Teaching & Learning
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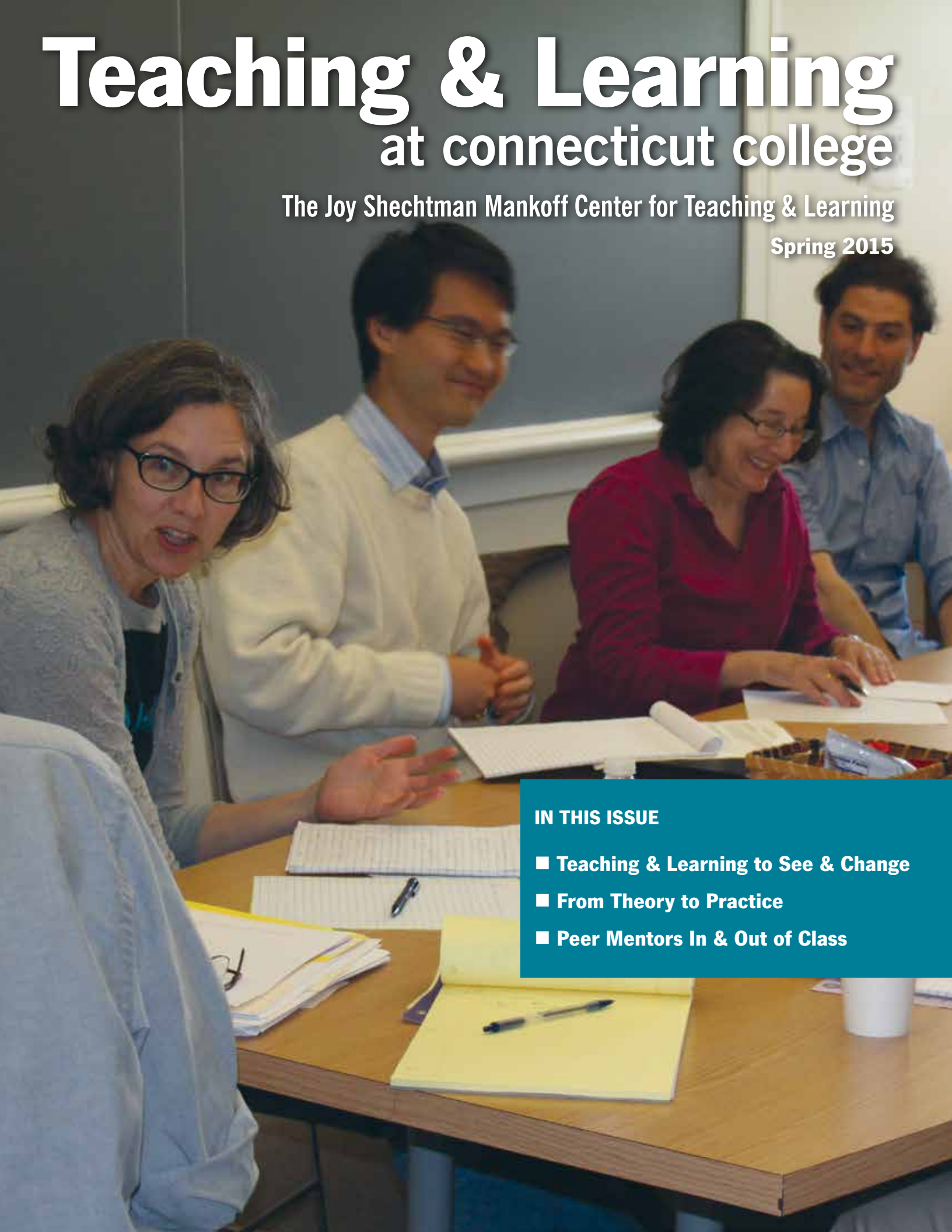
The Joy Shechtman Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning

Spring 2015



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THE JOY SHECHTMAN MANKOFF CENTER FOR TEACHING & LEARNING 2014-2015

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On the cover, faculty members participate in the 2014 Camp Teach & Learn conversation "Scaffolding and Sequencing to Get Better Papers."

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

letter from the Director

In this issue, we reveal and honor the continuing commitment to excellence in teaching & learning, which is a hallmark of our culture at Connecticut College. Curricular ReVision led to conversations that helped define what we share as teacher-scholars in the liberal arts, uncovering the consistencies that inform the complexities of our curriculum. The pages of this publication do the same. The articles that explore how we teach & learn by inspiring, challenging, and mentoring our students, by sharing wisdom, building community, and listening to one another were all written independently. Yet they harmonize well and testify to the commitments we share.

Contributing to ReVision's spirit of innovation, this issue also offers several new elements. Most notably, Featured Assignments presents course assignments that the CTL Advisory Board found distinctively elegant in their execution of effective practices, after inviting and carefully reviewing submissions from the faculty at large. In addition, there are two articles contributed by students, one drawn from an honors thesis investigating student persistence (i.e. retention) and a second by Writing Center tutors describing their experiences as peer mentors. The book review section also has been overhauled. It now offers commentaries that directly connect the books to teaching & learning at the College. This format is more conversational and more challenging, inviting readers to reflect and innovate.

So … browse and read, study the data and enjoy the ideas, hunt through the pictures for familiar faces. Above all, relax into the teaching & learning that our authors are experiencing, describing, analyzing, and sharing. I hope that you will find affirmations for your own teaching & learning, critiques of your most basic scholarly presumptions, controversies that will stimulate your thinking, and intriguing possibilities to rouse your scholarly imagination. We'll look forward to seeing you and hearing from you at the CTL events!

Best,
Michael

Michael Reder
Director, The Joy Shectman Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning

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Book Reviews

The Joy Shechtman Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning at Connecticut College promotes effective teaching that cultivates engaged student learning. The Center fosters a campus culture that values a diversity of learning, teaching, and disciplinary styles; encourages honest discussion of teaching and learning; and cultivates intentional, evidence- informed teaching.

Appearing Previously

Updates From Our Winter 2014 Issue

Faculty-Student Research Partnerships

Here is a quick update about our Playground Negotiations research project.

Brooke Dinsmore ’14, Molly Bienstock ’14, and Kevin Zevallos ’16 joined me during our 2013 summer of data collection, when we conducted a total of 198 semi-structured interviews. Realizing the magnitude and complexity of the dataset, I invited other student researchers to join us — Flor Campos ’16, Elena Klonoski ’16, Patrick Landes ’16, Max Lemper-Tabatsky ’16, Gina Pol ’16, Juan Jose Ramos ’15, Luis Ramos ’16, and Allie Rothenberg ’16. With students varying in levels of participation, we have been engaging in intense data management, analysis, and writing process. Creating a platform for youth’s voices to be heard, we’ve shared the project through seven undergraduate and three faculty-student empirical presentations on campus, the Eastern Sociological Society Conference in Baltimore (2014) and New York City (2015), and the Annual Meeting of the New England Council of Latin American Studies in New London (2014). Brooke Dinsmore’14 completed her honors thesis from this data, for which she earned the “Sociology Excellence in Research Award” and the “Harold D. Juli Memorial Award for Student Research.” We have two co-authored papers under review at academic journals.

Ana Campos-Holland
Assistant Professor of Sociology

The Technology Fellows Program

As part of the Curricular Renovation Fund dedicated to the ReVision innovations, the Technology Fellows Program (TFP) is investing in faculty who want to explore creative ways of leveraging digital technologies to deepen student curricular engagement. Piloted in Spring 2014, the first cohort of TFP fellows is now in their final semester and fully iimmersed in applying digital technologies to the classroom and beyond. You can hear more about their successes, failures, and hard-earned wisdom at upcoming Technology in Teaching, Talking Teaching, and Camp Teach and Learn events. You can also follow *Engage*, a blog on teaching with technology at Connecticut College (https://teachtechconncoll.wordpress.com/).

A second cohort of fellows will be admitted into the program in Spring 2015. They will work closely with TFP faculty co-directors Karen Gonzalez-Rice (Art History) and Anthony Graesch (Anthropology) as well as members of the Information Services Instructional Technology team (Chris Penniman, Jessica McCullough, Laura Little, Diane Creede, and Lyndsay Bratton). The program has already yielded intellectually rich and pedagogically reflexive workshops adding to faculty excitement about technology and teaching.

Anthony Graesch
Associate Professor and Chair of Anthropology

Electronic Devices in the Classroom

I thought I would write to tell you that I have updated my policy on digital devices in the classroom since I have discovered a new way of incorporating cell phones into class discussions. I now encourage students to bring their phones to class so that they can utilize them in a very user-friendly class polling (clicker) system. It is a web-based txt messaging system, www.polleverywhere.com. It allows instructors to create class polls quickly and students respond by sending a txt message. Results appear instantly without the worry of an infrared remote control-based system working properly and/or students forgetting their clicker. Students are not required to buy a device (if they already have a phone) and the basic system is free for professors. It has worked wonderfully in my classes so far this semester and the students love it.

Joseph Schroeder
Associate Professor of Psychology
Director of the Behavioral Neuroscience Program

From Class to ARC to TEDx

Conor McCormick-Cavanagh ’14 presented at the Middle East Political Transformations Conference, which I organized and the Academic Resource Center sponsored in Fall 2013. Conor thought his work was complete when he submitted a 30-page seminar paper, but then he earned an opportunity to present at the 2014 TEDx Connecticut College conference. As he later said, “With only 15 minutes to speak, I focused only on the most important principles and examples. My speech was definitely more accessible than my paper. Additionally, I became more of an advocate, encouraging audience members to question accepted notions about international politics. I believe that critical analysis of foreign policy decisions is

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Learning Life Through Japanese Language Classes

Hisae Kobayashi, senior lecturer in Japanese, is the 2014 Connecticut Teacher of the Year, an award granted by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. She is also the recipient of the 2008 John King Award for Excellence in Teaching at Connecticut College. With her permission, we have excerpted passages from the teaching statement that she prepared for the Carnegie — CASE award committee.

The Japanese Ten Commandments:

1. I, Hisae Kobayashi, am the only teacher of Japanese 101-102. You shall have no other teacher.
2. You shall not make yourself be a teacher to teach Japanese or provide any answers to your fellow classmates.
3. You shall not miss any class or be late to class.
4. Remember that you must memorize assigned conversations before coming to class. You shall labor and do all of your work.
5. Honor your classmates. Each one of you feels nervous in my class. You shall encourage one another.
6. You shall not laugh at your classmates. You may not intend to do so, but please understand how others feel about your behavior. You may laugh with them.
7. You shall not do any form of distraction (i.e. drinking coffee, shaking your head, whispering to your neighbor, etc.).
8. You shall not cheat.
9. You shall not miss the deadlines for assignments. If you do, you are still obliged to submit them.
10. You shall not covet your classmates' progress. As long as you follow my instruction and study as hard as you can, you will make progress in Japanese Each student's learning speed is different. You shall not compare yourself with your classmates.

Follow my commandments, and you will learn Japanese. This is what I tell my first-year students at the beginning of every year. And because I understand I am asking for a commitment (and because they don't know me yet), I always bring upperclassmen that first day. I want them to tell the new students that it is hard. That they will be required to put in 100 percent effort. But also that if they do, they will accomplish things they never thought they could.

Students cannot just learn about a language, they must learn to perform in a conversational setting. So in my classes, students must act. Each day they are required to memorize and then perform a real-life scenario — they are lost, they are complimenting a stranger on her attire, they are inviting friends to dinner — as if they are in Japan. They receive a daily score based on their performances and this accounts for a third of their grade.

Commandment 5, Honor your classmates

Japanese is not spoken regularly in Connecticut, so I must create situations in which my students can practice. I regularly eat lunch at the Japanese table. These lunches are not mandatory, but students come, because they know I expect them to, and because they enjoy having the opportunity to speak Japanese outside of class. I also encourage them to let Japanese become part of their lives — to answer the phone in Japanese, talk to themselves in Japanese and, if at all possible, to train themselves to dream in Japanese. And I take as many of my classes as possible to Japan, where they are frequently surprised by how often a real-life experience will mimic one we have practiced in class. These experiences inspire them in a way that only being fully immersed in the culture and language can.

My students respond to the effort I put into their education — and they are rewarded for their efforts in ways that surprise them. They learn they can accomplish more than they ever knew was possible. I would like my students to be "independent" learners. Learning a foreign language or learning itself is a life-long process. I hope that they will be able to fly from the nest to the real world! — *Hisae Kobayashi*

Teaching & Learning to See & Change

Excerpted from "On Activism and Activists," An Address to the Graduating Scholars in the Program in Community Action and Public Policy.

How do you change cultures? One small, but significant, way is to rethink your identities as activists. There will be many who will discourage you from activism and from adopting the label of activist. We use words like scholar-activists to describe students like you. Scholar-activist. The two words together, this hyphenated identity, makes me uncomfortable. You see, while it's supposed to be a positive phrase, one that captures the various aspects of our lives, it signals something limiting and mutually exclusive about the two categories.

If I asked you to envision a scholar, here are some things I can guess would come to your mind: A solitary figure, working by the light of a lamp (or a candle because scholars apparently forget to pay their electric bills); somebody who is surrounded by books, and churning out even more books; somebody who seems removed from and perhaps even above, other humans. The scholar seems to be interested in knowledge for the sake of knowledge.

Now if I asked you to imagine an activist, chances are that you would imagine a protest, a person with his or her fist in the air. Emotional. And that's the big lie we've all been told and we've all internalized — that being a scholar and being an activist are two different callings, and while one is about the disinterested, scientific pursuit of knowledge, the other is defined by bias and anger. In our culture, labeling people as emotional devalues them. As long as we can paint activists as situated within the realm of emotions, we can keep them on the defensive and dismiss them.

Well, this definition of activists is completely wrong. A recent study from the University of Chicago revealed that people who have a high "justice sensitivity" are cognitively driven — their commitment is the outcome of reason, not emotion. I don't want to devalue emotions, but it is important to understand and remember that we, activists, are not in fact, biased — at least not more than any person who identifies him or herself as a scholar.

The guise of disinterested scientific research only serves to hide the bias that exists all around us. Activism is about *uncovering* those biases in our culture. It is about revealing that which has been made invisible, challenging that which has been made acceptable. You'll notice that I say "*has been made* invisible" or "*has been made* acceptable," because there is no "natural order"; there is no essential or inherent way of being. And once we accept that, we *have to see* that power is *always* implicated in who is made invisible, who is normalized, who is accepted, and who is marginalized.

But that's the trouble with activists. They see a little too much, a little too well. That's the burden you have borne during your time here. And that's a burden I hope you will continue to bear by embracing your identities as activists — not as an addendum, not as a hyphenated identity, but as who you are. Because as the writer Arundhati Roy, reminds us: "The trouble is that once you see ... you can't unsee ... And once you've seen, keeping quiet, saying nothing, becomes as political an act as speaking out. There's no innocence. Either way, you're accountable."

I hope you will take these words with you and that they will give you the courage in those times when you most need it. In those times, when it might be *so* much easier to lower your voice than to speak up. In those times, when it might be *so* much easier to avert your gaze, than to lock eyes in defiance. No matter what course of action or inaction you choose in those moments, Roy is correct: Either way, you're accountable. — *Afshan Jafar*

The University of Chicago study referenced by Professor Jafar was authored by Keith J. Yoder and Jean Decety: "The Good, the Bad, and the Just: Justice Sensitivity Predicts Neural Response during Moral Evaluation of Actions Performed by Others," *The Journal of Neuroscience* 34, no. 12 (March 2014): 4161-4166. For the Arundhati Roy quote, see "The Ladies Have Feelings, So ... Shall We Leave it to the Experts?" in *Power Politics* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2001), 1-33.

Afshan Jafar is an associate professor of sociology whose teaching and research focuses on gender, globalization, religion, and the body. She is the 2014 recipient of the Helen Mulvey Faculty Award, presented to an assistant professor who regularly offers classes that challenge students to work harder than they thought they could and to reach unanticipated levels of academic achievement.

Teaching Classics, Building a Community

To enrich and widen our students' learning experience and to build a strong sense of community, I have been working with my colleagues in the Classics Department and our Classics Language Fellows to plan a number of Classics-related events throughout the year. Our goal is two-fold: first, to foster learning through fun experiences and, second, to expose students to the vast number of ways in which the civilizations of Greece and Rome have influenced and are still part of our world today. In addition to hosting guest speakers whose topics range from the gladiators to Roman conceptions of sex and ancient approaches to reading, we organize events that stretch learning beyond classroom walls.

STUDENTS VISIT THE GREEK AND ROMAN GALLERIES OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, ON A GUIDED TOUR.

