THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS PROJECT

Please join us Monday, March 27th from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m. in the Center for Teaching for a special presentation by Maria Trumpler, Director of the Office of LGBTQ Resources at Yale University. During Yale’s campus protests in the fall of 2015, many students of color spoke publicly about comments and actions in classrooms that made them feel that they did not belong at Yale. In response, the Intercultural Affairs Council started the Inclusive Classrooms project that is based on peer-led discussions of experiences and suggested best practices for faculty. Maria Trumpler will share the peer discussion guide, some of the best ideas for practices that resulted, as well as some of the challenges of bringing students and faculty together around this topic. This is a special opportunity and we hope you will join us.

Co-sponsored by the CFT and the Office of the Dean of the College / Associate Dean Elizabeth Skomp.

Lunch will be provided; please sign up HERE.
Teaching with Blogging: Lessons Learned

On February 23, Assistant Professor Melody Crowder-Meyer (Politics) shared some lessons she learned from incorporating group blogs into her Campaigns and Elections course. She shared her primary objectives for requiring her students to blog: to encourage them to engage more fully with the political campaigns that were happening, to increase their civic engagement, to encourage better writing, to defeat procrastination on their final paper, and to enhance their social media skills. After discussing her blogging requirements and assessment, Melody shared what worked and what didn’t from her own perspective and from the point of view of her students. Student feedback at the end of the semester was mostly positive, and Melody says she will use a modified version of this technique in future classes. However, she cautions that “simpler is better” when utilizing blogs, both for the students’ sake and the professor’s.

If you missed Melody’s informative presentation, you can watch it [HERE](#) (and view her slides [HERE](#)).

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Melody’s experiment with blogging in the classroom was supported by an Innovative Teaching grant from the Center for Teaching.

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An Introduction to Spatial Humanities

Richard Apgar (Asst. Prof. of German) and Margo Shea (Mellon Fellow with the Collaborative for Southern Appalachian Studies) joined us on February 15 to present their ongoing work in the new field of Spatial Humanities. Both Richard and Margo participated in the DuPont Summer Seminar on the topic in June, 2016 with Dr. John Corrigan (University of Chicago). After defining and explaining the roots of Spatial Humanities, they discussed using “big data” and geospatial visualization not only as research tools but also as a way to present the results of inquiry. Margo and Richard were candid about both the possibilities and the limits of this approach, and they openly shared their own forays into the realm of spatial humanities. Margo presented student-generated work from a “deep map” assignment in a class she taught in the Advent semester of 2016: Place, Memory, and Identity. Richard shared his ongoing scholarly project of mapping the German Enlightenment period.

Links to [RESOURCES](#) and [SLIDE DECK](#)
Being CREATivE in the Upper-Level Seminar

On March 2, Assistant Professor Elise Kikis (Biology) shared with us how she experimented with a new way of exposing her students to scientific research in her Biology of Aging course. From a meeting with Ashley Morris (C'97), a biology professor at Middle Tennessee State University, Elise was introduced to the CREATE method.

The CREATE (Consider, Read, Elucidate the hypothesis, Analyze and interpret the data, and Think of the next Experiment) method uses an intensive analysis of primary literature to humanize research science for undergraduates.

In Elise's Biology of Aging course, she used some aspects of the CREATE method. In particular, her students focused on the trajectory within a single research lab group. Students were intrigued by how one of the PhD students in this research lab eventually flourished in his own independent career. Elise treated the classroom like a lab meeting, where there would be a 10-15 minute lecture to set up the meeting, then a robust discussion about the work under study.

In concert with the University's recent emphasis on public speaking, students in Elise’s course also gave formal and informal presentations associated with the scientific research that was studied in the course. To increase student success, she focused on extensive planning prior to the formal presentations by her students. She scheduled at least two 1-on-1 meetings with each student to discuss the science in the research paper and to help with the organization of the presentation. For the informal presentations, Elise gave each student group the task of interpreting a figure from the assigned research paper. These groups would discuss for a short period of time and subsequently explain the figure to the rest of the class. It is clear that from implementing the CREATE method, her students were more engaged in the classroom and less threatened by the rigor of the scientific research.

