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The journal publishes a particular type of academic writing in which teacher-practioners critically reflect on their teaching practice—surfacing their assumptions, analyzing their pedagogical intentions, reflecting on the effectiveness of their learning designs, and diagnosing challenges to student learning.

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JOURNAL ON TEACHING

TEACHING OUTSIDE YOUR FIELD

Challenges and Opportunities of Teaching Unfamiliar Topics

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ABSTRACT

I discuss teaching as contingent faculty in the small college environment, having taught multiple topics outside of my research area. My essay focuses on resources for course preparation and how teaching unfamiliar topics can enhance one's pedagogical practices. Teaching an unfamiliar topic is an opportunity to thinking creatively about learning activities and to model lifelong learning.

KEYWORDS

syllabus, writing, interdisciplinarity, liberal arts

Teaching unfamiliar topics is a common task in a small department that offers a wide range of courses. Here I reflect on my experiences as a contingent faculty member in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Hastings College teaching outside my specialty. Hastings College is a small (approximately 1,100 students) college in Nebraska, affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA). I started teaching there at the same time that I started my doctoral dissertation, first as a part-time adjunct, and later as a full-time instructor.

My graduate work was in philosophy of religion and Christian theology, and I started by teaching the Philosophy of Religion course. Being in a small combined religion and philosophy department, I later was asked to teach courses in areas outside of theology and philosophy of religion, such as New Testament, philosophical ethics, and an interdisciplinary first-year seminar. Some of the courses that I taught were clearly outside of my familiar areas. Others such as Introduction to Philosophy, World Religions, and Jesus in History and Tradition overlapped somewhat with my educational background but also included components that were less familiar for me. At that time, the college required all undergraduate students to take courses in certain areas for their liberal arts program. The requirements included taking one course in religion and one course in philosophy. Students could choose nearly any of courses in our department to fulfill their requirements, and they could take them during any year of their studies. Thus, in nearly every course I taught, the majority of my students were majoring in areas outside of the humanities and were studying religion or philosophy for the first time.

While teaching an unfamiliar topic for the first time may induce a case of imposter syndrome, being in this situation is quite common in small departments and small, teaching-oriented colleges. I recommend Therese Huston's book *Teaching What You Don't Know* (2009). Huston discusses how administrators' decisions and external accountability contribute to the increasing commonality of faculty teaching outside their areas of specialization. The book offers several strategies for planning and teaching new topics and drawing on the relevant knowledge that instructors do bring. Huston explains that the best teaching draws on students' existing knowledge and engages a few topics in depth with examples. One strategy that she recommends is backward course design. The backward approach starts with the questions that the instructor wants students to answer, which Huston points out are more likely to interest students when they are similar to the instructor's own questions about the material (2009, 57-69). Thus, the instructor who is new to the material may have an advantage over a topic expert in thinking of questions that will interest students, as well as noticing which specific topics may be especially difficult and where there are connections to background knowledge that the students may share. Huston's advice in *Teaching What You Don't Know* (2009) would be a helpful guide for any new instructors teaching outside of their field and especially helpful for contingent faculty members who often are balancing their teaching with other occupations and time constraints.

Although each specific course that I have taught outside of my specialization has presented its own challenges and opportunities, the practice of teaching new topics is generalizable. Of course, even before class begins, an instructor must become familiar enough with the topic to plan the class. There are several potential resources for doing this. Ideally a previous instructor at your institution will discuss the course and share their syllabus and perhaps other materials. Colleagues at other institutions, especially similar types of schools, are also helpful to contact. The Syllabus Project website from the Wabash Center, American Academy of Religion, and Society of Biblical Literature is helpful for finding syllabi (Wabash Center 2021), as is Google. As you read other professors' syllabi, knowing your own students and the role of your course in your institution's curriculum is important. Syllabi from other professors can be helpful for considering which materials and types of assignments may work well, but I find that they are best used as inspirations for building on your own pedagogical style and any related expertise that you personally can apply to the topic. Similarly, even if you already have chosen or been assigned the textbook or textbooks for your course, it helps to look at other textbooks for that topic to get a sense of the variety of approaches to it and perhaps find inspiration for classroom activities such as case studies, primary texts, or discussion questions. Again, though, knowledge of your own course goals and having a sense of what your particular students will bring to the course shapes how you use those resources.

In my experience, the unfamiliarity of a course outside my own specialty is an opportunity to shift into more creative thinking about learning activities that fit the particular student population rather than my preconceptions about the material. For example, in my recent introductory New Testament course at Hastings College, the graded assignments included both exams and out-of-class writing assignments. I wanted to make the assignments accessible to beginning students who might be intimidated by the course. Rather than standard exegesis papers, I assigned the students alternative format writing assignments, along with answering some of the questions included in the textbook (Ehrman 2017). John Bean's book *Engaging Ideas* (2011) describes the value of alternatives to traditional formal writing. Alternative assignments support both content learning and students' growth as writers (Bean 2011, 56-65). Bean provides several examples of alternative assignments including, in the study of religion, the assignment of taking on the role of a member of the Corinthian community and writing a letter back to Paul (Bean 2011, 119). Working toward the liberal arts program goal of improving students' writing skills, I included similar assignments for my students. Below are their prompts for writing a book review, a social media post, and letters.

> ***Book Review:***
>
> Choose one of the four Gospels and write a book review of it. A good book review summarizes some of what the book is about (you may include "spoilers" or not), places the book in relation to similar books, evaluates what the strengths are and what the author failed to do, and recommends which readers the book would be especially suitable for. Your book review should show an understanding of the Gospel's unique themes/style, how it compares to the others, and the writer's emphases.

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"Eyewitness" Facebook Post:

Choose one of the speeches in Acts and write a long Facebook post about it. Imagine that you witnessed one of the speeches (you can make up someone who could have been part of the scene and take on that role) and describe the context and tone in which it was delivered and how you and other people reacted to it. You should mention some of the relevant thematic emphases from Acts, showing that you understand the role of the speech in the book. Because this assignment takes the format of a Facebook post, feel free to use emojis or "stickers" and write informally.

Sending Mail:

Choose one of the epistles that we've read so far and imagine what sort of letter from the church might have prompted your chosen book as reply. Write this imagined letter to Paul. Connect your letter to the epistle by using similar letter writing conventions and describing some of the cultural context, community situation, theological concerns, and/or people that are key to the actual epistle. In other words, if your chosen epistle is the answer, you are writing the questions and showing that you understand what would have been significant to its audience.

Answering Mail:

Choose Romans or one of the Deutero-Pauline or Pastoral epistles. Imagine that the community decided to reply to the original author and you are writing the letter expressing their response (you may address the author as "Paul" even if the epistle is considered pseudonymous). Connect your letter to the epistle by using similar letter writing conventions and referring to some of the same situations, theological concerns, or people that the author was addressing. Your letter should show an understanding of what is important in the epistle and the context that it addresses.

These writing assignments were relatively engaging for students, as the different formats encouraged them to write creatively, and allowed me to evaluate their analysis of a passage in a focused way. In between the writing assignments and exams, I also gauged students' understanding with in-class discussion activities, sometimes using Poll Everywhere to allow students to see everyone's ideas combined.

Teaching a new subject also can revitalize our own passion, as faculty members, for teaching in religious studies or the humanities more generally. It is an opportunity to model genuine intellectual curiosity for students and to use genuine questions in the course. Beyond my department, thus even farther outside my area of expertise, I taught Hastings College's interdisciplinary first-year seminar. One year the seminar was on The Creative Life, fitting a campus-wide theme. One of the main texts that I chose for the seminar was *The Creative Habit* by choreographer Twyla Tharp (2006). Because most of my students and I had very little experience studying dance, I believe that it was rhetorically effective for me to put myself on the students' side in discussions when asking what *we* as non-choreographers could apply from Tharp's writing and exercises. Students responded by thoughtfully applying Tharp's ideas about creativity in ways that I had not expected, such as to their athletic training.

In my experience, students at small colleges usually are accepting of the fact that their instructors are not always specialists in the courses that they teach. However, a contingent instructor (along with any non-tenured faculty member or member of a minority group who senses that they are in a vulnerable position on their campus) can feel pressure not to reveal ignorance. I usually chose to tell my students when I was a non-expert while introducing the course or a particular topic and presented my situation positively. I would express my excitement about having the opportunity to teach a new course and mention how it connected to my background or other interests. Explaining how my main scholarly interests were related to the topic provided a way to talk about the wide range of interconnected subjects in religious studies or philosophy. Because most of my students had never taken a course in the subject before (and some were not enthusiastic about fulfilling their religion or philosophy requirement), I used my introduction to demonstrate that it was all right to be an outsider to the subject. I would also discuss how an understanding of religion (or philosophy) fit into the liberal arts, and when relevant during the semester I would draw out connections with students' other courses and interests.

Because many institutions prize lifelong learning as a goal for their students, I believe that the students can benefit from being taught by someone who is not experienced with the course topic. Faculty members ought to embrace this opportunity to model learning as experts in a nearby field of study and to demonstrate that everyone is a learner.

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TEACHING OUTSIDE YOUR FIELD

Learning to Swim: How to Survive in the Deep End of Unfamiliar Course Material

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ABSTRACT

As institutions of higher learning increasingly rely on contingent faculty members to carry the load of required courses, more and more new contingent faculty find themselves thrown into the "deep end" of teaching in areas outside of their fields. By focusing on broader learning goals, appealing to the power of story, and emphasizing real-life application by incorporating experiential learning, these faculty members can make almost any course feel like a course they are qualified to teach. Furthermore, they can allow their wonder at learning new material inspire students to embrace unfamiliar topics as well.

KEYWORDS

general education, lifelong learning, experiential learning, undergraduate education

When I first interviewed for the adjunct position at the Christian liberal arts university where I now teach full-time, my dean informed me that I would be teaching a course called Understanding the Bible. I gently reminded him that I was a systematic theologian, and that I had not taken a Bible course in about eight years. He seemed unconcerned and assured me that I, at least, knew more than my eighteen-year-old students would know, so I would be fine. Needless to say, I entered the classroom that fall with much trepidation! It felt like getting thrown into the deep end of a pool before anyone had taught me how to swim.

I still teach Understanding the Bible almost every semester, and it has become my favorite course to teach. I rarely teach courses that are squarely within my field, spending most of my time teaching Bible or world religions. I have found that focusing on broader learning goals, appealing to the power of story, and emphasizing real-life application by incorporating experiential learning are three strategies that can make any course, no matter how unfamiliar the subject matter, feel like a course one is qualified to teach.

Focus on Broader Learning Goals

Every college student needs to learn transferable skills like the ability to engage in close reading of a text; the ability to distinguish reliable information from unreliable information; the ability to think critically about an idea; the ability to discuss and disagree about topics respectfully and in an informed way; the ability to collaborate; and the ability to present information in front of a group. Furthermore, students need to learn habits of mind like epistemological humility and resilience. These skills have become increasingly valuable in an age of machine learning and artificial intelligence. As Randy Bass has put it, "As machines get better at being machines, the primary purpose of higher education has to be to help humans get better at being human" (2019).[1] This is the task of the teacher.

Anyone who has successfully completed a graduate program, particularly one in a humanities field, has the capacity to teach these skills. It is possible to use just about any subject as a vehicle for the development of these abilities. Assignments and activities that enable students to practice these skills are a good way to set course content in a broader context of lifelong learning.