For two years now, Latin students have come together in early fall for a Botanical Latin Arboretum tour led by Arboretum curators. This is an opportunity to learn about the trees on campus, and the Latin and Greek etymological roots of their scientific names, while making reference to plants in Vergil's pastoral poetry and other texts. Latin was the shared language of European scholars until the 19th century, and Greece the origin of much of the European intellectual tradition, so scientists turned to Latin as well as Greek for scientific terminology.

An annual department open house at Halloween gives students an opportunity to come as their choice of a historical or mythical figure. Examples of this year's costumes include the goddesses Athena and Aphrodite, the weaver Arachne, Oedipus and Medusa. Meanwhile, the Classics team emerged as the champions of the Languages Soccer World Cup competition. Competition also surfaces at a Jeopardy game, featuring Classical Mythology, Greek and Latin literature, Greek and Roman history, philosophy, and art. Last year, students got so excited, competing about their knowledge of Platonic dialogues and Roman emperors, that they were the ones to request a rematch in the spring.

Many think of Latin as a dead language but Latin enthusiasts around the world desire to change that view. Two of those enthusiasts, Charley McNamara and Caleb Dance, PhD candidates in Classics at Columbia University, visited our campus in 2014 and taught students how to have a simple conversation in Latin. (Spoken Latin is rarely taught, as Latin classes focus on reading and writing.) We then had a fascinating discussion in Latin about Catullus' famous poem "*odi et amo*" expressing his paradoxical feelings of love and hatred. One student said that speaking Latin "made Rome as a culture more palpable" while another said that she gained "a new appreciation for what I was learning in the classroom."

The highlight of the 2013-2014 year, which we are repeating in the current academic year, was our day-trip to New York City, where 21 students and Classics faculty attended a guided tour of the Greek and Roman galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, followed by a performance of Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*, in the original Greek with English supertitles. Ancient Comedy (Classics/Theater 222) students were able to develop their own critiques of Aeschylus, before engaging with Aristophanes' critique of Aeschylus in the *Frogs*, often considered the first work of literary criticism in the West. One student noted that the performance made her see the plays "as drama rather than literature" enabling her "to think more analytically about choices that could be made by actors and directors," and another added that watching the chorus made her appreciate "the musical quality of the language."

Teaching Classics means teaching language, literature, history, art history, philosophy, and theater, among other disciplines. In the years to come we hope to strengthen relationships with other departments and create more co-sponsored events. We teach inside classrooms, but building relationships and creating learning environments outside the classroom is vital for enhancing our students' academic experience. — *Nina Papathanasopoulou*

Nina Papathanasopoulou is a visiting assistant professor of Classics, teaching Latin, Greek, mythology, and ancient drama courses. Nominated for Columbia University Teaching Awards in 2009 and 2013, she was the chorus director and choreographer of Greek drama productions performed in ancient Greek at the University; her research centers on Greek drama and classical mythology.

Interdisciplinary Approaches to Teaching Environmental Art

Interdisciplinary inquiry was at the heart of my fall semester courses, FYS 173B (The Art & Ethics of Garbage) and AHI/ES 361 (Environmental Art & its Ethics), which focused on the emerging genre of environmental art. Both were developed in response to my participation in the Global Environmental Justice Curriculum Development Seminar from Fall 2011 to Spring 2013, which was supported by a grant from the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation. Cross-disciplinary dialogue and exploration were crucial to the success of the course.

The interdisciplinary topic attracted students from diverse backgrounds, from studio art to biology. As students confronted their differences in disciplinary approaches and worked through misunderstandings and confusion, they facilitated connections among multiple disciplines and fostered rigorous debates about the stakes and consequences of environmental art. At the end of the class, first year and upper division students remarked on the value of these open-ended discussions. One first year student noted, "Although there were many times that I disagreed with my peers, I learned to respect and appreciate their perspectives." A senior observed that the interdisciplinary content of the course promoted active dialogue: "This class was especially important for listening just as much as discussing because of the … different departments that made up the course; therefore there was always really meaningful discussion and insight based on views from both groups of students."

Drawing on my interactions with colleagues during the Global Environmental Justice seminar, I invited several faculty members to share their expertise with students in each of the courses. Their diverse conversations supported the interdisciplinary tone of the course by inserting distinct disciplinary perspectives, from Geology (Doug Thompson) and Studio Art (Andrea Wollensak) to German Studies (Geoffery Atherton). Some topics integrated more seamlessly than others into the dialogue of the course, but I think the most important benefit of these guest lectures was the opportunity to model collaboration, active listening, and thoughtful dialogue among various disciplines. By inviting other professors into the classroom and engaging them in conversation, I showed my own willingness to encounter unfamiliar approaches and to grapple with new and challenging points of view.

TOP: STUDENTS FROM FYS 173B (THE ART & ETHICS OF GARBAGE) AND AHI/ES 361 (ENVIRONMENTAL ART & ITS ETHICS) AT IPARK, AN ENVIRONMENTAL ART SPACE IN EAST HADDAM, CT.

BOTTOM: STUDENTS FROM AHI/ES 361 (ENVIRONMENTAL ART & ITS ETHICS) DISCUSS AN EPHEMERAL ARTWORK IN THE STYLE OF ANDY GOLDWORTHY.

At the end of the semester, students had the opportunity to extend their interdisciplinary dialogues beyond the classroom. At a joint mini-conference, students from both classes presented their research in the form of 60-second videos created with the free software Jing. Students worked hard throughout the last weeks of the semester to create concise, focused videos that accurately reflected their research. In lively Q&A sessions following each panel, students debated the central questions raised by environmental art. In this way, the conference allowed students to practice one of the greatest challenges of interdisciplinary work: speaking across disciplines and fielding unexpected questions from a diverse audience. Several students across classes noted that the conference raised questions that they would like to address in future projects — projects which I hope will continue the interdisciplinary conversation of the course far beyond the semester. — *Karen Gonzalez Rice*

Karen Gonzalez Rice is the Sue and Eugene Mercy Assistant Professor of Art History. Her teaching and research is multidisciplinary, drawing on methodologies of contemporary art history, religious studies, American studies and trauma studies.

Classes, TRIPs & Poster Presentations

Professors & Students Reflect on Their Experiences in Okinawa & Taiwan

In Spring 2014, Professors Tek-wah King and Takeshi Watanabe each taught TRIP classes, a second-year Chinese language class (Chinese 201-202) and the Legacy of World War II, "Post-War" Japan (History 322). In this interview, they reflect on their experiences in campus classrooms, in Taiwan and Okinawa, and at the poster session their classes jointly hosted at the Academic Resource Center.

PROFESSOR WATANABE (FAR RIGHT) AND STUDENTS AT SHURI CASTLE IN NAHA, OKINAWA. THE PALACE OF THE RYUKYU KINGDOM, IT WAS DESTROYED IN THE BATTLE OF OKINAWA; BEGINNING IN 1992, IT WAS RECONSTRUCTED FROM HISTORICAL RECORDS.

■Why did you decide to do a TRIP and a poster conference?

Professor Takeshi Watanabe: I had always wanted to do a TRIP to Okinawa, and I had applied for TRIP funding a few years ago and did not get it. Over the summer, I noticed a Japan Foundation grant to take classes to Japan. I applied, and was fortunate to obtain $30,000. Of course, the College also gave me additional support that in total allowed me to take thirteen students.

Professor Tek-wah King: Between 2001 and 2006, three groups of first- and second-year Chinese language students went on the then-Freeman TRIPs to contextualize and optimize their learning of the Chinese language and culture at the pre-Study Away stage. The TRIP undertaken by the year-long CHI 201-202 was built on this tradition, with the alteration that for the first time we picked Taiwan to be our field of investigation. During our grant application stage, students and I recognized the educational value of targeting a Mandarin-speaking region where the traditional writing system was officially used so that our students' hard work learning non-simplified characters at CC would be rewarded. On the socio-economic and cultural side, Taiwan's unique status as a non-communist Chinese nation provided a diversified, comparative if not contrastive perspective on Chinese studies before most of our students went to China to study away or intern in their junior year.

■What was your itinerary? How did you select the sites that you chose to visit?

King: We conducted a series of guided onsite explorations and language practices, at Novice-High to Intermediate-Mid proficiency levels, in Taipei and Hualien. We visited the National Palace Museum, the Taipei 101 skyscraper, the Taipei Zoo, and the Taroko Gorge National Park; Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian temples; and university campuses, markets and stores, restaurants and tea houses.

Watanabe: Our itinerary took us around the main island of Okinawa, as well as Kudaka Island, which is the site of Okinawan mythology. We visited a number of sites associated with WWII. The caves where many people took refuge were powerful in conveying the horrors of the Battle of Okinawa. To meet with college students and professors, we visited the Okinawa Prefectural University of the Arts and Ryukyu University. Consul General Magleby was gracious to host a party for us and high school at his residence. He also spoke to us about the American policy in East Asia and the controversies surrounding the American military bases. We were then able to visit Kadena Air Base, the largest American base in Okinawa, and received a briefing about the base's strategic importance. To get another perspective, we spoke with activists opposed to the construction of a base at Henoko. For lodging, we mostly stayed at small inns or even people's homes, so students got to interact with local residents.

Maggie Nelsen '14 (Government major; History and Sociology-based Human Relations minors): Visiting a foreign country with our professor was an unparalleled opportunity, because as students we could constantly consult with Professor Watanabe and hold group discussions about what we were learning and experiencing. First-hand encounters with historical sites and various Japanese individuals allowed Okinawan history and culture to come alive for us in a way that it never could in a classroom. Many of our experiences were deeply moving. As a result, the class could more intensely engage the historical and cultural identity of Okinawans.

■What were the biggest challenges of incorporating the TRIP and conference into your courses?

King: For probably all the students in the Chinese group, the biggest challenge was to rely primarily on their still developing second language skills to discover, collect, analyze and utilize authentic linguistic and cultural information rather than drawing on English language sources to reach their conclusions. And logistically, making a visit with or without a local contact would oftentimes signify the commitment to either an insider's top-down or an outsider's bottom-up approach of inquiry. The pedagogical implication would be to realize what type of experience we want our students to have from one specific activity, and whether it is the ends or the means that we define as their primary learning goal.

PROFESSOR KING (FAR LEFT) AND STUDENTS IN THE TAROKO GORGE NATIONAL PARK, AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTRAL CROSS-ISLAND THROUGHWAY. THIS TREACHEROUS TWO-LANE ROAD CLIMBS UP AND CUTS THROUGH THE 10,000 FOOT CENTRAL MOUNTAINS, CONNECTING THE EAST AND THE WEST COASTS OF TAIWAN.

Watanabe: For my class, I had three students who spoke Japanese, and they could handle practical interactions. So the biggest challenge in organizing our TRIP was logistical. The monetary side presented one hurdle; another was the itinerary. I wished to take my class to an American military base in Okinawa, but lacking a contact, I initially had no response. However, one of the rewards was indeed how eventually I met so many people who were willing to help and to make this TRIP a success.

■What were the biggest rewards of incorporating the TRIP and conference into your courses?

Watanabe: One of my aims was to introduce Japan to students who have had little previous contact with that region. Opening this critical area to their attention as the subject of serious intellectual inquiry was rewarding to me. Also, in taking students to Okinawa, I did things that I would never do on my own, and I got to experience special moments. For example, by myself, it would have been difficult to meet with survivors of the Battle of Okinawa as they are in frail health, but because a visit by American college students was deemed a special occasion, I was able to arrange a meeting that was truly moving. Speaking for the students, I think that they all were truly inspired by the sites and people we visited.

King: The fact that students could overcome many difficulties in their hands-on debut research inquiries and succeed in assembling their posters was the biggest reward for their sacrifice. This was groundbreaking work for the students, made possible by the TRIP component.

Zach Jay, '16 (Economics major): One strength of the TRIP program is that it provides foreign language learners with the opportunity to continue their studies in an environment that immerses students in both the language and culture. I found that my Chinese language skills and cultural knowledge progressed in just the few days that I spent in Taiwan. Out of all of the incredible experiences, I will always remember the day that my classmates and I traveled to the Taipei Zoo. While traveling to a zoo and tea house are not among the most extravagant of activities in Taiwan, the memorable nature of the day comes from the problem solving that we had to do to get to those locations. Because the gondola near the zoo was not in operation, the tea house seemed out of reach. Determined to visit the tea house and a beautiful temple on top of the mountain, my classmates and I used our Chinese communication skills, wits, and sense of direction. We were ultimately able to reach our destination and return back, with lots of learning in the process.

■What was the relationship between the classroom, the field studies, and the conference? How did you balance all the different kinds of learning?

Watanabe: The seminar was titled, "The Legacy of WWII in Postwar Japan." The main question we examined was: how has WWII continued to reverberate in postwar Japan? Before our departure, we studied Okinawan history, WWII, and the controversies surrounding American military bases in Okinawa. Furthermore, each student had to propose an individual research topic, and do preliminary research. Although it was difficult to arrange specific field work for each individual project, everyone took advantage of the various opportunities during our itinerary, such as the meeting with the American Consul General, and visits to museums, universities, and protest sites. Making sure that everyone would find materials and meet people relevant to his or her topic was a challenge. We ended up having a packed itinerary that made everyone go to bed early every night.

King: The curricular design and the co-curricular TRIP component formed two parallel modules that intertwined and kept informing each other throughout the course. The format of our outcome sharing was more sophisticated this year than in the past. Although students still conducted individual PowerPoint presentations for their final oral examination, as in the past, the poster session supported by the Academic Resource Center supplied them with an invaluable opportunity to test-run their work three weeks earlier,

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CTL Research Scholars

Curricular ReVision: First & Second Year Experiences

For a third year, CTL Research Scholars, supervised by Michael Reder and Stuart Vyse, conducted small focus group conversations with Connecticut College students. Building on the findings of the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education, in which Connecticut College was a participant, the Scholars' questions were centered on students' perceptions of intellectual challenge at the College, their academic expectations, and the frequency of student-faculty interactions. The first-year experience was also studied in depth.

Laura Garciduenas '14 and Gabe Plummer '14 presented their findings to over 50 faculty at a meeting hosted by the CTL. The acknowledged limitations of the study were the comparatively small number, and the self-selection, of the student participants. Forty-one students, from the classes of 2013, 2016, and 2017, participated in focus groups of two to five. These included 24 women and 17 men; students racially identified as white (24), Latina/o (7), black or African American (5), Asian (2). The students' responses to the researchers' open-ended questions were diverse, reflecting their experiences before and during their years at the College, their responses to introductory and general education courses, and their disciplinary and intellectual priorities.

Even so, Garciduenas and Plummer identified a series of themes that surfaced repeatedly and consistently throughout their focus group conversations. These are identified below, with illustrative student statements.

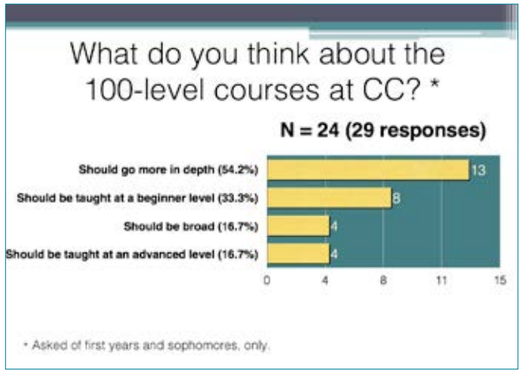
■ Students like courses that go into depth.
Going into it I knew it would be, like, survey, but I would have liked it to be more in depth ... it was a bit too much. One day it was one whole thing and the next it was another big topic. ... I thought, "Can we go back to that? I didn't get it!" It was going by so quick — we should've cut some stuff out to make room for smaller centered topics.

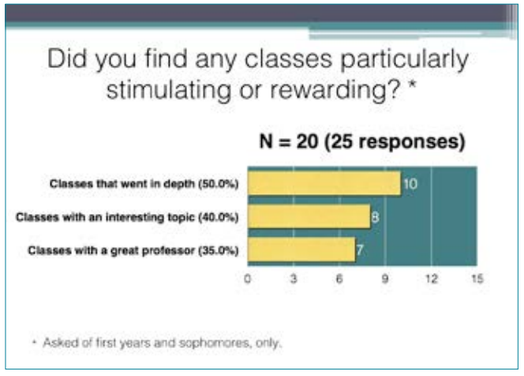
■ Student awareness of academic support has increased across their years at the College.
The events made by ARC are really helpful. The events 'Prepping for Exams,' 'How to Manage Your Time,' and 'Reading Strategies' were helpful.

■ Student awareness of opportunities to conduct research and to study with professors could be improved.
We promote research, but wait — I haven't been offered to do research. I would like to have some way to know who to contact.

