat guy starting up his Harley!

Why now? I've waited all my life,
Hearing others, to see this radiance,
And here the miracle reveals itself
By gas pumps of a convenience store.

I've seen the halos in the churches,

Where they make sense, arching saints,
Penumbras golden to concretize good.
But earthly, silly, mundane things?

The Spirit knows of course no laws,
Appears alone to us as it sees fit,
Or I have grown beyond my knowing
Into the eyes and domiciles of secret.

So, now you know my story - so far, at least. Do I strike you as improvident, reckless? Or, at last, courageous? Hard to say? I only hope you wish me well. We live an existence that certainly challenges one's being, don't we? And that being the case, any compassion or sympathy, if not an antidote, is at least something of a comfort.

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Memo of 1995

Eric Zencey, Center for Distance Learning and Center for International Programs

From 1980 until I left in 1995, I taught at Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont. For 13 of those years I was on the core faculty, where I was responsible for studies in "History and Social Inquiry." During my years at Goddard I gradually went from being a novice progressive educator to being one of the longest-hired teachers at the college. As is often the case with elders of the tribe, I was sometimes dismayed to see that younger colleagues didn't share some values and practices that I came to think of as crucial to our effort. I wrote the following memo in an effort to set the faculty straight about one thing that was important to me: "progressive education" is not and cannot be synonymous with "agitprop for progressive political causes." I had resigned my position a few weeks earlier, a circumstance which, for better or worse, freed my tongue. Sending this memo, which reports on an end-of-term faculty development retreat we held that spring, was my last official act as a faculty member at the school.

Memo

To: Goddard Faculty

From: Eric Zencey

Date: June 15, 1995

Subject: Political education at Goddard

At the recent faculty retreat I was asked to flesh out some of the ideas my small group reported. My small group grappled with the question, "is there a necessary affiliation between a progressive education and left, radical politics?" Some of us in the small group (all of us who remained in the group for both days) felt very strongly that whatever relationship may exist between the two is *coincidental* and *formal,* and neither necessary nor intrinsic. We, therefore, reported out a recommendation: that Goddard faculty aim to teach in ways that are *facilitative* rather than doctrinaire in political matters. One clear signal of success in facilitative political education would be if students exposed to the substance and content of a faculty member's teaching had a no better than random chance of guessing that faculty member's political beliefs.

This is a radical recommendation at Goddard. It reaches to the very root of what many of us believe about ourselves, about education, about our role and function as teachers, and about our hopes for the future. Clearly many people were puzzled by this recommendation. Some heard it as a request to reinstate a fairly traditional notion, the notion that good teaching is essentially objective. My aim in writing this memo is to

clarify the goal and the argument that supports it, and to show why some of us think that good progressive education at Goddard ought to be less explicitly political.

A large majority of Goddard teachers are baby boomers. Because of past retrenchments, we have few teachers whose age places them out of that category. We have some teachers younger than boomerdom, but even those faculty have been dramatically influenced by the boomer's defining cultural and historical experience, the cultural transformation that took place in the 60s and 70s. Many of us who went to college in those years accepted the arguments against politically neutral, "objective" education. You know those arguments. One: there is no such thing as objectivity. Two: "politically neutral" is itself a political stance. Three: value neutrality supports the status quo, with all its injustices: imperialism, racism, classism, sexism. Many of us were led, therefore, to embrace an explicitly political pedagogy as the only authentic, appropriate form of education. "Heretofore educators have only interpreted the world," we might have said, paraphrasing Marx; "the point is to change it."

I recall the relief I felt when I finally met a faculty member at the University of Delaware who was progressive, direct and uncompromising in his political beliefs. I thought, finally someone I can learn from. An explicitly political faculty member is, however, one thing at a university (especially one in which the conventions of social science suggest that the study of politics is value neutral) and another thing entirely at a small college. At the University of Delaware I had five professors a semester, and in four years was exposed to something like three dozen different faculty. I chose those three-dozen from among hundreds. The strong political influence of any one particular faculty member could thus be absorbed and diffused by this great breadth of exposure and by my own control - my own capacity for choice. At Goddard we do not have dozens of faculty in any one program; in most areas and in most programs, a student ends up with just a handful of true choices. In some areas students have, in effect, no choice. Unsurprisingly, the majority of our students tend to establish one primary relationship with a faculty member. For offcampus students, that primary and exclusive relationship is structurally required; it is with the advisor. Campus students have greater breadth of exposure, but still tend to gravitate to a single advisor, and usually have only one faculty member in their primary area of interest. Either way, the fact is undeniable: at Goddard, individual faculty loom larger in the (cognitive, emotional, political, aesthetic) lives of their students than do faculty at most universities.

Add to this the fact that it is possible for a student to transfer into Goddard and get a degree after working with *just one faculty member,* and I think you begin to see that politically doctrinaire teaching at Goddard can have undesirable effects. When a doctrinaire teacher is the sole representative of an entire field in a particular program, the college is in effect telling the student: take your education from this obviously partisan person, or go somewhere else. Or, in what is to my mind an even more regrettable situation, the politicized nature and content of the teaching is never problematized for the student, and the student comes to accept the teacher's vision not as one vision among the many possible visions that a reasonable, educated person might hold, but as the one true, right, historically correct perspective, the perspective that a properly educated person will have.

I know that this happens at Goddard; I have seen it happen. I know from personal experience that we have people teaching at Goddard, who believe that their political beliefs are indeed the true, right, historically correct perspective, and who believe that it is not only their privilege but their sacred duty to transmit this perspective to their students. I know that we have recently had people teaching here who believe that their students fail to learn unless by the end of the semester the student ascribes to the same general political beliefs that the teacher does. (I sat in a program faculty meeting and heard a faculty member say of a particular student that he "read all the right things but just didn't get it," which [I was told when I asked] meant that "he continued to disagree and to argue with what he read.")

It is my belief that teachers who do this mistake progressive education for something it is not: they think that

progressive education means "indoctrination into the ideas, perspectives, beliefs and information students need to support progressive political causes." In making this mistake, I believe teachers simply negate but do not transcend the evil of "objective," status-quosupporting education. Education-as-conservative-propaganda is not successfully challenged by education-as-progressive-propaganda. To try to do that just turns the cognitive and emotional and aesthetic and political development of our students into a field of battle. This is ultimately a very selfish thing to do: it proceeds from the needs and wants of the teacher, not the needs and wants of the student.

Education-as-conservative-propaganda is not successfully challenged by education-as-progressive-propaganda. To try to do that just turns the cognitive and emotional and aesthetic and political development of our students into a field of battle.

In advancing this point of view I have been challenged with slippery slope sophistries: "So are you telling me I have to give Hitler equal time in my teaching? That I have to represent genocide and racism as viable alternatives?" No, I'm not saying that. Frankly, this response is rather reductive and simplistic - it presumes a polarized either-or choice that is (to be a bit polarized and reductive myself) part of the problem, not part of the solution. Good teaching happens in the large world of ambiguities and graynesses that we, as complex humans, actually inhabit. One of the things a good teacher is sensitive to is the nature of their own influence, and a good teacher tries to minimize influence that does not bear directly upon the pedagogic purpose (which, I want to emphasize, should involve *how* the student thinks, not what the student thinks). This means that the teacher will not structure the learning experience as an opportunity to create comrades-in-arms, converts, pals or soldiers in the teacher's favorite social cause. The teacher will be student-centered and will teach from a position of developmental sophistication. This means the teacher will try to challenge the student's thinking (if that's what the student needs at that moment) even if the student agrees with the teacher's beliefs, and will try to support the student's thinking (if that's what the student needs at that moment) even if the student disagrees with the teacher's beliefs. The subject of the teaching will never be the nature of the teacher's own political beliefs, unless to withhold information about those beliefs would, in context, be inexcusably coy. (I think it is coyness to withhold information about the self from someone who is an equal. Students and teachers are not equal, and it is disingenuous of a teacher to pretend that they are. At the end of a student's apprenticeship in an area of study, the student and teacher might begin to approach equality; only then can the teacher be assured that his or her self-disclosure will not be used by the student to short-circuit inquiry, but will become one more datum in the student's own process of figuring the subject out. Until that moment, the student may want but does not need to know what the teacher him- or herself really thinks.)

In the 60s many of us who came to believe that objectivity was a chimerical ideal accepted a methodology in which testimony to one's political beliefs was not only acceptable but required. Scholarly articles and books from that era often begin with a touching confession of faith: "The author is a socialist who believes in the collectivization of the means of production." The same tendency has lately been modified by identity politics: "The authors speak as a white, middle-class woman from a major eastern city and as a Chicana from the American southwest." The operant idea was that only by knowing who a person was and where they were coming from could we begin to appreciate their context. These testimonials were supposed to make clear that the speaker spoke not as a faceless, arrogantly pseudo-objective "I" but in full knowledge that one's perception is shaped by where one stands. I don't think these announcements are wrong-headed, exactly.

But I think that as verbal imprecations, as spells designed to accomplish something they just don't do the trick, not at Goddard, not anymore. They don't prevent the commission of injustice. We commit injustice whenever we needlessly constrain the growth and development of our students, and I think that these testimonials do that: they do more harm than good.

Again, the alternative is not the complete closeting of the teacher's self, but an awareness that self-disclosure is not always in the student's best interest. Keeping the lid on who and what you are, and what you believe, is likely to be necessary in order to allow the maximum possible room for your students to seek and find their own beliefs and identity. Many teachers drawn to progressive causes have a strong need to announce their identity and beliefs; but it is exactly that - *their* need, not a demonstrated need of the learners they have undertaken to serve. Progressive education at Goddard proceeds from the needs of the learners, not from the needs of the faculty members: a pedagogy centered in faculty needs is very, very traditional.

The affiliation between progressive politics and progressive education is coincidental and extrinsic, not necessary and intrinsic, because it is formal. The affiliation comes from a common form, a common method: one is led to the practice of progressive education by reconstructing teaching methods in light of what we know and can learn about how people learn, while one is led to a progressive political agenda by applying the same method of critical inquiry to social, cultural and economic issues. I think that many of us have been led to teach at Goddard not out of a desire to see teaching done well, but out of a sense that *here,* in the hearts and minds of students, is the best place to stick a lever and to heave on it in order to effect the social changes that we want to see. We should understand that this is essentially a selfish reason. It has nothing to do with the wants and needs of students as individuals at particular points in their cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, physical evolution. We should trust our methods and our process: if we teach students in truly student-centered ways, and if we respect them as individuals who have their own purposes (and perspectives and political beliefs), they will be led inexorably to progressive politics. They might not always make it there before graduation, but reflection on their Goddard experience will show them the virtue of treating others as equals, as full and complex beings, as endsin- themselves rather than as means to the self's gratification. To short-circuit the student's process of discovery and learning by prescribing (or even passively cueing) its end point is not only wrong, it is dysfunctional: it tends to produce drone-minded converts who are frightening in their lack of appreciation of ambiguity and context, or it produces apathy. What else could result when the capacity for authentic definition of the self through the exercise of political initiative has been usurped by the will of an authority (the teacher)? It seems to me that the only authentic, self-affirming response to a usurpation of political will is resistance.

Some students resist passively by withdrawing into apathy. Others resist more openly by rejecting what they see as indoctrination: they transfer out of Goddard because the school is a poor "fit." Some few students - developmentally more advanced, perhaps - will join debate with faculty around the substantive issues of their studies and engage as equals. Some of these will agree with the expressed political beliefs of the faculty (though it is hard to distinguish these students from the drones who are led by example; the teacher must examine not the belief that is held, but *how* it is held). Others will disagree: they will explicitly challenge and dissent from the political beliefs that the teacher expresses. Such students should be cherished, rather than (as I have seen) be condescended to.

A final note: since the retreat I've had occasion to talk to two former Goddard faculty members, both of whom are honored teachers at other schools. (For fans of identity politics: both of them are female, and as successful, practicing artists both of them are very sophisticated about matters epistemological - they do not, that is, believe in a spurious "objectivity.") In separate conversations I asked them the question that our small group addressed: is there a necessary affiliation between a progressive education and left, radical politics? Without hesitation both of them said "of course not." One went further: "To assume that there is is just fascism of the left." I leave you with that thought.

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From More's *Utopia:* An Interview with Peggy Meerse

Catherine McAllister, Niagara Frontier Center

Dr. Peggy Meerse joined the faculty of Empire State College 22 years ago as a part-time mentor in Cultural Studies at the Fredonia Unit. In 1986, she was instrumental in establishing the college's Jamestown Unit, and served as unit coordinator, dividing her time between the Jamestown and Fredonia units. Her scholarship was honored with the award of a Drescher Fellowship in 1990; during this leave she continued her study of women's autobiography. She was presented the Empire State College Foundation Award for Excellence in Mentoring in 1999.

Beyond and between these dates and achievements, Peggy's dedication to the college and the individual adult learner define her time here. She devoted herself to her students and to their success, designing relevant and challenging studies, engaging her students in critical and personal reflection, and encouraging them over difficult patches in their learning. She served as a model mentor to those more recently hired: she was articulate, creative, organized, supportive, and tireless. Working quietly in the small units on the college's western frontier, her mentoring enriched the lives of hundred of students and scores of faculty and staff. Peggy Meerse retired on August 31, 2004.

Peggy Meerse

McAllister: Your first teaching experiences were in traditional college settings, including SUNY Fredonia -

but you chose to devote your career to teaching in our nontraditional setting. What have been the ramifications of your early decision?

Meerse: I became a generalist rather than a specialist. When I wrote my dissertation on More's *Utopia,* I expected to teach 16th century English literature and do More scholarship. But instead, I think I've worked with only three or four Empire State students in 16th century studies. Recently, I gave my collection of More's complete works to the Newman Center in Fredonia, with no regrets. If I had spent years writing scholarly articles that only a few people would have read, probably I wouldn't have had the opportunity to learn about mythology, children's literature, women's literature, nature writing, American fiction, multicultural literature .

McAllister: As you reflect on your work with the college, what particular experiences or aspects of your work have felt most meaningful and satisfying?

Meerse: Being able to read all this literature and discuss it with students and learn about it from students. Seeing students - especially those who were afraid of college and apprehensive about studying literature and being able to write competently - blossom and grow. Getting to know students over a period of years, sometimes, and seeing them earn their degrees.

McAllister: What frustrations have you experienced in your work - with students, with peers, with college structure?

Meerse: I suppose the typical ones, but now I'm retired, I had very nice going-away parties, and I'm in a nostalgic haze. So I don't want to think of any frustrations.

McAllister: Having spent 20 years as a unit coordinator at Empire State College, your work with the college has been both administrative and instructional. Has this blending of roles been comfortable? Has your experience suggested ways that the unit coordinator role might be altered to enhance organizational effectiveness and personal and professional development?

Meerse: For me, the blending of roles worked really well. I liked the variety. I think being unit coordinator made me feel more invested in the college than I might have felt otherwise. It was satisfying when enrollments were up, students and mentors and staff were happy, and our small piece of the college was running smoothly. I guess one suggestion might be to rotate unit coordinators, the way department chairs rotate in some traditional colleges. Besides spreading out the responsibilities and the drawbacks of coordinating, that would give other unit mentors a better understanding of how the college operates. Of course, many units have only one full-time mentor, if that, and a couple of part timers, so that plan might not work.

McAllister: The college has changed quite a bit over the past years - in size, in modes of delivery, and in approach to adult learning. How do you feel the move to grades and a more defined term schedule will affect the quality of our service to adult students? In what ways do you think this will affect our experience as mentors? Do you think these changes will undermine or support our sense of the college and our work as being individualized and student centered?

Meerse: Some of the changes that we worried about when they were introduced - such as the general education requirements and more emphasis on working with students at a distance - have turned out to be not so bad. I think there's been a drift toward standardization over the years, and the move to letter grades and term schedules continue in that direction. Still, the new grading system, for example, gives students many options. I'm more concerned that individualization is threatened by an overly rigid interpretation of the area of study guidelines and by imposing traditional expectations on degree programs that might be creative

and unusual. I think we've lost some of the college's early efforts not only to accept, but also to encourage such programs.

McAllister: The college is examining the experience of entering students and planning to enhance the quality of this experience to promote a higher level of student success and satisfaction. Based on your years of practice and observation, what areas of the college's "front porch" might be improved and how?

Meerse: Of course we know that students who get a lot of encouragement and support in their first enrollment are more likely to stay on and do well, but some students need more of this than mentors and staff have time for. Maybe online student support groups could be set up, where students could both ask and answer questions and also get answers from faculty and staff. I think it would also help students to have immediate, hands-on training, maybe as part of orientation, in using the college's electronic resources. The virtual library tutorial is great, but it could be overwhelming to some students who are just starting out. First they just need to be shown how to get into the library and the Writer's Complex, and how to order books from the online bookstore.

McAllister: If you were to return to the college in 20 years, what would you hope to see?

Meerse: Students continuing to meet face-to-face with mentors - and some students who are the children of our present students!

McAllister: The college has hired a number of new faculty recently, and many of us who are here still have many years to offer the college. What advice can you give us to help us best support our students' learning and our personal scholarship?

Meerse: I'm still trying to figure this out myself.

McAllister: What plans do you have for your retirement?

Meerse: I plan to study some of the subjects that I've been advising students to study, such as math and American history. I'm going to take piano lessons, work in my garden, travel, read a lot, play with my cats, and do some bird watching and star gazing with my new telescope. I'll continue to be involved with church and volunteer activities. In the spring I'll move to Nebraska, to be closer to family. Come and see me!

McAllister: Do you have any concluding reflections on your experience with Empire State College?

Meerse: I appreciate having had dedicated colleagues and the opportunity to teach what I wanted to teach, in the way I wanted to teach.

McAllister: That seems a very satisfied review of your career here. Thank you for giving some of your final Empire State College time to these questions - and for sharing your thoughts with us around the college. I'm sure I can speak for your colleagues and your students and thank you for your years of patient wisdom and support. Have a wonderful retirement.

ALL ABOUT MENTORING
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Turning Ideas into Action: From Mentoring to Organizing

Janet Lee Bachant, Metropolitan Center

In September, 2000, one of my first students as a part-time mentor in human development at the Metropolitan Center in September 2000 was a police officer who wrote a paper on suicide and the New York City Police Department (NYPD). In this paper, the officer spoke about the incredible stresses of police work that can result in suicide, and the problems with officers getting the help they need. Suicide, for example, was reported by my student to be the number one cause of death in the NYPD: it was a bigger risk than going on drug busts! It was a powerful report that made me reflect upon the mental health needs of law enforcement personnel.

With this as background, September 11 exploded. I knew that I had to do something, if only to deal with the helplessness so many of us felt during those agonizing days. The terrible losses suffered by our first responders congealed with the memory of my student's paper, structuring a vision of how I could make a difference. Because I am a clinical psychologist with years of experience in private practice, I decided to organize a volunteer network of clinicians - a coalition of psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and clinical nurse specialists to address the mental health needs of NYC's first responders and their families.