Close Reading

Many days in my Understanding the Bible course look like "Bible book club," in which students and I engage in a close reading of a passage and discuss it together. This practice is especially helpful for those moments when students are bringing particular interpretations to the text without realizing that there are multiple ways a passage can be (and has been) understood. For example, we spend quite a lot of time on the first three chapters of Genesis, and a close reading together reveals that neither the word "sin" nor the word "fall" appears there. This opens up a discussion about interpretation, translation, and theological anthropology that would not have been possible without time spent closely attending to the text itself.

Distinguishing Reliable from Unreliable Information

The task of determining what information on the Internet is reliable and trustworthy is increasingly difficult. Any course can be an opportunity to help students develop information literacy—and this is a perfect opportunity to enlist the help of university library staff. Perhaps a librarian can do an in-class workshop on the research process, finding and assessing scholarly sources, or moving from research to an outline. This approach has the added benefit of modeling the academic virtue of intellectual generosity, making the classroom a space where the primary instructor is the host, rather than the lone expert.

Discussion and Disagreement

Because I teach religion courses to students whose views are all over the theo-political map, I anticipate that disagreements will come up and that students will sometimes feel uncomfortable. To that end, on the first or second day of class I crowd-source from students a series of "conversation commitments" we can make to each other that we can reference whenever tense moments arise. Some of these include:

- Try to be curious instead of defensive.
- Avoid starting sentences with "I don't know how *anyone* could believe _________."
- Be prepared to fail at these commitments sometimes, and have grace with each other when we do.

1 See also the studies from the Strada Institute for the Future of Work (2018), on preparing people to be "robot-ready" and detailing how STEM fields and the liberal arts are both necessary for this preparation.

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Since students have helped generate the list, they feel some ownership over the classroom environment, and they feel empowered to help shape conversations in accordance with the ways we've promised to try to interact with each other. They provide guidelines on which we can fall back when we hit an impasse in the moment on a theological, ethical, or political issue.

Collaboration and Communication

In almost all of my courses, a group project and/or presentation are part of the grade. I usually assign students to their groups early in the semester, so they have a core set of other students to rely on for support, encouragement, note-taking when someone has to miss class, et cetera. I then have students present their projects at the end of the semester. In my Understanding the Bible course, I have students craft a story in the spirit of *midrash,* faithfully filling in a gap they find in any part of the biblical text. Then, they shape this story into a creative form—I have had students perform skits, write songs, create music videos, and engage the class in games they have invented, among other things. This project not only builds camaraderie among students and emphasizes the communal nature of biblical interpretation, it also encourages them to view the text in a way that is new for most of them and opens up the way they read.

Appeal to the Power of Story

Even though I am not a biblical scholar, I am, by virtue of having a graduate education, a good reader of texts who can help students extract relevant themes from biblical narratives. In a religiously diverse classroom environment, not everyone is committed to reading the Bible for devotional purposes, and many students have come away from encounters with the text (and the people who wield it) with emotional scars. Regardless of whether or not a particular student views the biblical text as authoritative, however, anyone can appreciate a rich, complex narrative. Similarly, in courses on world religions, focusing on meaningful narratives rather than on particular truth claims yields productive discussion and teachable moments of critical thinking. One cannot help but appreciate the beauty of another person's religious tradition when confronted with its sacred stories, even if one is not inclined to appreciate such things.

Along these same lines, I have found it valuable to assign good stories—novels and memoirs—as additional textbooks to complement the primary material. Chaim Potok's *The Chosen* (1967) or Anita Diamant's *The Red Tent* (1997) can help students access ideas about hermeneutics and interpretive communities in a way that simply reading the Bible itself cannot. Paul Kalanithi's *When Breath Becomes Air* (2016) helped a class of world religions students talk about loss, grief, and what comes after life for various kinds of religious believers. Austin Channing Brown's *I'm Still Here* (2018) helped third-year religion students understand the effects of anti-black racism within the church in a way that statistics about hate crimes never could. Novels and memoirs, especially, seem less intimidating than the primary sources of sacred texts and the more scholarly texts I assign. They also promote empathy and vulnerability, and they pave the way for students to share their own stories. Texts like these offer a quick way to establish a sense of community and get everyone on the same "team" as we wrestle with fraught topics.

Sometimes the affective dimension of teaching and learning religion can get lost in the effort of content delivery. Encountering new ways of interpreting sacred texts or discussing deeply held beliefs can be jarring, intimidating, or off-putting, depending on each student's background, and emotional reactions are very real and often very strong. Stories can make these new ideas and approaches seem less threatening, and can invite students to reflect on the aspects of their own experiences that have contributed to their ways of reading and interpreting. It is easy to reject a scholarly interpretation with which one does not agree (or which one does not quite understand), but it is difficult to argue with someone's experience.

Emphasize Real-Life Application by Incorporating Experiential Learning

Students want to know that their classwork will pay off in "real life" (though I would, and they might, quibble with the common assumption that being in college does not constitute real life!). It may not always be the case that they are learning what they view as marketable skills in their religion courses, but it is possible to demonstrate how learning the material can make them better citizens of whatever part of the world they inhabit. Field trips, guest speakers, and service-learning projects are some excellent ways to accomplish this goal.

Field Trips and Guest Speakers

In some of my Bible classes, we visit a local synagogue to augment our understanding of the significance of Torah and to give my predominantly Christian (or at least Christian-informed) students the chance to hear from their Jewish neighbors about not only their tradition but also their experiences of anti-Semitism. Students come away from these encounters eager to share what they have heard with their families and friends, to debunk stereotypes, and to be in solidarity with their neighbors who experience discrimination. The same thing happens when we visit a Hindu temple, a gurudwara, and a mosque in my world religions course, or when I have representatives from these communities come as guest speakers. Many institutions have funds available (either in particular academic department budgets or through other university offices) to provide honorariums for guest speakers, and adjuncts can find out if these funds are available to them.

Service-Learning

In one course I teach, I have students complete ten hours of service-learning with partner agencies around our city. At many institutions, service-learning is a graduation requirement, and one need not be a full-time faculty member to incorporate this requirement into a course. Adjuncts can find out if their employing institutions have an office of service-learning that can connect them with partner agencies with whom students can volunteer. Service-learning can help themes of a course come to life. To highlight the importance of table fellowship for the early church and Jesus' care for poor and hungry people, I have students work with agencies that address food insecurity. Students bring insights back into the classroom from their experiences serving in food banks, soup kitchens, and organizations that help people access SNAP benefits. A colleague has his students serve with an agency that aids recently arrived immigrants and refugees, as part of his efforts to emphasize the theme of wandering far from home that permeates the biblical texts.

Lifelong Learning: Let Your Wonder Show!

One of the most important tasks of the faculty member who teaches undergraduates is to demonstrate what lifelong learning looks like. Because I am often encountering ideas and texts for the first time alongside my students, the awe and wonder I feel at learning something new is genuine. I have learned not to be afraid of letting that wonder show. It is often the case (and I tell my students this) that I feel I learn more from them than they do from me.

The strategies I have outlined above are not a substitute for having a decent grasp on enough of the material to be able to teach it. They are, however, a way to focus on what one already knows how to do well, and use those things as the delivery method for unfamiliar subject matter.

I never feel as if I have exhausted the subjects I teach—I always have more to learn, so the students always have more to learn, and my energy stays fresh each semester. Rather than being a hindrance, teaching unfamiliar topics has largely been a gift.

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THE WABASH CENTER
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USING JAMES LANG'S "SMALL TEACHING"

"Small Teaching" with First-Year Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT

This contribution to the forum on James Lang's *Small Teaching* analyzes one instructor's implementation of Lang's techniques in a world religions course for first-year undergraduate students. Two types of strategies are considered in depth: those that use prediction to help students acquire and retain knowledge of class material and those that cultivate connections to previously mastered material and encourage active learning. For example, one activity asked students to use prediction as a tool for preparing for local guest speakers, helping to unsettle preexisting stereotypes and assumptions. Another activity asked students to create concept maps to draw connections across religious traditions. Ultimately, the author argues, these "small teaching" strategies did not require substantial work or resources from the instructor or her students but went a long way in fostering learning and critical thinking. The insights gleaned from this article could be applied to other courses and teaching contexts.

KEYWORDS

teaching, pedagogy, small teaching, world religions, religious studies

I first read James Lang's book, *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning*, during the spring of 2018 while I was in the process of designing a new version my world religions course.[1] This particular iteration of World Religions in San Diego[2] would be offered in conjunction with my University's first-year core curriculum

1 This article was initially presented as part of a panel at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. The author wishes to thank her co-panelists, Dr. Laura Taylor and Dr. Natalie Williams, for a productive conversation about this text as well as Dr. David Howell who presided over the session. She extends her gratitude also to the Teaching Religion Unit, which organized the panel, as well as Dr. Thomas Pearson, who invited the panelists to submit their work to The Wabash Center Journal on Teaching.

2 I had already offered Introduction to World Religions twice and had taught World Religions in San Diego once at the University of San Diego. I had also offered versions of these courses at four other universities and colleges in the past, sometimes at small private liberal arts schools and, in other cases, at large public universities or online. I was deeply familiar with the material and course learning objectives but was looking for new activities and modes of engaging my students. https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/DeConinck-Syllabus.pdf

program, meaning that all of the students in this class would be freshmen.[3] In order to promote a stronger sense of community among first-year students, enrollment in this course would be smaller than my usual lower-division courses (twenty-two students rather than the standard thirty-five). This smaller setting seemed like the perfect opportunity to experiment with some of the strategies and approaches that Lang describes in *Small Teaching*.

Part of my interest in Lang’s work also lay in thinking through how it could complement or complicate other models and approaches that I was currently using in my classroom. For example, I utilize team-based learning (Michaelsen, Knight, and Fink 2002), an instructional strategy that groups students into small, consistent teams with peers who have different learning styles and skills from their own for the duration of the semester. Team members interact with one another regularly in class to complete activities and discussion questions, and they also work on a large ethnographic project throughout the term. Given how central team-based learning is to my pedagogy, I was curious to see how many of Lang’s strategies could be successfully adapted for team activities. I was also intrigued by the growing body of literature centered around teaching first-year students (Nunn 2018) and how *Small Teaching* might likewise provide models for helping students, especially first-generation college students, transition from high school to university life.[4]

While reading Lang’s book, I found that some of his strategies aligned with things that I was already doing in my classes. For example, chapter 7 draws from scholarship about emotional involvement in the learning process to suggest strategies for cultivating enthusiasm, trust, and compassion between instructors and students inside and outside of the classroom. Small gestures and ways of connecting with students before, during, and after class matter, Lang argues, and he suggests strategies such as walking around the room before class begins in order to connect with more than just the students seated in the front row (2016, 109). Lang also draws from findings by Chambliss and Takacs (2014) to argue that detailed and personalized feedback on assignments provides students with a motivational boost. He writes, “[w]hen the students see that instructors are actually reading and critiquing their work, they become motivated to work a little harder at their writing—and that harder work pays off in some immediate gains in their writing abilities” (2016, 109). Both tactics discussed in this section of the book are ones that I was already consistently using in my classes; however, it was affirming to read scholarly evidence supporting these ways of engaging students.

