Dates to Note!!

Monday, October 4
Tuesday, October 5
Conversations in Teaching:
The Importance of Expectations on Student Performance
3 - 4:30 p.m.
Presentation Room of the Academic Commons

Thursday, October 14
Student Engagement through Aesthetic Education
12:15 - 1:15 p.m.
Marillac 137

Monday, October 18
Tuesday, October 19
Conversations in Teaching:
Multiple Approaches to Writing
3 - 4:30 p.m.
Presentation Room of the Academic Commons

Wednesday, October 20
New Faculty: Introduction to Grant Writing
3 - 4:30 p.m.
Sun Yat Sen Seminar Room

Tuesday, October 26
Building a Sense of Political Responsibility
12 - 1:15 p.m.
Sun Yat Sen Seminar Room

To RSVP for one or more of these sessions phone us at ext. 1859 or email us at CTL@stjohns.edu.

A View of Aesthetic Education

Heidi Upton (St. John’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, rouponh@stjohns.edu)

I teach two courses here at St. John’s University: Discover New York, through the lens of world music, with a focus on percussion, and a course called Creativity and the Arts. It is focused on engaging students (or re-engaging them) with their innate creativity in the context of the four art forms of music, dance, theater and the visual arts. I approach my work as a teacher from a particular practice called aesthetic education. In my classes, my goal is to provide an environment in which engagement in a work or works of art - the aesthetic qualities of things in general – encourages students to connect with their own learning and being in the world in an active way.

A particular challenge in teaching is facing groups of students who bring to class very different backgrounds, experiences, attitudes and outlooks. Many are bored with their education, most are anxious, particularly about grades. In fact, discussions about grading, I have found, bring even the most recalcitrant students into the fray. All of a sudden, everyone is really interested! Great! You finally have everyone’s attention. However, it doesn’t feel quite right. Is this the kind of attention we want from our students?

What we do want to develop in our students, I think, is “habits of mind”. We want to get them to self-regulate – to learn how to stay in the flow zone. Perhaps because I am an artist, I believe that the arts provide invaluable tools to do just this, and they do it through pleasure. Full engagement in the arts just feels good – it’s immediate, it’s rewarding, it’s visceral. It allows students to get a feel for the quality of the experience of being in the flow zone and to get used to staying there. Students today bail out all too easily when the going gets tough. Engagement in the arts encourages them to find strategies to avoid bailing out.

You can only create this kind of engagement, though, when it comes out of intrinsic motivation.

Which brings me back to grades. What is learning? Is it taking tests, regurgitating information? Extrinsic motivation – the grade conversation I mentioned earlier – is effective. Absolutely. We face daily in our classes, people who have spent a lifetime being bullied by extrinsic motivators. And it shows. I, though, believe we want the kind of learning that is done not to please us, not to get the right grade, not because it’s the path of least resistance. We do want the kind of learning that takes place when students are given support to engage in activities that they own.

Students are so distrustful when asked to pay attention. The phrase that we use “pay attention” is true. It costs something. Tens of thousands of times in their educational careers, our students have been invited to “pay,” by various means, and the returns have been meager. They distrust this request now. We need to ask them to attend, to pay attention, and to make sure that the payback is worth the effort. How can we do this?
We can provide a safe environment, physically and emotionally, so that they are able to perform the actions of bringing forth something of who they really are...in the midst of vague parameters, in the face of their peers, on which they will be graded...to offer something of their person-ness. This is a huge act of courage.

We can witness and honor their work. We can enable them to reflect so that they notice the pleasure they experienced. We can guide them to the alternative definition of success (not getting good grades) which is the next impulse of curiosity.

John Dewey stated he couldn't define what “aesthetic” means, but he could say one thing: it is the opposite of “anaesthetic”. I am inviting my students to awaken to an entirely different skill of attention than what is usually asked of them. I am inviting them to notice the slant of the sun, the reflection of the sky in puddles they are passing by, the greenness of the grass, the shape of the sounds outside the window, the texture of the chair. Works of art provide deep and lasting opportunities for this kind of engagement. I am inviting them to ask questions of these works of art as well as of the things in their own world. I stand beside them, in their company. We share the path.