The scope of this vision was very ambitious: a network of hundreds of credentialed therapists to treat law enforcement officers, firefighters, Emergency Medical Service personnel, their families and their children; continual support and training for these clinicians; clergy outreach to train them to identify congregants in need of help and referral; alcohol and drug rehabilitation; restoration of family connections weakened by September 11 as well as the fear of what may come - and so much more.

The New York Disaster Counseling Coalition (NYDCC) was literally born in my kitchen where my computer was stationed. Over the next days, weeks and months a small group of colleagues gathered together and pooled resources. The NYDCC is still evolving but in concept it is very simple: our mission is to build an allvolunteer network that makes help simple to get and is geared to the unique needs of people from different services and departments. We did not want to limit our services to those first responders directly affected by 9/11, though 90 percent of our referrals are 9/11 related. We realized that first responders are on the front lines every day and that their emotional health and well being is vital to us all.

The outpouring of giving, good will and the determination to turn ideas into action was simply astonishing: within days we had a flyer to distribute at fire and police stations, a growing list of clinicians who wanted to help, and a volunteer who donated his phone number for referrals. Within weeks we had a database of volunteers and a listserve with which to communicate with them. Within months we had obtained the pro bono help of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett for our 501 c(3) incorporation, pro bono accounting donated by the firm of Gettry Marcus Stern and Lehrer and funding from the New York Times Company Foundation. By January 1, 2002 we had hired an administrative director and rented office space on West 57th Street.

But there were real concerns: would our efforts be accepted by those we sought to help? We learned early on that the culture of courage that permeates first responder communities (they run *to* the fire or the gun shots, not away from them) often militates against them seeking help for themselves. Adding to this is the fact that many officers will not use their own counseling units because they feel that doing so will adversely affect their careers. Massive resistance to getting help was already built in. We did know that what we do would be needed. Oklahoma City demonstrated that. Also, research, such as Gershon's (2000) pre-9/11 study, found an association between levels of stress among law enforcement officers and rates of domestic violence in their families. So we knew that if we could get support services mobilized they could make a real difference.

We acutely felt the need to channel energy into action. Along with the avalanche of hardhats, boots, gum, eye drops, and masks that poured into Ground Zero, torrents of therapists streamed into New York, wanting to make a difference. Some found their mark. Most did not. Like millions of other traumatized Americans, we wanted to do something constructive because doing something was a vital part of our own healing process, but we faced a daunting lack of organizational structure through which to relate to this disaster as therapists. I am not referring to immediate crisis intervention, for which organizational support does indeed exist, but for ways to do what we do best, utilizing our clinical skills in an ongoing way to help deal with a disaster and its aftermath.

Developing a not-for-profit initiative with no business experience, however, was not an easy undertaking. The learning curve was hard, fast and steep and many things we did quite backwards, like, for example, going into operation before obtaining funds (not something I recommend!). With the help of many incredible people, we transformed ourselves from a group of concerned clinicians to an organization that had structure. While we still had questions, at least now we had the volunteer network and the organizational framework we needed to move forward.

The Metropolitan Center community has been especially supportive. Dean Persico was ready to lend a hand from the beginning, offering consultation and networking assistance with development. Colleagues offered formal and informal consultations on business planning and functioned as group leaders at our Renewing Relationships workshops. Dean Persico donated space at the college on several weekends for us to hold clinician trainings, and Empire State College participated in the resource room at two NYDCC retirement conferences.

Many first responders are enrolled in Empire State College, and so NYDCC has been partnering with the Metropolitan Center in developing additional resources for our first responder students. The NYDCC and the center colleagues met during the reading break with NYPD representatives at the college for an exploratory meeting on addressing the educational needs of officers. Following this meeting, the college was invited to submit a piece describing itself and its programs for inclusion in an NYPD newsletter. The collaboration has been enriching all around.

The NYDCC has a three-part mission: first, to provide free, confidential mental health services for uniformed service personnel and their families "for as long as it takes;" second, to provide education and professional

development resources for its clinician volunteers concerning the special needs of this population; and third, to develop outreach programs that enable those who need our help to obtain it easily.

The NYDCC's model of bringing private resources to meet public needs has worked. Our organization has grown significantly as its success at helping this community has spread. Initiatives generated include a series of weekend workshops for NYPD and EMS couples (supported by The New York Times Company Foundation); two conferences on retirement and the development of a retirement services division (supported by American Jewish World Service); extensive outreach to potential referral sources (supported by the Robin Hood Relief Fund, the MetLife Foundation, the UBS Humanitarian Relief Fund and the MBIA Foundation), and workshops for clergy. Eight scholarships for addictions treatment have been donated to us by Eric Clapton's Crossroads Centre Antigua (market value $120,000). In addition, NYDCC has been named the clinical representative for the Regional Emergency Medical Services Council of New York City and, as a result, developed and presents the mental health training segments of their certification program for first responders, EMTs and paramedics.

The NYDCC has a network of hundreds of licensed, professional volunteers that can be mobilized at a moment's notice in the event of another attack. Our Referral Program has referred hundreds of people to practitioners who have donated thousands of hours of mental health counseling. Our volunteer clinicians pledge to donate at least one hour per week to members of this community. To maximize utilization, they charge no fees, accept no insurance, and commit to provide these services "for as long as it takes," even if it takes years. In counseling services alone, NYDCC has the capability of providing 1.5 million dollars of in-kind counseling services per year to the responder community.

The need for mental health services in the responder community is growing, not diminishing. Added to the immediate losses of September 11 are emotional problems that are only now emerging, compounded by the stresses of ongoing disaster preparedness. The NYDCC provides extensive and creative outreach initiatives that target these issues and reach these communities.

One example of such an outreach initiative was the series of couple's workshops we developed and ran during the winter/spring of 2004: *Renewing Relationships: Enriching, reconnecting, and rebuilding intimate partnerships.* These workshops brought couples together for a weekend of resiliency training and psycho-education. Each workshop weekend (there were five of them) involved a full day and a half of group and couples work on identifying problem areas and developing better communicating and negotiating skills. In addition to combating isolation, *Renewing Relationships* offers an opportunity for respite with life partners, as they include an overnight stay at a hotel, dinner and tickets to a show. Importantly, this initiative also provides a way to reach those first responders who evidence signs of more serious mental illness and an opportunity to reach out to them. Finally, putting on this program has been a very effective way of recruiting more clinicians to our service (we even had one clinician come from Boston at her own expense to be involved). Jose del Pilar, a colleague at the Metropolitan Center who, with his wife, led one of the groups, commented at the end of the experience, "I'm hooked! When can we come back?!"

It has not been easy moving NYDCC from being a heartfelt response to 9/11 to becoming an ongoing, self-sustaining organization that addresses the mental and behavioral health needs of NYC's first responders. And we still have a long way to go. Funding for 9/11 is almost depleted (even as first responder needs are still growing). To deal with this issue, we are in the process of developing our corporate, philanthropic and foundation funding base. We are also working on obtaining city, state and federal funding. In another realm, we are in the process of moving from a founder's board of directors to a more business-oriented board that will be able to meet the challenges of sustaining our vision. I urge any of you in the Empire State College community who are interested in becoming involved in this project to contact me directly at Janet.Bachant@esc.edu. We continue to need all the help we can get.

Building on the spirit of volunteerism that infused the city and the country during an ordeal that is not yet over has been an extraordinary experience. It gave me an opportunity to put into action ideas that were until then only musings in my mind. It has certainly given me more than I can say in words.

ALL ABOUT MENTORING
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Writing, Juggling and Mentoring: Some Thoughts on Adjustments and How to Make Them

Mark Peters, Niagara Frontier Center

Though mentors certainly engage in a lot of metaphorical juggling, I take juggling more literally. I'm no Karamazov brother, but I can do a bunch of patterns with balls, including a simple cascade; a showy behind-the-back; and a cross-armed, wrist-breaking, corpuscallosum-melting Mills mess. (Hey, it beats my old hobby of playing an ear-gouging acoustic guitar .)

I spend most of my time mentoring adults in writing at Empire Sate College, but I spend a little time teaching kids to juggle in the Buffalo public schools. It's not often that my interests in juggling, writing, and education converge, but recently while scribbling in my notebook, I looked down at my ugly, sloppy, brutal handwriting and had a few new thoughts - new to me anyway.

Mark Peters

First I need to mention a weird fact about juggling I read in Jack Kalvan's article "The Human Limits: How Many Objects Can Be Juggled." Though the mathematical formulas and scientific reasoning flew so far over my head that I didn't even feel the breeze, I got the gist of Kalvan's juggling research with 100 people, who ranged from accomplished, Trekkie-level jugglers to nonjuggling, well-adjusted civilians. Stunningly, Kalvan found that every single person, even the nonjugglers, had the hand speed to juggle nine balls - implying that the average person also had the hand speed to juggle nine. (That's the average person mind you, not the average octopus or the average 10- armed robot.)

At this point, we need some perspective. I can juggle five balls, but learning this trick took two to three months of practice before I could pull off even a rickety, crappy runthrough of the pattern. My friend Lee - who has professional-level juggling skills, plus unicycle-riding and fire-eating talents - can juggle seven

balls, but just barely. I'd be shocked if more than 30 people on the planet can juggle nine balls. So how in the name of pancakes could the "average person" possibly have the tools to pull off this decidedly unaverage feat?

Here's the trick to the trick: the average guy and gal really could juggle nine balls, but only if they did it perfectly, without the slightest goof or deviation from the pattern, and *with no adjustments.* As any juggler knows, a perfectly-juggled, adjustment-free juggling session - even when doing simple three-ball patterns - is about as rare as a monkey that hates bananas. The hand speed required to make those adjustments is infinitely greater than the hand speed needed when a pattern is progressing smoothly. That's the rub: there is absolutely no way to achieve an effortless, picture-perfect performance of any pattern without doing a bungled, on-the-edge-of-collapse version first. This is why nine-ball jugglers aren't as common as cell phones or colds.

So what does all this have to do with mentoring writing or looking at my own handwriting - the same hellacious handwriting that slowed my attainment of penhood in elementary school? Well, as I looked at that page of freshly scribbled, scrawled, and mangled words, arrows and cross-outs, I realized that my sloppiness may not all be due to imperfections in my penmanship or character. I saw the same old nasty mess, plus something I hadn't noticed before: adjustments.

My notebook was a record of rearranged sentences, altered words, fixed tenses, added notes, and rerouted trains of thought. I'd be hard-pressed to say where writing ended and revising began. Composition theorists like Linda Flower and John Hayes have long claimed that writing is a recursive process that can't be neatly broken down into discrete stages, but I don't think I ever really grasped that fact before. As a writer and a mentor, I tend to think of pre-writing, writing, and revising as separate entities (like earth, Mars and hell) but the evidence in my notebook told a more complex story of simultaneous planning/writing/rewriting - and constant adjustments.

As a writing mentor, I suspect I haven't spent enough time helping students make adjustments on the fly. Here's one exercise I do that *might* address this issue: I ask students to pick a sentence from their latest draft and rewrite it five times, in my office, while trying to keep the content as consistent as possible. As they write, I rewrite versions of the sentence too, kind of like these versions of a decidedly nonstudent sentence:

> I will never juggle six balls, since I will never have the five practice hours a day that such a feat would require.
>
> It just isn't worth the time to learn to juggle six balls - not if I want to maintain some tenuous connection with the human race.
>
> Juggling six balls will forever remain out of my reach, and since only jugglers would be impressed anyway, learning that trick isn't worthwhile in any sense.
>
> Learning to juggle six balls would be kind of cool, in an extremely mega-geeky way, but who has the time?
>
> If I win the lottery or marry well, maybe

> I'll learn to juggle six balls, but as long as
> I have to earn a living, I'll be a five-ball
> man who knows his limits.

After 15 minutes or so, we both have a bunch of versions of one of their sentences that we can look at and discuss, leading to conversation about paraphrasing, punctuation, synonyms, style, etc. Through this exercise, I can model ways of rearranging and reimagining sentences and thoughts, and I think there's an implied message that's helpful too: if I'm willing to spend time playing with and working through one of their sentences, then I must think their work is important.

But does this exercise help students make adjustments? I hope so, but I'm not sure. Before coming to the college, I sometimes did an exercise called the "free writing word throw," in which I would ask my freshman composition class to follow the first commandment of free writing (keep your hand moving) while following another rule: they had to incorporate into their writing the words I would periodically bellow. So if I yelled out "Atkins-friendly," "vengeance," "spatula," "horsepucky," "ratatouille," "Chattanooga," "squeegee," and "genesplicing" at one-minute intervals, every student's page should include those words in that order. (By the way, I apologize to whomever I stole this idea from - I have completely lost track of its origin.)

Did the free writing word throw help my students make adjustments? Well, it forced them to change their sentences quickly in response to unpredictable input - so maybe. Then again, the process and product tended to be pretty ridiculous. Can an exercise so far removed from any serious writing that my students either were forced to do (or wanted to do) actually have any carryover effect? I don't know.

Part of adjusting - a part I'm experiencing right now as I write *this* essay - is moving back and forth from the microscopic view of a word or phrase to the wide-angle lens of the whole essay, along with the inevitable questions like: Am I overusing dashes again?

Did I use the word "precarious" twice? Does my conclusion echo my introduction? Should it? Am I being funny enough? Interesting enough? Too goofy? What will my colleagues think? And when does a list of questions stop conveying a writer's choices and anxiety and start causing a reader's annoyance and headache?

I don't know how I answer these questions, but I answer them all the time, with varying degrees of success. Like playing basketball or music, I do a lot of it by *feel.* But as far as sensible ideas about writing go, "writing by feel" is even vaguer (and much sillier, and much truer?) than "writing as a series of adjustments." So where does that leave me? As always, here. Writing.

The truth is, maybe, that every act of composition is unique, and nobody - not God, Allah, Buddha, Zeus, Yoda, the elephant-god Ganesha, or the best academic theory - can tell you what to do, though Yoda did famously and usefully say, "There is no try - there is only do, or do not," which might be good advice for my students, good advice for me, and a fine place to end.

ALL ABOUT MENTORING
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The Empowerment of Immigrants Residency: Enhancing the Mentoring Experience Through Academic-Community Collaboration

Lear Matthews and Beverly Smirni, Metropolitan Center

As a daughter of immigrants from Jamaica, West Indies and Guyana, South America, and as a Guyanese immigrant, now American citizen, we had both personal and academic interests in planning and coordinating a study on the empowerment of immigrants in New York City. The two-day residency that we designed was held on two Saturdays - March 13 and March 20, 2004 at the Metropolitan Center. Aware of the significance of addressing diversity/ multicultural issues within the college, we wanted our residency to highlight the ways in which the lives of immigrants in general, and working poor immigrants of color in particular, are often ignored and are largely invisible to some New Yorkers. Immigrants, particularly those from the Middle East, have become comic caricatures for late night TV (for example the Pakistani cab driver in New York City). Furthermore, the impact of post-9/11 immigration policies on this population is not fully understood. We thus planned the residency around how, why and the ways in which immigrants in groups as well as individuals are actively involved in documenting and advocating for their legal rights, economic survival and access to cultural expression.

The themes of the residency revolved around the dynamics of how immigrant groups, coalitions and nonprofit agencies have organized to seek power and to address issues and barriers to living in New York City. Most of the speakers were immigrants themselves from India, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Guyana and China. We invited speakers from a range of municipal agencies, nonprofit policy-making organizations and community based groups. With passion and commitment, our guests expressed the ways in which immigrants survive and face realities of discrimination and persecution based on race, color, language, ethnicity, gender and poverty. Among the presenters were Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan, documentary artists; Lois Lee, director, Chinese American Planning Council, Inc.; Farah Tanis, executive director, DWA FANM (an organization "committed to the rights of Haitian women and girls"); and Commissioner Sayu V. Bhojwani, from the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs.

Mr. Lehrer and Ms. Sloan opened the program with a presentation titled, *Crossing the BLVD.: strangers, neighbors and aliens in a new America* - the title of their recent book (Norton 2003; the book also comes with a CD). Using a narrative and pictorial medium to recreate real life situations of immigrants from various countries, these presenters evoked in students a curiosity and rapt attention that seemed to set the stage for a successful symposium. Ms. Lee focused on educational advocacy issues (including language and students' rights) in public schools, and cultural barriers to the educational advancement of immigrants. She gave riveting accounts of the consequences of immigrant parents working multiple jobs and the effects on the well being of their children. She also focused on the cultural conflicts experienced by newly arrived immigrants. Ms. Tanis spoke eloquently about health issues and advocacy work with immigrant women.

Representing a community-based organization whose goal is to eradicate domestic violence and empower Haitian and other immigrant women, she highlighted the lack of adequate healthcare for immigrant women and the need for a healthcare system that is sensitive to differences in cultural values. This theme provoked a vibrant discussion among students. Commissioner Bhojwani gave an overview of issues and concerns confronting the immigrant community in New York City. She offered general information and cited data about efforts by the city to develop programs that responded to the needs and problems of immigrants. The presentations were well received by the participants, who were engaged in a dynamic question-and-answer period following each presentation.

Mohamed Attia, Jonathan Barba and Joanna Pittner From the International High School story in the "Unlikely Bedfellows" section of *Crossing the BLVD.: strangers, neighbors, aliens in a new America*.

Students were provided with three sets of readings keyed to the presentations for each of the two days. These handouts included the following titles: "Hardship in Many Languages: Immigrant Families and Children in New York City" (2004, Report by the Milano Graduate School, Center for New York City Affairs); "Immigrants Old and New: Closing Borders of the Mind" (in J. Gonzalez, 2000, *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*); "Immigrant Mohamed Attia, Jonathan Barba and Joanna Pittner From the International High School story in the "Unlikely Bedfellows" section of *Crossing the BLVD.: strangers, neighbors, aliens in a new America*. . Well-Being in New York and Los Angeles" (2002, The Urban Institute, Brief Number 1); and "New Immigrants and the Dilemmas of Adjustment: Who Gets the Lousy Jobs?" (in R. Waldinger, 2000, *Multiculturalism in The United States: Current Issues*).

In addition, a binder with core readings was distributed to participants at the conclusion of the residency for their use in completing a research project. These core readings provided students with a broader perspective about the unique and complex set of challenges (legal, cultural and economic) recent immigrants face as they try to survive in New York City. These readings included: "Immigrants Rights: Striving for Racial Justice, Economic Equality and Human Dignity" (2002, Report by Political Research Associates, Activist Resource Kit); and "Social Service Needs of Hispanic Immigrants: An Exploratory Study of the Washington Heights Community" (D. Strug and S. Mason [2002] in *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work,* Vol. 10 [3], pp. 69-88).

