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Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education -- A Companion Piece to *Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning*

Peter A. Machonis
Florida International University

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Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education

Peter A. Machonis, Editor



National Collegiate Honors Council

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National Collegiate Honors Council

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**SHATTER THE GLASSY STARE:
IMPLEMENTING EXPERIENTIAL
LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Editor

Peter A. Machonis

A Companion Piece to

Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning

Jeffrey A. Portnoy

Georgia Perimeter College

jportnoy@gpc.edu

General Editor, NCHC Monograph Series

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FAX: (402) 472-9152
Email: nchc@unlserve.unl.edu
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ABOUT THE COVER



John Bailly. *Cienfuegos*, 2007.

Mixed media on paper (30"x 22").

Collection of Bill and Margaret Gellatly.

Cienfuegos was part of an exhibition entitled "Place of Mind," a collaborative show highlighting cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary dialogues between a French-American painter, John Bailly, and a Cuban-American poet, Richard Blanco. In their frequent conversations, they showed each other how to look at each other's work differently. The

painting on the cover represents a portrait of Blanco, whose family comes from the town of Cienfuegos, Cuba. As Bailly states:

I then drew a portrait of Richard from life as he sat in my studio in Miami. I wrote his name, Blanco, in Braille. But this Braille is two-dimensional, intended to be a symbol of the difficulty in communicating. I then drew my favorite line of all his poems, “There should be nothing here I don’t remember.” Richard later shared with me that when I included that line in the drawing, he had not yet realized its significance, just as I had not understood certain parts of my paintings until he shared his thoughts about them. He then wrote a poem using that line as its central theme. This type of conversation between us was, for me, the most wonderful part of our collaboration; we helped each other look at ourselves in a new manner.

In the lexicon of Place as Text, the visual artist and the poet removed each other’s blinders. During small group explorations at NCHC Institutes, participants are deliberately assigned diverse groups representing different backgrounds and fields of specialization. While investigating their assigned areas, participants not only strike up conversations with the people they meet but also with each other. Everyone notices different aspects of the same landscape, helping all of the participants realize that they indeed do have blinders in how they see the world. When these blinders are removed, individuals become better learners and have richer experiences, similar to what the two artists shared.

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Peter A. Machonis
Department of Modern Languages
The Honors College
Florida International University

FOREWORD

BERNICE BRAID

LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY-BROOKLYN

City as Text™ grew out of a particular configuration: course clusters comprised of several disciplines that were organized to address a theme especially resonant with a given site. It was clear that students needed a mechanism to sensitize them to context and to integrate their reading, discussions, and writing. Multiple components—structured explorations repeated over time in various locations; laboratory observations recorded with attention to detail and nuance; formal and informal interviews of people who live, play, work, worship in, and shape their environment—became the experiment that evolved into a versatile exercise we now call Place as Text. Whether “city,” “town,” “village,” or “neighborhood,” any socially constructed enclave we tested yielded similar and spectacular results: students looked, listened, heard, and saw differently and better when the larger place became a text they sought to decipher in terms of the cumulative information they were compiling in their classes. Better yet, they were energized, determined, and persistent about returning to locations, pursuing ideas, and asking questions.

They used their forays into people’s arenas to begin to see how others convert space into place, how others domesticate the enormity of a great metropolis, how others create personal lives unfolded in utterly public places. In this process they also examined how they themselves went about assembling impressions, interpreting interactions, seeing into and beyond the immediate world around them. We who were their instructors in such semesters, or who came to closing symposia to hear students present their findings about local phenomena, began to see the larger implications—and much broader applicability—of these field laboratories.

For one, they opened minds in a remarkably short time. This phenomenon seemed to be in part because time constraints—no more than three months—forced clarity of focus. “Transformation,” students said, was also a product of their perceptions about themselves as active investigators with the inescapable burden of having to present in a public forum work derived from their explorations. At a profound level, students experienced themselves as discoverers of unknown territory.

Experiments with short- and long-term uses of these field activities—in orientation classes; as preliminary steps in selecting and developing research topics; as mapping exercises in foreign or unfamiliar domestic

Foreword

cities—yielded similar outcomes. Age group (use of this methodology with high school students as well as with professional development faculty workshops have been reported in NCHC publications for some time) did not weaken the results; heightened attention, careful analysis, curiosity, self-awareness, and confidence emerged from each fresh application of CAT.

What we who have been using these mapping exercises recognize as “ethnography of a sort”—ways of engaging in anthropologists’ “thick description” and understanding worlds in terms of what Clifford Geertz called “blurred genres”—others who have adopted and adapted versions of CAT learning strategies have referred to as “deep discovery.”

One of the most satisfying adaptations has been the exceptionally brief (no more than five hours) walkabouts in regular use at national and occasionally at regional honors conferences. In those settings, independent but structured explorations that aim at asking questions and amassing possibly useful information about chosen topics function to break down barriers among students and faculty who are strangers to one another; to convey a sense of familiarity in an unfamiliar site; to provide endless material throughout a conference for ongoing conversation; and in some sense to whet the appetite of participants for future adventures in new territory in self-designed explorations.

Another valuable adaptation is the use of this methodology to generate accurate observational skills in and deeper appreciation for the wholeness of a given micro-environment—the often symbiotic relation of the parts to the whole—in natural settings outside cities. In both NCHC Semesters and Faculty Institutes, field examination in ex-urban sites dealing with natural and agricultural themes has proven as powerful as the application of these modalities to urban settings, significantly expanding the range of disciplines that collaborate in any given project.

This monograph, *Shatter the Glassy Stare*, presents in some detail the ways in which Faculty Institutes—professional development opportunities where instructors immerse themselves in site-specific learning activities exactly as students would, though only for several days—allow participants to acquire the skill to design such adventures elsewhere for their own students. Participants undergo the stress that students feel in radically unfamiliar territory, but equally they experience the exhilaration students exhibit when they see patterns emerge from a dizzying array of fresh stimuli. Integrative thinking and connected knowing are energizing and provocative.

What students are acquiring, and what faculty are mastering, is both a way to make meaning out of raw unfiltered experience and the

Bernice Braid

insight that seeking patterns/making connections is how we make our experience meaningful. It is a way to understand what witness really means: to be a participant-observer is a way to be in the world.

Thirty-one years have passed since the first NCHC Honors Semester in 1976 and twenty-nine since the first Faculty Institute in 1978. A small army of us in honors have by now created explorations in multiple disciplines to enrich and deepen our courses. About fifteen years ago one of the almost four dozen exceptional faculty who have served on the Honors Semesters Committee taught the rest of us then serving that the Orientation Laboratory that launches CAT in an NCHC Honors Semester—whether sited in the Grand Canyon or New York City—is Wilderness Training. I am deeply gratified to have had such creative and generous partners join me in developing the flesh and bones of City as Text™, and in helping one another to understand just how CAT works to engage people in learning that becomes a habit of inquiry and fosters relative comfort with the shockingly unfamiliar.

Semesters Faculty Institutes have brought faculty together to experiment with new ways of doing old things, to engage in their own wilderness training. The many talents and disciplinary perspectives of these colleagues, enhanced on site by local experts and leaders, have contributed to the excitement and success of experiential-learning institutes. Facilitators who have orchestrated and led them are acknowledged below. I am personally grateful to these colleagues; to Long Island University's Brooklyn Campus administrative officers, who have supported and encouraged my involvement with CAT and with NCHC; and to one colleague in particular who, whenever silence fell on Committee meetings, urged Publication: Ada Long. She, we, all of us are grateful to Peter Machonis, to whose enthusiasm, dedication, and intelligence we owe the very existence of this monograph.

SEMESTERS INSTITUTE

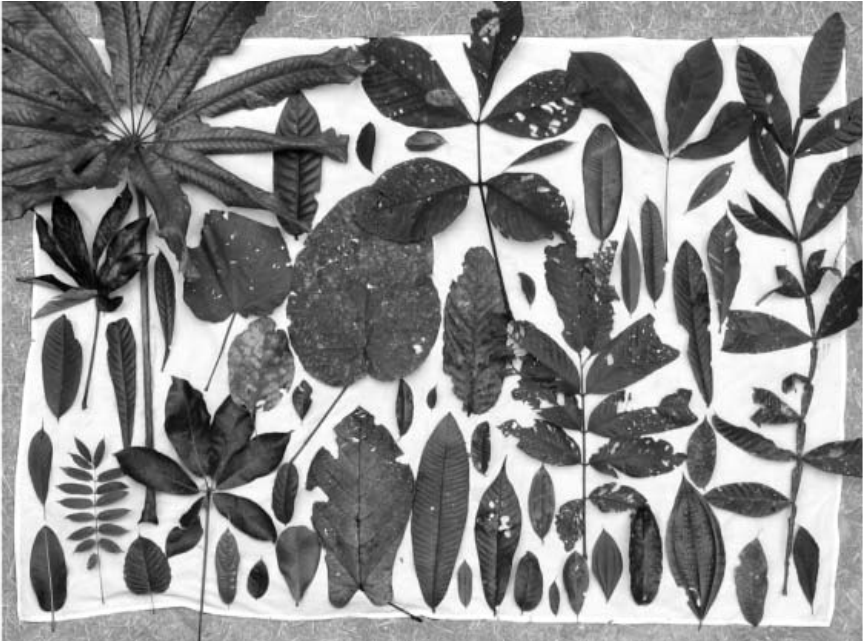
FACILITATORS

Bernice Braid	Long Island University-Brooklyn
Clarence Christian	Southwest Tennessee Community College
William Daniel	Winthrop University
Elaine Eff	State of Maryland Folklore Office
Devon Graham	Florida International University
Ada Long	University of Alabama at Birmingham
Karen Lyons	University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Peter Machonis	Florida International University
Lillian Mayberry	University of Texas-El Paso
Dail Mullins	University of Alabama at Birmingham
Ann Raia	College of New Rochelle
Jim Ruebel	Ball State University
Robert Strikwerda	Indiana University Kokomo
Shirley Forbes Thomas	John Brown University
Matthew S. Witkovsky	National Gallery of Art

2007–2008 HONORS SEMESTER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jan Allen	Community College of Baltimore County-Essex
Elizabeth C. Beck	Iowa State University (Co-Chair)
Kevin Bonine	University of Arizona
Bernice Braid	Long Island University-Brooklyn (Co-Chair)
George Catalano	State University of New York at Binghamton
Clarence Christian	Southwest Tennessee Community College
Craig Cobane	Western Kentucky University
William Daniel	Winthrop University
Devon Graham	Florida International University
Jim Grove	Mount Mercy College
Kim Klein	Shippensburg University
Ada Long	University of Alabama at Birmingham
Kathy Lyon	Winthrop University
Karen Lyons	University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Lydia Lyons	Hillsborough Community College
Peter Machonis	Florida International University
Matt Nickerson	Southern Utah University
Joy Ochs	Mount Mercy College
Jim Ruebel	Ball State University
Robert Strikwerda	Indiana University Kokomo
Shirley Forbes Thomas	John Brown University

INTRODUCTION



Leaves of 50 species of trees in lowland Amazonian
rainforest east of Iquitos, Peru.

PHOTO BY DEVON L. GRAHAM.

INTRODUCTION TO CITY AS TEXT™ AND OVERVIEW OF CONTENTS

The title, *Shatter the Glassy Stare*, stems from one of the essays in this volume in which the author, Devon Graham, talks of witnessing too often “a glazed-over look appearing in students’ eyes” while teaching General Biology. In his “Turning Over a New Leaf,” he not only shares his experiences of participating in a National Collegiate Honors Council Faculty Institute on experiential learning but demonstrates how he has applied this methodology in his own teaching so that now “no professor drones, no eyes glaze, and everyone is engaged.” If you have seen the glare, the gloomy gaze, the glassy stare a bit too often in your classes and would like to replace it with a gleam, an intent glint, or engaged sparkle, then this book is for you.

All of the authors of this volume have participated in an NCHC Faculty Institute. Such institutes are four- to five-day workshops to introduce the concept of experiential learning, in particular City as Text™ or Place as Text methodology, to honors faculty.¹ Although they take place in interesting and sometimes exotic locations, they are not guided tours by any means but are demanding practicums that require active participation on the part of everyone. The institutes require not only dynamic interaction among the participants, including on-site writing, which is shared out loud with fellow institute members, but advanced preparation through reading substantial packets of materials. These institutes are not for what one might think of as typical professors, as implied in the first essay immediately following this introduction, in which Joy Ochs, a participant in the 2006 Miami Faculty Institute, gives the reader an effective depiction of the institute learning process. Participants, generally limited to a group of about fifteen, become simultaneously active learners and disoriented students, who must develop a connection with a place. They are all new students who meet each other in a novel location, try to make sense of it, and explore its ambiguities in just a few short days. They not only learn and write about a particular place, but they also acquire a hands-on experience of a new pedagogy and come away excited and energized. Many apply what they have learned to their own courses afterwards, and as this collection of essays illustrates, the methodology learned is easily applicable to many disciplines and types of courses.

City as Text™ methodology, designed by Bernice Braid, Director of the Honors Program at Long Island University, and first implemented

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in the 1976 NCHC Honors Semester in Washington, D.C., is based on the concept of active or experiential learning.² Over the past thirty years, it has subsequently been further developed and refined by members of the NCHC Semesters Committee and, since applications are not necessarily limited to a city, is also referred to as Place as Text (Braid & Long). In addition to Faculty Institutes and Honors Semesters, an abbreviated version of City as Text™ is currently in use at the annual NCHC conference: an intense three- to four-hour structured exploration of the conference city and surrounding environment. At these conference walkabouts, students and faculty actively investigate not only the local culture and history but also the local economy, ecology, geography, and politics. Participants are split into small groups with an assigned area of the city to explore in their three to four hours. They return for a general discussion at the end of their walkabout to exchange insights with those who have explored other areas of the same city. The idea is that the sum of multiple experiences provides a better view than just one person or one group doing the same exercise.

In Appendix C and D of this monograph, we provide complete instructions on how to organize a City as Text™ excursion and what to tell learners beforehand, along with the basic exploratory strategies used in these exercises: mapping, observing, listening, and reflecting. In a nutshell, City as Text™ entails explorations by small and diverse groups of an area; not all participants should have the same background, major, or field of specialization, nor should they be part of a clique, be good friends, or share many of the same interests. It works best if these groups, usually three or four students per group, are assigned by the facilitator of the exercise rather than self-chosen. Each small group is assigned a specific neighborhood of the larger general area to explore. Each group elects a leader who must give a short report to the entire group on what the group saw, how they interacted with locals, even what they ate in their area. Learners are asked to *map*, to note the traffic flow and social activity; to *observe*, to look for the expected as well as the unexpected, to look at everything from signage to architecture; and to *listen*, to strike up conversations with members of the community and to get a feel for the population.

After exploring and reflecting on their assigned areas, each small group returns to the initial location at an appointed time for a debriefing: a discussion and a sharing of the day's experiences with the entire class or large group. One or two experts in city politics, architecture, preservation, or any relevant subject matter also attend the large group discussion, but these experts do not lecture. Rather than tell the

Introduction to City as Text™ and Overview of Contents

participants what they should have noticed, the experts listen attentively to the groups' reports, briefly react to what the participants saw, and answer their curiosity-driven questions. Rather than the traditional top-down learning approach where the expert's lecture predetermines what to look for, in this bottom-up approach to learning, the students notice the details, and the ideas and questions follow from their observations. They are active learners, full of excitement, thinking and discovering for themselves, with no glassy stares.

This oral reflective module is then supplemented with a written component in which the participants reflect on the day's experience as self-conscious observers and make connections. Written assignments and observation exercises associated with this method take many shapes, and various examples are detailed in Appendix E, but the one highlighted in this volume is the *Mythos, Logos, Ethos* writing exercise used at many NCHC Faculty Institutes.³ Based on N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, this exercise enables participants to reflect on the richness of the field experience in a three-part essay focusing on some aspect of the environment they explored. These three parts are connected, but each is told from a different perspective: the first is a legend or myth (*mythos*), the second is a fact-based episode (*logos*) connected to the myth, and the third is a personal reflection (*ethos*)—again connected to the myth and the historical account—that shows how the participant has gathered a new insight into the specific location or theme of the institute.

One final but important component of this methodology—not always evident in a brief Faculty Institute, but implemented in a longer Honors Semester—is the recursive element of learning. In an attempt to replicate David A. Kolb's learning cycle, students, energized by their first City as Text™ excursion and discussion and eager to learn more, go out and explore again, reflect even more on what as well as how they observe, relate it to what was already noted in previous excursions and discussions, consider other ideas and implications, and write additional reflective essays. During the course of a semester, the professor brings in more experts for class interactions, perhaps divides up the student groups in another fashion, and expands or focuses the areas of exploration, all the while commenting on the ongoing writing assignments. Essentially, a true City as Text™ experience is never complete with just one round of exploration and essays but continues throughout the semester and can easily turn into a semester-long project.

This collection of essays, in essence a companion piece to Braid & Long, is devoted to NCHC Faculty Institutes: it describes what takes place

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during these experiences and, more excitingly, what faculty have subsequently developed on their own campuses. *Shatter the Glassy Stare* is divided into six sections or chapters: Campus as Text; Local Neighborhoods; Travel Courses; Science-Related Applications; *Mythos, Logos, Ethos* Writing Exercise; and Philosophical and Practical Considerations. Although some essays overlap these categories, we have placed them in the most relevant section. All of the authors have participated in an NCHC Faculty Institute and have implemented City as Text™ methodology into their own teaching. Some authors, however, have just recently returned from the 2007 New Orleans Institute and have not yet completely implemented their projects while others, who have already initiated changes to specific areas of the curriculum, might also refer to other anticipated applications in their conclusions. What is clearly emphasized throughout this volume is that colleagues in honors have successfully applied City as Text™ pedagogy to multiple disciplines and in many types of courses and not just in the humanities or in honors.

Chapter 1, **Campus as Text**, offers three very different applications for discovering the university or college campus. In addition to the campus orientation facet, Anita Guynn has freshmen explore the strong ethnic and historic ties that the state university has with its surrounding community in “Town and Gown.” In the next essay, “From Cigarette Butts to the ‘Stacks’ and Beyond,” Mary Lou Pfeiffer specifically applies Campus as Text to a group of honors freshmen living in the same space on campus, Honors Place, but also uses it in an advanced World Religions course in which students discover what they consider to be sacred among the profane on campus. Whereas the first two essays discuss implementations in freshmen orientation courses, Joy Ochs shows how faculty can learn about the sociology of space and City as Text™ methodology in “Campus as Text: A Faculty Workshop,” while exploring and completing an assessment on their own, ostensibly familiar, college campus.

Chapter 2 illustrates how City as Text™ can be applied off-campus to learn about **Local Neighborhoods**. In “The Lower Ninth Ward: First Impressions, Final Realizations, Future Plans,” Janice Allen, who explored this neighborhood during the 2007 New Orleans Institute, speaks about participants’ gaining a new appreciation of an interconnected and shared humanity and the circumstances in which that happens. She plans to implement City as Text™ learning strategies in Sparrows Point, a tight-knit Baltimore neighborhood threatened by the closure of a large tidewater steel plant. In the second essay of this chapter, Peter Machonis shows how he uses “Little Haiti as Text” in French

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Linguistics classes not only to expand students' multicultural awareness by exploring a significant local Miami neighborhood but also as a means for students to discover the nature and origins of Haitian Creole and its relationship to French.

The **Travel Courses** in Chapter 3 are a natural forum for implementing City as Text™ strategies. In “Adapting an Honors Pedagogy to a General Studies Travel Course,” Joy Ochs shows how easy it is to adapt this methodology even before leaving campus by giving students a blank map. During a January-term course to Belize, her students not only learn about different ecosystems, cultural practices, and contemporary issues but also improve their skills in written and oral communication, retain knowledge, and appreciate the way it is constructed. In the next essay, Rick Ostrander shows how to adapt City as Text™ strategies to a rural German setting with “The Adopt-a-Village Project.” To learn about traditional German life and culture, small groups of students are assigned a different German village to explore by bicycle. At the end of the study abroad program, each group presents their adopted village to the larger group in what has become the centerpiece of the German Studies curriculum.

Since sciences often require that students assimilate or memorize large quantities of data, one might think that City as Text™ strategies, in which students become independent learners, are not appropriate for **Science-Related Applications**, the focus of Chapter 4. In “Turning Over a New Leaf,” however, Devon Graham addresses how science students can be easily engaged and illustrates an experiential-learning approach that uses leaves to interest students in botany. He focuses on the learning process by having small groups of students collect different types of leaves, which they then organize and classify themselves. In “Gourmet to Galapagos,” Kevin Bonine illustrates scientific applications even further with three different cases: Table as Text, Transportation as Text, and Intertidal as Text. In the first, a highlight is student preparation of a sustainable meal; in the second, small groups of students have to reach a specific location by using different modes of transportation; and finally, separate groups explore three different intertidal ecosystems in the Galapagos Islands to understand how these systems interact and overlap.

Chapter 5 is devoted to the **Mythos, Logos, Ethos Writing Exercise**. In “A Change in Pedagogical Style,” Kathy Lyon portrays her participation in the 1998 Crete Faculty Institute as an experience that truly transformed her. What she understood about perspective from her brief observation writing was further developed in the longer exercise. She

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learned to look at the world through a different lens and to think and write creatively on issues she had never before considered. It also changed her approach to teaching and played an important role in her development of an award-winning general education seminar. The next two authors not only wrote fascinating, yet quite different, three-part essays during the 2006 Memphis Blues Terrains Institute, but they have already implemented this writing exercise in their own classes. John Kandl, in “Crossroads and Beyond,” has developed a first-year honors writing course exploring the creative process; the experiential-learning component takes place at the Cleveland Museum and the Rock Hall of Fame. Students keep a *Mythos, Logos, Ethos* journal throughout the semester while they become engaged in understanding the creative process not only as a research topic but as a creative writing experience of their own. Stephen Nichols in “Do You Get the Blues?” shows how to use the *Mythos, Logos, Ethos* exercise in a Christianity and American Culture class, where students visit a non-Christian place of worship as the experiential-learning element. Following a student’s suggestion, Nichols has integrated a fourth component of the writing exercise, an *Apologia*, in which students go beyond the personal *Ethos* section by examining the broad implications of the experiential-learning process.

Finally, Chapter 6 examines some **Philosophical and Practical Considerations** in implementing City as Text™ methodology. In “Platonic Thoughts on the Frustrations of Experiential Learning and Teaching,” Alan Grose cites Plato’s allegory of the cave in presenting some practical advice on what to do when the city under investigation “fails to make sense.” Inspired by the learning activities of the New Orleans Institute, Grose has his “Idea of the Human” seminar students examine monuments and memorials near Ground Zero and do active research on how life in New York City has changed since the events of 9/11; he also offers some useful suggestions for dealing with ambiguities and students’ frustrations. In “Experiential Learning and City as Text™: Reflections on Kolb and Kolb,” Robert Strikwerda examines not only the philosophical implications of Kolb’s learning cycle but also some of its pedagogical difficulties. Invoking Aristotle’s peripatetic teaching method, Strikwerda emphasizes the importance of walking—together and in small multifaceted groups—as an integral component of student learning.

Readers interested in participating in an institute, designing one of their own, or simply implementing City as Text™ teaching strategies in their own courses will find additional practical materials following the essays in this volume. A short description of NCHC Faculty Institutes

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that have taken place from 1998 to 2007, along with a template for institute design, are given in Appendix A and Appendix B. Detailed instructions on how to organize a City as Text™ excursion and what to tell learners beforehand can be found in Appendix C and Appendix D, and follow-up written assignment suggestions are detailed in Appendix E.

Endnotes

¹City as Text™ was designed by Bernice Braid for the National Honors Semesters and has been widely adapted to other uses. The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) first introduced the term at the United Nations Honors Semester in New York City in 1981. At the national level, it was launched at the 1983 NCHC Conference in Philadelphia. The trademark and copyrights are held by the National Collegiate Honors Council, which should be acknowledged by all who use the title and design concept.

²More information on the intellectual assumptions and educational foundations of Honors Semesters can be found in Braid 1990. For a comprehensive description of Honors Semesters, the interested reader is referred to Braid & Long 2000: in particular, pages 14–22 for an overview and pages 81–85 for planning issues. Details on NCHC conference walkabouts are also found in that work: pages 23–25 for a general description and pages 78–80 for planning.

³For more information on the genesis of this writing exercise within honors and NCHC, see Shirley Forbes Thomas' essay on pages 32–39 in Braid & Long.

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“YOU’RE NOT TYPICAL PROFESSORS, ARE YOU?”

REFLECTIONS ON THE NCHC FACULTY INSTITUTE IN MIAMI AND THE EVERGLADES¹

JOY OCHS
MOUNT MERCY COLLEGE

At the close of the NCHC Faculty Institute in Miami and the Everglades, our group went out for a celebratory dinner at a Cuban restaurant in Miami. Between the main course and the dessert, one of our group struck up a conversation with the young man selling flowers on the sidewalk outside. As we left the restaurant a short while later, knots of participants still locked in animated conversation, the flower vendor remarked, “You’re not typical professors, are you?”

He was responding to the effects of our City as Text™ experience, and he hit on the quality that makes City as Text such a unique and important pedagogical method: we are not typical professors, and we do not teach typical classes. Our students, even the flower vendor, can immediately sense the difference.

What happened in Miami that produced such a noticeable effect?

At the beginning of our institute, we allowed ourselves to experience the disorientation of not knowing. As experts in our fields, we can all too easily hide behind a mask of knowing more than our students. Not knowing is an uncomfortable place to be. But for our students, the disorientation of not knowing is their primary state of being. By putting ourselves as instructors in the same position as our students, we create a space for a new kind of learning to take place. The subject matter is no longer a holy relic to be passed carefully from master to disciple. Instead, the subject matter emerges in the process of examination by teacher and students alike. In fact, in the City as Text approach, there is no distinction between teacher and student: the learning process is undertaken equally by all.

For many participants of this faculty institute, the disorientation of not knowing began the moment we stepped off the plane. If Miami was our subject, we knew scarcely anything about it, from the climate (we northerners were simply dressed wrong) to the linguistic barriers (some shopkeepers speak only Spanish). Even the institute’s choice of hotel was disorienting, replacing the expected box hotel and all its amenities with a quirky and incommodious hostel. My room, just big

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enough for a bed and a chair, was located a block away from the front desk, in a courtyard behind an unmarked iron gate. I had not packed shampoo, pens, or an iron, expecting to find them in my room. The Clay Hotel offered none of these; my room also lacked an alarm clock and a working telephone. One member of our group was so thrown off balance by this unfamiliar environment that he actually left to go book a room at a more traditional hotel before lack of vacancies drove him back again. However, the strangeness of this environment served a specific purpose: it knocked us out of the complacency of routine and forced us to interact with the environment in innovative ways. No alarm clock? Open the curtains and sleep facing the place where the sun will come up. Program your cell phone to vibrate in the morning. Purchase a cheap clock at the local thrift store. In a state of disorientation, we had to be more receptive to our environment than if everything happened according to expectations. This initial disorientation primed us for the City as Text excursion on the second day.

