



Teaching Perspectives

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ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY

Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada

Editorial

Teaching Perspectives

Welcome to the eighth issue (November, 2007) of Teaching Perspectives, the St. Thomas University learning and teaching development journal. The theme for this issue is Remembrance Day: Remembering Great Teachers.

The issue begins with a reprint of the late Brian Ouellette's article *Marrying the Head and the Soul: Teaching Spirituality in an Academic Environment*. Now is a good time to remember the careers, and families, of former St. Thomas University professors, among them Fenton Burke, Oscar Brown, Richard Costello, and Jurgen Doerr, all excellent instructors, in their own individual ways, and all good friends of mine. If I have forgotten someone, it is unintentional. I am getting to that age. Please forgive me.

Dr. Michael Higgins' article, *Things of the mind, the spirit, the imagination*, recalls the words of another great teacher, John Henry Cardinal Newman and helps place a university education in the framework of a long tradition. For Newman, and I quote from Dr. Higgins' article, "the university is not a recruitment centre, a storage hold from which can be drawn a fully equipped workforce. It is, rather, 'according to the usual designation, an Alma Mater, knowing her children, one by one, not a foundry, or a mint, or a treadmill.'"

Dr. Sonsoles Sánchez-Reyes, of the University of Salamanca in Ávila, brings to our attention, in *Great Teachers of the University of Salamanca*, the lives of two educators from Salamanca (founded 1218): Fray Luis de León and Miguel de Unamuno. Both of these are household names in Spain and the Hispanic World, though they appear to be lesser known in the English-speaking world on this side of the Atlantic.

In *Excellent teachers I have known*, Dr. Ian Fraser writes in praise of two teachers, one from Carleton University and the other from Aberdeen, who figured prominently in his own educational experience. Dr. Gayle MacDonald, in *My favourite teachers*, brings us closer to home with memories of her childhood and early education. Dr. Colm Kelly, in *Translating Greatness, Translating Teaching, Translating Excellence*, challenges our notions of what greatness is and what it means.

Earnest Hummingbird, of the mysterious Department of Creative Solutions, offers insights into the great debate on Information Technology. Are we for it, or against it? There are arguments on both sides, as he states in his article *IT: The Great Debate*. The editor speculates on what teaching may become as we enter the 21st Century. His article, *What is the role of the teacher within the 21st century classroom?*, was written in partial fulfilment of the course requirements for the online certificate in teaching offered by the Institute for the Advancement of Teaching in Higher Education (IATHE).

Finally, Dr. Louis Schmier, of Valdosta University, in an impassioned plea, asks us to remember each one of those we are teaching, with no student left behind; and he gives us good reasons why, in his opinion, the last should sometimes come first.

Call for articles: The next issue (Number 9) of Teaching Perspectives will be dedicated to Philosophies of Teaching. While this will be the central theme, articles on other aspects of teaching and learning are always welcome. Deadline for submissions for the next issue: February 14, 2008.

Editorial Policy:

The opinions expressed in these articles are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily represent the views of St. Thomas University, the members of the LTD Committee, nor the Editor of Teaching Perspectives.

Marrying the Head and the Soul

Teaching Spirituality in an Academic Environment

By Brian Ouellette
In Memoriam

The concept of spirituality is a new and evolving area of study in social work education (Dudley & Helfgott, 1993, Sheridan, 1994). Until recently, social work distanced itself from the exploration of spirituality and practice. This reticence was based on efforts to create “value-free” interventions, some confusion between spirituality and religion, and perhaps some discomfort with the religious roots of social work practice in North America (Canda, 1988; Derozotes, 1990). For the past four years, I have been teaching an elective course entitled Spirituality and Social Work. It was one of the first such courses in Canada, and one of a few in North America. Teaching this course has been one of the most enjoyable and exciting things I’ve done over my 15-year teaching career. I look forward to going to class, and leave each class energized and hopeful. I have often described the course as an oasis of warmth and tranquility in my busy life.

In terms of content, we cover diverse and fascinating areas — the first area we address is the distinction between religion and spirituality, which is an important first step since there is much confusion between the two. We also explore spiritual development, and students write a paper exploring their own stages/phases of spiritual growth. Besides looking at how spirituality is incorporated into social work practice, we also cover a wide variety of topic areas depending on student interest. These topics include such diverse areas as Yoga and Breathing; Feminist Spirituality; Native Spirituality; Near Death Experiences; Evil in the Context of Abuse; Stones and Healing; Holistic Healing; Eclectic Paganism; Fundamentalism; Liberation Theology; Musical Healing; Transpersonal Psychology; Food for the Soul; Spirituality and Humour; and Spirituality in the Workplace.

I’ve learned a great deal from teaching this course; it not only exposed me to whole areas of practice that were alien, unknown or off-limits to me, but it also taught me about my own biases, misconceptions, and fears. The other wonderful learning for me has to do with the realization that there was a great deal of commonality amongst the topics covered in the course and the values of social work practice. Themes such as harmony, unity, mutuality, respect, goodness, love, innateness, and connectedness to nature seemed to resonate throughout the various topics covered.

The exploration of spirituality and its integration into professional practice requires a high level of safety and an openness to diversity. When I began to teach this course I was acutely aware that the content of the course and the students’ past experiences were going to raise emotions and strongly influence their experience of the course. Early on I discovered that I had four types of students in the course: (i) the religious student committed to the practice of his faith; (ii) the anti-religious student who had negative feeling toward established religion due to negative experiences or ideological differences; (iii) the spiritual student who had nurtured her own unique spirituality; and (iv) the student who hadn’t put much thought into the issue until taking the course. I was very aware that I could walk into or stimulate a holy war!