If you missed Elise’s presentation, you can watch it [HERE](#).
Most Likely to Succeed
by Tim Jesurun
Visiting Assistant Professor of Psychology

The award-winning documentary Most Likely To Succeed was shown at the SUT on March 6th (with a discussion afterward). The film addressed several issues related to the state of education in America today. Our education system was designed about 125 years ago to produce the labor force needed for the industrial revolution. The goal was to mass-produce workers who could follow directions and complete repetitive tasks without errors. The system was tweaked to meet the rising demand for repetitive white-collar jobs in the middle of the 20th century. We now live in a world where robots can do repetitive manual jobs and computers can do a growing amount of white-collar jobs, such as beating Ken Jennings at Jeopardy and writing news stories. Therefore, what we need to be doing now is producing young adults that are ready to be creative and social, two things computers are far behind us in. Sadly, our school system has not adapted and is still working to produce now outdated skills. So the documentary takes a dive into High Tech High, a high school in which the barriers between subjects is lowered, students direct much of their own learning, and where tests and quizzes are replaced with long-term team projects. Breadth of education is reduced, but depth, and most importantly higher-order thinking, is increased. This is held up as a model for better education, rather than the standardized test crazed education system we currently have.

Our first topic in the discussion afterwards was what we thought some of the important skills were today that schools should be teaching. We talked about:

- public speaking and oral communication
- risk taking, failure, and learning from failure which are punished in school
- how different teamwork is in the workplace from group work in school and the challenges of group work
- how the teachers in the film worked hard to help students to be self-directed and let them have a great deal of control over their goals, class time, and the use of resources

Next we discussed major changes we wish could happen in education today. Some of the ideas included:

- helping students find their passions at a younger age and pursue them
- making a gap year between high school and college mandatory
- reducing efforts at teacher accountability, which are mostly about student standardized tests scores, and trusting teachers more to use their creativity and insight to educate our children

I finally prompted them to think about college in particular even though the film was mostly focused on high school. We talked about:

- how education moves students through the checkpoints, but has much less room for individuality and independent thought than there should be
- the artificial rules of college admission and big money behind the test prep and college prep industries
- how higher education is not sufficiently diverse, especially around socio-economic status and geographic regions.

Finally we summarized our take away with the thought that it would be ideal if our education system was designed to create better human beings, not better students.
by Paige Schneider
Teaching Professor of Politics

In 2015 I had the opportunity to travel to Minneapolis with faculty colleagues from the Mellon Globalization Forum (MGF) task force to participate in the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) Global Learning conference. One session that I found particularly interesting was on Collaborative Online International Learning or COIL. The presenters at the COIL session shared mostly positive experiences about using a variety of information technology platforms to connect their classes with students and colleagues from other colleges and universities around the world.

There is a consensus that students who have the opportunity to engage personally with people from other countries are more likely to be responsible and knowledgeable global citizens. Study abroad programs serve this purpose well. But, as the State University of New York’s (SUNY) COIL Institute for Globally Networked Learning has found, virtual collaborations between students from different countries in a classroom setting can be a cost effective way to facilitate cross cultural understanding and shared learning on important global issues. In 2013 Sewanee Spanish professor Angela Jordan conducted a successful collaboration between her Sewanee students in Spanish language classes and English language students at the Universidad del Norte-Barranquilla, Columbia, demonstrating the educational benefits of virtual exchanges for language learners. I considered the benefits of this type of interaction for students in politics and women and gender studies, and decided to pursue the project idea.

I reached out to a Ugandan professor that I met at Victoria University in Kampala—Lina Zedriga—to see if she was interested in a COIL exchange. Lina planned to teach a class on women and human rights in the spring term, and I a seminar on gender, violence and power. We would have roughly equivalent numbers of students. I applied for and received a Center for Teaching grant to help facilitate the collaboration. Over the next two months, we agreed on a basic timeline for joint class meetings, key themes that we would discuss as a group, collaborative projects in which the students might ‘twin’ or pair up, and ways to document our work. Looking back, the course planning was by far the easiest aspect of this endeavor!

We faced a number of key challenges. Kampala and Sewanee are nine time zones apart—except when the U.S. reverts to standard time in November. Lina and I had agreed to Skype for a meeting in December but I had forgotten about the time change that occurred in the U.S. in November when we set our meeting time. It is not easy to explain the concept ‘day light savings time’
to someone from a country in which this archaic practice does not exist. We were both better prepared though, when in March we reverted back to daylight savings time. Fortunately, Lina taught three hour long classes in the evening, and my students agreed to meet earlier in the morning, enabling us to work around the time change.