On the second day of the institute, our task was to move from the disorientation of not knowing to the responsibility of finding out for ourselves. The City as Text methodology calls for three levels of information-gathering: mapping, observing, and listening. We were sent out in groups of three to different sections of Miami Beach, where we would make our observations and then report to the group. We first had to map our area by defining the boundaries and parameters of the space. The boundaries are not simply geographical; we looked at things like patterns of usage (what defines this as a residential rather than a commercial space?), demographics (is this an integrated or segregated neighborhood? high income or low income?), and design (does this space have a coherent sense of place, or is it fragmented?). Next, we made observations and listened to residents in order to discern the significance of the place. Patterns not immediately obvious from the mapping exercise emerged.

The disorientation of not knowing primed us to be receptive to our subjects, to see them in unanticipated ways. The topic of our institute was “Built and Endangered Environments,” with on-site exploration of Miami Beach and the Everglades. Without setting foot in either place, we all reasonably assumed that Miami Beach was the built and the Everglades the endangered environment. But once we were on site and responsible for finding out for ourselves, we found we had to reconsider and revise our definitions of “built” and “endangered.” Tasked with learning about the nature of these two places, we quickly found that we had to discard what we thought we knew and pay attention to what was

actually there. For instance, my perceptions of a modest residential neighborhood in Miami Beach changed significantly when I learned that monolithic high-density, high-rise housing was encroaching on the dwindling areas of single-family residences. Under the pressure of high-profit developments, this more modest neighborhood was endangered. Already, workers in the service sector, such as the doorman and the street sweeper we interviewed, could not afford to live in Miami Beach. What will happen as luxury condominiums replace even more of the modest dwellings? Even the beach of Miami Beach is endangered as waterfront condominium complexes wall off sections of beach for their residents' private use.

The Everglades were no less surprising when we explored them on our third day. Our preconceptions of this place were of a wilderness inhabited by alligators and mosquitoes and prohibitive to human intrusion. Our actual experience of this wilderness left a far more positive impression as we gawped in delight at the sight of wood storks and gallinules. But finally, as we learned about the bedrock and the periphyton and the sedges and the Water Conservation District, our perceptions changed once again as we understood this endangered wetland in its own way as a built environment: both built by natural processes into a complex ecosystem over thousands of years, and built in the sense that the points of human intersection with this natural area are carefully controlled. The paved trail at Shark Valley creates conditions that attract more wildlife and simultaneously constrains human opportunities to view this wildlife. Additionally, by some human calculations, the Everglades are allowed to exist only because they serve the anthropocentric function of drinking water reservoir. In the process of finding out for ourselves, finding out by standing knee-deep in water with algal muck between our toes, we resolved our hazy notions of Everglades-as-wilderness into myriad facets of the place as it is.

A product of the responsibility of finding out for ourselves was an increased self-awareness of ourselves as learners. Participating in experiential learning does not allow students the passive option of hanging back and forming an opinion later. Immersed in the experience, one must constantly assess and refine one's perceptions. This process is enhanced by working with others. Perhaps the most transformative moments came during the debriefing portions of the institute, where, after time for private writing and reflection, groups and individuals shared what they had learned about our two onsite locations. Because as observers we all came from different backgrounds—biologists, literary scholars, a policy maker, a geologist, a chemist—no two people saw

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the same details or discerned the same patterns. Returning from a walkabout and comparing notes, we sharply focused our own observations because of the context provided by others. My own observations about workers in the service sector not being able to afford housing picked up new resonances when a biologist described the process of “unnatural selection” at work in the poor neighborhoods. In the Everglades, individuals focused on water, the plants, the reptiles, the birds, the manmade structures, and from all of these a more comprehensive picture emerged. Excitingly, our subject came into being during the process of exploring it. And our self-awareness as observers increased in the process.

To me, the most important aspect of this whole experience was this: that no matter what the fifteen of us, professors from around the country and from diverse disciplines, were doing, whether we were corporally experiencing the disorientation of not knowing, gleefully finding out for ourselves plunged up to the elbows in Everglades water, or deliberately analyzing our own self-awareness as learners, all of us, at every stage, were passionately thinking about how we could carry this pedagogy back into our own classrooms, how we could energize our students as much as we were being energized. This topic was the conversation as we pedaled bicycles through Shark Valley, this was the conversation as we pounded the streets of Miami Beach, this was the conversation in the hotel lobby and elevators, and this was the same conversation that was still going on as we took our leave of each other outside the Cuban restaurant on that last night of the institute. It was this conversation that the flower vendor overheard, and it is this conversation that makes his observation so fitting: we are not typical professors, and the NCHC Faculty Institute is not a typical learning experience.

Endnote

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CHAPTER 1: CAMPUS AS TEXT



Participants explore
campus as text
at Mount Mercy College.



Borders, paths,
landmarks, and nodes
on the Mount Mercy campus.

PHOTOS BY TIANZHENG WU.

PLACE AS TEXT: TOWN AND GOWN

ANITA R. GUYNN

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT PEMBROKE

Introduction

This past spring, at NCHC's 2007 Recovery/Discovery Faculty Institute in New Orleans, I encountered anew the city that I had long loved but also learned that I had never really known it. The four days—was it only four days?—we spent walking, talking with residents, eating in diners, taking buses, and listening were deeply meaningful. We came to New Orleans as twenty individuals and left as part of a group. We left New Orleans having learned a great deal and feeling motivated to learn more. Group cohesion, learning, and motivation: what more could anyone aim for in designing a freshman orientation experience?

Now that I am back on my campus, I am excited about providing my students with the same kind of experience I had in the Big Easy and have proposed achieving this same type of cohesion and excitement about learning by using Place as Text pedagogy in a first-year learning community (LC). Although our campus setting, a rural, largely agricultural county in southeast North Carolina, cannot provide a "City" as Text experience, the campus and surrounding small town can serve as complementary sites of inquiry for our new students.

The University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNCP), the smallest of the sixteen UNC campuses, was founded in 1887 as Croatan Normal School to educate Native Americans. Pembroke today is the center of the homeland of the Lumbee tribe. UNCP's 5,200 undergraduate students include a total minority enrollment of 49% and a growing number of Hispanic and international students ("What Makes Pembroke Pembroke?").

Given its setting, historic links to the surrounding community, and diverse student body, the university is well positioned to use Place as Text pedagogy to promote its mission, which includes: "enriching the intellectual, economic, social, and cultural life of the region," preparing students for service to the region, and instilling in its students "a continuing appreciation for diverse cultures and an active concern for the well-being of others" ("UNCP Mission Statement").

Learning Communities at UNCP

First-year learning communities at UNCP are a new option for students who seek a more unified and supportive first-semester experience. After a single pilot learning community (LC) two years ago, this fall we are offering three LCs, two of which will apply Place as Text. In an LC, a cohort of about twenty students enroll in linked courses, plus one or two additional courses that they choose individually. The LC is composed of four academic courses for a total of ten credit-hours. A three-credit English Composition course and a one-credit Freshman Seminar are always included; two additional three-credit courses are chosen from among popular general education courses, such as introductory psychology, sociology, biology, or religion. Both Freshman Seminar and English Composition, through conversation and written assignments, integrate the learning community experience. The learning community setting, where students discuss texts from different disciplinary perspectives with different faculty guides, offers a perfect opportunity for students to digest and understand the wealth of data gathered in Place as Text experiences.

The Heart of Place as Text: Freshman Seminar

The university's Freshman Seminar course, required of all incoming freshmen, is designed to help students "develop the skills and explore the issues that are critical to their success," become familiar "with the many services that are offered through the University," and promote "personal development, exploration, and well-being" ("Freshman Seminar"). Taught by faculty from across the campus, this course often includes assignments like campus scavenger hunts, interviews with faculty or staff members, visits to various campus offices, and group presentations. When it is part of a learning community, this course provides an opportunity for addressing students' academic and cocurricular concerns; in fact, material introduced in other LC courses is often discussed and integrated in the Freshman Seminar setting.

The proposed Freshman Seminar employing Place as Text pedagogy will require students to spend several days exploring the campus in teams and reporting to the whole group on their findings. By looking, not being told what to look for, students will discover a range of facts about the campus. They will become familiar with the university's current facilities, as well as explore its less-documented feel. Where are various departments located? Which student lounges have big-screen TV's? Where do students in a given major really hang out? What is the

atmosphere in the snack bar? What nicknames do students have for administrators? They will also encounter the history of the campus as graven in the names and dates on buildings and as represented by the memories of long-time faculty and staff members, from the professor emerita in American Indian Studies, who is a UNCP alumna, to a cafeteria worker or groundskeeper whose grandchild will be enrolling next year. Some class meetings will serve as whole-group debriefings, where students pool their findings, draw conclusions, and pose new questions. As the semester progresses, the seminar instructor will suggest useful written or Internet sources and invite guest speakers to help answer the questions students have developed. Instructors in the learning community will visit each other's classes, contributing questions and information from their own fields.

Homework Meets the Real World

While students generate questions and seek answers about the campus, the focus in the second half of the twelve-week Freshman Seminar will shift to the community surrounding UNCP, a natural progression where many area residents' surnames are the names of campus buildings, where many students have family in the area, and where many students have off-campus jobs. Again, students will explore neighborhoods in teams; they will sit on park benches, have lunch in a diner, and shop at the downtown stores. Information they gather about the community (Where is daycare available? Where is the best quick lunch on a student's budget? How has the town changed in the last ten years? What is the local system of government?) will connect to information in other learning community courses and will encourage students to integrate and apply that information in focused and meaningful ways.

For example, students could discuss their findings about the tribal system of governance and its relationship to the state of North Carolina in their introductory political science class. The learning community's introductory economics course might examine the effects of plant closings, tobacco regulation, and recent small business initiatives—all developments discovered by students in their Place as Text walkabouts and conversations. All these topics could be discussed in the Freshman Seminar and, depending on the kinds of curricular coordination agreed upon by the faculty in the learning community, could be the subject of papers for the English Composition course.

Conclusion

New students step onto college campuses excited, nervous, and eager to make friends and explore their new surroundings. Often, that curiosity can be quashed by repetitive orientation lectures. While some information, such as registration procedures and safety awareness, must be provided to students promptly, much of the fascinating lore of the campus would be better left to students' own discovery processes as fostered by Place as Text assignments and debriefings. Students would become more confident as they come to trust themselves as observers and researchers; they would be encouraged to seek personally relevant information; they would depend on their classmates as fellow explorers; they would better understand connections between the university and its community; and they would apply classroom knowledge to their everyday surroundings. Involving first-year, first-semester students in the life of the campus and of the community, inviting them to discover these new settings rather than being lectured to about them, can prepare students for meaningful engagement throughout their college careers and beyond. I know from my New Orleans experience that Place as Text is an effective and exciting pedagogy; I cannot wait to see how our students, both newcomers to Pembroke and the many who think they already know the town, will respond to it.

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FROM CIGARETTE BUTTS TO THE “STACKS” AND BEYOND

MARY LOU PFEIFFER

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

An academic active-learning event in January 2006 significantly influenced the content and design for my coursework at Florida International University (FIU) in the Honors College, the Department of Religious Studies, and Women’s Studies. The NCHC Faculty Institute entitled “Miami and the Everglades, Built and Endangered Environments” introduced me to “active learning” exercises (Braid & Long) and City as Text™ pedagogy. These experiences greatly influenced the courses I taught in spring and fall 2006, and they continue to influence my course development. The first results were two experimental exercises, “Campus as Text: Finding the Sacred among the Profane” and “Discovering FIU through Campus as Text for Freshman Year Experience.” Both offerings were successful adventures in learning that captured the minds and interests of students in religion and honors and offered them a unique participatory experience. The results were reflected in the positive course evaluations.

The Institute: Miami Beach and the Everglades

Our first assignment at the January 2006 NCHC Institute was to write about our initial impressions of the city of Miami Beach. I hesitated to write anything because my mental images were seasoned by the experience of living in Miami for more than twenty years rather than from perceiving the Beach as a first-time visitor. When confronted with the assignment, I realized my first impressions could be drawn from my family’s past when my maternal grandparents settled on Miami Beach in the late 1920’s. Thus, the following essay emerged:

Driving across the causeway offers me the realization of why Chris and her family moved from the Beach back to the mainland: *traffic!* I am driving east to South Beach on a six-lane highway at 5:35 p.m. and I am blocked on all sides by creeping automobiles traveling about 10–15 miles per hour. As I pass the Fisher Island ferry sign, I slip into a mesmerized moment—a lapse in time—recalling my grandparents’ first habitat on Miami Beach in 1925 in a Quonset hut on Fisher Island. What

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a change in the skyline and life style in 80 years: no ocean view anymore from the causeway; now my vista is filled with high-rise buildings silhouetted against the purple sky . . . a “mini” Manhattan . . . one that I’m not certain I like! The Beach has again become “the place to see and be seen.” As I turn onto Washington from 5th Street, I’m met with parking meter chaos on both sides of the street. Uh-oh! All the meters seemed to be blocked off in canvas “no parking” signs. I hope I can find a spot by the time I reach the Wolfsonian, the gathering location for the institute participants. Ah, luck is with me: a spot large enough to park my truck and I have plenty of quarters to spare. (Graham & Machonis 14–15)

The second essay topic for the institute, the Florida Everglades, differed vastly from the cityscape of Miami Beach. No map to follow, no sidewalks to tread, only the wilderness to experience:

The Everglades—part of me, my mother, my grandmother Earth, my womb—the majestic world of wonder that always puts me in my place on the planet, as only a speck in part of the ecosystem: not greater, not lesser, but connected—webbed among the amazing multitudes of species I encountered today. There are so many more creatures than I have witnessed in all my visits to the Everglades. Can I remember to be humble in light of this amazing wilderness that needs to be shared with all, yet carefully controlled from the masses? “If the skeeters don’t git ya, then the gators will . . .” is the theme for the day. The gators were everywhere, not in Gainesville it seems, but here in South Florida in full force. I usually go to the Flamingo section of Everglades National Park, not Shark Valley; therefore my perception, my “vista-scape” awakened and excited in me a renewed sense of awe and honor for my family, my home, my sacred beloved Mother Earth. The Glades are listed as one of the unique international wonders of the world. Deep in my psyche and soul, I chant, I cry and pray that the human community will protect our Glades, our flowing river of clean, pure water. I want to touch every person in the US, particularly those out of South Florida, drawing each into a sacred relationship with this “River of Grass” that is a gift of creation, our fresh water supply. This is American “sacred space.” It differs markedly from the profane proliferation of city as text: South Beach . . . for without the Everglades, “SoBe” [the vernacular

for South Beach] as it is would not “be,” but the Glades might forever be, particularly if we protect it as our clear water source. (Graham & Machonis 43)

Campus as Text:

A Search for the Sacred among the Profane

During the spring semester after my participation in the institute, I was teaching an evening course in World Religions. The main concentration involved discovering the sacred, from the literary texts of Mircea Eliade and Beldon C. Lane, sacred sites themselves, and a personal sense of the meaning of “sacred.” Using the visual and descriptively written techniques from *Place as Text*, I divided my thirty students into six groups of five. Each group was given instructions to walk out of the classroom in a specified direction—east, south, west, and north, with one at ground level in the center atrium of the building, and the final group instructed to ascend the stairway to the top of the building—recreating a similarity to the six sacred directions of many indigenous tribes, the four cardinal directions, plus above and below. The assignment for each group was to record their collective “vista-scape” images on paper. I presented no further instructions except that each person was to write her or his own list, and in the aftermath their group would discuss what might be considered sacred vs. what they viewed as the profane. The following includes some examples from their observations:

The group facing west commented on the many trees and root systems in their view, noting that the trees had been “whacked off at the top.” They noticed much construction development, a little lake, dumpsters, and many different shades of green among rows of trees. They claimed they saw too much trash and thousands of cigarette butts. The sunset dominated the list for the idea of the sacred, coupled with two pieces of sculpted art. The southern group noticed students of diverse ethnicity walking along pathways. The students were self-involved and did not look around but stared down, seemingly oblivious to the landscape. The walkway that leads from their dormitories to their study places, that is stepped on thousands of times, seemed mundane. The construction reminded them of the evolution of humankind: we use our minds more than our bodies, and we can build great and beautiful structures, but litter is prevalent everywhere; again, they noticed cigarette butts everywhere. Trees with other plants attached to them

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and weird root systems captured the sacred image for them. The atrium group noticed birds flying and nesting inside the atrium where there was a canopy of palm trees with dirty fronds; light rays to sustain the plants streamed through the glass roof, but the fronds received no water from above. A birdbath filled with water purified the space, creating the sacred. This group remarked upon a billboard with posters promoting free speech, opportunities within the university, tutors, and graffiti, but more prevalent was the comment regarding the cigarette butts that adorned the atrium garden ground covering. The eastern group discovered a fountain that should have motivated people through its sound, but it was empty, not flowing. They felt the fountain should have been the sacred element, but they selected instead the colorful plants, flowers, and different shades of green that mark the pathways. They commented that grass along with the warm and luscious weather added beauty to the sacred sense of the landscape, but again the cigarette butts around the east wall injected the profane that disturbed the sacred element.

After their outdoor excursion, the groups gathered to write a collaborative essay and report their shared efforts with the class. The exercise became an adventure and was an immediate success. It sparked a lively discussion of the sacred vs. the profane, with the sacred seeming illusory to some, but several of the groups grasped the idea of water as purification, promoting a sense of the sacred; the western group overwhelmingly laid claim to the sunset as their sacred entity because it evoked a personal feeling of sacredness in its beauty. This exercise promoted such an unusual and strong group dynamic that I continued the exercise the following week with an in-class extemporaneous essay: a compilation from each group’s presentation followed by a final synthesis of the entire exercise relating the sacred and the profane in landscapes. The prize for the most profane was cited by all but one group: the collection of cigarette butts on the ground surrounding the building in every direction and in the atrium. Despite no overall consensus regarding the sacred, the butts succeeded in representing profanity.

The course evaluations validated the overwhelmingly positive response to the Campus as Text assignment. Nearly every student mentioned the CAT exercise. The assignment was one of the highlights of the course because, according to them, it brought insight and understanding to the sacred in a profane vista. Many students commented that they would like to see an inclusion of active-learning exercises such as this one in other disciplines and courses.

Freshman Year Experience

A second application of my NCHC Institute experience was a “Freshman Year Experience” course to introduce honors freshmen to university life. I designed a three-week experience and created four groups of three or four students each. I gave them each disposable cameras and asked that they document their findings visually. The instructions were to locate and photograph twenty specified places, items of interest, and people from all walks of life on campus. The list included the President’s home, the Provost’s office, the Governor’s office, a place in dire need of repair, the most decorated professor, the newest faculty member, a faculty member originating from the farthest distance from the main campus at FIU, a sacred place, the dean of each college in the university, the Obelisk of Peace, a hidden stairway, a neglected sight, and “the stacks.”

Certainly, today’s libraries have few, if any, stacks due to digitizing data, and the students’ conceptual stacks were quite unusual. Some found stacks of books that qualified as the stacks for them. Another group found a corner of the fifth floor, hidden away from most students, that they called the stacks. Only one group asked a librarian about the stacks. Her reply was, “The stacks are antiquated research areas available only to those with written permission.”

After the students completed their search-and-snap mission, locating the persons and items listed, they processed the film and compiled their results into a scrapbook-like form called “CAT at FIU.” The Campus as Text results, splendidly created works of art and PowerPoint presentations, far surpassed my expectations. The students began with unknowns and paved a path that allowed them to integrate themselves into campus life where the entire campus replaced the classroom and texts. FIU became their canvas! They synthesized a familiarity with FIU that most students do not experience. They presented compilations during the final class session of the semester, which was indeed memorable for everyone and gave each student a unique university personhood. Each of the presentations exhibited boundless creativity. One group even visited the President’s house during preparation for a gala event. They covertly photographed some of the preparations and themselves prior to the event.

The freshmen groups that participated in the Campus as Text project lived in the dormitory “Honors Place.” They shared their enthusiasm and experiences regarding the exercise with the dorm resident counselor, Brad Shuck (the Associate Director of Career Services at FIU). In turn, he came to me inquiring about the CAT project that so

From Cigarette Butts to the “Stacks” and Beyond

impressed the students. He commented they were excited and consumed with the exercise, and he wanted to know more about it. I shared with him my ideas and gave him my copy of *Place as Text*, and by the time we met again, he had designed his own experiential activity for those employed in career services. Using the camera idea, he allowed each team time to learn about each other, from each other, and with each other through unknown realities, thus creating a visual representation of campus through the team’s eyes.

Conclusions

I discovered the living laboratory presented in Braid & Long and the working NCHC Institute to be extremely effective in eliminating boundaries for the creative imagination of the students. The strategies and group dynamics I witnessed in the classroom that followed the sacred vs. profane and CAT experiences were better than expected. In fact, they were superb. The active hands-on methodology, as I discovered, is without bounds and is a gem for integrating students in a group where some might otherwise be less involved and lose interest. I found the ideas from Braid & Long easily adaptable to nearly all facets of my teaching.

I am currently working with an idea to take this pedagogical approach into my Honors Biomedical Ethics class. I am creating a person and place as text methodology for presenting ethical dilemmas in science and medicine because of the general lack of understanding regarding diversity and others’ belief systems. One of the more effective methods to teach diversity, particularly biodiversity, is to actively engage the students with each other, their respective environments, and differences in education when confronting ethical situations that create havoc in society. In another Honors course with the central theme of “Values and Authority,” I am designing a “Dictators and Democracy, War and Peace” exercise that lends itself to active learning in a living laboratory environment. Each team of students will design a make-believe country, present it as a dictatorship and as a democracy, and determine how the fictional country’s residents might respond in times of war and peace. The entire class will participate in the decision as to which environment allows the country to prosper and survive. My hope is that the students will challenge each other’s designs and ideas, thus reaching creative conclusions. I will once again teach a Freshman Year Experience with a similar, more refined Campus as Text project. My personal experiences in active learning as a participant and facilitator affirm that new applications of this pedagogical approach are boundless.

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CAMPUS AS TEXT: A FACULTY WORKSHOP

JOY OCHS
MOUNT MERCY COLLEGE

After returning from the 2006 Faculty Institute in Miami, I ran a faculty development workshop using the City as Text™ methodology at Mount Mercy College with the help of my colleague Dr. Mohammad Chaichian. The workshop had two purposes. At the core, it was a development workshop to train other faculty to use the City as Text (CAT) pedagogy in their classrooms. To that end, we designed the workshop as a model sociology course, where participants learned about the sociology of space by using the CAT method. Faculty members learned experientially how to implement the pedagogy and design their own courses. Concurrently, however, the workshop was also an opportunity for the Mount Mercy community to do an in-depth assessment of the physical space of the campus in preparation for welcoming a new college president, revising the college's vision statement, and taking inventory before launching a capital campaign. To that end, we invited key staff members to participate, including the Sister of Mercy in charge of mission integration, the director of college relations, student development staff, and representatives from the development office. We also issued invitations to members of the board of trustees, but none was able to attend.

Because we designed the workshop for participants who considered themselves intimately acquainted with the space we would be exploring, the challenge was to build in one of the key components of CAT: the sense of disorientation that allows one to look at a place from a new perspective. At NCHC Faculty Institutes or conference walkabouts, this disorientation is achieved by virtue of participants being in an unfamiliar city. In this case, however, we were starting with a group of people who believed they already knew the topic, and shaking them out of their sense of complacency, to defamiliarize the familiar so they could be open to looking in a new way, was imperative.

We planned several elements of the workshop set-up to achieve these ends. First, we engineered the groups who would be working together to include people from different disciplines, ensuring that each participant be exposed to fresh viewpoints while they worked. Next, we arranged for the workshop to be held in a different location on campus on each of the four days. This provided disorientation both in the sense

Campus as Text: A Faculty Workshop

that it did not allow anyone to approach the learning space in a habitual frame of mind and also because we chose unusual spaces that faculty seldom inhabit, including the on-campus convent and the cavernous, underground facilities office. Third, we designed the on-campus explorations to begin from points off campus, driving participants into residential neighborhoods, loading docks, or the convent and having them enter campus from these novel directions. Finally, we asked participants to spend a night in the residence halls, to step outside their customary roles as professionals and view the campus from within this intimate space as residents. These four factors contributed to a productive disorientation that made participants receptive to experimenting with new paradigms as we completed our CAT explorations and reflections. Ours is not a very large campus, but it was revealing that people who described themselves as knowing the campus well reported after this workshop that they had been paired with someone they had never met before, explored a building they had never set foot in before, or discovered a corner of the campus they never knew existed.

With the dual purposes of modeling a CAT-based course and working to assess the campus, we designed the workshop as a four-day lesson on the sociology of space, using Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City*. We examined physical space (the layout of the campus) and social space (how space shapes human interactions). At the beginning of the workshop, participants wrote down their first impressions, what they thought they knew, as a point of reference. Then we disoriented them through the novel experiences described above and asked them to map the physical space of the campus. We instructed them on Lynch's concept of "legibility" and asked them to identify structures that create signification in the space. These structures include paths through the space, both natural and artificial; edges that define the boundaries of the space; districts, or areas of homogeneity; nodes, or centers of attraction, both planned or natural; and landmarks, or points of reference. The campus is small enough that each group had enough time to explore the entire outdoor space during a ninety-minute walkabout. After collecting information using mapping, listening, and observing, groups reconvened to share what they had found.

The CAT experience is best exemplified by the group who never made it out of the commuter parking lot where they were dropped because they got so busy doing their work. This is a space that few faculty or staff ever have occasion to visit, but it is the primary entry point for the majority of our students. The group's insights about the first impression for students arriving on campus included observations

about the inadequacy of signage, the confusing traffic flow patterns, the lack of landscaping, and the backdoor feel of the primary portal through which students arrive. We quickly realized that what is literally the backdoor for faculty and staff needs to be reconceptualized as the front door for students and visitors. These and other observations became part of a larger campus conversation when participants in our workshop were later invited to sit on the new president's commission for college vision.

On the second day of the workshop, we reconfigured the groups and sent them out to explore specific interior spaces on campus. We tried to send people into spaces they do not normally inhabit, again disorienting them and demanding a fresh perspective. We asked them to think about the social uses of interior spaces using Edward T. Hall's notion of proxemics (*The Hidden Dimension*). Hall describes intimate space, social-consultative space, and public space, where inhabitants feel comfortable being personal, professional, or anonymous, respectively. Teams looked at offices, classrooms, dormitories, the sports complex, the chapel, the cafeteria and kitchens, the subterranean tunnel system, and other specific-use areas. In addition to their open-ended observations, they were asked to consider which aspects of the space's design promote a sense of community and which hinder it. So, for instance, groups came back with the surprising observations that the most robust social space could be found in the dark, underground facilities office, where natural nodes or gathering places invited both social and professional congregation during the work day and, according to the facilities director, more efficient work. Meanwhile, one designated social space, with its carefully arranged chairs in the lobby of the athletics building, was untouched by human habitation, suggesting that declaring a space available for social use does not make it a natural node if it does not have other elements that make it inviting. We learned about the actual use of space by observing proxemics, and this information will be useful to the newly convened college committee on space utilization.