GABE PLUMMER '14 AND LAURA GARCIDUENAS '14

■ Professors are one of the most influential aspects of students' experiences at the College.
Anthropology 101 — The professor did field work in southern Sudan. ... there is more in depth material here at Conn [than there was at high school]. There are more personal connections. The personal experiences help me to learn better, because when it's out of the textbook it's not as interesting. But when you hear stories of him being in southern Sudan it's awesome!





From Theory to Practice

Experimental Archaeology

Following his participation in Camp Teach & Learn book conversations, and after additional study of teaching & learning scholarship, Professor Manuel Lizarralde provided this reflection on the connections between the theories advanced by three well-known authors and one of his courses, Experimental Archaeology.

J.A. Bowen *(Teaching Naked, How Moving Technology Out of Your College Classroom Will Improve Student Learning),* D.F. Chambliss and C. G. Takacs, *(How College Works)*, and L.D. Fink *(Creating Significant Learning Experiences, An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses)* all emphasize that students value relationships with their teachers and prefer a hands-on approach to their learning. And college professors are responding, sometimes slowly, shifting from lecturing to designing new "learning methods and environments (Fink 2013, 13)." Experimental Archaeology (Anthropology 396), which I co-taught with Professor Anthony Graesch, provided this kind of a teaching and learning experience, and allowed us to test the authors' conclusions and recommendations.

Experimental Archaeology required students to design and conduct field experiments, in addition to library research, writing, and reviewing their peers' work. Students designed and conducted three experiments. Two focused on cooking stones in water and earth ovens. Fractured stones are very common at archaeological sites, but the fracture patterns have not been widely studied. Students collected appropriate stones and cooked food with them (potatoes or venison), both dry (in an earth oven) or by boiling (by adding rocks to a wooden container with two gallons of water), in order to measured patterns of change in those rocks (cracks, breaks, color, and weight). Students noticed that the stone in the earth oven needed to be larger than those in the boiling experiment. In the boiling experiment, rocks did crack and fracture more often than those used in the earth oven.

The third experiment assessed the accuracy and penetrating force of Ötzi/Iceman arrows. Students made three yew long bows and eighteen arrows, with shafts that were 72, 84 and 87 cm in length. Then, they cast the arrows over 600 times, measuring accuracy (by shooting on a competition score target at 15 meters, which is the standard range for a hunter with medium to large game), penetration on the target (on 19 layers of cardboard), and kinetic force (translating the speed and weight of the arrow into joules). The Ötzi/Iceman arrows did not show much significant difference in accuracy, penetration, or kinetic force. These three experiments provided new insight for the literature with data that the students themselves produced.

The experiments were demanding and time-consuming, and students learned the challenge and complexity of field research. Our primary goal was, as the authors recommended, to see if replacing lectures with active learning would help students better retain their knowledge. Student teaching evaluations indicate that this goal was achieved. As one student stated in the course evaluation, "Hands-on experiments helped me to fully understand the process of collecting scientific data." Building on our teaching and learning experience in Experimental Archaeology, the next step will be focus more on the nuances of writing a report for the experiments, and have the course in the fall instead of a very cold winter since most of the work was done outdoors. — *Manuel Lizarralde*

Manuel Lizarralde is an associate professor of ethnobotany. His teaching and research focus on the relationships between Latin American indigenous peoples and the environment, working to record and save indigenous knowledge of plants before it is lost through rapid environmental change. His numerous journal articles and book chapters, which rely on field studies, advocate for environmental protection and social justice.

STUDENTS FROM ANT 396 (EXPERIMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY) AT THE FIELD EXPERIMENT SITE.

Grading, Pedagogy & Full Participation

Consider some claims related to grading:

a) Grades should aim to provide objective assessment of students work.

b) It is appropriate to use grades to motivate students to do their best work.

c) If a student bombs a test because she had a migraine, it is reasonable to allow the student to retake the test.

d) Students with various kinds of disabilities sometimes ought to be given different kinds of assignments or different parameters for the completion of assignments.

e) It is fair/unfair to give better/worse grades to students whose backgrounds did/did not prepare them (as) well for college work.

By endorsing the aspiration to full participation we have taken on the responsibility to look backward at where our students are coming from and also forward to where we hope they are headed.

In a recent Talking Teaching, participants shared strategies for handling some of the tensions implicit in the ideas above. I want to share some reflections on the implications of that discussion for full participation.

Claim (a) suggests that an important dimension of our grading pedagogy is, in the language of ethical theory, *backward-looking*. This means that the point of assessment is to provide a measure of accomplishment up to the point of the assessment, i.e., in the past. This is often construed as *meritocratic*. By contrast, (b) suggests a *forward-looking* value. It sees grades as a tool, appropriately used to promote educational outcomes, i.e., in the future.

Looking *backward* at what our students have done enables us to assess their work. It is also an opportunity to think about the varying paths students have taken to get to where they are. The 'A's two students receive mean different things in virtue of the kinds of preparation and support the students' have (or haven't) had and what kinds of obstacles were overcome to get those 'A's. Claims (c), (d) and (e) help to elucidate this point.

Claim (c) suggests that work-product alone is insufficient to capture our concept of merit because the test-taker's failure is not attributable to her knowledge or intellectual ability. Claim (d) tells us that the work we ask students to do should be sensitive to students' differences because students often succeed by doing things differently. And (e) is structured to raise a larger question about how our pedagogical practices implicate social justice: what grades students get should plausibly be determined by the quality of their work-product; but because what grades students "earn" is also a function of the opportunities they have (or haven't) had, it is not plausibly a measure of what they *deserve* in the fullest sense.

So long as we maintain a system of grading that takes grades to be backward-looking assessment, I think we cannot abandon some version of a narrowly meritocratic system. But precisely because the system is only narrowly meritocratic, it is also a meaningful — if unscientific — reflection of a set of social inequities that determine students' preparation for college work and that continue to affect students' lives long after graduation.

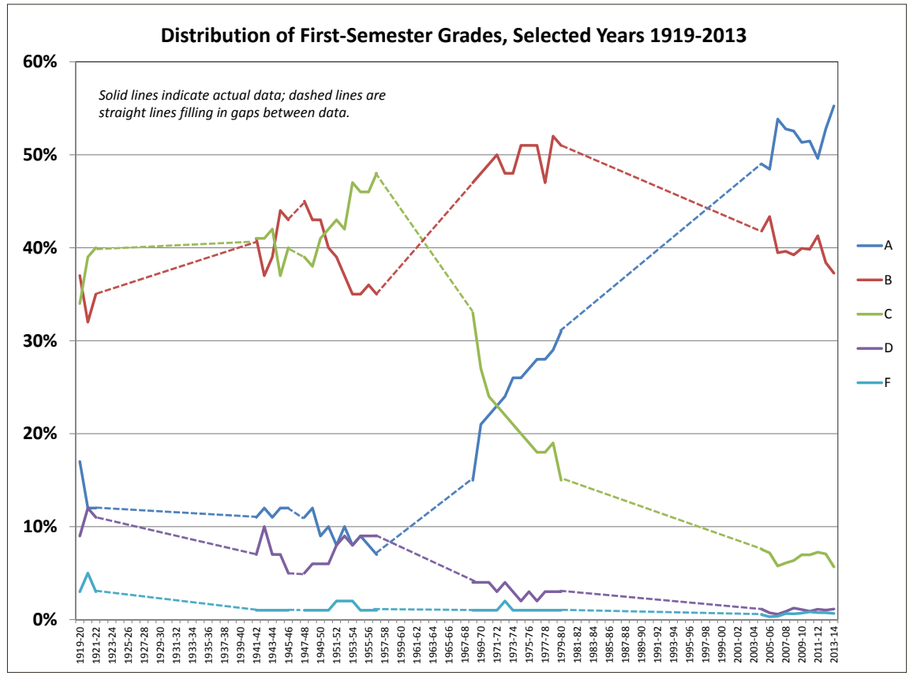
By endorsing the aspiration to full participation we have taken on the responsibility to look *backward* at where our students are coming from and also *forward* to where we hope they are headed. This is complicated by the fact that our institutional values ask us both to assess, "meritocratically," and also to promote the best outcomes for our students. Grading can be painful because we know how much grades *matter* to our students. I think we should keep in mind that they matter not just as powerful signifiers of past achievement, but also as reflections of inequalities that are — to some tangible degree — in our power to ameliorate through reflective pedagogical practices, for example, by engaging ourselves and our students in discussions of what inclusion means in different contexts. — *Simon Feldman*

Simon Feldman is an associate professor of philosophy and was one of the Talking Teaching coordinators in 2013-2014. A recipient of the John S. King Award for excellence in teaching, his teaching and research explore questions about the relationship between the self and the larger community of persons. His courses include Ethics, Feminist Philosophy, and Philosophy of Law; most recently, he is the author of Against Authenticity: Why You Shouldn't be Yourself (Lexington Books, 2014).

Engaging the Data

Grade Inflation or Grade Improvement?

This graph shows grade-distribution data going back to the earliest days of the College; because there are numerous gaps, dotted lines span the periods where there are missing data points so trends are easier to see. They show that our campus reflects national patterns, with A's and A-'s becoming the most common grades, B's remaining pretty steady in their frequency, and C's waning.



Beyond confirming assumptions that grades are trending upward, however, this graph shows when the trend began in more detail than has previously been available. But what explains the trend? Is it a problem or not? Should we try to reverse the trend?

Various observers of higher education have offered a variety of possible explanations for this national trend. These include the move towards widespread use of student course evaluations, which may have created incentives for faculty members to keep students happy with better grades. A related hypothesis holds that students and faculty members have struck a "disengagement compact" under which faculty members give students good grades "provided that students don't make a fuss about the class or ask for too many meetings outside of class or too many comments from faculty on students' written work or exams."

College or departmental policies and student services may explain some of the upward grade trend, such as a move away from grading on a curve (which rations higher grades) and a move towards more flexible add/drop policies that allow students to drop courses in which they're underperforming — both possibly relevant to the trend on our own campus. Looser general education requirements may allow students to self-select into courses in which they expect to do well, skipping formerly required core courses that they might have found more challenging. Increased services for students in the form of tutoring, math and writing centers may also have the effect of raising the quality of student work. Changing pedagogical practices may also explain some of the increase, such as better teaching of writing (scaffolding of assignments, e.g., or giving students comments on drafts of papers so that the final product is better than the first draft).

More generally, increased programming for faculty members by centers for teaching and learning may have led to more precisely defined (and therefore more achievable) learning outcomes. Finally, the trend towards much greater reliance on contingent faculty members at many institutions may play a role, to the extent that visiting faculty members, for a complex set of reasons, may tend to give higher grades.

Some of these explanations, then, imply that the trend towards higher

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Advising Varsity Athletes: The Faculty Fellows Program

Leading a Division III men's ice hockey program, Coach James Ward recruits widely, with many first-year players twenty- or twenty-one-year-olds coming from semi-professional hockey leagues. These are highly motivated students. Still, their transition can be difficult, having been away from school for one or two years. More, the hockey season starts shortly after fall semester midterms and ends shortly before spring break, so players have to manage their academic commitments carefully.

The advising provided by the team's faculty fellow is correspondingly valuable. Professor Catherine Stock meets with players when they are prospectives and admits, and during their pre-major and major years. Every player is treated the same, regardless of their playing time. She ensures that all players are challenging themselves and working outside their 'comfort zone in the classroom and in co-curricular activities.

The advising syllabus for the men's ice hockey team has the following elements:

1. Contact incoming players in late May to discuss the upcoming pre-registration period in June.
2. Meet with new players in September (pre-registration), October (midterms), and November (pre-registration for spring and impending end-of-term issues).
3. Work, as needed, with upperclassmen on choosing majors, challenging themselves academically, and managing rough spots.
4. Contact faculty who have a large number (3+) of men's hockey players (especially first and second years) to check on their progress.
5. Attend games; meet parents afterwards when possible and answer their academic questions.
6. Discuss academic issues or concerns with Coach Ward during the season.
7. Meet with juniors in the spring to review academic goals for senior year.
8. Encourage all players to take advantage of academic opportunities and programs at the College, including sophomore seminars, presidential leadership seminars, student advisory boards, honors theses, internships, certificate programs, residential life leadership positions, and so on. I advocate for players, when appropriate.

The faculty fellow program allows classroom and coaching faculty to share their expertise, with one another and with the students. In the process, students learn how to build strong bridges between their athletics and academics. The men's ice hockey team sees the positive outcomes in student after student, season after season. — *Catherine M. Stock and James Ward*

Catherine M. Stock is the Barbara Zaccheo Kohn '72 Professor of History and the Director of American Studies. Her research interests are focused on the American West of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. A recipient of the John S. King Memorial Award for Excellence in Teaching, her classes include "Introduction to American Studies," "The American West," "Globalization and American Culture Since 1945."

James Ward is an adjunct associate professor of physical education. He has coached at the Division I and Division III levels, and taught a range of classroom-centered courses. Coach Ward has taken the College men's ice hockey team to the NESCAC championships three times, and has also fostered partnerships between the varsity team and community organizations, including the Green Dot violence prevention program.

Engaging the Data

Continued from page 15

grades simply reflects the increasingly better work being done by students over time. Others imply that higher grades are the less-reassuring result of institutional policies and instructors' practices without actual improvements in the quality of student work.

Which explanation(s) do you find persuasive? Is this trend a matter for action by individual faculty members, departments, and/or the College? Recent reports in higher education publications have drawn attention to long-term efforts at Wellesley and Princeton, which would limit the number of A's. Should Connecticut College institute its own reforms? — *John Nugent*

The Center for Teaching & Learning has a variety of resources about trends in grading. Some of the ones that directly address the trend in increasing grades include:

Shouping Hu's *Beyond Grade Inflation: Grading Problems in Higher Education*. ASHE Higher Education Report 30.6 (2005).

Lester H. Hunt, ed. *Grade Inflation: Academic Standards in Higher Education*. Albany, NY: SUNY P, 2008.

Valen E. Johnson's *Grade Inflation: A Crisis in Higher Education*. New York: Springer-Verlag, 2003.

Visit the CTL website for a bibliography of materials related to grading

John Nugent is the Director of Institutional Research and has contributed extensively to College self-studies and analyses. His disciplinary expertise in political science focuses on questions of public policy at the intersection of state and national politics; he is the author of Safeguarding Federalism: How States Protect Their Interests in National Policymaking (University of Oklahoma Press, 2009).

Content Notes & Trauma in the Classroom

Across the United States, there is increasing discussion of course content, student survivors of sexual assault, and trigger warnings. Title IX's expansive coverage of students' access to higher education is becoming more recognized and enforced, as evidenced by the large number of Title IX complaints filed against schools failing to address sexual violence.

"Trigger warnings" are central to current discussions as they are a common internet-based method of *warning* audiences about content prior to their exposure to material that may be *triggering* (e.g. depictions of sexual violence flagged for sexual assault survivors). As *Washington Post* blogger Alyssa Rosenberg observed after the Santa Barbara shooting rampage, "Calls for trigger warnings may be less a sign that political correctness has taken over the academy than a sign that colleges and universities are failing to live up to their basic obligations to keep their students safe." This is the core of Title IX – problems on our campuses and in the world more broadly cannot be disentangled from course content or challenges to our students' abilities to learn.

While critics attribute calls for trigger warnings to feminists, millennial over-sensitivity, and/or knee-jerk political correctness, students and faculty are articulating serious concerns about education and trauma. Professor Angela Shaw-Thornburg (South Carolina State University) concludes that "to tell your students that these words and images are worthy of thought and study, and then to deny that such stuff might at least bruise those students is the worst kind of hypocrisy for those whose stock in trade is the word. Our students deserve better." Moreover, as my summer research assistants noted, power dynamics impede students' abilities to address their concerns with faculty. As the debate continues, it is imperative that faculty take responsibility for course content that may negatively impact students.

Institutions such as Oberlin College have responded with draft guidelines asking faculty to "flag anything that might 'disrupt a student's learning' and 'cause trauma'" (Medina 2014). This language assumes that impacts are predictable and that content is actively injurious. But it is impossible to fully know students' experiences or their potential triggers (Freeman et al 2014). In light of the debate over trigger warnings, it is incumbent upon us to ask: What are the possibilities for facilitating learning that challenges our students and engages our painful realities? How can we do such work without our students shutting down or feeling isolated?

One possibility is the use of *content notes* that provide, in advance, basic, preferably, intersectional information about course materials. Content notes can be coupled with information regarding campus services (as suggested by Freeman et al) or better yet, collaborations in courses with service providers. Thus, faculty can acknowledge potential challenges while supporting students' ability to anticipate their own needs and/or access services.

This approach underscores the import of content for students, particularly

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Ariella Rotramel is a visiting assistant professor in the Gender and Women's Studies Department. Her courses include Introduction to Queer Studies, Feminist Approaches to Disability Studies, Transnational Women's Movements, and Public Policy and Social Ethics. Her research includes women's leadership in transnational communities of color, anti-LGBT hate crimes, and gendered labor forms.