Other sections of *Small Teaching* offered strategies that were new and inspiring to me, especially those gleaned from chapter 2 (about predicting) and chapter 4 (about connecting). I decided to focus on these selections in particular while redesigning my course for first-year students during the fall semester of 2019.

In chapter 2, Lang theorizes that prediction aids in focusing classroom learning, even if students are radically wrong in their predictions. He writes:

> when you are forced to make a prediction or give an answer to a question about which you do not have sufficient information, you are compelled to search around for any possible information you might have that could relate to the subject matter and help you make a plausible prediction. That search activates prior knowledge you have about the subject matter and prepares your brain to slot the answer, when you receive it, into a more richly connected network of facts. Prediction helps lay a foundation for richer, more connected knowing. (2016, 49)

In my class, I decided to adopt prediction as a strategy to help my students prepare for and then reflect upon the guest speakers we hosted in class. World Religions in San Diego encourages students to consider how the history and core

3 It may be helpful to know that University of San Diego is a private Roman Catholic research university. In the fall semester of 2019, the University’s undergraduate enrollment was 5,919 students and 40 percent of our students identify as Catholic. For more context and information about student demographics, please see the USD Fact Book and Undergraduate Profile.

4 To provide more information about my teaching context, I offer a few notes here to describe the students in this particular semester and section of the class, which included twenty-two learners in total. In a confidential pre-semester survey, six of my students claimed gender pronouns of he/him/his and sixteen claimed gender pronouns of she/her/hers; no students claimed they/them/theirs, zie/zim/zir, or other preferred pronouns. Four students were first-generation university students and two students came from international backgrounds. Of those born and raised in the US, half (n = 11) had been raised in California, 22 percent had lived in multiple states growing up, 9 percent came from Colorado, and another 5 percent each came from Arizona or Oregon. All of my students came to university directly from high school without a gap year or period of working beforehand. This survey revealed a diversity of religious identities as well; twelve students (55 percent of the class) identified with some type of Christianity—most commonly Catholicism—while three students claimed hybrid religious identities and another three described themselves as nonreligious, unsure, or searching. Two students self-identified as Buddhist, one student as Muslim, and one student as secular Jewish. Some students had attended religious school throughout their lives, but eight students (36 percent of the class) had never had a course specifically about religion before.

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teachings of five different religions play out in lived, complicated ways in our local community. Over the course of our sixteen-week semester during the fall of 2019, our class hosted five guest speakers, one from each of the religious traditions we were studying in class. Leading up to each of these visits, I asked my students to look at a given religious community's website and to write a short reflection about their initial impressions and expectations for the visit. This gave them the opportunity to consider how media and online portrayals of a community inform their preconceived notions about that community. Following the visits, students were again asked to write a short reflection, this time describing what stood out to them the most and what they learned from our speaker.

This simple exercise in prediction proved to be incredibly valuable. Following Lang's model of "prediction, exposure, feedback" (2016, 41-42)—in which students make a prediction, are exposed to something directly, and then reflect on what they have learned—many of the learners in my classroom were able to unearth their own preconceived notions without my having to say a word. Consider, for example, some of the written predictions that I received from students before we hosted the speaker from our local Buddhist meditation center:

> "My impression of this community after looking at their website is they're welcoming and very open to visitors. The most important thing to this community (from my perspective) is that they value stepping away from everyday life to relax and refocus."
>
> "In terms of the beliefs and values of [Buddhist center], it seems like they strongly value the well-being of others. Their guided meditations and theme-specific classes are all centered around helping people become better versions of themselves and improving their own personal well-being. They even host public events and discussions to help others remove stress and anxiety from their lives. Even to someone unfamiliar with the [Buddhist center's] community, it is easy to see how much they care about others and their well-being."
>
> "I would like to ask our visitor why Buddhists have to shave their heads, what the difference between modern and traditional Buddhism is, and what the process of becoming a Buddhist monk is like."

These initial written reflections gave me insight into students' existing ways of imagining "Buddhism." For example, they immediately picked up on the values of compassion (karuna) and the desire to avoid suffering (dukkha) that lie at the heart of the Mahayana tradition. At the same time, some students continued to imagine Buddhists as monks with a distinct style of dress and so forth. You can probably imagine the look on some of their faces when our guest speaker—a thirty-something-year-old blonde woman in jeans and blouse—arrived. Here are some of the written reflections that I received after the visit:

> "It was so interesting to be taught about Buddhism from the perspective of a layperson, who worked and was also a mother. It gave me a modern and accessible perspective of Buddhism."
>
> "[Our visitor's] commentary on how looking at everyone as suffering beings helps you understand people and appreciate problems really resonated with me."
>
> "I was not expecting the session with [our visitor] to go how it did. I was thinking we would be talking to a Buddhist monk, but instead I walked into the classroom and saw a middle-aged mom sitting there. It sort of threw me for a loop because I had an image of an Asian monk in my head. Of course I know that religion can be spread throughout the world but I am still a little shocked that [our visitor] told us that she had a good solid community of people just like herself that go to the temple and practice Buddhism."

Some students' predictions were reinforced, but their understanding of the tradition we had been abstractly studying in class was made more specific and grounded through their encounter with the speaker. For others, though, this experience of predicting what the visit would be like and then reflecting upon what they had actually experienced was deeply transformative, as evidenced in the comments from the third student. Thus, this sort of activity was especially powerful when it came to unsettling students' assumptions about sites and persons in our own local community.

The other section of Lang's work that I chose to employ in this class was chapter 4, which addresses how to help students identify connections between new material and material that they have previously mastered. He writes, for example, that "a simple way of understanding how to build comprehension in our students would be that it consists of helping them forge, rich, interconnected networks of knowledge—ones that enable each existing piece of information in our content area to connect with lots of other information, concepts, and ideas" (Lang 2016, 96). This way of thinking about building connections aligns with existing scholarship about memory and how our neural connections tend to build pathways in relation to one another (Lang 2016, 61-62). Lang proposes a variety of strategies to promote this sort of deep understanding, but I was particularly intrigued by concept mapping. Lang describes concept mapping as a "manageable task for a small group of students to undertake at the conclusion of a lesson or a unit of material" that "offers the additional benefit of being an interesting and (in the best of all possible worlds) even enjoyable activity" (2016, 104). Reading this section of the chapter made me wonder if this type of drawing activity would indeed be enjoyable for first-year students, especially those who have more visual learning styles. This strategy also seemed to align with my use of team-based learning and team activities.

As an experiment, during our unit on Hinduism, I had students work with their teams to create a visual map or illustration showing the connections between key concepts related to reincarnation (samsara, dharma, moksha, and so forth). After each team had created their visual diagram, they explained it to the rest of the class and, with some feedback, made any changes to more accurately depict these concepts. A couple of weeks later, once we had moved into our unit on Buddhism, I asked the teams to revisit their maps and amend them with new vocabulary and with attention to how Buddhist practitioners might map notions of life, death, and rebirth in a different way. The result of this activity and the discussion that ensued was a productive sort of confusion. Students had a particularly hard time figuring out how the Buddhist concept of anatman/anatta (the doctrine of no self or soul) could be drawn or visualized in comparison to the Hindu idea of atman (the self or soul that is carried forward in cycles of rebirth). However, once each team had figured out what this might look like, the concept seemed to gel in their minds in a way that it had not in past classes or semesters. In fact, some students asked me if they could hold onto their drawings and they used them as visual study guides for their next exam. This activity allowed students to see connections and comparisons across traditions, while reinforcing knowledge they had previously mastered.

The most appealing aspect of Lang's work may be the fact that it provides general frameworks and strategies that are supported by scholarship on teaching and learning and can be easily adapted into a variety of courses on the study of religion. In the case of my class, my students' scores on the Buddhism exam were higher than in past semesters, which implied that something about these strategies seemed to be effective for them. I also observed that using the mapping exercises helped them cultivate a strong team dynamic early in the semester. Students who were artistically inclined had a chance to showcase those talents with their teams—and teams without an artist in their midst were able to laugh over their shared attempts to draw. Additionally, the prediction exercises that we utilized throughout the semester helped prepare students for their final paper assignment, which also involved comparing media depictions of a given topic/tradition to complex realities. I was encouraged by these and other outcomes that resulted from implementing Lang's ideas in my classroom and plan to make small changes in some of my other classes moving forward.

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USING JAMES LANG'S "SMALL TEACHING"

Motivation and Emotion in the High School Religion Classroom: Insights from James Lang's *Small Teaching*

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how James Lang's *Small Teaching* suggestions for fostering deeper motivation were implemented at the high school level in sophomore and junior religion courses.

KEYWORDS

emotion, motivation, high school, religion, pedagogical methods

James Lang's *Small Teaching* (2016) has played an integral role in helping me to transition from teaching as a contingent professor in university and seminary settings to teaching full time in an all-boys Jesuit high school. PhD programs in religion often lack specific discussions of educational theory and pedagogical methods. Graduates of these programs who end up teaching at any level gather skills along the way, usually in trial-by-fire situations, drawing on the lessons learned about teaching from our best (and sometimes our worst) teachers. When I began teaching high school, I quickly realized I could no longer rely upon the professor-as-expert mode of education to establish my authority and engage my students. Lang offers many discreet, small steps that can be implemented at any point in one's teaching career to help engage students in ways that quickly improve motivation and student learning outcomes. Furthermore, his methods are based in pedagogical research that is concerned not only with pedagogical theory but with the neuroscience of learning and measurable educational outcomes.

The religion curriculum and the administrative body of the high school where I teach allow for much creativity and freedom on the part of teacher teams who collaboratively construct the courses each year. All students take religion for all four years of their high school education. First-year students take a hybrid course that introduces them to the Ignatian history and identity of the school and then turns toward Hebrew Bible/Old Testament scriptures. Sophomores build on this foundational work in biblical studies with a year-long course in New Testament, focused primarily on the Gospels. Juniors take a Christian Ethics course that introduces philosophical ethical methods and Catholic Social Teaching. Seniors choose from a number of rotating electives including Bioethics, Finding God in

All Films, World Religions, and Art and Spirituality. The maximum class size is twenty-four students. Many students come from Catholic grade schools and/or families who identify as Roman Catholic, but the student body represents wide points of religious, ethno-racial, and economic diversity. The department is dually focused on the academic study of religion and, in keeping with our Ignatian identity, the spiritual, emotional, and justice-seeking capacities of our students.

While I have implemented many of Lang's suggestions for increased understanding and knowledge retention, which are the subjects of the first two sections of *Small Teaching*, my reflections here concern his third section, titled "Inspiration." Lang's chapter on motivation within that section helps to explain what many religion and philosophy instructors know and rely on intuitively—that students need to care about the subjects they encounter in order to learn, and that part of our job is communicating why *we* care about what we study and teach. He offers helpful tips on how to communicate and foster that care. One specific issue he addresses is the harnessing of emotion in the room to motivate student interest. In a class like Christian Ethics, which I teach for high school juniors, emotions run high in many ways. The material can be confrontational and deeply personal. In my other course, New Testament with high school sophomores, emotion functions in a different way to motivate students' engagement. Many students at this developmental level are resentful of having to take religion and are disinterested in the subject. I will discuss some of the ways that I try to cultivate, guide, and harness emotions as a part of both these courses.

Each of Lang's chapters include overviews of the educational and cognitive models that support particular ways to implement his theory. At the end of each chapter he provides summary "principles" to encourage teachers not simply to emulate his practices, but to incorporate the principles of the chapter into their own work. The three principles of the chapter, "Motivation," shape my reflections below.