To get a full experience of intimate space on campus, faculty and staff stayed overnight in the residence halls, students' most intimate space but one that faculty never enter. To make this visit possible, we scheduled the workshop during the week between the end of spring semester and the beginning of summer session when the residence halls were vacant. Participants found this experience profoundly

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disorienting, and it allowed them to step out of their habitual roles and engage differently with their peers. In one suite, a normally reclusive faculty member ended up leading the rest of the group in a tai chi exercise that had everyone laughing. In the other suite, a malfunctioning thermostat required a visit by the residence life staff, who were tickled to be of service to the resident professors. While the ostensible purpose of the dorm stay was to study the space, an unintended benefit of the exercise was a renewal of the sense of community among the participants, who had seldom, if ever, interacted before outside of their professional personas but who were able to form relationships that they could carry back into their work. As interdisciplinarity is an important component of CAT, the dorm stay proved fruitful in paving the groundwork for future collaborations.

After the two days of hands-on exploration, participants met to synthesize a sense of place. While the walkabouts are fundamentally data-gathering exercises, the synthesis phase allows for knowledge to be constructed as sense is made out of the data. After writing private reflections about their experiences, all the participants gathered for a conversation about what they had observed. Listening to others report on their walkabouts, participants became aware of their own personal and disciplinary biases, the particular lenses that constrain how they see things. So, for instance, a nursing professor acknowledged her “inattentive blindness” to the classroom space she used every day after a sociologist and an artist observed the discrepancy between the starkness of the space and the compassionate healing arts that were supposed to be fostered within it. Several participants reported firsthand on the state of the campus’s handicap accommodations, something they had never paid attention to, after accompanying one participant in her wheelchair over the hilly terrain, into restrooms all over campus, and through the awkward tunnel entrance. In the conversations that emerged, disparate pieces of information were gathered, examined, merged, and given new meaning as differing perspectives ensured a rich and multifaceted picture of our campus. Already, some lessons learned are translating into both personal and institutional action to improve campus spaces.

As a tool for campus assessment, the CAT workshop was fruitful. At core, however, the objective was to get CAT into our classrooms, to create hands-on learning experiences for the students. On the final day of the workshop, faculty designed syllabi that would adapt CAT for their disciplines. Since our honors program is small, and not everyone has the luxury of teaching a field-based course, we focused on how to

apply CAT in regular courses, to create metaphorical places as text if we could not have geographical ones. The following examples offer a sense of the possibilities: the human body as text in a nursing course; museums and paintings as text in an art history course; network space as text in a computer science course; text posited as place in a literature course. Since this workshop, two new CAT-based courses have been developed for the honors program, and one interdisciplinary general studies course has already used the CAT methodology during a travel course to Belize.

As our college adapts to changing needs, including a major revision of our core curriculum, a capital campaign, and a new generation of students, having a cadre of faculty who have experienced our campus as text is beneficial in so many ways. Whether in their committee work, their teaching, or their increased sense of collegiality, these faculty members bring fresh, informed perspectives to students, administrators, and their peers. CAT has applications beyond the honors program, and I am excited to see how it will be used as it finds its way into different sectors of the college.

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CHAPTER 2: LOCAL NEIGHBORHOODS

When I walked down Decatur Street and saw a restaurant sign, “Whirling Dervish,” it felt like a symbol for the whole New Orleans as Text experience. I started out slow, tentative, and inquisitive as we began our process of immersion. The book *Why New Orleans Matters* set the stage with its wonderful descriptions of food, music, and parades, and then we experienced our first parade within hours of arriving. The clues were there: wedding guests, beautifully dressed partygoers, homeless street folks, and people of all ages and ethnicities smiling and clamoring for beads. Add in the psychics who set up tables in the square: Can you really predict the future? This question would become one of the important and recurrent themes of the week: What will New Orleans be like in ten years and beyond?

We struck out on our journey by gathering clues and stories. As I looked out the window, no words could describe the mile after mile of devastation. I met people looking for permanence and community as they lived in their FEMA trailers. I met people in their Sunday best, fasting and soul-searching as they held on to a spiritual anchor, led by a pastor preaching parables about gardens and being vigilant, especially close to home. The whirling dance turns faster now as I am chastised: “We don’t want your pity” but your compassion instead. My soul is being awakened to hear and feel their stories.

As I approach the ground zero of the Ninth Ward, I see human resilience in the face of utter destruction. I meet people who are planting vegetables in open spaces and sharing them with others. I see hugs and tears and former neighbors sharing memories, and I am reminded that community consists of caring people, not buildings. I hear new stories and new facts that stir my soul toward anger and disbelief. Could people really be happy about the loss of all these fellow human beings? As we hear about the white-collar thugs who are scheming to take advantage of the situation, my logical side is further challenged and more questions are raised. Were these deliberate actions or incompetence, apathy or lack of leadership?

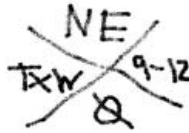
We return to the hotel to watch Act III of *When the Levees Broke*, and then my own personal levee breaks; I am crying so hard that no words can come out. My whirling dervish is now at frenzy level as I am finally approaching the painful truth: where do we go from here?

I am grateful for this powerful experience, and when I hear the song “Do you know what it means to miss New Orleans?” I can answer: “A little.”

2007 New Orleans Faculty Institute participant, Maureen Farrell
Moraine Valley Community College

THE LOWER NINTH WARD— FIRST IMPRESSIONS, FINAL REALIZATIONS, FUTURE PLANS¹

JANICE ALLEN
THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF BALTIMORE COUNTY



On the doors of destroyed house after destroyed house, our eyes take in this and similar spray-painted symbols. Nothing in my education, personal culture, or lifelong career of guiding students as they decipher perceived phenomena comes to my aid as I struggle in vain to collate these symbols into a message. Obviously placed on front doors for all to see, they must be a message.

Passing these modest houses and their once neat lawns and gardens, we encounter the devastation of the Ninth Ward, upper and lower, and we diligently analyze these puzzling notations. We have noticed them immediately; they tease us. Perhaps the 9's and following numbers signify dates of inspection. By whom? Perhaps the number at the bottom refers to body counts. What is "NE"? Annie, a young soil analyst we meet along a North Rampart Street sidewalk, tells us "TXW" refers to toxic waste. We are beginning to comprehend.

Only after what seems a string of too many such encounters during our Lower Ninth Ward days—of listening to too many victims' stories; of endless images of what must have been experienced as excruciating separation, isolation, and destruction; of immersion for several hours a day in worlds totally unknown, totally excluded from our personal worlds—only after all this do we abandon our degree-ridden compulsion to analyze and finally know for certain that we can never really understand the tragedy of this impoverished, Black, working people's culture in the Ninth Ward. The horror and distance from all that we have known are too great. Empathy will never work for us; compassion, however, will.

Then we realize that the displaced, dispossessed, and seemingly ignored African-American victims of the Ninth Ward neither know nor

The Lower Ninth Ward

give a hoot about the connotations of the door markings on each and every house. What people like Dave Ellis, a former homeowner now living in his car who walked with us to tell us his story in the hopes that we would retell it to others, know is far more crucial and personal:

My sister's brother-in-law died in that house there. . . . See that hole in the roof over there. My best friend, Johnny Gilead, came out through that hole, held on to that roof corner for as long as he could and finally drowned. . . . And that lot there between those two cement slabs, that's where my house used to be. 'Twas really my mother's sister's house, but she give it to me when my wife and me married. It just floated away. Ricky Johnson used to live in the fourth house on the left down there, and he seen it just float over to Flood Street and disappear.

We swallow hard as flesh and blood images annihilate our need to translate door symbols. We're overcome with sadness, and that's the reality, all we ever need to know.

No amount of sadness, however, will repair the severed social contract between a government and its people. The pain that is most acute for the inhabitants of the Ninth Ward is the pain of abandonment, of being ignored as recognized, legitimate citizens of city, state, and country. For the most part, the Lower Ninth Ward is still a ghost town, a place where the right of return, an established right of all citizens, is implicitly denied. Where are the FEMA trailers in the Lower Ninth? Where are the reconstruction crews? Where are the systemic and institutionalized revisions that are going to make life viable for these citizens? Certainly not in the rebuilding of the levees, for even though the Army Corps of Engineers has assumed some responsibility for the disaster, their rebuilding of these protective barriers is not the broad, fundamental reconstruction that the situation demands. The foundations of the levees are becoming far more solid and the heights increased, but current plans seem unlikely to produce structures that will withstand the rage of a meters-high surge and the relentless assault of a foolishly anchored barge.

Nowhere is the required visionary plan that combines state-of-the-art flood and surge protection with a decades-long system of land reclamation. Several times during this four-day faculty institute, we have heard reference to the Dutch. The progeny of the engineers who realized the water control and land reclamation of the world-renowned *Ijsselmeer*, *Flevoland*, and *Rotterdam/Zeeland* projects have not been hired as consultants. These specialists faced challenges far more awesome than those threatening New Orleans today. Where are the twelve to

fifteen billion dollars it will take to truly protect this piece of America and its citizens? What kind of a treacherous endgame do the steps not taken by state and federal governments predict?

The steps that I plan to take involve a neighborhood in Baltimore, Maryland. The neighborhood, Sparrows Point, is located on a peninsula jutting into the Chesapeake Bay, which has been the site of the country's largest tidewater steel plant for well over a century. Also the home of the plant's employees, this spit of land has engendered a hearty, feisty, intensely loyal breed of women and men who have, through the years, evolved into a formidable match for company directors and government regulators alike.

Currently, Sparrows Point's very existence is threatened by progressive plant design and production methods that make the former Bethlehem Steel factory seem obsolete by anyone's standards. Initial research has revealed a peninsula drained of its energy and resources. As the massive steel mills, corroded from mismanagement, have given way to smaller more viable industries in other parts of the country, the rich cultures of the mills' heyday have collapsed into mere skeletons of what they once were. The eventual demise of these hulking soot-covered monsters on Baltimore's horizon underscores the expediency of capturing and encapsulating the life forces of Sparrows Point in a module that can become a learning experience for future generations of students.

In late spring 2007, I was accepted into a CCHA (Community College Humanities Association)-sponsored, NEH-funded research institute at the Library of Congress on the topic "American Cities and Public Spaces." The institute began in May 2007 with a two-week internship at the library, continued with another week's internship in January 2008, and will conclude with an additional weeklong internship in June 2008, followed by a conference/seminar. My own investigations so far have focused on collecting the library's historical data on Sparrows Point's cultures—including the shipyards, labor unions, women, music, schools, churches, healthcare, art galleries and murals, and political, racial, and ethnic tensions. In spring 2008, I will take to the streets and neighborhoods and work through a tentative process to be replicated by The Community College of Baltimore County students in a future semester.

I will transfer the process learned in New Orleans to Sparrows Point. After listening to introductory, yet objective, descriptions of neighborhoods and activities in Sparrows Point, students will make a preliminary selection for mapping of a neighborhood, business, institution, or any

The Lower Ninth Ward

area from my own list of places and topics of inquiry. Then they will complete actual maps and engage in numerous conversations with local inhabitants and workers. As a group, students will collect and process this information for approximately five-to-six weeks. Students will then select a major interest that will become their focus for the remainder of the semester and the subject of their written and oral projects. During the next phase, they will complete library and archival research on their topics and engage with invited expert witnesses and authorities for perhaps another four weeks. During the final phase, students will watch their experiences and research come to fruition as the students work through numerous drafts and creative forms for their papers and presentations.

It is my hope and objective to create an experiential-learning environment, using Place as Text pedagogy that will work equally well in English, history, women's studies, economics, and labor relations departments (Braid & Long 2000; Kolb; Strikwerda). The experience of the NCHC Faculty Institute in New Orleans nourishes my dedication to this effort; the prospect of communicating even a shadow of the gift of that institute informs the construction of this new course.

Endnote

¹This article was originally inspired by an essay I wrote during the 2007 NCHC Faculty Institute entitled "New Orleans: Discovery and Recovery" (Long 24–26).

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LITTLE HAITI AS TEXT

PETER A. MACHONIS

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Introduction

Miami's Cultural Community Tours web site describes "Little Haiti," an ethnically Haitian-dominant Miami neighborhood, as follows:

This rich cultural and historic community is one of Greater Miami's true gems. Smell and sample the food, observe the art, hear the typical *compas* and *racine* (roots) music and learn about the Haitian culture in a walking tour that will stir the senses. Visit the botanicas, learn about *vodou* and understand the history of this wonderful community.

The City of Miami's web site offers additional positive information in "About Little Haiti":

If you are looking for a *quincaillerie* (hardware store), *gros savon* (soap), and *beurre chaud* (bread), then you must make a trip to Little Haiti, the neighborhood where Miami's growing number of Haitians have carved out a place they call their own. Little Haiti's population is 33,908. Little Haiti captures much of the flavor of world-famous Haitian primitive art, rich with colors of the Caribbean.

Although many of the Internet descriptions mention an "industrious community" or a "strong sense of ethnic pride" or "entrepreneurial energy," the few that are less favorable and refer to crime, trash, and prostitution often receive disproportionate attention. Some students are indeed afraid to visit Little Haiti, or at least their parents worry when they do.

Through "active learning" or "experiential learning" (Kolb), however, where students are taken out of the classroom and into real-life situations, or through "Peer-Led Team Learning" (Berke), where they work in collaborative teams, students can experience Little Haiti for themselves. In a semi-structured, goal-oriented setting, students might notice the trash, but will also come to realize that there exists a unique cultural community in their own backyard. These learning experiences can be field trips or more individualized group explorations of the area of focus, commonly referred to as City as Text™ in honors programs and colleges (Braid & Long). Students vividly remember these

extended classroom excursions, which add an eye-opening dimension to their education.

From Tybee Island to Little Haiti

The first time I did a Little Haiti exercise with students in French Linguistics, in Spring Semester 2003, it was a traditional field trip. I called it “City as Text” since I was already reading Braid & Long in anticipation of an NCHC Faculty Institute later that semester and because the students were being encouraged to go out and read the city, to look at everything, talk to as many people as possible, and write down what they could see, hear, and smell in the shops and in the streets of Little Haiti. We concentrated on the commercial section of Little Haiti. I tried to encourage the students to take different directions when leaving the Libreri Mapou, a Haitian bookstore and cultural center in Little Haiti, and some did, but the excursion was typically a group of about ten of us moving around together, rather than a true City as Text experience. The expedition included a class discussion at Nuvo Kafe, a more upscale North Miami venue, as well as a follow-up discussion in class a few days later and a written reflection on the Little Haiti experience.

One student, fortuitously, got lost on the way to our rendezvous point, Libreri Mapou, and ended up finding a *vodou* temple at a nearby location where she observed her surroundings in great detail before encountering the class. She provided an account of her observations during group discussion, and thus her incident added to our overall experience of the day. In a sense, one can say that students really do learn by failing. Educators often say that doing is more important than knowing for today’s students, and the post-X Generation, or Millennial Generation, really does prefer to learn through group activity.

A few weeks later, I found myself also learning by doing at the 2003 Coastal Faculty Institute at Skidaway and Tybee Islands, and I realized through our small-group exploration of Tybee Island how City as Text is really done. First of all, you need a small group. That day, our group of four interviewed fishermen, beachgoers, shop owners, wait staff, locals, vacationers, homeowners, and policemen. I quickly realized that this methodology only works with a small group. Our group of ten in Little Haiti would never have had the same conversations or the same unanticipated opportunities that arose during our Tybee Island excursion. For example, one couple ended up inviting us to visit their four-story house with amazing views of the salt marshes and beaches as well as the more populated areas of the island.

I also realized that working with people who are unfamiliar forces one to look at things differently. Some of us noticed the birds, others the effects of the seaward wind on the salt marsh hay, and still others the various types of palm trees. Some pointed out architectural features while others remarked on the make-up of the local population. Our native Alabaman had the most appropriate line for striking up conversations with fishermen: “Are ya fishin’ or are ya catchin’?” But once the person or the group we were talking with felt comfortable with us, they opened up and talked about everything of importance on the island: from taxes to sewage, from non-existent crime (“just barking dogs,” according to the police) to tensions between the “tree huggers” and the “sand bubbas.” At this point I determined to do Little Haiti as Text in a more-structured but directionless way. At Tybee, we were only told which part of the island to explore but not what to do except for the three City as Text strategies of mapping, observing, and listening. Later, when the small Tybee groups got together, we learned even more about the island and realized that the sum of everyone’s experience did indeed offer a more complete view of the island than just one group doing the same exercise and certainly much more than if just one person were to have visited the island.

Later, in the Fall Semester 2003, I used a more rigorous City as Text methodology when another French class visited Little Haiti. This time I divided the Little Haiti area into four geographic locations, with some leaving the Libreri Mapou by foot and others by car. I gave the students a handout with the basic strategies of mapping, observing, and listening. Students were not told what to expect. Indeed, the most important thing to do is not tell them what to do other than providing them with the three strategies. Furthermore, in class beforehand, we only covered a few rudiments of Creole language before these excursions. (On another occasion, the class had previously seen *The Agronomist*, a movie dealing with the journalist Jean Dominique’s experiences in Haiti). This time I assigned groups, three or four students to each group, making sure that they were diverse in terms of major and interests, trying my best to break up any cliques and including one Creole speaker in each group whenever possible. Each small group appointed a leader who was to give a short report to the larger group on what the group saw, with whom they spoke, and what they ate. Students had two hours to explore their assigned area and then reported back at the appointed time to the central location, Libreri Mapou, for a discussion and a sharing of the day’s experiences.

What the Students Observed

During our debriefing, which included Jan Mapou, the owner of the bookstore, students pointed out that a number of Haitian newspapers existed, with articles in French, English, and Creole, such as *Haiti Progrès*, *Haiti observateur*, local papers such as *Haiti en Marche* (in French with a Creole page at the end), *Le Floridien* (in French and English), and *Boukan* (completely in Creole). They also found French magazines and newspapers, like *Le Point*, *Paris Match*, *L'Observateur*, *Madame*, *La Tribune*, and *L'Equipe*. Students noticed the use of Creole everywhere. People would pop into the Libreri Mapou, have a short conversation in Creole, buy a French newspaper, and leave. But students also heard English, French, and sometimes Spanish. Others were surprised at the mixture of French and English, such as a greeting card stating, "A ton shower" or "Pour votre shower." Formal signage is more often in French or English than in Creole (*Super Cut*, *Louis Market*, *Ziggy Furniture*, *Brave Guédé Botanica*, *Bureau de Transfert*), but handwritten signs are often in Creole: *Air Continent: \$249 Bon Bagay!*

The groups noticed botanicas during the first excursion, but large groups were not always welcome in such a modest environment. In small groups, however, the students visited these shops, where one could purchase Haitian crafts such as *lanp tèt gridap* (a small gas lamp made from a tin can) as well as articles used for practicing *vodou* like *ansan* (incense), *ason* (ritual gourd rattle), *bale* (broom), *bouji* (candles), *fwèt kach* (special whip). The student who had gotten lost the first time tried to take her small group to find the *vodou* temple, but she had a difficult time because a fire had occurred since the last time the class was there. That group persisted and did manage to see what was described as a genuine setting for the practice of *vodou*. Just as we had experienced in Tybee Island, students realized that small groupings allow for these types of serendipitous visits.

Food always plays a significant part in City as Text excursions. The first time that the group of ten visited the *canne à sucre* stand, which was reminiscent of being in Haiti, rather than interact with the locals, they talked with each other while tasting the sugar cane. The first class visited Nuvo Kafe together, but the waitress did not even speak French or Creole, so Haitian students in class explained the various food items and one student, who had recently visited Senegal, pointed out the difference between the African French word *griot* (a storyteller) and the Haitian Creole homonym *griyo* (deep fried pork). The other classes doing the genuine City as Text in small groups on their own also tried

various food items, but this time, during discussion, they were all sharing with the others what they had seen and tasted during their explorations. Many remarked that the stores in Little Haiti had spices used in Haitian cuisine. One group talked with a man who comes all the way from Boca Raton, more than forty miles, to buy beef patties and spices for Haitian cooking. The students tried *La Choucoun* (genuine Haitian cola), *pate kreyòl* (pastries), and at Louis Market *pistach griye* (roasted peanuts). At Lakay Tropical Ice Cream, they tasted unusual ice cream flavors such as *kachiman* (sugar apple or sweetsop) and *kowosòl* (guana-bana or soursop). The last time our class did Little Haiti as Text, while the students were off on their own in small groups, I visited the local *canne à sucre* stand and bought sugar cane to share with the students, thus providing an unusual class handout during discussion.

Students also learned of the different kinds of Haitian music, *compas* or *konpa* (mainstream rhythm dance music) and *racine* or *rasin* (folk music), just by going to the music stores in the area. Whereas the first time, when I was the group leader, they just listened, took notes, and bought music to listen to later; when they were in small groups, they talked with the clerks, watched video-clips, and danced in the store to the music.

The number of money transfer places surprised some students. They noticed not only CAM Transfert but also Unitransfert, both nearby each other. During discussion, we then talked about Little Haiti, or rather the Haitian Diaspora in general, as being Haiti's "10^{ème} département" (Aristide). Indeed, according to Guy Victor, consul general of Haiti in Miami, Haitian expatriates in the United States send 1.5 billion dollars to Haiti per year, a sum that represents more than the Haitian government's annual budget.

Students generally found the area to be quite different from typical American big-city neighborhoods. Most students commented that people did not pay much attention to traffic when crossing the streets and that people consequently tended to drive slowly in the commercial area of Little Haiti. Some noticed domino players, the loser decorated with colorful clothespins similar to what one might see in Haiti. Others remarked that one could hear Haitian music or radio stations blasting over loudspeakers on the sidewalks. With some inquiry, they found out that one Haitian radio station, *Radio Pèp la*, has been on the air in South Florida for around twenty years.

However, in a true City as Text experience, groups do not necessarily see the same things. For example, while visiting one area the week before in preparation for our excursion, I noticed a sign in Creole:

Little Haiti as Text

Miami nan vil magik la kè solèy la toujou briye (Miami, the magic city, keeps the sun shining). But the following week, a group of students at the same location never even mentioned the signage; instead they noticed the excessive trash in the street, sometimes in heaps. This difference led to a very lively exchange, including the participation of the owner of the bookstore, Jan Mapou, in the general discussion about the sometimes-neglected place of Little Haiti within the larger context of the community of Miami.

Conclusions

At first, I did not think that the two types of excursions, the large field trip of ten students with the professor vs. City as Text with students in small groups on their own, were extremely different. Students saw and discussed some of the same things; perhaps students learn out of the classroom no matter what the methodology. But after doing this exercise with many French classes during the past four years, I realize that students have a more personal contact with the community in the smaller groups and, since they have not all seen the same things during their explorations, they pay more attention to what others are saying in the large group discussion.

I highly recommend this methodology. It has worked well in Little Haiti, one of our significant local resources. Students use the extended text idea to construct their *own* map of Little Haiti rather than just going on what they hear from parents or peers or what they read on the Internet. Our City as Text experiences have taken us to the main commercial area of Little Haiti, but future visits could involve a weekday exploration of the Haitian Refugee center, the schools in the area, or participation in cultural events at Libreri Mapou.

This firsthand experience excites students about learning. They come back to regular class with questions from their visits to Little Haiti such as the relationship between French and Haitian Creole. This discussion opens the door to their learning a few rudiments of Creole or perhaps a bit about the pronominal system or articles. I am most familiar with French linguistics courses, but this methodology can be extended to any subject area. The pedagogical method is to have the students be the catalyst, to ask questions that can be explored in class or researched by the students themselves, much as we did and discussed on Tybee Island. Students become interested in learning. After these explorations, we might study the Haitian sound system or the origins of Haitian Creole as an “accelerated French” (Chaudenson; Valdman). If

students are motivated to learn more, we might then continue to look at the Haitian Creole verbal system with a glance at verbal particles and discuss Derek Bickerton's bio-program hypothesis on the origins of Haitian Creole. Students learn not only about Creole, of course, but also how French and other languages interact and change over time or in particular contexts. For instance, questions of relexification can be discussed in the larger context of American English's influence on Spanish and Creole in Miami. Or we might talk about how hybridism and selection from a "feature pool" play important roles in all cases of language evolution and thus conclude that Creoles are not really special languages but simply languages that developed under exceptional circumstances, namely on plantations in a racially segregated environment, thus creating broader language divergence (Mufwene).

In other classes, students might want to learn more about Haitian Advocacy Law. After learning from Jan Mapou of the many Haitian organizations in Miami, students might then be motivated to find out more, for example, about the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition, an umbrella organization made up of fifteen local organizations in Miami, with organizations such as the *Veye-Yo* Equal Treatment Coalition, the Haitian Women organization *Fanm Ayisyen Nan Miyami* (FANM), and the Haitian Lawyers Association. Sociological questions can also be explored. One semester, students in my French Linguistics class read a follow-up article by Flore Zéphir on the social value of French for immigrants, which also played a large part in our regular class discussion, or rather heated debate, afterwards.

Educators today write about a quiet revolution occurring in the academy over the last twenty years: along with education, we are also concerned about teaching civic engagement. Concerning the phases of citizenship often discussed in such articles, I felt that students barely got past the "oblivious," "drive-by" service-learning experience with that initial field trip to Little Haiti. I no longer feel that way after doing genuine City as Text excursions with many classes. Students do not simply visit Little Haiti and then forget about it. They now want to talk about social inequalities, participate in Libreri Mapou's cultural activities, and expand their multicultural awareness. By going to this neighborhood, losing their fear of the unknown, and fully engaging their interest, students undeniably come to see Little Haiti "not as deprived but as a resource to empower and be empowered by," and they are definitely moving in the right direction along the phases of citizenship, toward the "reciprocal" level of civic engagement (McTighe-Musil).

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CHAPTER 3: TRAVEL COURSES

The city of Rome was our classroom, although we had prepared for the adventure through reading in a variety of disciplines, from archaeology to the classics to contemporary fiction. Each contributed uniquely to our understanding of “The Eternal City.” Yet no history text, no personal memoir, no travel guide could replace walking the city, meeting its people, and savoring the flavors of its food. Our Faculty Institute featured these elements. From this model of an Institute in Rome, we learned a pedagogy that can work in Atlanta, Berlin, or Cairo.

2005 Rome Faculty Institute participants, David and Louisa Franklin
Young Harris College



Mount Mercy students Sarah Jencks, Aaron Robertson, and Danyl Spivey create a conceptual map of Belize.

PHOTO BY JOY OCHS.

ADAPTING AN HONORS PEDAGOGY TO A GENERAL STUDIES TRAVEL COURSE

JOY OCHS
MOUNT MERCY COLLEGE

During a three-week January term, twelve general studies students from Mount Mercy College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, enrolled in Culture and Natural History of Belize and adopted the entire country of Belize as their text. Two main objectives of the course were to give the students an immersion experience in another culture and to foster interdisciplinarity and multiple perspectives. The City as Text™ pedagogy suited these objectives perfectly.

Before the ten-day travel portion of the course, students familiarized themselves with the CAT methodology. On the first day of class, they were presented with a blank map of Belize and asked to fill in what they knew in terms of geographical features, biotic zones, and human impact. The students, who had received no instruction on these topics, were stymied by their lack of knowledge. Because of their frustration, they were immediately receptive when they were put into small groups, assigned one of these topics, and given thirty minutes in the library to find out everything they could about their topic. Motivated to overcome their earlier ignorance, students researched with gusto and returned armed with facts and details.