What is Title IX?

Part of the Education Amendments of 1972, Title IX is an unqualified assertion of equality. It states:

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Title IX has long been associated with athletics, where it requires the effective accommodation of students' interests and abilities, and equality in the benefits, opportunities and treatment of student-athletes. The desired standard is achieved when men's and women's sports programs are each willing to accept the other's participation, opportunities, and resources as their own.

Increasingly, Title IX has been the basis for requiring institutions to address issues related to sexual harassment, sexual violence, and most recently, discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, and non-binary expressions of gender. The Title IX Team will be offering workshops to inform all members of the campus community about Title IX regulations, particularly its protections and mandatory reporting requirements, and its role in eradicating gender-based violence on campus. — *Eva Kovach*

Eva Kovach is an adjunct associate professor of physical education, senior woman administrator, and associate director of athletics. Her teaching focuses on leadership and sport; she has coached the women's varsity crew to two New England Varsity Four Championships, in addition to medalling at numerous New England Championship and ECAC events. Professor Kovach has held leadership positions at the FISA World Cup Regattas and the 2004 and 2012 Olympic Games, and is the U.S. Liaison to the Henley Women's Regatta.

Peers, Academic Performance & Persistence Beyond the First Year

From 2005 to 2009, 91% of incoming first-year students persisted into their sophomore year at Connecticut College while 9% transferred or withdrew. I was interested in investigating the factors that affected this outcome, because I knew that students' decisions to persist were complicated and could be related to academic, social, and other factors.

Although it is impossible to fully explain student decisions, it is possible to find factors that may influence a student's decision or may otherwise be predictive of a student not persisting. I learned that strikingly different factors affect the persistence of females and males; among the most important contrasts are the effects that a student's peers have on the likelihood of his or her persistence.

For females, financial aid has a positive effect on the likelihood of persistence and the distance that Connecticut College is from a student's home has a negative effect. A composite of high school academic performance (such as high school GPA and SAT scores) does not have a significant effect on a female's likelihood of persistence. The first-year fall GPA had a quadratic effect on the likelihood of persistence of females: females who had very high or very low GPA's their first semester were less likely to persist.

The greater the differences in academic preparation among female roommates, the less likely they are to persist. So, a female who is housed with a student who had a similar high school GPA and similar SAT scores is more likely to persist than one who is housed with someone with a different background. If a female has substantially different high school academic preparation from her roommate, both she and her roommate are less likely to persist. While females with roommates with different academic backgrounds can and frequently do succeed, large differences can still be an important factor in the decision to persist.

I found that neither the financial aid a male receives nor the distance that a male lives from Connecticut College has a significant impact on the likelihood of his persistence. Similar to females, a male's high school performance does not significantly affect his likelihood of persistence. While first-year fall GPA does not have a significant effect on persistence, a male's classroom performance relative to his peers does have a quadratic effect on his likelihood of persistence: a male who performs greatly above or greatly below the median in each of his classes is less likely to persist. So, a male who earns a 3.8 would be less likely to persist if the median grades in his classes were 3.2's than if they were 3.6's. Likewise, a male who receives low grades in classes would be less likely to persist if his classmates received high grades than if they received low grades. While I can only speculate on the reasons for this effect, it is possible that males who perform much differently than their classmates feel out of place, which could lead to a decreased likelihood of persistence.

In contrast to females, the greater the difference in academic preparation among male roommates the more likely they are to persist. Unlike females, males seem to "like" being housed with someone with a different academic background. Survey research or other qualitative studies may be able to shed more light onto this finding.

This study suggests that males and females may have different motivations for withdrawing from Connecticut College. This should be considered in any further research on persistence or even in studies about student perceptions on campus. Faculty teaching first-year students should keep tabs on females who are performing substantially different than their roommates. (First-year seminar professors, for example, may have roommates in their class.) Faculty should also keep tabs on both first-year males who perform substantially better or substantially worse than others in their classes; males who perform substantially worse than the others in his classes may require more assistance and attention while males who perform substantially better may benefit from mentoring or being more academically challenged. While the decision to persist at or to leave Connecticut College is complex, keeping these factors in mind when providing support to students may help prevent some students from transferring. — *Patrick Russo '14*

PATRICK RUSSO '14 AND TERRY-ANN CRAIGIE, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS.

A double major in Economics and Mathematics, Patrick Russo '14 received the Chair's Prize in Economics and the Walter F. Brady, Jr. Prize in Mathematics; and graduated cum laude with Honors and Distinction in Economics. He is a research analyst in the Research and Statistics Group at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. His thesis, Determinants of Undergraduate GPA and Persistence at Connecticut College, was advised by Terry-Ann Craigie, assistant professor of economics, and John D. Nugent, director of institutional research.

ReVision: Piloting Change

Throughout the 2014-2015 academic year, faculty have led and contributed to four pilot projects, each designed to fine-tune proposed curricular innovations. Carefully coordinated, the pilots are part of continuing College-wide effort to strengthen teaching and learning in the liberal arts. Early responses from faculty and staff, student leaders and participants have been positive; assessment and development are continuing throughout the spring and the summer.

First-Year Seminars (FYS)

The first-year seminar pilot sought to meaningfully connect students to the mission and core values of the College, while placing the liberal arts in a larger context. In order to give students more opportunities to engage with the subject matter of their seminars and to build community, faculty supplemented classroom studies with meetings during fall orientation, and connections with other courses and co-curriculars. Writing, always stressed in the FYS program, is now joined with oral proficiency and library research skills. Faculty members are identified as mentors supporting student-driven learning, encouraging students to take ownership of their educations.

Residential Clusters

Several residence halls are hosting multiple first-year seminars, with the intent of connecting classes and residences so that students can more readily create their own learning communities. Because students live together, it is easier to share learning, to arrange meetings with student advisors (who might or might not live in the same residence hall), and to accomplish group assignments. In addition to the intellectual rewards, students see one another heading out the door, remind one another to bring the readings, and walk to class together. This pilot was designed to foster students' engagement in the College communities, giving them a richer sense of place.

Team Advising

This pilot worked to increase the intentionality of the advising provided to each student, bringing together the faculty advisor (the leader of the student's first-year seminar), a staff advisor (perhaps from CELS), and two student advisors (recruited, educated, and paid through the Academic Resource Center). The team can also be expanded for a student, depending upon their curricular and co-curricular commitments. Though the individual teams have taken different approaches, every one has a common advising syllabus and at least one team event in every semester, not including pre-registration. This pilot is dedicated to enhancing outreach and responsiveness to the students, by strengthening coordination and collaboration among advisors.

Conn Courses

Conn Courses, now in planning, will be integrative courses that help students make connections among their classes, the different disciplines, and the world. These courses are intended to build on the FYS program and its goals, bridging students to their upper level and major courses. Pilot participants are now developing a rubric to share with the faculty, to suggest how new courses can be developed or existing courses can be revised for this pilot. — *Ginny Anderson, Anne Bernhard, and Suzuko Knott*

Suzuko Knott is an assistant professor of German whose research interests include contemporary German language and literature, film and media studies, and gender and women's studies; her most recent publication discusses Japanese-born German-language writer Yoko Tawada, and she hosted the writer on campus in March 2015. She has received grants from the German-American Fulbright Commission. Her courses include Beginning German, Imagining Amerika, Sexology and Sex Activism in the Weimar Republic and Stories from the Road.

For biographies of Ginny Anderson and Anne Bernhard, see pages 20 and 26.

Universal Design for Instruction

Universal Design for Instruction (UDI) is a proactive approach for achieving full participation. Recognizing that students bring differing abilities, experiences, and knowledge into the classroom — and that students learn in different ways and at different paces — UDI is a framework for creating a teaching and learning environment that is both interactive and welcoming. Further information about UDI is available from Noel Garrett, Dean of Academic Resources, and Barb McLlarky, Director of Student Accessibility Services. Helpful online resources are also posted by the University of Connecticut (at http://udi.uconn.edu/index.php?q=print/12) and the Center for Applied Special Technology (at http://www.cast.org/udl/).

Sharing Our Best Assignments

A New CTL Initiative

This past spring, the CTL began a new initiative, "Featured Assignments." The CTL Advisory Board evaluated 11 assignments, submitted in response to an "all faculty" email invitation, based on a series of criteria. These included assessments of the assignment's originality; the degree to which it made course material relevant to students' lives, encouraged creativity and critical thinking; and the extent to which it encouraged students to apply knowledge and relate to real-world experiences.

The selection process was tough, but two assignments really stood out and were selected as the Featured Assignments, with a third assignment recognized as Notable, and a fourth and fifth awarded Honorable Mention.

The full description of the assignments and the instructor's reflections are posted at the CTL website.

FEATURED ASSIGNMENT: Core Values

Suzuko Knott, FYS 143B: Stories from the Road: Transformation and Discovery

Students read the College's Mission and Core Values Statement, discuss the document, and prepare a brief (25 sentences or so) follow-up journal entry. Throughout, students are asked to reflect critically on their own values and expectations, the standards and priorities of the College, and the relationship between the two. The writing assignment, which is posted on Moodle, asks each student to advocate for the addition of one core value to the Mission statement, explaining its positive effect to the Board of Trustees. Suzuko says the assignment is a great way to introduce students to the campus culture, their new community, and the process of shared governance.

The Advisory Board members thought the assignment was powerful, getting students to think critically about their education and providing a nice connection to the curricular revision. One advisory board member said they thought the assignment should be required in *all* FYS courses!

FEATURED ASSIGNMENT: Campus Tour

Tek-wah King, CHI201: Intensive Intermediate Chinese

Tek's campus tour is a capstone assignment that requires students to design their own campus tour in Chinese; they then take Tek, who poses as Chinese-speaking visitor, on the tour. One of the goals of the course is to help students develop better interpersonal communicative skills. Tek says that no matter how much the student has rehearsed, there is an element of spontaneity to each tour that requires students to have meaningful interactive conversations as new situations arise.

The CTL Advisory Board members really liked the creative elements of the assignment, the application of skills to a real-world scenario, and how the assignment shifted the responsibility for learning to the student.

NOTABLE ASSIGNMENT: Peer Review

Jeff Cole, ANTIES 450: Cultivating Change

In Jeff's class, small groups of students work on a research project on local farmers and provide peer-reviews on the drafts of a final report that each group submits. Jeff's goal for the peer review is to give students experience crafting constructive assessment of one another's work and using peer feedback to improve their own work.

Although many of us use peer review in our courses, Jeff's careful structuring and execution of the process were commendable. The assignment is also highly transferable to other courses. The Advisory Board was particularly impressed by the thoughtful feedback from the students in the reviews.

HONORABLE MENTION: Comparison of Established & Alternative Treatments

Ruth Grahn, PSY/BIO 322: Psychopharmacology

In this assignment, students must evaluate alternative treatments for a mental illness of their own choosing. The assignment includes in-class discussions, during which students receive feedback about their topic, and a final paper.

Ruth's assignment was notable for several elements, including the carefully constructed grading rubric that simply and clearly identifies the major criteria and expectations of the final paper. Ruth also clearly articulates the learning goals, which include improved critical thinking and information literacy. The Advisory Board also valued the choice that students are given in selecting their topic.

HONORABLE MENTION: Architectural Commentaries & Criticism

Emily Morash, AHI 279: Contemporary Architecture

This assignment is a series of writing assignments spread throughout the semester in which students critique and comment on contemporary architecture. In some of the assignments, students are assigned a structure to critique (e.g. the addition to New London Hall), and in others, students must choose.

The assignment is a great example of carefully scaffolding writing in class, in order to build students' skills and engagement with the material. The first four assignments help students develop specific skills, such as tone and depth of content, all within a limited word count to simulate the constraints of real news stories. These earlier assignments then serve as the models for the final essay. The Advisory Board also thought Emily's assignment was highly transferable to other courses. — *Anne Bernhard*

Anne Bernhard is an associate professor of biology and the CTL faculty fellow. Her research focuses on estuaries and salt marshes, and is funded by the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative.

Talking Teaching … what did we say?

Samples of Feedback from the 2013-2014 Talking Teaching Conversations

Approaches to Advising: Fostering Intentional & Integrative Learning

Advising is an art — not a science — the boundaries between academic / non-academic need to be blended.

I'm thinking more concretely about how to connect CELS to my first-year seminar and how to begin using the CELS portfolio in my advising.

The inclusiveness of the conversation was most helpful. Ideas were shared in a respectful environment. Appreciated the openness to CELS by faculty. Very helpful, hearing the faculty perspective.

Most helpful … Introducing people from different areas with the same goal.

Creating Connected Courses: How Linking Courses Can Facilitate Integrated & Intentional Learning

Most helpful … the conversation about connections between academics & athletics.

We need to talk about advising ideas — how to give faculty access to what other faculty are teaching so intersections can be found.

Great ideas about connecting, women, athletics, & academics. Need a catalogue of topics.

Critical Thinking in the Liberal Arts

This reminded me that there are multiple ways to "see" the world.

This was a good opportunity to really think about "thinking" by myself.

Most helpful … All the critical thinking about critical thinking! how is critical thinking different from just thinking? what is the connection of creativity & critical thinking?

Most interesting … considering how "critical thinking" functions in different disciplines, the range of things that "critical thinking" can mean.

For my teaching, encouraging students to define "critical thinking" for themselves — the why of what they're learning.

I'm thinking about the value of critical thinking and how to leverage it.

Curricular Models: Implications for Teaching & Learning

Most interesting … Discussion of Conn courses – love the idea of team-taught courses blending two disciplines that would fulfill "requirements" of breadth.

It's a challenge to determine how my department will be affected by this change. I would love to participate, but I'm not sure if resources will allow it.

I want to team teach more.

Do Grades Facilitate Learning? Managing the Competing Pedagogical Purposes of Grading

Most interesting … subjectivity of the "grading" process.

I'd love to see a campus-wide grading philosophy — something ultimately linked to Conn's reputation.

For my teaching, I will continue thinking critically about how I grade my students & alternative ways to evaluate. I would love to try teaching a non-graded course.

For my teaching … breaking down the domains of grading: objective, subjective, effort, outcome, etc.

The First Year: What Are We Doing In Our 100-Level Courses?

Most interesting … Creative ideas in possibly linking or cross-listing courses – making connections between courses.

Most helpful … Hearing different perspectives, learning about different objectives and constraints across departments.

First Year Seminars as a Cornerstone of General Education

Bringing a group of faculty together creates a faculty community which is very important. It makes faculty feel they are working together towards common goals.

For my teaching … Integrating work with ARC fully — like the pilot group did.

The Honor Code in the Classroom and Beyond

I was very interested in the amount of people who do not think the Honor Code works. I learned a great deal from other faculty members, who have had varied experiences.

Most interesting … the suggestion of a Green Dot for academics. Thinking about how to create student and faculty buy-in for the Honor Code.

Maybe vigilant reporting of even small infractions is the best approach to take.

For my teaching … at the start of each class, have a discussion about the meaning of our honor code.

Inclusive Excellence Across the Disciplines

Ideas for my teaching … To bring more of my personal story to the classroom. Do more to paint a picture of my discipline that is diverse, showing how it is inhabited by all kinds of people.

Ideas for my teaching … Ideas about how to present my own whiteness as a topic for class discussion, within the limits of discussion, not above or beyond the discourse of the field.

I like the idea of having an Inclusive Excellence representative in departments or in divisions who can

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The Friendship Model of Thesis Advising: Is It Replicable?

The 2014 Oakes and Louise Ames Prize for the most outstanding honors thesis went to Jyoti Arvey '14 of the Slavic Studies Department, for *Gender in the Everyday Life of the Russian Home*. Her thesis is an ethnographic exploration of what it means to be a woman "the Russian way," as revealed in the gendered daily practices of several families in Ufa, Russia. Having conducted four months of participatory observation and hours of interviews, Jyoti painted a vivid and nuanced picture of contemporary Russian life in the domestic sphere. As Jyoti's advisor, I provided guiding hypotheses while letting the voices of her informants surprise us. Among the recurring topics most relevant to the identity constructions of domesticity was *permanentnyi remont* (ongoing home remodeling), which became an epistemological key to the gender dynamics of the Russian home.

Specifics of the topic aside, advising Jyoti in her thesis work was in and of itself a process worthy of reflection. Whatever else it is, "thesising," a verb Sybil Bullock '14 coined, is always collaborative. It involves so many parties that it is difficult to pay homage to all of them. An honors thesis is not accomplished in a year – it takes much longer and, in my experience, the crucial factor is building a network for mutual learning and support across students and faculty, in which advising is not a hierarchical practice but part of developing an intellectual partnership and, eventually, friendship.