Acknowledge Emotions in the Room

Lang writes that "infusing learning with a sense of purpose, and especially self-transcendent purpose" can capture student attention and help students to connect to the subject (2016, 174). While all classes in a curriculum have "purpose" and awareness of that purpose helps students understand the relevance of the subject matter, religion courses can seem alienating and useless for some. But they are rich with opportunities for highlighting "self-transcendent" purpose. In religion courses we encounter questions about meaning and morality, how to be in community with others, and how to live "the good life." Every topic we cover is in some way connected to the idea that human life and experience is meaningful precisely because of our connections to that which is bigger than the self. This concept fits well within the Jesuit mission of my school to educate and care for the whole person and to form students for service to others.

Any classroom can be a highly emotional space. Students and instructors bring their own experiences and lives to the topic and to the learning community. The subject material itself, particularly in religious studies, can be fraught with emotional baggage and trigger points. Emotions in the ethics classroom are not always positive. Learning about systemic injustice, for example, can lead to despair, sadness, and confusion. Learning about white and male privilege often leads to anger. These emotions can be destructive in the classroom if they are not appropriately addressed and channeled toward self-transcendent purpose. However, these negative feelings are often the conduit to a greater sense of purpose born out of exposure to injustice.

One tactic for dealing with negative emotion begins with naming what is happening in the room. In a recent junior class where I introduced different definitions of racism and foregrounded a definition of racism as a system of privileges based on whiteness, many of the (white) students immediately appeared distressed and started to offer the kinds of arguments that often come up when privilege is revealed—they started to turn toward ways in which whites experience "oppression." Rather than dismissing or ignoring the clear emotional undertones of the discussion, I tried to name it immediately and asked students (a) what they were feeling, and (b) to think about why they had immediately moved to a defensive position even before we had gotten through the lesson. Simply asking us all to *notice* the emotion in the room created an opportunity for an emotional pause button and facilitated a moment of self-reflection.

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Make it Social

Despite the traditional model of the teacher as all-knowing source of information, students and teachers are always co-creating the classroom environment and learning from each other. While I acknowledge that my engagement and revealing the issues I care about is key to my motivating students, perhaps equally important is being willing to listen to what motivates students. One tactic for making learning social highlighted by Lang is to “Tell Great Stories” (2016, 182). One of the stories I tell in many of my classes is about falling in and out of love with Aristotle as a student. In my Christian Ethics course, students read a small portion of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* in our introduction to virtue ethics. I tell them about how much I loved Aristotle, that he made me want to study philosophy, and that I thought he could see into my life and heart from millennia away! But then I learned about Aristotle’s position on women, that he would have believed that women were malformed men, and I tell students how much that hurt my feelings. This story helps me to show students that all production of knowledge is human, and facilitates a conversation about how to assess the humanity of our heroes, particularly when they let us down. My students enjoy this small glimpse into my personal intellectual history, but it also serves to increase their curiosity about Aristotle and about reading primary philosophical sources generally.

I have also tried to use the spirit of telling great stories in a wider scope than Lang suggests. Listening to student stories and helping them to express their own enthusiasm has helped me to create more engaging assignments for my New Testament course with sophomores. In late October of 2019, Kanye West released his much-anticipated album *Jesus is King*. Members of my New Testament classes were ecstatic about the album, and would often enter class singing lyrics to the songs. We were studying the gospel of Mark and learning the basics of critical biblical interpretation methods including literary and historical analysis. I was initially annoyed by their level of what I feared was uncritical hero worship for Kanye West. I wouldn’t let them play the album in class even when they insisted it was relevant to our subject matter (they were right, it was!). Finally, in need of a mid-quarter assignment, and thinking about Lang’s admonition to “make learning social,” I decided to ask them to teach me about what they loved about West’s new album. With the help of a colleague in the religion department, I developed a four-part assignment designed to provoke their critical analysis of West and his new album, while practicing their skills of literary criticism. I provided some analysis of the album from cultural critics, mimicking the historical critical method of biblical interpretation that emphasizes contextual knowledge. I asked students first to explain the conflicts in the ways Kanye West’s album had been critically received. Second, they were required to describe his theological understanding of Jesus by citing and explicating the lyrics from one of the songs on the new album. Next, employing the information we had covered in the New Testament course so far, they compared and contrasted West’s Jesus with Mark’s portrayal of Jesus. Finally, they were invited to either critique West’s theology or to offer their own creative interpretation of Jesus in the form of song lyrics that revealed something meaningful about their own understanding of Jesus. In allowing student interests to lead, I benefited from their enthusiasm about the Kanye West assignment. Listening for and to their own interests is an aspect of the Jesuit commitment to *cura personalis* or care for the whole person.

Show Enthusiasm

Sharing enthusiasm for my subjects gives students a model for caring about the world, which is especially important at this age where their concerns about their own internal worlds are primary. High school students can be driven by how others perceive them, leading to any expression of care and enthusiasm being perceived as weak or uncool. Teachers have an opportunity to disrupt that narrative and lead students in discovering their own sense of wonder, joy, and purpose in learning. But this disruption is only possible given a relationship of trust in the authority that the teacher has developed with students. One method for the development of trust relies on appropriately revealing aspects of my identity and personality. As a general practice, I let my enthusiasm lead my teaching—I choose topics and case studies that I find particularly compelling, knowing that if I am bored with the material, the students are unlikely to develop an interest in it.

Lang suggests that demonstrating that you care about the material can significantly motivate care in your students. Students need to see what “hooks” the teacher about the topic. I have a number of topics, some not related to religion at all, about which I let students see my most enthusiastic self. On a recent summer break, I read a book about intelligence in cephalopods that I found fascinating. When school started in September, I started the Christian Ethics course with a

picture of a beautiful octopus on the board and asked students to make connections between the octopus and being an engaged ethicist—a discussion based on my expectations of them as laid out in the syllabus. I told them my favorite octopus-related anecdotes about animals in captivity that disrupt scientific studies and assert their autonomy over the desires of researchers. When I devised this opening school year activity, I was not concerned with making cephalopods fit into the course material. Instead I wanted an opportunity to demonstrate my enthusiasm for a topic, which would set the expectation that this class is a place where we share enthusiastically about the things we care about, from the most mundane to the most deeply important.

Lang's small teaching methods offer a wealth of discrete, easily adoptable strategies that can affect the outcome of a single lesson, but they also offer the opportunity to rethink our pedagogical strategies and motivations on a larger scale. His reminder to pay attention to emotion has helped me to more intentionally embrace the organic and sometimes messy emotional tenor of my classroom and has helped me develop a pedagogical strategy that helps me and my students to learn together authentically and joyfully.

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USING JAMES LANG'S "SMALL TEACHING"

Structured Reading Groups: Incorporating James Lang's *Small Teaching* in the Theology Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores James Lang's *Small Teaching* as a useful resource for developing and incorporating structured reading groups in the required upper-level theology courses at the institutions where I teach. The purpose of the reading groups is to increase student engagement and facilitate deep learning, with each reading group role patterned on one of Lang's models or principles of knowledge, understanding, and inspiration.

KEYWORDS

small teaching, reading groups

In his work, *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning,* James Lang introduces a "small ball" approach to teaching and learning that is intended to "spark positive change in higher education through small but powerful modifications to our course design and teaching practices" (2016, 5). Lang's innovative pedagogical strategy brings principles from cognitive theory to bear on classroom instruction by using relevant research on learning and higher education as the foundation from which to develop small teaching techniques designed to promote sizeable improvements in student learning.

According to Lang, the benefit of this deliberate, structured, and incremental approach to teaching is that instructors can have a considerable effect on student learning through minor and relatively simple modifications to their courses. For example, drawing on the growing body of evidence in memory research that demonstrates the positive effect of retrieval practice for acquiring and retaining knowledge, Lang proposes a small teaching activity in which instructors use the opening or closing minutes of class to ask a series of low-stakes questions that require students, either orally or in writing, to practice retrieving prior information covered in the course. Having students regularly recall foundational knowledge through brief activities such as this, he argues, helps to strengthen and improve their memories, which in turn leads to more durable and complex learning (2016, 29-32).

Although the majority of the small teaching models and principles found throughout Lang's work require minimal preparation and grading and can be put into practice in a single class period at any point in the semester, Lang also notes that instructors can develop a more comprehensive learning strategy for their courses by drawing systematically from the three sections of *Small Teaching*, aptly titled "Knowledge," "Understanding," and "Inspiration," in their course design (2016, 11).

This paper describes a pedagogical strategy I developed and implemented using Lang's small teaching techniques in upper-level theology courses at the undergraduate, liberal arts institutions where I teach. This approach uses structured reading groups as a central component of the course in order to facilitate and inspire deep learning. While the reading groups themselves are an example of a more deliberate and comprehensive learning strategy discussed by Lang in the closing chapter of his book, the individual roles associated with the groups fall under umbrella of small teaching practices and can easily be detached from the reading groups and used successfully in a single class period.

Structured reading groups bear a strong resemblance to literature circles, which have traditionally been used in elementary and middle-school literature classrooms. First introduced in 1993 by Harvey Daniels, this pedagogical practice was designed to boost student interest in reading and literary discussions by giving the student a choice of texts to read and developing thought-provoking strategies to encourage student engagement with the text. According to Daniels' model, students meet regularly with their small groups to discuss their selected reading, and each student is given a different role to play in the circle. Examples of the roles developed by Daniels include, "Discussion Director," "Illustrator," "Summarizer," "Connector," "Literary Luminary," and "Word Wizard." These creative and complementary roles are intended to inspire students to develop their own unique insights, questions, and responses to the text. Speaking on the efficacy of this student-centered, collaborative approach to learning, Daniels states, "Teachers who implement literature circles in their classroom are recreating for their students the kind of close, playful interaction that scaffolds learning so productively elsewhere in life" (2001, 25).

More recently, instructors in higher education have begun to adapt these literature circles into their classrooms to promote higher-order thinking skills. I was first introduced to reading groups through Heather Macpherson Parrot and Elizabeth Cherry's article, "Using Structured Reading Groups to Facilitate Deep Learning" (2011). In this article, Parrot and Cherry document the specific group work format they successfully developed in order to promote critical reading skills and active discussion of course material in their sociology courses. Similarly, Tricia Van Dyk's article, "Teaching Moral Philosophy through Literature Circles," describes this pedagogical technique as an effective method for making course material relevant and engaging to students from a variety of identities and backgrounds (2019).

Influenced by Lang's small ball approach to teaching and looking for a comprehensive format to boost student engagement and learning in my upper-level theology courses, I decided to experiment with the reading groups format. In the eight semesters that I have implemented readings groups in my classes, students have consistently rated the reading groups in their final evaluations as one of, if not *the* aspect of the course that contributed most to their learning.

The reason that the reading groups are so effective at sparking student learning, I argue, is twofold. First, they are designed to facilitate and inspire deep learning by drawing systematically on the principles, methods, and activities explored in each of the three parts of *Small Teaching*—knowledge, understanding, and inspiration. Second, and not unrelated, the reading groups provide a unique collaborative and student-centered approach to learning in the theology classroom.