The blank map was projected anew onto the chalkboard, and students were invited to fill it in. The first group began hesitantly, sketching in the physical features they had been sent to research. Then, with some excitement, the group in charge of biotic zones came forward and superimposed their sketches over the landforms. Immediately, the relationship between, say, cloud forest and mountain range became clear. By the time the group in charge of human settlements added their information to the mix, students were already synthesizing an understanding of how the pieces fit together: how landforms, rainforest density, or weather patterns invited or limited the growth of towns, farms, and industry. Finally, students added cultural practices to the map and began to see how physical geography affected settlement by different ethnic groups, which in turn affects cultural practices such as religion, cuisine, and folk art.

Adapting an Honors Pedagogy

Because students had been assigned to work on a specific and limited topic, this portion of the course simulated interdisciplinarity as each student became an expert on one aspect of the geography of Belize but needed to rely on the expertise of others to understand the big picture. Knowledge was not handed down from one student to another but constructed in the conversation that occurred as all the students worked together to create an integrated map. At the end of the class, the learning was reinforced by a brief lecture that related what we had learned to the places where we would be traveling in a few days: students had much more at stake when they knew they would be living in the rainforest and villages they had just mapped. Students also completed a journaling exercise that asked them to reflect on the learning process they had just used.

In other preparatory work, students wrote an individual research paper on a focused topic that we would be covering while on the ground in Belize. Topics included questions about biology, ecology, farming practices, economy, ancient Mayan civilization, and contemporary cultural practices. The wide range of topics ensured a multifaceted conversation about the place we would be visiting; the depth to which each student researched his or her topic ensured that the class would have at least one resident expert to consult when we were in the field conducting our explorations without the benefit of libraries or even Internet access. While we were in Belize, each student-expert taught the class through a brief presentation prior to the related excursion, speaking about Mayan civilization prior to our visit to the Mayan ruins at Xunantunich or about symbiotic relationships prior to our first snorkel in the coral reef. More importantly, however, the student-expert was responsible for answering questions that spontaneously sprang up when we visited the site. By relying on the student-expert, the other students gathered information through the CAT method of listening in addition to mapping and observing while we were in Belize. Whenever we could, we also listened to native residents and guides, but these were not always available, so the student-experts provided a continual and reliable source of information.

Thus primed, students journeyed to Belize, where they entered a profoundly alien environment. They had acquired a limited text-book knowledge of the place, but nothing could prepare them for the experience of this wholly other culture, climate, and environment. We landed in Belize in the late afternoon and spent our first night in a jungle lodge, with geckos chirping in the thatched ceiling, leaf-cutter ants filing across the doorstep, and the blackness of an unlit forest pressing around.

The disorientation the students felt in this situation was salutary, pedagogically speaking, for it shook them out of their complacency as students. Surrounded by the unfamiliar, they had to look at things in unfamiliar ways. As an experiential-learning method, CAT makes students step outside their conventional classroom paradigms, and at no time is it easier to do this than when they are experiencing an alienation from what they know. Outside their ordinary habits of thought, the students respond to the call to figure things out for themselves, using the tools of mapping, listening, and observing. For instance, a visit to a rainforest farm was not a passive tour but a hands-on opportunity as students asked questions of the farmer; planted corn; and tasted sugar cane, cacao, ginger, and coconut. Later, touring the rainforest with a Mayan guide who had studied with a shaman, students asked about the medicinal properties of plants and sampled leaves, saps, roots, and even live termites as they made observations with all their senses. Students transformed their disorientation into a need to find out, make sense of their surroundings, and synthesize an overall picture of the place. Each day's activities were revisited in journal entries where students reflected on how their interaction with their environment influenced their ways of seeing. Using the CAT methodology, students experienced rainforests, coral reefs, Mayan ruins, farms, villages, and towns as we traveled around half of this Massachusetts-sized area.

Near the end of the trip, students were put in groups of three, given large sheets of paper and markers, and asked to revisit the first-day exercise of creating a map of Belize. Whereas on the first day students filled in blank maps with conventional features, after eight days of CAT explorations they now free-formed conceptual maps that were astounding in their diversity as well as their ability to articulate what the students had learned. Students not only drew from observations made during the trip but were influenced by their areas of expertise, both in their assigned topics and in the knowledge they brought from their various majors. So, for instance, a group containing a biology student and an economist pointed out how different growing zones stimulated economic opportunities such as citrus groves on the savannahs versus tourism in unfarmable areas. Some nursing students, acting on their own initiative since we had never formally covered the topic in the course, focused on the different health-care practices they had observed in the villages versus the cities. The social science students responded to both of these maps by observing how political policies influence agriculture, tourism, and health care. The class, relying on mapping, listening, and observing, synthesized a rich, complex understanding of Belize as text.

Adapting an Honors Pedagogy

As a general studies course, Culture and Natural History of Belize was designed to expand students' knowledge and skills in certain areas: written and oral communication, multicultural awareness, understanding of biological systems. The assessment methods included the formal research papers and informal reflective essays, an oral presentation, and a written exam over course content. By nature, a travel course differs from a conventional classroom course anyway, yet conducting this course using CAT methodology superadded skills that normally do not get assessed or even taught: collaboration, leadership, initiative, the ability to think on one's feet and adapt to novel situations, the ability to articulate the way knowledge is constructed.

The success of this course in meeting its stated objectives as well as its unstated ones was driven home for me three months after the trip when I asked the students to present at Mount Mercy's Undergraduate Scholars Day. Six students whose topics formed a good cross section of the course content agreed to participate. Because of scheduling conflicts, getting this group together to rehearse their presentation before giving it was difficult; as an expedient, I told them each just to read a section of the research paper they had written prior to the trip.

What the students gave me instead was evidence of the effectiveness of City as Text as a learning method. On Scholars Day, the first student began by reading from the script of her written text. Then she spontaneously interrupted herself, looked up at the audience, and began to extemporize based on the knowledge she had acquired in Belize itself, which was so much richer than the facts she had conned from the pre-trip textbook. She spoke from experience and she spoke with authority, with total command of her topic even though it had been three months since she had studied it and had never rehearsed—had not even planned for this spontaneous speech. The next student followed suit, and the next. One student was absent because of illness, and another, on the spur of the moment, spoke about her topic as knowledgably as about his own. In other words, these students, having been immersed the previous January in their place as text and working cooperatively on the ground there to construct their knowledge as a group, had mastered their topic and retained their knowledge to the point where they could present an unrehearsed speech about it in April. During the question-and-answer session afterwards, students were asked about the process and benefits of this form of experiential learning. Again, the students were self-aware about their own learning process and articulated without any prompting from me how the CAT method had stimulated their interest and enabled them to retain

Joy Ochs

knowledge beyond what they normally do in traditionally taught courses, even in their own majors.

What is most impressive is that these students were not from the honors program but were regular students, with different interests and abilities, taking a course to fulfill a general education requirement. Honors pedagogies benefit more than only honors students. In terms of writing, oral communication, reflective judgment, multiculturalism, understanding of biological systems, and learning to read a text, this course allowed students to integrate several branches of liberal studies and make them relevant to their own concerns. At our small college, as the conversation heats up over the role of a general education curriculum vis-à-vis professional training, CAT can provide a meaningful way to educate all students in the liberal arts, engaging their enthusiasm, enhancing their practical skills, and opening their eyes to the world around them.

THE ADOPT-A-VILLAGE PROJECT

RICK OSTRANDER
JOHN BROWN UNIVERSITY

In 2005, I attended the City as Text™ Institute in Rome, Italy. As part of a group of scholars, I toured the usual Roman attractions such as the Pantheon, the Forum, the Coliseum, and the Vatican. As we walked to the Forum on our first day, we wandered through an area known as the Jewish Ghetto, purportedly the oldest continuously inhabited Jewish community in Europe. Fascinated by this four-block area with its butcher shops, furniture stores, restaurants, coffee shops, and a synagogue, I lingered here for a while. Along with a colleague, I met an elderly Jewish man named Martin who overheard our conversation and discovered that we were Americans. He struck up a conversation with us in broken English and invited us to tour his woodshop.

We walked up a small cobblestone street to his doorway, where Martin ushered us into a large, dark, musty room filled with the accumulations of decades of woodworking. An old American flag hung on the back wall of his cluttered woodshop, next to an Israeli flag and photographs of departed friends and relatives. Martin had survived the Nazi occupation of Rome, a time when many of his friends and relatives were deported to Auschwitz and never returned. He viewed the American soldiers as liberators and had taught himself enough English to communicate with them. While the rest of the group proceeded to the Forum, I spent over thirty minutes asking Martin questions and listening to his stories of life in the Jewish Ghetto.

I was fascinated by the Jewish Ghetto. For the rest of the week, while I joined the group on its visits to Rome's important sites, I adopted the Jewish Ghetto as my own particular text within the larger city. As we were encouraged to read the text of buildings, signs, people, cars, and the like, I focused on this particular chapter of Rome. I sought to understand, as much as a non-Italian-speaking outsider could in one week, the people, the buildings, the economic relationships, and the daily rhythms of life in this corner of Rome. I would walk there for breakfast and coffee in the morning and watch the neighborhood come to life between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. Some colleagues and I ate dinner there on a Tuesday evening, arriving at an empty building at 7:30 p.m. and leaving a noisy, crowded restaurant at 10:00 p.m. While the Jewish Ghetto has no walls anymore, I detected the invisible boundaries of the neighborhood. While I had many photos of the Vatican and the Forum to take back with me to the U.S., my most vivid impressions of Rome were my

The Adopt-a-Village Project

conversations with Martin and watching Jewish schoolchildren play soccer in the city streets in afternoons after school.

Three months later I started my own summer study abroad program in Wurzburg, Germany, a city straddling the Main River in a historic region known as Franconia. Wurzburg is ideally located for a study abroad program. I teach two courses, European Art and Culture and History of Christianity, and the city offers the opportunity to visit important cultural and historical sites within a two-hour drive, including cities such as Munich, Nurnberg, and Heidelberg. However, in addition to the usual study-abroad activities, I wanted my students to have the City as Text experience that I had experienced in Rome. Thus was born my Adopt-a-Village project, which has become a centerpiece of the German Studies program.

In Wurzburg, we are surrounded by several small villages that still retain the character of traditional German life and culture. As is typical of Franconia, these villages are compact. Unlike agricultural regions in America, Franconian homes and barns are clustered in small towns, and farmers drive to their fields each day to work. This feature makes Franconian villages ideal venues for applying City as Text in a more rural environment. Thus, each year I divide the students into groups of three and assign each group a particular village to adopt. Every few days they mount bicycles and ride along the Main River to their assigned villages with exotic names such as Margetshocheim, Veitshochheim, and Thungersheim. In constructing this project, I have adapted several components of the City as Text methodology for Adopt-a-Village.

Students use local transportation to access their village. In Franconia, that means bicycles. When I participated in the Rome Institute, I rented a bicycle for an afternoon and wrote one of my essays describing my experience riding through the backstreets and neighborhoods of Rome. I found a bicycle to be an ideal way to map a city because it provides the mobility to cover a significant amount of territory but does not sacrifice the sense of close connection to one's surroundings that occurs in a car or a bus.

I added bikes to the Adopt-a-Village project for other reasons as well. Europeans use them to get around, which is a foreign concept to the many Americans who view a bicycle as simply a means of exercise. Seeing a sixty-year-old German woman riding her vegetable-laden bicycle home from the local market is a new experience for our students. Using a bicycle themselves helps them consider the possibility of alternatives to our mechanized, automobile-centered culture. More importantly, bicycles enable students to survey the general surroundings of

the village and also to explore a particular place more closely. It provides both a sense of belonging and critical distance. For each visit my students ride into their village, then park in the central *platz*, and begin their explorations (bike locks, of course, are not necessary in German villages).

Another City as Text feature is the emphasis on direct experience. Eventually students will, of course, read texts about the history and culture of Germany. But first I send them out to read the text of their particular village firsthand. On their first walkabout, students are asked literally to map the village: to locate the church, the main square, the park, the school, the businesses, the firehouse, and the police station and to understand their proximity to each other. Next, students ask typical City as Text questions of their village:

- What are the rhythms of life here? What do people do, and when do they do it?
- How is space arranged here? What architectural and artistic styles prevail?
- What spaces are private, and what spaces are public? How do you know?
- How do people interact? What unseen forces influence social interactions?
- How do tradition and modern culture/technology interact in this village?
- How does this village contrast to modern urban centers such as Nurnberg and Munich?

Such questions sharpen students' observational skills and enable them to begin to make sense of their new environment.

Finally, the Adopt-a-Village project is highly interdisciplinary. Because the German Studies program offers general education credit, students from a variety of majors participate. Thus I am able to group students into teams comprised of different majors. As students begin to understand their village through observation and reading texts, they contribute perspectives and methods from their majors to their group's understanding of the village. What, for example, could a business major learn about the economic interactions in this village? How does a historian contribute to an understanding of the village? How would a German major discern distinctive traits in the German dialect spoken at this village? What could an architecture major add to the group's understanding of the physical structures of the village? As students piece

The Adopt-a-Village Project

together their analysis of the village, they appreciate how different disciplines apprehend reality and how their perceptions of their village differ from those of their colleagues.

The Adopt-a-Village project has yielded countless memorable experiences. At first, students typically are nervous about the project. After all, they speak virtually no German, and they are venturing into areas far from the typical tourist sites, places where they may very well be the first American visitors ever. Students usually return, however, from their first walkabouts, brimming with excitement over new adventures and cultural encounters. The Erlabrunn team describes meeting an elderly waitress at an inn who spends an hour explaining to them in broken English the history of the village and various people in it. The Vietshochheim team discovers a former Jewish synagogue in their village and spends the afternoon exploring it. The Thungersheim group happens upon a local winery whose owner invites them in for lunch and gives them a tour, accompanied with samples, of his wine cellar that dates back five hundred years.

Over the course of their visits to their village, students assemble notes, personal reflections, photographs, interviews, and even concrete objects that will become part of their capstone presentation, which is usually a PowerPoint presentation of their village to the rest of the class. The purpose of the capstone presentation is twofold. Students introduce their village to the class by giving a thick description of the actions, interactions, and landscape of the town and its inhabitants. Students reflect on their role as perceivers, namely, the extent to which their own beliefs and cultural background shaped their perception of the village and how perceptions differed among the members of the group.

We conclude the German Studies program by spending a few days living in a castle in the Austrian Alps, where the final presentations are made in the fireplace room of a medieval castle, a fitting climax to the German Studies program. Students not only tie together their observations of their particular village, but they have an opportunity to hear how other villages compare to their own. Often lively discussions ensue over the similarities and differences of the various villages, enriched by students' knowledge of European history, religion, and culture that they have accumulated over the past four weeks of study.

As a professor and fellow learner, I am always gratified to see students express the excitement of discovery over their villages that I experienced in my encounters in the Jewish Ghetto of Rome. The Adopt-a-Village project has proved itself to be a useful way to adapt the purpose and methods of City as Text to a rural German setting.

CHAPTER 4: SCIENCE-RELATED APPLICATIONS



University of Arizona Galapagos Summer 2007 course participant Kristin Tollefson, a high school science teacher in Scottsdale, AZ, shares intertidal discoveries with school children from Liceo Naval. (The Galapagos National Park Service approved and oversaw all activities.)

PHOTO BY KEVIN E. BONINE.

TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF

DEVON L. GRAHAM

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

As I move reluctantly through each new year, I have noticed a number of distressing trends. Students are younger and younger, I am less and less flexible, and traffic gets worse and worse. Recently the Department of Transportation (DOT) particularly distressed me. It had abandoned the crisp lettering that it used to use on road signs and also started using smaller font sizes. Since I like to be in the appropriate lane well ahead of any turn, I would slow down and squint to make out the details of critical signage, to the annoyance of other commuters busy juggling cell phones, makeup, Blackberries, and cigarettes. The DOT notwithstanding, I was finally forced to admit the truth: my eyesight was worsening. The corneas, irises, and lenses I was born with simply were not doing the job they used to, and I needed new lenses to see the world clearly again.

Seeing the world with new lenses is not simply a question of the right optics; it also requires mental and intellectual changes and flexibility. When those first eyeglasses were put on, my brain had to learn to interpret the newly crisp images appropriately. Intellectually, I had to change my driving habits to reflect my new visual capabilities, and, most difficult of all, I also had to develop the habit of carrying my lenses with me.

In academia we have numerous opportunities to see our world, our subject matter, our students, and ourselves with new lenses. Too often, though, we fall into the complacency and ease of being the expert, teaching the same courses over and over and handing down our accumulated years of knowledge to students who are probably visualizing the beach, the campus pub, or their significant others as their eyes slowly glaze over. As a Ph.D. student in tropical biology, I was the expert in the General Biology labs that I taught. I was tasked with making sure that twenty-some freshmen in each lab section learned something about all the major groups of organisms: plants, animals, fungi, bacteria. Although I had been interested in biology ever since I can remember, I could see myself in my students' eyes: struggling to feign attention and learn names and taxonomies that were irrelevant to their lives, or at least they would be irrelevant once they had passed the medical school entrance exams or got into law school. I was teaching the way I had been taught, and I was passing on my accumulated knowledge.

Turning Over a New Leaf

I moved out of academia for a while after finishing my Ph.D., did some environmental consulting, and then became involved with a conservation organization in the Peruvian Amazon and with ecotourism. Ten years ago I also started teaching an interdisciplinary Everglades course in The Honors College at Florida International University. Over the years I have hosted scores of groups in the Amazon and the Everglades—tourists looking to add a new experience to their collection of travels, tourists genuinely interested in natural history, high school groups, college courses (my own and others), and graduate students. With all such groups, being the expert is easy. After all, I have spent considerable time in those environments, accumulating knowledge, and the groups are always overburdened with questions. They are in unfamiliar territory and are asking me to interpret it for them, to point out what is important and what is interesting. They are asking to see the Amazon or the Everglades through my lenses, lenses that through time have become blurred and that have ceased to reveal those details that to me are not important, interesting, or novel. They say that familiarity breeds contempt, and while that may be putting it a bit strongly, familiarity with a subject matter can certainly breed complacency and a loss of enthusiasm or curiosity, unfortunate liabilities often unconsciously passed on to our students as well. As Annie Dillard eloquently states in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*:

An infant who has just learned to hold his head up has a frank and forthright way of gazing about him in bewilderment. He hasn't the faintest clue where he is, and he aims to learn. In a couple of years, what he will have learned instead is how to fake it: he'll have the cocksure air of a squatter who has come to feel he owns the place. Some unwonted, taught pride diverts us from our original intent, which is to explore the neighborhood, view the landscape, to discover at least *where* it is that we have been so startlingly set down, if we can't learn why. (13–14)

A faculty institute opened my eyes to the intellectual blinders that I was putting on myself and my students and set me on the path to exploring the neighborhood and viewing the landscape through fresh and curious lenses.

Participating in the Coastal Institute on Skidaway and Tybee Islands was almost an afterthought. My Everglades course co-teacher suggested that maybe we could learn something that would be applicable to our Everglades course; the institute was billed as a coastal institute after all, and the Everglades are certainly coastal. Besides, it was an opportunity

to get away for a long weekend at university expense. What could possibly go wrong? Things went wrong from the very beginning. Although we had experts leading the institute, they did not share their knowledge, at least not until the participants had been forced to explore this new environment, both natural and human, in small teams, sharing their observations and experiences and developing their own sets of questions and perspectives. This was uncomfortable because I usually prefer to have a good collection of facts in hand before opening my mouth, something that was impossible in a new environment and with limited time for observation and exploration.

Being forced to share my perspectives with the other participants orally and in written form also made me re-examine my interpretations of what I was seeing. Were those interpretations based on a full review of the evidence? How much crucial data was I missing or overlooking? How did my own past experiences color my vision? How was it that I could see things so differently than the other participants in my small group? It was a startling and revelatory approach to me, but I could see firsthand that it worked. I, in the role of student, contributed to the collective wisdom and knowledge of the group, with even the experts listening and perhaps learning. My particular set of lenses through which I viewed this new environment were different from those of the other participants, and we all contributed new points of view, with the experts giving appropriate background and facilitating as we went along. What a difference from sitting in a classroom taking notes as a professor droned on and on!

Finding practical ways of applying this new approach in my own Everglades and Amazon classes and excursions did not take long. Indeed, it was frequently a relief to be able to leave the role of expert behind and to give students the responsibility of developing their own interpretations of what they were seeing and experiencing. With this approach, students also become more engaged: they have ownership of the knowledge that they are acquiring, and the learning experience becomes meaningful and personal.

An example of how this new approach can drastically change the pedagogical experience is well illustrated by the topic of plant taxonomy and diversity. As an undergraduate major in zoology, I had no interest in plants. They were merely places where birds could be found; objects that hid snakes, lizards, and frogs; and food sources for caterpillars that turned into the butterflies and moths that I collected. Plants had little intrinsic value unless they happened to have thorns, stinging hairs, or toxins that needed to be avoided. Not until I took a systematic botany

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course to meet graduation requirements did I develop an interest in plants, and that only happened when I discovered that it was possible to distinguish between them and actually give them identities, names. Suddenly they were more than just inert green things in the landscape.

As a Ph.D. candidate teaching general biology labs, I struggled to engage the interest of my freshman students when we did the modules of plant taxonomy and plant structure. Mostly, this effort failed. I doubt that a minute fraction of the 300-some students that passed through my labs could tell you today what a monocot or a dicot is, or even the difference between a simple and compound leaf. They memorized the details long enough to pass the quizzes and exams, and then that information was sent directly to the recycle bin in their brains.

While hosting school groups in the Amazon, I often heard complaints from teachers that they lacked time in their curricula to teach anything about plants, so they were always eager to have a session or two on botany in such a plant-rich environment. At first I would give watered-down versions of tropical plant taxonomy, talking about the major families of plants as well as the adaptations of tropical plants to their environment. Inevitably I would see a glazed-over look appearing in students' eyes after a few minutes: the same look that I saw in my General Biology labs, and the same look that I had in my own eyes during a 1:30 p.m. undergraduate course I took on French literature to the seventeenth century. I think I fell asleep in every class.

After experiencing the Coastal Institute, as well as having had the opportunity to participate in many NCHC conferences and to exchange ideas with participants from other institutes, I dramatically changed my approach to interesting students in botany, plant diversity, and things green and growing. As an example, I now divide students into small groups of three or four at the most, give each group a big bag, and send them out the door. The advance instructions are minimal, and the only detailed information provided to the students relates to any potentially toxic or noxious plants that they might encounter. Students are tasked with collecting twenty-five or more different kinds of leaves. They are given an appropriate period of time and meet back at a central point when they are done.

When the students reconvene, I instruct each group to organize or classify their leaves (on a table, on the floor, on the ground) in whatever way they wish. They always ask questions: "Should we organize them by size?" or "How do you think we should organize them?" My answer is always the same: "There is no right or wrong way of organizing the leaves. Just decide among yourselves how you would like to do it." A

flurry of activity follows: students discuss within their groups how they want to arrange their leaves, they disagree and argue, and they spy on other groups to see what they are doing and to see if anyone else has an example of the unusual leaf that a particular group gathered. No professor drones, no eyes glaze, and everyone is engaged. I sit back and watch the activity, thinking this is too easy to qualify as teaching, but the fun continues. Once the students arrange all the leaves, I ask each group to explain why they arranged the leaves in the way that they did, and I also ask the individual group members to identify their favorite leaf and explain why they chose that particular leaf.

The criteria that the groups use for their classification schemes are always highly diverse: leaf size, texture, coloration, complexity, the shape of leaf edges, the amount of epiphylls on leaves, the degree of herbivory damage, or a combination of these or other criteria. The reasons given for having favorite leaves are equally diverse although there is often convergence among students on a particular texture or color: velvety leaves with purple undersides seem to be very popular, for instance. During this entire process, my input is limited only to asking which group would like to go next or to asking minor clarifying questions. The students are center stage. They are talking and listening to their peers, and short attention spans are not a problem. No one wants to say the exact same thing as someone else, and no one wants to be at a loss for words.

The whole process forces students to look closely at something to which they otherwise would pay only fleeting attention. Not only do they come up with their own classification scheme, but their peers show them how many different criteria can be used in such classification schemes. Best of all, there are no right or wrong ways of classifying or giving identity to their leaves. Once we have been through this process and students have themselves pointed out the many ways in which leaves vary in shape, texture, color and function, then I have a student-created platform from which to take the discussion further, and, as the resident expert, to synthesize the students' findings and provide additional information. We identify compound and simple leaves, with students culling examples from their collections. We discuss whether a given sample is truly a leaf, or only part of one, or a different plant structure altogether. Students inquire about why some leaves have such odd pigmentation and texture, such as those velvety purple-undersided leaves, and this inquiry leads to discussion of light environments and photosynthesis in tropical rainforests. Other students inquire about the dramatically regular pattern of holes that can frequently be found in

Turning Over a New Leaf

many broad-leaved monocot leaves. During this entire process I continually endeavor to return questions to the students themselves, sometimes rephrasing them to direct the flow of conversation but frequently simply asking, “What do you think?” As we explore the possible explanations for those regular patterns of holes, we eventually touch on how monocots grow and how they are different from dicots. We also talk about herbivory and host specificity; those patterns of holes are made when beetle larvae eat their way through the leaves as each leaf is tightly rolled up in a leaf bud.

I do not expect the students who participate in these exercises to remember the names of the plant families that we eventually mention or to remember all the names or details of different leaf structures. I do know that they come away knowing how to look at leaves, how to see and interpret differences between leaves, and how to share that information with their peers. I see it as we hike on the trails on subsequent days—students pointing out to other students an unusually long drip-tip on a particular plant or a winged and undulated petiole on a *Philodendron*. They are learning to be critical and careful observers, and an entire world of green that was previously inaccessible or ignored is opened to them, not just until the next quiz or exam but possibly for the rest of their lives, wherever their career choices might take them. I often wonder how my own career path might have been changed if I had had this kind of experience as an elementary school student, in high school, or even as a freshman or sophomore in university.

I use this same approach to tackle other topics such as insect diversity, taxonomy and structure, fish, flowers, fungi, tree trunks, and bark since students can collect images easily with the digital cameras that everyone has these days, and I have little doubt that the basic technique can be adapted to completely different fields of study. Could not students collect and organize law cases or medical conditions in an analogous manner? How about architecture, art, or religious philosophies? Not only does this approach fully engage students, but it also helps me to be a better and more observant teacher. Students’ perspectives are often jarringly different from my own, so I have the opportunity to see familiar subjects with fresh eyes. At the same time, I can evaluate the level of subject knowledge that students have without putting anyone on the spot, and I can then fill those gaps in an engaging way. At first I did worry that I was somehow cheating students by not sharing all of my accumulated knowledge. I no longer feel that way. What I am doing instead is sharing what John Janovy, Jr., refers to as a “transferable skill” rather than a collection of facts. If students at some point in time

become interested in botany or in learning the name of a tree in their back yard, they now have the intellectual tools and the confidence to tackle the subject. As Janovy puts it in *Teaching in Eden*, “A teacher’s biggest reward is to watch his or her class rise beyond the immediate subject matter to an understanding that we are actually studying *how* to learn” (34).