I was also aware that spirituality is not a cognitive concept — it can’t just be understood and studied cognitively. It is very much a concept that is experienced and experienced differently by different people. My dilemma was: How do I accomplish this in an academic course? How do I marry the head and the soul?

I’d like to share some of the things I’ve tried that I think were helpful :

- (i) Using meditation as an integral component of the course: Each class began with a meditative activity (usually a piece of music, a reading and/or some quiet time). Steve Sunderland of the University of Cincinnati in a recent article describes this as a mean of “welcoming the spirit” (Sunderland, 1999). I’m convinced that this activity sets the tone for the rest of the class and facilitates the move from the head to the soul.
- (ii) Standard setting: In the first class, we spend some time discussing the norms and expectations for the class. We usually identify a list of words or statements that capture how we will work together in the classroom. Such words as respect, confidentiality, mutuality, trust, honesty, and use of “I” statements are usually identified as norms or standards. We return to these norms when tension or judgement of the other begins to occur.
- (iii) Using reduced lighting: I deliberately schedule the course for the evening. This allows us the opportunity to shut off the lights and use candles for the meditative activity. We turn the lights back on afterwards, but I try to find ways to use fewer lights. The reduced lighting in the room reinforces the atmosphere of trust and closeness. A benefit of night classes, I guess!
- (iv) Prof and student as co-learners: Students are an integral component of the learning in the course. I do not identify myself as an expert but rather as a co-learner. Students are involved in the selection of topics to be covered in the course (although I do identify certain topics that must be covered), and after the first class they take full responsibility for the meditation activities at the onset of each class. As well, many students opt to do small group presentations on topics of their choice. The topics and the format of the presentations have been amazingly varied and full of impact.

(v) Use of rounds: Taking the time to do a round is a useful means of facilitating discussion, of creating safety, and reinforcing the concept of co-learning. Although I haven't used rounds as much as I had hoped, when I have, they bring out issues, ideas and perspectives that may not have been raised. Rounds ensure that all voices are heard and that all voices have equal value. These are important concepts to reinforce, certainly in a spirituality course, or a course that celebrates diversity.

(vi) Separating the experience from the grade: Marks are of major concern to social work students and frequently get in the way of learning. In the spirituality course, I make the statement that I will not be marking their assignments! This, of course causes some consternation and concern for students, but the process has worked well with little problems. I inform students that I will give extensive written feedback on their assignments but I will not assign a grade. Each student is asked to identify a grade for the assignment, and I as teacher reserve the right to question the proposed grade. For the most part, students have been accurate and reasonable in their self-grading. In the few instances where I questioned the grade, students accepted my suggested new grade, or were willing to do more, or were willing to rewrite the assignment to attain the higher grade.

(vii) Encouraging creativity: In the literature and for many spiritually-oriented practitioners, creativity and spirituality go together (Walz & Uematsu, 1997; Krill, 1999). Aware of these connections, I encourage students to push themselves and to find creative ways to do their assignments. Each term I am pleasantly surprised by the quality, the creativity, and the diversity that students put into their assignments.

Conclusion: The course consistently receives positive evaluations from students and many identify safety, diversity and creativity as contributing to their learnings. Recent research by John Coates and myself on the impact this course has had on students' values indicates that the course has (i) increased students sensitivity to spirituality in themselves, (ii) increased students sensitivity to spirituality with others, and (iii) had the most impact on those students not raised in a religious or spiritual tradition and not currently practicing in a religion or spiritual tradition. These results raise many questions and indicate the need for further research. However, as an educator and social worker they are encouraging and reinforce my belief that the context of learning is as important as the content learned.

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Things of the mind, the spirit, the imagination

Michael W. Higgins, President and Vice-Chancellor, St. Thomas University.

Some time past I attended a fundraising seminar in Toronto. I learned a great deal; I acquired data, I networked (as they say), and I developed some strong working familiarity with the fundraising culture.

But there was also a downside. I was surprised, and not a little depressed, by the pan-evangelical fervour of the seminar facilitator, by his very clear fondness for neologisms, and by his love for contrived spontaneity – that’s a brain-teaser if ever there was one.

We were encouraged to write single-sentence paragraphs, to employ exclamation marks after every sentence, and to model our prose on U.S. News and Reports. I have some considerable difficulty with “dumbing-down” nostrums such as these.

I promise you that I won’t ever do that!

A university is about more than fund-raising; it is about much more than career placement. It is about these things, of course, but it is also about other things, things of the mind, the spirit, and the imagination. John Henry Cardinal Newman spoke about these things and what he had to say matters still – for us, the St. Thomas University’s community of the twenty-first century.

Newman wrote extensively about education throughout his long life and knew from his own direct experience what a demanding task it was to tutor the young. A fellow and tutor of Oriel College, Oxford, a teacher and administrator at the Oratory School at Birmingham, and the founder and first rector of the Catholic University of Ireland in Dublin, Newman was also the author of what evolved into a three volume work on university education: *Discourses on the Scope and Nature of University Education Addressed to the Catholics of Dublin* (1852); *Office and Works of the Universities* (1856); and *Lectures and Essays on University Subjects* (1859).

Newman was the consummate Victorian. His polemical pieces, his novels and poetry, his patristical and exegetical studies all bear the stamp of his time. But Newman is also a figure for our own time. His philosophical and theological insights have been foundational for much contemporary Roman Catholic thought – think of his *On the Development of Doctrine*, *On Consulting the Laity*, and *Grammar of Assent*.

And his masterly command of the English tongue, as exemplified in his *Apologia pro Vita Sua* and *The Idea of a University*, continues to assure him a secure place in the English curriculum at the University.

Although some of his work on the role of a liberal arts education and on the function of a university betrays the biases and limitations of his age and personal disposition, much of his educational writing has about it, to coin a phrase, a timeless relevance. Of course, he could change his mind. Or more precisely, nuance it. Or more precisely still, make the necessary historical accommodations.