After the presentations on the first day, students were divided into three small discussion groups, led by mentors Jill Hamberg, Emil Moxey and Jose Del Pilar. Group members engaged in spirited discussions on the topics presented. Reports from the group leaders indicated that many students seemed to be aware of the main issues and problems the presenters introduced, yet were still surprised by the lack of adequate response by organizations to the problems immigrants faced. A good number of students wanted to debate the controversial issues raised by the speakers.

Coordinating this residency meant that we were working closely with community-based advocacy

organizations and had a unique opportunity to create new links between our work as community and human service mentors and a network of community-based contacts and resource staff advocating on behalf of immigrant political and legal rights and cultural expressions. Thus, after the residency, in working with students on developing their 2 and 4-credit contract studies (students were given this option), we were able to distribute a list of web sites and phone numbers of all of the presenters. We encouraged students to conduct interviews with them and/or their staff.

At times we came face to face with our own limitations in exposing participants to a range of views. For example, one of the presenters appeared to be accepting, if not endorsing, a form of self-segregation in housing for a group of immigrants in the borough of Queens, New York. He said at one point: "You can't force people to live someplace they don't want to live and are unwanted." We attempted to open up the discussion of this issue by pointing to immigrant teens and children who make friends with a rich array of new immigrants and children who had spent their whole lives in the United States. However, due to time constraints and the complex nature of deeply held views under discussion, we simply had to drop the issue. This same kind of problem was experienced in the small discussion groups.

... many students seemed to be aware of the main issues and problems the presenters introduced, yet were still surprised by the lack of adequate response by organizations to the problems immigrants faced.

It is clear that the residency provided students with a forum for critical analysis of ideas and observations regarding the well being of immigrants living and working in New York City. In addition, it provided much insight into the dilemmas, strengths and needs of immigrants as they try to adapt to their new homes. In this regard, students expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to develop personal awareness in their interactions with immigrants in their communities and at work. In many ways, students showed they were interested in expanding their knowledge about immigrant affairs (for example, social, political and psychological issues; legal issues; and issues related to their transition to a new cultural and school environment, and their access to social and health services). In addition, they expressed their interest in contributing to the empowerment of immigrants in New York City through advocacy, community organizing, and participating in the activities of cultural organizations that seek to bridge the gap between the host society and new Americans. Some of the students were already working with these organizations; others expressed what was probably their first interest in these areas. Importantly too, the residency provided an academic forum for them to assess this kind of work and existing programs as well.

On the evaluation forms that all participants were asked to complete at the end of the final session, students were asked to comment on the residency structure and on the learning they derived from their work. We wanted to better understand what they did learn and how such a residency could be even more effectively organized and carried out.

In an answer to the question, "What did you like most about the residency?", one student wrote,

> "I loved that it was diverse. The couple from *Crossing the BLVD.* was great and set the tone for what to expect from the residency. It was just packed with information which is always good."

However, another student reported,

> "The March 13 presentations were dynamic and the March 20 speakers paled somewhat. For the most part, statistics were always a little dry and the March 20 presentations seemed to overlap with each other in terms of certain information."

Students also responded to a question about the usefulness of the post-presentation group discussions. One student wrote,

> "Yes, I found the small group discussion very useful and should have had a little more time to discuss what we learned."

This comment coincides with the observation of one group leader, who indicated that, although the small group format was very useful, the discussion was so intense and students had so much to say, that some of them probably didn't feel that they had the opportunity to talk about their views. There needed to be more time and perhaps better ways to organize the discussion of such charged issues.

Still, another student remarked,

> "Yes, this group offered an opportunity to share our ideas and to compare them with others."

Learning about immigrant issues also appeared to remind some students about the possibilities of exploring their own sense of identity and their perception of self in relation to others. One student queried,

> "Where are the African Americans in this process?"

And another stated,

> "For balance, I would like to see inclusion of views of nonimmigrant blacks and whites and the problems that people have with immigrants."

The level of student participation, the overall quality of discussion, and project papers (whose topics ranged from exploration of the impact of individual and family adjustment on empowerment, to the role of political and economic factors in advocating for change) were impressive and point to the need to continue the sponsorship of residencies on related diversity issues. Through such groups, students will be given the opportunity to explore together the strengths and deficits of community-based organizations and to examine topics of individual interest and importance.

Finally, residencies such as this one forge essential links between academics interested in exploring the impact of urban social issues on people without power and community-based organizations mobilizing to empower them. And too, residencies focusing on culturally diverse issues can potentially serve to increase all students' cultural competence in both academic knowledge and community involvement. This residency, along with those developed at the Genesee Valley and Niagara Frontier centers contribute to the college's goal of promoting culturally sensitive and highly effective educational programs for students and alumni on very relevant topics of our time.

ALL ABOUT MENTORING
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Graduation Speech, June 2004, Syracuse, N.Y.
Xenia Coulter, Central New York Center and Center for International Programs

President Moore, Vice President Elliott, Dean Amory, Dean Carey, Faculty Chair Nikki Shrimpton, Alumni Ron Heath and the faculty, staff, tutors, alumni, students, family, friends and (certainly) dear graduates:

It is not only a great honor to have been asked to speak at this ceremony, it is also a great pleasure. It's always wonderful attending the somewhat upside-down ceremonies that are a hallmark of Empire State College. Instead of children sitting quietly in their robes, it's the gray-haired parents. And instead of proud (but sometimes clueless) parents in the audience, we have proud, but also very involved, children and spouses there. As remarkable as are the accomplishments of our graduates - and they are awesome - the earning of an Empire State College degree represents a real communal effort, one truly worth celebrating. Again, I am truly honored and happy to be here.

Graduates, in the few minutes I have with you, I'd like to think aloud a bit about the nature of your achievement. What did you learn during your arduous, and for some, rather long educational journey? I ask that question partly to seek reassurance because when I look beyond our college, I sometimes wonder what, if anything, a college education actually accomplishes.

During the current crisis related to the prison debacle in Iraq, for example, I was struck by how uninformed so much of the nation's reaction was - this, despite the fact that our leaders, particularly in the government and media, have all had presumably excellent college educations. It's my guess that large numbers of college students have studied some psychology and thus have come to learn about what psychologist Philip Zimbardo refers to as "the power of the social situation." As famous as Pavlov's dog is the extraordinary study done by Stanley Milgram more than 50 years ago, in which perfectly ordinary human beings found themselves administering what they thought were near lethal amounts of electric shock to people who happened to have given wrong answers to trivial questions - and they did this because someone in authority insisted that they do so.

More relevant to today's news, thousands of students also learn about the Zimbardo "prison study." Here, quite ordinary college students were randomly assigned to be either prisoners or guards. Those selected to be prisoners were picked up in the middle of the night and "imprisoned" in an improvised jail in the basement of an academic building. Those selected to be guards were assigned regular eight-hour shifts in which to supervise the prisoners. As some of you may now recall, this study, which was to last for two weeks, had to be discontinued after four or five days because of the growing brutality of the guards and the growing submissiveness of the prisoners - two groups which only days before had been indistinguishable and unremarkable 18 and 19 years olds. Psychology teachers emphasize that our initial reaction - oh, I wouldn't

do that - is simply wrong. We *would* do that. The design of Zimbardo's study assures us of that.

Of course, no one learns about Milgram's or Zimbardo's studies in order to *accept* such behavior. The educational philosophy at the heart of such lessons is that we must understand what we do before we have any chance of affecting a change. Thus, teachers hope that knowledge of these studies may, if not inoculate their students, at least cause them to be increasingly "mindful." When we acquire such awareness, we are then better able to recognize that initial reactions are often mindless reactions, and armed with this knowledge, to gain strength enough to keep these reactions in check. And certainly we hope our students will also acquire some compassion for people who are put into powerful social situations that they do not have the knowledge or skills to recognize and therefore resist.

Sadly, it seems to me from what I have read in the newspapers or heard on TV about the situation in this Iraqi prison, these hopes have not been realized. Rather than compassion or understanding, what we initially heard (and still hear) were frantic efforts to find someone, something, to blame. Our government leaders leaned toward deploring the "few bad apples" who behaved in ways that no "true American" would; and the media tended to deplore poor leadership for not keeping these individuals under control. Nothing that I read or heard made reference to these famous psychology experiments - at least not for several weeks and then only after we were reminded of them by Zimbardo himself whose comments were widely circulated on the Internet.

I'm not raising this issue because I want to talk about why the abuse occurred or what should have been done or what can be done now. I'm raising it because I'm curious about why the knowledge of these studies, I'm sure our well-educated leaders had heard of, disappeared. Where did their education go? Did their years in the classroom have utterly no impact? Is indeed college useless?

As an educator, of course, I am unwilling to answer this question with an unqualified yes. And as a scholar, I am not without some ideas and thoughts about why, ordinarily, college may have less impact than the world expects. First of all, and this relates to what I think is so special about graduates from Empire State College, I suspect that the vast majority of media and government spokespersons were all exposed to a college education at the traditional age of 18 or 19, not as experienced adults. There's a saying that education is wasted on the young. While that's obviously a pretty serious oversimplification, there is still some truth to it. Young people, students fresh from high school, have little experience to which they can relate or make meaningful what they learn. They don't, for example, have an embarrassing history of failing to stand up to authority that they can relate to a study such as Milgram's. Or they haven't experienced first hand the social pressures to which we too often succumb. No, they are products of a very traditional philosophy of education that says first you learn, and then only later do you apply.

But all kinds of educational research suggests that this philosophy is wrong. Real meaning comes from integrating knowledge into one's lived experience. Thus, to the extent that the experiences of traditional aged students are limited, much of the knowledge to which they are exposed in college may then fall on what are, in effect, deaf ears. But with adult students, people who have actually experienced the problems of the world and who come to school hoping to gain new ways of thinking about their lives, studies such as Milgram's or Zimbardo's do not appear in a vacuum. They make sense of what they've previously observed or may have even experienced. In other words, I'm suggesting, or at least speculating, that the uninformed reactions to the revelations from Abu Ghraib occurred, at least in part, because we simply don't have out there guiding and shaping the world's opinions, enough college graduates who went to school as adults.

My second thought comes from the simple observation that learning requires opportunities for repetition or practice. Most students in traditional classrooms are probably lucky if 30 minutes are spent on the Milgram and Zimbardo findings. Thirty minutes out of four years of new information! Here at Empire State College, we engage our students in what we refer to as mentoring. And there are important differences between

traditional teaching and the somewhat radical practice of mentoring, which, by the way, are beautifully described in a book published this year, *From Teaching to Mentoring,* written by two Empire State College faculty - Lee Herman and Alan Mandell. Although you may not have recognized it as such, when you engaged in a conversation with your mentor about what you were learning, you were being forced (or at least encouraged) to "practice" that learning. You were also practicing during the many hours you spent reading, taking notes, writing, as well as talking, not only with your mentor, but with family at home and friends at work. It is repetition that solidifies the relevance and meaningfulness of new learning.

We know that mindlessness in others can be stopped simply by one person being willing to stand up and publicly share his or her second thoughts. And sharing your thoughts and ideas is what you have learned to do at our college.

And with enough repetition and practice, learning doesn't just fade away, become inaccessible, appear seemingly irrelevant or at best end up as something you must pull off the shelf in order to use. It becomes a part of you. And when learning is internalized in this way, it then becomes available to help you question and revise your own behavior - to reconsider what you might ordinarily take for granted - to "think twice" before reacting - to acquire new habits of thought. In other words, I'm arguing, again somewhat speculatively, that you, our graduates, have had, through the special education offered by Empire State College, a better chance than many traditional college students to truly integrate the lessons of education into your everyday behavior.

Maybe I'm wrong to suggest that you are now more thoughtful or reflective because you were lucky enough to acquire your education as adults or because of the special form education takes in our college. Perhaps you *have* been changed by your education simply because any adult who makes the decision to return to school and then finds the inner (and outer) resources to navigate the many obstacles that stand in the way, must already be special to start with. But either way, the fact is that you have been changed. Because you are an adult, you have been ready to recognize that what may feel right initially often turns out to be simpleminded or wrong. You have come to see that it is often necessary to refrain from reacting to give yourself time to think twice. And through discussion and other kinds of educational practice, you have actually learned how to wait and see, to reflect and to acknowledge, if not appreciate, the complexities and contradictions of the world.

And now, seeing that you have gone this far in your education, it strikes me that you have yet another opportunity ahead of you. It's not only that you have the chance to continue to nurture and expand these mindful and reflective habits of thinking in yourself, but that you will also be able to encourage these habits in others. We are, of course, extremely proud of what you have already accomplished and for that you clearly deserve today mounds of congratulations. This is certainly your day. But as you look back today on your achievement, I strongly urge you to also look forward to consider what you still can do tomorrow. No, even if you wanted to, you're probably not going to replace Dick Cheney or Peter Jennings. But if you continue to seek out new information and remain open to new insights, your way of thinking will become a model for your children, your families, your friends, even for members of your community. Moreover, your thoughts may make a real difference. We know that mindlessness in others can be stopped simply by one person being willing to stand up and publicly share his or her second thoughts. And sharing your thoughts

and ideas is what you have learned to do at our college. So armed with your hardwrought education, go forth and do as much in the real world.

Thank you so much for your thoughtful attention. Again, congratulations, and good luck to all of you!

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Grading as a Creative Collaboration

Anne Breznau, Office of Academic Affairs

The following paper was developed for and delivered at the Evaluating Adult Learners Conference held in Saratoga on June 10-11, 2004. It was part of a session charged with sharing information about evaluation from the academic world beyond Empire State College.

While it may seem odd that an administrator is giving this talk, I wasn't born an administrator. I obtained one doctorate in a graded institution and one near doctorate at an institution that gave narrative evaluations. So I have the experience of being an adult learner in both types of institutions. I also have been an instructor in an institution that gave narrative evaluations and did not give grades, and in many that did give grades. I come to my current position from 11 years as a full-time faculty member, tenured and associate professor, at an innovative college that gave credit for prior learning, experimented with teaching practices, and had a large population of adult learners. In my history, I have experimented and struggled with the same issues regarding evaluation of students that Empire State College has faced.

That said, the topic of grades is of particular interest to me because my dissertation in 1994 was based on a dialogic project wherein students wrote the learning contract and grading criteria for the study. While I didn't intend for grading to become the subject of inquiry for the class, it quickly became clear that I couldn't move the students from that subject. They were fascinated by it. They debated endlessly about what constituted an A or a B. They wrote papers on the subject along with letters to the class; additionally, they kept a journal that was shared with me weekly and to which I responded weekly. These journals were a safe place where no critiques of writing and no grading could occur. They received full credit for this portion of their work just by submitting the journals.

The rules regarding journals, letters and papers were developed by the learners. They went beyond that and considered the social and institutional context within which the grading questions resided. They researched the grading policy of the institution and of the department. They did a survey of grading practices of other faculty within the institution. In the end, they wrote a collaborative critique of institutional and department policy and practice and they gave a public presentation of their findings to the faculty and administration. All of this took place at a community college and I would say that 50 percent of the students in this particular group were adults. Together, we learned a great deal about the theory and practice of grading.

In reviewing the literature for this presentation, I found vast numbers of our colleagues across the world who have developed incredibly creative ways to make grading an integral part of a student's learning. My findings are divided into two categories:

First, there are those who see grading as an unnecessary evil and who try to circumvent it. Our keynote speaker at the first evaluation workshop, David Bleich, is an example of this group. He developed what he called the "basic B" approach to grading. Most people get a B. If your work rises above the criteria for that, you get an A; if it drops below, you get a C. Others of this group who see grading as evil and unnecessary, give an A to everyone just to get rid of what they see as the log jam to learning created by worry about grades.

There is a second group, however, that sees grading as an important aspect of the learning experience itself. Thinking as an evaluator is seen as a critical skill in a learner's repertoire. In this second group are those who use the portfolio method in demonstrating student learning. The second group, almost unanimously, also views grading and evaluating as a *collaborative* act involving at the minimum the teacher and the learner. Let me offer you a sampling of the ways that various faculty have approached this collaboration.

For example, Stephen Brookfield writes: "I will use two evaluative approaches, each of equal importance. I will use my own judgment about the significance of a learning accomplishment, and also a learner's judgment of how much she has learned" (p. 65). He also uses second and third portfolio readers when possible.

In *Andragogy in Action: Applying Modern Principles of Adult Learning,* Malcolm Knowles includes an essay by Frank S. Bloch who writes: "Although traditional grading methods usually are based on the one-sided evaluation of students by teachers . , the solution is not necessarily to eliminate grades or to reduce the rigor of the evaluative process by means of a pass/fail system. Instead, the student, together with the instructor, should assess the student's performance at critical points . in order to evaluate the work . , to determine the student's learning needs and to measure the student's overall progress" (p. 239). Additionally, Bloch has the student set the means of demonstrating learning in advance and also select the readers who will evaluate the work.

Maryellen Weinmer writing in the September 2003 issue of *Change* magazine suggests that faculty and student must "share decision making" including the process of evaluating. This shared responsibility, she says, builds the learner's knowledge base and skills, including self-awareness and the development of "assessment skills." She sees these skills as applicable in a wide range of arenas across the lifespan (p. 53).

In addition, I found two books that are dedicated to alternative methods of sharing the grading responsibility and to innovative collaborations with students. One is called *Grading in the Post-Process Classroom.* This is a collection of essays and hence presents multiple perspectives and ideas. Let me hit the highlights.

1. Xin Liu Gale suggests collaboration of institution, teacher and student in structuring, specifically, the portfolio system. She believes that this system-wide approach lends legitimacy to portfolio evaluation and also gives much-needed security to students, since one of the components of the typical portfolio system is suspension of grades until the end of the study. The portfolio process, she says, can become chaotic for learner and teacher unless it is highly structured, and broadly conceived within the institution (in other words, sanctioned by all and widely used as an evaluative method). Gale provides clear instructions on ways to develop a portfolio process with students (pp. 75-89). She also describes A, B, C and D papers (pp. 91- 92). Incidentally, our colleague Xenia Coulter has written a paper detailing what an evaluation looks like for A, B and C work. She went through reams of student work and pulled out the evaluations; then she reduced these to common characteristics and outcomes. (This paper was included in *#16* and is now available on Mentorsite.)

2. Tim Peoples and Bill Hart-Davidson see an evaluation or a grade as "finally, an argument rather

than an objective pronouncement of truth" (p. 107). As such, they involve the student in self-evaluation processes throughout the study, including writing rationales/ arguments at multiple points in the development of each evaluative grade or moment.