To begin, I design my upper-level theology courses to accommodate at least six reading group meetings over the duration of the semester. For each of the different courses I teach, I work to create a unique set of reading group roles, which I develop based on the specific learning goals for that course, as well as the evidence-based models, principles, and small-teaching activities outlined in each of the three sections of Lang's *Small Teaching*. Many of these roles also have the additional benefit of meeting the liberal learning goals for the common curriculum at the institutions where I teach.

Early in the semester, I divide students at random into groups of five, give or take. The groups then determine amongst themselves which member will be responsible for which role during the first group meeting, and the students rotate roles throughout the semester, so that each student plays a different role for each meeting. On the days in which the reading

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groups are scheduled, the reading groups meet in class for approximately thirty-five to forty minutes. Then, for the duration of the class, the groups come together and discuss with one another the various questions, insights, and connections raised in the individual groups.

The "Discussion Leader" is an essential role for the group process. In addition to developing questions to help their group members understand and think critically about the main points in the text, the discussion leader's responsibility is to keep the meeting on track and to make sure that everyone participates. I have also found that the "Passage Analyst" plays a key role in encouraging the students to engage the text meaningfully, whether individually or collectively. The passage analyst's job is to locate several passages in the reading that they consider to be particular insightful, compelling, or challenging and to create a plan to discuss and analyze these passages with the group. Each of these two roles help students to develop knowledge in the course and to use basic intellectual skills to deepen their understanding.

In the first section of *Small Teaching*, Lang discusses the importance of helping students gain a solid knowledge foundation in the course content. Here, Lang warns that instructors should not be quick to dismiss helping students learn and remember facts or concepts in favor of higher order activities, such as creating new knowledge. He writes, "Knowledge is foundational: we won't have the structures in place to do deep thinking if we haven't spent time mastering a body of knowledge related to that thinking" (2016, 15). Accordingly, in my upper-level courses that require more difficult and theoretical theological readings, I often employ the role of "Theological Term-inator," which entails identifying theological concepts or ideas in the reading that the student found to be either foundational for understanding or with which they are unfamiliar. The Theological Term-inator then looks up these concepts and explains them to the group. The role of "Cartographer" (or concept mapper) can also be effective in this capacity.

In the second section of his book, titled "Understanding," Lang explores the cognitive skill of connecting as a means by which instructors can purposefully guide students toward deeper learning experiences. Drawing on current research in neuroscience, Lang contends that one of primary differences between the way a novice and an expert develop their knowledge base is their ability to connect the information, ideas, or skills they know. While instructors can undoubtedly help students begin to think about how to make important connections, Lang notes that studies have shown that when students are able to make new connections for themselves, the learning is more profound. Thus, Lang argues that small teaching activities that help to facilitate the formation of new connections leads to deeper and more meaningful learning experiences (2016, 91-100).

Given these findings, I have begun to include the role of "Creative Connector" in every reading group. This role asks students to make at least one connection between the reading group text and something outside of our class. These outside ideas include, but are not limited to, articles from credible media sources or a cultural, social, political, or economic ideas from their other coursework, or in the case of my students, a more popular choice is to connect an insight from the reading to a TV show, literary work, movie, artwork, poetry, or campus event. I am often impressed by the profound connections that my students make, and on more than one occasion, I have saved these connections to use the next time I teach on the topic.

I have also experimented with some reading group roles that have been less successful. For example, I have found that in my upper-level theology courses, students have not yet built the range of cognitive skills necessary to perform the role of "Devil's Advocate" outlined by Parrot and Cherry. This role asked students to challenge ideas in the article by developing a list of critical questions and arguments that might be raised by the author's critics or by those with differing viewpoints (2011, 365). The lists that my students developed were often weak, flimsy, or contrived. Similarly, I also experimented with the role of "Reporter," whose job is to take notes on the discussion and summarize its main points. My students consistently reported that they did not find this role to be as engaging as the other reading group roles and that it often felt like busy work. Based on this feedback, I no longer assign this particular role. Instead, I ask each group to share their main discussion points with the other groups at the end of the class period.

The final section of Lang's *Small Teaching* explores the idea of inspiration as a component of deep learning and emphasizes the importance of getting students to care about the course material. In the chapter on "Motivation," Lang points to several key elements in the research on emotions and learning that he believes are ripe for exploration by college and university faculty, and which I think are implicitly and explicitly present in the reading groups. First, he argues, emotions can help us

capture the attention of our students (2016, 173). When we feel strong emotions, our attention and cognitive capacities are heightened. Second, he proposes that in order to help drive student's minds in purposeful and productive directions, we should focus on infusing learning with a sense of purpose, and especially self-transcendent purpose, which he notes is one of the strongest predictors for learners who persist through challenging academic tasks. Lang highlights that fact that the most powerful form of learning arises when students can see the capacity of their learning to make the world a better place (2016, 174-175).

Considering Lang's summary of the research on purposeful learning, I developed the reading group role of "Activist," which asks students to explore the relationship between faith and justice. This role, along with the "Intersectional Identifier," offers students a space to think critically about systems of oppression, such as sexism, racism, and xenophobia, and to reflect on the theological resources for such work. More importantly, these roles encourage students to begin listening to the voices of the marginalized and oppressed and to contemplate how they might take small yet courageous steps to foster concrete practices for social transformation in their own communities and to become co-creators of a more just and peaceful world.

In their final course evaluations, students have consistently referred to the motivational capacity of the creative connector, activist, and intersectional identifier roles. As, one of the students in my feminist theology course wrote, "The reading group roles created a dynamic space for intentional, critical thought. My two favorite roles were the creative connector, because making personal connections makes learning very relevant and applicable beyond the classroom, and the feminist activist, because I loved the idea of 'being a little bit brave.' I will take that idea with me where I go from here in life."

A third element in the research on emotions and learning that Lang highlights is the idea that emotions are social and catching (2016, 176). For example, numerous studies have shown a positive correlation between the instructor's passion and enthusiasm for the subject and student motivation. But, as Lang points out, this is only part of the story. Drawing on Dan Chambliss and Christopher Takacs' research in their book, *How College Works,* Lang underscores the immense influence that a student's personal connections and relationships in the classroom can have on their learning (2016, 176).

The effect of interpersonal relationships on creating positive learning experiences in the classroom is the second reason I believe structured reading groups are so effective. At their core, reading groups capitalize on the benefits of peer-to-peer connection insofar as they foster conversations among students and encourage their experiences, perspectives, and connections to emerge as equally important in the creation of classroom knowledge (2016, 190). The reading groups also give students the opportunity to attend to the challenges of communal relationships and work, especially as they practice communicating across differences. One of my students gave voice to this idea in their final course evaluation, stating: "Reading groups [contributed most to my learning]. Discussions were always fun and lively. They were my favorite part because I got to see the different perspectives of my groupmates. This made it easy to engage and formulate my own opinions and also respect opinions that did not necessarily match up with my own."

In addition to using the reading group roles to formulate a more comprehensive learning strategy in my upper-level theology courses, I have also separated out the various roles and used them individually in my introductory courses as small, low-stakes teaching activities. For instance, I might ask students to come prepared to class with two passages from the reading that they want to discuss with their classmates or to make an everyday connection between our course content and an outside idea.

A drawback of structured reading groups for those instructors looking to incorporate a small ball approach to teaching and learning is that the reading groups can potentially require a significant amount of grading, depending on how instructors choose to assess student learning and their overall class size. Although the reading groups essentially run themselves once they have been set up, in order to for them to truly be a productive space for student learning, students must come to class having read the assigned text and adequately prepared for their designated roles. To ensure this will happen, I have found that at the very least I have to assign a short, written component for each role. For example, I ask the discussion leader to write their questions for the group, as well as their own answers to these questions.

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While I typically prefer to grade the written assignments on a scale of one to ten and to offer substantive feedback to each student when I can, an instructor could easily make my grading more efficient by limiting their comments to those assignments that need improvement and using a scale of check plus, check, and check minus. Regardless of how one chooses to assess student learning in the reading groups, it is worth noting that most students tend to appreciate the fact that their grade is based on an evaluation of their individual work rather than that of the entire group.

Overall, I have found the benefits of incorporating structured reading groups in my classes far outweigh the potential time commitment associated with grading student work. In my observation, the reading groups, when developed in conversation with the principles, models, and activities found in the three sections of Lang's *Small Teaching,* lead to an effective comprehensive learning strategy. Reading groups, among other things, encourage students to think, create, evaluate, listen, question, connect, interpret, explore, analyze, consider other's perspectives, reflect, collaborate, discuss, lead, remember, imagine, and to consider how they might make a difference in the world for more than just themselves. In other words, reading groups give students a reason to fall in lifelong love with learning.

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ARTICLE

Active Learning in Lecture-Based Courses: "Discipleship Survivor" as a Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Despite educators acknowledging the pedagogical benefits of active learning principles and activities, large enrollment classes most often take place in fixed-seating lecture halls. This proves challenging to designing creative activities for student engagement. In this article, the authors describe one such creative activity used in a large, introductory course on the New Testament. "Discipleship Survivor"—an exercise in which each week students voted on which of Jesus's twelve disciples would be cast out of a boat—proved to be particularly engaging and effective. From their follow-up study with students, the authors highlight principles that will allow other instructors to adopt and adapt their own material to make lecture-based courses more interactive and engaging.

KEYWORDS

active learning, constructivist learning design, gamification, student engagement

Although traditionally lecturing has been the primary delivery mode in universities, research has been demonstrating that this is not always the most effective option (White 2011), in large part because in the digital age students can receive the same information from other sources. For some time now, universities have been brokering new technologies to move away from traditional, in-class lecturing methods. For example, in "flipped classrooms" content delivery is being shifted to audio or video recordings that can be viewed online, allowing in-class time for students to engage in interactive activities (Baepler, Walker, and Driessen 2014; Pickering and Roberts 2017). Not everyone is on board, however, and many professors continue to use lectures as their primary teaching strategy, either by force of habit, comfort, or the physical layout of the classroom (lecture hall) they are assigned. But whether content delivery is online or in person, research on cognition has clearly demonstrated that students do not learn well by only passively listening to lectures (Halpern and Hakel 2003; Rollins 2017, 3; Barkley and Major 2018, 3).

In contrast, educational research points towards the effectiveness of active learning, which requires students to participate in the learning process (Cameron 1999, 9). Students are invited to engage in activities and processes that employ their minds, and sometimes their bodies, in ways that move beyond listening to the dispersal of

information by the instructor and the parroting back of the same information.[1] Student engagement can include activities such as games, debates, presentations, problem solving, discussions, and role play. When a student engages in active learning, they are self-motivated and able to learn beyond the recall of facts or singularly focusing on getting a good grade (Rollins 2017, 104; Thaman et al. 2013). Using constructivist learning principles that place students at the center of the process, students are challenged to think about, talk about, and relate the information to their lives (Cameron 1999, 3; Mallin 2017, 242–243; King 1993, 30).[2] Active learning is being advocated in learning environments for students of all ages, as it is shown to result in increased engagement, increased critical thinking, increased knowledge retention, and increased understanding (Christenson 2018, 99–100).[3]

With the push for active learning in higher education, there has been an associated push for implementing active-learning classrooms that are designed to increase interaction between the students and with the instructor in higher-education institutions (Chen 2017, x; 2018; Whiteside, Brooks, and Walker 2010). Yet, while interactive classrooms are ideal for engaged, constructivist learning, most institutions of higher education do not have the financial or logistical capacity to make large-scale conversions of their learning spaces. The unfortunate reality is that most instructors end up in rooms designed around the lecture model, particularly for courses with large enrollments (i.e., fifty or more students). And thus, the problem remains: how do professors engage students in large lecture classes, particularly in those with fixed seating? While some discussion can be enabled—student-to-instructor or pair-and-share dyads or triads, for example—this is a far cry from the interactivity that the scholarship of teaching and learning is promoting. In this article we will describe and assess an activity in an introductory Bible course that proved pedagogically effective in addressing this issue.