The university is for the enlargement of the sensibility, the cultivation of the mind, and the uncompromised pursuit of intellectual excellence. But these are not bodiless exploits untouched by the personal, the pastoral, and the moral. Newman fully understood the irreplaceable value of human interaction, for, and let me now quote him, “an academical system without the personal influence of teachers upon pupils, is an arctic winter; it will create an ice-bound, petrified, cast-iron university.”

The university has as its function intellectual culture: “to open the mind, to correct it, to refine it, to enable it to know, and to digest, master, rule, and use its knowledge, to give it power over its own faculties, application, flexibility, method, critical exactness, sagacity, resource, address, eloquent expression.”

For Newman, the university is not a recruitment centre, a storage hold from which can be drawn a fully equipped workforce. It is, rather, “according to the usual designation, an Alma Mater, knowing her children, one by one, not a foundry, or a mint, or a treadmill.”

We need to affirm again and again the value of non-utilitarian learning, as well as affirming the critical importance of the truly personal in the world of the anonymous, the truly communal in the world of the collectivity.

At St. Thomas University, we resolve to do our job and to respect the primacy of the personal and the value of an uncompromised cultivation of the mind. St. Thomas University is not a factory or a treadmill; it is not an ice-bound and cast-iron university. It is a centre of learning and growth. Our graduates, faculty, students, staff, and friends, help to make it so and you are critical to its mission.

GREAT TEACHERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SALAMANCA

Sonsoles Sánchez-Reyes, Universidad de Salamanca en Ávila

In Spain, the University of Salamanca is a household word in higher education. There is a proverb that many local curious inquirers are bound to have heard in lieu of an answer: “A saber, a Salamanca” (if you want to know, go to Salamanca).

Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for this popular association between the University of Salamanca and the core of learning is the fact that it was the first of the existing universities to be founded in Spain (almost 800 years ago, in 1218), and one of the very first in Europe, along with Naples, Paris, Cambridge, Oxford and Coimbra. A well-known maxim in Latin comes from those early days: “Quod natura non dat, Helmantica non praestat” (What is not bestowed by nature, cannot be borrowed from Salamanca), which challenged the extended belief that attending classes in Salamanca was so effective, that the only thing it could not accomplish was miracles!

But it would be unfair to diminish the crucial role that many Great Teachers of this institution have played in maintaining the University of Salamanca as a reference in tertiary education for eight centuries, regardless of the difficulties and personal ordeals quite a few of them had to undergo.

Fray Luis de León, a superb theologian, linguist, and poet, a distinguished lecturer at Salamanca, is the paradigm of the aforesaid. In the 16th century, wanting to render the Holy Writ more accessible to the population, he translated some parts of the Bible from Latin to the vulgar tongue, that is, to Spanish. This was strictly forbidden and he suffered persecution from the Inquisition. On being released, after an incarceration of four years, he resumed his lectures at Salamanca with the sentence “Como decíamos ayer...” (As we were saying yesterday...), which has become a sign of identity for all those who continue searching for knowledge and truth, no matter how hard the constraints from the outside may be. Nowadays, the statue of Fray Luis de Leon overlooks the ancient façade of the University of Salamanca and the classroom where he used to teach has been preserved just as he left it.

Miguel de Unamuno, a celebrated writer, poet and philosopher, is another Great Teacher of the University of Salamanca. When he was remarkably young, he became Senior Lecturer and President of the University, but eventually he was deposed from his Lectureship and Presidency and sent into exile as a punishment for his criticism of the Government. On his return to Salamanca, several years later, he was received by a cheering multitude. He died while he was under sentence of home confinement because he always stuck to expressing his views freely, although they might not coincide with the official creed. Now, his bust presides over the yard of the Faculty of Philology, located in the Palace of Anaya, where he had his office.

That is why it is only fair to think of these two Great Teachers on Remembrance Day.

Excellent Teachers I Have Known

Ian Fraser

When I saw the focus of this issue of Teaching Perspectives, I wondered whether or not I could come up with a single professor who had influenced me. In trying to choose, I realized that quite a few have had a significant influence on my teaching, but that there were two who stood out.

Humour and Story Telling:
Dan McIntyre, Carleton University

Dan had a gift for using humour and stories to convey information. He didn't just make a point, but often acted it out. I remember his demonstration of personal space and how you might act if someone invaded yours. In the scenario, he was acting the part of a person who encounters a stranger in an elevator who is facing toward the back instead of the front... the image is still with me. The students were rolling in the isles. Eight years later when I was giving an interview for ATV television about St. Thomas University's Science Fair, the presenter asked me about one of the exhibits which happened to deal with personal space. I saw a tape of the interview and I noticed I couldn't help but smile when I recalled Dan's explanation.

Enthusiasm:
Denis Parker, Aberdeen University

I never took a class from Denis (though I had definitely heard of his reputation). Denis was my thesis advisor at Aberdeen University. I recall working on a project trying to get a computer to present an image quickly. This may not sound much today, but I was working with an Apple IIe computer. Am I dating myself? I had been working on the programming for most of the week and had pulled an all-nighter to complete it. I got the program working at approximately 8:30 in the morning. I went to his office to show him, though I was tired and really only wanted to go to bed. He was over the moon, to say the least. He pulled in every professor in the building to take a look. We went back to his office and talked about the potential. He was up and down and in and out of his chair, writing furiously on the white-board. He reminded me of a child at Christmas. When I left his office I was full of drive, energy and enthusiasm. I realized why he had the reputation he did. He showed me that enthusiasm is contagious and revitalizing.