3. William Dolphin suggests making the subject of grades the initial topic of inquiry, as was the case in my dissertation project. He writes: "When we get to the point of considering what an actual, collaborative statement of a grading policy looks like, I talk a bit about how authority is constituted in texts, considering closely . texts that have a formative role in self-constituting communities: [such as] the mission statement of the university or college, . the city charter, the state constitution, for example" (p. 117).

4. One of the issues that I've heard discussed at Empire State College is whether grading is a comparative act - where students are evaluated relative to the pool of other students being evaluated. Juan E. Flores thinks each student should be graded on criterion intrinsic to that student's learning, and he flat out states, "forget the bell curve." He believes "we should be brave enough to aspire to large percentages of As and Bs," and says this can happen "if we are willing and able to invest the hard work necessary in creating an environment where the student's level of excellence can be legitimately left for him/her to decide" (p. 122). What most of us think of as grading's "poison," he says comes from the believe in the bell curve, that if some students demonstrate excellence, then, relatively speaking, others will demonstrate less excellence. In other words, we worry that with grading there must be the good and the not so good. He suggests that we forget that and help all of our students earn As and Bs (pp. 122-23).

5. Anne Righton Malone and Barbara Tindall believe that evaluation and grading "become a social . act when we invite students to join us in conversation about" their work (p. 127). Their strategy is to have students write weekly letters to the teacher and have the teacher write back. They believe this puts the student's work in both a private/nurturing arena, and a public/evaluative one. This allows teachers to wear the "two hats [of nurturer and evaluator] comfortably" (p. 130). (Incidentally, I used student journals this way in my dissertation project.) The other book that gives concrete examples of ways that various people and institutions have approached sharing power with students is called *Who Teaches? Who Learns? Authentic Student/Faculty Partners* by Robin R. Jenkins and Karen T. Romer. It describes what seven different colleges did to change educational practice, including, in some cases, evaluation. I bring these institution change reports forward because the invitation to share power in grading can be a trigger that brings institutions to other fundamental changes in the way they structure power related to decision making. One college, worth noting, uses students who are near graduation as preceptors for incoming students. This is regarded as a learning experience worthy of credit and, with a lot of conversation with a faculty member, these students evaluate the work of the incoming student in a formative way. One of the student participants writes something that one of us might write as we approach grading, "I had to balance being a friend with being fair" (p. 65).

As one of my co-presenters in this session said to me, "But, what if I disagree with the grade a student gave himself?" In a truly shared situation, you have your say and the student has his or her say and the final grade divides the two in an agreed upon way - whether the faculty member likes it or not. This is at the heart of the sharing of grading power.

In my own experience, and almost universally in the literature of those who have experimented with sharing power, the opposite situation is more likely to occur. Once the students really understand what's involved and are really given the power, their attitudes change and they tend to underestimate their own achievements. My personal rule with shared power was: I can never lower a grade that was given in a shared power situation, but I can *raise* the grade if I think it is deserved.

The landscape of higher education is one in which evaluation and grading have been a catalyst for creative faculty and institutions to develop collaborative relationships that share power with learners in real ways. Five . basic themes generally found in shared grading include: (1) faculty members relinquishing a portion of the grading power and responsibility to others; (2) having students write the criteria for the letter grading system; (3) keeping portions of a learning situation ungraded; (4) having students select peer or other readers and graders of their work; and (5) putting the evaluative act within the larger social context - questioning where power to evaluate itself comes from and what it contributes to the learning experience, the institution and the larger culture.

These five themes presume one common action, an action fundamental to the Empire State College way, that is: dialogue between faculty and student in an atmosphere of mutual respect and responsibility.

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ALL ABOUT MENTORING
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Sabbatical Freedom

Peggy Tally, Verizon Corporate College Program

Peggy Tally

The word freedom has a long and venerated history within political thought. As someone who studied political theory as an undergraduate, I once spent a lot of time grappling with the concept of freedom.

After graduating from college, however, I moved on to other questions in my professional life. As a sociologist, much of my subsequent research and scholarly interests have been focused on the question of social constraints. Freedom from those constraints has been something that, while perhaps held out as an unconscious ideal, I have not raised explicitly in my research.

I have been surprised that during my sabbatical year, I found myself rushing headlong back into something I had cared about a long time ago, but had put aside. I found the question of "freedom" had moved back to the center my research, as well as my own personal development.

Heading into my sabbatical year my research plan was clear. I wanted to understand how foreign viewers were responding to Hollywood films in the wake of 9/11 and the war in Iraq. Since American films and their

ideologies are being consumed by audiences across the globe at an unprecedented level, how might this cultural diet inform and constrain people's thinking about the United States?

In the fall of 2003, I was able to conduct interviews with a very interesting cohort of young women from Eastern and Western Europe, in the hopes of understanding how they resolve their political feelings with their enjoyment of popular culture. One of the important things I learned was that, far from being "dupes" of mass culture, these young women, primarily between the ages of 19 and 25, articulated complex feelings not only about America and its popular culture, but about how their own nationality has played into their reception of Hollywood films. Many young women were highly critical of America's political actions in the wake of 9/11, for example, and saw certain American films as extensions of what they understood as an imperial or "macho" attitude toward the world. Yet even in these films they found characters, values and beliefs they enjoyed and saw as worthwhile, and they talked about how these values resonated with and against their own national experience. They demonstrated, in other words, freedom of thought in relation to American culture and society. They were able to think critically and identify with some aspects of American culture and at the same time wholeheartedly reject aspects of American culture they found troubling.

These findings have caused me to question whether a theory of "cultural imperialism" is adequate to understand foreign audiences. Such a theory might predict, for example, that Eastern European nations, where American culture has quickly moved in to occupy what was a relative vacuum of commercial media, would be particularly susceptible to its blandishments. In fact, I found that women from Eastern European countries such as Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary were both more appreciative and more critical of American commercial culture and values than those from Western European nations such as Finland, Germany, France and Sweden. The recent historical experience of these nations, which have undergone such rapid and tumultuous transitions to democracy and "fast capitalism," appears to have put their citizens in a unique position to see and articulate both the strengths, and the deep flaws, in America's cultural imagery.

But this is only half the story. If throughout my sabbatical year I was learning about cultural freedom in my scholarly work, I was learning even *more* about the meaning of freedom in my personal and professional life.

Being an adult necessarily implies a loss of freedom, as one "buckles down" and attends to life's business of work, family and community engagement. However, when you go on sabbatical, the conventional notions of responsibility are turned upside down. Most dramatically, in my work life, I was suddenly "freed" from my earlier responsibilities of mentoring my students. In its place was . what? At first, the sense of liberation was dizzying! If I wanted to read a book in my field, I could spend the whole day doing so. If I didn't want to go onto my computer for a day, no problem. If I was tired and wanted to take a nap . you get the point.

By the end of September, I was growing tired of all this freedom - not to mention the fact that my garden was sufficiently (and Peggy Tally . literally) tilled, and all my garbage cans at home were compulsively emptied on an hourly basis. I began to think of the Sartrean (or was it Nietzschean? Now I had time to look up both philosophers to find the exact quote) idea that with freedom comes responsibility. I also began to think of - and experience - Emile Durkheim's notion of *anomie.* I began to think, finally, about what freedom means for a human being. Not the political freedom of oppressed peoples - freedom on a more personal level.

What I discovered was that, emotionally, "freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose" (to quote another existentialist, Kris Kristofferson). On a personal level, negative freedom - the freedom from constraints or obligations - quickly loses its luster once it is achieved. You need *some* kind of social or communal constraints if you're going to realize, and enjoy, positive freedom - the ability to act so as to realize your fundamental purposes. I was temporarily freed from my mentoring responsibilities, but I realized that I would soon go off the deep end unless I could embed myself in some other sustaining activities - if

only to react against those so I could enjoy my freedom again.

My sabbatical "research plan" didn't begin to solve the problem. It was a promissory note, a far-off target, and one that left me thrown back on myself, alone. So I undertook to find some social constraints, hopefully in the form of deadlines, and deadlines attached to *people.* My response to students when they asked me when a paper was due - "in a timely manner toward the end of the term" - now rang hollowly in my ears. I needed some dates! I needed, more importantly, some human out there who I knew was waiting for some piece of scholarly writing from me.

To that end, I began to search the Internet for a "partner" - not the on-line dating kind, but a scholarly other who would need something from me at a specific time. I needed to be in a "master-slave" dynamic (to invoke the Hegelian concept, again not the on-line dating one) where I could be once again in the position of having to answer to an "other," and where, having fulfilled my responsibility to them, I could thereby "transcend" the whole dynamic and become the master of my fate once again! While the goal was lofty, I needed a concrete "other" who would help play this role in my life.

While you can't, as I soon learned, simply Google a scholarly task master (maybe I typed in the wrong word?), I was able to find some "others" out there by going onto listservs where announcements were being posted soliciting articles and book chapters for various journals and edited collections. In addition, I began to comb through earlier professional relationships I had had when I was more active as a scholar, to find out what they were doing, and what kinds of connections they might offer. Third, I began to scan potential journals, not only for possible article submissions, but to see if they would be interested in having me review books in their fields. Finally, I also contacted various scholarly journals to see if they would be interested in having me review potential articles written for them.

These investigations yielded some rich veins that I tapped for my own interests. For example, I was searching the Internet one day and read a description of a wonderful book that was being put together on girl culture. Since I've studied the family and popular culture in the past, and am also raising two girls, I thought I would contact the editor of this volume. I wrote explaining my interests in "tween" culture and Hollywood, and she invited me to submit an article. The problem was, the article was due in six weeks, and I was in the midst of interviewing older European "girls" for another project. I resolved the issue by making a conscious decision to focus my efforts on writing an article for the editor of the "girl culture" book and scheduled a host of additional interviews with the European women for one week after the due date of the article. I can give many examples of these kinds of "deadlines" that I actively sought during my sabbatical year. While to my friends and family, I ended up looking like a kind of shut-in during my sabbatical year, in fact it ended up being a wonderfully liberating experience.

During these intensive writing periods, I remembered the amazing feeling I used to get as an undergraduate after pulling an all-nighter. I remembered how empowering it was to push myself past my limits. Though now the only all-nighters I do are those induced by insomnia, I did rediscover the exhilarating feeling of pushing oneself, and freeing oneself from all other worldly concerns and responsibilities.

I also rediscovered those writerly portions of myself that had been all but completely channeled into more bureaucratic, administrative tasks. Before the sabbatical, I noticed that my contract evaluations, for example, often exceeded the level of writing effort that was needed for the task. My e-mails, furthermore, had spilled far too much electronic ink and had become an outlet for my writing desires. Now, being pushed to produce writing for different audiences proved to be a liberating experience. And with that freedom came a kind of personal happiness that I had once associated with the scholarly enterprise, but had long ago been diverted toward other professional activities.

The new challenge for me will be to integrate the rejuvenating effects of the sabbatical, my liberatory

servitude if you will, into life as a mentor again. I know the upbeat assessment - it is not only possible, but necessary, to stay "fresh" in your field, to continue to read, write and think about your area of study. I have often struggled, however, with the "iron cage of bureaucracy" of some of my mentoring responsibilities, as well as the need to be a "jack of all trades, master of none" that comes with the territory of trying to mentor in a diverse range of topics. I haven't resolved this challenge, but at least the sabbatical year has allowed me to entertain the possibility that active scholarship is not a closed chapter of my life.

Maya Angelou has written "I know why the caged bird sings." My hope is that, in going back to my "old life" as a mentor, I don't lose the voice I have rediscovered during my sabbatical year - that I can find a way to sing amidst the cacophony of daily work responsibilities.

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Sabbatical

Crystal Scriber, Central New York Center

During the fall of 2003, I had a six month sabbatical. It was very satisfying and productive and I learned a great deal in the process, through both research and experimentation with digital photography.

About 20 years ago, I built a complete darkroom in my basement. I have a Minolta/Beseler 4 x 5 enlarger, which prints both positive and negative images. My photography involves creating arrangements that I photograph or I might use found objects such as a rusty old truck. I also like to do extreme closeups through the use of extension tubes. I generally print from slides, sandwich slides and negatives together, or print color negatives on positive paper. In the past I have printed my own photographs in my darkroom at home and I have been able to exhibit them successfully in shows and galleries around the country. This is a long, tedious and dangerous process (the chemicals are not safe to handle). Developing film is not generally a creative process and it is possible to have a laboratory complete this step. The actual printing in the darkroom can take 59 separate steps. Four separate trays are required for the developer, stop bath, fixer and water bath. A contact sheet is first made of the negatives. Small images are made by placing the negatives on top of a sheet of photographic paper in a frame under glass in the dark. This is exposed to light and then processed in the trays. The images to be enlarged are chosen from this sheet and they in turn are processed. A test print with several different exposures is made first. Despite the test print often the final print must be redone several times. The print is then dried.

I have thousands of images that I have not been able to print because of the time required. I manipulate the images as I print them so I cannot have anyone else process them. For example, I will print a color negative of a close up of small tomatoes in a garden in the positive process and this will create a surreal and unidentifiable landscape or I will sandwich an abstract positive with a negative or another positive which might place my German shepherd in a red garden of poppy pods. All this can now be done simply and effectively in the environment of the computer darkroom.

Until recently digital images were usually of poor quality. Dot matrix prints were not appealing but the new ink jet printing which sprays small dots on the paper has totally changed that. Through my research I have discovered that the processes, equipment and software have been improved to the point where beautiful, photo quality images can be produced easily and with vast flexibility compared to traditional photography. The creative possibilities are literally endless. During my sabbatical I was able to scan my photographic images into my computer, manipulate them, and export them onto a CD. I was able to create a portfolio of new abstract images that have no relation to the originals. I then took them to a local service bureau and had them turned into prints, which were aesthetically very pleasing. The difficulty with this is twofold - there is a

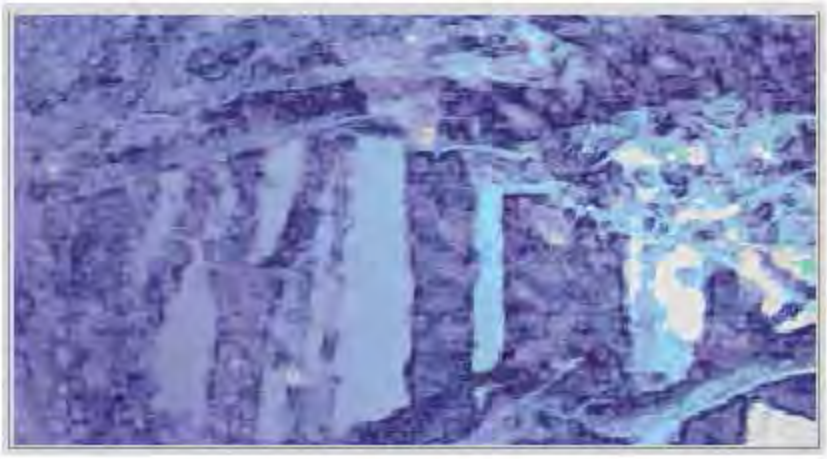
time lag before one can see if the results were successful and then it might be necessary to return to the service bureau to have one or more prints made. A second problem involves cost. If a large print is needed it can cost over $200 per print. Recently, I acquired an Epson 7600 that can print photographic quality large prints and a Canon Rebel digital camera, which will allow me to skip the scanner in the future.

Adobe Photoshop is virtually a "darkroom in a computer." I can scan my slides, negatives or flatwork such as drawings, paintings or photographs into Photoshop and from those images I can create an unlimited number of new works of art and it is safe and a much more efficient and productive process than the traditional darkroom. I can produce a "straight" photograph, combine images, change the color, or create a total abstraction from a tree and its reflection in a pool. Producing photographic art on the computer is a relatively recent concept but it is an important new direction. Creativity is an editing process and I can choose to save the images that have aesthetic appeal for me.

I printed the first two black and white images included in this article many years ago. Last fall I scanned them into Photoshop and began to create a portfolio of abstract images from them. The first step was to duplicate the black and white prints in order to save the originals. Then I began to alter them by adding color, changing color, creating mirror images, or using the zoom tool to enlarge and isolate certain sections of the image. Through these techniques I was able to create a portfolio of about 50 brilliantly colored prints. The prints following the black and white image of the tree were all created from the tree. Series 2 all came from the black and white picture of the swamp. My next project will be to work on creating a series of collages.

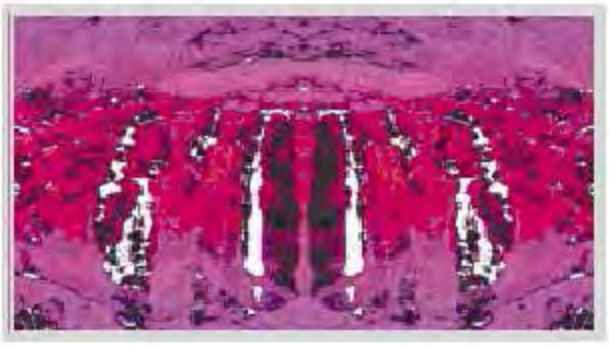
(Crystal Scriber's images appear on the next three pages.)

Series One

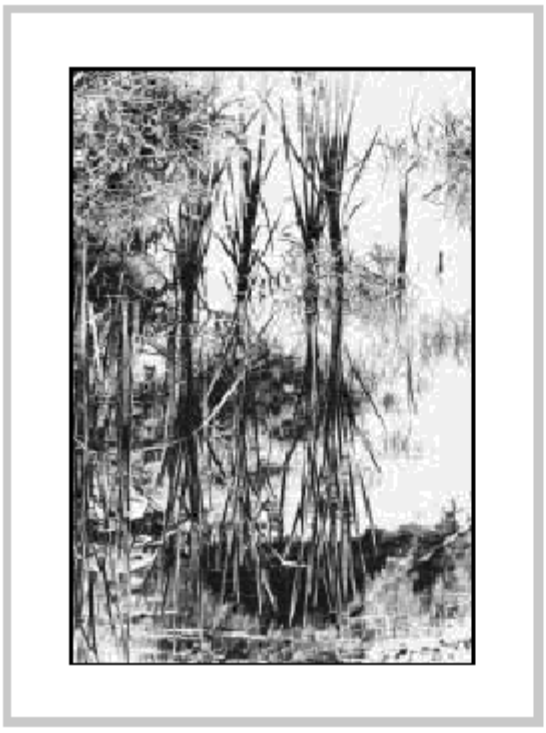


Original photograph

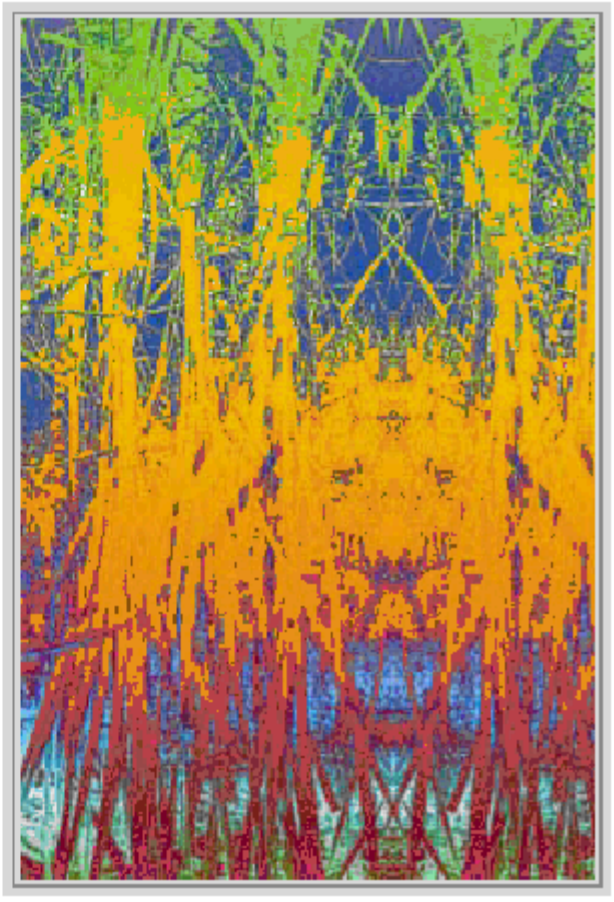
Sabbatical



Series Two



Original photograph



ALL ABOUT MENTORING
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Thirty Years a Mentor: If Caught Stealing this Case You Will be Prosecuted

James Robinson, Long Island Center

Thirty Years a Mentor: If Caught Stealing this Case you will be Prosecuted.