Discipleship Survivor

The New Testament course (RELS 214), offered at Queen's University, a publicly funded, research-intensive institution in Canada, is designed to give an overview of the content and background of the twenty-seven documents that comprise the New Testament. Through these texts, students explore the historical development of various facets of the early Jesus movement as it is expressed in the literature of the various communities of the first and early second centuries CE. The course is scheduled in a lecture-style hall with seventy to one hundred students who take it as an elective in their program.

The course syllabus articulates three key learning outcomes that students will demonstrate as a result of taking the course:

> **LO1:** Comprehend how scholars use historical, literary, and archaeological evidence to understand and reconstruct the development of religious groups and movements in antiquity.
>
> **LO2:** Understand the historical development and the diversity of the early Jesus movement.
>
> **LO3**: Respect diverse interpretations of biblical texts and early Christian movements.

The physical setting of the course lends itself to delivery of lectures, but over two decades of teaching, the course instructor (Ascough) has increasingly introduced one or more learning activities into every class period, sometimes taking up to half the class time or more in a non-lecture format. This is particularly important since the course is a three-hour period once

1 A good guide to such actions can be found in the modified version of Bloom's well-known taxonomy in which Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) switched out the nouns for verbs across the lower to higher order levels of learning and the subsections of remember, understand, analyze, apply, evaluate, and generate (cf. Bloom 1956; Ascough 2011, 52–53).

2 On constructivist learning see Fernando and Marikar (2017), Olusegun (2015), Vella (2001, 42–44).

3 Active learning is not without its detractors; some university faculty see active learning as "another in a long list of educational fads" (Prince 2004, 223). One of the main arguments against active learning is the "coverage problem." That is, active-learning activities take up class time, resulting in less time for instructors to cover new material (Faust and Paulson 1998, 17; Michael 2007, 44). Further, preparing active-learning activities often takes much more time. If an instructor already has their lectures prepared from previous times that they taught a course, it will take them more time and effort to redesign the course. In addition, active-learning techniques often require pre-class, hands-on preparation, which can be seen as a waste of time (Faust and Paulson 1998, 8). While literature in favor of active learning agrees that some active-learning activities take more preparation, there are also many active-learning activities that require little preparation. Further, once an active-learning class is designed for the first time, little preparation will be needed for future classes. More importantly, although less information may be taught by the instructor, more information is actually understood and learned by the students (Michael 2007, 45).

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a week for twelve weeks, and thus clearly not conducive to straight lecturing. Nevertheless, while the activity described below works particularly well in our university's configuration (twelve disciples—one for each week of the course), it can be adapted for other teaching patterns by having students engage in it for just one class period per week.

"Discipleship Survivor" is an active-learning exercise that Ascough used in 2016 and 2019.[4] Towards the end of the first class of the semester, he projected the following text:

> Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16:13–19, NRSV)

Ascough recounted how, according to Christian tradition, this promise to Peter was not just the foundation of the church but, at least in some traditions, the establishment of the papacy. And since Peter was (reputedly) the first Bishop of Rome, Peter was the first Pope. After a brief pause, he pointed out that, according to the biblical accounts, during Jesus's trial Peter denied knowing him three times (Matt 26:69–75) and humorously suggested that perhaps Peter didn't *really* deserve the keys to the kingdom after all. Perhaps Jesus made a poor choice and one of the other disciples should have been given the opportunity to receive the keys, and thus perhaps be the first bishop of Rome!

Ascough then revealed a toy boat, ostensibly in the style of a first century fishing vessel from Galilee, that contained figurines of Jesus and the twelve disciples (Figure 1). He then tasked students with looking up the disciples of Jesus: Who were they? What did they do? Why might they be worthy of the keys? Why were they not worthy? Students were asked to come to the next class prepared to nominate one of the disciples to be removed from the boat, and told that they had to give reasons—for example, why should this guy go and others remain? Ascough gave them no resources or direction.

Figure 1: Toy Boat and Figurines

Throughout the semester, students came to class with evidence about the characters and deeds of the disciples that were drawn from a variety of genres such as the canonical Gospels, the non-canonical Acts of the Apostles, ancient martyrdom accounts, and medieval stories of saints, most of it gleaned from online resources. Students found resources on their own,

4 This activity improvises on the popular television show *Survivor*, in which each week a member of one of two "tribes" is voted off the show by their peers. Although our own game might more properly be named "Disciple Survivor" since it determines who the last disciple remaining on the boat will be, but Ascough likes the play on words with "disciple*ship*" since there is a boat involved.

following links that often began with a Google search. Of course, such unguided searching can be problematic since there are a lot of questionable sources out there. Whenever questionable evidence was brought up, however, another student would usually challenge its veracity, with only the occasional nudge from the professor to say that it might not be reliable. This process not only addressed directly the learning outcome on the use of evidence in historical reconstructions, it also linked to a later assignment in the course in which students evaluate web sites focused on the historical Jesus.

Discipleship Survivor was a new activity Ascough introduced into the course in Fall 2016 and it was meant to be a short, somewhat peculiar way of getting students to recognize the challenges of reconstructing history. It was, as he anticipated and as one student commented, “a good ice breaker before the lecture began.” To his surprise and delight, it turned out to be much more than that. As the semester progressed, this opening exercise took up more and more time at the beginning of class. Many of the students came to class prepared to make arguments for casting out one particular disciple or another. The first ten to twenty minutes of each class was devoted to the process of student nominations, argument, and debate until Ascough called for the vote and a show of hands in support of removing each disciple, with students only allowed to vote once.[5]

The different types of evidence students used launched discussions about how one assesses the relative worth of a particular genre (e.g., is a biblical Gospel somehow “truer” than a third century martyrdom account?). For example, students came to class the second week confused (as anticipated) because their searches had revealed that across the four Gospels included in the Bible there are fifteen named disciples, not twelve (see figure 2). Students were thus confronted with whether to accept the later church tradition that conflates characters in order to retain the count at twelve (i.e., Matthew = Levi; Thaddeus = Judas in John 14:23; and Nathanael = Bartholomew). This was the first inkling for some students, particularly those with a Christian background, that perhaps they did not know as much as they thought, or at least what they thought they knew might not be correct.[6]

Figure 2: The Named Disciples

JESUS' TWELVE DISCIPLES / APOSTLES

	Matthew 10:1-4	Mark 3:13-19a	Luke 6:12-16	John 1:35-51	Acts 1:13b, 26
1	Simon (Peter)	Simon (Peter)	Simon (Peter)	Simon (son of John; renamed Cephas, which means Peter)	Peter
2	James (son of Zebedee)	James (son of Zebedee)	James	“sons of Zebedee” (21:2)	James
3	John (brother of James)	John Boanerges (brother of James; “son of thunder)	John		John
4	Andrew (brother of Peter)	Andrew	Andrew (brother of Peter)	Andrew (brother of Peter)	Andrew
5	Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
6	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew		Bartholomew
7	Matthew (tax collector) (9:9)	Matthew	Matthew		Matthew
8	---	Levi (tax collector; 2:13)	Levi (tax collector; 5:27)		---
9	Thomas	Thomas	Thomas	Thomas (the twin, 11:16; 21:2)	Thomas
10	James (son of Alphaeus)	James (son of Alphaeus)	James (son of Alphaeus)		James (son of Alphaeus)
11	Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	---		---
12	Simon (the Cananaean)	Simon (the Cananaean)	Simon (the zealot)		Simon (the zealot)
13	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot (6:70-71)	Judas (Iscariot)
14			Judas (son of James)	Judas (14:22) (= Thaddaeus?)	Judas (son of James)
15				Nathanael (= Bartholomew?)	---
16				“beloved disciple”	
					Matthias (to replace Judas)

PAUL: Cephas (Gal 1:18, 2:9); James the Lord's brother (Gal 1:19, 2:9); John (Gal 2:9); Peter (Gal 2:7)

5 In the future, Ascough plans to use a phone app such as Poll Everywhere to facilitate quicker voting, more accurate tallying, and to ensure that students are forming their own conclusions; cf. https://library.educause.edu/resources/2018/7/clickers-mobile-and-web-apps.

6 This is part of a wider issue of “unlearning” in biblical studies courses (see Ascough 2020). Students in The New Testament course often carry with them personal or cultural understandings of Christianity in the modern context, which they assume are grounded in biblical texts.

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Student comments could often be expanded into more rigorous learning. For example, in the second iteration of the activity when Judas was nominated for expulsion one student raised the issue of what happens to "Christianity" if Jesus is not "betrayed" and crucified. This resulted in a lengthy conversation, led by the professor, on the church's struggle with the role of Judas in the Gospels and beyond, including a discussion of the recently discovered *Gospel of Judas* that tackles this problem directly.

After an intensive first season of Discipleship Survivor, students made their final choice, which was not voted on in class but appeared as the final question on the quiz in the last class:

> In Discipleship Survivor we have eliminated all but two disciples as contenders to be rewarded with the "keys to the Kingdom": Simon Peter and John son of Zebedee. Indicate your choice as the "*winner*" and provide at least two arguments for your candidate and/or against the other, *based on our discussions in class*.

This question was worth points and all students participated in making their choice and defending it.[7]

Figure 3: The Top Disciple

In keeping with Jesus's own decision (according to Matthew) and almost two thousand years of tradition (and to Ascough's displeasure!), Peter prevailed and retained the "keys to the kingdom" and his position as the top disciple (cf. figure 3). This delighted a block of students who were clearly interested in preserving Peter to the very end, almost certainly out of concern to reify the Christian tradition.

During the first season of Discipleship Survivor in Fall 2016, the order in which the disciples were removed was: Judas (for obvious reasons); Simon the Zealot (for being radical); Thomas (for the doubting); Batholomew/Nathaniel (for questioning the value of Nazareth); Matthew (for tax collecting); Thaddeus (for nationalist leanings); James the "Lesser" (for being Thaddeus' brother [!]); Philip (for being boring); Andrew (for being "meh"); James, son of Zebedee (for not being significant enough); and finally John, son of Zebedee (for not being as important as Peter).

7 Since this was the last day of classes, students were invited to check the online course management system to find out who "won." The result was also announced on the department's website, which had been posting weekly updates about who had been removed from the boat. In the second iteration of the exercise, the updates were made on the department's Facebook page and not only became the most "liked" posts but also resulted in a number of students, including some not in the course, starting to follow the department on Facebook.