These two attributes, together with organization, are what I consider key to effective teaching. Paraphrasing an excellent teacher and former colleague, Tom Fish, I have 'begged, borrowed and stolen' from great teachers and have tried, to best of my ability, to incorporate their qualities into my own teaching. I am certainly no Isaac Newton, but like him I attribute any success I may have had to the fact that I have stood on the shoulders of giants.

My Favourite teachers.

By **Gayle MacDonald**

A favourite teacher usually implies someone who was fun. I've had that type of teacher. My Criminal Law professor from U d'Ottawa was one...Jimmy Stewart. Jimmy was (and still is, last time we had a beer) a Crown Prosecutor in Ottawa. He looks and sounds like a used car salesman. His favourite line "quote me and I'll deny it", would be delivered with his signature wry smile, usually when describing the backroom deals of prosecutorial discretion. I've stolen the line, and I use it when teaching. He'd love that.

But fun isn't the only way to describe a favourite teacher. Favourite teachers can be quite serious. One comes to mind, a Miss Iverson from Grade 10. Miss Iverson, I'm quite sure, was never a child, nor did she have a first name. Miss Iverson taught me Enriched English. It was the first difficult course of my scholastic career. I never did figure out which part was enriched. The course name always sounded like misbranded bread to me. But I did work. We read a novel or a book of poems or a play per week. I was 16 at the time. I didn't know that I could read that much, write that much, or learn that much. Miss Iverson was (seriously) passionate about literature, all literature, from all periods. But what I remember the most was her introduction to Canadian fiction. Miss Iverson made it seem an imperative to read Canadian fiction, rather than a choice. That has stayed with me. I'm quite passionate about Canadian fiction, and still read it whenever I can. She'd be proud.

Another teacher that I'd hesitate to call my favourite, but whom has certainly influenced my own teaching, is my mother, otherwise known as Norma or "Mrs. MacDonald" to as she is still known to former students, some of whom are my age. Teaching public school for 35 years can tire a woman, I witnessed that. But it can also yield many teaching tricks. In my first year of teaching a class of 180 students at Queen's U. in Kingston, I had a hard time getting them to settle down to the lecture. I phoned Mom to whine: "They're so noisy, Mom, we waste a good five minutes getting them all settled in. They're standing up, sitting down, and shuffling their knapsacks. How do I get them to keep quiet?" Mom responded: "21 year olds are not that different from 10 year olds, really. Shut the light off and fold your arms. Stand there and look at them. They'll get quiet really quickly, as they'll want to figure out what you're doing". I've used that tactic ever since. It works. She'd have a good laugh at that one.

A person who would hesitate to call himself a teacher is a minister friend of mine, a United Church minister known as the Right Reverend Peter Short (he was Moderator of the United Church of Canada recently, hence the fancy moniker). Peter is a poet, a gentle raconteur, a wordsmith extraordinaire, and a deep thinker. Sometimes he can be so deep, it's depressing. Other times, not so much. But he always stimulated thinking, and is always teaching. On leaving a sanctuary, his words to the flock are always the same: "The worship is over, let the service begin." I've always liked that line, as I think it says much. For me, Pete's famous ending is what teaching is, a service. It's definitely not worship and it's more than performance. He'd be embarrassed to know that I've told all of you this. But he'd smile.

Favourite teachers...there really are so many. Dr Maria Los, my Philosophy of Law and Ecosystemic Analysis of Criminality professor, whose famous line "Really, I've seen Marxism in action [in her native Poland]. It's very different from the theory" rocked us all as graduate students. She edited for money as a graduate student herself, her command of the language was as impeccable as it was daunting. Miss Iverson would be smiling.

Another favourite was my undergraduate thesis supervisor, Dr. Ed Renner, who made me breakfast one day and said that I had to tell him the argument of my psychology thesis before his soufflé fell. I didn't make it. I sputtered on far too long. He was very disappointed. Said the soufflé was one of his finest. It was only much later, when I really began to cook, that I truly appreciated his effort. I can still feel my "inner undergraduate" pleading with him "I could do it now, Dr. Renner, and I'd be happy to have another soufflé!"

My favourite teachers, though, have been my children. My son Eris looks over at me, struggling to work on something when medication has fogged my brain and says cryptically "Thought you were only working half-time, Mom? Seems to me you've been at that a while". (Mind you, he's really only trying to get me off the computer so that he can play on it, but still. His point remains.) When he was two, he 'needed' a pad and pen to come to a friend's house for dinner. He settled himself on a great dining room table and began to make marks on a page; lines, check marks and strokes. Bemused, I came over to ask him "What are you doing, honey?" "Mah-king", he said proudly. "Just like you, Mommy".

Then there's my daughter Breagh who, when very young, went blank when someone asked her "what Mommy did". She looked confused for a moment, then brightened, proudly, with her response: "My Mommy shows me how to make cookies, and how to wash my face".

Now, she'd probably just say that I talk for a living. A line I've also used.

So what's in common with all of these stories? It's that my favourite teachers, have given me something to carry forward, something lasting, something that makes me think. They've shown me what works for them, what doesn't, given me incredible one-liners and techniques. I've learned much. If I'm lucky, perhaps I'll pass some of it on, "carry it forward" as the saying goes, to my students. For without them, I'm not a teacher at all. I'm just talking for a living.

Translating Greatness, Translating Teaching, Translating Excellence

Colm Kelly

I will write for a moment in what I might call “my” “native” Hiberno-English: When I went to Trinity (College Dublin), I studied sociology there and was lucky to have one brilliant lecturer. The rest were good or very good, but that one bordered on being brilliant.

In Canada I would probably just say that he was a great professor, while in the officially sanctioned discourse of our own St. Thomas U., he would have demonstrated excellence in teaching. But these three terms are not precisely equivalent to each other. They resist translation, the one into the other. The brilliant lecturer shines and illuminates like the sun. But it must be acknowledged that this brilliance only shines on and in relation to one or more singular beings, not on the world. In my case it shone on a shy boy, a product of Victorian (or Jansenist) Irish Catholicism, who was eager to be exposed to such brilliance, and who was already quite thoroughly distanced from his ‘own’ culture.