My new pedagogical vision really came into focus when I helped plan and implement the January 2006 Faculty Institute “Miami and the Everglades: Built and Endangered Environments.” As participants from various institutions shared their insights and experiences, I visualized myself in the same role back at Tybee Island. The dramatically different perceptions and interpretations of the participants challenged my notion that I knew Miami and the Everglades. Instead of feeling the need to defend my own expert perspectives, I was gifted with the opportunity to see the familiar with many different lenses and to gain a fresh appreciation for the teaching and living opportunities in my hometown. I hope my participation in the Tybee Island Institute had the same impact on the experts there. While my students will always remain responsible for learning some core facts and background information, my approach to teaching has permanently changed in both subtle and obvious ways. Students are put front and center, and the entire class, including me, has the opportunity to see the subject matter from different perspectives. Sometimes that means admitting that I am not as much of an expert on a particular topic as I might have thought. From me, it requires flexibility, a fair dose of humility, and a willingness to explore new ideas. It breaks me out of the complacency of being the expert, and for both my students and me, turning over a new leaf is a very good thing.

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GOURMET TO GALAPAGOS: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN THE SCIENCES

KEVIN E. BONINE
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Introduction

Honors has a reputation of not being as well represented in the biological and physical sciences as in the behavioral sciences and other traditionally liberal arts. I teach at an institution where this is slowly changing. Having come through honors as a student, I look for ways to incorporate the honors philosophy into my biology-related courses. In January 2006, I had the opportunity to join an NCHC Faculty Institute in Miami, Florida. I was drawn to this particular institute for many reasons: as a biologist I wanted to see the Everglades, one of the areas we would visit in our exploration of built and endangered environments, and, more importantly, I wanted tools and ideas for employing experiential learning in my courses.

I was not disappointed on either count. In fact, I found out how easily and quickly Place as Text could be applied to the sciences well before our visit to the Everglades in my reaction essay to the Institute's Miami Beach as Text explorations. Here is what I wrote after one day on the beach, which included viewing a PBS special on Carl Fisher, exploring just one neighborhood in a small group, and participating in the general debriefing at the Wolfsonian Museum:

Trophic Levels and Pyramid Schemes: The Tragic Transformations of Miami Beach

Mr. Miami Beach, Carl Fisher: overachiever, millionaire, and über consumer. His vision of a wealthy vacationer's paradise destroyed a mangrove ecosystem and contributed to the rise of roads and automobiles in the U.S. He must be one of a handful of individuals who have had the largest impact on Florida, U.S., and global environmental health and quality. Yet, in keeping with our admiration of wealthy entrepreneurs, he is remembered with a nostalgic and awed reverence. How do the lost

ecosystem services from habitat alteration compare to the millions bought and sold here? If considered long term, the dollar value of the natural benefits lost likely outweighs the human economic valuation of the converted swamplands. But environmental valuation is difficult and predicated on several assumptions. What about the Native Americans who first modified this environment to suit their needs? Were they not stricken by invasive diseases marching ahead of explorers from the Old World? Were they not corralled, removed, and impoverished? Several waves of transformations preceded Carl Fisher.

And his life reads like a metaphor for Miami Beach: boom and bust, glamour and goading, disease, hurricane, death, and resurrection. The juxtaposition of fabulous wealth and fame with poverty, immigration, and drug addiction makes Miami Beach and its history fabulously intriguing. Moreover, this history seems to be on fast-forward, much as Carl Fisher lived his life: from nonexistent to scores of high-rise hotels and astronomical property values, all within a century.

The recent cultural history is akin to natural ecological succession in some respects. Much as a hurricane can wipe out most life on a barrier island, which can be recolonized later, waves of people in Miami Beach have come and gone. Wealthy land speculators preceded wealthy vacationers and mafia-style enterprise. Weather, religious, and political refugees moved into the general area. Retirees came, rested, and died. Modest dwellings became crack houses and were revitalized into multistory condominiums and hotels. Is this an example of repeat succession with differing stochastic outcomes, or is this an example of the many stages of physical, cultural, and environmental succession following the catastrophic habitat changes of the early twentieth century?

Residents, employees, and vacationers also talk of dramatic and large changes in the relatively modest timeline of five to twenty years. Change seems almost fractal here. No matter the scale of geography or time, change is everywhere. People come and go, places come and go, buildings come and go. Individuals familiar with Miami Beach suggest that someone living here for two years has been here a long time. Community is hard to build on such transience. As a holiday destination, that may not matter. Night clubs, bars, restaurants, hotels, and souvenir shops—

these all blink in and out like some organic metapopulation living off the burnt flesh of tourists. (Graham & Machonis 19)

Upon returning to Arizona, I started exploring various ways of incorporating Place as Text pedagogy into course content. My experiences writing about Miami Beach's über consumer is what perhaps inspired a first application to University of Arizona's sustainability course.

Table as Text:

Sustainable Eating in the Desert Southwest

In fall 2006, a colleague, Guy McPherson, and I put together an Honors Colloquium on food sustainability. Our course text was *The Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan, with many other readings scattered in where appropriate. The format of the course was mostly discussion, with weekly writing prompts to facilitate participation, reflection, and retention. We wanted to design a science-based course that would appeal to a broad audience and would require creativity and active learning. By the end of the course, we wanted students to get their hands dirty and put their ideas where their mouths were.

At the beginning of the course, we asked students to describe their favorite meal and discuss its sustainability. A number of them wrote about sustenance, caloric content, and the stick-to-the ribs quality of things like macaroni and cheese. We were looking for something rather different. Sustainability for a biologist is more about continued availability of reliable resources for hundreds or many thousands of years into the future. These resources include pollinator species, crops, energy, waste assimilation capacity, water, and many others. Sustainability can also be applied to human societies and their persistence into the future, a point we hoped to make in the course.

During the next fifteen weeks, we directed discussions about energy inputs, barrel-of-oil equivalents, net energy, invasive species, the green revolution, externalities such as pesticides and habitat loss, seasonality, and the fact that the average piece of food eaten in the U.S. has traveled over 1200 miles. The students began to understand the myriad ramifications of food choices. By examining their own diets, each student was invested in the course topics. What were the ingredients in chocolate chip cookies and where did they come from? Could the students pronounce even half the ingredients in a Twinkie? The answers were enlightening (try these two: polysorbate 60 and stearyl lactylate) for both us and the students.

Gourmet to Galapagos: Experiential Learning in the Sciences

To wrap up the course, we wanted to go well beyond classroom discussion and weekly writing assignments. We asked the students to prepare a sustainable meal based on our mutual understanding of sustainability in the context of earth resources and ecosystem services. They were in charge of the menu and chose the components and the ingredients. What made the assignment so useful was its reliance on student creativity, hands-on preparation, and background research. The dishes they created turned out to be simple, mostly vegetarian, made with locally procured ingredients, and served with enthusiastic explanations. Meat was scarce at our table because only about 10% of the energy, on average, makes it from one trophic level to the next; fewer overall resources are needed when we eat plants than when we eat animals that ate plants. Local beans, goat cheeses, saguaro cactus fruits, and other treats graced our table. One of my favorites was homemade tortillas from mesquite flour with nopalito (prickly-pear cactus pads) salsa. All students had tangible evidence of their increased understanding of the implications of dietary choices, and everyone tasted the fruits of their learning. Now all we need to do is figure out a way to increase rainfall in southern Arizona so all of us (> 1 million in Pima County) can live here sustainably.

Planes, Trains, and Automobiles: Transportation as Text

Table as Text was the first installment of an annual course on sustainable living. While our first round focused on food, the fall 2007 theme explored transportation. Our primary text was a recent book, Lynn Sloman's *Car Sick*, which generated ample discussion and dovetailed nicely with other readings such as "Explosion of the Suburbs" (Mowbray 74–92) and writing prompts about peak oil and other end-of-empire scenarios. However, our most dramatic impact came from having the twelve car-savvy students transport themselves using myriad modes of transportation other than personal autos.

In the language of Place as Text, mapping, listening, and observing were readily pursued in our sustainable transportation course. For example, we gave students a physical destination in town, a local grocery store catering to Hispanic immigrants. Then each small group was tasked with getting to that location using a different form of transportation considered alternative in the Southwest—by foot, bicycle, bus, or taxi. Along the way students interacted with their local environment—the people, the places, the occasional animals, and other

components. Students actively mapped (where was traffic bad? where did the school children wait for the bus?), listened (why did the other bus riders choose this mode on this day? why did the taxi driver choose this profession?), and observed (are certain modes of transportation restricted to certain economic classes? which modes are incompatible with other modes? which modes are sustainable on the time-scale of centuries?). At the destination, the students took stock of their voyage and prepared to return to campus via a different assigned form of transportation. Not all combinations were possible because bikes are allowed on local buses, which have bike racks, but not in taxis.

The class later assessed the pros and cons of each mode of transport, comparing comfort level, convenience, immediate cost, infrastructure, pollution, and other components. Class discussion highlighted the lack of bike lanes and sidewalks, the hot, sunny weather, and the dead animals along the road. Students often complained about the time required to wait for the bus as well as the lack of shade when walking. Overall, no one mode of transportation was the hands-down winner, but students were much more aware of the monetary, environmental, and comfort considerations that go into every transportation decision. They noted that they now felt better able to evaluate the personal and global implications of transportation.

Homework assignments involved other destinations, modes of transportation that a group did not yet use, as well as times of day or weekends that also influence how transportation, the environment, and the individual might interact. Research into the costs of car production, road building, tailpipe emissions, and light rail required more traditional library searches but was also approached in a modified Place as Text format with small groups exploring different subjects and returning to the group as experts in order to enrich our composite understanding of the sustainability of transportation options. Students also demonstrated their creative responses to the course content and new experiences through poetry.¹

During one of several nearby field trips, the students met author Brad Lancaster, an alternative-lifestyle and water-harvesting guru. Students were enthralled by his off-the-grid, below-poverty-level, yet fulfilled lifestyle and particularly enjoyed hearing about how he picks up friends at the Tucson airport. Lancaster rides out to the airport on a bicycle, to which a second bicycle is strapped. At the airport, he swaps the second bicycle for the friend's luggage and the two pedal home. Only really good friends ask him to pick them up more than once, especially in the summer.

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According to Sloman, approximately 40% of the trips British and U.S. citizens make by car could be made using other modes of transportation without any changes in infrastructure or bus schedules or the like. These are the soft or easy changes. Another 40% could be done without a car, but would require addition of bus routes, different times of operation, or more bike paths. The other 20% are much more difficult to modify and include such examples as picking up heavy home improvement items and taking elderly relatives shopping or to the doctor (47). One of our goals in the course was to move students well into the 40% of soft changes they could make immediately, while we hoped that they would work on the remaining 60% as they voted, chose career paths and housing options, and became the citizens in our democracy.

Although we did not reach our goal of having students actually implement all of the soft changes that they could, they did learn to scrutinize the pluses and minuses of transportation choices on a broad scale, examining the effects on other people, ecosystems, and future generations. Two students said they were trying to sell their cars as a result of what they learned in the course. Several students worked much harder to arrange carpools for visits with family in other parts of Arizona. Overall, students noted that their perceptions of transportation and its costs and benefits changed because of the class. The tools and the teaching methods used in this second adaptation of the sustainable living course are readily transferable to other contexts, and in fall 2008 we plan to address the sustainability of water.

Intertidal as Text: Exploring the Galapagos Islands

Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution.

(Dobzhansky 125)

Place as Text pedagogy was also applied in summer 2007 to a travel course geared toward U.S. secondary science teachers but also accepting undergraduate and graduate students in the sciences and honors. The focus of the course was marine ecology in the Galapagos Islands. This archipelago, located 1000 kilometers west of the South American continent and likely only discovered by humans in 1535, is best known for its role in Darwin's theory to explain evolution.

Darwin visited the Galapagos in 1835, landing on four of the islands. He observed tortoises, mockingbirds, finches, lizards, and plants, which were found nowhere else in the world, often resembled species found in western South America, and were slightly different between islands.

After pondering his observations for twenty years and almost being scooped by Alfred Russell Wallace, Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, laying out his observations and rationale for natural selection.

More recently, three sizable towns have sprung up on the islands, growing mostly in the last 30 years since regular airline flights began. Our course was based in the capital on San Cristobal, population less than 10,000. Although the town started as a fishing village in the early 1900s, its economy is now driven by tourism, a navy base, and bureaucratic infrastructure. The Ecuadorian government is attempting to limit immigration to the Galapagos from the mainland because of the negative impact more and more people have on the island ecosystems that are the foundation for substantial tourism revenue. However, residents of the Galapagos have a higher per-capita income than on the mainland, and therefore immigration pressure is significant.

Our goals for this science course were manifold. We wanted our enrolled U.S. participants to revel in the extraordinary oceanography, marine ecology, geology, and terrestrial ecology that are so evident in this archipelago. We also expected our participants to grasp most of the content and many of the details of this incredible, yet rather simplified ecosystem as well as to learn research and teaching methodology that they could then apply in other places less exotic than the Galapagos. Finally, we wanted to share our enthusiasm, as well as our English, with the local school children—a mixture of native Galapagueños and recent Ecuadorian immigrants, military and non-military—at the naval school in town. The result was a fantastic month of exploration, study, research, teaching, sharing, and learning, many components of which drew upon Place as Text teaching methodology.

For example, each participant arrived as the course expert on one species of interest (chosen from a list provided by the instructors at the pre-trip meeting one month before departing the U.S.) such as the endemic penguin, the finches, the *Scalesia* plant radiation, and the sea lion. At dinner each night, two participants shared interesting information about their species with the group. Our field explorations, cultural interactions, and journal writing also drew upon Place as Text. To involve and learn from a cross section of the community, we convened a professional panel consisting of a longtime local fisherman, the head of a women's handicraft cooperative, and a former member of the politically appointed Galapagos planning commission. These individuals shared their views on conservation, development, and tourism issues and fielded our questions during a lively evening discussion.

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To teach our participants, half of whom are or will be K–12 teachers, about Place as Text, we linked our initial examination of the intertidal with explicit Place as Text practice. Our twelve participants were divided into three groups: rocky intertidal, mangrove intertidal, and sandy intertidal. Walking, crawling, and snorkeling, participants mapped, observed, and explored these three different ecosystems and where they interacted and overlapped. Each group described biotic and abiotic components of each intertidal type, human interactions with each type, and the differences observed along a gradient from the high intertidal to the low intertidal. Thus when we convened as a larger group, we had a rich understanding of the challenges and innovations evident in the intertidal, the important role of the intertidal in terrestrial ecosystems, and the influence of biotic and abiotic factors in determining ecosystem structure and function. Using a simple key to the phyla, participants also categorized the organisms in their area of intertidal and compared that measure of biodiversity with the other intertidal types.

Perhaps most importantly, we shared our exploration and knowledge of the intertidal with local children from the navy school. (See the photo at the beginning of this chapter.) Our participants were now responsible for guiding children—many of whom were new to the habitat type either because they had recently moved to the Galapagos or because they came from a family that did not explore the local ecosystems—through an exploration of the wonders to be found in the intertidal. Participants talked to these students about competition, predation, desiccation, light, heat: the components that determine the distribution and abundance of organisms (i.e., ecology). With an increased appreciation for the organisms that inhabit the coasts and the processes that determine what lives where, these young Galapagos residents will, we hope, continue efforts to preserve and protect this remarkably pristine set of islands.

If conserved, this enchanting archipelago will continue to share lessons in biology and evolution with future generations. During the course of the month, our participants not only learned about oceanography, marine ecology, and the intertidal of the Galapagos, and how to explain complicated scientific information to younger students, but they also gained familiarity with a new teaching methodology applicable to their subject area and student population back in the U.S., or wherever they venture next.

Conclusion

Although honors has a reputation for not being well represented in the biological sciences, I have already taken my experiences from the NCHC Faculty Institute and applied them to three different aspects of my teaching. Feedback from my students reaffirms that Place as Text methods do a better job of engaging interest, stimulating participation, conveying concepts and information, and engendering true understanding than many traditional classroom teaching styles. I hope that these examples will inspire other professors to pursue novel and innovative approaches to combining honors and science education.

Endnote

¹This was the first time we used poetry as a medium for student feedback in the sustainable living colloquium, which added to the interdisciplinary aspect of the science-based curriculum. Student feedback was both personal and general, as can be seen in the following samples:

Untitled

In our quest for progress
We've hurt more, gained less.
Time to hop on our cycles
And begin to backpedal.
Out of necessity,
To a time of simplicity.
As the need to compete depletes,
The need to survive thrives.
In our quest to regress
We gain more, hurt less.

—Becky Burton 2007 (enrolled student)

Untitled

I'd like to ask you a patriotic question
About . . . current affairs . . . the state of our nation.
Our obsession with material possessions
And the death of a right . . . due to trepidation?
What's become of our rights, of our once-great nation?
Oh, I wish I could answer that question
But I, consumed with doubt, brainwashed by corporations
Like most of my generation
Sit idly by helplessly watching our inheritance bleed dry

Gourmet to Galapagos: Experiential Learning in the Sciences

Led to believe that one person is powerless
That it takes a million to stand and to deny
The custom and achieve measurable success.
A million starts with someone.
It could be you; or me.
Throw off the chains of apathy. Be free.

—Jason Town 2007 (enrolled student)

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CHAPTER 5:

MYTHOS, LOGOS, ETHOS

WRITING EXERCISE

While at first the writing assignments were a bit daunting, they quickly became a point for reflection and reinforcement of our daily experience. All of us were writing about the same experience, yet generating such diverse text responses.

The assignments forced me to reflect on my experiences and helped me to remember details that I might have otherwise forgotten.

This was a good reminder of what our students go through.

Writings were a useful exercise in reflecting and synthesizing observations. Review of others' writing at the end of the institute was enlightening and inspirational.

Sharing essays about Miami Beach revealed all the different ways we saw it. This portion of the institute felt celebratory and I couldn't wait to hear the Everglades essays next.

2006 Miami Faculty Institute participants
Anonymous evaluations on institute writing assignments

CRETE FACULTY INSTITUTE: A CHANGE IN PEDAGOGICAL STYLE

KATHY A. LYON
WINTHROP UNIVERSITY

Nearly ten years have passed since the life-changing experience of my first NCHC Faculty Institute in Crete, entitled “Developing Integration Structures in a Cross-Cultural Context.” Through my work with the facilitators of this institute, a transformation took place in the way that I think and teach. The institute allowed me to become a keener observer, to become more tolerant of ambiguity and unease by thinking and working outside of my discipline, and to be more reflective about what I do in the classroom. Like many participants, I brought back to my own campus the field-based exercises and explorations incorporated in NCHC Faculty Institutes. When I take students on field trips, for example, I ask that they use the City as Text™ techniques of observing through exploration, interpretation, analysis, and written reflection much like institute writing assignments. However, I feel the most valuable aspect of the Crete Institute was the effect on me as an educator and as a person.

After the 1998 Crete Institute, Winthrop University undertook the challenge of revamping its general education curriculum, and in the summer of 2000, I was one of seven faculty members assigned to create a new university-wide general education seminar course titled “Human Experience: Who Am I?” geared toward freshmen. As with the writing assignments in the Crete Institute, these six faculty members and I worked outside of our disciplines; in addition to that challenge, we addressed provocative issues of self and college (why are you here?), self and nature, self and community, and self and the sacred (why are you Here?). Similar to the participants in the Crete Institute, the students in this course would engage in the fundamental academic activity of investigating different perspectives and opinions, understanding how things look from “over there” (Burmeister and Lyon viii).

We all worked together in developing this seminar over the summer of 2000, which was a hot one in every sense of the word, but my experiences from October 1998 tempered the climate, having shown me how to be productive when out of my comfort zone. In the self and nature component of the course, I was forced to think as a biologist and ecologist; in self and community as an anthropologist and sociologist; and in self and the sacred as an expert in philosophy and religion. As

Crete Faculty Institute: A Change in Pedagogical Style

in the Crete Institute, I had to look at the world through the eyes of someone I was not. Furthermore, developing the Human Experience course made me realize that at times I had vague ideas on where I stood on some important issues. But my Crete experience again helped me understand that we do not always know the right answers and they might not exist.

The experience of becoming a student again during the institute also changed how I view my own students and my role in the classroom. I am now a more compassionate teacher who focuses on their learning—no longer the sage on the stage but a learner just like them. I am no less rigorous in the classroom, but my shift from an inner to outer focus has centered my teaching on the students rather than myself. Throughout the development of the Human Experience seminar, I had to read, study, and think about areas for which I had no training, and, more importantly, no answers. Again, my experiences as a student during the Crete Institute allowed me to adapt to this new pedagogical style. I frequently tell my students that being uneasy is not inherently bad; in fact, if they are never confused, then something is wrong. I have taught Human Experience sixteen times since that first semester, and it is just as difficult and as interesting every semester as it was then. Looking at things in new ways, thinking about new ideas, and being out of my comfort zone were instrumental in this metamorphosis to a more reflective and compassionate educator. The Crete Institute laid the foundation for this change.

Before October 1998, I had experienced international travel in meaningful ways, starting with a study abroad in Italy prior to college, followed by participation in a Fulbright group project to China in 1991, and then by a faculty teaching experience at Shanghai International Studies University during the spring semester of 1994. None of this prepared me for the whirlwind of that week in October of 1998, particularly the 3½-day stay in Iraklio. Stateside, I had received all of my travel information, rough itinerary, and reading list, which included *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* by Louis de Bernières, a novel about World War II in Greece, and the works of two Crete natives, Nikos Kazantzakis' *Zorba the Greek* and C. P. Cavafy's series of *Collected Poems*. I had read, I was packed, and I was ready.

Although I arrived in Iraklio on Saturday evening at 4:55 p.m. after missing my flight from Athens due to checked baggage (lesson learned), plenty of time remained for our group meeting at noon on Sunday, which consisted of a general introduction with maps, overview of activities, a more detailed itinerary, additional readings such as

“Bluffing Your Way through Archaeology,” pronunciation guides, and historical readings on the places of interest. That afternoon we spent introducing ourselves, exploring the city, and finally settling down to dinner in groups. After dinner I retired early since the itinerary indicated that we meet at 7:45 a.m. in the hotel restaurant for breakfast. My scribbled notes said to “bring everything,” which meant comfortable shoes, maps, and writing materials.

A packed itinerary created the living laboratory envisioned by NCHC’s Honors Semesters Committee and this institute’s facilitators. Within this laboratory, participants discovered a new lens for honing our observational skills, acquired instruments for discussing and writing about substantive material, and developed a process for reflecting on these experiences and integrating them into who we are and what we do. I would like to describe three facets of the Crete Institute that were transformative. During the institute I learned to look at things in a new way; I learned to think creatively about and reflect on my own writing; and, most importantly, I learned the true meaning of being outside my comfort zone.

Despite my extensive experience traveling and teaching in cultures unfamiliar to me, not until this institute did I really learn how to observe another culture. The facilitators explained that our exercise for the Monday trip to Rethymnon was to walk around the city, eat in restaurants, view museums and exhibits, and think about how our own educations and backgrounds influence what we see. Specifically, we were to choose some aspect of private life as it is lived out in public and to think about how we witness that event. Our written assignment was to collect impressions of the place and its people, emphasizing how people earn a living, how they decorate their homes, how they worship, and how they interact with one another and with us. We were encouraged not only to observe what was happening but also to interpret what we saw by analyzing what was going on while reflecting on how we felt about witnessing this event. The idea of looking at a place through the eyes of its people was completely new to me. My hastily written notes on my impression of the trip to Rethymnon are as follows:

The questions I asked the Cretans most often: “Do you speak English?” and “Do you know where the folk art museum is?” My observations while walking around were: People were friendly if they were not busy. If talking on the phone or hauling cargo they were not interested in stopping to talk to you. It seemed the most willing to help were the strangers to Rethymnon, which, of course meant they could not help you.

Crete Faculty Institute: A Change in Pedagogical Style

It was very difficult to read streets signs and also difficult to navigate in the alleyways and streets. I found myself walking in circles. In terms of private use of public space, I noticed in the park there were “old man spaces” and “woman/children spaces.” Women and children occupied one area and the old men sat on benches on the sidewalks. Throughout the town there seemed to be very little “people space.” Cars were parked on sidewalks, and if cars were not present there was a tavern on the sidewalk. The tavern keepers were very eager to have people in their spaces, however. The Folk Art Museum (after three hours searching) was very interesting and informative. A kind of embroidery called “Rethymnion embroidery”. . . . (Braid 3)

When I look back at this entry, I realize that my questions and observations were clearly egocentric: “How are you going to help me?” I was not looking at a place through the eyes of its people, and I clearly missed the point about understanding a culture by reflecting on how my experiences influence how I see. Or maybe I did, but was in denial (I’m a psychologist) about being an aMErican tourist. To this day, when I visit a new place, whether foreign or U.S., I think about observing by exploring, interpreting, analyzing, and reflecting not only through my own eyes but the eyes of natives.

On Tuesday, the institute participants were introduced to N. Scott Momaday’s *The Way to Rainy Mountain* as the foundation for our writing as participant-observers during the next two days in Iraklio. Momaday’s work, which exemplifies Place as Text in the northern plains of Oklahoma, traces the migration of a Native American tribe, the Kiowa. Although his text was not required reading for this institute, the book is written in tri-part sections explaining the mythic origin of the Kiowa (mythos), the historical reference to the Kiowa culture (logos), and Momaday’s personal journey in the context of this culture (ethos). Our assignment for Wednesday was to write a paper comprised of a mythic section on a legend associated with Crete (mythos), an historical section relating an event that is connected to the myth (logos), and a personal section where we place ourselves in the context of the other two narratives (ethos). I have assigned many papers in my twenty-five years of teaching, but this was the first time I had been required to write creatively outside my discipline in years. Not only that, my paper was not going to be turned in anonymously, graded, and returned; instead, we were going to discuss our writing as a group in seminar. The next day! In the meantime we were to travel with our facilitators to Knossos and visit the Iraklio archeological museum, discuss *Zorba the Greek*, have

dinner, tavern-hop, eat breakfast, and discuss island mentality, slippage of borders, individualism, Cavafy's poems, private use of public space, and walkabouts. To say the least, I was uncomfortable. I thought about the assignment, I wracked my brain, I started over it seemed a hundred times, feverishly writing during every spare minute, but I did finish—just in time. Here is what I wrote:

Mythos

Freudios, the youngest of the Titans (also called Kronos or time) dethroned his own father and castrated him in order to become king. He fathered three children, one of whom was called Idios—god of libido (also called sexual energy) and Thanatos (also called aggressive tendencies). The other two children were Egos—god of reality and Superegos—god of morals and ethics. In order to keep his children from robbing him of his Kingship, he successfully repressed from consciousness all three of them, he thought. Much to Freudios' dismay, Idios (sexual and aggressive god) kept emerging. This weighed so heavily on his conscience that he developed a theory about the re-emerging unconscious motives. In this theory, he stated that young males are motivated by a god called Oedipus Rexos, who is governed by fear of castration anxiety by the father and love of the mother, and young girls are motivated by a goddess named Electros, who, in turn, is ruled by her anxiety aroused by penis envy and love for her father. According to this theory, resolution of these Oedipus Rexos and Electros complexes comes about by identifying with the same gender parent, thereby reducing anxiety. Freudios also stated if this identification does not take place in the young female and male, the child is either governed by the god of Homosexos or turned into a stone wrapped in swaddling clothes and fed to the father.