The goal of higher education is to train people to be lifelong learners. To nurture this, I don’t think we can take the essential skills for granted, especially when our students come to us from institutions that have not provided them with these skills. We need to nurture the essential skills of engagement at the most basic levels:

- The capacity to pay attention
- The capacity to be personally engaged
- The capacity to be invested

I read somewhere that eighty percent of how you teach is who you are – the way you speak, the kinds of questions you ask, how passionate you are about what you believe. Our students are watching us, scrutinizing us. If we bring a high quality of joy to whatever we do, I believe it makes a difference. Opportunities for quasi-apprenticeships are presented to us all the time, and mostly they pass us by. Maybe we can do better.

Call for 2005 Carnegie Scholars

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and The Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) announce a call for Carnegie Scholars.

Faculty members from any discipline or professional field, and from all institutional types, are invited to apply for participation in the 2005-2006 Carnegie Scholars Program. Each applicant must propose a scholarship of teaching and learning inquiry project that addresses the cohort theme of undergraduate integrative learning.

Complete application guidelines can be viewed at http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/CASTL/highered/guidelines and applications must be received electronically by 15 November 2004.
Professor Joseph Adolphe (Fine Arts, adolphej@stjohns.edu) produced illustrations for Medical Economics (June 2004), portraits of Richard Peck for (Prentice Hall/Pearson Ed., July 2004), illustrations of “Harvest of a Quiet Eye” for Harpers Magazine (July 2004), presentation roughs for True Vine book cover (Public Affairs Publishers, July 2004), portraits of Gerald & Cullen Rapp for Gerald & Cullen Rapp Inc. (July 2004), portrait of Adam Clayton for Coastal Contractor Magazine (2004), and four drawings for Golf Magazine (July 2004); also was presented with an Award of Excellence in the 45th Annual Communication Arts Illustration Competition (July 2004).

Professor Dan Ault (Fine Arts, aultd@stjohns.edu) exhibited his art work “Self-Portrait” at The Bertoni Gallery, Sugar Loaf, NY (May-June 2004).

Dr. Diana Bartelt (Biological Sciences, barteltld@stjohns.edu), Director of the St. John’s University Institute for Biotechnology, attended the New York Biotechnology Association (NYBA) Annual Meeting in New York with Dr. Joanne Carroll of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences (CPAHP) (March 2004); the Institute was a sponsor of the meeting. Dr. Bartelt also co-authored an article, “A Direct Mass-Action Mechanism Explains Capacitative Calcium Entry in Jurkat and Skeletal L6 Muscle Cells,” in the Journal of Biological Chemistry (November 2003)—other coauthors were B. Narayanar, M.N. Islam and the corresponding author R.S. Ochs, all of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences; attended the “Second Physiology of Yeast and Filamentous Fungi” meeting in Anglet, France and presented a poster entitled “Measuring Intracellular Calcium Flux in Aspergillus in Response to External Stimuli”, co-authored by Vilma Greene, a former doctoral student who is currently a post-doctoral fellow at Weil Medical College of Cornell University, and Sairah Saeed, a Clare Booth Luce doctoral fellow (March 2004).

Professor Linda Butti (Fine Arts, buttil@stjohns.edu) exhibited her work in the Artist Studio Tour in conjunction with the East Hampton Artists Alliance (July 2004); participated in the juried mixed media show and sale “Earth Prayers” at St. Catherine’s Gallery, Water Mill, NY (July-August 2004) and the 37th Annual Artists Invitational of the Spring in East Hampton, NY (August 2004).

Dr. Sylvia Clark (Marketing, clarks@stjohns.edu) published an article, "In the Air Again: Frequent Flyer Relationship Programmes and Business Travellers' Quality of Life," in the International Journal of Tourism Research (August 2003).

Dr. Robert Finkel (Physics, finkelr@stjohns.edu) was appointed to the International Scientific Committee of Mathematical Biology and Ecology 2004 by the World Scientific and Engineering Academy; delivered an invited talk, “Conserved Quantities for Dynamic Systems,” at the WSEAS fifth annual Systems Theory Meeting and was nominated for inclusion in Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers (2004).

Dr. Hannah Berliner Fischthal (English, fischthh@stjohns.edu) had a review on The Magic Worlds of Bernard Malamud published in Shofar, An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies (Spring 2004).