In my case, it all started with Hegel. Some 2 ½ years ago, I read Hegel's *Philosophy of History* with a group of highly motivated students, as part of their self-designed course on philosophies of modernity (other faculty members taught in the seminar as well). Some members of this group later resided in

THE EARTHLINGS, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, SYBIL BULLOCK, TARA LAW, DAGNA BILSKI, DHRUV SAHI, GABBY WANG, KAYLA COGLE, PETKO IVANOV, JUAN PABLO PACHECO, JYOTI ARVEY

or frequented Earth House, which provided an emotional and intellectual atmosphere supportive for thesis projects; I was the primary advisor of two and a reader for a third. In many respects, the "earthlings" became a family and were regarded as such by its members – both faculty and students.

Arguably, the success of these students (their names were all over the Awards Ceremony list) was the result of circumstances deliberately nurtured by students and faculty alike. "Thesising" included topically relevant art-projects like Juanpa's (Juan Pablo Pacheco '14) short-film making and screening (in Film Studies), or Jyoti's multimedia installation (in the Art Department). We learned that thesis writing is not only about the product (i.e., the thesis itself), but also about the process in which the writers acquire intellectual tools that they can continue using long after the writing itself is finished, hopefully throughout their careers.

Advising, of course, has its "technical" challenges: narrowing down the thesis topic (students usually start with mega-ideas); adopting a theoretical framework and the readings that go with it; learning to do the writing in small, manageable steps while bearing in mind the overall composition of the thesis; and setting weekly priorities and small-portion deadlines. Last but not least, there is a lot to be said about cooperating with faculty readers (Andrea Lanoux of Slavic Studies and Eileen Kane of the History Department in Jyoti's case) whose fresh critical lenses de-familiarize the project and help to negotiate its completion. It takes a department (or two) to produce a successful honors thesis.

All of this said, the question remains whether "the friendship model" of thesis advising as described above is replicable, including for me. As Juanpa put it, "So what are you going to do now – replace us with another group of students?" While replacing this particular circle of friends is impossible, the model of close intellectual relationship with and among thesis-writers could be sustained if students are more integrated cross-generationally (with "younger" students gravitating around the seniors) and residentially (around housing that cultivates "thesis writing spirit"). — *Petko Ivanov*

Petko Ivanov is a lecturer in Slavic Studies; his research investigates the construction of identity among Slavic peoples. His courses include the introduction to Slavic studies, linguistic anthropology, and Russian culture (a senior seminar), as well as Russian language courses. Klassnaya Gazeta, a newspaper written entirely in Russian by his students, is available at the Connecticut College Digital Commons.

The Residential Education Fellows (REF) Program

The Residential Education Fellows (REF) program encourages the seamlessness of a living-learning environment, extending learning beyond the classroom. Since 2009, eleven professors each year, in partnership with the staff of the Residential Education and Living (REAL) office, have provided more than 325 opportunities to students and the Connecticut College community. These events range from the traditionally academic to the more informal. The students appreciate a setting to engage with their professors outside of their classrooms, and use the REF program as a way to make connections between what is happening inside and outside of the classroom. Some of the most popular programs have been topically relevant to the here and now of our campus.

If you are a post-tenure faculty member interested in the REF Program, please contact Professor Catherine Stock (History and American Studies). There are also opportunities for pre-tenure faculty to participate informally. — *Sara Rothenberger, Director of Residential Education and Living*

Teaching & Learning REF Events

Here are notes from two conversations that focused on teaching & learning.

ATHLETICS AND ACADEMICS

Panelists, Blake Reilly '14, Theresa Ammirati, Ron Flores, Kristin Steele, and Marc Zimmer.

Almost 50 students, including many coaches and athletes, met to discuss the interplay between athletics and academics at Connecticut College. Each panelist spoke for five minutes before the discussion was opened to the floor. Focusing on the positive and negative contributions of athletes in the classroom and the College community, panelists considered whether athletics enhances students' critical thinking abilities and health; impacts the scheduling of classes and academic events; reinforces student leadership skills; builds a strong campus and alumni community; and contributes to the College's reputation. Also advanced were recommendations to integrate academics, athletics, and co-curriculars through the ReVision initiatives. — *Marc Zimmer, Jean C. Tempel '65 Professor of Chemistry and interim Dean of the College*

SEXISM IN THE CLASSROOM

Facilitators, Olivia Dufour '16 and Joseph Mercado '16, with Ron Flores, Darcy Folsom, Judy Kirmmse, and Ari Rotramel.

Almost forty students met to discuss and raise awareness about the pervasiveness of sexist ideologies and language in Connecticut College classrooms. Working against the reinforcing power of silence, students and faculty provided opportunities for participants to voice their concerns and recommendations through a series of small group and group-wide discussions. The dialogue was intentional and cross-disciplinary, incorporating the experiences of students from all classes and with diverse identities. Participants advocated for critical thinking and responsible pedagogy, greater attentiveness to the workings of male privilege, and a campus-wide commitment to understanding the intersectionality of sex, race, and gender. — *Olivia Dufour '16*

Some Teaching & Learning REF Events

CAN WE BE A GREEN DOT??
The Office of Civil Rights has asked that sexual assault be eliminated on campuses nationwide, is that possible? More, can that be done here?

LET'S TALK IT OUT
A discussion of Beverly Tatum's book, *Why Are All the Black Kids Seating Together in the Cafeteria?* We will use themes from her book to discuss similar topics regarding Conn's Dining Halls.

EMMA WATSON AND THE CULT OF CELEBRITY DIPLOMACY
Emma Watson's recent speech to the United Nations on gender equality has received much praise. She joins a long list of "celebrity diplomats," who can easily gain access to world leaders and forums. What are the benefits and drawbacks of celebrity diplomacy? Are their messages effective? Come talk about the politicization of the "cult of celebrity," in general and issues surrounding the intersection of feminism, privilege and celebrity-hood this particular event has raised.

DE-STRESS FEST
Midterms are over! Now it's time to de-stress and decompress from your terribly busy academic schedule. Come to the De-stress Fest and learn about managing your stress while having some good old fashioned fun!

Mentoring Writing: Peer Mentors at the Writing Center

Peer mentors at the Writing Center are nominated by faculty members and interviewed by me. Those who are accepted and interested in tutoring then enroll for the fall semester in English 300, a course that helps them develop as writers by learning new writing skills and thinking about the larger patterns in their thinking and writing. The course also equips them with a solid repertoire of good tutoring strategies. Each year, approximately twenty-four students work at the Writing Center as peer mentors, conducting almost 1,000 consultations. The students who contributed to this interview-article exemplify our peer mentors' dedication to teaching & learning. — Steve Shoemaker, Director, The Roth Writing Center

Why Students Come to the Writing Center

It is important to know that all kinds of students come to the Writing Center – tutors help with lab reports, papers, theses, everything. And not all the writing tutors are English majors. Of the three peer mentors contributing to this article, one is an English major, another is majoring in Biochemistry, Cellular & Molecular Biology and minoring in Math, and the third is a Human Development major and Psych minor.

Most often, students come in because they are having a difficult time starting the assignment or because they find the assignment itself convoluted – they need help interpreting it and finding a path to completing it. When students come in with a draft of their paper, they want another pair of eyes to look at it, to see if it is cohesive and makes sense. You can't see everything on your own and it's also reassuring to have positive feedback.

In the fall, there are lots of first-year students, especially since a major goal of the first-year seminars is to introduce students to college-level writing. In the spring, upperclass students have theses and seminar papers; they will sometimes have weekly appointments for their big assignments. Students who are doing well and feeling confident about their writing come to the Writing Center, as well as those who are concerned or having difficulties.

A PEER MENTORING SESSION AT THE WRITING CENTER.

People come in at all stages and we structure our tutoring around where they are in the writing process, what they want to get done, what blocks or difficulties they want to overcome. Sometimes, students will come back because they have similar problems with multiple papers. Or they will bring the same paper several times, especially if they have partial drafts. Rewrites can be especially difficult – a student may think the paper is finished and then discover that there is more work to be done.

The Goals of Peer Mentoring

Writing tutors support a student's writing process. We don't give answers and we don't tell students what to write. We don't edit, we don't judge what is right or what is wrong. Even when students want to work on their grammar, when there is a right and a wrong, we want to help them learn to edit for themselves. So, we try to look for patterns of error and to provide more general rules, so that a student can apply these rules to many sentences and in many different situations. Our goal is to give students confidence in their abilities, so they have a sense of agency around their writing.

I only pick up a pen when I want to write down something a student has said — sometimes it is easier for a student to talk through their ideas than to get those ideas down on paper. I give the student what I have recorded and encourage her or him to incorporate what she or he has said in the session into the essay itself, and to develop those ideas further. That way, the student has something solid to turn to when she or he is feeling "blocked."

We're successful when we help students come to their own conclusions, when students leave the Writing Center with good questions and solid goals, which they have arrived at themselves. Our contribution is to ask guiding questions and to allow long pauses, even if that feels awkward at first, so that students have a chance to think.

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Jack Hile '14 graduated with a major in English; he is currently working in U.S. marketing at Reebok International. Susan Jacob '16 is majoring in Biochemistry, Cellular and Molecular Biology, and minoring in Mathematics; she is looking forward to a career in medicine. Jessica Karpinski '15 will graduate with honors is Human Development and a minor in Psychology; she is starting the job hunt, planning to build a career in the New England region.

Teaching & Learning in Genetics: Peer Mentors In & Out of Class

The Connecticut College peer mentor program in the biological sciences began in 2005, as a response to the differences in preparation among students in our large introductory classes. With support and encouragement from the new Academic Resource Center and its director, Noel Garrett, the program has been revived. Peer mentors may attend every class and work together with faculty and students in active learning exercises during class-time or they may offer evening sessions where they work with students to solve problems, answer questions and clarify confusing concepts. In some courses they do both. As peer mentor Natasha Zeid '14 remarked, "By the end of the semester, we knew people, so it was like tutoring friends. And some of the people, we had tutored in the past or had been on an athletic team with or in the dorm with, so we knew we could help." The program promotes a culture in which asking for help is a mark of friendship rather than cause for stigmatizing.

In the Spring 2014 semester Kris Hardeman, Lecturer in Biology and Botany, and I worked together with Noel Garret to implement the peer mentors into our Genetics course. As a mid-level, core course for several majors, with approximately 70 students, Genetics is a particularly appropriate course for in-class peer mentoring. Substantively intricate, genetics requires students to learn facts, integrate abstract concepts, and think critically — often simultaneously. From my perspective as the professor, incorporating active learning has profoundly changed the course. I divided each 50-minute class into 15-minute blocks, mixing lecture and active learning. However, it was difficult to implement the active learning component in each class meeting while addressing the content needs for the course. The in-class peer mentor program helped to counteract the pressure to prioritize content — it made conversation, collaboration, and active learning are constants. Blake Reilly '14 was a housefellow and had previously served as a tutor for two other biology courses. Natasha Zeid '14 loved genetics and was enthusiastic about sharing her passion, but she knew some found the material frustrating. During each active learning exercise, Blake, Natasha, Kris and I circulated throughout the classroom. We talked with students, offered encouragement and inspiration, and pushed for them to think critically, apply, synthesize and create. These interactions set a high standard for the students, with the peer mentors serving as role models.

An important factor for the success of the program is faculty-peer mentor communication. This is an area that we all agreed needs to be improved for the next go-round. The mentors knew that they had to prove themselves — at the beginning of the semester, students would only ask Kris and me questions. Gradually, students began to flag the mentors down. As the mentors acknowledged, knowing the problems and active learning modules in advance allowed them to plan their classroom conversations and their tutoring sessions. As with team teaching, the faculty-peer mentor partnership requires a balance between structure and spontaneity, coverage and assimilation.

In-class peer mentoring has now caught on at Connecticut College. Last semester Martha Grossel had mentors in her 100-level Cells course and Anne Bernhard had mentors in her 200-level Ecology course. As part of Spring 2014 Camp Teach and Learn, Michele Schuster, Associate Professor of Biology at New Mexico State University, discussed peer mentoring as a successful pedagogical approach. At New Mexico State, in-class peer mentors are called BioCats and their program has proven to be very effective for enhancing student learning. Perhaps we'll call our mentors BioCamels? — *Deborah Eastman*

Deborah Eastman is an associate professor of biology. Her research uses molecular and genetic techniques to study how different cell types are determined during development. Her courses include Developmental Biology, Genetics, and Stem Cells and Cell Signaling.

Thanks are also extended to Blake Reilly '14 and Natasha Zeid '14 for their help in preparing this article.

References and Further Resources:

For additional information, see the scholarly writings of Michèle Shuster and Ralph W. Preszler in "Introductory Biology Course Reform: A Tale of Two Courses" (*International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning*, July 2014).

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ACTIVE LEARNING IN BIO 208 (GENETICS)

Faculty Teaching & Learning in the First Year

Through the Class of '57 Teaching Seminar, the Center for Teaching & Learning offers first-year faculty opportunities to learn about Conn's culture and to explore aspects of effective teaching and learning. Drawing on the scholarship of teaching, and the experiences of faculty organizers in their second and third year at the College, participants develop a peer network dedicated to supporting strong teaching and establishing a sense of community at the College.

WENDY MOY (MUSIC) AND GINNY ANDERSON (THEATER).

Assistant Professors Ginny Anderson (Theater) and **Wendy Moy** (Music) reflected on their first year at Conn and their experience with the Class of '57 Seminar:

Anderson: I think back to the beginning of last year, when the year before us was a blank slate. After four years of teaching at a public state university, I had certain expectations about what it would be like to teach at a small liberal arts college. I had gone to one myself as an undergraduate and I couldn't have been more excited, but there are things we certainly couldn't have prepared for: a culture that is entirely unique to Conn.

Moy: There were so many thoughts going through my mind: What will my students be like? Will the syllabus that I wrote fit the needs of my course? I, too, went to a small liberal arts college but I wasn't sure what to be prepared for after teaching at a R-1 university with classes that had hundreds of students.

Anderson: Being a student at a liberal arts college is one thing, teaching at one is an entirely different experience. That was one of the greatest things about the CTL. There was a sense of … *beginning* … not just the semester but our careers at Conn … and, most importantly, our friendships.

Moy: What I appreciated about the CTL seminar was the philosophy that excellence in teaching was a life-long process. At the same time, there were practices that could be easily implemented, which could improve the educational experience not only for the students but ourselves. I always left feeling inspired to try something new. Thinking back, what were your some of your favorite sessions this year?

What I appreciated … was the philosophy that excellence in teaching was a life-long process.

Anderson: It's funny — the specific theme or content of any particular meeting always took second place to just coming together and reflecting on all that was happening around us. The year moved so quickly and there was so much to learn, especially as we found ourselves in the midst of curricular ReVision. But I remember how helpful it was to exchange syllabi with one another, to develop mid-term course evaluations and techniques for creating challenging assignments. I think one of the most informative sessions was when we met with current students to hear about the most (and least) meaningful experiences they had shared with professors.

Moy: The most helpful session for me was the syllabi workshop. I learned so much from reading syllabi from the Biology and Economics departments. In addition, it was wonderful to not only receive feedback but to also share what I teach on a daily basis. It made me feel that I was not only a part of a department but part of the College.

Anderson: That is one of the true pleasures of teaching at a liberal arts college, isn't it? Learning about what colleagues are doing in other departments and finding those points of connection. The emphasis on pedagogy made the CTL a great common denominator — it provided a place for exploration and experimentation. — *Ginny Anderson and Wendy Moy*

Wendy Moy is Assistant Professor of Music at Connecticut College and Ginny Anderson is Assistant Professor of Theater. Their collaboration continued beyond the CTL in the spring of 2014 when Professor Moy served as vocal director for Professor Anderson's production of On the Town. They serve on the organizing committee for the Class of '57 Seminar for 2014-2015.

Heard Around the Campfire …

Samples of Feedback from the 2014 Camp Teach & Learn Workshops

Approaches to Interdisciplinary Concentrations

How can faculty, staff, and students identify a serious question? Then, how can we use different perspectives, through a breadth of classes with different ways of learning and thinking, to explore that question?

It was interesting to learn that faculty have already collaborated across disciplines to create theme-based "concentrations." Concentrations are a way of thinking about a common theme from different perspectives — different ways of thinking through a problem.

The discussion of how to balance an interdisciplinary theme & the needs for educational breadth was particularly helpful.

We need department support for development — we shouldn't just rely on existing faculty networks to help facilitate the collaboration.

The most compelling thing was the passion that people had to gear up the system. There were good ideas about co-teaching, curricular development, and integration.

