

tools in the distance learning instructor's arsenal and can enhance instruction greatly. Because any image the instructor sends will appear no bigger than the size of the students' television monitor, it is essential that all graphics presentations follow certain conventions. To ensure legibility, use sans-serif fonts, at least 24 point type, and maintain 24 point spacing between lines. All graphics should be limited to 8 lines and done in a 4x3 ratio. To minimize glare, use pale pastel backgrounds instead of white.

In closing, we hope some of our advice will help you shine for yourself and in turn reflect well on the institution as you and students enjoy the television format of teaching/learning. Remember, if you make a "mistake" on television, there is always a second chance,

next time, to rectify it. In the meantime, go with the flow of the show—that's all you can do and that's all anyone expects from you. In hindsight, you'll find that you have probably blown the "mistake" all out of proportion. You'd really have to go out of your way to do something that's an absolute unforgivable no-no on television. Keep that deodorant rolling and the enthusiasm up, distance learning partner!

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General Education for the New Age: The Interdisciplinary's Elasticity and Specificity

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INTERDISCIPLINARY COURSES IN A TWO-YEAR COLLEGE is a timely topic. Semester conversion has given the state of Georgia the opportunity, more or less, to reinvent the junior college. The challenge has been to restructure curricula in order to better equip students for the rapidly changing and global nature of their job market.

Through semester conversion, Middle Georgia College (a junior college) created a number of special topic courses in literature, humanities, philosophy, history, and political science. For example, under World Literature are *Intro to German literature*, *Intro to French literature*, *Intro to Spanish Literature*, *Intro to Literature of the Orient*, *Intro to Postcolonial Literatures*, *Intro to Contemporary Poetry*, *Intro to Contemporary Drama*, *Intro to Contemporary Fiction*, *Intro to Children's Literature*, *War in World Literature*, *Gender Studies in World Literature*, *Intro to Australian Film and Literature*, and *Literary Adaptation of the Film*.

The state's Council on General Education rejected all of our listings of special topics as part of the core, saying "The focus on General Education is lost in Special Topics courses so we feel they should only be found in Area F [(majors)]." I would argue that the core does need to be redefined. The core should be more specialized, but, at the same time, more broadly based than ever before. That might seem to be a contradiction, and special topics might seem more appropriate for upper division, but it is not, and they are not.

We live in an information explosion, which prom-

ises to only intensify. What students learn in order to earn a four-year degree is already outdated by the time they are ready to begin their careers. Besides, the better paying jobs require at least a masters degree. Success in amorphous professions is going to depend upon a worker's ability to apply knowledge in different ways to different situations. And it will also demand specialization, which is certainly a relative term. Who can be truly specialized anymore, as much as there is to learn on any given topic and when knowledge is changing every day? Nevertheless, workers are expected to know many things about a lot, and a lot about many things. Although many students may be horrified to learn this, they will always be required to be students even after they get their degrees. They will always have to increase their knowledge just to keep pace with the demands of their jobs. Therefore, what they gain during an undergraduate program must be a broad base upon which they can build several careers. They will change careers at least seven times in their lives, and perhaps their first career won't even be in line with the major they declared in college. The job market is fickle and will become even more so. Instead of giving them prefab rooms which will prove useless for them, a general education needs to give them tools to build their own occupational structures.

To illustrate, in a survey course, why teach 200 poems, 20 short stories, 10 essays, 2 plays, and 1 novel all in one quarter, covering the "greats" at neck-break-

ing speed? Very few two-year college students are English majors. Those that are, are most likely to become teachers. Then why teach hundreds of writers and literary jargon and theory as if students' lives will depend upon this knowledge? Why teach English majors to teach the same way if that does not maximally prepare other students for their careers? An argument can be made as to the value of teaching Melville's *Moby Dick*, or any other work of literature for that matter, to students who will not need to know about Melville in their careers: students gain insight into the human condition through literature; therefore, any literary study should prove of value to them.

However, teaching the traditional canon (Clemons, James, Crane, Dreiser, etc.) as an imperative and teaching it from strictly a literary point of view (This is a metonymy; that is an alexandrine) is an antiquated system. The problem is not just the usual, that the traditional literary canon is comprised mostly of the dead white guys. The urgency is not only about what pieces to teach, but more importantly how to teach them. We need to choose works that will give students a broader cultural appreciation of the world. The Mexican novelist, Carlos Fuentes, has been quoted to say:

People and their cultures perish in isolation, but they are born or reborn in contact with other men and women, with men and women of another culture, another creed, another race. If we do not recognize our humanity in others, we will not recognize it in ourselves.

A criterion for canon selection useful to students is multicultural. Students can hear the voices from diverse cultures in literature so that they can become more understanding and tolerant citizens of the universe. After all, students will be working and living in a diverse world, and interaction will be absolutely vital for their economic success, as well as for the future peace of our planet.

Another tool that students can take with them into academe and the professional world is the ability to analyze. John Locke said once:

Reading furnishes the mind with materials of knowledge; it is thinking [that] makes what we read ours. We are of the ruminating kind, and it is not enough to cram ourselves with a great load of collections; unless we chew them over again they will not give us strength and nourishment.