Dr. Jefferson Fish (Psychology, fishj@stjohns.edu) published a book, the Handbook of Culture, Therapy, and Healing, co-edited with Uwe P. Gielen and Juris G. Draguns (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004); the book includes his chapter, “Cross-Cultural Commonalities in Therapy and Healing: Theoretical
Issues, and Psychological and Sociocultural Principles,” as well as three other contributions he co-authored with his co-editors.

Dr. Maura C. Flannery (Computer Science, Mathematics and Science, flannerm@stjohns.edu) presented a paper, “Going Public with ‘Teacherly’ Research,” at the International Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference in London (May 2004); published an article, “Polarity at Many Levels,” in The American Biology Teacher (August 2004); participated in a workshop on Systems Biology sponsored by the BioQUEST Curriculum Consortium at Beloit College in Wisconsin (June 2004).

Professor Diane Miller Himmelbaum (Fine Arts, himmelbd@stjohns.edu) exhibited two works in the Alpan International 2004 at the Alpan Gallery, Huntington, Long Island (August-September 2004).

Professor Thomas Kerr (Fine Arts, kerrt@stjohns.edu) had an illustration published at INXart.com in the article, “Iran’s March towards nuclear weapons” (June 2004).


Dr. Jeffrey C. Kinkley (History, kinkley@stjohns.edu) helped plan and attended the Tenth Sino-American Conference on Education of the CUNY-Shanxi Exchange; this included activities of its Group Three, on "Literature, History, and Social Responsibility" at Brooklyn College (June 2004); at the conference, presented a talk and discussion in English and Mandarin on "Teaching World Literature and History: Curriculum and Texts" and led further panel discussions.

Dr. Brook Lauro (Computer Science, Mathematics and Science, laurob@stjohns.edu) received funding from the National Park Service to continue her research on waterbird conservation—the title of the project is “Habitat Enhancement to Encourage Piping Plover Productivity at Breezy Point, New York;” also published a paper, “Habitat Use of Sympatric Fish Crows (Corvus ossifragus) and American Crows (Corvus brachyrynchos)” Wilson Quarterly (2004); presented a paper, “Patterns of Waterfowl Diversity and Abundance at Suburban Ponds and Lakes on Long Island, New York,” at the annual meeting for the Society of Conservation Biology at Columbia University (July 2004).

Professor Claudia Sbrissa (Fine Arts, sbrissac@stjohns.edu) showed her art work in a group show titled “Drawing Conclusions” at the Islip Art Museum (June-September 2004).

Dr. Richard Stalter (Biology, stalterr@stjohns.edu) published three articles with co-authors: “The Vascular Flora of Five Florida Shell Middens” in Journal of the Torrey Botanical Society (2004), “A Comparison of Species Diversity at Twelve Study Sites” in In Vivo (Spring 2004), and “Effects of Wrack Accumulation on Spartina alterniflora, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, New York City,” in Perez and Andion (Eds.), Coastal Environment V (Southhampton: WIT Press, 2004).

If you would like to send an entry to “Faculty News,” the deadline for the October issue is October 8. We prefer that you email the information to us at CTL@stjohns.edu. But if that is not possible, then send a typed copy of your announcement to our office located in Bent Hall, room 281. We reserve that right to edit all material received.
Last Spring, the Modern Language Association and Emory University co-sponsored the first national conference in the humanities on the topic of disability studies. Over the past decade disability studies has emerged as a major field of academic study. Ways of perceiving disability in the United States are changing, largely in response to the Disability Rights movement which led to the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 that mandates full integration and prohibits discrimination. A consequence of the legislation has been participation by individuals with disabilities in all walks of life. Where previously they were confined to their homes or to institutions, the disabled are now becoming increasingly visible in schools, in the courts, and in the workplace. Moreover, disability is being redefined in broader terms as a universal human experience likely to occur in every life and in every society.