Difficult Dialogues in the Classroom

Difficulties in dialoging arise from a variety of sources including … unanticipated student comments, the surprise factor; the desire to avoid uncomfortable issues associated with inequalities; student resistance to alternative views, especially when faculty are perceived as having a liberal bias; discussing difference generates anxiety, especially if a discussion leader feels unprepared for the conversation.

In considering how to respond to student comments that challenge the "safe space" of the classroom, remember that not all students feel equally safe. Think about how to navigate and manage this space. Think about whether "protect vs. engage" is a false dichotomy — and how to do both with skill. Because the classroom is about preparing students to make contributions to the world. To do this, faculty need to engage, not avoid.

Put the dialogues in the context of student norms, which include … increasing polarization of political views; faith is seen in opposition to reason, belief in opposition to science. Dialogue is a way to bridge these differences, to lessen the entrenchment.

To set the stage for difficult dialogues … manage your own perceptions and values; define what is difficult, address the polarization, and think about how to move toward one another without avoiding minority viewpoints; address the complexities without over-simplifying; and deal with difficult participants deliberately and slowly — reflection is important.

I have new ideas for ensuring that the classroom is a safe space, so that students have effective discussions — rather than attacking ideas or beliefs.

Remember: Affirmation is not the same as confirmation.

Think about the structure of the conversation. Refocus, from debate to dialogue. Frame the content of the conversation. Respond to misinformation.

Most compelling: Intentionality. Being explicit about what's good about the difficult dialogue, what's beneficial for all.

Doing the Math: Using Statistical Evidence as a Means to Counter Student Skepticism About Inequality

Jamming on info sources as a group was fun, funny, illuminating.

Most helpful … Conversation about alternative approaches to use/display data, including limits on how it can be used to support discussion. Data needs to be balanced, with alternative displays, and unpacked.

Most helpful … How to make students more involved.

Most compelling … Thinking about pedagogy & the use of statistical data in the humanities. What is "information"?

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About CELS — But Were Afraid to Ask

What was most helpful? I don't even know where to start! Probably walking through the CELS experience from the perspective of a student, first through senior years.

We need to keep these conversations going and know that students are the priority, so we should really work together and continue the communication.

STAN CHING (CHEMISTRY) AND RACHEL SPICER (BOTANY)

First-Year Seminars: Planning the Pilot(s)

Elements of the pilots will include … faculty will be advising students in the seminar; pilot seminars will be residentially connected, with shared events and thematic links; the seminars will meet in the same time slot, to facilitate connections.

To build community in the pilots … clusters will be created across campus; and there will be a deliberate effort to help students connect who they are inside and outside the classroom.

First-Year Seminars as a Cornerstone of Curricular ReVision

Among the new ideas … social mapping of the campus; and having students interview each other, to learn about one another.

First Year Seminars seem to be lacking a common or shared structure, which ultimately manifests in a lack of student seriousness. Collaboration and engagement can change that.

I learned that these seminars should not aim to teach one particular subject, but to teach ways of thinking/learning/communicating through any subject of the student's choice.

There is a compelling need to build community within & outside the seminars.

The Clusters can potentially transform "social space" into "intellectual space" — this could be crucial for retention. My best students that have applied to transfer this year both loved their Cluster, adored their professor, but yearned for a student culture that engaged with their classes, not just "Are you going out tonight?" and "Where?"

Flipping the Liberal Arts Classroom

Benefits of flipping include … saving class time for discussion and pushing students to higher order thinking; independent student review of materials "evens the playing field"; can provide cover for "snow days" and other unplanned absences; allows for greater

ASHLEY HANSON (LIBRARY) AND JULIE RIVKIN (ENGLISH)

variations in media for delivering information, for introducing new pedagogical methods with less worry — there is time for experimentation. At the same time, it is important to hold students accountable for the video content, either with in-class work or quizzes.

It was helpful and surprising to realize that I could start incorporating flipping very soon — and that it could solve many worries that I have.

This expanded my knowledge of Moodle and related programs. I feel that flipping will work in courses that I teach at all levels.

DANA WRIGHT (EDUCATION) AND CANDACE HOWES (ECONOMICS)

Liberal Arts "Conn" Courses

This conversation raised lots of important questions … How do liberal arts colleges fit into the curriculum? When do students take them?

How do these courses integrate with other components — the first-year seminars, concentrations, majors, etc. — in the student's education? Do we understand liberal arts courses as "just" General Education, or as courses in the majors as well?

Putting the Liberal Arts into Action

What should we do to prepare students to be effective learners outside the campus community? How are we going to do this? There are many great programs on campus that promote engagement and civic responsibility, with expertise and documentation, but we need to create structure and integration.

We need to clarify the experience of community and social justice and sustainability in the College — among students, faculty, and staff — locally and internationally – so that there is a critical perspective on intentional engagement.

There needs to be an institutional commitment to "pop the CC bubble."

Reading & Discussion Group: How College Works, by Daniel Chambliss & Christopher Takacs

Big picture conclusions from this book include … students are not focused on learning so much as they are on engagement; students don't know how college works when they come to college; whimsical and unplanned meetings can have a very positive effect; the friendliness of the faculty is very important; students just need a few people with whom to make a positive connection, but we are all losing the skills of connecting at the personal level.

BOB ASKINS (BIOLOGY) AND AHMAD ALACHKAR (ECONOMICS SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE)

Summing it up for CC … are we creating opportunities for students to connect? How do we build community? What do we do well with our first-year students? Which professors have a high impact and how do we magnify their contact with students?

Most compelling idea? Generally, students need to be "coached" in how to communicate better — as do faculty.

It's important to … connect classroom & out of classroom experiences; to engage the less engaged students; and to help over-committed students understand the trade-off.

We need to identify & pull students out, recognizing those who have trouble engaging. Little bits of encouragement help a lot.

We need to be more intentional about increasing interactions with students. There is a real importance in programs that connect students with college, outside the classroom.

Reading & Discussion Group: Teaching Naked, by José Antonio Bowen.

How do we prepare students for … assuming responsibility for their education (students tend to have a "consumerist" attitude), taking healthy risks (learning is often about the "uncomfortable stuff"), fostering collaboration (linking this to student self-reflection, as well).

Most helpful … The discussion/sharing of ways to engage students in more active learning & collaboration. Discussion, too, that failure can be OK (in the right context).

Most helpful … The exchange of ideas — using technology to increase interaction between student & student. I don't know enough about technology & how it can be used. I find myself not opposed to technology — I used to think that technology was de-humanizing. I can see now that it doesn't have to be.

New ideas … Letting students become more stakeholders in their learning – got me thinking about how I could make this part of my teaching.

Reading & Discussion Group: Engaging Race in Pedagogy

How do we foster productive conflict over race? We need to create a language that empowers students to talk about race, that provides them with a broader knowledge, and that sets the conversation in the liberal arts tradition of freedom, privilege, and citizenship. Campus as a "sanitized space" — is conflict minimized, limited to specific small areas/pockets? Do we need to help conflict "erupt"?

There seem to be two strands of work to be done: (1) faculty behavior in & out of the classroom; (2) addressing the course content & issues of race that come up in class. I think that we need to uncouple the discussions of these two so that we can be more specific/focused. I would also like to think more about these two stands in terms of how my discipline is responding to them.

The problem of "universals" — "human nature," etc. — is that these allow students to universalize their own experience rather than helping them to recognize their own located-ness, their specific identity markers. College is a place where networking happens, so it's important to help students develop a vocabulary around difficult issues — it can make a difference in students' abilities to "achieve the American Dream."

We can scaffold conversations about identity. For example, begin by studying / talking about cases somewhat distant from the contemporary culture that students are familiar with — a class in medieval literature, affirmative action in Brazil, etc. — as a preface to a contemporary conversation. But then students would also benefit from readings about contemporary concepts such as colorblind racism.

We need to use each other as resources to make sure our students aren't ignoring the opportunities that present themselves to get outside their comfort zone and talk about the issues.

Most helpful … The readings and hearing everyone's experiences about how to talk about race or how to interject material to put a context to what I am teaching that points at the racial gaze of a particular issue.

Most helpful … Consider the possibility of identifying interested parties with specialized knowledge that may be willing to meet with my class to explore the issues of race.

Most compelling … To have the courage to leave the prescribed topic and handle or call out something that comes up related to race.

Most compelling … Increasing considerate but clear conflict, using it to teach.

KATHRYN M. O'CONNOR (CC CHILDREN'S PROGRAM), SUE WARREN (BIOLOGY), AND SARDHA SURIYAPPERUMA (BIOLOGY AND BOTANY)

Rethinking Advising

Lessons learned … the educational process unfolds in a piecemeal process for students, and students need mentors, even more than advisors. Integrating learning is difficult.

Faculty need to give even more thought to … the diversity of student backgrounds; to the reality that we are encountering students — even students new to the College — late in the students' educational careers; to assessing advising, in order to foster faculty accountability.

Rethinking Larger Introductory Courses: Strategies for Improving Student Learning & Success

Among the strategies for improving student success were … pre-course interventions (like a boot camp), supplemental instruction (like out-of-class study groups), peer instructors, active learning, parachute courses (if a student fails the first course, they can parachute down to a lower class), co-curricular support (e.g. living communities).

The way this workshop was structured, we had to think about how to re-think our course & this was good in forcing us to think about it now rather than putting it off for later.

I'm most excited about the possibility of embedding peer mentors in my large lecture course. At the same time, I'm most worried about the financial support for doing this.

I'm usually in traditional lecture mode — I need to be willing to slow down and go off schedule if necessary. But then, how do I plan for such a situation?

I'm going to work on making student preparation specific to each class. And then I'll have an in-class reinforcement of ideas with the peer mentors doing a teaching activity with the students.

I'm looking forward to implementing techniques that improve student participation in class. I'm mildly concerned about making these changes, but not too much. The workshop offered support for the ideas I want to implement & suggestions for efficient ways to accomplish the reforms.

MICHÈLE SHUSTER (WORKSHOP FACILITATOR, FROM NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY) MARTHA GROSSEL (BIOLOGY), ABIGAIL VAN SLYKE (DEAN OF THE FACULTY), AND ANNE BERNHARD (BIOLOGY)

It was helpful to think about ways to have student prepare better for class. For example, integrating the seating of peer mentors and lecturers in the class. And there was a compelling argument for adding more extensive class activities that require specific preparation. I really should use clickers to reinforce student prep.

This presentation was excellent. The message was that different techniques work in different circumstances, so you need to assess their impact. Not all "best practices" work in every situation.

Scaffolding & Sequencing to Get Better Papers

Scaffolding breaks writing into smaller pieces / stages, so that we teach students how to accomplish big complex tasks. Sequencing involves looking at the whole shape of the semester, looking at the overall trajectory of the course, and designing a meaningful sequence of three to four writing assignments. Both work to counteract last minute papers, by having projects unfold over time. Bot require being intentional about student skills and about content, so that we cultivate the habit of daily writing.

Most helpful … Feedback from peers, idea brainstorming for a particular assignment and for a particular course.

Most helpful … Scaffolding, giving lots of mini assignments beyond draft — revision — final. Instead, give "tiered" assignments that lead to the final product.

I feel that our students really struggle with what to do with their sources, so I liked the idea of exploring why we ask them to use sources.

Great advice on scaffolding critical reading as a stage in working toward writing. There were also ideas on how to dissect a text with students so they will know how to construct a response.

Senior Symposia: Who, What, Why, & When?

The goal is to infuse students with a sense of intellectual curiosity as they're looking at Conn. Floralia galvanizes students … why shouldn't something academically do so? If students know, from the time they are first-years, that they will have to present as seniors, it might change the whole four-year experience.

Questions for us to think about … What does or should a culminating experience be based on? For example, with 90% of students in CELS, should this be a practicum? Should we commit to something new or to coordinating existing "capstones"? When and how will we make it possible for students to present and to attend one another's presentations?

I now have a better understanding of capstone projects across campus – and how we are NOT aware of different programs. We need another session!

We regard to curricular ReVision … We need to think to about what extent we want to coordinate existing events vs. have this be an outgrowth/reflection on the whole four-year experience.

How do we get everyone to participate? Some students do multiple projects, but many don't do any.

Teaching & Reaching All Students in STEM Classes

Suggestions for frustrated faculty to assess whether their teaching is working … assess student understanding with clickers; encourage students to prepare for class, even forcing with quizzes; assess note-taking, as these skills are often qualified. Remember to set goals that are measureable, that allow for feedback, and that help students to evaluate their work. It's important that students do something so that they construct their own knowledge and then can apply their learning. Active learning.

Most helpful … reminders about simple things like think — pair — share, which I will use more intentionally now. Think, give a prompt to students; Pair, discuss with a neighbor; Share, with the class.

Most compelling … case studies — bringing in real world examples in a dynamic way.

New ideas … one-minute papers at the end of class to figure out what students are having challenges with.

Team Advising: Planning the Pilot

What would an advising team look like? It would include faculty, staff, student advisors, coaches, CELS … and would use e-portfolio, for example, to facilitate communication.

We all agree that advising needs Re-Invigoration, though some faculty are worried that this model is daunting or prohibitive.

Technology in the Liberal Arts Classroom

There are many ways to encourage student collaboration, including peer review through Forums and chat room exercises. We want to teach students to teach themselves, and we need to set aside time for reviewing ideas and performance.

We teach students to collaborate, but then we also need to teach them how to evaluate their collaborative relationships and processes.

Most helpful … brainstorming faculty-wide programs/collaborations to improve tech in the classroom; and sharing our approaches/failures/alternatives. The role of Tech Fellows — and the commitment to collective faculty needs & students.

Most helpful … the small group discussion about what is digital literacy.

New idea … to take an online course, to experience what our students experience in a new classroom/discipline.

Title IX: It's Not (Just) about Athletics Anymore

Most helpful … (1) Definition of the legal requirements; (2) Discussion of implementation, addressing Title IX, general faculty sensitivities and rules.

Most helpful … Re. being active, understanding my responsibilities to the students. Starting to talk about our roles as mandatory reporters.

Writing and Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is something that needs to be worked on and maintained, or it fades away, I think. Follow-up to this workshop would be great, in my view.

This was a great opportunity to learn from others, to hear their ideas about critical thinking and to have examples of assignments. There were lots of ides to jump-start assignments, from smaller practical nuggets to large ways to frame a whole course.

I valued the tangible ideas to create rich learning opportunities for students that are lacking intent or focus.

Thanks to all those who completed feedback forms and shared their workshop responses. Added thanks to those who contributed their notes from the discussions and presentations: Joe Alchermes, Geoffrey Atherton, Greg Bailey, John Bitters, Christine Chung, Maria Cruz-Saco, Luis Gonzalez, Heidi Henderson, Shaun Hove, Candace Howes, Suzuko Knott, Mónica López-Anuarbe, Peter Mitchell, Mike Monce, Emily Morash, Tobias Myers, Michelle Neely, Page Owen, Andrea Rossi-Reder, Mark Seto, and Sue Warren.

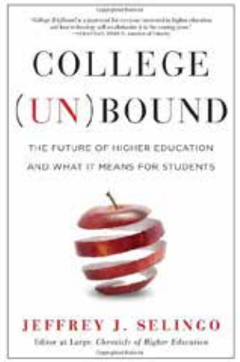
FACULTY DISCUSS REVISION INITIATIVES AT A CAMP TEACH & LEARN WORKING LUNCH.

from the CTL Bookshelves

College (Un)Bound, The Future of Higher Education and What It Means for Students

Jeffrey J. Selingo, New Harvest, 2013.

College (Un)Bound is an easy-to-read book that describes the challenges, changes, and opportunities currently



facing higher education. The book hits all the major topics, including college cost-benefit calculations, the student/institution match, entering vs. completing college, advising, technology and new pedagogies, and learned skills and competencies. There are lots of interesting case studies that describe students' college experience, and the work of innovators and entrepreneurs. The book is strictly focused on academics and not the broader co-curricular aspects of a college education.

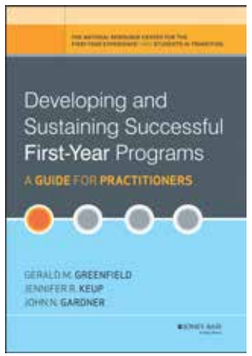
For someone at Connecticut College, the book offers insights into other types of institutions — large universities, community colleges, and lower ranked private institutions. It also provides food for thought on how we can do better for our students, though most of these ideas are already part of our CTL conversations. Indeed, this is especially relevant to our discussions of general education reform. Anyone following these discussions will readily recognize, among many others, the themes of personalized education, high impact practices, new teaching pedagogies and practices, and enhanced advising.