The lecturer is the one who reads well and who models for you how to read well – how to read the text, the tradition, the problematic, the culture and the society, and above all, the other, well. To read the other well, would this not be the highest demand to descend on the one, jumping ahead for a moment, who professes reason and the truth. But this brilliant lecturer can also shine too brilliantly and can blind you, or leave you in the dark, regarding other matters as important as what is being read, and covered over, in the classroom. It was for this reason – amongst many others – that I left Ireland to pursue a doctorate abroad.

The great professor is the one whose stature exemplifies the profession of faith in reason and truth, and who leads you to want to follow in that profession, whether in the university or in the streets or in the bureaucracies. Fundamentally, I see no difference between the great professor and the brilliant lecturer, except that ‘professor’ can more readily and more expansively accommodate a conception broader than that of a particular style of teaching. Of course the stature and grandeur of the great can also cast a shadow and overwhelm us. And let us not forget that a primary sense of ‘great,’ according to the OED, was “thick, coarse, massive, big(...) Composed of large particles; coarse of grain or texture. Of diet: Coarse, not delicate.” I believe that to dare to call someone else great – although I take this risk all the time, for example, when I frequently say that “Derrida is a great thinker” – always risks coarseness and indelicacy. And then what would we unkindly risk thinking of those who seem to declare themselves to be great, or who claim to know what greatness is and how to teach it?

The brilliant lecturer and the great professor may, and we hope always will, be the one who, according to the official discourse, has demonstrated excellence in teaching and has been quasi-certified as an excellent teacher. But who would claim to know this? And by what hubris? Let me re-call, amidst the calls to re-Christianize and to re-Catholicize STU, the beautiful imperative and warning of Jesus: “Judge not, lest ye be judged.” The excellent person is the one who strives and towers above the others, who are the mediocre. But if everyone strives thus, everyone may fall down, not to mention risking looking ridiculous. Recall what God did to those who dared to build the tower of Babel. Indeed, the attempt to measure and certify excellence is itself a profoundly mediocre exercise, an exercise fascinated by and drawn to the median and the middle, to that which most readily lends itself to measurement and calculation, rather than to the greatness and brilliance of the singular and the immeasurable. Not that I don’t think that many fine people have been given awards here. I am happy for them. I would accept a nomination myself!

My “brilliant lecturer” is and was Brian Torode. I no longer even know if I would, or could, consider him a brilliant lecturer today. But I do know that I could never utter or use, rather than just mention or quote, a phrase such as: “Brian Torode demonstrated excellence in teaching.” By the way, anyone who is interested, will get a very good sense of what this brilliance was like, both in its illumination and in its casting of shadows, by consulting David Silverman and Brian Torode *The Material Word: Some Theories of Language and its Limits* (London: Routledge, 1980). Of course, HIL does not hold this book.

IT: The Great Debate

Earnest Hummingbird, Office of Creative Solutions

This spring I visited a campus debating society which debated the following motion: Be it resolved that media influences learning in a positive fashion.

I was able to write down, in shorthand, the opening speeches of the debate, and I copy them here for your edification and entertainment. Unfortunately, I do not know who either of the speakers were. I trust they will forgive my quoting them in full in the never-to-be sufficiently praised journal of this university.

Proposer of the Motion:

Gentlepeople of the jury, my learned colleague, a notable Luddite with an amazing power of failing to see the light and to make a powerful point will argue that technology in teaching is doomed. He will say that what was good enough for our grandparents is good enough for us, and he will argue further not that we should turn back the clock, but that the clock should never have been started in the first place. These are unsupportable arguments, as I will clearly demonstrate to you.

In the first place, technology has been with us for an amazingly long time. What do I mean by this, you ask? Well, a stylus and a slate is technology; and these have been around for 5,000 years or more, since humankind first taught itself to write. A fire drill that creates heat is technology and the art of fire making has been with us for tens of thousands of years. Indeed, along with the ability to laugh at ourselves, fire differentiates human beings from the beasts, for where animals fear fires and flee from them, humankind has tamed fire and by controlling it has changed the environment in which we once used to live.

But technology is more than just the use of primitive instruments. Writing, for example, is an organizing principle and fire making is a mere precursor to the art of organizing the daily feed, not eaten raw at the site of the hunt, as the animals do, but brought back to cave and tent, to be prepared in a social organization that again differentiates humans from beasts.

Do we still eat our food, cooked or raw, in cave or tent, or protected from the wind in natural scrapes? Of course we do not. For our civilizations, and there have been many of them throughout the course of history, have advanced and as they have advanced, they have brought new forms of technology to the fore. Human beings grow, they advance, they develop new technologies, they learn to manipulate new technologies and this manipulation is a learning process in the course of which we teach our young, not to scrape and survive with a minimal living for themselves, but to stand on our shoulders, and see further than we were ever able to do.

Gentlepeople of the jury: the technological clock started a long time before time was measured by clockwork. Indeed, time itself is a part of the technological process, the organizational process, which enables humans to organize, regulate, and improve this wonderful world in which we all live. We are competitive by nature. To compete, we must be at the cutting edge, to be at the cutting edge we must continually advance our knowledge and develop to even greater depths the organization of our society and the technologies which we use to advance our children's knowledge.

Without technology, and I include the new media we are developing on a daily basis, we would not be here; we cannot, as my learned colleague would have us do, just dismiss the technological advances which have brought us where we find ourselves today and which will further enhance the places in which we will live tomorrow. They are a part of us, as our blood is part of us. We cannot separate the body from its blood and still talk about the entire human. Nor can we separate the media from teaching and learning to isolate one aspect of the world wide network, that single body of intelligence that we are in the process of creating.