An interdisciplinary approach to significant issues has characterized the work of scholars in areas such as the social sciences, the applied health sciences, legal rights and job discrimination. Largely missing from such discourse is the work of humanists despite the fact that representations of the disabled frequently come from images and narratives found in literature, art, film, or popular culture. Rather than reflecting reality, such representations structure it. The way in which we imagine disability alters our relationships with others and determines the way we shape our world. What needs to be confronted is that disability is not simply a medical problem or a personal one, but a diversity issue, and humanistic inquiry reveals disability to be a shared experience that permeates all aspects of culture. This MLA conference sought to bring an academic perspective to the shift from medical view to cultural understanding. An example of how such a shift alters our notions of disability occurs when we consider the diagnosis of attention deficit disorder. Would such a diagnosis exist at all if learning environments and academic programs were tailored to the needs of the “afflicted” student? A goal of those assembled at the conference was to seek acknowledgment that disability is a fundamental form of human diversity. Disabled persons are now the largest minority group in the United States, comprising thirty percent of the population and increasing dramatically as baby boomers age. Approximately one third of entering college freshmen report having a disability of sorts, including learning disabilities and depression. One of the resolutions proposed at the conference was the adaptation of learning technologies and academic environments to all kinds of learning abilities and disabilities.

In addition to developing a new way of understanding disability, the conference explored what it means to be disabled. To accept disability as an aspect of all life is to effect a social change from repression and discrimination to acceptance and accommodation. Such a view requires an understanding of what it means to be fully human. Where else but in the university can the customary concept of disability be reimagined? Presentations in several conference panels offered recommendations on how to incorporate a Disabilities Studies program into courses across the humanities curriculum. Varying programs at institutions nation wide were studied. Programs at the University of Wisconsin; the University of Illinois; the University of California, Berkeley and Ohio State University were discussed. It was noted that there is also an indication of interest on the part of some community colleges as well. In the case of Berkeley, strong student support and community endorsement have driven the University’s commitment. In developing Disabilities Studies programs, matters to consider include program structure, hiring strategies and funding. There is general agreement that the interests of programs would best be served by an interdisciplinary approach and cross-campus collaboration. Faculty is recruited from science and humanities departments as well as from affiliated law schools. At the University of Wisconsin, a diverse search committee has represented five different colleges. Regarding the matter of funding, opportunities exist for grants from private foundations as well as from the government.

Final resolutions at the conference included a commitment to recruit faculty members, staff members and students with disabilities. It was also agreed that universities should build library collections, including nonprint resources, on Disability Studies.
Shared Resources
A number of individuals have sent citation of noteworthy resources to the CTL, and we’d like to share them with you.

Blogs
A lot of people seem to be talking about and using blogs or web logs right now, and they are definitely being used at a variety of educational levels. Julie Upton, R.S.M., the University Provost, sent an article from the August 19th issue of The New York Times: “In the Classroom, We Logs Are the New Bulletin Boards.” This article can be accessed from the Times database at the University Libraries website, and it refers to two helpful blog sites, http://tblog.com and http://movabletype.org. For another article on blogs in teaching go to http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue9_6/huffaker/index.html.

Better Meetings
We all endure more than enough meetings, so the thought that they can be pleasurable seems unrealistic. But this is the theme of an article that Bill Nieter, Assistant Dean in St. John’s College of Liberal Arts and Science, sent. It is available at http://www.ascd.org/publications/class_lead/200406/champion.html. It suggests that teachers can get together for a number of reasons which can enrich their lives and their teaching.

Comprehension
An article recommended by Lori Murphy, Coordinator of the Critical Thinking Skills Program, deals with the problem of the illusion of comprehension that afflicts many students. They think they know the material but discover when they take a test that their understanding was not at all what they thought it was. The article was a posting to the Tomorrow’s Professor website and is available at http://ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/postings/571.html. While you are at this site, click on the “Subscribe” button at the top of the page and join the Tomorrow’s Professor listserv. You will be sent two postings a week on issues related to college teaching. It is an easy way to keep up with the latest thinking on teaching and learning.

Disability Resources
Dr. Angels Belli’s article elsewhere in this issue is a reminder of the challenges of meeting the needs of students with disabilities. If you are interested in learning more, a good place to start is with a website sponsored by the University of Washington and available at http://www.washington.edu/doit/Faculty/Resources.

New Art Image Database Available
The University Libraries are pleased to announce a subscription to a new database, ARTstor, which is an archive of thousands of high resolution art images. ARTstor is a non-profit initiative founded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to create image collections that cover many time periods and cultures in order to support a wide range of educational and scholarly activities. It is a tremendous resource, but please keep in mind that the images are copyrighted, so they may not be posted on unrestricted websites. More information about appropriate usage of ARTstor images can be found on their website. You can access ARTstor by going to the University Libraries’ webpage and clicking on Databases A-Z or Databases by Subject, where ARTstor is listed.

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