I recommend this book for its overview of the challenges facing higher education, especially as it relates to the proposed "higher education bubble". It is a good read even for those considering themselves well versed on this topic. Reading the book definitely encouraged me to examine my own efforts in teaching and student engagement, as well as our institutional practices at Connecticut College. — *Stanton Ching, Margaret W. Kelly Professor of Chemistry*

Developing and Sustaining Successful First Year Programs

Gerald M. Greenfield, Jennifer R. Keup, and John N. Gardner, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013.

This is a book about making first year experiences vibrant and meaningful for students and teachers alike, with the hope/expectation/proof that "… experiences in the first year often set the tone for students' entire undergraduate experience." (p.4) Each of the 12 chapters — which address topics such as pedagogy, orientation, advising, learning communities — gives some historical context, explains potential reforms, reviews academic research, sets out implementation strategies and assessment methods, and provides examples of practices from a variety of institutions. The authors acknowledge the need for resources to create change and address ways to garner support. Change, they stress, is only possible with commitment by various committee structures, by faculty, and by the resource managers at the institution. Change is hard.



I find my teaching consistently enlivened by CTL events that include discussions with other teachers about teaching. These discussions often spark new thinking about how to approach content and idea delivery in my classes. This book reinforces those conversations.

I was particularly interested in two chapters. In the first, Chapter 1, "High Impact Pedagogies," Greenfield, Keup, and Gardner provide lists of pedagogical approaches, gathered from extensive research, that support the promise of teaching methods to create a climate of learning that leads to cognitive and personal development. High impact pedagogies aim to deepen student engagement. Examples include using a variety of teaching methods, encouraging contact between students and faculty, and promoting active learning within and outside the classroom. High impact pedagogies aim to deepen student engagement.

I am often surprised when a seemingly simple teaching practice leads to a student having a more "meaningful" engagement with the course material. For me, "meaningful" often means "personal" … absorbing an idea, rolling it around inside the brain and body, and then being able to apply the idea to a greater outside world of other ideas. Connectivity, as opposed to holding the idea at arm's length and observing it with detachment. Sadly, it feels impossible to mandate, or even strongly suggest, any particular teaching practices campus-wide out of respect for faculty autonomy.

The second chapter that felt relevant for me was Chapter 5, "First Year Seminars," which lists four types of FYS structures: extended orientation, academic seminars, basic study skills and pre-professional/discipline linked seminars. I will be teaching a First Year Seminar in the fall. I taught one quite some years ago, loved the experience for many reasons, but have not had space in my teaching load to do so since. Of course, I wish for my class to be "meaningful" and for the teaching methods to create habits of thoughtfulness in scholarship and citizenship.

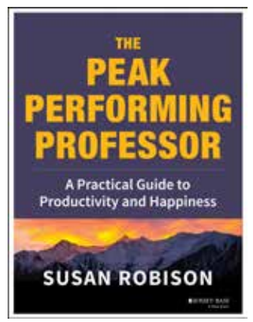
I appreciate our work at Connecticut College, trying to wrangle some commonality into our first-year seminar program. If we can create a consistency between seminars through ongoing conversation and the enlistment of interested faculty, our FYS's could serve as anchors for academic achievement in later years. A focus on commonality between seminars can ease the inclusion of goals like these four, in addition to individual course content. Students can have more comparable experiences. As faculty we can count on a specific set of skills (the contested word seems most appropriate) as we move into upper level courses.

Overall, this book seems most useful as proof that our efforts to strengthen academic rigor, especially in the first year seminars, will be worthwhile. — *Heidi Henderson, associate professor of dance*

The Peak Performing Professor: A Practical Guide to Productivity and Happiness

Susan Robison, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013.

In *The Peak Performing Professor,* Susan Robison stresses the importance of approaching a career in academia with purpose. It is, she stresses, an undertaking filled with meaning. In my own teaching, I value opportunities for students to explore, discover, and uncover new meaning — I don't see teaching and learning as merely conveying information or transmitting knowledge. Instead, it is, at its best, a search for truth. As a literature scholar, I study and teach the stories that reveal humans in their world, with all their complex relationships and interactions; and I have seen so many interpretations and so many truths in the language and the narratives of these stories. Robison extends this approach across all disciplines. She argues that teaching and research are both a search for understanding, and insists that each of us realize that we are generating a "body of work." To view one's career from this perspective is to leave behind the article-by-article (or book-by-book) publication struggle in favor of agency, creativity, and intentionality. It is profoundly self-assertive and self-empowering.



There are two principal limitations to *The Peak Performing Professor.* The first is the sheer size of the book, which has five units, 21 chapters, and seemingly innumerable exercises. The reminders are sometimes a bit childish — for example, think about how you are using time, so that you use it well. But then, sometimes the most basic assertions are helpful reminders, including Robson's Rule that with just one life to live, you had best make it a good one. The second, and stronger criticism, is the author's tendency to speak in absolutes and binaries, so that a reader either is or is not "peak performing." This is disheartening, even discouraging. Avoid this experience by looking at the table of contents, picking the unit or the chapter that speaks to you. And then sample the text and the reminders, try this or that exercise. Part 5 of the book, "PACE Your Roles and Responsibilities," is a sound and useful point of departure if you are seeking specific strategies and activities to apply in your courses and research right away. The exercises in this section address, in a step-by-step fashion, teaching strategies (effective course design, connecting courses to larger questions, designing content activities) and our role as scholars (thinking of 'body of work,' not publications, connecting one's writing to one's purpose and mission, writing drafts techniques).

This is a how-to book that helps a reader to connect the elements of their life, from academia to partnering to parenting. It repeatedly asks readers to think about their aspirations, in, with, and apart from academia. It encourages readers to think about their connections to and with other people. And that is its strength and its weakness: Weakness, because the complexity of human relationships cannot be captured in exercises and reminders; strength, because it focuses on our humanity, the heart of our work as teachers and scholars. — *Aida Heredia, associate professor of Hispanic studies*

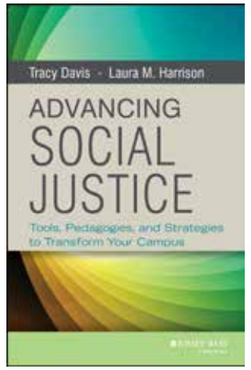
Advancing Social Justice: Tools, Pedagogies, and Strategies to Transform Your Campus

Tracy Davis and Laura M. Harrison, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013.

In eight very accessible chapters, Tracy Davis and Laura Harrison argue for a model of social justice "regime change" that colleges and universities could utilize to better address issues of power and privilege. The need for "change" is a compelling rationale for writing this social justice primer — a handbook for action, if you will — that faculty can reference as they grapple with the complexities of hierarchy, access, power and identity. "Primer" and "handbook" are not pejorative; I believe the authors see their book as a "toolkit" (their term) for "change." As we move deeper into revising general education, *Advancing Social Justice* might help us in the struggle with organizational practices that have historically blocked (re)invigorating social justice approaches.

I'll focus on two of the chapters that I found most interesting. In their first chapter, "Uncovering Epistemology," the authors present a clear, succinct description of positivism and how it works to limit our understanding of knowledge construction and its relationship to power. If you have ever, as I have, tried to explain the impact of positivism on class

formation in the United States, then you know how befuddling the idea is to undergraduates steeped in the ideology of individualism. Davis and Harrison argue that positivism separates "culture" and "power." Rather than a dialectic, a positivist argues that reality "is not a [social construct]; it simply is."



The implications are enormous. To illustrate, policy discussions that reject positivism would begin (our GE discussions might hopefully be a good example) by posing questions about institutional culture that recognize the pervasive influence class and hierarchy have played in the development of what some call the "culture" of Connecticut College. Citing Edward Said, Davis and Harrison note that the "failure to examine a phenomenon [say Connecticut College "culture"] in depth often leads to theorizing that reduces it in ways that diminish its complexity." Said described the outcome as "the universal eclipsing the local, creating a situation where what counts as *real* or *true* [my emphasis] is simply the point of view of those in power." As we discuss intended outcomes in revisioning general education, Davis and Harrison would want us to grapple with what we mean by "transformative" and "engaged learning." If we do not come to understand the structural implications of an *authentic* "social justice regime change," then Said's warnings about the outcome of unexamined assumptions will be a sad but fitting epitaph to ReVision.

As good as the text is, I found significant contradictions because the authors repeatedly did not follow their own recommendations. Too often, they gloss over complexity in favor of simplistic assumptions. My sense is that Davis and Harrison fear to tread too far into the murky waters of ideology. Case in point is the fourth chapter, "Critical Pedagogy: The Foundations of Social Justice Educational Practice." Readers can use many critical scholars cited in the text to critique the main argument of the book: that "social justice" is possible if faculty simply [my word] present data on injustice, make explicit positivist organizational structures, and expose hegemonic thinking wherever it might lurk in the academy. In other words, if social justice oriented faculty construct a pedagogy of counter-narratives that "disrupt the status quo" (their words) we can create a sustainable social justice agenda. Perhaps a good starting point, but without next steps, it's naïve.

I agree with Davis and Harrison that social justice loses its impact if it is reified, framed by slogans rather than honest meaning making. But I disagree most with their reluctance to *name* structural pathways to intended outcomes, to posit a *political* agenda larger than the Golden Rule. Their oft-repeated counter-narratives told in the form of anecdotes (the "left out of the story" stories) are supposedly anti-hegemonic, but to what end? Is there an end game here, or does their argument devolve into some sort of apolitical, mushy sentimentalism where all we need to do is hold hands, be happy and sing *Kumbaya*?

Davis and Harrison do not name systems of oppression and domination except to say that they exist. But unless we systematically articulate a language of critique that enhances our understanding of the *structural* roots of oppression, then we will forever spin on an axis of social reproduction rather than social justice. To think otherwise is naïve. — *Michael James, professor of education*

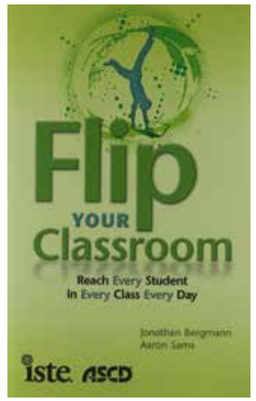
Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student, in Every Class, Every Day

Jonathan Bergman and Aaron Sams, International Society for Technology in Education, 2012.

This is a practical guide to the why, what, and how of "classroom flipping," an approach to course design that has students learn course content outside the classroom, so that class time can be spent on case studies, experiments and other projects. Ideally, flipping allows classroom time to be devoted to helping students develop a deep understanding of the course content, learning and practicing higher order thinking. In the "normal approach" to flipping, course content is delivered through videos that are either commercially available or are produced by the faculty member. Then, in the classroom, students work in unison to complete assigned activities. The faculty member continually assesses student learning through both formative and summative assessment.

Bergman and Sams, however, advocate the "flipped mastery classroom." Unlike the normal approach to flipping, the mastery classroom presents students — working individually or in groups — with a sequence of well-defined objectives. Students must master each objective in order to advance to the next. The faculty member monitors each student through formative and summative evaluations. When progress is not being made or is slow, the faculty member provides remediation, extra help in understanding the concepts. The flipped mastery classroom allows students to work at their own pace, but the faculty member and the student both know that each objective has been mastered.

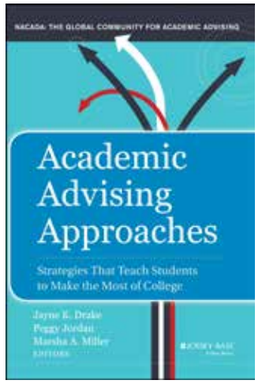
The authors present an impressive case for the mastery approach and provide a step-by-step guide for its implementation. I currently use the "normal approach" to flip two of my classes, including a large introductory class. My primary reason for flipping the large class, in particular, was to help less-prepared students catch up with well-prepared students before coming to class. Preliminary data indicate that students who have not taken AP biology in high school score better on exams using the flipped classroom than before the classroom was flipped. After reading *Flip Your Classroom,* I am now interested in experimenting with the mastery flipped classroom. The ability to progress at an individualized pace would be ideal for students who have different levels of preparation, but confront the same expectations for their classroom performance. — *Stephen Loomis, Jean C. Tempel '65 Professor of Biology*



Academic Advising Approaches. Strategies that Teach Students to Make the Most of College

Jayne K, Drake, Peggy Jordan, and Marsha A. Miller, ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013.

Every year, I officially advise approximately 40 to 50 majors and minors, and unofficially advise other dozen or so students who already have a faculty advisor but who also share a special rapport with me. I was especially interested in reviewing a segment of this book, as my advising experience is *ad hoc* only. My interest was also sparked by a Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) session I attended this May about CELS (Career Enhancing Life Skills) advising and how to better "team- advise" as an institution. My students always give CELS counselors rave reviews.



Reading Drake, Jordan and Miller's (2013) book cover-to-cover, I was mostly drawn to *Appreciative Advising* (Chapter 6), *Advising as Coaching* (Chapter 10), and *Socratic Advising* (Chapter 12). These topics were somewhat familiar to me but the chapters were also innovative, specific and structured. Appreciative Advising, for example, was "rooted in Appreciative Inquiry, an organizational change theory focused on the cooperative search for the positive in every living system and leveraging this positive energy to mobilize change." (Bloo, Hutson and He, pages 83-4). As a reader and an advisor, I valued the emphasis on mutuality and accountability, a process that occurs only after we build trust and support. The importance of non-verbal behavior, open-ended questions and welcoming gestures breaks down formal barriers and facilitates the one-on-one developmental process needed in relationship building.

Personally, I admire effective coaches and my students call me "Coach López" in class, so I am thrilled to witness the recognition and intersection of coaching and academic advising. The idea of emphasizing that my students and I have a common goal, and that we *both* must actively be part of the decision facilitation process (as opposed to the advisor passively prescribing the student what to do) is very appealing when we are problem solving together. But explicitly discussing strengths and weaknesses to lay out a successful goal-setting plan is a delicate task to accomplish, as it requires self-examination, reflection and critical thinking skills that some students may not have early in their college careers. The Socratic approach to advising can be helpful in these circumstances; it "involves a method of negative hypothesis elimination" that can help advisors and their students reach this reflective stage together to "become self-aware thinkers" and "more autonomous, independent and resilient." (Spence and Scobie, p. 198-9) Uncovering faulty thinking and embracing humility instead of egocentrism in order to reach an informed, honest decision is not always easy. It doesn't always yield perfect results, either, just like real life.

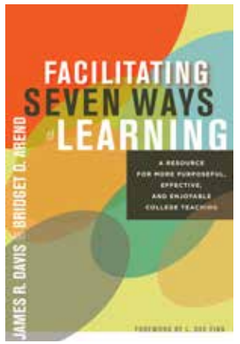
I particularly enjoyed reading the practical scenarios, which illustrated specific cases and deepened my knowledge of the stages of these three — appreciative, coaching, and Socratic — types of advising. Advising transcends writing letters of recommendation, signing forms and providing PIN numbers to complete major requirements and graduate on time. I hope that our College and departments provide additional supportive materials, such as this book, to young and seasoned faculty alike. We can always improve what we are doing, and learn and share effective advising techniques. — *Mónika López-Anuarbe, assistant professor of economics*

Facilitating Seven Ways of Learning, A Resource for More Purposeful, Effective, and Enjoyable College Teaching

James R. Davis and Bridget D. Arend, Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing, 2013.

Facilitating Seven Ways of Learning promotes the idea that "teaching succeeds when learning occurs" and offers strategies for instructors to bring about effective learning. The premise of the book is that teachers should consider desired learning outcomes for their course or course segment, and then choose the "way of learning" that fits with those outcomes. While offering some historic perspective, the book focuses on offering concrete ideas to facilitate each way of learning.

I read closely the section on "cultivating problem-solving and decision-making abilities." One of my primary goals in teaching chemistry is have students learn how to solve problems and analyze data, in class and in the laboratory. Though we practice problem solving during class, and students have opportunities to work more problems outside of class, I find it can be challenging to guide their learning of the process of problem solving. This book provides a clear look at teaching and learning to solve problems through the use of mental models, a fairly simple way to diagram a route from defining the problem (initial state) to solutions (goal state) via possible solution paths. I like the idea



of being more transparent and purposeful about the steps involved in taking a problem apart and determining possible paths to a solution, and plan to try this in my class. I also will make sure that my assessment of problem solving stresses the process of problem solving as well as the outcome.

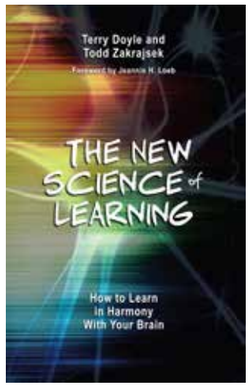
Davis and Arend also present an interesting section comparing novice and expert problem-solvers. Problem solving often requires specialized knowledge in a particular field, something that novices are working to possess. Apparently novice problem solvers have a harder time classifying problems, determining relevant information, and preparing a model for solving the problem. Students in my biochemistry class are often focused on learning information at the same time that they are trying to apply that knowledge in solving problems or working through case studies. It would be helpful if the authors had provided some thoughts on how to blend becoming more of an expert with acquiring problem-solving skills. I look forward to working with my class as they learn to be expert problem solvers in chemistry, and this reading gave me some strategies and heightened understanding of how to facilitate this type of learning. — *Tanya Schneider, assistant professor of chemistry*

The New Science of Learning, How to Learn in Harmony With Your Brain.