These words stare at me from the side of a battered red plastic milk carton as I stand waiting for my tea to heat in the microwave.

"Thirty years," I murmur. "Look at that . "

"Yeah, that microwave is pretty damn slow," Matt says, rushing past with memo in his hand. He stops for a second. "You okay? You don't look so hot. I mean, I don't mean to offend, but you look kind of, what? Queasy? Icky? Maybe more icky than queasy. Queasy implies a kind of vomity thing, don't you think?"

"Matt," I start again.

"Well, I've never been very good at distinguishing that kind of thing. I guess that's why I'm a biologist and not a doctor. Listen, I'd love to talk, but I have a student waiting." He dashes away, paper fluttering in his grip.

"Jesus, it can't be." Eva's at the Xerox. "You know a lot of older people have that problem," she smirks.

"No, Eva, I meant . "

"It's a post midlife acceptance kind of thing. You know, when a person starts to slow down a little, they can often feel that their perceptions are not always clear to them. That's a normal process, and you can usually benefit from it if you don't start to obsess over the loss. You look pretty good though, considering."

I stagger back down the hall. "I can't believe this."

"You having reality issues again, Robinson?" Toni has just come into her office. She is shouting over the wall at me.

"I hope we're not going to have any of our little problems this afternoon."

"No," I say, "I was just reflecting on . "

"Oh, that again. You men are always reflecting. I have that at home and it drives me nuts."

Ed rambles over to my door. "A problem?" he asks.

"Well, not really . "

"There's always a problem. I'll bring it up with Joe Moore if you want."

"It's not that important."

"Ed, did you ever notice that plastic milk carton ?"

"Yes, I have. They give us new office space and then they keep that old crap. That's the kind of thing that demoralizes everyone."

My tea is cold by now, so I head back to the microwave. I find Ivan talking with Mark. I open the door and shove the tea inside, grimacing.

"You don't like the tea?" Ivan asks. "I thought it was very good."

"Yes," I say, "the tea is really fine."

"It is much better than we had in Bulgaria when I was a graduate student."

"Anything is better than when you were a graduate student," Mark says. "That's a historical given. That's like saying Nixon had a normal sex life."

"He didn't?" Ivan asks.

"He probably didn't," I say, "but that's not . "

"It is entirely relevant," Mark says. "It's much more relevant than the stuff they usually teach about the 1960's. I wasn't there. But if I was, like you, I'd be outraged. I mean it's one thing when they lie to you about stuff you weren't alive to witness, but you were there for that stuff."

"You were there for Nixon's sex life?" Ivan asks.

"No, he means Nixon wasn't there," I say.

"In Bulgaria that was often true with our leaders, also." Ivan shrugs.

By this time I don't care about the tea anymore. It's hot or cold, but it just doesn't matter. I go back to my office and look at my 30-year clock, my badge of honor and survival. It's better than my 25-year pewter medallion. My medallion just sits there dull and unaccomplished. The clock has a solid, mechanical gleam of competence. I wish I could wear it around my neck on a gold chain, so everyone could see. I'd leave my shirt unbuttoned down to a big tattoo that said, "Mentor." When I walked into the State Office Building there would be an awed hush. Husbands would tell their wives, mothers would tell their children, "Look, dear, it's a Mentor, a 30 Year Mentor."

I watch as the second hand marches around the dial. How many sweeps has it made since I first saw that milk carton?

Cathy waves to me. "You have a countenance grievous sicklied o'er with doubt and palsied woe," she says.

"Please, don't start."

"Yeah, just because the Yankees are in, what, tenth place?"

"I can't think."

"Well, as a Canadian, a woman and a Mets fan I can't really help. I mean diversity has its limits, eh?"

"Go back to your office, Robinson," Toni shouts, "And leave that poor woman alone."

"He's not bothering anyone," Dori says. "You shouldn't pick on him like that. It isn't fair to treat people like they were a doormat, even if they are old and feeble."

John stops to listen. "That reminds me of a good joke. This old guy dies and goes to heaven, and his wife . "

"Not now, please . "

"You already heard it? Okay, Nixon and Clinton walk into a bar . "

"NO!"

"Hey, Robinson," Jack says. "You're lookin' kinda rotten. You gotta be careful with yourself, you know? I mean, I used to let myself get run down and then I said to myself, hey, I got better things to do than run around after all these crazies on the streets, you know?"

"Maybe it's not the same one," I say. "Maybe it's a different milk carton."

Karyll pauses at my door and smiles. "You okay?" she asks.

"Sort of."

"That happens on the Rez all the time. People are just sort of happy, or sort of sad. But it makes you wonder what's really going on for them."

"The Rez sounds like an attractive place right now."

"You might fit in," she says smiling. "Of course it would take a while."

"Thirty years?" "Maybe. People are slow to accept you. You'd have a lot to prove."

"To them?" I ask.

"More like to yourself."

"Karyll, you know that red plastic milk carton in the back?"

"Not exactly."

"I've been looking at that thing for 30 years."

Lee has come to the door and is looking over Karyll's shoulder. "Why didn't you get rid of that thing when we moved?" Lee asks.

"I thought I did."

"You could have given it to Yvonne," Lee says, "to go with her yellow chair."

"Why don't you get rid of it now?" Karyll asks.

"Yeah," Chris says, "That's more to the point. What's the matter with you?"

"Would it bring back the 30 years?"

There's a pregnant silence.

"What do you think?" Karyll asks me.

"No way," Chris says. "Are you freakin' kiddin'?"

"That's what I thought."

Jeanne comes to my door. "I hate to interrupt this obviously important conversation, but you have a student waiting. And Lisa called. She wants to know if you're doing anything."

"Yeah, Robinson, quit gabbing and do your work."

"Thanks, Toni."

I wonder who stole the case to begin with. It wouldn't have been Evelyn. It definitely could have been Gary. Or . Marie?

"I bet it was Marie, the time she brought her carpet to the office and Gary put the fake dog poop on it."

"Robinson?"

"Yeah, Toni?"

"Did you take your meds?"

Thirty years.

This is a work of fiction. The characters in it bear no resemblance to any person or persons, living or dead.

ALL ABOUT MENTORING
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Weaving Storylines in Adult Education

Marie Tondreau, Hudson Valley Center

. The Story Circle I

The domain of story in teaching and learning is large, and varied, and of ancient lineage. Close your eyes. Imagine a campfire in the midst of a wilderness, a great forest. See the people gathered in a loose circle around the fire, gazing with rapt attention at a sage, one of their elders, a wise woman with long gray hair flowing down her back as she paces the perimeter of the circle. Her hands move like birds, darting, swooping, following her words like servant shadows. She speaks of time past, a land far away, ancestors who gave birth to the grandmothers and grandfathers of the tribe now huddled under the stars, entranced by the tale she weaves in word and song. She speaks of their history, their heritage.
She speaks story.

> Story is the essential culture builder and learning tool of any society or family or classroom. The child within us and the children in our classes yearn for stories. It matters not that we no longer sit around campfires originating mythology - or even spend much time on porches gossiping and spinning tales - every child re-enacts this ancient means of expression and depends on its form to explain life's deepest concerns. (Paley, 1995, p. 93)

Later, when the story is done and people have begun to settle down for the night, a young girl stands in front of the old woman and meekly waits to be acknowledged. (This is storied knowledge, too, taught with sharp admonitions and swift disciplinary actions: children must show deference to their elders.) The old woman smiles at the child, who asks her question and receives an answer. The story is clarified, and now shines even more brightly in the eyes of the child as she runs home. *Mam, listen! This is how it was done in the olden days!* Bits and pieces of story flow like a river, and the circle of teaching and learning continues.

> A system of education must help those growing up in a culture find an identity within that culture. Without it, they stumble in their effort after meaning . . It is only in the narrative mode that one can construct an identity and find a place in one's culture. Schools must cultivate it, nurture it. (Bruner, 1996, p. 42)

Many years later, a descendant of that tribe flops onto his stomach on a narrow bed and opens the book his teacher gave him. He wants to understand why people kill each other. He begins to read about great wars

fought long ago, in countries that no longer exist, among people with names that sound strange to his modern ears, with weapons that seem laughably quaint in comparison to such inventions as nuclear warheads, missiles, atom bombs. He reads about the rise and fall of massive empires. He reads about exiled kings and beheaded queens. He reads story.

> We are told that Zen masters often respond to the pleas of their students for answers by telling stories . . [T]hese teachers . know that insights always shine brightest for those who have them, that truth is a word we give to a pattern that makes sense to us, and that by offering a story teachers provide a common structure on which each of us can order his or her own experience. Great teachers know that to provide an answer is to confuse ends with means . . A good story is a kind of hologram of the life of an individual, a culture or a whole species. Each of us hears in it, with ears conditioned by our own history, what we most need at the time to understand. (Daloz, 1999, pp. 24-25)

A tall woman with long hair and weary eyes stands in the doorway to the boy's room, looking at him with affection for a moment before speaking. *Come,* she says, *it is time for dinner.* He wants to keep reading, absorbed in the epic tales of exotic times and places evoked by the words in the book, begs for more time. *No, it is time,* she says, gently but firmly. *Why?* he wails. *Because that is the way we do things in this family,* she says. *We eat dinner together, no matter what.* Another story, first taught and learned long ago, when he was very young, repeated over and over, becoming family lore or legend. When he is a father, in a future he cannot now even imagine, he will tell this story to his children: *We always ate dinner together. That's what families do.* In matters momentous and miniscule, bits and pieces of story flow like a river, and the circle of teaching and learning continues.

> [Narrative schooling] makes a profoundly different statement about the purposes of education than education growing out of the structure of mechanism. It suggests that each person lives in a world that can and should be accounted for. It incorporates the world into the learning process in a particularly innocent (or artless) way, bringing the realities of lives into the open where they can be discussed and their meanings understood. To tell one's story on a continuing basis, as it is lived, is to assume responsibility for the way one's plot develops. One's story defines the social and cultural setting in which one lives; it says, "This is where I am, how I got here, what I care about, what I'm good at, where I'm going, what I might become. This is my myth of myself. This is who I am." (Hopkins, 1994, p. 167)

Narrative in Adult Education

The interdisciplinary study of narrative and narrativity provides a theoretical structure for my passion for story, for in-depth explorations of lived experience that portray the magnificent complexity and diversity of human life. Yet this raises questions. What does an individual life story reveal? Is there an essential core of humanity that can be glimpsed through the myriad permutations of forms in which it appears? Are people basically the same? Or is a life story only comprehensible in the context of the unique constellation of components that comprise it? I suspect that there is validity to both perspectives. Human beings share a common biological heritage (from the level of DNA and genetic coding to the complex neurological pathways that negotiate perception and sensation), and similar physiology (one head, two eyes, opposable thumbs). However, human beings do not share a common culture or language, which allows for enormous diversity across all realms of experience. The study of stories from cultures and life configurations that differ from my own enriches my quest for understanding the world in which I live. Words and worlds are not synonymous, but words and the stories woven of them can be doorways into other worldviews, a first step toward understanding. Stories have been an important part of my life and my education, and now they are an intrinsic part of my practice as an educator.

I have become convinced that stories are valuable pedagogical tools because of the way they resonate with

natural processes of making sense of experience. My belief that much human experience and knowledge are narrative constructions informs much of what and how I teach. Sometimes I teach "story" directly through learning contracts in Narrative Psychology, Narrative Counseling or Life Story Literature, and the narrative perspective always underlies my teaching. This may mean using stories to complement theory - like the collection of multicultural essays that I pair with a text on cross-cultural psychology - using students' own personal anecdotes to illustrate the cultural/societal construction of gender, or using case studies to link organizational theory with personally relevant workplace stories. It may mean pointing out the storied nature of positivist assumptions about research and what constitutes valid sources of knowledge, or the generalization of white male experience into authoritative stories about human nature. It may mean teaching organizational theory through metaphors, which themselves constitute storylines, or an impromptu speech about the complex stories embedded in workplace dynamics and workers' emotions.

It always means sensitivity to context, culture and language. It always means attending to the stories I am and the stories I live and how I embody them. It always means honoring the stories of my students - spoken or silent tales about selves, lives, experiences, beliefs, hopes and fears, dreams and aspirations, roots and wings. It means trying to nurture the delicate balance between the "modes of thought" that Jerome Bruner (1986, 1990) calls "paradigmatic" and "narrative." It means developing not only my craft as a teacher, but also my artistry as a storyteller.

Life stories open windows into other worlds and breathe life into scholarly theory. They bridge the various disciplines that study self, and selves. They mandate the inclusion of ground as well as figure - cultural context, place and circumstance, relationships and roles - and encompass the myriad aspects of what it means to be a self situated in space and time. Stories can take us inside, give us access to thoughts and feelings and beliefs and meanings. And stories can show us what is outside, give us a view of the multidimensional worlds in which we live, and which shape the stories of our lives.

Holistic education requires a blurring of sometimes fragmented and reductionistic disciplinary boundaries, an extraction of threads to weave a new pattern, and the narrative perspective encourages this kind of interdisciplinary exploration. Narrative in teaching encourages development, critical reflection, and perspective transformation. The narrative perspective also fosters an awareness of the multi-faceted dimensions of adult lives, and thus serves as a way for educators to remain aware of the variability of learners' stories, experiences, lifeworld contexts, and developmental trajectories.

Learning from Stories

Stories, whether rooted in actual or imaginary realms, literally and figuratively word our world. Literature is more than idle fantasy crafted to amuse, provoke, or sedate those who enter the textual corridors of its hallowed halls. Literature encompasses a great continuum of scope, from nonfictional tales (which provide the experience of vicarious participation in actual happenings) to realistic fiction (which provides an opportunity to vicariously experience other selves and other lives) to science fiction and fantasy (which illuminate the assumptions we live by in the very act of turning them upside down and inside out). Numerous studies in psychology have shown that the mind cannot distinguish between actual happenings and vividly imagined ones, which is why mental rehearsal can improve the performance of athletes. Similarly, vividly imagined literary worlds can have real effects on the consciousness of readers by stirring emotions, shaping beliefs, and informing actions. As Martha Nussbaum (1998) states, "if literature is a representation of human possibilities, the works of literature we choose will inevitably respond to, and further develop, our sense of who we are and might be" (p. 106). I emphatically agree with Nussbaum when she further states that:

> It is the political promise of literature that it can transport us, while remaining ourselves, into the life of another, revealing similarities but also profound differences between the life and thought of that other and myself and making them comprehensible, or at least more nearly comprehensible. Any stance

> toward criticism that denies that possibility seems to deny the very possibility of literary experience as a human social good. We should energetically oppose these views wherever they are found, insisting on the world-citizen, rather than the identity-politics, form of multiculturalism as the basis for our curricular efforts. (p. 111)

Identity politics signifies a broad range of theorizing and activity rooted in the shared circumstances of certain marginalized social groups. It sometimes has the unfortunate effect of emphasizing difference (only "we" can understand or communicate our experience) and thus fostering separatism. It is also vulnerable to fostering inappropriate generalization, a kind of essentialism that may not allow for differences in perspective and experience within a group that shares a particular characteristic, such as race or gender. Further, in an educational context, it may result in a focus on providing separate courses or programs of study - women's studies, queer theory, racial or ethnic studies - that are primarily for the benefit of those who share a particular social identity classification.

The "world-citizen" idea emphasizes that we are all citizens of the world, that we share this planet and need to try to understand each other, to transcend the cultural borders that separate us and engage in critical reflection on societal norms and assumptions. It connotes "we're all in this together" rather than "us against them." This does not mean seeking universal standards, ideals, values or classes. It means recognition and respect for the multiplicity of experiences and perspectives that teachers and students represent. It means seeking our own blind spots, and challenging our own worldviews. It means weaving a new storyline or vision of the world, one that eliminates the distinction between center and margin.

The "world-citizen" idea emphasizes that we are all citizens of the world, that we share this planet and need to try to understand each other, to transcend the cultural borders that separate us and engage in critical reflection on societal norms and assumptions. It connotes "we're all in this together" rather than "us against them."

This is not a simple thing to do. What constitutes a "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 1991) for one student may be a fact of life for another, or dismissed as irrelevant. African American or Haitian or Latino or Asian students usually do not need stories to awaken them to the existence of oppression and discrimination in the world, but white students often do. For minority students, just having their existence in the world offered as a valuable source of learning (through the inclusion of their people's stories) may be a new experience - it provides validation, if nothing else, and possibly role models for survival and success. A focus on dialogue and stories in the classroom usually means that students learn something about the realities of each other's lives, and almost any story can be used to stimulate critical reflection if the process of doing so is modeled by the instructor through questions and the articulation of alternate perspectives. I find that students almost always begin to challenge assumptions when they try to integrate theory and stories, whether they are drawn from life experience or encountered in the pages of a book. Theory is orderly, logical and coherent; lives are not. Teaching needs to allow for individualized engagement with diverse perspectives in order to be effective. Stories provide that.