Logos

Sigmund Freud was born in 1860 in Vienna, Austria, where he received extensive grammar training in the classics—four years of Greek and eight years of Latin.

Ethos

I have always tried to find myself. I was always questioning as a child and later tried three majors in college, graduating with one undergraduate degree and switching to another discipline for my advanced degree. Why do I do this? Why can I not be satisfied? Who am I trying to please? How do I define myself? Does

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moving around, traveling, define who I am? Have my conversations with Italians, Chinese, Germans, Austrians and Cretans defined me? I don't know. I certainly don't think I am driven by some Freudian impulse but believe my culture has shaped who I am. . . . (Braid 26)

I believe that the Crete Institute also shaped who I am. The uncomfortable writing process of this institute, along with my self-conscious experience of being a student again as well as a foreigner, transformed my thinking, writing, and teaching. Becoming a student during the institute changed my role in the classroom from expert to facilitator; I now realize that I do not always know the right answer and more importantly that there may not be one; being out of my comfort zone as a writer gave me a way to identify with my students and more effectively help them develop confidence and skill in their writing; and being a stranger in an unfamiliar culture showed me what many students feel when they come into my classroom. In short, the Crete Institute made me a more reflective and compassionate educator. Moreover, the institute was a catalyst in developing the Human Experience seminar, unique to our university. Although just one of the many general education changes at Winthrop, it may be among the reasons that the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) recognized our university as one of eighteen institutions to participate in its "Core Commitments Leadership Consortium."

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CROSSROADS AND BEYOND

JOHN KANDL
WALSH UNIVERSITY

Crossroads

(Orpheus, Robert Johnson and the Origin of the Blues)

*Mythos*¹

Where crossroads cross
Purposes double
Cross. Robert Johnson
You found this surely
That midnight-hour you
Gave your soul away
To the origin of the blues.

I wonder when you turned
From the turning road to see
(At that midnight-hour)
That now you could do anything,
Did you see the magic hand
Who handed you your own guitar
Was only Orpheus turning?
Ancient, unthinkable, and
Strangely familiar?
Orpheus turning,
Handing you your own guitar?

Rilke was right. It is always
Orpheus. Orpheus always
Turning. In the turn
Forever, he is the turn.
Turning to see the Love
Of his Life – rising to a dream
In the sun and sinking forever
Back into the underworld.
And always forever the present
Moment, rising and sinking.
Isn't it always? Always, everywhere, midnight
In the Mississippi Delta, crossroads

Crossroads and Beyond

Marking the inscrutable center
Starlit and bounded
By earth in plowed rows
And horizons always in motion?
Isn't it always, just here, the origin
Of the blues – and Robert Johnson –
And Orpheus turning?

*Logos*²

I found myself in a graveyard in Memphis,
Winding through pathos, my map
Upside-down, my compass mal-
functioning. Several times
I'd thought I was lost – I'd lost
My group. And all around –
Endless graves, row upon row, and severed each
From each, group from group, and all
Ignoring the unity of all that must
Be the only sure promise of death.

Here were the poor with their meager markers,
Marked with specifics of name and date,
Inscriptions promoting the promise
Of life-eternal. And here the empowered
In extravagant tombs, severed
From the poor – and all the same –
White from black, poor black from rich and
Rich white from poor, etc., etc. And there
Were other signs as well – to unearth
The history and mark its place. I saw
Young women snapping
Pictures of intriguing monuments. I saw
Others, too, bringing flowers
To the dead. This is a living cemetery.

I read the inscriptions
Of history – detailing who and what who
Had done. This hero of war, this
Benefactor. These others – unknown –
In “No Man's Land.” I saw
The prominent local politician

John Kandler

Who died when his heart attacked
At the moment of his finest
Public hour: introducing
A president. His monument
Shows him with hand raised high
In the dignity of rhetoric, jaunty right foot
Slipping off of the pedestal. I saw
The truncated tree, and the shrouded
Urn – arguing for uncertainty. The signs
You see here are like plaques in museums.

At the STAX, for example, in
Memphis, I read the inscriptions
Of *Soul*. The history of Soul is recorded here.
It all began in joy – white and black
Jamming together: “It was just
like a family” – “*feel-good music*,”
Said Rufus Thomas. And then –
The murder of Martin Luther King –
That changed it all.
The feel-good made way for
Mourning and anger, and
The urgency of the present moment. Rebirth,
The dream of unity and peace cannot
Be shattered? And then –
The selling of Soul to more powerful brokers –
The un-recordable loss when the devil
(Jim Stewart?) sells away the Masters and
All the Soul is sold.

Crossroads crossed purposes and
Double-crossed again. And all recorded
In the STAX museum in Memphis. This
Museum is a cemetery. Its markers point
To the Lorraine Motel, which is also
A museum that winds you through
Halls – speaking in the several languages
Of mourning and triumph and mourning
And hope – in written inscriptions, in picture,
In video, in spoken word – from suffering and
Suffrage to Rosa Parks and all the way

Crossroads and Beyond

To that room in the Lorraine Motel and
The balcony where King was shot – and
The boardinghouse room across the gap
Where the shot was shot, where the dream
Collapsed in blood. And the writing
On the walls proclaims “You can kill
The dreamer, but you cannot kill the dream.”

And I thought of STAX and the museum of Soul –
After the Soul had been sold. It was Rufus
Thomas again, proclaiming “STAX will never
Die.” And I thought of the Elmwood gravesites
All proclaiming Life Eternal and Freedom and
Peace and Unity – amidst such obvious loss
And separation: “Life – Death,” said one,
“Then Life and Love Eternal.”

Intermission

And the *mythos* returns to turn
Upon itself, where crossroads
Cross and double-cross. There you’ll find
Robert Johnson, and the origin
Of the blues, and Orpheus forever
Turning. He is the turn.

Ethos^s

And so, the blues. And the origin
Of the blues. The blues is always
Pressing into the present. It is
The wail of loss and longing
And also in its very pathos the wail of
Hope beyond hope, desire beyond
Delusion, erasing hope it is in its energy
The endless hope of Soul eternal. . . .
It is both of these – not one
Or the other – in separation – or even
Interchange. It is both of these turns and always –
Always both at once. Death-in-Life and
Life-in-Death. Isn’t it always? The eternal
Turning of Orpheus? Cemetery and
Museum – with living bodies, hearts, minds,

John Kandl

Soul reacting and acting? Orpheus
Turning and Robert Johnson at midnight –
At the bottom of the night and the dawning
Of dawn – Meeting us at the crossroads?
Handing us our own guitars? *A guitar*
For every child – and the eternal question
Arising forever: *How will each accept this gift?*

Commentary: Beyond the Crossroads

“Crossroads” is a revised version of a piece originally written at the NCHC Faculty Institute in Memphis entitled “Exploring Blues Terrains” (Christian 6–7). I found the *Mythos, Logos, Ethos* structure extremely useful for clarifying, ordering, and deepening the field-based learning experience. I also found that the process of writing in this structure can lead one into surprising turns. I found myself involved in a kind of lyric-essay that not only details and reflects upon my personal experience of Memphis and the delta but also reflexively engages the writing structure itself, attempting to reveal mythos and logos in a more or less open-ended dialogue. That is, in ethos, while elements of logos may contradict and dismantle the assumptions of mythos, ultimately both may remain valid in a kind of stand-off between such issues as factual reality and mythic ideal. (“You can kill the dreamer, but you cannot kill the dream.”)

Considering ways to incorporate the mythos-logos-ethos assignment in my classes, I became interested in employing the format as a heuristic writing experience, not always linked to a strictly field-based assignment. I approach this as a series of informal journal assignments, recurring throughout the semester, useful for sparking class discussions and as a springboard into formal papers. In a first-year honors writing course exploring the creative process and involving excursions to the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Rock Hall of Fame, the first mythos assignment (first week of class) takes “creativity” itself as its subject. Students explore their own definitions and ruminate on such issues as the significance of the creative process to themselves and to the world at large. The logos assignment (second week) asks them to detail definitions of creativity and principles of the creative process mainly via Brewster Ghiselin’s introduction to *The Creative Process: A Symposium*.⁴ The ethos segment (third week) examines mythos-beliefs in light of Ghiselin’s principles, which offset though not entirely the widely held

Crossroads and Beyond

assumption that creativity is an inherently mysterious process. The students then are asked to apply some of these principles in three writing assignments spread throughout the semester (one on William Blake, one on Picasso, one on the Beatles); these, toward the end of the semester, are combined into one longer essay on the creative process. For each of these subjects, students again write a mythos-logos-ethos journal, which they share with the class in discussion and in workshops drafting and revising their formal papers. They work with secondary and primary field-based sources. For the Picasso and Beatles assignments, students are required to team up with two or three other students in the class to visit the Cleveland Museum and/or the Rock Hall of Fame. (I am still fine-tuning ways to better organize this experience.) The overall goal of the course is to engage students in demonstrating their growing understanding of the creative process both as a research topic to explore and as a genuine creative experience of their own. At the end of the course, the students write a journal assignment exploring ways their personal understanding of the creative process has changed or deepened because of their own creative experience in the course. As in any course, the most successful students are the ones who go beyond the assignment, seriously and honestly exploring the terrain. For such students, one of the outcomes is their surprise in experiencing for themselves the degrees to which such intangibles as chaos, chance, uncertainty, and intuition are fundamental to the process. In a sense, the ethos of the creative process itself marks the crossroads of mythos and logos.

Endnotes

¹Notes to *Mythos*:

Robert Johnson: 1930's era blues guitarist and singer Robert Johnson is said to have sold his soul to the devil in the Mississippi Delta at the crossroads of U.S. Highway 61 and Mississippi Highway 49 somewhere outside of Clarksdale. The devil, or simply a "dark figure" in some accounts, took Johnson's guitar, performed a spell over it, and handed it back to Johnson, who then found he could play anything he wanted.

Orpheus: According to classical myth, Orpheus could mesmerize his listeners, including animals as well as humans and, sometimes, gods. His powers were such that he could charm the gods of the underworld to allow him to rescue his recently deceased lover, Eurydice, from Hades. She was given leave to follow him back to the world of the living, with the warning that if Orpheus turned to look back, he would

lose her forever. In one of the most mysterious actions in mythology, Orpheus turns.

Rilke: This refers to Ranier Maria Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*.

²Notes to *Logos*

Graveyard in Memphis: Refers to the historic Elmwood Cemetery in Memphis, TN. Established in 1852, the 80-acre cemetery offers a unique insight into the social hierarchies of historic Memphis—slaves have their own section, as do free blacks, as do poor whites, rich whites, etc.

“No Man’s Land”: a plot of unmarked graves in Elmwood cemetery.

Truncated tree . . . shrouded urn: Sculptural images denoting uncertainty of the cause of death, especially whether or not the death was natural.

STAX: STAX records, founded in 1959 by Jim Stewart and Estelle Axton, was unique in its color blindness, equally employing both white and black musicians. The recording studio was located in a renovated movie theater, which today houses the STAX museum. With a roster of artists including Otis Redding, Sam and Dave, and Booker T. and the MG's, STAX is renowned for outstanding innovations in rhythm and blues and soul.

Rufus Thomas: One of the premier recording artists at STAX.

Jim Stewart: Co-founder with his sister Estelle Axton of STAX records. Stewart, perhaps due to inexperience, signed a contract with Atlantic Records which, in its fine-print, gave Atlantic ownership of all STAX's masters or original tapes. In this case, the devil was truly in the details.

Lorraine Motel: The site of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., April 4, 1968. The Lorraine also accommodated STAX musicians between recording sessions. It is now the site of the National Civil Rights Museum.

³Notes to *Ethos*:

A guitar for every child: This slogan is for bluesman John Billington's highly successful program to bring a hands-on blues experience to all children in the public school systems of the Mississippi Delta.

⁴**The Creative Process: A Symposium.** This anthology, edited by Brewster Ghiselin, presents a selection of writings by creative people on their own experience of the creative process. Moreover, the selections represent virtually all fields, including literature, visual arts, science, mathematics, and philosophy.

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DO YOU GET THE BLUES?

STEPHEN J. NICHOLS
LANCASTER BIBLE COLLEGE

Introduction

This paper, stemming from what I originally wrote during the NCHC Faculty Institute on Experiential Learning entitled “Exploring Blues Terrains” (Christian 11–12), employs three voices to get the blues. The voice of a poet anticipates the experience, framing the blues around the events in the early life and career of Johnny Cash. Next, a tourist-historian explores the city of Memphis and Beale Street in search of the blues. Finally, a more personal voice reflects on the disappointments and surprises discovered through the experience in Memphis and the Mississippi Delta. After my essay, an “Apologia” section discusses how I use this assignment in my courses and offers a suggestion from one of my students.

Mythos:

A Poet Anticipates Memphis

Johnny Cash, did you get the blues in Memphis?

Or did you get the blues when Jack died and you were fishin’
and he had told you to go on ahead and it’d be alright?

Or did you get the blues when you realized
June wasn’t so far out of your reach after all
and maybe she loved you more than you loved her?

Did you get the blues in Memphis when you walked the streets
and you couldn’t pay the rent?

Did you learn your rhythm watchin’ the black boys shinin’ shoes?
Or did you learn your rhythm pickin’ the cotton and puttin’ it in
the sack?
Or did you learn it from those church songs in your mama’s hymn
book?

Tell us, Johnny Cash, did you get the blues in Memphis
pickin’ your guitar
for Sam Phillips
while the people walked by
and looked in the window

Do You Get the Blues?

and thought
just another white boy
in from the fields
thinkin' he's gonna sell some records?

Logos:

A Tourist-Historian Visits Sun Studios

The only recording studio in the country listed on the national historic registry may be found at 706 Union Avenue, Memphis, Tennessee. Constructed in 1906, the building first housed a bakery. In the 1960s it was home to a barber shop, next serving the needs of the river divers of Memphis as a short-lived, but adventurous, scuba supply shop in the early 1970s. After twenty-five years of vacancy, some familiar faces returned. In 1985, Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison, and a host of others, June Carter Cash among them, breathed new life into the building. They were there to record *Class of '55*, a tribute album to Elvis and the glory years of 706 Union Avenue. These glory years were from 1950–1960, the ten years of Sam Phillips' lease of the building as the home of the Memphis Recording Studio, better known as Sun Studio, and the legendary Sun Records. In that modest building Sam Phillips and his stable of young artists made musical history. Sam Phillips had been looking for a new sound, a fusion of the blues and of the country music that had originated in the cotton fields of the Mississippi Delta and the hills of Tennessee. When these musical genres were brought together by both black and white musicians, the new sound emerged: rock and roll. Today the building is a museum, gift shop, and recording studio all in one. For the cost of some studio fees, anyone can record a song in the very same building standing on the very same spot where Elvis broke through with that new sound.

On March 10, 2006, after traveling just over 1,000 miles by air and having walked nine blocks, I visited Sun Studios, spending \$71.85: \$9.50 for a tour; \$23.95 for a book; \$20 for a vintage Johnny Cash 45 (“Blue Train,” verso “Born to Lose”); \$7.95 for a mug; \$4.95 for a poster; \$2.50 for a refrigerator magnet; and \$3 for three postcards at a dollar a piece. I bought the blues in Memphis.

Later that night, I met Trent Lott coming out of the B.B. King Blues Club on Beale Street. He had made the trek over from Memphis's famed Peabody Hotel where the Southern Republican Leadership Conference was meeting to pick the next presidential candidate. Senator Lott signed my admission stub for the Sun Studio tour—I had

to document the moment, and it was the only piece of paper I had; he used his own pen. When he saw what he was signing, he told me, "I recorded a song at Sun Studios." The junior Senator from Mississippi continued, "I was part of a quartet and after we graduated from college, we went to Sun and cut a record." "Senator Lott," I asked, "Did you get the blues in Memphis?"

Ethos:

Lost Delta Blues, Still Lost

I went to Memphis and the Mississippi Delta to find the blues. Trained as an historian, I look for artifacts, interpret documents, search for causes, and tease out effects; I look for things past in things present. I didn't find the blues in Memphis. I didn't find them in Sun Studio; Elvis loomed too large. I didn't find them on Beale Street; the Elvis impersonator doing Neil Diamond songs was a bit of a problem. I didn't find them at STAX Studios. The casinos dotting the Mississippi Delta not only blocked the sun, they also shut out any traces of the blues. Clarksdale, the place of legend and myth, was too plugged in or too shut down. I have concluded that the Delta Blues headed north on Highway 61 in 1943, when Muddy Waters bought his ticket from the colored window at the train station at Edwards and Issaquena in Clarksdale, Mississippi. I can't blame him for leaving. I can't blame it, the blues, for leaving, either. Memphis Slim said the blues is revenge. "We had a hard life," he explained. Getting away makes sense.

Is the blues in the Delta? Is the blues in Sarah's son-in-law? Sarah owns and runs Sarah's Kitchen on a back street in Clarksdale. The sign overhead says, "It's a *kitchen*, not a restaurant." And under that sign Sarah's son-in-law told me his story. His first wife was shot in the back and killed as she played a duet at the piano with him somewhere in California. He left the west coast, moving first to Chicago, then to St. Louis, and finally to Clarksdale, the reverse trajectory of the Delta Blues musicians. And, at Clarksdale, he was remarried to Sarah's daughter. Is the blues in his story?

Is the blues in Elmwood Cemetery in Memphis? Is it at Lillie Mae Glover's grave? Lillie Mae Glover was known as Ma Rainey II, a tribute to the mother of the blues, Gertrude "Ma" Rainey. She dominated the blues scene in Memphis and around the south. Her epitaph says it all: "I'm Ma Rainey II, Mother of Beale Street. I'm 78 years old. Ain't never had enough of nothing, and it's too damn late now." Or is it at the grave

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marked with the statue of a little girl holding a bouquet of flowers over the chiseled words, “At least I got a bouquet of flowers.”?

Is the blues somewhere in the Delta as a ten-year-old black boy, who when delivering mules to a rich white family, was so ill-mannered as to actually walk into the house? That boy would go on to earn a Ph.D. in sociology, but, at the time, he didn’t realize that he, according to the prevailing custom, belonged on the porch. The house still stands. Is the blues, like the dusk of a summer evening, lingering somewhere there on the porch? Or, did that boy take the blues with him as he went off to school and got himself a Ph.D.?

Is the blues in a man with grey hair and in a fine suit, talking, as the evening sun went down, about putting guitars in the hands of children before guns would find their way into them? I do hate to see the evening sun go down. This grey-haired man in the fine suit, Johnnie Billington, had agreed to meet us and to give a talk on the blues. A child of the Delta, he had made his money in Detroit, and now he was back home, turning a group of kids into a band of musicians. He was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*, as well as on a PBS special, as saying that he would like to put guitars in the hands of these kids, before guns find their way there. He turned these kids into musicians, into human beings with some sense of identity and dignity. And he did so through music, through the blues. At one point, Mr. Billington leaned over the neck of his guitar, looked right at me, and shot a question: “Do you get the blues?” “No,” I said. I wish I had added, “But I think I’m beginning to.”

Apologia:

Hear, O Historians

I had been a committed defender of the traditional research paper. As my historian colleagues, one by one, succumbed to assigning personal experience papers because of the overwhelming problems with plagiarism and easy-to-be-had papers for sale online, I held strong to my position of requiring the standard rite-of-passage of the traditional research paper. Then I went on the NCHC Faculty Institute and experienced the very gratifying assignment of the Mythos, Logos, Ethos essay. I found that thinking about writing in that style helped in my own research and publication. I also had fun with the assignment. I thought I owed my students the same opportunity.

I first used the Mythos, Logos, Ethos essay assignment in a summer class, Christianity and American Culture. This course had the benefits

of being in a seminar format, heavy on participation and student-led discussions, and of having field trips. At first, the students were hesitant about the assignment, and I, quite new to it myself, was not able to offer a great deal of help. But they rose to the occasion. Some still, when they see me, remind me that this assignment was the most fulfilling and gratifying of their college career. One, an older student, shared the experience with her son, a high school teacher, who in turn tried it in his classes.

Building upon the good experience of the summer course assignment, I decided to use the assignment in a fall semester course, which happened not to be an honors section. I assigned writing on a world religion other than Christianity. Visiting a place of worship was the desirable experiential-learning component, but I also allowed phone or e-mail contact as a substitute. The fall schedule gave the students more time for the process, which seems to be a significant part of the Mythos, Logos, Ethos essay, than allowed for in the concentrated summer session. Many students spent some time during their fall break, visiting a non-Christian place of worship or center that was near their home and that they had always had a curiosity about that was never satisfied. Again, my students in the fall, as they had in the summer, responded favorably to the assignment even though they confessed having serious doubts about the assignment at the beginning. They showed their abilities in writing a research paper in the logos section, but they also showed their creativity and their own intellectual development in the mythos and ethos sections. They had, in other words, the benefit of the rigors of the traditional research paper and much more. Some even added to the essay itself. One student in particular was inspired to do an additional oil painting that captured on canvas her words on paper. Others enjoyed creative formatting of their text.

I devoted a class session to debriefing the assignment in order for them to share with each other what they learned and to evaluate the assignment. Like old veterans swapping war stories, they enjoyed recalling their experiences for each other. They enjoyed learning from each other, and I enjoyed learning from them. One student in particular, Jamie Wolfinger, made a rather fascinating suggestion. She felt that ending with the ethos section stopped short of bringing the assignment to completion. She suggested that a section be added that moves beyond personal reflection to explore the broader implications of what such experiential learning means. As a class we came up with the term "Apologia" to express this section. Students were not merely concerned with their own intellectual and personal development or journey. They

Do You Get the Blues?

also had an interest in what the larger community could take away from their journey.

I had been a committed defender of the research paper. I still am committed to it, just not exclusively. Socrates began his famous “Apologia” by calling on the citizens of Athens to consider his case. Then Socrates went on for quite a bit, especially against today’s standards of speech-making in a world of sound bites. Here is mine, humbly offered: “O Historians of the Academy, consider the Mythos, Logos, Ethos, and Apologia essay because your students will likely find it to be one of the most creative and gratifying of their writing assignments, and you just might find that they, not to mention you, will also learn a great deal in the process.”

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CHAPTER 6: PHILOSOPHICAL AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS



Beams of Light memorial on September 11, 2007.

PHOTO BY ALAN W. GROSE.



Detail of brass memorial on Firehouse 10 near WTC
“dedicated to those who fell and to those who carry on.”

PHOTO BY PETER A. MACHONIS.

PLATONIC THOUGHTS ON THE FRUSTRATIONS OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND TEACHING: REFLECTIONS AFTER THE NEW ORLEANS DISCOVERY AND RECOVERY INSTITUTE¹

ALAN W. GROSE
LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY-BROOKLYN

One of the most valuable features of the NCHC Experiential Teaching/Learning Faculty Institutes is the opportunity faculty participants have to learn in the same sort of engaged process that we will try to facilitate for our students when we teach in the City as Text™ methodology, and my experience during the 2007 New Orleans Discovery and Recovery Institute proved in this regard to be very rich indeed. Over the course of four early spring days in “the city that care forgot,” I was a part of a group of educators from all parts of the United States—an otherwise improbable assembly of individuals—engaged in field explorations of various neighborhoods, discussions with local residents, and debriefings in which we attempted to come to grips with the complexities of life in New Orleans after the disaster of Hurricane Katrina. We found ourselves at various points intrigued, angered, saddened, frustrated, and sometimes on the verge of despair in our attempts to comprehend the overwhelming sets of difficulties in this legendary city. As a result of this experience, I have come to a better understanding of one of the experiential-learning activities I have designed for my own students. In a core curriculum course I teach called *The Idea of the Human*, students not only examine monuments and memorials near Ground Zero but actively research how life in New York City has changed since the events of 9/11. Watching the emotional reactions of faculty in New Orleans made me see my students’ reactions to their explorations in an entirely new light.

In New Orleans, I was particularly struck by the moments of frustration that occurred in our group as the city we were studying failed in various ways to make sense, and I would like to use these moments of frustration as an occasion for reflection on what it is like to learn in the experiential method that City as Text promotes. For the world to stop making sense is not always a bad thing because this step is often necessary in our surrendering of faulty preconceptions and moving on

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toward a deeper understanding of our place in the world. Indeed, when we teach, I believe we should create both the conditions in which the world might fail to make sense to our students and those in which they also understand that they have our support as they go about trying to make better sense of it on their own. But what interests me most about the senses of frustration I witnessed in our group in New Orleans is what I think is probably an asymmetry between the frustration we as faculty feel as the world fails to make sense to us and that which we might hope for our students to experience. I would like to reflect on this asymmetry by invoking the aid of the story of the cave that opens Book 7 of Plato's *Republic*, an allegory that is often used to help students think about the nature of a liberal arts education. This allegory, however, also speaks to a unique difficulty we might encounter as we learn to teach our students in an experiential method. To suggest something of the practical value of these insights, I also offer some examples of how my improved understanding of the frustration of experiential learning has led to refinements in the 9/11 experiential-learning activities I assign to my students, particularly in helping them to deal constructively with their frustrations and emotions.

Plato's allegory of the cave is familiar to many educators, but a few of its features that are particularly relevant to the experience of a liberal arts education guided by an experiential methodology are worth rehearsing briefly. Students just arriving at college for the first time are much like the prisoners in Plato's cave: they are comfortable with their surroundings, and they take many of the shadowy appearances they perceive of the world around them uncritically at face value. But Plato's prisoner does not remain comfortable for long. He is uprooted from his comfort, turned toward puppets and a fire that have cast the shadows he formerly took to be reality, and dragged out of the cave into the sunlight of the outside world. The process is disorienting and confusing. Moving from seeing darkness to looking into bright light is not easy. Moreover, it is painful. At times the freed prisoner might like to return to the view of the world that was simple and comfortable.

This disorienting journey from darkness to light captures the process of the world failing to make sense in the ways that it previously had. Two components of Plato's allegory are important to notice here, particularly for those of us who will teach in the City as Text method. First, Plato only speaks of one prisoner being set free. This is not just Plato's notorious elitism but a reflection of the fact that education must ultimately take place one mind at a time. It is only in the individual mind that the world makes sense, and it is only in the individual mind that the world

will fail to make sense. The world, of course, can fail to make sense in all sorts of ways: politically, scientifically, aesthetically, or morally. The way this failure happens in any particular case tells the students as much about their own mind and lenses for viewing the world as it does about the world itself. Ironically, sending students to investigate a neighborhood in a group can often have the effect of forcing them, sometimes with great frustration, to realize the uniqueness of their own lenses of investigation.