Terry Doyle and Todd Zakrajsek, Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing, 2013.

This short book should be required reading for all incoming first year college students.

Terry Doyle and Todd Zakrajsek provide a succinct yet thorough review of the latest neuroscience research on how the brain processes information and utilizes it for learning and memory. Written for students, the book is essentially a 'how to' guide for success in college. Complex neuroscientific concepts are explained in a manner that does not require the reader to have background knowledge of the field and are illustrated using real-world contextual examples that students can apply to develop successful study and learning strategies. Each ten- to twenty-page chapter is divided into concrete sections that keep the reader's attention and ends with a summary list of key ideas that serve as future reference points.



The authors explain the importance of distributed practice vs. cramming for learning course material, and the impact of sleep, nutrition, and exercise on learning and memory. They provide guidelines for students to develop effective study strategies such as chunking, patterning, and cause-and-effect relationships, citing research studies to support their strategies. Doyle and Zakrajsek debunk the myth of multitasking and emphasize the importance of adapting from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset.

While some of the information from chapter to chapter is repetitive, important take-home messages like 'the one who does the work does the learning' and 'you don't have the luxury in college to pay attention only to what interests you' are emphasized and re-emphasized in order to drive ~~these~~ points home. The book is specifically directed towards students of the 'information age' whose access to information and temptation by digital distraction are expanding at exponential rates.

The *New Science of Learning* is a short, information-packed reading that would be an ideal discussion topic for the start of a first-year seminar. In fact, after reading it I have decided to incorporate it into my own FYS in the Fall of 2014. — *Joseph Schroeder, associate professor of psychology*

▶ waiting on the CTL Shelves …

*I*ntroduction to Rubrics, An Assessment Tool to Save Grading Time, Convey Effective Feedback, and Promote Student Learning, 2nd ed.

Dannelle D. Stevens and Antonia J. Levi, Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing, 2013.

This is a useful book, with "useful" meant as a term of high praise. For those of us committed to providing thoughtful and individualized comments, but beleaguered by high stacks of papers and examinations to grade, rubrics can be a source of professional salvation. Stevens and Levi explain (and defend) the value of rubrics for designing and evaluating all kinds of assignments, learning opportunities, and teaching processes. They offer step-by-step guidance. And their illustrative examples, which extend across disciplines, are well-chosen for their adaptability to diverse classes. Check this out!

Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching, A Guide for Faculty.

Alison Cook-Sather, Catherine Bovill, and Peter Felten, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014.

Focusing on faculty – student partnerships, these three authors focus on the relationships between faculty and students engaged in collaborative teaching and research endeavors. Stressing the importance of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility, they draw upon their own teaching and research, and the experiences of innumerable others to argue for an approach to teaching that recognizes faculty expertise, honors student voice, and deep engagement. Readily acknowledging the countercultural elements of their recommendations, Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten nonetheless persuasively maintain that partnerships have the potential to transform education, building participatory intellectual communities that are diverse, motivated, and invested in teaching and learning. This is a book that relates directly to independent and honors studies, and to continuing discussions of strengthening student intentionality in course selection.

Reviewers

Stanton Ching is the Margaret W. Kelly Professor of Chemistry, teaching courses in general, inorganic, and analytical chemistry. His current research is focused on porous nanostructured manganese oxides. Professor Ching has also been very active in intercollegiate athletics at the College as the Faculty Athletics Representative to the NCAA and as a former member of the NCAA Division III Management Council.

Heidi Henderson is an associate professor of dance. The recipient of four Rhode Island State Council on the Arts Choreography Fellowships for excellence, she has performed and has had her work performed nationally and internationally. Her courses include Modern Technique, Composition, Improvisation, Anatomy, and Dance Writing.

Aida Heredia is an associate professor of Hispanic studies. She has been awarded grants by Fulbright, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Fulbright-Hays Program for her research and publications on cultural representations in the Caribbean and the African diaspora in the Americas. Professor Heredia's courses include Meditations on History, Arts and Politics in Latin American and the Caribbean and Literary Imagination and the African Diaspora in Latin America.

Michael James is a professor of education whose courses include the seminars "Critical Pedagogy" and "Education and the Revolutionary Project in Latin America." His research has centered on public schooling in the United States within the larger context of class, race, and gender inequalities, capitalist development and political economy.

Stephen Loomis is the Jean C. Tempel '65 Professor of Biology. Nationally recognized as an outstanding teacher, Professor Loomis teaches a wide range of courses in biological sciences; his flipped classes include Organisms (Bio 105) and Human Physiology (Bio 202). His research centers on stress physiology of invertebrates and cryobiology.

Mónika López-Anuarbe is an assistant professor of economics, whose teaching and research focuses on health economics, game theory, microeconomics, aging and long-term care giving, and intergenerational transfers. A major and minor advisor, she also advises independent and honors studies, developing conference papers and presentations with her students.

Tanya Schneider is an assistant professor of chemistry, teaching courses in biochemistry and organic chemistry. Her research centers on the biosynthesis of natural products, with a focus on the problem of antibiotic resistance.

Joe Schroeder is an associate professor of psychology and director of the behavioral neuroscience program. His research, which is conducted entirely with student collaborators, focuses on the development of behavioral pharmacology animal models. The recipient of the 2011 John S. King Teaching Award, he teaches a diverse set of courses including two first-year seminars, "Genius, Creativity and the Brain," and "Global Environmental Justice: Toxins and the Nervous System."

Appearing Previously

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one of the many ways we can make the world a better place." His talk, "Israel, Iraq, and Democratic Peace Theory," can be viewed on YouTube.

Caroleen Sayej
Assistant Professor of Government & International Relations

If you would like to share your teaching & learning experiences on the Connecticut College campus through this publication, please contact Michael Reder, the director of the Joy Shechtman Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning, or MaryAnne Borrelli, the Center's publications editor.

Content Notes

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when they come from radically different perspectives. I would extend such considerations beyond sexual violence to themes such as poverty, colonization and enslavement. In the same classroom, there may be students whose life experiences are being directly portrayed or are finding intense resonances with course themes. For other students, it may be a dearth of connection with these experiences that faculty seek to challenge to produce deeper understanding.

Content notes can help *all* students prepare by highlighting the issues that will be raised in class. Working together, we can *develop a range of strategies* to address the imperative of supporting student engagement with challenging topics. — *Ariella Rotramel*

References and Further Resources:

Know Your Title IX - http://knowyourix.org/

Elizabeth Freeman et al "Trigger Warnings Are Flawed," *Inside Higher Ed* http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2014/05/29/essay-faculty-members-about-why-they-will-not-use-trigger-warnings

Rebecca Mead, "Literature and Life," *New Yorker*, http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2014/06/09/140609taco_talk_mead

Jennifer Medina, "Warning: The Literary Canon Could Make Students Squirm," *New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/18/us/warning-the-literary-canon-could-make-students-squirm.html?_r=0

s.e. smith, "On the Difference Between Trigger Warnings and Content Notes, and How Harm Reduction is Getting Lost in the Confusion," *XOJane,* http://www.xojane.com/issues/trigger-warnings-content-notes-and-harm-reduction

Angela Shaw-Thornburg, "This Is a Trigger Warning," *Chronicle of Higher Education* http://m.chronicle.com/article/This-Is-a-Trigger-Warning/147031

Mason Stokes, "In Defense of Trigger Warnings," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, http://chronicle.com/blogs/conversation/2014/05/29/in-defense-of-trigger-warnings/

Talking Teaching

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help us think about discipline-specific issues.

This discussion fits very well with an initiative by NESCAC presidents to allow coaches to reach out to students of color when recruiting.

Most interesting … Discussion of making whiteness part of the discussion in the classroom, e.g. asking why are all the great scientists white and male?

Re-Envisioning First-Year Seminars: Piloting New Ideas

I came away with lots of new ideas. Ideas about structure and standards, & connecting among FYS's.

Using Exams to Improve Learning Across the Disciplines

The questions of exams and learning leads to questions of the academy, its purpose, and bigger questions about the possibility of teaching, knowledge, etc.

Most helpful … The discussion of the purposes we have for teaching in relation to the exams we give. We need to relate our purposes more closely and more transparently to the exams.

I think I should start giving exams!

What Makes a Liberal Arts Course?

Most interesting … thinking about understanding why the liberal arts tradition is important — beyond just as a of informing what we think it is important for students to learn.

For my teaching … To appreciate my relationship/modeling with my students.

For my teaching … To be more explicit about what I am doing and to make education more transparent. (And what makes it worth $60K?)

I should continue to strive to be inspirational.

This prompted thought about whether every class should be taught from a "distinctive liberal arts perspective" — and what this could mean.

Classes, TRIPs & Poster Presentations

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concurrently with their peers from Professor Watanabe's Okinawa group. Upon our return from Taiwan, however, the dire need to present meaningful findings made it necessary to prioritize each student's individual project over following the course syllabus.

Jay: The title for my poster was "An Analysis of the Semantic and Phonetic Radicals of Chinese Characters" and it was written in Chinese. It looked at characters that are comprised of both semantic and phonetic radicals, where the semantic radical classifies the meaning of the character to some extent and the phonetic radical indicates its pronunciation. Of all existent Chinese characters, it is estimated that 70 to 90 percent fall within the category of semantic and phonetic character compounds. As a result, it becomes necessary for learners of Chinese as a second language to consider radicals, as they aid in character recognition and memorization. Radicals also provide an important historical context in which to consider the characters, culture, and language.

■ Did you coordinate the two classes?

Watanabe: One component of my grant proposal was to hold a conference that would share our experiences and findings with the college community. When I mentioned this component to my class in the first meeting, some of the students told me about the poster session they had done with another class. I then spoke with Noel Garrett. Rather than holding a conference with paper presentations, the poster session seemed more appealing. In the end, I was pleased with the way that the event turned out. As I was planning this event, I realized that Tek was taking his class to Taiwan, and we decided that we should have both of our classes present their work at this event.

King: Interestingly, our two groups of students visited lands that, to varying degrees, are considered marginalized East Asian territories under well-established political and cultural centers, that is, China and Japan. Although the origins of the indigenous tongues—Austronenian and Japonic—are distinct, Taiwan and Okinawa are only 400 miles apart. It should therefore not be surprising that cross-group bonding was happening in cyberspace while we were 8,000 miles away from the CC campus!

■ What theme unified the students' research projects? What did they want to teach through the poster conference?

King: I think, through the field activities, students discovered an authentic society in Taiwan, witnessed their perceptual and narrative tools sharpened in Chinese, and came back with deepened cultural knowledge to reflect on, to analyze, and to share with the College community.

Watanabe: Environmental degradation, warfare's long effects, the struggle to make one's voices heard, the pressures of a distorted economy: on islands of immense natural beauty on the one hand and rusty abandoned buildings on the other, Okinawans demonstrated resilience, humor, and a fervent commitment to overcome these trials, an optimism that has inspired the research that we shared through our conference. In Maggie's project, for example, she delved into provocative artworks that expressed not only the horrors of the war, but also the survivors' strength and hopes for a peaceful future.

Nelsen: My poster is titled "World War II and the American Occupation: Reverberations in Contemporary Okinawan Art and Civil Society." Okinawans remain subordinated under the United States presence and the national government's security alliance with the U.S. Political channels are a largely ineffective means for Okinawans to express grievances, advocate for themselves, or share their perspective of the war. Therefore, Okinawans communicate their identity and beliefs, and continue to reconcile war trauma, occupation injustice, and current disenfranchisement through art and grassroots civil society organizations. My poster displays some of these initiatives, including art from the Sakima Art Museum and from the Okinawa Peace Memorial Hall, showing the historical narrative and the fervent anti-war commitment of the Okinawan people.

■ Would you do it again?

Watanabe: Definitely! While some Okinawans expressed surprise that I brought students to this small, economically disadvantaged prefecture — one that has not always been culturally Japanese — our group came away convinced that the challenges Okinawans are facing are ones that we too must embrace and confront.

King: It goes without saying, particularly with such passion from the participants as well as the generous support, advice, and guidance form all the various constituencies of the College, which includes the Office of National and International Programs, the AAPC, the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, the Academic Resource Center, the Office of Dean of Studies, and now the Center of Teaching and Learning!

Tek-wah King is a senior lecturer in Chinese. His research interests focus on syntax and morphology, and on foreign language pedagogies. His classes extend across the complete Chinese language curriculum, from beginning to classical and dialectal studies, alongside two course offerings for the linguistics minor, "Introduction to Language and Mind" and "Syntax."

Takeshi Watanabe is an assistant professor of Japanese. His research interests center on premodern Japan and include the literary and visual interpretation of history. Recently, he has been working on the cuisine of classical and medieval Japan, and has two forthcoming book chapters on the topic. His classes are routinely cross-listed with Art History as well as History, and include "Cooking, Consuming East Asia," "From Tea to Connecticut Rolls: Japanese Culture through Food" and "The Performing Arts of Japan."

Mentoring Writing

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The Challenges of Difficult Sessions

Sometimes the tutor and the student don't click. Other times, the student just comes back with the same paper, without making any changes. And it's hard to help if the paper is due in an hour and needs more than a quick fix. But the key point is remaining positive, because otherwise the student feels like a failure. Everyone has the ability to bring something out on paper and we're there to help students see that. We always want to end on a positive note, to stress that progress has been made.

It can also be difficult if you have a very specific assignment or paper, and the tutor doesn't have that disciplinary background. It is definitely hard if the professor wants a very specific tone and style, which the student doesn't understand. If the tutor offers advice, which the professor rejects, and the student gets a bad grade, it reflects back on the tutor. We are always referring students back to their professors, especially for these kinds of questions.

Ideas for Growth and Change

It's good to have the Writing Center — not all schools have structured peer tutoring. If we were to expand, we could have writing tutors in specific disciplines. The Writing Center could be the hub with multiple branches, especially in the larger departments. That would bring disciplinary expertise into the Writing Center and it would open people's eyes to seeing writing everywhere. Writing is part of every major. But there are also advantages when tutors work with students who are from disciplines other than their own. That situation sometimes makes it easier to concentrate on the writing *as* writing.

We need to encourage everyone, *everyone*, to explore free writing. It is a style of writing that is almost stream of consciousness; Faulkner and Kerouac are good models. I want people to write creatively, to find vitality and to explore their ideas and imaginings through words. They should write poetry, prose, everything. I want people to get outside the frame of writing for someone else and just write for themselves, because there is such relief and joy and happiness in writing creatively.

Writing is an important act and it needs to be salvaged from neglect. Not enough people do it – they haven't even tried to do it because it seems intimidating, or because it seems an impersonal scholarly act. When I started, I started with stories, because we don't exist as a people if we don't have stories.

What Faculty Should Know about Peer Mentoring at the Writing Center

First, it takes a lot of initiative, even courage, for a student to come to us. It is hard to work with a stranger. The students that we work with are doing their best and want to do well.

Second, tutors can only do so much. We don't always know the professors' guidelines or preferences, even though we do ask students to bring prompts for the assignments to their sessions. We are always referring students back to their professors.

Third, we have the same goals as professors. We all want to help people become better writers. — *Jack Hile '14, Susan Jacob '16, and Jessica Karpinski '15*

Peer Mentors in Genetics

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▶Key Aspects of the Biology Peer Mentoring Approach

Peer mentoring targets traditionally difficult academic courses rather than high-risk students. **Students can gain help without being singled out or having to ask for individual assistance.**

Peer mentors undergo training and are mentored by Academic Resource Center staff. **Mentors attend six hours of training by the ARC learning coordinator throughout the semester and earn a tutoring certificate.**

The peer mentors participate in all class meetings, meet regularly with ARC staff, and meet weekly with the faculty member teaching the course. **The mentors know exactly what is being discussed/presented in class and are engaged as participants in the course. They help facilitate class discussions and assist in problem solving in class. This allows the professor to significantly increase the in-class active learning component, particularly in a large class. Importantly, this also allows the mentors to become more approachable and credible with the students, and increases student attendance at mentor sessions.**

The peer mentoring sessions are open to all students, are regularly scheduled each week, and start at the beginning of the semester. **In this way, students can build the sessions into their weekly studying and get help even before the first exam. Mentors actively engage students in different applications of the course material and introduce students to a variety of learning strategies.**