The Story Circle II

The domain of story in teaching and learning is large, and varied, and of ancient lineage. Close your eyes. Imagine a classroom in an old brick building, a small and crowded room. See the people gathered in a loose circle around a central table, gazing with rapt attention at their teacher, a wise and eloquent man with black hair and chestnut skin. His hands move like birds, darting, swooping, following his words like servant shadows. He speaks of time past, men and women who shaped the world now occupied by the students who came to learn its wild and wondrous ways, who sit entranced by the storylines he weaves in lyrical words. He speaks of the history of science, the evolution of theory. He speaks story.

> Stories are "told," and then they are "ordered." The materials and subjects of schooling provide a variety of diverse forms for ordering narrative, for comprehending and structuring its meaning: historical ordering, scientific ordering, the ordering principles inherent in the various social sciences, and philosophical or even spiritual reflection. (Hopkins, 1994, p. 178) Later, one of the students - the young boy who tried to understand war, now an adult attending college at night - stands in front of the teacher and waits to be acknowledged. (This is storied knowledge, too, taught with sharp admonitions and swift disciplinary actions, internalized and carried across the years: people must show deference to their elders.) The man smiles at the student, who asks his question and receives another question in response. The story shifts and shimmers, takes on new contours and dimensions. *Now I understand! It all depends on how you look at it!* Bits and pieces of story flow like a river, and the circle of teaching and learning continues.
>
> Truth, for the tireless promoters of modernity and technical rationality, is measured in terms of standard procedures that demand an icy, critical stare at the object of study. In contrast, the story invites the listener or reader to suspend skepticism and embrace the narrative flow of events as an authentic exploration of experience from a particular perspective. (McEwan and Egan, 1995, p. xii)

Later that night, the same student sits at a desk in his study and opens a book his teacher suggested, continuing his lifelong quest to understand why people kill each other. He reads about biological determinism, social learning theory, psychopathology. He takes copious notes, comparing theories and analyzing evidence. Then he turns to another book, the story of a killer named Gary Gilmore. He reads about family violence, life in prison, bouts of drinking, a broken love affair, a brutal killing spree. He reads story.

> Good literature is disturbing in a way that history and social science writing frequently are not. Because it summons powerful emotions, it disconcerts and puzzles. It inspires distrust of conventional pieties and exacts a frequently painful confrontation with one's own thoughts and intentions. One may be told many things about people in one's own society and yet keep that knowledge at a distance. Literary works that promote identification and emotional reaction cut through those self-protective stratagems, requiring us to see and to respond to many things that may be difficult to confront. (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 6)

A slim woman with dark hair and lively eyes stands in the doorway to her husband's study, looking at him with affection for a moment before speaking. *Come,* she says, *dinner is ready.* He wants to keep reading, absorbed in the compelling tale of betrayal and senseless violence evoked by the words in the book, but puts it down and walks out of the room with her. He recalls his mother's words from long ago: *family comes first.* At the dinner table, his young son tells a disturbing tale about his day in school, an imagined fight with the bully who stole his lunch money. *I'm gonna knock his head off, Dad!* His father listens, thoughtful and caring. No, he says firmly. *Violence is never the answer.* His son asks why, and in return hears the story of Gary Gilmore. Then he hears a story about Martin Luther King, Jr., and peaceful resistance. He hears

another about Israel and Palestine, and how wars start in the hearts of bullies living destructive stories rooted in righteous conviction. They sit at that table long into the night, telling tales, learning lessons. Bits and pieces of story flow like a river, and the circle of teaching and learning continues.

> The eternal conflict of freedom versus destiny is revealed in the old Spanish proverb: Habits at first are silken threads - then they become cables. The same could be said of stories. Thus . beware of the stories you tell yourself - for you will surely be lived by them. (Howard, 1991, p. 196)

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Lucy Winner and Katt Lissard
Metropolitan Center

One of the most popular chants heard at anti-war demonstrations around the country in the past couple of years is a call and response about democracy. It has an infectious rhythm and is passed back and forth, usually between a single voice posing the challenge, *Show me what democracy looks like!* - and an exuberant, raucous group reply that goes, ***This** is what democracy looks like!*

In the spring of 2004 we embarked on a project with a group of students at the Metropolitan Center of Empire State College. We wanted to uncover what democracy looked like to our students, right now, in New York City. Our Democracy Project: A Laboratory in Arts and Civic Dialogue, encouraged students to explore ways to "perform democracy" - that is, to respond to current political, social and civic matters by making art together. The goal was for students to examine their own experiences and expectations of "public" acts of citizenship (e.g., marching, performing, participating on a jury, politicking) in order to lay the groundwork for a multidisciplinary performance. We wanted to use the arts as a means to engage ourselves, our students and the larger community in dialogue.

The Democracy Project was a "laboratory" because it was an experiment. Our approach included the challenging notion that the workshop would be run as democratically as possible. Artistic decision making would be shared by the group, and the final presentation would reflect diversity and, hopefully, consensus. We had no idea what form the presentation would take. We had no idea what this democracy would look like. That would depend on the students and on our work together.

In our first session we asked students to talk about a personal experience they considered "of democracy" as well as one "of no democracy." This proved to be a galvanizing entry point. While we didn't presume that only activist students or political artists would be drawn to the project, it was surprising that over half labeled themselves "apolitical" or "someone who hasn't been involved much in things." Thus, we ended up with a mix of people, from their late 20s to their late 50s, with a variety of artistic backgrounds - musicians, actors,

writers, visual artists and doll makers as well as those new to art. Political experiences ranged from involvement in Black liberation struggles to work in agit-prop street theater to what they described as "nothing at all." One student had never voted.

To inspire the move from personal experience to artistic expression we introduced the words of W. E. B. Dubois: "Begin with art, because art tries to take us outside ourselves. It is a matter of trying to create an atmosphere and context so conversation can flow back and forth, and we can be influenced by each other." We proposed to use theater, music, dance, visual art and creative writing as exploratory vehicles to contribute to the urgent conversation that had begun September 11, 2001.

We divided the 13 weeks of the workshop into three parts: generating, gathering and creating.

Generating

During the first phase we wanted to establish some ways of working, and to help develop a common vocabulary and a series of reference points. We gathered readings from American history, using Howard Zinn's *People's History of the United States* as a basic text. We studied early Greek democracy and went to see a production of Aeschylus's *Agamemnon.* We read dramatic literature and writings about arts and civic dialogue. Students responded to the readings and viewings through discussion, group exercises and journal writing. Finally, our colleague Alan Mandell gave an overview of social theory, and led a discussion by posing the provocative question: "Can we exist in a society of astonishing inequality and still be a democracy?" This question became central to the work. By the end of the first phase, each student had developed an individual focus, and we began to prepare for part two.

Gathering

In the fifth week, we had handed the reins to the students. Students each gave a 45-minute presentation in which they offered up the results of their investigation into an aspect of democracy in an artisic context. Again, the range was as diverse as the students. Investigations included everything from a participatory improvisation built around fear and ostracism, to the creation of on-the-spot protest songs, to an abstract lecture on "maginalization and the majority," to the beginning scenes of a melodrama based on the election of 1876. Following each presentation, we held a feedback and brainstorming session to uncover what the presentation had inspired. By the end of the four week period we had an exhaustive list of potential ideas, including visual, musical and aural elements as well many possible forms that our final presentation might take.

Creating

We gave ourselves the next five weeks to plan, create, build and rehearse a public presentation. First, we needed to find a frame that would collect and contain the expressive cacophony our students had engendered without silencing any of it. It was at this moment that we encountered the most significant strains in our attempt at "democratic" process, but finally we came to a consensus: we would make a museum of democracy modeled on P.T. Barnum's 19th century *American Museum.* Barnum's "democratic" and immensely popular museum housed wild animals, dioramas, historical reenactments, freak shows, melodramas, lectures and staged battles. It was a sensational mix, understood by some to be "morally uplifting and instructive" and by others to be "a vulgar jumble of chaos and disorder." Our students were drawn into the Barnum legacy of populism and spectacle, and the museum became the perfect prototype for our emerging performance/collage.

We spent several weeks scripting, scoring, cutting and rehearsing. We made a trip to Materials for the Arts - a not-for-profit organization that recycles discarded lumber, notions, theater sets, office furniture, and other

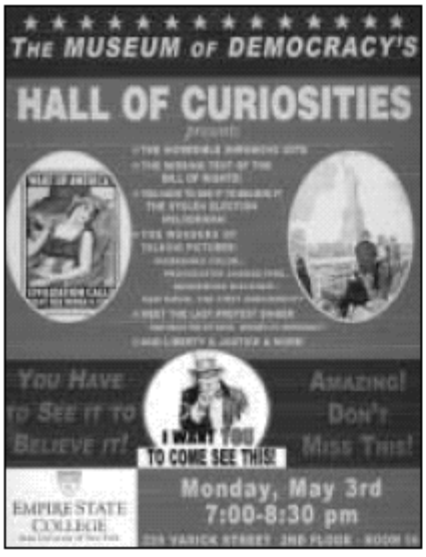
"trash" for use by artists and educators. There we grabbed anything that looked like it might be useful in our museum. We gathered piles of black stage curtains and yards of other fabric - black, royal blue, sheer white and Victorian floral, along with some odd prints of cowboys and clowns that intuitively seemed to connect to our themes. We also took empty picture frames, faux marble foam core flats, piles of toy guns, telephone wires and computer parts, cans of spray paint and huge rolls of white seamless paper.

Students worked at home, designing, recording, writing and painting. Huge dolls were fabricated to represent the candidates Tilden and Hayes in a melodrama of the election of 1876. A Material for the Arts posterboard with images of suburban homes for sale was turned into a case-by-case incident report of domestic shootings for an exhibit about the right to bear arms. Random people on the street were asked to recite anything they could remember of the First Amendment to be used as a video loop installation.

Throughout the final two weekends students came and went as their schedules allowed, transforming the gallery, the largest room at the Metropolitan Center, into a scene shop and construction site filled with ladders, drills, 2x4s, matte knives, scissors, push pins, swaths of fabric, sheets of posterboard, water bottles, soda cans, coffee cups, Chinese food containers and general chaos. Using fabric and foam core and paper the space was redesigned. Walls and passageways appeared: separate alcoves for the various "exhibits" were sectioned off and a central performance area for the melodrama was defined. Staff, faculty and administrators at the center checked in periodically, to marvel at how the space was becoming unrecognizable and to wonder what could possibly come out of the mess. And as their museum began to become a reality, the students themselves became increasingly energized and excited about inviting the public to see what they had done.

The result, The Museum of Democracy's Hall of Curiosities, in the spirit of Barnum, was a multifaceted, contemporary installation and performance. It was both fun fair and civics lesson, entertainment and intellectual provocation. The museum itself exceeded our expectations and the Democracy Project as a whole inspired many of our students to become more actively engaged in the world around them.

Tour the Hall of Curiosities *(view left to right)*



This poster, created by student participant Pat Brown, was used to advertise the event.

The Incredible Shrinking Vote (disenfranchised) by Jimmy Simopoulos. In order to enter our museum, visitors had to cast a ballot provided by our own version of Uncle Sam (Jimmy in costume). They then inserted the ballots into our voting machine, which shredded it, the curls of paper visible through the clear plexiglas face of the machine, joining the mangled votes of those who had gone before.

From there they passed under our large antique-framed sign: Welcome to Our Hall of Curiosities and walked along a four-paneled wall, *Standing/Under the Vote* by Colleen Cosgrove. These panels presented excerpts from various amendments that pertain to voting as well as highlighted information about the Electoral College. The information was focused and made more compelling by the use of collage and wordplay.

As they rounded a corner, they came face to face with Beth Sorrentino's video installation of person-on-the-street videos, *The First Amendment*. While the loop was running, visitors could also color inside or outside the lines of their favorite candidate on the large cartoon-like papers provided, as well as get some up-to-the minute history lessons.

Next was Val Hawk's *Foundations of Democracy: An Exercise in Ostracism.* Dressed in flowing Greek toga, Val invited visitors to cast ballots the way the ancient Greeks did – by writing the name of the person they would like to see banished from the community and tossing it into a vase.

Moving clockwise from Ostracism, visitors encountered Keith Kirk's *Exclusion: The Column of No,* which was, literally, a column covered with signs: No Jews, No Blacks, No Women, No Trespassing, No Gays. Next to this, under another framed sign *The Right to Bear Arms*, was Kirk's vintage glass museum vitrine on an antique stand filled with guns and the images of suburban home domestic crime scenes.

Across the performance space was Judith Delgado's *Civic Dialogue Parlor.* Visitors were invited to step into a frilly genteel world of flowered walls and delicate spindled table and chairs and converse with Judith about politics … or anything else that crossed their minds.

In a corner draped with camouflage and red flags, sat Paul Sachs, *The Last Protest Singer.* Backed by a collage of anti-war slogans and images of musicians like Bob Dylan, he took requests, and sang songs he had created for the museum. Occasionally he was joined by the rest of the Democracy Project company to sing the song they created collaboratively, "Where's My Democracy?"

In the opposite corner cordoned off by yellow police tape and glowing orange fluorescent traffic cones was Jimmy Simopoulis's silent installation, *The New American Emergency Flag* . Using the degrees of colored "alerts" issued by Attorney General John Ashcroft, the image highlighted a new "flag of fear" under which Americans have been asked to live.

In the center was the performance space. On display were two life-sized dolls of 1876 presidential candidates Tilden and Hayes. At designated times, playwright and barker Colleen Cosgrove (with cane) gathered audience members for the performance of *The Stolen Election or The Melodramatic Race*. This raucous and stylized performance revealed startling similarities to the stolen election of 2000.

Photography by: Tim Winner and Pat Brown

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ALL ABOUT MENTORING
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Organizations in Higher Education: A Sabbatical Report

Mary Klinger, Genesee Valley Center

As I began my sabbatical in February 2004, the weeks stretched before me. I knew my students would be supported in their work and the unit would be well coordinated. I knew this in my brain: I was not expecting my gut to have such difficulty letting go. By sheer effort of will, I managed to disengage from that day-to- day phenomenon that is mentoring at Empire State College. Finally I was able to devote my full focus to the work at hand - organizational culture and organizational learning in higher education institutions. As you will see, though, Empire State College never left my thoughts for long, since my research and activities kept moving back to thoughts and ideas related to the college. Ultimately, I reasoned that that really wasn't such a bad thing.

My anticipated sabbatical activities included completing an extensive literature search and readings in the area of organizational culture and learning as they relate to various aspects of higher education institutions. Another activity anticipated during my sabbatical included the development of a personal faculty web site that would be attached to the Empire State College web site.

Organizational Culture and Learning in Higher Education

I decided that my reading should begin with a review of the business realm of organizational behavior, culture and learning, as well as with a review of the latest research in these areas. Since the field of organizational behavior is still in its infancy (compared to other fields) there is still much discussion as to its place in the field of business as well as the social sciences. There is still divergence as to the conceptualization and applications of organizational culture research and many definitions abound in the literature. Most definitions, however, identify the importance of shared norms and values that somehow guide the behavior of people in organizations.

As I began to look at higher education, I found much of the literature concerning organizational culture and learning ties directly or indirectly to the term "learning organization." Peter Senge, who popularized the term in *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (1990), discusses five disciplines of the learning organization: personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, and systems

thinking. Senge has stated, however, that because of overuse the term is now no more than a buzzword, although the concept is still enormously important. Taken with the adult education angle, Marsick (2000) uses critical reflection, collaboration, and communication to describe the elements of organizational learning that foster a learning organization. Interestingly though, there is little consensus on a definition for either organizational learning or learning organization and very little empirical research on learning organizations. I found that there are no universally applied steps to move toward a learning organization. It seems that each organization must deal with its own uniqueness.

In the higher education literature on organizational culture, organizational learning and learning organizations, I was surprised to discover that much of the material is not directed at United States four-year traditional institutions. Most of the literature is connected to traditional educational institutions in the United Kingdom and Australia, as well as to community colleges in the United States. I was struck that in much of this literature the suggestions of researchers to enhance organizational learning and steps to become a learning organization leaned toward an organizational culture change that sounded very familiar to me. Suggestions ranged from more interdisciplinarity among departments, to enhanced organizational communication and active governance, teaching students to learn how to learn rather than teaching facts, and restructuring institutions to make them more learning focused. Since much of what I was reading reminded me of Empire State College, I realized at this point that I needed to move my attention to another category of higher education institutions, namely nontraditional higher education. I found a wonderful book called *Utopian Colleges* (1999) by Constance Cappel. She researched a number of nontraditional colleges and universities in the United States and abroad: Antioch, Sarah Lawrence, Goddard, The Union Institute and World College West. She explains in her book that the "utopian" institutions, although different, share several characteristics.

> [In these utopian colleges] the students, faculty and administrators strive to be open minded, while the colleges have a history of being nonsexist and nonracist. The idea of community is fostered and the organizational structure emphasizes equality and sharing in a nonhierarchical model. The entire institutional body tends to be more idealistic than in traditional schools. Personal growth is encouraged in an interdisciplinary educational setting not based on competition but on individual accomplishments (p. 2).

Many of these characteristics are similar to concepts of a learning organization.

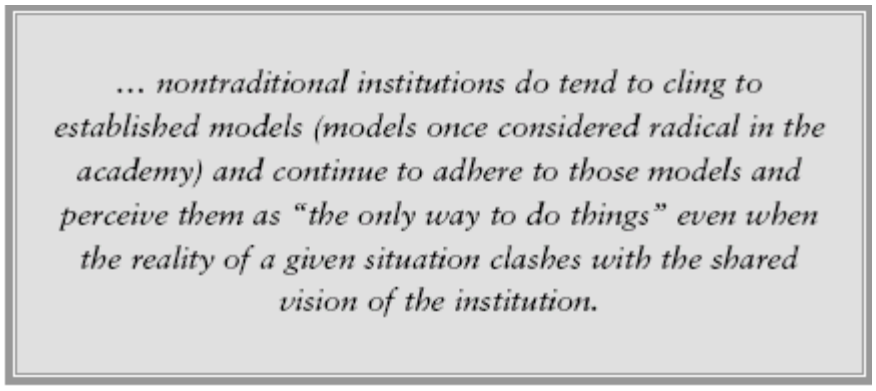
I met with Dr. Cappel and a number of other academics at The Union Institute and University and Vermont College to gain more insight into the culture and learning beliefs at other nontraditional institutions. One of the interesting themes that I found concerning nontraditional higher education organizations is stated concisely in Kline and Saunders' *Ten Steps to a Learning Organization* (1998).

> The price we [organizations] pay for excellence is often to establish a set of templates which are so solidly established that we cannot effectively interact with anything which falls outside their sphere. That's why the great revolutionaries of one age become the reactionaries of the next. Having created new ways of seeing things, they cling to them and are unwilling to admit new possibilities that go beyond what they have created (p. 31).