Victoria University is a relatively new private university with modern facilities and better than average technology for a Ugandan university. Nonetheless, colleges and universities in low income countries obviously lack many of the resources that we take for granted. I sought the assistance of Freida Headrick in Library and Information Technology Services (thanks Freida!) to identify a technology platform that might work for the collaboration and we decided to try GoToMeeting. Sewanee has a GoToMeeting account and we could share the resource with Victoria. We held a practice session and all went well. But on the day that my students showed up bright and early for our official launch of the collaboration, and the I.T. specialist from Victoria was on hand to assist Lina’s class, we failed to connect. After a frustrating thirty minutes with no luck, and no clear sense as to why it was not working, we ended the session. We tried again on another occasion, but Internet service was apparently unavailable across much of Kampala on that day. At this point I wondered if the technological divide was too vast and if COIL was perhaps best suited for partnerships between colleges in high or middle income countries.

Plan B was to use Skype, or Google Hangout. Now early February, and with the Uganda presidential elections looming, we hoped for the best. Unfortunately, episodic violence and a heavy military presence on the streets of the capital city forced a closing at Victoria University. Victoria students headed back to their hometowns to wait out election season. They returned to class in March, but midterms were in full swing and then Sewanee students departed for spring break. It was not until Sewanee students returned to campus in late March that we had our first successful virtual classroom meeting over Skype. On the day we finally connected with Victoria students, there was an exuberant outburst that I imagine was heard ‘round Spencer Hall. We formed into small working groups according to thematic interests (i.e. women and health; gender and leadership; international relations) and Sewanee and Victoria students traded contact information and made plans to follow up with each other.
I had explored various online platforms for the collaboration and found **Hightail**, a user friendly platform that easily incorporates images, videos, and other forms of information into collaborative virtual work spaces. Sewanee and Victoria students shared their biographies and pictures on our space. We also decided to create a Facebook page which drew only moderate interest from the Victoria side as Internet connections can be spotty outside of class, and data for mobile phones is pricey. In the end, students had the most success connecting over Whatsapp, which is similar to Snapchat, free, and used widely in East Africa. However, it is not conducive to in-depth discussions, so a combination of Facebook, email, and Whatsapp was necessary.

The student assignment for the COIL project was to post information about interactions with Victoria students to a class journal on Blackboard. Victoria draws students from a wide range of countries so Sewanee students stood to learn about the lives of their age peers from a diverse group of East African and Horn of Africa countries. To the extent possible, students were to draw connections between what we were learning in class, and what they discussed with and learned from their Victoria colleagues. A number of students who shared insights from their exchanges demonstrated clear connections with class material and a deeper understanding of important themes. One student posted:

“We talked about the civil wars in the DRC and Mali (as pertains to my research paper) and she asked if I knew about Memba, one of the vice presidents of the DRC. Alice told me that ‘he helped send his army to quell a coup in Central African Republic but
couldn't stop his men from raping and molesting women and children.' I thought this was ....useful in supporting Elisabeth
Wood's argument that if those in higher up positions tolerate sexual violence, it is more likely that troops will engage in sexual
violence, than if the higher up outright condemns and punishes this sexual violence.”

In a wide ranging conversation with one of the young men in Prof. Zedriga’s class, a student stated:

“At this point I told him that I was really interested in women's rights, reproductive
rights and human rights issues; I asked him his opinion on abortion, even though I
wasn't sure if this would be controversial. He said he doesn't believe it is a controversial
issue ’at all'-because 'I believe every woman has a right to decide if and when she wants
to get pregnant.' I thought this was really progressive of him and spoke to an
egalitarian mindset, perhaps. This [supports]
the research that shows the younger
generations of men in countries being
generally more progressive and forward
thinking than older, more conservative men,
although I wasn't sure if Julius was
representative of other young men from
Tanzania.”

By the end of the semester, some students
had connected to and sustained a
meaningful dialogue with one or more
Victoria students, and those students
reported finding the experience exciting
and fulfilling. For those who experienced
ever fewer successful exchanges, the experience
was, at times, frustrating. All of the
Sewanee students were surprised at how
much they had in common with the Victoria
students, and could clearly see the effects
of how social media and other information
technologies facilitate the global
integration of diverse cultures. The research
that demonstrates global diffusion of norms around women's human rights was
corroborated in many of the student
exchanges, providing important insight to
Sewanee students whose views of people in
Africa can be distorted by unidimensional
media representations.