During the second season of Discipleship Survivor, which took place in Winter 2019, the results were very different and surprising. The disciples were removed in this order: Simon the Zealot; James "the Lesser"; Peter; John; James; Matthew; Phillip; Thaddeus; Andrew; Bartholomew; and finally Thomas. During round seven, after Matthew was voted out, a student suggested bringing someone onto the boat, noting, "Survivor is a reality show, and the producers do what they can to keep it spicy. I was thinking, instead of kicking someone off this week, how about we bring someone on, and bring Paul on the boat?" This comment was followed by Ascough's "Oooh," and lots of excitement and applause. Ultimately, four non-disciples were nominated, and Paul was chosen as the one to join (slightly beating Mary Magdalene in the voting [to Ascough's dismay]). In the end it came down to Paul and Judas; Paul was chosen to win, with sixty-four votes compared to Judas's twenty-one votes.[8]

This activity turned out to be much more pedagogically effective than anticipated. Many times the discussion about the disciples raised core methodological and hermeneutical issues explored in class, but in an organic way that was tied to preparation that the students had undertaken on their own. As a student enthused, "Loved the disciple survivor! So fun and challenged us to look at history and the text." The debates around which disciple should stay or go, particularly as it came down to the final four, also forced students to formulate and articulate evidentiary-based arguments to support their position and counter the positions taken by others, thus addressing the first and second learning outcomes of the course.

Assessing Discipleship Survivor

While Discipleship Survivor proved to be popular, Ascough was unsure of its effectiveness. Unlike the use of an exam, which for all its faults can be a mechanism to measure student learning, it can be difficult to measure the effectiveness of active learning, especially in lecture-based classes. Did students learn through this activity and if so how and what did they learn?

D'Amico was a student in the New Testament course but was also in Ascough's course on Research Methods in Religious Studies. She enjoyed participating in Discipleship Survivor, and as a concurrent education student, she too was interested in whether it was pedagogically effective. A conversation in the Methods course sparked an idea for a collaborative research project on the impact of Discipleship Survivor as a learning strategy. After receiving summer research grants9 and gaining ethics approval, D'Amico used four sources to gather data: recordings of in-class discussions, formal student evaluations, one-on-one interviews, and analysis of a Facebook messenger group discussion which she had created (set up at the beginning of the semester and not initially tied to the research project). Students who were enrolled in RELS 214 during Fall 2016 and Winter 2019 were sent an email inviting them to take part in a semi-structured interview regarding their thoughts on Discipleship Survivor.

It was clear from the start that Discipleship Survivor was *engaging*. One of the ways Queen's measures teaching and learning is through a University Survey of Student Assessment of Teaching (USAT) which includes at least eleven Likert-scale questions and two questions for qualitative responses: "What did you especially like about this course?" and "Do you have specific suggestions for improvements for this course?" In responding to these questions, thirty students made comments about Discipleship Survivor, with twenty-two of them using the words "fun," "entertaining," "liked," "enjoyed," or "loved." In their interview responses, 87 percent of the fifteen participants used these words, with comments such as, "We were learning but it was fun," "It was fun doing my own research," "[It was a] fun medium that served both to engage attention while still remaining informative," and "I loved how we were able to critically engage with the material in a way that was so interactive and fun." There were also multiple students who simply wrote on their USATs "Discipleship Survivor" or "The boat!" when asked what they liked about the course. Out of twenty-five positive comments, six of them directly used the words "interactive," "interesting," or "engaging." Similarly, when interviewed, 73 percent of the students

8 Interestingly, Judas was the first disciple nominated to be voted off during week one, and was a nominee most weeks. However, a key argument that helped him to stay throughout the semester was: "If Judas wouldn't have betrayed Jesus, then Jesus wouldn't have been crucified, resulting in no Christianity." Although some students argued that God could have fulfilled his plan for Jesus with or without Judas, Judas made it all the way to the end.

9 A Queen's University Undergraduate Summer Student Research Fellowship (USSRF) and an Arts and Science Undergraduate Research Fellowship (ASRF).

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used these words. Participant Three's comment reflects the reality of many of today's learners: "I learn best in interactive formats, not just being lectured at," and another said, "I really liked how [Discipleship Survivor] allowed some really interesting class discussion."

The element of "fun" that the students identify reflects a broader trend in higher education that uses games pedagogically: "Games are intrinsically engaging and provide a venue in which concepts are introduced to the learner or reinforced in a fun, low-fear environment" (Lester 2018, 265).10 By designing Discipleship Survivor on the basis of a popular television series and introducing it in a low stake setting of an opening icebreaker at the beginning of the class, students were able to engage without fear of "losing" points. Yet, in such moments of fun "complex knowledge is *situated* in an active, meaningful context of applying nascent knowledge" (Lester 2018, 265, his emphasis), in this case recently acquired data about the disciples being applied to forming critical judgement about the veracity and importance of the stories (addressing Learning Outcome 2).

One way that engagement can be measured in a university class is by examining students' interest in going to class. When asked "Did Discipleship Survivor enhance your learning? Why or why not?" all fifteen interview participants said that it did. Participant Ten responded, "Yes! [it was an] incentive to go to class—you didn't want your favorite to be voted out!" Similarly, when asked "What did you like about Discipleship Survivor?" a participant replied, "It got me more engaged and wanting to go to class to see what happens (especially towards the end of the semester)." Interestingly, Participant Six explained, "I wasn't originally in the class, but my friend was. After the first class, she told me about Discipleship Survivor, so then I decided that I wanted to take the class, and I'm glad that I did!"

Another indication of student engagement is a Facebook group chat that took place during the semester. At the beginning of the semester, D'Amico created a Facebook messenger group with twenty-six of her friends who were also in the class (one quarter of the total class of ninety-nine students), most of them from a Christian campus group they attended together. The intention of the Facebook group was to discuss assignments and tests. After Ascough introduced Discipleship Survivor, however, the main purpose of the group switched to focus on this activity.11 The first message about Discipleship Survivor simply said, "We can dominate this competition guys," followed by discussion about group voting strategies and weekly debates about who to "kick off" the boat. Of the twenty-six people in the messenger group, twelve were actively involved in discussion about Discipleship Survivor while the others reacted to messages, showing that they were following the discussion without directly contributing. Overall, there were 227 messages sent about Discipleship Survivor throughout the semester. Some of the messages strategized about who to vote out. For example, at the beginning of the classes, messages included "Who do we want out?" "Who goes today?" and "What does the team want to do?" Further, comments such as "Guys! The people are speaking! Wow! United in one spirit!!!" and "Together we are stronger!" were sent after voting someone off of the boat. Other comments included, "Everyone knows you keep the bad guys on for at least a few weeks," "Okay time to defend . . . let's go people," "Make history," "We are playing into the system guys," and "Good voting block team."

Not everyone agreed during some votes, thus creating debates. The majority of debates in the Facebook group involved Bartholomew, Judas, Paul, Thomas, and John. In one instance, on a morning before class, Participant Six pleaded to keep John by relating him to her own faith, "I can't speak to why the others don't mention it but I will say again that it in fact shows humility on John's part that he put his own fear and safety second and was there for his Savior and friend when He needed him the most . . . (unlike the rest who stayed away in fright)." Other participants, however, disparaged John and questioned his humility, leading to a lengthy debate. Later, but prior to class, Participant Eight sent a link saying that all afternoon classes at Queen's were cancelled as of 3:00 p.m. due to poor weather, and participant Seven replied, "NOOO . . . wait but we start at 2:30 . . . just enough time to kick off John."12 Despite the cancellation, however, the conversation continued with a couple of students adding the hashtag "#NotMyBelovedDisciple." Participant Six, still wanting John to stay, jokingly wrote, "God sent this freezing rain to protect John from being voted off!" demonstrating her humor and investment in the activity.

10 On gaming in higher education see Carnes (2014) and the essays in Whitton and Moseley (2012). For particular application to Religious Studies and Theology see the special issue of *Teaching Theology and Religion* 21, no. 4 (2018) on "Games and Learning."

11 The instructor was not aware of the existence of the Facebook group until after the course was over. That said, in this age of social media it seemed like it was a good way for (some) students to interact with one another around the activity, even during class, so in future Ascough would not make any rule against such groups (without encouraging them either; the key is that it was an organic process).

12 It seems that undergraduate students are not usually disappointed when a class is cancelled. Student Seven's comment shows engagement and interest in the class.

Like the way that the conversation concerning John shows students analyzing and evaluating John's actions and intentions, the Facebook chat demonstrates other ways that the students analyzed and evaluated the information. During another conversation that John happened to be featured in, Participant Four sent a picture of Matt 20:20–28, commenting that James and John's mother asked Jesus to give them a place of honor in his kingdom, saying "[they] don't even have the guts to [ask Jesus] themselves so they make their mom do it for them." Another time, Participant Seven sent a link to an article, adding, "Here's a lighthearted take on characters in the Bible falling short of perfection." By analyzing and evaluating the given information, students picked their favorites to stay, sending messages such as, "As long as Bartholomew is the last one, I'm game," "I am team John," "Don't let Judas go!!" "I kind of like Thomas," and "At all costs protect Judas, Paul, Bartholomew, and Thomas." Further, students in the Facebook chat connected the academic study of the disciples to their own Christian faith. For example, when the conversation was leaning towards voting off Thomas, Participant Three said, "I kind of like Thomas . . . let's keep him," followed by "He's relatable." At one point, Participant Seven commented that the group should start their own boat, followed by Participant One saying, "Where anyone can get on . . . 'cause God loves everyone." While Participant One was clearly joking, she likely subconsciously connected the activity to her own belief about God, making it personal. 13

In addition to being engaged during class, students demonstrated direct evidence of *effective* learning through their comments.14 Although the course did not include a formal or summative assessment of Discipleship Survivor until the final vote (which took place as a quiz question), many students did more than the bare minimum—that is, they took ownership of their own learning. Common in-class comments that demonstrated this were statements such as "I found an interesting passage that says . . . ," "I found a website that says . . . ," and "I was talking to one of my religious friends, and she was saying . . . " By looking into other sources and getting the opinions of people outside of the class, students analyzed the information and demonstrated interest in the material. While being interviewed, students also commented on taking ownership of their own learning. For example, there were many comments such as, "My friends and I would talk about it after class and try to decide who we all wanted to vote out each week," "[It] encouraged students to do research and learn about the class content outside of class," and "I enjoyed the opportunity to explore and research course-bolstering content without the pressure of academic grading." Participant Ten commented, "it was almost as if we were being rewarded for doing our own research . . . the class was controlling a part of what we learned rather than it being exclusively what the professor decided to deliver, which allowed us to pursue our personal interests," and Participant Five admitted, "To be honest, [doing research on Discipleship Survivor] was one of the only times that I have been thoroughly engaged in extracurricular readings." As with the case of the student that wanted to keep Paul on the boat (mentioned above), such emotional investment on the part of students is a critical part of constructivist learning.

While being interviewed, many participants also commented on how much they learned through Discipleship Survivor, not only from their own research but also from their classmates. Common comments included: "It was interesting to hear the thoughts of my peers," and "It was immensely helpful to critically examine the disciples with my classmates and explore their relationship to course content as a group . . . [Our conversations] raised points that I otherwise would have missed." Some self-identified Christian participants also commented on how they liked hearing their non-Christian peers' thoughts, saying things such as, "It was cool to see non-Christians contribute to the discussion," and "[It was interesting to hear] those who might not have been Christian speak to varying points."