I found this as a recurring theme in studying the organizational culture and learning of higher education institutions, especially nontraditional organizations. It appears from my initial research that nontraditional institutions do tend to cling to established models (models once considered radical in the academy) and continue to adhere to those models and perceive them as "the only way to do things" even when the reality of a given situation clashes with the shared vision of the institution.

Questions that I developed as I worked were answered in part by my study of organizational learning and learning organizations. Nontraditional organizations of higher learning are experiencing an evolving culture change that is not necessarily of their making. For example, how is the culture of nontraditional institutions changing in response to the problems of external mandates and internal integration? Are we being proactive and creative in the ways we respond? Are we communicating with each other? I believe that the more we look at the theories and practices of learning organizations, we will be able to be more proactive and respond creatively to these kinds of recurring questions. I think that this is also true for traditional higher education institutions that are dealing with different but equally difficult impositions on their organizations.

Near the end of my sabbatical as I thought through my activities, I had the beginnings of one of those mini - "aha" moments. As I contemplated the elements of one of the learning organization models that I had studied, the Luthans model, I realized that we at Empire State College use the learning organization concept, but not necessarily related directly to the institution as a whole. Luthans, et al., in *Organizational Behavior* (2002) created a broad theoretical framework of a learning organization for business, based on Argyris' work in double-loop learning and Senge's generative learning, as well as through a comprehensive review of the available literature on learning organizations. Their work describes three essentials for a learning organization. The first is the presence of tension (Senge calls this "creative tension") or the stimulus to learn, in effect the gap between a vision and reality. This gap causes questioning, inquiry, challenges to the status quo, and critical reflection. The second essential is systems thinking, where there is a shared vision of the people in the organization and an openness to new ideas and the environment beyond the institution. The last essential element is a culture that facilitates learning, where suggestions are accepted and there is teamwork, empowerment and empathy. According to Luthans, these three elements, when working together, allow a learning organization to develop. The "aha" moment came when I realized that this framework looked a great deal like a framework that could be used to describe the mentoring model used at Empire State College. Faculty use it everyday in our mentoring practices - shall we say a learning organization of two (or a few). In the coming months, as time allows, I would like to pursue this idea and see if thinking about this model as a model for mentoring can move the college closer to understanding and developing a more effective learning organization. These concepts presented by Luthans are reproduced on my web site for discussion.



My Personal Faculty Web Site

Another project of my sabbatical was the development of a personal faculty web site. It has bothered me for a long time that when students (or potential students) look at the Empire State College web site and enter the faculty web pages section, they have never seen more than a handful of web pages. I wonder if the impression that we give is that we only have a few faculty members at the college? I am excited that I was able to add to the faculty web sites.

There are two other reasons that I wanted to create a web site. I want to give my students access to a variety of resources helpful in their pursuit of learning. I also wanted to make my research work available to my colleagues, (both academics working in my field of study and to my colleagues at the college). With the capable assistance of Francis Murage (and Katharine Watson who worked on the design of the web site), I believe I have been successful in this endeavor. I hope that this effort will motivate other faculty to develop web pages (maybe using mine as an example or a template). The web site address is http://www1.esc.edu/personalfac/mklinger and will also be linked to the Empire State College web site.

Involvement with Empire State College During the Sabbatical Leave

As you see, during my sabbatical, my thoughts were never far from Empire State College. I do want to comment on the surprising reactions that I received from many people when they saw me at the All College Conference in March - many . incredulous that I would attend. I had been on sabbatical for about five weeks at that time. There had never been any question in my mind that I would attend. Why wouldn't I? It is the most important event of the year at the college. It is the one time that the college as a whole comes together where people can renew friendships, contemplate and discuss others' opinions, see what's new, and attempt to learn all they can learn in 47 hours about colleagues' new ideas and the evolution of past ideas. (It is also a time to play a little, laugh a little, and relax a little). It is the one time a year that you can be in a large group of people where you don't have to explain what the college and mentoring are all about. Of course, we tend to spend a lot of time trying to further define those terms.

At All College you never have time to talk to everyone. You never have time to go to all the interesting sessions. But just knowing and feeling that all these intelligent, caring, dedicated people are all in the same place at the same time is a wonderful experience. The All College Conference can certainly be an opportunity for organizational learning.

I want to thank everyone involved for allowing me the opportunity of this sabbatical leave. I feel privileged to have been allowed the time to pursue my interests and hope that my contributions will ultimately be useful in the academy. I know that I will be able to use my learning to assist my students more successfully through a renewed commitment to learning as well as through my gained knowledge in the field. I feel privileged to be a member of this unique organization and hope to continue to contribute in a meaningful way. For me, a sabbatical was not an escape from my job for six months. It was a time to discover pieces of Empire State College from different perspectives, different frames. In an ideal world, every member of the college community would have the opportunity to take the time to step back and view our institution with a fresh perspective.

ALL ABOUT MENTORING
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Building Learning Communities Through Interdisciplinary Practices

Deborah Holler, Central New York Center

Deborah Holler

This article follows the panel discussion of the same title presented at the All College Conference, March 2004. In addition to Deborah Holler, panel members included Rae Rohfeld, Elaine Handley and Patricia Maiden.

For most of my college years, I thought that my reluctance to focus on one particular area of academic study was the result of a messy mind and, as one grade school teacher concluded, "a short attention span." My undergraduate program veered all over the academy finally becoming a dual major across two colleges at Syracuse University where I also earned an M.A. in a combined program, once again across two different colleges. Ten years later, when I began working towards a second M.A. at Empire State College, I was introduced to the term interdisciplinary and learned to love it. While I was engaged in interdisciplinary studies in the M.A.L.S. program, it became evident to me that learning within the intersections and counter-play of the arts, humanities and sciences expands and enhances the particular in any subject. But it was not until I became a mentor and began to practice interdisciplinary research and pedagogy that I truly

understood the way in which interdisciplinary practices cultivate communities of learners across the boundaries of the academy and into the community at large.

One of my first endeavors as a mentor was to develop a learning contract for an independent writing study in which students could address a topic in their area of study through an interdisciplinary research and writing project. This study worked so well for students that I began to work with other mentors in my unit to develop interdisciplinary studies in literature and writing. I also began to view my colleagues in the sciences as resources and translators who helped me to bridge the gaps in my scholarship. Over time, my colleagues and I built personal and professional relationships that carried us into collaborative studies across the disciplines. With Pat Maiden, whose earlier research in literacy affirmed creative expression as a mode of learning literacy, I examined my pedagogical practices in expressivist writing as a means of promoting fluency and self-confidence among beginning academic writers. The early results of this study were presented at the 2003 Conference of the SUNY Council on Writing.

During the same time period, Nikki Shrimpton and I often shared students in the sciences who also had interests in literature and creative writing. Gathering momentum from these early collaborative efforts, Pat Maiden, Nikki Shrimpton and I began a longitudinal study in which we developed a series of discourse activities designed to support new students as authentic learners by assisting them in crossing the border of authority into the academy. The early results of this study were presented by Pat Maiden at the Seventh Annual International Conference on Transformative Learning at Columbia University. Ultimately, these collaborative endeavors became the building blocks of experience that would ultimately transform my ways of thinking about my particular area of interest, research and pedagogical practices.

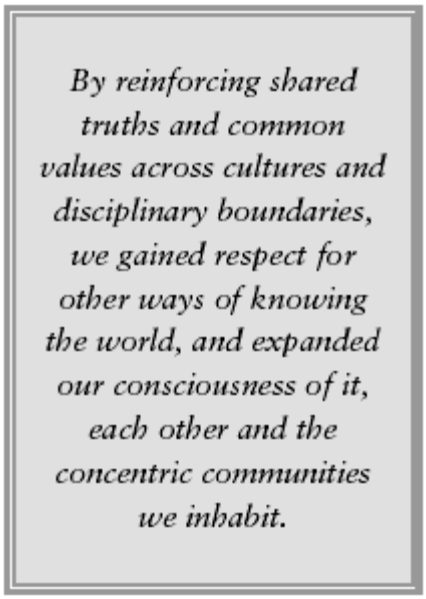
Since I was first introduced to the topic 10 years ago, interdisciplinary study programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels have flourished. A recent Internet search on Google.com resulted in a staggering number (12,000) of international journals devoted to interdisciplinary studies representing all aspects of the arts and sciences, as well as cultural and practical studies. Returning to this topic after 10 years was something like running into an old college chum whose career has taken off in all directions. I was both awed and intimidated by the weight and volume of the current discourse. At the same time, I felt compelled to examine my own practices as a mentor, teacher and lifelong learner.

I began reviewing recent anthologies in which scholars and researchers across the disciplines examine interdisciplinarity in both theory and practice. Among them, articles such as those by Lisa R. Latucca, William H. Newell and William J. Green concentrate on the academic discourse and applications of interdisciplinarity within a context of globalism and community. Johan Galtung, for instance, asks us to consider the nature of peace. He employs game theory as a framework for discussion of world peace achieved through the effects of interdisciplinary discourse and asserts that global peace can be best fostered through a discourse about the meaning of peace in the military, economic, political and cultural contexts. In "The Central Curricular Issue of Our Age," Huston Smith asserts that interdisciplinary discourse creates a new Deborah Holler context for knowing the world by filling in the partial map of the sciences. He argues for a consideration of the realities of the immaterial world and human endeavors in terms of values and existential meaning. Ernest L. Boyer also considers interdisciplinary discourse in terms of values when he argues for a core curriculum that represents commonalities among all people. He then describes those commonalities in terms of the arts, humanities and sciences. Mary E. Clark also examines social aspects of interdisciplinary practices when she asserts that interdisciplinary pedagogy in the academy builds communities of learners by recognizing connectedness and commonality among diverse people.

Sometime during the summer of 2003, I heard about Empire State College's intention to host the 14th North American Interdisciplinary Conference on Environment and Community. By this time my professional relationship with Nikki Shrimpton had taken on a more personal tone. On a car trip to Canada, we drove up the Niagara Escarpment, through the Tuscarora Nation and past the Niagara Power Project while I told her

about my longtime interest and research into the cultural geography and history of the Niagara region. I knew that the story of Niagara was compelling, and mentioned to Nikki that I thought it would make a good topic for a presentation at the conference. Captured by my narrative (I like to think) she agreed. I then asked if she might be interested in partnering with me and, in a leap of faith, my colleague said yes!

Over the next six months, Nikki and I would come to know the Tuscarora people and culture in a way neither of us anticipated. We attended marathon meetings with our Tuscarora partners during which we walked their lands, visited the power project and the mighty Niagara river. We sat in diners, cars, home offices and cafés, and listened to many hours of talk from people who build a world through narrative. As collaborators, we examined our topic from the perspectives of our disparate cultures and disciplines. Among us we represented Western and non-Western worldviews as well as practical and academic expertise in environmental science, technology, the arts and cultural studies. With our Tuscarora partners, we created a slide show in which text and images tell about the impact of hydroelectric power plants on both global and local environments, as well as the indigenous peoples and surrounding communities. The product of our collaboration was presented at the Annual North American Interdisciplinary Conference on Environment and Community in February 2004. As result of this experience, Nikki and I have branched off into new areas of scholarship and our Tuscarora partners have built on our earlier work and are conducting lectures and art displays across New York and Canada.



After the months of travel and talk, work and play combined with the heady glow of a truly exciting conference, the aftermath left a void begging to be filled. I knew that engaging in this research project had a profound effect on me, and felt the need to articulate what I'd learned from the experience. I began by asking myself about the effects on my ideas in cultural studies and narrative theory in particular. I'd read widely and deeply in narrative theory over the years, and am a practicing creative writer. As I began thinking and writing about our collaboration, I began to understand how many of my presuppositions about oral narrative technique and practice had been turned upside down. As a people whose pedagogical technique is contextualized in narrative, the Tuscaroras' way of informing us was a demonstration of the way in which the very construction of discourse over time and space reflects the cultural values and philosophies of a people. These ideas have already begun to impact on my research, writing and pedagogy, and will no doubt inspire my endeavors for a long time to come.

I wanted to know if interdisciplinary practices could have a transformative effect across the boundaries of the academy, so I decided to interview my scientist partner Nikki Shrimpton. I began by asking questions

about her teaching practices and knowledge of interdisciplinarity prior to her work on this project. Initially, Nikki described her teaching practices as fairly routine and heavily weighted in environmental science, but she also said that ecology and environmental studies are intrinsically interdisciplinary. When I asked her what she had learned from our experience with the Tuscaroras, she talked about her area of interest and added that she was excited by what she saw as "overlapping zones" or "concentricity" of interests among people with diverse backgrounds and disciplinary practices. This aspect of our conversation was well within my expectations. When Nikki said that she was impressed by the way different disciplines use different "languages" but sometimes use the same words with differing meanings, I caught a glimpse of transformation. I remembered some of our initial meetings with each other, and then with our partners, and the times we digressed into a discussion that would have delighted a linguist. Through these brief sidetracks, we hammered out agreements on particular meanings of words that were common among us, but had differing meanings within our disciplines or worldviews. In this way, we began to form a common language that was both interdisciplinary and cross-cultural.

Because I knew that my ways of thinking about narrative and oral traditions had changed considerably, I wondered if Nikki's thinking in her area had changed in any way. I asked her, "Do you think there can be ways of knowing that are not based in the sciences?" and "After our experience with the Tuscaroras' oral teaching practices, what do you think about narratives as a way of knowing the world?" Initially, she responded that there can't be any knowledge of the world outside the sciences, but narrative can describe phenomena or explain science in a way that brings nonscientists into the sciences. As she pondered the question further, she began to tell me about her impressions of one of our Tuscarora partners, an environmental scientist, and the extraordinary way that he traversed the bridge between scientific knowledge and the traditional knowledge of the Haudenosaunee culture. She was, she said, very impressed with the way that their stories described how they learned about their world from the indigenous animals. Nikki went on to say that her experience with our Tuscarora partners had "opened (her) up to other ways of thinking and knowing." Finally, Nikki said that she had found great comfort in the commonality and "shared truths" we had found among us, and that she'd like to think about the questions and revisit our conversation, a plan I intend to carry out.

This dialogue helped me to crystallize some of my ideas and to reinforce what I already knew about the pedagogical power of oral discourse. Until we talked about our experience, neither Nikki nor I had confirmed what we learned other than the facts and history of the case we examined. After our dialogue, I came to understand that it was the learning experience itself that was the most compelling teacher, the one with the power to transform both our personal and academic worldviews. When my scientist partner began to view the world from outside the boundaries of empiricism, expressing wonderment and a desire to know more, I knew that she too was enriched by the experience and was expressing the best characteristics of a dedicated student. By exchanging the particular truths and languages of our disciplines, we began to re-examine old axioms in a new light. By reinforcing shared truths and common values across cultures and disciplinary boundaries, we gained respect for other ways of knowing the world, and expanded our consciousness of it, each other and the concentric communities we inhabit.

Through our mentoring practices and continuing partnerships in pedagogy at Empire State College, the concentricity of interests expands to include students, their interests and narratives of discovery. In Educational Planning, for example, mentors have an opportunity to engage students in an interdisciplinary discourse in which we negotiate a common language that translates life experience into college learning. Our students' stories about themselves inform us in a way that brings them across the boundaries of the academy and affirms the egalitarian relationship between students and their mentors. Inspired by our research partnership, Nikki and I have continued to develop interdisciplinary studies for students as well. This fall we offered a group study in The Nature and Meaning of Place, a study that will satisfy General Education requirements in The Arts and Natural Sciences while also framing a context for transformative learning. Through our pedagogy and practices across the disciplines, we create interstices of interest across

the disciplines that both inform and transform us as a learning community of reciprocating translators and learners. Finally, when we are inspired to share our learning with others, we grow exponentially as lifelong students while reaffirming our identity as a learning community.

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The Tension of Grading and Evaluating Students

James Wunsch, Verizon Corporate College Program

For more than 30 years, Empire State College did not award letter grades unless a student specifically requested them at the start of each study for each enrollment period.[1] Behind that policy was the belief that a written statement of how well a student had learned a subject could be far more meaningful than an "A-B-C" grade. A new policy has now been established. The narrative or contract evaluation will continue to be mandated, but for the first time in college history, a letter grade must accompany the narrative unless the student has signed a waiver specifically requesting that letter grades not be issued during an enrollment period.2 From now on, then, most Empire State College students will be awarded letter grades.

The Debate Over Letter Grades

The letter grade proposal touched off a spirited, year-long debate across the college. Advocates pointed to polls showing that the majority of students favored automatic letter grades for a number of reasons: many needed a routinely generated grade point average (GPA) to gain federal employment or entry into law, business or other graduate programs; some corporations require employees to submit letter or number grades before compensating them for tuition. And then there were students who simply wanted an unequivocal "A-B-C" performance statement. Many center deans and program directors also favored the letter grade proposal. In the past, students who had taken studies without a letter grade could still get one later on. This policy made center deans and programs directors ultimately responsible (on student request) for retroactively assigning letter grades based on the narrative evaluations for every Empire State College study going as far back as 33 years.3 On the other hand, opponents of letter grades pointed to the fact that there was no firm data indicating that the absence of letter grades had proved to be an impediment to graduate school admissions; indeed, anecdotal evidence suggested that Empire State College students with their demonstrable ability as independent learners had done well in getting into graduate schools. The college had always been able to generate letter grades as needed. Moreover, letter grades seemed, if not contrary, then largely irrelevant for a college where a mentor and student collaborated in the design of individualized studies based on a student's own interests and needs. In classroom situations where an individual's performance might be gauged against that of the group, a case could be made for grades, but in one-to-one individualized instruction, grades just didn't seem warranted.

The College Conferences on Evaluation

When it became clear that the new letter grade policy would be approved and implemented, it seemed to individuals on both sides of the issue that instead of continuing the debate, it would be more fruitful to

consider the fundamental issues concerning student evaluation. In that spirit, the Academic Planning and Learning Policy Committee (APLPC), the Mentoring Institute, and the Office of Academic Affairs hosted two conferences on evaluation. At the second conference (June 8-9, Saratoga), I chaired a panel titled, "Tensions and Challenges of Writing a Narrative and Assigning a Letter Grade." Ed Warzala of Genesee Valley's Batavia Unit and Alan Mandell of the Metropolitan Center each made presentations, and I offered some prefatory remarks on college policies, past and present, relevant to evaluation issues. Alan Mandell, who is the editor of this journal, asked me to summarize the session.