According to student feedback, the time
difference was the single largest barrier to
connecting and communicating with Victoria
students. With more time to plan and
schedule the next COIL class, this problem
can be addressed. Challenges with
technology and the unreliability and cost of
access to the Internet are important
considerations for those who might consider
a COIL project with a colleague in a low
income country. Professor Zedriga and I
would like to try again, though. My hope is
that it will be a bit easier the second time
around, with fewer surprises, and more
realistic expectations of what we and our
students can hope to accomplish over the
course of the semester.

PAIGE SCHNEIDER
OUTSIDE THE GATES: UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

ACS Grants Update
The pre-proposal deadline for the 2017-2018 grant cycle for the ACS is June 16.
The staff at the ACS is available to work with faculty and staff to answer questions and help develop proposals. The ACS has several new outreach tools that are effective in generating interest in their grants programs.

ACS grants webpage
Go here for full information on the program and process, including tools for finding collaborators, a sample grant abstract, award amounts and application forms and deadlines.

ACS Grants Facebook group
Go to ACS Grants Group and ask to join. Here, you'll find news and articles related to their grant themes and can become a part of a growing community of innovators.

If you have any questions, ideas, or suggestions, please contact Jennifer Dugan using the information below:

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Research on Teaching and Learning Summit
October 13, 2017
Kennesaw State University
Kennesaw, GA

Since 1993, thousands of educators in colleges and universities from across the country and globe have participated in this interdisciplinary conference to discuss and share experiences and innovative teaching techniques. The Summit offers concurrent sessions on cutting-edge issues in pedagogy and student learning in a relaxed, congenial atmosphere. There are also opportunities for participants to network with fellow educators. Participants report that they have learned many new ideas they were able to bring back to campus, and that they have been energized by interacting with a collegial community of educators invested in excellent teaching.

The keynote speaker is Linda B. Nilson, Ph.D. from Clemson University. Her talk will be entitled "Specifications Grading: Restoring Rigor, Motivating Students, and Saving Faculty Time".

Talk Abstract: The way we have been grading student work for many decades earns low marks on a list of 14 criteria for assessing grading systems. This keynote presents an alternative system, specifications (“specs”) grading, that does better, especially in motivating students to achieve outcomes and produce high-quality work. Better yet, it saves you time. The system works effectively because it gives students more choices and control while holding their work to high academic standards. By the end of this keynote, you will be able adapt one or more of your courses to a pure or synthetic version of specs grading and revise your syllabus accordingly.

Proposals are currently being accepted for presentations and posters. Please consider attending and submitting a proposal for the Research on Teaching and Learning Summit.

Proposal Submission Deadline: Monday, April 3, 2017
ALLIED ACADEMIC PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

Office of Advising

Reminders and Announcements
The time approaches for us to meet with advisees to talk about course selection for the fall, and so we’ll soon be sending out advising preparation worksheets to advisees to fill out before they meet with advisors. Be sure to clear some time to meet with advisees in the week prior to their course registration window, and contact them early to encourage them to sign up for appointments (and get their PINs). We’ll also make funds available soon for a spring meal with advisors who are interested in getting together with their groups (or with individual advisees at McClurg or Stirling’s—however you want to spend your meal stipend).

For all current advisors
Now—before the midterm grades are officially calculated—is a great time to check in with advisees about how they are feeling about their coursework this semester.

For advisors of sophomores
The official major declaration window for fourth-semester students has now ended, but if you still have second-year advisees who have not declared, please urge them to choose a major and new advisor.

For new faculty
Keep your eye out for an announcement about training sessions in May and August for brand new advisors! These interactive small-group sessions will familiarize you with the philosophy of advising at Sewanee, guiding students through the General Education requirements, and the different seasons of advising students over the first four semesters, and we’ll go over a number of hypothetical advising scenarios.

If you have any questions, contact Lauryl Tucker (vltucker@sewanee.edu).
SEWANEE WELLNESS INITIATIVE

Holistic wellness at Sewanee....Where are we? and Where do we want to go?

The Sewanee Wellness Initiative (SWI) group along with the Center for Teaching are hosting informal lunches where small groups of faculty can share their thoughts on wellness. This is a follow up to the survey sent earlier this semester. From those responses we know this is an important topic, and we want to hear more from you. This will be a fun lunch to catch up with colleagues while sharing your views on how we can create an enriching place to work that serves all of our wellness needs.

Lunch dates at the Center for Teaching:
Thursday, April 6th at 12:30 pm
Wednesday, April 12th at noon

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OUR WEBSITE AND CALENDAR