The media which are the subject of today's debate are only steps forward in the technological struggle that advances us and our ideals, our knowledge of the world and the world around us, the teaching that we give to the next generation, and the ability that we all need to predict the future needs of ourselves and of our very survival on this fragile planet. Through these media we can have instant contact across time and space. We can spread ideas faster than they have ever been spread before. We need no longer work in isolation, for we can be together and work in teams that need never meet face to face for their work is there before them. Our teaching must keep up with these

new technologies and our children must learn to grow with the new media, indeed to help the new media advance as they become part and parcel of their daily lives.

Gentlepeople of the jury: these are cogent arguments. I beg you to support the motion: Be it resolved that the media influences learning in a positive fashion.

Against

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury: my learned colleague has called me a Luddite and indeed, in a certain sense, I am a Luddite, and I am proud of being a Luddite. Quite simply, I do not accept that every technological advance is good; for some technology is a step back into the dark ages. However, I do agree that certain elements of technology, when controlled and used in a sensible fashion, might, under the right circumstances, be a useful addition to traditional teaching and learning.

However, I will suggest to you that we are not using technology in a meaningful fashion to positively enhance teaching and learning. The crux of my argument will therefore be that we have not yet learned how to use technology correctly; we are in fact using technology incorrectly and, as a result, the media we use influence learning in a negative fashion. Incidentally, my learned colleague, apart from telling us that to be at the cutting edge of technology is good, scarcely managed to link technology and teaching in a meaningful fashion. In fact, like a good advocate, he avoided he avoided an issue that he knows he cannot defend.

What is meaningful teaching? It is the joining of minds, not of machines. It is the look on the face of a flesh and blood student when a new idea is grasped and a problem is understood. This occurs in a face to face discussion with the teacher, not online. It happens only in traditional classrooms, in traditional seminar rooms, in tutorials, in face to face dialogue between flesh and blood people.

I will suggest to you that the electronic world of media and multi media has grown totally out of control. We no longer talk to other human beings for we are isolated from each other by ear plugs. We keyboard on our computers, and never meet face to face. When we do meet face to face, it is virtual face to virtual face and we talk to our screens, while dealing with plastic and LCD images, never with flesh and blood.

Obsessed by the computer's magic, we sit for long hours each day with no human contact other than when we rush out to purchase endless supplies of coffee, coffee without whose caffeine we cannot even keep awake at our keyboards. People who use technology to excess, and we all do, are more comfortable with their machines than they are with other human beings. We have, ladies and gentlemen, isolated ourselves from our own humanity. And this is, quite simply, the greatest sin that we, as human beings, can commit.

We talk about the synchronous and the asynchronous and about virtual meetings, but we have forgotten that Chronos is the God of Time. And time on the computer, like time in prison, has lost all meaning. Time is history, and we have forgotten the meaning of history. Those of us who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Saturn, the son of Chronos, devoured his own children as we allow ours to be devoured. Mistake after mistake, day after day, errors copied and repeated ad nauseam, *seculae seculorum*, to the virtual end of virtual time. On our computer screens, everything seems to be happening now, in a space that is so small, that we cannot distinguish Africa from Asia, Newfoundland from New Zealand, for they are all the same size and in the same place: on our computer screens.

What is the difference between 1066, 1666, and 1966? This is a trick question: the answer is "one or two slips of a finger on the keyboard". The dates, for they are dates, have no meaning anymore. On our computer screens there is no yesterday, no today no tomorrow, there is only this instant, this virtual instant during which you are reading my words and grasping at the straw of our new virtual reality. Is it raining where you are? Snowing? How do you answer that question? I know people who check the weather channel to see what is happening outside their house because they have become afraid to look outdoors and see the real world for themselves.

As for the workplace, it is everywhere and we are no longer able to escape it. Email mounts up and follows us where ever we go; spam is enormous and rising; the blackberry, which has no more merit than a raspberry, is alive in our pockets, constantly texting us, and we, like a nation of Pavlov's dogs, twitch nervously in response every time the cell phone rings. Have you ever wondered why it is called a cell phone? It is called a cell phone because we are imprisoned by it. This prison is not a convenience, not a way to precious knowledge: it is an invasion of our privacy. It is an invasion of the private space between our ears in which, and thanks to which, we must learn to grow as individuals.



Teaching Perspectives

For the future of the human race does not lie in our ability to connect with a computer screen. It lies with our ability to talk together, one on one, in the flesh. Without the advancement of human relations, of the one on one contact of traditional teaching and learning, we as a civilization are doomed. Let me remind you of the old ethical question: if you could press a button and become an instant millionaire, knowing that by doing so, someone in a far off land would die so you could have his money – would you press the button? Such questions have become meaningless: we press that button everyday and not one person but thousands of persons die. We record their final sound bytes, we listen to their deaths as we view them in virtual reality, and it is all meaningless to us because it is all happening in virtual reality with virtual sound bytes with virtual screams on a miniature screen. It is not technology that influences our teaching positively, but how we use that technology. Believe me, when we talk media in teaching, we are talking captive audiences chained to their chairs, as lifeless as those who sat in Plato's cave, watching the virtual shadows on the virtual walls, and like Plato's automatons, we have become unable to get up and leave the room in order to see the real world.

One final question, ladies and gentlemen of the jury: we used to ask "Who shall assess the assessors?" We must change that question and ask: "Who is programming the programmers?" And we must also ask why? And to what ends?" Albert Camus, the Nobel Prize winner for literature, once divided the world into two parts: les meurtriers et les victimes, the assassins and the assassinated. Unless we can teach our children how to think critically, how to think for themselves, how to think away from the pernicious computer and its virtually real screen, with its virtually real semi-truths, we are in grave danger of again dividing the world into two parts: the programmers and the programmed.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, media influences teaching, but in the most malicious and damaging way possible. I implore you to vote against the motion.



ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY

What is the role of the teacher within the 21st century classroom?

Roger Moore, Director of Teaching and Learning

The exact nature of the teacher's role depends upon many factors. These include, amongst others, (1) the amount of teaching experience which the instructor has; (2) the level at which the teacher teaches; (3) the role of teaching within the university; (4) the level and size of the class; (5) the type of instruction which the instructor wishes to employ; for example, the transfer of professional and material content versus the transformational development of the individual learner; (6) the relationship which the teacher wishes to establish between teacher and taught; (7) the availability, reliability, and quality of IT equipment and the instructor's familiarity and expertise with said equipment; (8) the amount of freedom allowed to the teacher in the choice of in class teaching methods and materials.

The above are just some basic considerations. In addition, it is essential to consider the differences between a formal lecture course, a participatory course, a laboratory course, a hands-on interactive course, a one on one or small group teaching course, a content driven course, a course driven by group work and communication, a course centered on problem based learning, and any other type of innovative teaching theory which follows the pendulum as it swings between strict structure on the one hand and chaos theory on the other. Other aspects of teaching to consider include the availability of technology, WebCT courses, online courses, distance courses, courses with a text, courses without a text, self-designed courses, and student designed courses. Each one of the above considerations clearly demands that the teacher be flexible and play a different role according to the varying circumstances.

It should be immediately obvious that there is an enormous difference between the teacher's role in an online WebCT course and the same teacher's role in a communicative grammar course or yet again in a specialized honours seminar or a graduate course in a master's or doctoral program. Clearly, for both teacher and taught, one size can no longer fit all, for our university classrooms are no longer filled with a select elite representing perhaps 2% of the high school graduating class, but rather with a figure much closer to the 30% or 40% level. This accounts for the multitude of possible answers to the initial question. In fact, this also suggests that teachers need a great deal of awareness about the various ways in which material can be delivered for, as reception theory teaches, there are as many learning styles as there are teaching styles and the reduction of education to a single process is no longer the best way to set about the problem of delivering a subject to a group of multi-talented and multi-tasking learners.

The question, however, clearly delineates a time, space, and place for teaching: in the classroom. That said, the nature of teaching and learning is changing enormously. Thanks to the computer and to the widespread distribution of factual knowledge, it is necessary to ask whether knowledge and teaching should be limited to the classroom. Rephrased, where do learners acquire their knowledge and, by extension, what knowledge do they acquire? When asked "What do you teach?" I often reply that I do not know. Antonio Machado, perhaps Spain's greatest twentieth century poet, wrote that "the eye you see is not an eye because you see it, it is an eye because it sees you." When students sit in class and listen, we no longer be certain that what we say is what they hear; we do not know how they interpret what they hear; nor how and why what we teach changes them, if in fact it does. Does what they learn stay in the classroom, only to be brought out at examination time? Or does it move outside the classroom and operate in the real world outside the classroom walls? Do we, as teachers, transfer only material knowledge? Or do we transfer thought processes, analytical and critical systems, ways of speaking and looking, of reading and writing that reach out to students, embrace them, and extend beyond the classroom and out into the real world beyond academia?

Personally, I am a great believer in involving students at all levels not only with the design of the course, but also with the assessment procedures to be used in the course. In my opinion, students must know what they are being taught and why this particular set of lessons is important. I think of each of my classes as a lived experience shared by teacher and taught; it should never be just another 3 or 6 points in the accumulation of the 120 points needed to graduate. Each course taken should reach beyond the classroom walls and contribute to the individual's development.

I also believe that teachers can sometimes get in the way of this deeper learning process and must therefore be capable of playing a leadership role when necessary and of standing back when the students are obviously doing well on their own without a teacher. At the undergraduate level, I start this style of teaching in first year and by fourth year students are used to it and welcome it. I therefore make the assumption that after the students and I agree upon what should be taught and how it should both be taught and assessed, we are ready for 3 months of self-development and integration of knowledge with maximum student participation.



Teaching Perspectives

At this stage, from day one, my role as teacher is assigned to me in cooperation with the particular group of students that I am teaching. No two courses are ever the same, even when I teach the same course number twice in separate timeslots. This means that I no longer teach a set selection of material; rather, I teach a specific group of people in a way that is specific to them as a group. Now: if the students wish me to change my role, I can do so. I can do so at the beginning of the course, or I can do so at one of the in course scheduled SGIDS or course progress discussion sessions. This means that if I have not read the group correctly or if they have over- or under- estimated themselves, we can stop, have a rethink, and move forward again. It also means that if they want a lecture class I can give one; if they want a role playing session, or group discussions, or a full class debate, I can organize these options. Flexibility and knowledge: these are the key elements in this style of teaching. Know yourself; know your students; know your own limitations; and, above all, know your subject as well as you can and preferably inside out.

In the multiple model I have outlined above, the students must, and do, take responsibility for their own learning. The teacher's role is to observe and to assist when necessary or when asked to do so. In this model, too, the role of the teacher is to be able to interact one on one with each student. This demands small group teaching, even within a larger class. It demands individual contact. It demands assessment that is formative and allows the student to develop rather than assessment which is normative and reduces the student to a point on a fixed, numbered scale.

So, in my opinion, the teacher of the 21st century must be a chameleon, an actor, an invisible man or woman, a shape changer who can react to each situation and respond to each moment and to each individual student. With teaching like this, there is never a dull moment, in class or out of it.