Warzala: Timely Feedback and the Need for Rubrics

Ed Warzala pointed out that a mentor or tutor might write a narrative dealing in a straightforward way with academic deficiencies without serious student objection, but that once the performance was reduced to a letter grade - C for example - then there was a far greater likelihood that the student might object. Routine letter grading is likely to make the evaluation process more tense and confrontational. He suggested that if there were sufficient feedback and commentary between tutor/mentor and student *during the study,* then potential conflicts over the final grade might be reduced. In other words, the student should have a fairly clear sense of what his or her final grade will be before it is formally submitted. He also suggested that since so much of the evaluation of student performance rests on the quality of written work, then tutors and mentors should, at the outset, provide and discuss with the student a rubric listing the criteria by which written assignments can be evaluated. He did not endorse any particular rubric but distributed one from Bowdoin College as an example of a reasonable approach.4 Warzala concluded with an appeal not to become too mechanical in assigning letter grades; a little encouragement, he suggested, a slight boost in the grade beyond what the mathematics might dictate, could go a long way to encouraging the student and improving future performance.

Mandell: The Individual's Learning as the Focus for Evaluation

When Alan Mandell distributed sample narrative evaluations with letter grades attached, he touched off a very lively discussion, which included many provocative questions: Was the evaluation sufficiently explicit as to what the student had leaned? Was it appropriate to comment on student "feelings" or "progress" rather than to focus exclusively on performance? Was the final grade consistent with the narrative evaluation? If there was a consensus to this discussion, it was how very difficult it can be to write a fair and complete evaluation. How much easier, in fact, to simply assign a grade and be done with it. Here Mandell pointed out that however cumbersome and difficult it might be to write a narrative, it offers - as a letter grading system never can - a way to deal with the complexity of individual learning. And concern for the individual is what this college is all about.

What Did the Founders Have in Mind?

Mandell's point comes across even in the earliest Empire State College documents. A *Prospectus* (February 1971) proposed that a new, as yet unnamed, nonresidential "University College" focus on ". the individual student learning at his own pace with the guidance and counseling of master teachers." Neither this *Prospectus* nor the college's first *Bulletin* (1971-72) dealt specifically with how students were to be evaluated, but it was predictable given Empire State College's progressive roots (note such predecessors as Bennington, Sarah Lawrence, Black Mountain and St. John's-Annapolis) that the narrative would become the preferred evaluative instrument and that letter or number grades would be issued only as needed. The foundation documents also made it very clear that the evaluation process would be a major concern at the college and that "although a student learns for his own purposes, if he wants college credit, the ultimate evaluation of his performance must rest with the faculty" (*Bulletin* 42). What distinguished the evaluation process at Empire State College from that of traditional colleges was that here the student would be invited to help frame the terms under which he or she would be evaluated. As the *Prospectus* explained, " . the

student's own needs will shape the process within which the judgment will take place" *(Prospectus).* Because the student might propose what would constitute satisfactory progress, which in most institutions was not a matter for discussion, the *Bulletin* stressed "that effective arrangements for evaluation must be part of each contract *from the outset.* [My italics] Once the program is at its end it is usually too late." Here, then, three decades ago, was Ed Warzala's point: make sure you and your student understand the terms of the evaluation agreement and allow the student to participate in the discussion. And don't forget the feedback during the contract! While this panel was charged with dealing with the implementation of a major new academic policy, it is notable that in the end, our panelists chose to speak about two issues - the need for individualized learning and upfront evaluation standards, both of which were central concerns of the college founders. This is a testament to the fact that either we have been talking in circles for 30 years, or let us hope, have maintained a consistent focus on what is really important for learning.

In Defense of Bulky Transcripts

Empire State College's new letter grade policy will make it easier for the college to provide what many employers and graduate admissions departments seek: a simple list of course titles, credits and the grade point average. But along with this conventional transcript there will be appended, as always, all those contract evaluation pages detailing, study by study, what a student actually learned. How very odd that such a document should circulate in the digital age. And yet, because the distinctive Empire State College transcript remains a far more revealing document than those obligatory and often quite meaningless "letters of recommendation," it may be more useful in opening doors for our students. In any event, the bulky transcript remains a testament to an abiding 30-year effort to realize the dream of teaching students . one by one.

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Notes

1 It should be noted, however, that since their inception, the Center for International Programs and The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies have been issuing letter grades.

2 Students will also be able to designate up to 12 credits over the course of their entire enrollment on a pass-fail basis. A pass will be deemed equivalent to at least a C- though pass-fail credit will not contribute to the GPA.

3 The administration will still remain responsible for providing letter grades for all courses taken prior to July 1, 2004.

4 An APLPC sub-committee developed a rubric, which was used this summer in scoring student writing samples for Empire State College's GEAR report to SUNY in Basic Communications. A copy of this rubric can be obtained from Mitch Nesler, assistant vice president for academic affairs in Saratoga Springs.

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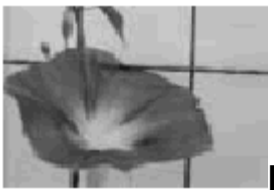


Mosquitoes and Morning Glories on Slovansk Island:

Reflections on Graduation 2004, Prague

David Starr-Glass, Center for International Programs

This summer two fortuitous factors came together in a most pleasant way. The first was that the date of the Empire State College graduation in Prague was changed from a Saturday to a Sunday. The second was that I live in Jerusalem, a mere 1600 miles as the silver crow flies, from Prague. And so, not constrained by issues of shabbat or distance, I was able to attend my first Prague graduation.

The event took place in the sumptuously restored Sophia Palace, built on Slovansk - Ostrov, one of the islands in the Vlatava River that runs through Prague. The Sophia Palace is a magnificent venue being in the center of Prague and yet secluded in its own tree-shaded park. It was constructed in 1835 and named for Sophie, mother of Franz- Josef I. (At that time the Czech lands were under control of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire.) A center of cultural activity in the city, the palace aged with dignity. However, during the communist era, it was much neglected and fell into a state of shabby disrepair. In 1992, following the implosion of communism, it was extensively restored and refurbished. The results are most impressive: an enchanting yellow facade and a set of halls glittering with gold leaf intricacies. The palace is a remarkably beautiful building much visited and held in great affection by the people of Prague.

The graduation, hosted by the University of New York in Prague (UNYP), actually involved four distinct ceremonies. The UNYP does not award its own degrees. Instead its various educational partners issue them: Higher Diplomas in business from Highbury College for those who opt for the UK track; bachelor's degrees from Empire State College and master's degrees from La Salle University and the University of Louisville, for those who chose the United States academic option. The ceremony was impressively organized and seamlessly conducted by Barbara Adams, UNYP's academic dean. Ken Abrams, dean of the Center for International Programs, and the Prague unit's director, Evelyn Wells, represented Empire State College. It was predominantly an Empire State College affair - about 120 of the 140 graduates were ours.

It was also a colorful, glittering, and joyful event. William Cabaniss, the United States ambassador to the Czech Republic was there, as were many other American and Czech dignitaries and civic and business

leaders. The proceedings began with trumpeters from the Prague Castle Guard playing in quick succession *Kde domov mu°j, The Starr Spangled Banner, and God Save the Queen.* This was followed by the celebratory pomp and calculated circumstance of a traditional academic graduation, something graduates and their parents will always remember. As the sole Empire State College faculty member, I was deeply happy to there with my students who were now becoming my graduates.

I had taken a pocket camera but, in the event, it remained in my pocket and I left without a photographic record of the afternoon. There was just too much going on: too many people to greet and to congratulate - new graduates, their parents, spouses and significant others. Nevertheless, I left with a set of clear images of the afternoon and many reflections, mostly formed in the cool of the evening when mosquitoes descended with dusk and a gentle rain on Slovansk - Island.

Last year a publisher friend in England asked me to index a book that he was bringing out by Herbert Plutschow, professor of East Asian languages and culture at UCLA. It is a fascinating book that traces the development of the tea ritual in Japan. In particular, it focuses on arguably the greatest of all tea masters, the legendary Rikyu (1522-91), the son of a wealthy fish merchant from Sukai. Rikyu ritualized tea in a way that embraced a profound aesthetic sensitivity and a deep spiritual experience.

The book contained one story in particular that resonated with me. Hideyoshi, one of Rikyu's guests, knew that a profusion of morning glories grew on the hedge in the tea master's garden. Wishing to see these flowers opening in the morning sun, he came to the tea party early but to his dismay found that all of the flowers had been cut down. However, on entering the tea hut he was startled to see that Rikyu had placed a single morning glory blossom in a simple bamboo vase in the alcove.

Hideyoshi was transfixed by the beauty of the solitary flower and by the realization that Rikyu had deliberately shifted the focus away from the massed flowers of the hedgerow to this isolated specimen. For Hideyoshi, this exemplified not only profound *wabi* but also demonstrated how it could be used to elicit a spiritual response. *Wabi,* so cultivated by the tea masters, is a refined austerity considered to complement, or provide a contrast to, beauty. Now, the degree to which I have cultivated *wabi* is unclear, even to myself. However, as the mosquitoes and dusk settled around me, I began to think of the single morning glory that remained after the sumptuous splendor of the graduation.

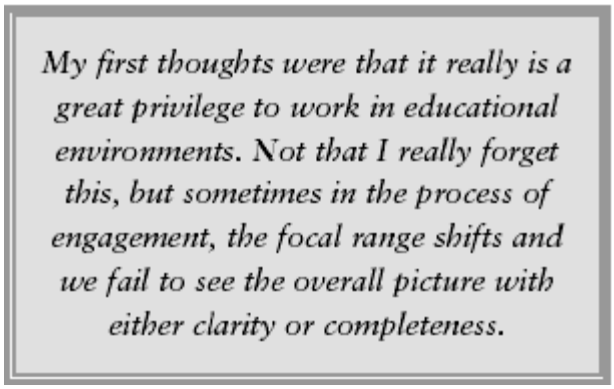
My first thoughts were that it really is a great privilege to work in educational environments. Not that I really forget this, but sometimes in the process of engagement, the focal range shifts and we fail to see the overall picture with either clarity or completeness. It often takes what sociologists call role-relevant events to restore the focus. This was one such event: the isolated flower in the bamboo vase.

But educational environments come in many different forms, with different missions and evolved cultures. Fortunately, I work in an environment that is motivated by student-centered engagement, by an attempt to catalyze the joint construction of knowledge. Graduations - and certainly Empire State College graduations - make me reflect on the journey that students and myself have started out on and the milestones we have passed. They make me conscious of the goals of the journey, even if there is never a sense of having arrived at a final destination. Theoretical positions, rhetorical mantras, and plain wishful thinking are all transcended as I witnessed these new graduates, whom I have had the privilege of mentoring, continuing on in their individual and unique journeys. And it is as a mentor, not teacher or instructor, that I engaged with these students who are now graduates. So, with a sense of humility and happiness, I recognize my own growth as a person and as an educator, in the same way as some of my colleagues have also recently done (Herman and Mandell, 2004).

If anything, my contribution to these young men and women has been to help them with their unique construction of understanding. It is a critical awareness of novelty that we have tried to come to terms with,

not the transmission of values or ideas. I have represented my role, often to their consternation and confusion, as "the guide on the side," rather than as "the sage on stage." It was as a guide that I saw them this afternoon, a guide who cannot accompany them further. That is why I came here today: not to say goodbye, but to wish them Godspeed in the continuing of those journeys that they have shared with me but which cannot, and could never have, belonged to me.

The darkness is thickening. Prague is an amazingly beautiful city, by day or by night. Street and bridge lights are reflected in the dark placid waters of the Vlatava; the evening sky is still deeply bruised behind the silhouette of Prague Castle. My taxi will soon arrive and take me to the airport but there is still time to pause under the chestnuts and reflect some more on the day's events.



The international dimension is a particularly enriching element of the educational environment within which I work. Charles V is attributed with saying: "He who possesses another language possesses another soul." My Czech is pretty basic, and yet the willingness to engage students in their own language - even if only to greet them and say farewell - has built so many bridges, and has perhaps laid the metaphysical foundations for an additional soul. Of course, language skills obviously have pragmatic advantages when it comes to communicating and establishing relationships, as I always tell my business students.

But in the context of international mentoring, the vulnerability of launching out in an imperfectly understood language underscores for students that the roles of teacher and student are not predetermined but are negotiable. I always ask them to correct my Czech, which inevitably they do. They are always delighted when I master some arcane grammatical issue on which they have corrected me. (Czech is not lacking in arcane grammatical issues!) They often wonder why I have assumed this vulnerability and not remained distanced and secure in English. We enter into a dialogue. They begin to recognize the role of the guide. They begin to contemplate taking risks and disclosures.

I am struck by Paulo Freire's (1985) observation that:

. knowing presumes a dialectical situation: not strictly an 'I think' but a 'we think.' It is not the 'I think' that constitutes the 'we think,' but rather the 'we think' that makes it possible for me to think.

It has indeed been a dialectical situation with these students, a way of thinking together that has helped all of us come to a place where we could think independently. That is the role of the guide on the side, who often has to actively realign preconceived notions regarding the architecture of academics and the structures of power; who has to identify and often give permission for the student voice in the process of knowing. I guess that I too have made the tentative progression from teaching to mentoring, whether I engage in face-to-face interaction with my student or, as I more frequently do, engage them electronically.

Two things also strike me this evening. The first is how it might be possible to assist these new graduates to

retain a connection with Empire State College. These young men and women are among the brightest in the Czech Republic. The majority of them made a conscious decision to receive an American education and an American degree: it was considered and accepted, not something that was forced upon them. And interestingly, in spite of the increased mobility that membership in the European Union provides and in spite of a history of emigration, some willing some forced, these young people tell me that they love their country and will remain here. Their efforts and knowledge will make a valuable contribution to a heroic country coming to terms with the dislocations of its transitional economy following the collapse of communism. But their efforts will undoubtedly be given synergistic effectiveness by networking and utilizing their shared Empire State College experience. The creation and energizing of an alumni association is, for me, a priority for them, for their country, and for our college.

And there is a second thought that strikes me quite forcibly. I have enjoyed and been personally enriched by this international experience. Equally, my students tell me that they too have understood and grasped the opportunity of participating in an international academic program.

. And so I wonder to what degree, or in what manner, might the international programs of our college enrich our stateside operations?

. What venues might there be for exchanges of ideas, experiences, and perhaps even individuals?

. In what ways might the challenges and opportunities, which are faced in Prague, be incorporated productively into the lives of stateside colleagues and students?

Fuzzy ideas and questions, indeed: as fuzzy and muted as the vanishing sunset colors behind the black silhouetted castle. Yet today there was a great deal of energy, a great deal of possibility and potential. And it seems that this could be constructively harnessed to serve a common good. I would greatly welcome suggestions, thoughts or embryonic visions about ways of sharing the experiences that those of us in the Center for International Programs have - ways, perhaps, of linking students or seeing their experiences as contributing to a college-wide understanding. In the gathering dim I see my taxi pulling up. I only hope that next year the graduation is also on a Sunday and not a Saturday!

Note

If you do have thoughts on how cooperative ventures and institutional sharing might be helpful please let me know. I really look forward to your thoughts and creativity. David.Starr-Glass@esc.edu.

Further Reading

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In Memoriam

Arnie Steigman

1932 - 2004

Arnie Steigman

The untimely death of Arnie Steigman was a profound loss for those of us who were his friends, his students and for the academic program of Empire State College. Anyone who spoke with him was immediately impressed by the passion and the wealth of knowledge he had about politics and government. Both were based on a lifetime of study, work and community services.

Arnie received his B.A. from City College of New York, his master's degree from Baruch College and his Ph.D. from New York University in public administration. He worked in public administration all his life and served as deputy commissioner in the New York State Office of General Services. He was especially proud of his tenure at the State Office of the Special Prosecutor for New York City, which was originally headed by Maurice Nadjari.

Over many years, Arnie taught at several colleges, including the College of New Rochelle, Bronx Community College, Long Island University and the University at Albany.

At Empire State College, he taught a variety of courses for FORUM East and the Center for Graduate Programs including: Scanning the Business Environment, Government and Business Relationships, Managing in Public and Not-for-Profit Organizations, Managing Ethically in Public Organizations; New York State Politics and Government; Ethics and Accountability, General Management, Personnel Management, Budget and Financial Management, Planning and Control, and Community and Government.

His involvement in community affairs and professional organizations was extensive. He was a member of the Schenectady Citizens Advisory Committee on Budget and Finance; chairperson of the Town of Niskayuna Zoning Board of Appeals, a member and vice president of Congregation Gates of Heaven in Schenectady, the American Society of Public Administration, and executive director of the State Academy of Public Administration.

Arnie's professional publications include: "Whither Employee Commute Options;" "Ethics and Accountability: Who Watches the Watchers;" "Role of Inspectors General in State Government;" "TQM: Why have It?" and "The Superannuation of Young Executives."

A description of Arnie would not be complete without mentioning his passion for food and good restaurants. Regardless of where one traveled, one could always count on Arnie's list of recommended places to have a great dinner. I will miss him greatly.

- Andrew DiNitto, FORUM East

I knew Arnie for eight years, ever since colleague Andy DiNitto introduced him to me when I co-directed FORUM East. Since then and literally up until his last day, our professional relationship continued to thrive. Five years ago when my M.B.A. partners had either resigned from the college or left on a long sabbatical and I was virtually left alone to manage the new M.B.A. program that was in its infancy, Arnie was there to shoulder important residency and online learning activities. Always supercharged with endless energy and unmatched enthusiasm to teach and mentor M.B.A. students, Arnie went beyond the call of duty to support the goals of the program. One thing that characterized Arnie was his incredible work ethic and his love of teaching, regardless of the location and the time. He was always there when he was needed.

"One thing that characterized Arnie was his incredible work ethic and his love of teaching, regardless of the location and the time. He was always there when he was needed."

About a month before his untimely death, Arnie and I ran the M.B.A. residency, splitting up the work between two student groups and converging for a large group discussion. It was then, on Saturday, April 24 that Arnie

and I decided to develop a joint presentation on "corporate social responsibility and executive ethics" for a Union College audience. When working together on our powerpoint presentation in my office during a short break that we had during the residency, Arnie suggested the date May 27, 2004 for our presentation. We agreed to meet on that day at 4:30 p.m. to prepare and synchronize our talk prior to the actual event that was scheduled to begin at 6:30 p.m. Two days before the meeting Arnie sent me a reminder: "Alan," he wrote "let's meet at 4:00 p.m. so we'll have time to eat something before the presentation." The next day, May 26, I wrote back to him confirming 4:15 p.m. as a compromise. Wednesday night I spent long hours thinking about Arnie, how I should introduce him and what I should say. I fell asleep around 2:30 a.m. Shortly after 8:00 a.m. the phone rang at my home. Doris Callahan was on the line sharing the sad news about Arnie. That evening instead of introducing Arnie, I shared the news of Arnie's death with the audience.

Symbolically, you might say, Arnie died the same day that he wrote on his presentation notes, once again attesting to his endless love of teaching and the values he placed on learning and education. In my date book on the day that he died it simply says: "4:15 p.m. - Arnie." Unlike all the other times in our eight years of working together, this time Arnie did not show up.

- Alan Belasen, M.B.A. Program