Second, we should notice in Plato's allegory that no person acts as a tour guide. In order for the world to fail to make sense in the way that might spark education, the individual student must work at it actively. One's former preconceptions of the world collapse under the weight of the new experiences that do not fit together with the old, and it is here that critical reflection and thinking begin. The City as Text method, of course, emphasizes that students must experience the city as a starting point for their own inquiries. The technique of having students generate their own mapping of a particular area as they happen to experience it puts the individual student in the driver's seat as new experiences launch on a collision course with former preconceptions. When the two collide and the world fails to make sense as it previously did, thinking begins. We can expect frustration to manifest itself in a broad range of ways, and debriefing sessions can help to vent this frustration and nurture continued critical reflection.

In Plato's allegory the reward for this frustrating effort finally comes when the prisoner has made it outside of the cave, and here is where I would like to shift my focus toward our experiences as faculty members who have spent a great deal of time reading, studying, thinking, and working hard to make sense of the world. When Plato's prisoner finally has his eyes adjusted to the light and he can finally appreciate the beauty of life in the sun, the world makes sense. Although Plato seems to think that this adjustment requires an understanding of what is ultimately good, true, and beautiful, we manage to make sense of the world in many different ways. What is more important to my present reading is that the thinker outside of the cave loves this new clarity, and Plato suggests that such a person would be unwilling to exchange it for even the most desirable aspects of the old comfortable circumstances. I think that we as teachers can relate to this experience more than we might initially expect. We have worked hard to make sense of the world and our place in it, and our love for this sense of things helps to account for why so many of us would not trade this job for any other. We probably all know the wonderful satisfaction of giving a lecture that is perfectly

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organized and that connects all the dots. Such is the beauty of life outside of the cave! In this sense, we are all philosophers, lovers of wisdom.

But this is not the end of Plato's allegory, and it is in the rest of the story that we find the asymmetrical kind of frustration that we face in learning to teach in an experiential methodology. Plato's prisoner is forced back into the cave and returned to his original position among the shadowy appearances of things. Plato describes further disorientation as his eyes become filled with darkness, and there must surely be frustration involved here, too. He later counsels that a philosopher should return to the daily practices of political life only slowly before taking on the tasks of ruling as guardians, the most important of which Plato thinks is educating the future leaders of the city-state. It takes time for those who have received a theoretical education and who love the clarity of a good theory to reacclimate themselves to the world of daily politics. The frustration one suffers in the loss of the beautiful clarity of life under Plato's sun cannot but be different from that suffered in turning away from the shadows. Here we can see an important asymmetry between the nature of experiential learning and experiential teaching, one that also seemed to me to be evident at the New Orleans Discovery and Recovery Institute.

The frustration of the person who has already achieved the clarity of making sense out of the world but for whom the world again no longer makes sense, I submit, is potentially much deeper than the frustration of the person for whom the world is failing to make sense for the first time. This point is not obvious because we all have known students who become overwhelmed and disillusioned to the point of falling into despair at some point in their undergraduate education. I suspect also that many of us had such an experience ourselves when we were undergraduates; however, we found our way through and at some level made sense of things for ourselves. We now come to the world with the sense that even in the face of extreme complexity, we can achieve a rational understanding of things. It is possible and maybe even, when we succeed, beautiful.

In New Orleans, however, a sense of frustration permeated the air during our sessions together in the institute and pointed to a world failing to make sense, particularly among those who were exploring New Orleans for the first time or for the first time in a long time. This frustration manifested itself in many ways as we thought about and inquired into the overwhelming complexity of the tasks of recovering from the devastation of Katrina. People were angry that key pieces of information for making the puzzle fit together were not forthcoming. Who, for

instance, owned that barge—shown in Spike Lee’s documentary *When the Levees Broke*—that just happened to be at the spot of one of the worst breaches of the levees? People shed tears in sympathy with the losses of those who had so little but still lost almost more than can be imagined. Is such loss in this world of abundance even possible? There was heated perplexity at the vast gulf of difference that exists among residents of New Orleans even on the factual questions of what had actually happened to cause and aggravate the destruction in the city, differences exacerbated by profoundly low levels of social trust among New Orleanians. How can a city so divided plan its redevelopment fairly? And, perhaps most frustrating of all, we tried to fathom how the plight of so much of this beautiful city that so many people understandably love so deeply could be met with such callous indifference by so many people—from those within the Bush Administration to the wealthy landowner from New Orleans’ Uptown neighborhood whom Tom Piazza, in his *Why New Orleans Matters*, depicts as thinking the whole issue of destruction was overstated. Even if they will never love New Orleans as Piazza and so many we met clearly do, how could so many people fail to display even a minimally decent level of concern when there was and still is such clear information about the suffering and need of our fellow Americans, our fellow human beings?

To be sure, much has come to light in the aftermath of Katrina that should not make sense because much in the world is not as it ought to be. But even as we recognized this, our frustration was fresh and raw. What faulty assumptions have we made about how facts are discoverable? About how vulnerability is not in principle technologically obsolete? About the basic decency of America and humanity? To encounter New Orleans today is to learn that things do not all make sense, at least not as they did before. For those of us who some time ago found the principles or theories or methods by which we could make sense of the world, at least enough to motivate us to undertake an academic life, these perplexities carry the threat that the sense of the world we have achieved and love so dearly might really be illusory or impotent to help with what matters most. This powerful issue remains at the root of much of the frustration exhibited in so many ways in our debriefings and discussions in New Orleans. This frustration is also different from what we experienced the first time we tried to make sense of the world, if for no other reason than that it might now shake our hard-won confidence in our academic endeavors or undermine the cultivated passion with which we try to help our students to make sense of the world for themselves.

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I propose that we draw three lessons from the recognition of this asymmetry between the frustrations in experiential teaching and learning that might enrich the way we engage our students in the process of experiential learning. First, such recognition should help us to identify and resist the temptation we might feel to move our students too aggressively toward our own sense or understandings of the theories we love so much. Learning is a fragile process, and we must sometimes exercise restraint in order not to derail it for our students. When we plan a City as Text learning experience, we should guard against giving too many instructions. Students should look around for themselves to see what they can discover. In the terms of Plato's allegory, we must resist the temptation to point out the beautiful, intriguing things too quickly lest our students miss everything by not becoming acclimated to the light by themselves.

A second lesson might be hidden in the fact that we have now experienced the frustration of trying to make sense of the world at least twice. Perhaps the most valuable ingredient that we can bring to the learning situation is not our theoretical expertise but our practical experience of having struggled to make sense of things for ourselves. I have suggested that we ought to work to make sure our students understand that we are there to provide support for them when they encounter the frustrations of facing a world that no longer makes sense. Having had the experience ourselves and coming to be aware of it through experiences like the NCHC Institutes might just provide the right tools to facilitate learning on their own for our students. Plato's allegory does not mark this possibility directly but rather quite indirectly by suggesting what happens when this project of learning goes badly. When Plato's prisoner is returned with his new wisdom to his former situation, he talks with his former neighbors and now potential students too quickly about his new opinions of the world. At first they ridicule him, but then they become so irritated with him that Plato says that they would kill him if they could. None of us will ever encounter quite this extreme, but we should recognize that frustration can easily get out of hand and derail a learning process. Having traveled this way before, however, we can perhaps be more sensitive to these possibilities and shepherd our debriefing discussions away from the direction of hasty action and toward the road of continued inquiry. Follow-up assignments that call for students to organize their thoughts and observations can also be constructive in this regard.

Third, in those moments when we become overwhelmed with frustration and perhaps risk falling into despair, Plato's allegory might offer

one more insight. When we return to the darkness of Plato's cave, this return is not quite the end of the story for us even if we think that the world is no longer clear or beautiful or that it no longer makes sense. We can still craft the circumstances in which the world might fail for the first time to make sense for our students. And we can lend them our support as they struggle to forge a deeper, better understanding of things for themselves. The beauty of the world when it actually makes sense might slip from our grasp as we return to conditions of experiential education. But if Plato's view is correct, our understanding of the world will be enhanced in many ways, and we will be more equipped to pursue the higher calling of facilitating for our students the best kind of education.

Here I turn to the way in which my experience in the New Orleans Discovery and Recovery Institute has helped me to think more strategically about an experiential-learning activity I stage for my own students in my sections of the course Core Seminar: The Idea of the Human. The Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University (LIU), where I teach this course, is located approximately three miles away from the site of the former twin towers of the World Trade Center and the dramatic attacks of September 11, 2001. I take advantage of this location by having students inquire into the ways in which life in the city has changed in the wake of these events. One important issue to address in this inquiry is how we remember 9/11. To promote this investigation, I have developed a learning activity centered on student explorations of several monuments and memorials in lower Manhattan, especially surrounding the Ground Zero site itself. This component of my course plays out in three stages: students' independent explorations of the sites, an in-class debriefing that I bill as a 9/11 Memorials Observation Symposium, and finally a formal writing assignment. The potential for a wide range of emotional responses and frustrations is significant. As Plato might put it, witnessing our learning process in the New Orleans Institute has helped me to see the ways my sensitivity to these responses might be essential to facilitating the experiential-learning process for my students.

In the context of the explorations of memorials to 9/11 that I designed for my students at LIU, this heightened appreciation of the frustrations of experiential teaching and learning has translated into two important refinements in the way I approach the process. The first arises from my increased awareness of the frustrations that might attend this process of inquiry. As Plato's story suggests, when faced with profound frustration, students might be tempted to turn away from

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intellectual inquiry entirely. For students exploring memorials to 9/11 to become upset about the attacks or about the ways in which they feel these memorials misrepresent or entirely omit important parts of the story is not uncommon. Such moments offer a fertile but fragile opportunity to guide students' reflections toward the rewards of sustained intellectual inquiry. Quite practically, designing debriefing discussions and subsequent writing assignments carefully is essential. Debriefing discussions, in particular, establish a forum in which fraught emotions and frustrations may be called up, but a forum that is also somewhat sheltered, something of a safe haven.

I now see more clearly than before that, when emotions and frustrations arise in such a forum, being prepared to point these energies in a constructive direction is important. This can take several forms. One might be to stop the discussion and to invite the students to reflect on what has just occurred in the room as a part of the process of inquiry. I might ask my students, for instance, to describe and reflect on the range of emotional responses they have just observed. Another might be to pose a more general theoretical question such as what their observations or experiences might tell us about how humans respond to unprecedented disasters. What, for instance, is the significance of the range of artistic and architectural styles among the memorials they have observed for the ways in which 9/11 will be remembered? What are the differences in the kinds of responses each evokes? And importantly, the follow-up writing assignment should encourage students to reflect not only on their observations but also on what they learned about themselves as inquirers, thereby encouraging them to understand their frustrations as a natural part of the process of inquiry. Normally in this course, students develop their skills at writing expository essays with a scholarly tone, but in the follow-up essays to their 9/11 memorial observations, encouraging a personal tone is important. Not that a scholarly tone is inappropriate, but in this kind of learning activity, they might observe their own perspectives growing in a scholarly, intellectually engaged direction.

The second refinement to the way I understand the process of my students' explorations of the 9/11 memorials arises very much from my increased appreciation of the likely asymmetry of the frustrations they and I might encounter. That my frustrations in confronting the aftermath of 9/11 are not the same as those of my students is increasingly apparent to me. I consider the events of 9/11 and the politics that have developed since from a background of a professional political philosopher who has studied extensively the ideas of democracy and justice.

Although I will not detail here all of the frustration and disappointment I feel when I think of the shape of the world today, suffice it to say that I wonder occasionally if there is a point to it all. But this despair might not be the outlook among my students. Indeed, as a study by the Harvard University Institute of Politics suggests, for the generation that is now roughly eighteen to twenty-four years of age, 9/11 was a profoundly defining event in their political awareness: they might be appropriately called “Generation 9/11.” Far from being a generation in despair, however, these young men and women are more civically engaged than ever before. It turns out, as Plato seems to have understood, that the most important thing I might be qualified to do to make the world more as it ought to be might not be to theorize the nature of democracy and justice and the many, many ways in which our society falls short. Rather, having experienced the world failing to make sense now, I am equipped with better resources in helping students in their struggle to make sense of the world for themselves instead of turning away in frustration. They, in the long run, might be more able to improve the frustrating state of the world than we are today.

Endnote

¹This article was originally inspired by an essay I wrote during the 2007 New Orleans Faculty Institute, entitled “Discovery and Recovery” (Long 115–122).

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EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND CITY AS TEXT™:

REFLECTIONS ON KOLB AND KOLB¹

ROBERT STRIKWERDA
INDIANA UNIVERSITY KOKOMO

The ancient Greek followers of Aristotle were called the Peripatetics, apparently because their teacher taught philosophy as they walked under the *peripatos* (covered walk) of the Lyceum, an area just outside of Athens. As a graduate student, I thought this method had to be a rather inefficient way of teaching, conjuring as it did an image of students jostling to get close to the teacher, some rushing to keep pace while asking questions or taking notes and others distracted by a bird flying overhead. City as Text™ (CAT) has made me rethink the facile assumptions behind that image. Maybe walking around in a particular place is an especially appropriate way of learning.

I am a philosopher by training, and “experiential learning” is not a term I would have used when I began as a college teacher to describe my approach to teaching. I have taught what philosophers say about experience but only in a rather abstract way. We have not philosophized about what we have experienced together. But I do like to walk around cities, and a number of years ago I participated in my first City as Text exploration as part of a National Collegiate Honors Council conference. What I chose then as simply a pleasant way to spend an afternoon has led to an enriching professional and personal journey. CAT has been not simply another good teaching method but an opportunity to reconsider all of my teaching.

Experiential learning is a staple of all that the NCHC Honors Semesters Committee does, whether it is the Semesters themselves, the City as Text explorations at NCHC conferences, or NCHC Faculty Institutes (Braid). I was honored to be one of the facilitators in January 2006 for an Institute focused on Miami Beach and the Everglades where my current reflections first took shape. I will continue to write of it as “City as Text” even though several successful Faculty Institutes have shown that you do not have to be in a city to do Place as Text. The value of CAT is amply evidenced by its results; nonetheless, I think situating CAT in some broader philosophic contexts is valuable.

The committee’s practice has been influenced by the thinking of David A. Kolb, a well-known psychologist and organizational theorist at

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Case Western Reserve University. I am somewhat chagrined to admit that it was only after several iterations of these NCHC activities that I realized this David A. Kolb was not the same as David Kolb, *sans* initial, a philosopher, whom I had also read. This misidentification, however, was a fruitful one for me, as I explain below.

The revolving process of learning is a hallmark of David A. Kolb's account of learning, and I will start with that. His account of experiential learning begins with a model derived from the work of the Gestalt psychologist Kurt Lewin, with doses of John Dewey and Jean Piaget added. His diagram of the model is circular, with four components or stages. At the top is "Concrete experience"; then, moving clockwise, the learner comes to "Observation and reflection," then proceeds to "Formation of abstract concepts and generalization" at the bottom of the circle, continues to "Testing implications of concepts in new situations," and finally moves back to "Concrete experience." In what follows, I will use his model to elaborate how CAT experiential learning functions in contrast to what is too often typical in college education.²

David A. Kolb writes that "learning, change, and growth are seen to be facilitated best by an integrated process that *begins* with here-and-now experience followed by collection of data and observations about that experience" (21, italics added). Experience may be the ideal starting point, but in thinking about learning through City as Text, I have come to see that, in order to understand college-level honors education, it is advantageous to enter the process elsewhere, as I hope to make clear in what follows.

Seeing CAT in terms of what it is not is vital. Much of college education stresses what happens at the bottom of Kolb's circle: formation of abstract concepts and generalization. In typical university classes we predominantly study more or less elaborated systems of abstract thought, such as various systems of philosophy, literary theory, statistical methodology, accounting, or engineering. Each major has, I would argue, its set of boxes, its periodic table of the elements, a way of classifying the world for disciplinary purposes, and concomitant methods for manipulating these categorized entities. Perhaps college educators rightly make these intellectual frameworks the major focus of education, molding students to think like sociologists, artists, physicists. Nor is it entirely abstract. We do show them how to draw implications from these conceptual systems, using both old, staged experiments and newer situations. We train them to gather data, write up the results, reflect upon them, distinguish empirical and normative issues, and finally move back to encapsulate new findings or replications in terms

of the abstract conceptual systems, as in Kolb's circle schema. What Kolb terms "concrete experience" is narrowly focused concreteness.

Most college teachers, I think, have a genuine commitment to their own discipline and think that there is something good and right about at least one of the approaches within the field even after the traumas of graduate school. We think our discipline's concepts and methods can be used fruitfully to understand our world better. Unfortunately, I think that all too often students and professors may inadvertently become locked within disciplinary frameworks. For example, in my Introduction to Philosophy class, I teach freshmen to think philosophically; elsewhere, my colleagues are teaching them to think like economists or biologists or criminal justice majors. Then, when I have these students several years later in my Honors Colloquium, they find it difficult to see people as people rather than "observing subjects" or "enumerating behaviors" or "calculating agent cost-benefit ratios."

Learning to classify and put labels on things is an important step, I believe, on the way to framing experience in terms and propositions that we can in turn analyze using those wonderful abstract systems. But our students may become unable to observe fully or to reflect broadly on their experience rather than on conceptualized aspects of their experience. In Kolb's terms, such students have "concrete experience," but too often it is abstract-driven experience.

Of course, our honors students typically have been, from elementary school through college introductory courses, rigorously learning how to put experiences into boxes and learning to do it quite well: they know how to jump through hoops. Many of us have had the experience of sitting around a table with our students in an interdisciplinary honors seminar, encouraging them to think outside of the box, and being frustrated at how hard that is for them. I marvel that I thought one classroom seminar exhortation would enable my students to set aside years of education with a contrary message.

The problems we see in our students arise in part because following the simple four stages of Kolb's model without getting stuck in a rut is hard. He quotes Piaget about the adolescent who ultimately "returns to a more active orientation that is now modified by the development of the reflective and abstract power that preceded it" (qtd. in Kolb 24). But it is hard for the student and, yes, for the scientist or scholar to be open to new concrete observations that do not fit into our sometimes painfully learned abstract frameworks.

In terms of Kolb's cyclic model, the problem is not just that some students go through only some of the four stages, as he seems to imply, but

that they do it in a too restricted fashion, often circling only within the realm of “abstract concepts and generalization” under their professors’ direction (“compare and contrast the theoretical approaches of X and Y”), and we too often have them move through the other three stages in a rather narrow, even perfunctory manner. If we could trace students’ academic thinking over time, recording each rotation through the process with a pencil on paper, I suspect we would discover that, instead of tracing a number of circles, our students’ learning would look like a basket: a fairly dense container at the bottom, where the various conceptual moves of their major occur, and then a few narrow lines going through the other three stages of Kolb’s model—hardly what Kolb desires for experiential learning.

We need to expand the circle of learning and make it more supple. All too often, students formulate, with nudges from instructors, some straightforward, commonplace suppositions from their major courses, write down the results they experience in a prescribed fashion, and make some perfunctory reflections. It is a commonplace at my institution that we must expand our students’ horizons, as if this expansion were simply a matter of increasing the diameter of their thinking. In my philosophy classes my role is often to get students to slow down and pay closer attention to the subject, experience what is close at hand, experience it more concretely and then reflectively. As an exercise in my Existentialism class, they have to observe or recall a few significant moments and describe them as they think Sartre or de Beauvoir or Levinas would. They nearly always cover too much at too little depth. At these times, my students remind me of my children racing through a museum, only noticing the big flashy items in displays.

What to do? One can try various means of getting students to put aside their preconceptions and to observe. I call this “decrustifying,” making limited patterns of thinking more supple or, if necessary, breaking them open. My colleague in art brings pinecones and flowers to class; the chemist brings students into the lab to do experiments with water samples from local sources—all good, but still in one place. What more can we do?

Get out and walk about. For walking slows us down, giving us time to notice, then to reflect, and then to walk some more. And it is not simply walking; it is walking together and talking with one’s fellow peripatetic students. A stroll together can open us up to differences as we realize that the literature major, the business major, the biology major do not notice the same things—just like their professors—and we can share our learning as process and result. We become peripatetic friends, as faculty in CAT Institutes will attest.

Walks around a neighborhood or an ecological community work effectively precisely because they are not abstract, but specific. They have rich texture in locales that are essential to rich learning. As the students continue to move about, they notice other aspects of a place, that what seems true of a scene from one perspective becomes less obvious as one moves about. A building looks one way from close up on one side, another from farther away in relation to its surroundings on the other side. The hearing-impaired student or faculty member comes forth as an acute observer of a dimension others might not have noticed. The fluidity of people moving through a neighborhood, of birds wading through a stream, is multiplied by the students' perspectives and helps to keep the group from coming to any premature closure. It is practical epistemology.

A complication to all this is that the students should do explorations in small groups. Two or three people can readily approach residents who might be walking their dog and engage them in conversation. A group of five is already too many in my experience, but then the students have to be out on their own without the teacher, without me, hovering over them, giving them that nudge, explaining some key theoretical insight. They have to learn on their own. This complication is not a drawback but a strength that is quite different from what I thought as a graduate student about the Peripatetics not all being able to hear Aristotle.

Exploring specific places resonates with a special aptness. Plazas, neighborhoods, marshes, and hammocks are, as we explore them, structuring places, not static but growing, decaying, and rebuilding. Certainly that was the case in both of our institute sites: Miami Beach and the Everglades. The facilitators drew neighborhoods on the maps and sent us out. The groups, like typical honors students, transgressed boundaries and crossed streets to talk to more inhabitants and explore unintended buildings. Around South Beach, we realized the area is an accumulation of the layers of 1920s resort, 1950s retirement community, and 21st-century gentrification revival, each eroding or tearing down parts of a previous era. We noticed evidence of Jewish and Cuban communities waxing and waning and of the *nouve au riche* now in ascendancy. In the Glades, we observed patterns being laid down over time, recycling. We could discern, with some nudges admittedly, how the layers of periphyton altered as the water level lowered, with snails feeding, snail kites preying on the snails, and alligators gathering as surface water became scarcer, as dikes were built.

Although I am in general skeptical of claims about today's students as if they were a different species from other generations, there is

something about CAT as learning that perhaps we are only now simulating electronically. The other David Kolb, the philosopher, explores this connection in his work both using and reflecting on new media. For example, as he wrote both a book and a hypertext on the same subject, he reflected on the differences that the two modes of representation induce. He echoed a CAT slogan when he pointed out that a “popular model for hypertext is: Exploration!” (1998). Aristotle’s students did have one technological advantage over our students: as an anonymous reviewer pointed out, papyrus was expensive and they lacked ballpoint pens, so they were not so busy trying to write down every word that they were not paying attention to what he was saying. I have seen CAT students grouped around an area resident with one student talking and the rest scribbling in their notebooks—not really a conversation.

Kolb the philosopher suggests that much current academic thinking rests on tired dichotomies such as fact/value or “a related but less famous dichotomy of passive data facing active forces, or passive content manipulated by active subjectivity” (1998). In my philosophy classes, I find students oscillating between an epistemic pole of factual truths typically validated by science and a pole of subjective determinations where belief is sufficient to create truths, and then back. They have no good models for what might be in between. Classes suffer from “a one-sided diet” of examples, as Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote (155).

CAT supplies a remedy. CAT is a geographic analogue of a really good hypertext. Both are edgeless; they offer a great variety of directions. Kolb argues:

Places are a wonderful topic for broaching these issues, since places are emphatically factual yet also socially meaningful and historically changing. They show us the way we are thrown into already operative dimensions of linked possibility within the process of self and social identity formation and change. (“Sprawling”)

CAT involves exploring communities that are not neatly circumscribed, that observers have to recognize mentally not in some entirely subjective manner but out of almost too much material, almost too many structures. They are polymorphous communities; they are mixes of subjective and objective that give students new examples of how to learn.

A motto of Mitchell Wolfson, Jr., the founder of the Wolfsonian Museum of Florida International University in Miami Beach, which hosted our NHC Faculty Institute, suggests a similar understanding: “What man makes, makes man.” The museum’s collection “encourages

us to ponder the cultural, political and aesthetic value” of designed objects during the years 1885–1945 (Wolfsonian Museum). CAT can be an essential part of complexifying our students’ thinking so that they learn in a more flexible, active, complicated, ambulatory fashion, neither amorphous nor what I call unimorphous but richly polymorphous. Then students can move through the psychologist Kolb’s circle of learning in an increasingly deeper, more complex, yet more flexible fashion. Instead of Kolb’s simple circle or a basket, I picture a wreath made of twigs and wires, all interwoven in intricate fashion.

Perhaps Aristotle took his students walking in the Lyceum not simply because it was convenient or cheap. Perhaps the Socratic dialogue on friendship, *Lysis*, begins there for a reason. Recent archaeological exploration indicates that the Lyceum, which was a little bit beyond the Athenian city wall, was used for military exercises, religious gatherings, and meetings of the Athenian assembly. It had a gymnasium building and roads or running tracks for athletic training. It had some “large open spaces and shady groves of trees, bounded roughly by [two rivers] and Mt. Lykabettos to the north. A series of roads led to the Lyceum from in and around the city. . . . Irrigation channels were constructed to keep the area green and wooded” (Morison).

Perhaps Aristotle knew a great place to do City as Text when he saw one.

Endnotes

¹This essay was originally published in *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* 8.1 (2007): 99–105 and reprinted with some emendations by permission of the National Collegiate Honors Council.

²I disagree with how Kolb the psychologist describes the nodes of “concrete experience” and that of “observation.” It seems to me that the “concrete experience” of a novice is distinct from that of an educated observer, who can experience more in a particular situation. But that discussion is for another time.

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APPENDIX A

NCHC Faculty Institutes from 1998 to 2007

Faculty Institutes originally began as Faculty Development Institutes connected with a specific NCHC Honors Semester and were intended mainly for honors directors. They are no longer necessarily coupled with an Honors Semester; many take place independently of these longer programs and attract not only honors directors and deans but faculty from any discipline wishing to incorporate interdisciplinary, field-based elements in their home institutions. All Faculty Institutes encompass a similarly structured program lasting from four to five days, which includes experiencing the learning strategies of City as Text™ in a specific location. Toward the end of the institute, participants spend a full day of sharing their writings aloud and discussing implementation ideas for their own institutions and courses. The structure of a typical institute is as follows:

Day 1:

Arrival: Free time, preliminary walkabout, or organized visit
Orientation and Introductions
Ice Breaker: Opening Reception or Dinner
Brief Written Assignment

Day 2:

Brief Seminar on Experiential Learning and City as Text™ methodology
Field explorations in small groups
Debriefing
Written Assignment

Day 3:

Field explorations in large or small groups
Debriefing or Seminar with experts
Written Assignment

Day 4:

First Working Session: sharing of written assignments
Second Working Session: individual projects for home campuses
Final Dinner or Closing Party

Day 5:

Possible breakfast discussion
Leave for home

NCHC Faculty Institutes from 1998 to 2007

Participants are always sent a packet of readings before an institute. These books and articles are discussed on site and comprise four general areas:

- **Pedagogical readings** such as the following:
Braid, Bernice. "Field-Based Education in 'Semesters.'" *Thought and Action: The NEH Higher Education Journal* 6.1 (Spring 1990): 93–105.
Braid, Bernice & Ada Long, eds. *Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning*. Monographs in Honors Education. National Collegiate Honors Council, 2000.
Kolb, David A. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984.
Kolb, David A. "Learning Styles and Learning Disciplines." *The Modern American College*. Eds. Arthur W. Chickering et al. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981. 232–237.
- **Tourist orientation information**, such as maps, brochures, and guide-book excerpts.
- **Fiction or poetry** that is site specific or culture specific. (See examples below in Faculty Institute descriptions.)
- Articles on **ecology or natural phenomena** and, depending on the institute, sometimes articles on archeology and architecture. (See examples below in Faculty Institute descriptions.)

