

Center for Teaching Excellence

This is the seventh of a series of newsletters encouraging faculty enrichment and excellence in teaching by announcing opportunities, sharing ideas, and promoting collaboration.

Opportunities in the near future:

Colloquium on Teaching

Monday afternoon, March 17

4:30 p.m.

Kresge Room in Payson Library

Stella Erbes will comment on her newly published book entitled What Teachers Should Know But Textbooks Don't Show. Dr. Erbes is an Assistant Professor of Education. She works closely with the teacher education students who are preparing to teach in middle school and high school.

Responses will be given by Damian Jenkins, Visiting Instructor in Education, and classroom teachers from the elementary and secondary levels.

Faculty Colloquia

Thursday afternoon, March 27

4:00 p.m.

Kresge Room in Payson Library

Professor of Religion, Ronald Highfield, will present a lecture entitled "Is the World Big Enough for God and Humanity? Studies in Evil, Freedom, and Dignity."

Thursday afternoon, April 17

4:00 p.m.

Kresge Room in Payson Library

Distinguished Professor of Political Science, Dan Caldwell, will present a lecture entitled "The Legitimation of the Nixon-Kissinger Grand Design."

TurnItIn Training Sessions

Alan Regan and Mark Giglione will offer a training session on the use of this new feature of Blackboard which addresses plagiarism. The same session will be offered each time.

Friday afternoons, March 1, and April 4

2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Payson Library Computer Room.

Please register yourself for the session you can attend!

Here is the link:

<http://www.pepperdine.edu/it/training/registration.htm?loc=mal>

From this page:

- 1. Select one of the "TurnItIn (Faculty Only)" courses listed.*
- 2. Enter name and contact information.*
- 3. Click "Submit"*

Workshop on Teaching Writing

May 6

8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Dresher Campus, LC159

Dr. Lee Ann Carroll, Professor of English and Director of Composition, and Dr. Theresa Flynn, Director of the Writing Center and the Junior Writing Portfolio, will offer a one-day intensive workshop on the effective teaching of writing in all academic disciplines.

Topics to be covered:

- developing assignments,*
- responding to assignments,*
- evaluating assignments,*
- other valuable teaching tips.*

- ❖ *This workshop will be designed primarily for those who teach courses which are designated as “writing intensive.” Each of these faculty members is urged to attend.*
- ❖ *All pre-tenure faculty members are especially encouraged to participate.*
- ❖ *All faculty are invited and will benefit tremendously.*

In association with the California Writing Project, Dr. Carroll has conducted numerous workshops on the teaching of writing for teachers K-University in California and nationally. She is the author of the book Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop as Writers which is based on a longitudinal study of Pepperdine University students across academic majors.

Each person who participates will be given these texts:

- *Dr. Carroll’s book, Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop as Writers,*
- *John C. Bean’s Engaging Ideas: The Professor’s Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom,*
- *Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein’s They Say I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing.*

Lunch will be provided as well as a modest stipend.

If you have questions about any of these opportunities, please email me. constance.fulmer@pepperdine.edu

Jeff Zalar has agreed to share a copy of the remarks he made at the Teaching Colloquium on February 25.

“LECTURE AS A FILLIP TO CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE”

JEFFREY T. ZALAR

There seems to be little justification for a lecture. Because lecturing assumes that the transference of knowledge is unmediated by individual differences among student learners, cognitive theorists denounce it as philosophically insupportable. Education specialists reject lecturing as impractical, for passive students are unlikely to master material they do not apply, analyze, or synthesize at higher and more active levels of thought. Assessment experts warn against it, for in placing the burden of interpretation on students lecturing relieves teachers of their

responsibility to reach academic goals. Students, we know, feel this burden keenly, for they bring to lectures an expectation of dynamic performance that few teachers can satisfy. Many professors run from lecturing, too, especially in the anonymous spaces of large halls, where there is no margin for error in frosty environments of lethal vulnerability to student impatience, intolerance of error, and indifference to the material. Even leaders in the movement to revitalize Christian higher education are disinclined to endorse lectures. To them all authentic education builds community by refining character for interpersonal engagement. Lecturing is not a communal endeavor. How, then, can it promote *agape*?^[1]

I answer that lecturing is a fillip to regular contemplative practice, which is a defining feature—if not *the* defining feature—of a fully-developed intellectual personality.

On the first point: learners may not be disembodied intellects; the transference of knowledge to them may indeed be conditioned by particularistic factors, such as level of preparation, socio-economic placement, and racial or gender identity. But learners are not isolated atoms, either. They are incarnate intellectual souls, who share an origin in the Mind of God and possess rational affinities that justify a common lecture on philosophical grounds.

On the second point: the paradigmatic style of learning in the Western Tradition may be Socratic exchange and the *disputatio* of medieval Schoolmen. But lecturing *has worked* effectively, too, and for centuries of time. In the modern era, it has advanced Western civilization to world leadership in the creation and dissemination of knowledge. It has also produced, I should add, the titans of the Christian tradition: Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Scotus; Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin; Schleiermacher, Harnack, and Karl Rahner.

On the third and fourth points: Teachers *are* responsible for reaching the academic goals they set for their courses, which must include the *successful*—and I want to stress *successful*—conveyance of large amounts of information. But students are just as responsible for the instruction they say they want to acquire when they enroll in these courses. So if teachers must be smart, engaging, and witty, students must be teachable, mentally alert, and diligent in overcoming the peculiar obstacles to their learning. Lecturing satisfies a basic need of university teachers even as it builds these important elements of good intellectual character in students.

On the fifth point: Professors who run from lecturing should ask themselves if they have not succumbed to the same academic fears that afflict their students: the fears “of failing, of not understanding, of having their ignorance exposed or their prejudices challenged, [and, above all,] of looking foolish in front of [others].”^[2] They might also inquire about their courage to confront and persistently to transform the dogged anti-intellectualism of much of student culture.

On the sixth and last point: Christian scholars are right to reassert the communal manners that structure knowledge as a form of responsible relationship. And yet the active love of *agape* is insufficient to define them, for Christian scholars—teachers and students alike—are called not only to public engagement with others but to private and silent thought. The *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* are equally foundational to the Christian life of the mind, and a well-rounded Christian education must engender both. Because it inculcates the basic

excellence of attentiveness, lecturing promotes intellectual, social, and spiritual virtue all at once. It communicates a significant body of knowledge to student learners and it enkindles within them intrinsic interest in the subject matter; it draws these learners into common understanding on the basis of a common set of terms; it also, finally, helps “topple the thick barriers to attentive listening,” an objective which our Provost Darryl Tippens has identified as primary to the formation of “pilgrim hearts” in all Christian disciples.^[3] Perhaps lecturing is not so outdated and unwelcome after all.

^[1] I am thinking here mainly of Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998) and Mark Schwehn, *Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

^[2] See Palmer, p. 37.

^[3] This is a paraphrase from Darryl Tippens, *Pilgrim Heart: The Way of Jesus in Everyday Life* (Abilene, TX: Leafwood Publishers, 2006), p. 123.