Literature, with all of its symbolism and signs, provides excellent material for improving students' critical thinking skills. Not only are these skills essential for career success, how else should we be teaching literary works but then to "chew them over again" so that they will give "strength and nourishment"? This is why I believe that American, British, and World Literature survey courses are curricula of the past. We need to select lit-

erature according to criteria that will be handleable or chewable for students. This is why I think junior colleges do well to offer *Intro to African-American Lit* instead of an *Intro to American Lit*.

In order to achieve multicultural literacy and critical thinking, the canon must at once become more elastic to include previously marginalized literature, and at the same time more specific to give the students time to chew the fodder.

But these two objectives are not enough for what a study of literature ought to achieve for our students. Everyone knows that literature requires an interdisciplinary treatment. Since literature is the record of human experience, of course it arises out of the social sciences, the sciences, as well as the humanities. Many of us probably already supplement our literature courses with music and art. We also contextualize with history and extract with psychology. All the while that we are expecting students to consume megadoses of information in each discipline, we are assuming that they are integrating the entire curriculum in such a way that they can package and repackage it for and in the future. What we need to do is offer more interdisciplinary courses that will help students make the connections.

In Georgia, general education in the quarter system was divided into four areas (Humanities, Math and Natural Science, Social Science, and Major) that divided knowledge. In the semester system, we could do more to synthesize knowledge. The job market is not compartmentalized in the way academe is. Even if students were able to stay in the same career, which statistics indicate is unlikely, careers are interdisciplinary. They have to be able to process massive amounts of information. Computer science people need to know some accounting if they are to design a program for an accounting firm and then engineering in order to work for an engineering firm. A lawyer needs to know more than law in order to process and argue cases. Every career has become at the same time specialized (think of what dentists can do to teeth) and broad (think of what dentists have to know in order to run their businesses). Academe must follow suit in order to provide an educational base that will prepare our students.

More courses need to be specific as well as broad. As part of the new core proposal, MGC designed and was given approval of several to-be-team-taught courses, such as *Contemporary Cultural Issues* and *Intercultural Communications*. Additionally approved were two interdisciplinary, single-taught courses: *Political Science Global Issues* and *Environmental History*. The latter course is more specific than American history because it will focus on only environmental issues; its theme should be readily accessible to students due to its relevance. At the same time, it has a broader base because what students learn about the environment in this course will apply to more than just an understanding of

America. The class will be interdisciplinary, drawing from the sciences as well as from history and literature.

Instead of one teacher with a single expertise controlling the classroom, a team shares multiple perspectives. Students will need multiple perspectives in their occupations. With the broadening of knowledge, however, the presentation of material must be managed through a specific agenda. Otherwise, students will be overwhelmed. The interdisciplinary, whether team-taught or individually taught, is general education for the new age. With elasticity and specificity, it gives the students the skills they will need to manage their own futures.

Note: For more information on team teaching, see "Mythic America: Teaching Literature and History in a Two-Year College," in Teaching English in the Two Year College to come out either in October or February of next year. This article details the experience and success of Dr. Phillip Gibbs (history) and my co-teaching a course entitled Mythic America. We taught another course that combined history and English (and music, art, and architecture), entitled The South in Story, Song and Myth.

Collaborative Modeling of Critical Thinking in the Classroom: "Sounds Good But..."

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COLLABORATIVE TEACHING HOLDS ADVANTAGES and challenges for students and faculty. Adult students bring life experiences and a background in general education which contribute to the learning experience. By capitalizing on the inherent strengths of the adult learner, learning activities are developed which foster the development of critical thinking, team playing, and decisions making.

In the Associate Degree Nursing Program at Coastal Georgia Community College faculty share class planning and preparation. Teams of two to four instructors facilitate learning in each class section. Each instructor is responsible for command of content and the management of classroom dynamics. Richard Paul's model of teaching critical thinking serves as the foundation for learning activities. The ongoing interaction and "out loud" thinking of the instructors fosters the students' willingness and comfort in testing new ways of thinking, exchanging ideas, and making complex decisions. Even large classes of students have been facilitated in this manner.

In any given classroom hour one may find students role-playing, group problem-solving, providing peer assessment, and discovering new connections among previous life experiences and learning. These learning activities are applied in ways that are relevant to their emerging professional roles in nursing.

While students are involved in learning activities instructors are simultaneously managing time, task-ori-

entation, interpersonal dynamics, and environment. Instructors maintain a class norm of safety for the students as they risk sharing ideas, questions, and their understandings of content. Instructors also monitor the class for student reaction of excitement, "ah-hah" moments of discovery, boredom, frustration, and possible overload. The student's awareness of his/her own thinking process and relational responses is enhanced by the instructors as they openly note and respond to such cues. This process is therefore shown to have value in team endeavors. For example, when a student displays a sudden grasp of a complex issue, instructors spotlight this student. The student then shares the new understanding, especially reflecting upon the steps which led to the discovery. In another example, when a student shows an apparent "block" in learning, instructors enlist the support of students who have mastered the content or issue. The supporting students accept the class norm of assisting struggling class members by modeling their successful thought processes. Instructors carefully time summaries to clarify and highlight essential information and processes of thinking, learning, and teamwork.

In addition to monitoring student behaviors, instructors are constantly observing each other for reactions and cues. If an instructor is unclear about a colleague's intent, he/she may stop to clarify, agree or disagree, and reach a decision regarding further progression of the class activity. In order to do this, faculty trust levels for each other must be high. Methods for managing divergent points of view must be agreed upon