Lincoln Faculty Institute

May 30–June 2, 2007

Theme: Prairie Attitudes and Urban Realities

Location: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, with explorations of Lincoln and the surrounding prairie.

Readings: *A Street Named 'O'* by Mary Jane Nielsen, *O Pioneers!* by Willa Cather, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* by Jane Jacobs, and excerpts on the SoHoization of American cities, Ian Frazier's *Great Plains*, and *Local Knowledge* by Clifford Geertz.

Appendix A

New Orleans Faculty Institute

March 10–14, 2007

Theme: Discovery and Recovery

Location: Post-Katrina New Orleans, including the French Quarter, New Orleans East, Ninth Ward, Algiers, Little Vietnam, Mid City, and the Garden District.

Readings: *Why New Orleans Matters* by Tom Piazza and “What does it mean to lose New Orleans?” by Anne Rice. During the seminar, participants viewed and discussed the Spike Lee documentary, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*.

Memphis Faculty Institute

March 10–14, 2006

Theme: Exploring Blues Terrains

Location: Memphis; Clarksdale; plantations, towns, and museums along the Mississippi Delta; and Southwest Tennessee Community College.

Readings: *Junior Ray* by John Pritchard, “Down to the Crossroads” by Mark Jacobson, excerpts from Elijah Wald’s *Escaping the Delta* and John C. Willis’ *Forgotten Time: The Yazoo Mississippi Delta*, and blues lyrics, such as “Beale Street Blues” and “Got My Mojo Working.”

Miami Faculty Institute

January 11–15, 2006

Theme: Built and Endangered Environments

Location: South Miami Beach, The Florida Everglades, and The Honors College at Florida International University.

Readings: *Skinny Dip* by Carl Hiaasen; EPA article on climate change, wildlife, and the Everglades; and excerpts from *Old Miami Beach: A Case Study in Historic Preservation* by Raley, Polansky & Millas. Participants also viewed and discussed a PBS film on Carl Fisher as part of orientation.

NCHC Faculty Institutes from 1998 to 2007

Rome Faculty Institute

March 14–19, 2005

Theme: Rome Unearthed

Location: Rome, where participants explored the various layers of the city: architectural, cultural, historical, political, and religious. This institute, co-sponsored by Ball State University, was slightly longer than other international ones.

Readings: Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons*, Edith Wharton's "Roman Fever," Juvenal's Third *Satire* on the City of Rome, and excerpts from Virgil's *Aeneid*, Goethe's *Italian Journey*, and Catharine Edwards' *Writing Rome*. Participants also viewed the film *Roman Holiday*.

Island as Text Faculty Institute

April 5–8, 2003

Theme: Coastal Ecology and Culture

Location: University of Georgia Marine Education Center and Aquarium (MECA) on Skidaway Island (near Savannah, GA), with excursion to Tybee Island.

Readings: *The Water is Wide* by Pat Conroy and a chapter from *Portrait of an Island* by Mildred and John Teal. Orientation included viewing and discussing the film *Conrack*, which is based on *The Water is Wide*.

Seattle Faculty Institute

June 12–16, 2002

Theme: Nature and Culture in the Pacific Northwest

Location: The city of Seattle and nearby natural areas.

Readings: *Holy the Firm* by Annie Dillard, *Snow Falling on Cedars* by David Guterson, and *Northwest Passage: The Great Columbia River* by William Dietrich.

Appendix A

Spain Faculty Development Institute

June 4–8, 2000

Theme: Modeling an Integrative International Education Experience

Location: Alcalá de Henares, 13 miles from Madrid, with excursions to Madrid.

Linked with the planning of the Fall 2000 NCHC Honors Semester, “Cultures that Clash and Cleave,” at the Universidad de Alcalá.

Readings: *The Flanders Panel* by Arturo Pérez-Reverte, a suspense novel set partially in the Prado, and *Roads to Santiago* by Cees Nooteboom.

Grand Canyon Faculty Institute

November 17–21, 1999

Theme: Paradigms of Experiential Collaborative Learning

Location: Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, with field excursion to Grand Canyon.

Linked with the Fall 1999 Honors Semester, “The West as Image and Reality,” at Northern Arizona University.

Readings: *Ethics* by Lawrence M. Hinman (excerpts), *The Power of Religion* by Amada Porterfield, and articles on Environmental Studies and Navajo sandpainting.

Crete Faculty Institute

October 18–22, 1998

Theme: Developing Integration Structures in a Cross-Cultural Context

Location: Herakleion (Iraklio), with excursions to Rethymnon and Knossos.

Linked with the Fall 1998 Honors Semester, “Crossroads of Continents and Civilizations,” in Thessaloniki, Greece (Aristotle University).

Readings: *Captain Corelli’s Mandolin* by Louis de Bernières about World War II in Greece, and works of two Crete natives, Nikos Kazantzakis’ *Zorba the Greek* and C. P. Cavafy’s *Collected Poems*.

APPENDIX B

Template for Institute Design

Location and Theme

Decide on **site and theme**. The theme and site should be linked in some intellectual way. What specific issues will the participants investigate? Why choose this particular location for the inquiry? How many different perspectives can you provide on the topic? What pre-institute readings might be appropriate for the theme? (Some examples of themes and readings of past institutes are given in Appendix A.)

Activities and Options

To successfully plan a Faculty Institute, the planners should consider the following questions:

What will the schedule be? Plan a schedule that permits enough time for City as Text™ explorations, large group discussions and seminars, reflective writing activities, and a general discussion of follow-up implementations. Be sure to include an initial icebreaker for the group to bond and a final dinner or closing party. Consider the logistics of getting to the site since participants may be coming from across the country.

How much perceived risk do you want participants to experience? How uncomfortable do you want participants to be? How much of a challenging, intellectual, outward-bound experience do you anticipate for participants?

What resources and logistics—human and other—will you need? Consider facilitators, student assistants, translators (depending on location), local experts, guest speakers, buses/vans, public transportation, and meeting locations. What space will you need for reflective/writing activities and large group discussions and seminars?

What contingency plans will you need in the event of inclement weather or logistical problems?

Budget and Marketing

What will the budget be? Consider transportation and lodging costs for facilitators. What transportation costs will be incurred by participants? What meals and lodging (if any) will be covered by the institute budget? What fees (entrance to parks and museums, tours, etc.) are involved with the various institute activities? Will any honorariums be required?

Template for Institute Design

How much lead time do you need to schedule activities and social functions? Consider meeting room, vehicle, and hotel reservations? How much institutional support do you need for the institute?

How will you advertise the institute? Consider brochure and web-page designs. What will the printing and mailing costs be?

Institute Evaluation

How will you evaluate the success of the institute? The following are typical questions included in an effective evaluation:

Consider the kinds of activities that were folded into this institute: explorations (on foot, bus, bike, other); readings; discussions; small-group work; writing. What would you say each of them contributed to your learning about the themes of this institute? Be sure to consider the experiential-learning seminar and the review of written assignments.

What do you now know or understand better/differently about the themes of this institute than when you arrived?

To what aspect(s) of the institute do you attribute this learning/insight? If you were to apply elements of this institute to a course you teach, which one(s) would you try to incorporate? For what specific expected outcome?

What was your overall impression of the institute? Was it what you expected? Are there any activities that should be added to or should be excluded from a similar future institute?

APPENDIX C

How to Organize City as Text™

- 1 Decide on **site and theme**. The theme and site should be linked in some intellectual way. What specific issues will the group investigate? Why choose this particular location for the inquiry?
- 2 Provide some **introductory material** to read before meeting as a group in order to ground the issues in some way. These resources should relate to the theme to be explored but should not include too much information. Introductory materials could include articles, book chapters, movies, or short books (novels, autobiographies, etc.).
- 3 Divide the exploratory area into **separate locations**—various locations on campus, various neighborhoods of a city, different parts of a museum, etc. These can be simple geographic boundaries, depending on the theme, but dividing the area into diverse neighborhoods each relating to the theme in a different way typically produces more interesting intellectual results. The areas should be clearly delineated and should not overlap so that the small groups (cf. #4 below) do not run into each other and form larger groups.
- 4 Divide participants into **sub-groups**. This works best with participants who do not know each other very well and who are from different disciplines. Each group is assigned to **investigate one or two areas**. The most important thing to do is not to tell them what to do other than to provide them with the four City as Text™ strategies—Mapping, Observing, Listening, Reflecting—as detailed in Appendix D. Participants often come back with observations, insights, and experiences the organizers never considered. Individuals in small groups thus have the freedom to learn on their own and from each other, but they also become educators when they report to the larger group.
- 5 Each group has a certain amount of **time to investigate**. People from different disciplines notice different details, and this sharing of the experience helps all the participants notice their own blinders or filters through which they see the world. They **discuss and reflect in their small group**, and one or two members prepare a short oral report to give to the larger group.
- 6 Meet for **large group discussion** or **debriefing** with **each sub-group** giving its **report**. This should create a layered discussion showing an

How to Organize City as Text™

understanding of the theme explored. One or two relevant **experts** may be brought in for the larger group discussion. But rather than giving a lecture, the expert(s) should listen attentively to the groups' reports and briefly react to what the participants saw and answer their curiosity-driven questions.

- 7 Individuals prepare **written reflections**. Participants should reflect on the day's experience as self-conscious observers and connect their thoughts to the themes explored and discussed. Some examples of written assignments are given in Appendix E.
- 8 A final component of this methodology is the **recursive element** of learning. Essentially, a true City as Text™ experience is never complete with just one round of exploration and essays; it continues throughout the semester. During the course of a semester, students might share written reflections out loud, exploratory groups might be redistributed, areas of exploration can be expanded or focused in other ways, and more experts might be brought in for class interactions. The idea is that learning is bottom up, not top down. Individuals and small groups gather information themselves and have many questions. Semester projects can then be developed to explore unresolved or complex questions raised during the discussion.

APPENDIX D

City as Text™ Strategies:

Mapping, Observing, Listening, Reflecting

City as Text™ methodology, designed by Bernice Braid for the Honors Program at Long Island University and first implemented in the 1976 NCHC Honors Semester in Washington D.C., is based on the concept of active or experiential learning. The title City as Text™ has been used by members of the NCHC Semesters Committee since 1983 and, since applications are not necessarily limited to a city, is also referred to as Place as Text. In addition to Honors Semesters, an abbreviated version of City as Text™ is currently used at the annual NCHC conference: an intense three- to four-hour structured exploration of the conference city and surrounding environment. At these conference walkabouts, students and faculty actively investigate not only the local culture and history but also the local economy, ecology, geography, and politics. Participants are split up into small groups with an assigned area of the city to explore in their three to four hours. They return for a general discussion at the end of their walkabout and exchange their insights with others who have explored other areas of the same city. The idea is that the sum of everyone's experience provides a better view than just one person or one group doing the same exercise.

Participants use four basic strategies in these exercises: mapping, observing, listening, and reflecting.

- 1 **Mapping:** You will want to be able to construct, during and after your explorations, the primary kinds of buildings, points of interest, centers of activity, and transportation routes (by foot, vehicle, or other means). You will want to look for patterns of housing, traffic flow, and social activity that may not be apparent on any traditional map. Where do people go, how do they get there, and what do they do when they get there?
- 2 **Observing:** You will want to look carefully for the unexpected as well as the expected, for the familiar as well as the new. You will want to notice details of architecture, landscaping, social gathering, clothing, possessions, decoration, signage, and advertising.
- 3 **Listening:** You will want to talk to as many people as you can and to find out from them what matters to them in their daily lives, what they need, what they enjoy, what bothers them, and what they appreciate. Strike up conversations everywhere you go. Ask about such

City as Text™ Strategies

matters as how expensive it is to live there (dropping by a real estate agency could be enlightening), where to find a cheap meal (or a good one or an expensive one), what the local politics are (try to find a local newspaper), and what the history of the place is, what the population is like (age, race, class, profession, etc.), what people do to have a good time. In other words, imagine that you are moving to that location and try to find out everything you would need to learn to flourish there.

- 4 **Reflecting:** Throughout your explorations, keep in mind that the people you meet, the buildings in which they live and work, the forms of their recreation, their modes of transportation—everything that they are and do—are important components of the environment. They are part of an ecological niche. You want to discover their particular roles in this ecology: how they use it, contribute to it, damage or improve it, and change it. You want to discover not only how but why they do what they do. Do not settle for easy answers. Do not assume you know the answers without doing serious research. Like all good researchers, make sure you are conscious of your own biases and that you investigate them as thoroughly as you investigate the culture you are studying.

APPENDIX E

Written Assignments¹

Institute writing assignments are based primarily on the City as Text™ learning strategies, which are Mapping, Observing, Listening, and Reflecting, described in Appendix D. Assignments are site-specific, growing out of the places, people, and events explored and observed. The major focus is to help participants, or explorers, decipher how space becomes place in human cultures. General framing instructions include what to look at, how to take notes, and how to think about the implications of those notes. Some focus for the exploration is also given, such as evidence for economic status, religious activity, recreational options, and aesthetic expressions: the elements of local culture that might help answer the question, “What is it like to live here, and for whom?” Participants are also asked to place themselves in the context of what they observe as participant-observers and to examine the lens or mindset through which they make observations. Participants share aloud all or portions of their writing with the entire group.

There are several observation exercises during an institute, a structural element replicating the student learning cycles in semester-long courses; these illustrate the benefits of recursive activities such as exploration, note taking, interpretive and analytical writing, and self-reflection. Together these exercises constitute a combination of field investigation and ethnographic inquiry, but with a heavy admixture of self-reflective examination of the constitutive lens and the nature of how we construct meaning out of experience. All institute assignments lend themselves to student projects at home institutions or studies off campus. Specifics vary at different sites, but the following are examples of forms and formats most frequently used.

Observation Essays

Participants are divided into groups of two or three for the initial walkabouts, which are exercises meant to hone observational skills as the participant-explorers scan a particular environment and discover its structural principles. Groups are assigned a specific destination, where they probe beneath the surface impressions to develop a sense of the hidden reality or underlying organization. On the streets, group members choose a specific scene, an event or interaction, or a group of people to observe more closely. These exercises involve observing and then describing and analyzing how people in the specific location or cultural

Written Assignments

setting make private use of public space (a family having a picnic in a cemetery, children playing games in the street, interactions in a farmers' market, patterns of movement in a large train station, etc.).

Museums are particularly significant locations for this type of investigation. Participants not only consider the objects and images on display but examine how these are displayed, what information is provided about them, patterns of groupings, etc. Participants might also observe who is visiting a particular museum (e.g., age groups, ethnic groups, socio-economic class, likely relationships if any, locals or tourists) and note how these people address the invitation to see.

These apparently simple assignments are collected in field laboratory notebooks, which are most fruitful when detailed and conscious. When participants share their observation essays with the rest of their own group and hear reports from other groups, they find differences among the observers and discover the importance of expectation and lens for both the perceptions and the analysis of events recorded. Participants are forced to examine and reflect on their own way of seeing. Some writers realize for the first time that even the selection of an interaction or person to observe is an act of interpretation that provokes self-reflection.

Turning Point, or Critical Incident, Essays

This lengthier essay is an occasion for participants to understand more deeply how meaning derives from context. Participants typically review past observation exercises, readings, and seminar interactions, reflecting on how their own seeing and understanding of this specific place has changed since their arrival. This assignment asks participants to describe a scene, an event, or other occasion that gave them a shift in perspective or a new insight into the location, its people, art, psychology, or culture. What were the elements that might have precipitated this shift or epiphany? Again, participants should engage in self-reflection about their impressions, considering their own lens, and ask the question, "What made me think so?" This part of the process is a search for evidence to support conclusions buried in their analysis and an opportunity to consider possible provocations for attitudinal shifts that have occurred to open this site to the participant-observer writing about a complex experience.

Mythos, Logos, and Ethos: Ethnographic Writing

This assignment has its genesis in the works of N. Scott Momaday and Suzanne Evertsens Lundquist, as well as NCHC's City as Text™ and

Appendix E

Honors Semesters. The objective is to enable participants to examine the richness of a particular place from the standpoint of myth, history, and self-reflection. The writing approach is patterned on Momaday's structure and technique in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*.

Momaday, a Kiowa, creates a picture of self-reflective, connected knowing—that is, a depiction of an individual's process of locating himself in reference to the nature and culture of a specific place while at the same time helping to define that place by means of self-reflection, imagination, and language. In very brief tri-part sections, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* traces the mythic origins and migration of the Kiowas from the northern plains to Oklahoma, presents historical references to the Kiowa culture, and explores Momaday's own journey and perceptions as he places a self-created version of himself in the context of that culture as participant-observer.

During the field experiences of an institute, participants collect material for a tri-part essay, roughly approximating Momaday's juxtaposition of myth, history, and personal reflections, focusing on some specific part of the literal terrains visited during the institute as text. Each member of the cohort is asked to compose an essay involving three entities that are separate yet connected: a brief myth or legend (*mythos*); a brief historical event/building/account/commentary (*logos*) related to the myth; and, a somewhat longer autobiographical reflection (*ethos*) that is related (sometimes literally, sometimes intuitively) to the mythological and the historical accounts and has in some way given the person new insight into the specific location. Participants are encouraged, but not required to vary genres (such as poetry, drama, etc.) and types of narrators for each of the three sections.

Projects for Home Campuses

During and following the institutes, participants from varied disciplines outline writing assignments for students on their home campuses modeled on or adapted from the above-described assignments. For instance, the walkabouts followed by observation essays are often used in orientation courses to introduce new students to their campuses, the turning point essays have been adapted to students' exploring their own majors, and the ethnographic assignment has been used for everything from individual assignments to semester-long projects in courses traditionally considered as dissimilar as composition and math. Many NCHC institutional members whose faculty have participated in institutes now offer courses in their on-campus honors curricula and their international studies curricula that make use of the above assignments.

Written Assignments

Endnote

¹Bernice Braid (Long Island University) created the Observation and Turning Point essays for the first NCHC Honors Semester in 1976. Shirley Forbes Thomas (John Brown University) designed the *Mythos, Logos, Ethos* Writing Exercise, which she piloted in a 1994 Honors Composition course.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Janice Allen, Professor of English at The Community College of Baltimore County-Essex (Maryland), teaches composition, literature, and women's studies. She holds a *Doctorandus* in British Literature from Groningen University (Netherlands) and is ABD in English from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Recipient of a Community College Humanities Association/NEH grant for research on American cities, Allen is presently creating an experiential-learning course on the Sparrows Point neighborhood of Baltimore.

Kevin E. Bonine (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison) is Adjunct Assistant Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Arizona. He has written extensively about reptiles and amphibians, his study organisms of choice, but his research interests also include evolutionary physiology, population ecology, and conservation biology. Besides teaching courses in herpetology, vertebrate physiology, conservation biology, and organismal biology, Bonine motivates honors students with multiple field experiences and research projects.

Bernice Braid (Ph.D. in Comparative Literature, Occidental College) is retired Director of the University Honors Program at Long Island University-Brooklyn, where she was Professor and Dean of Academic and Instructional Resources and now directs the cross-disciplinary seminar, *The Idea of the Human*. Co-editor of *Place as Text*, Braid is the original designer of *City as Text*TM—a strategy for structured explorations in multi-disciplinary Honors Semesters. She has served as president of NCHC and has facilitated many NCHC Faculty Institutes.

Devon L. Graham conducted his dissertation research in ornithology and botany in Costa Rica, receiving a Ph.D. in Tropical Biology from the University of Miami in 1996, and has taught interdisciplinary field-based courses in The Honors College at Florida International University since 1997. He has served as president of Project Amazonas, a non-profit educational, medical, and conservation organization in the Peruvian Amazon, since 1997 and regularly hosts educational and ecotour groups in Peru and other tropical locations.

About the Authors

Alan W. Grose (Ph.D., City University of New York) is Adjunct Associate Professor of Philosophy and Administrative Coordinator of the Core Seminar Program at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. His teaching interests include ancient philosophy, ethics, political philosophy, and cross-disciplinary courses involving memory and memorialization.

Anita R. Guynn (Ph.D., University of South Carolina) is Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Theatre, and Languages at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. She teaches first-year composition, advanced composition, creative nonfiction, and southern literature and is interested in learning communities and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

John Kandl is Professor of English and former Director of Honors at Walsh University in North Canton, Ohio. He holds an M.A. in Creative Writing from Syracuse University and a Ph.D. in English and American Literature from New York University with a specialization in English Romanticism. His publications (along with some poetry) include critical articles on Romantic literature, particularly on the poetry of John Keats.

Kathy A. Lyon is Director of the Honors Program and Associate Professor of Psychology at Winthrop University, where she teaches honors sections of the human experience course, introductory psychology, and a psychology senior seminar. She earned her Ph.D. in Experimental/Developmental Psychology from The George Washington University. An NCHC-recommended site visitor, Lyon also serves on the NCHC Board of Directors and the Portz Fellowship Committee.

Peter A. Machonis (Ph.D., Pennsylvania State University) is Associate Professor of French Linguistics and Senior Honors Fellow at Florida International University. He frequently organizes City as Text™ excursions for his students to Miami's Little Haiti and to Hollywood, Florida, where there is a large Quebecois population in the winter. Author of two books on the history of the French language and a specialist in lexicon-grammar, Machonis also co-teaches an interdisciplinary honors seminar on the Florida Everglades.

About the Authors

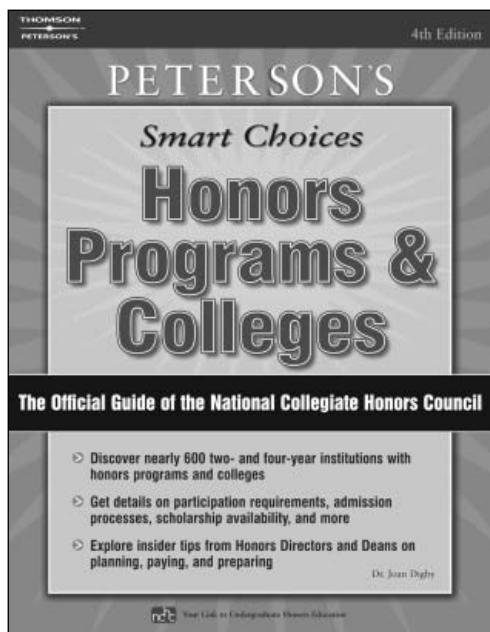
Stephen J. Nichols (Ph.D., Westminster Theological Seminary) is Research Professor of Christianity and Culture and Chair of the Honors Committee at Lancaster Bible College in Pennsylvania. He has written a dozen books, including *Jesus Made in America: A Cultural History from the Puritans to “The Passion of the Christ”* and *Getting the Blues: What Blues Music Teaches Us about Suffering and Salvation*. Nichols teaches in the areas of Christianity and culture, church history, and theology.

Joy Ochs (Ph.D., University of Michigan) teaches early British literature at Mount Mercy College, where she is Associate Professor of English and Director of the Honors Program. An advocate of active learning, she has taken students out of the classroom to study natural history in Belize, prairie ecology in Iowa, and the economics of food distribution at local farms and factories. Place as Text has been an ideal way to reconcile her interests in literature and environmental studies.

Rick Ostrander (Ph.D., University of Notre Dame) serves as Academic Dean at John Brown University in Siloam Springs, Arkansas, and has published widely in the field of American higher education. In 2004, Ostrander served as a Fulbright Senior Scholar at the University of Wurzburg in Wurzburg, Germany, and has since then developed a passion for leading students on summer study trips to Germany and Austria.

Mary Lou Pfeiffer (LL.M., St. Thomas University School of Law) is Honors Fellow at Florida International University, where she teaches seminars in honors, religion, and women’s studies. A specialist on Native American Indian spirituality and sacred sites, Pfeiffer is currently working on a book about the Miami Circle, a 2,000-year-old Tequesta artifact uncovered in downtown Miami. She also serves on the Board of Advisors for Women’s Studies and the College of Arts & Sciences.

Robert A. Strikwerda (Ph.D., University of Notre Dame) is Director of the Honors Program and Associate Professor of Philosophy at Indiana University Kokomo. Co-editor and contributor to *Rethinking Masculinity: Philosophical Explorations in Light of Feminism*, Strikwerda has also written about applied philosophy and the history and philosophy of social science. He was one of the facilitators, along with Peter Machonis and Devon Graham, of the NCHC Miami Faculty Institute “Built and Endangered Environments” in January 2006.



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Beginning in Honors: A Handbook by Samuel Schuman (Fourth Edition, 2006, 80pp). Advice on starting a new honors program. Covers budgets, recruiting students and faculty, physical plant, administrative concerns, curriculum design, and descriptions of some model programs.

A Handbook for Honors Administrators by Ada Long (1995, 117pp). Everything an honors administrator needs to know including a description of some models of honors administration.

A Handbook for Honors Programs at Two-Year Colleges by Theresa James (2006, 136pp). A useful handbook for two-year schools contemplating beginning or redesigning their honors program and for four-year schools doing likewise or wanting to increase awareness about two-year programs and articulation agreements. Contains extensive appendices about honors contracts and a comprehensive bibliography on honors education.

Honors Composition: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Practices by Annmarie Guzy (2003 182 pp). Parallel historical developments in honors and composition studies; contemporary honors writing projects ranging from admission essays to theses as reported by over 300 NCHC members.

Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges by Samuel Schuman (Second Edition, 1999, 53pp). How to implement an honors program, with particular emphasis on colleges with fewer than 3000 students.

Innovations in Undergraduate Research and Honors Education: Proceedings of the Second Schreyer National Conference edited by Josephine M. Carubia and Renata S. Engel (2004 145pp). Essays on the importance of undergraduate research, course models, connections to service learning, and learning strategies that support undergraduate research.

Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning edited by Bernice Braid and Ada Long (2000, 104pp). Information and practical advice on the experiential pedagogies developed within NCHC during the past 25 years, using Honors Semesters and City as Text™ as models, along with suggestions for how to adapt these models to a variety of educational contexts.

Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education edited by Peter A. Machonis (2008, 160pp). A companion piece to *Place as Text*, focusing on recent, innovative applications of City as Text™ teaching strategies. Chapters on campus as text, local neighborhoods, study abroad, science courses, writing exercises, and philosophical considerations, with practical materials for instituting this pedagogy.

Teaching and Learning in Honors edited by Cheryl L. Fuiks and Larry Clark (2000, 128 pp). Presents a variety of perspectives on teaching and learning useful to anyone developing new or renovating established honors curricula.

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC) is a semi-annual periodical featuring scholarly articles on honors education. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education.

Honors in Practice (HIP) is an annual journal that accommodates the need and desire for articles about nuts and bolts practices by featuring practical and descriptive essays on topics such as successful honors courses, suggestions for out-of-class experiences, administrative issues, and other topics of interest to honors administrators, faculty and students.

NCHC Handbook. Included are lists of all NCHC members, NCHC Constitution and Bylaws, committees and committee charges, and other useful information.