Random Thought

Louis Schmier, Valdosta University

So, I get a message from a professor. It began this way:

"I am a Professor of English, not a father confessor. I know my subject. I have published extensively and I know how to convey the facts of my discipline to my students. Why should I have to spend time thinking about the student's emotional or social life, it's not my job. I care about their learning if they care about their studies. Nevertheless, I can't be involved in the lives of the students. I don't have time or inclination to do so. It will distract me from teaching English and other scholarly things I have to do. I have been reading your hopelessly romantic and irrelevant musings for a long time. Why do you tell such stories about ordinary, average, and at times distasteful students? It's enough that I have to deal with them in my classes. Isn't it better to focus on the better students who are here to learn?....."

Here was my "quickie" answer:

"As I read your note, I thought of Kim Tanner, for one, and the teachers in our First Year Program for another, and each would say about our job of caring for each and every student without concern for their SAT scores, class standings, GPA, and any other means academia uses to sort students. You, as far too many do, seem to use those terms "ordinary" and "average" with such disdain, almost a bitterness. So, I ask, 'why should the struggling less than stellar student disappear, barricaded behind our fixation with GPAs, shunned aside by our fascination with awards and recognitions, tolerated only because they pay the bills, spat out as "distasteful" sour milk, thrust into the shadows as we spotlight honor students, be out-of-focus as we focus on producing mini-scholars, separated as chafe, quarantined as infectious carriers, and hunted down as interlopers?' It assumes that they do not have potential, that they are not worth our time and effort, and that they do not have it within them to burst into novae. Then, again, the hiding of the less than stellar students is systematic in our academic culture. None of us are the Southwestern Airlines of academia. Love institutions we're not. We don't put these students who admittedly often test our mettle and are demanding our time and effort—and love—first. Instead we so handicap them with loveless disdain at worst and faithless indifference at best that we almost insure they run far behind the pack. So many of us just don't see teaching them as labors of love so much as laborious work."

"So many of us have two selves. When talk is of these students, who make up the majority, you can hear so many of us pronouncing a plethora of lofty platitudes about how we care about students or how we emphasize teaching or how we are concerned about their retention. But, are those academics expressing their real feelings and beliefs? Are they presenting a façade of a false self? Are they merely trying to appear a certain way to others? Are they publicly assuming a foreign identity? Are they publicly hiding who they really are? In so many private conversations about these "ordinary" and "average" students the grandeur is absent. Coming from these same academics are mournful unwelcoming sighs; we can hear tones of discouragement, annoyance, moaning, disavowal, disdain, resignation, displeasure, and even anger. They place these students among the dismissed "don't belong" and "they're letting everyone in" and "I don't have the time" and "it's not my job" and "they get in the way." These academics use the external and superficial criteria of tests and grading as the basis for judging a student's worth.

These supposedly irrelevant students don't stay long in their thoughts and are quickly swept out of the spotlight into the darkened background. They much prefer a discussion of their "dedication to their discipline," of their research and publication, and of the "good" students and especially of the "honor" students. That's when their blank eyes get a sparkle, their blank faces turn bright, and their sneering lips curl up in smiles; that's when stoops are transformed into erect posture and vocal tones of despair are replaced by tones of pride."

"But, if you really want to be a good teacher, if you want to be the salt that makes students, all students, thirsty for learning, you gladly—gladly—begin, without conditions, with the students you have. That minority of "above average" students will always be with us, but it is infinitely more important to tell the story of the student in the shadows in the hope of shaking our conscience and altering our academic culture. I've said this over and over and over again. And, I'll say it still again. After watching PBS' Declining by Degrees, I know that it's not that average student who should feel ashamed of not making the grade, it should be us. We are a perniciously corrupting force when we fail to esteem all—all—students and accept their frailties rather than depreciating them, when we display contingent faith and hope and love based on test scores and grades. If we are to be judged, let us be judged by the commitment we have, by the dedication we have, by the faith we exhibit, by the hope we offer, by the love we have, by the support and encouragement we give those who are most needy of us. If that be sappy, whistling in the dark, or foolishly romantic, so be it. But, you know, the dear Lord made so many of those "ordinary" and "average" students, he must love them. So, should we."

Make it a good day.

Learning and Teaching Development Committee Calendar of Events November - December, 2007

November 16, 2007
Workshop / Teaching
Conversation
Assisting JOBS Assistants
Dr. Gayle MacDonald
Faculty Lounge EC201
3:30
Refreshments will be served
RSVP ltdcommittee@stu

November 17, 2007
Effective Teaching Institute
Outcomes Based Teaching
Tucker Campus, UNBSJ
8:30 am All day

The LTD Committee will reimburse gas (\$35) and early registration fees (\$65) for all participants from STU.

November 23, 2007
Workshop / Teaching
Conversation
Course Outlines
Dr. Sharon Murray
Faculty Lounge EC201
3:30
Refreshments will be served
RSVP ltdcommittee@stu

November 30, 2007
Workshop / Teaching
Conversation
De-Stressing
Dr. Gary Kenyon
Faculty Lounge EC201
3:30
Refreshments will be served
RSVP ltdcommittee@stu

December 3, 2007
WebCT Spectacular

December 5, 2007
Kaleidoscope Conference
UNBF.

ISW: Instructional Workshop
April 23-26, 2008
Limited Enrollment
To reserve a place in this ISW
Certificate Program
RVSP ltdcommittee@stu.ca

All these events are described fully on the LTD Webpage
<http://w3.stu.ca/stu/sites/ltd/index.aspx>

LTD Deadline
The deadlines for enrolling in the following certificate programs are rapidly approaching:

The Diploma of University Teaching (DUT @ UNB)

Institute of the Advancement of Teaching in Higher Education

If you are interested in these certificate programs
RSVP ltdcommittee@stu.ca



Roger Moore



Sharon Murray



Monika Stelzl



James Whitehead



Dan Murphy



Mark Henick