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13 Naturally, the activity was not without its detractors. One USAT comment noted that the activity was offensive, and two interview participants expressed similar views. When asked, "What didn't you like about Discipleship Survivor?" Participant Nine commented, "It felt mildly sacrilegious. . . . I understand that the point of it was to learn about the disciples as individuals, especially beyond the biblical narrative, yet it felt disrespectful to be undermining the actual narrative of Jesus and his selection of the twelve." Adding to this point, when asked "Do you think this kind of activity is appropriate within a religious studies course?" Participant Five replied, "I think to some it may seem disrespectful to treat historical figures and religious heroes in a joking, tv-show manner," although then went on to note that as long as the instructor was clear that the purpose was not to offend but to promote active learning "then I think it's an awesome activity for a religious studies course!" Nevertheless, it is clear that Discipleship Survivor may be disrespectful to some Christians and, if used in a course in a theological context, perhaps runs a greater risk of being deemed hypocritical, since biblical texts suggest that people are not to judge others (e.g., Matt 7:1–5; 25:31–40; Luke 6:36–37; cf. Rom 2:1, 14:10–12; Jam 2:9, 4:11–12).

14 As explained by Watkins, Carnell, and Lodge, "All over the world effective learning means more knowledge generation (construction) with others (co-construction), and less independent knowledge acquisition (coverage)" and "effective learning has to be monitored by the student, not the teacher" (2007, 19).

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Factors Contributing to the Effectiveness of Discipleship Survivor

Observations, interviews, and feedback all confirmed the authors' initial sense that the Discipleship Survivor activity was engaging and effective. Next, we turned our attention to identifying the factors that made it so and thus could be transferred by instructors to other lecture-based courses in religious studies and beyond. As it turns out, there were multiple factors contributing to the success of the activity.

In their guide to studying religion, Northey, Anderson, and Lohr suggest that, despite the differences in how the discipline is taught, there are three important aspects that can be agreed upon: (1) the importance and pervasiveness of religion in everyday life; (2) the diverse nature of religious studies in content and approaches as well as in the commitments and motives of those who study religion; and (3) the awareness of religious presuppositions at play when religion is studied (2012, 4). This third aspect is captured nicely by Jacobsen and Jacobsen: "Religious or secular convictions and ways of life haunt everyone's thinking and action, and that means any comprehension of the place of religion in higher education requires a heightened self-awareness from everyone, along with more sensitivity to the ways in which various religious or religion-like frames of cognition, affectivity, and action (of which we are often only partly conscious) shape us as individuals, educators, and students" (2012, ix). Recognition of the various religious commitments, or lack thereof, in the classroom is a key part of *constructivist learning design*. Constructivist theory suggests that students learn best by connecting new knowledge to what they already know. As King notes, "In [the] constructivist view of learning, students use their own existing knowledge and prior experience to help them understand the new material; in particular, they generate relationships between and among the new ideas and between the new material and information already in memory" (1993, 30).

Students need not be Christian for the material in a course such as "The New Testament" to intersect with their own world views. In her comprehensive study of students and faculty in religious studies and theology courses in the United States, Barbara Walvoord found that one of the primary goals of students in such classes is the exploration and nurturing of their own spirituality (2008, 20–21). While not antithetical to critical thinking, the "highly-effective" faculty she interviewed "developed spaces and voices by which students can nurture their own religious and spiritual development and can address the 'big questions' of their lives" (2008, 12).

In Ascough's New Testament course it is clear that at least 25 percent of the class came from some form of Christian context, since this was the basis for the creation of the Facebook group where participants knew one another from a Christian campus group. These and other students could be presumed to have some knowledge directly pertaining to the disciples—either information that they learned growing up or information that they read in their own study of the New Testament and extra-biblical literature. They were able to connect the new information that their classmates shared about the disciples to their previous knowledge, adding to engagement and interest. For example, when asked if they thought that Discipleship Survivor enhanced their learning, Participant Six replied, "Definitely! It especially helped me to learn about the smaller disciples who I had heard of but who I didn't know much about . . . It also allowed me to connect the class to my own faith." In response to the same question, Participant Ten said, "I only knew the surface information of some of the disciples, but research allowed me to create my own opinion on a disciple rather than simply agree with what people have told me throughout the years."

Similarly, many non-Christian students seemed to connect the activity to their extant cultural knowledge as well. For example, many of them had at least heard of "doubting Thomas" or "St. Peter." This background sometimes manifested itself in the classroom debates around Discipleship Survivor with students taking a protective stance over a particular disciple, most obviously Peter. In both iterations of the activity, but particularly in the 2016 version, there was block voting that consistently protected Peter from elimination. The arguments used by students that year seemed to indicate their own Catholic background, given their emphasis on the primacy and the importance of Peter as the first Pope in Rome. In 2019, Peter was eliminated almost immediately, although a small contingent continued to press for his reinstallation on the boat, again with what might be characterized as typical Roman Catholic argumentation.

We noted earlier the research indicating the importance of active learning, but not all attempts at designing and implementing activities end well. Indeed, while many studies show that active learning is the most effective way to improve student learning outcomes, other studies indicate times when there is no difference in achieving learning outcomes

between active-learning techniques and lectures (Dorestani 2005, 1–20; Wingfield and Black 2005, 119–123; Andrews et al. 2011, 294–405). In such cases, the lack of differences may be attributed to the instructor's ability to incorporate and execute active-learning strategies. Perhaps more tellingly, instructors who have been teaching for many years are not always comfortable with changing their teaching strategies (Berry 2008, 150; Faust and Paulson 1998, 8). In our study, student comments seem to suggest that *instructor confidence* plays a large part in the success of the activity, both with the material and with facilitation of the process.15 Participant Twenty-one's comments point nicely to both these aspects: "If any other prof tried to do the activity, I don't think it would have worked as well, but with Prof. Ascough it was good, probably because he was light hearted, but at the same time had good balance and made people take it seriously while having fun." The student noted that "It's easy to be misinformed, but by presenting our views and then Prof. Ascough correcting us, it helped us to know the accurate information." From ' Ascough s point of view, such confidence comes from years of experimentation and, at times, spectacular failure, along with learning the constructivist theory. As Andrews et al. note, "it is possible that a thorough understanding of, commitment to, and ability to execute a constructivist approach to teaching are required to successfully use active learning . . . Without this expertise, the active learning exercises an instructor uses may have superficial similarities to exercises described in the literature, but may lack constructivist elements necessary for improving learning" (2011, 400). Over time, instructor confidence in the process can be developed.

Far from antithetical to active-learning techniques, lecture-based courses are a good place for instructors to begin implementing constructivist design into their teaching. Lectures are not bad in and of themselves, as the research shows (see Hackathorn et al. 2011). Barkley and Major explain, "teachers use lectures to present a synthesis of information from across multiple sources, organize information into a logical structure, share important background and contextual information and ideas, highlight similarities and differences, clarify confusing concepts, principles, and ideas, help learners consolidate information, model higher-order thinking strategies and skills, convey enthusiasm for the content, [and] communicate why content is worth learning" (2018, 7).16 Even Stephen Brookfield, a great promoter of discussion-based learning, talks about how important it can be at times to allow students to "luxuriate in the lecture" (1990, 61). He points out that students can be resentful or feel insulted by the overuse of activities such as group work: "They speak and write of their sense of relief at sometimes being able to occupy the role of attentive listener while an expert who has spent some considerable time exploring an area of intellectual concern lays out its conceptual topography for them" (Brookfield 1990, 61).

The challenge, however, is determining how the benefits of lecturing can fit together with the research in support of active learning. One way that didactic teaching and active learning can complement one another is through interactive lecturing. In fact, although most professors continue to use lectures to teach, not many completely rely on the lecture (Barkley and Major 2018, 3). Rather, they combine lectures with other teaching techniques (in part addressing Learning Outcome 1), such as group work, discussion, inquiry, and case studies. There have been many studies conducted on the efficacy of interactive lecturing in the sciences (see Ernst and Colthorpe 2007; Thaman et al. 2013; Wolfe et al. 2015; Welsh 2012). While the studies have differing results, they show that interactive lecturing is an effective way to enhance student learning. As explained by Mallin, "Interactive lectures. . . enable students to frame new knowledge in terms of what they already know. Lectures provide content and context for student reflection and can be tailored to students, focusing on areas of difficulty as well as areas that pique students' expressed interests. The activities students engage in during interactive lectures help them to check their understanding of subject matter and develop a deeper understanding in which they apply, analyze, synthesize, and critique course material" (Mallin 2017, 242). Another reason that interactive lectures are useful is because students have different learning styles, and by incorporating active learning into traditional lectures, instructors can cater to more of their students (Faust and Paulson 2017, 238). Further, studies show that when an instructor incorporates active learning into their lectures, students are more likely to consistently attend class, are more likely to report positive feedback, and are able to benefit from both types of learning (Barkley and Major 2018, 7; Revell and Wainwright 2009, 209–223).

Part of the constructivist paradigm, then, includes *instructor transparency* about the techniques being used in the course, particularly through "parallel processing" (see Ascough 2014). As part of the broad course outcome that students shall

15 Michael (2007, 44–45) explains that some barriers to active learning relate to the instructor. For example, active learning is difficult to do if instructors lack personal and professional maturity, and if the instructor does not know how to properly do it.

16 Others disagree: "The 'job' of [teaching] is 'not for the faculty member to demonstrate her expertise'" (Jaschik 2019).

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"comprehend how scholars use historical, literary, and archaeological evidence to understand and reconstruct the development of religious groups and movements in antiquity," Ascough often paused during the lectures and activities to explain both the design and the rationale for his teaching techniques. In the case of Discipleship Survivor, the purpose was not made explicit until later in the course and it arose naturally as a response to some student pushback. Up to that point, Ascough had consistently pointed out and affirmed students drawing upon a swath of different kinds of evidence and arguments to support their nominations. Often, these data would be incorporated into the course content. For example, when John was nominated and arguments were made that included his authorship (for better or worse) of the Book of Revelation, Ascough was able to organically give input not just on the authorship debate around that biblical book but also the broader issues of authorship of early Christian texts in general.

At the beginning of week ten, a student raised his hand during the nomination process and, in a clearly frustrated and angry tone, said, "Do you see what this game is doing? Now we're having prejudice and judgement on other people," to which another student added, "Maybe we should just create an ark, where you add people onto the boat instead of taking them off." These comments caught Ascough off guard, in large part because this same student had, to this point, been a frequent contributor to the activity. It seems that the student had decided that the process of negatively judging the disciples would encourage a broader culture of judging other people, something that ran counter to his (Christian) convictions. Although this pushback seemed to come out of the blue, it had started somewhat earlier in the Facebook group when students commented on the problem with the activity and Participant Three sent a message that said, "Next week let's boycott . . . nobody vote," to which Participant One added, "We're [definitely] boycotting this dumb game . . . #SayNoToBullying." Participant Seven then said, "Let's start our own boat," to which Participant One added, "Where anyone can get on . . . [because] God loves everyone." In this case, emotional investment on the part of some students interfered with their learning from the game, and during the next class, those comments were furthered in the group, with Participant One writing, "I'm boycotting. . . like actually let's not vote" until the student verbalized the frustrations to the entire class. Although taken by surprise, it provided Ascough with an opportunity to step back and describe the pedagogical principles behind the activity and how it was designed to be an integral part of the learning, tied to the outcome of students being able to marshal historical evidence to form arguments (Learning Outcomes 1 and 2). In the end, the majority of students seemed to understand that the key was learning; as one student observed, "It's not offensive, because it's a game—we weren't trying to 'play God' or saying that Peter wasn't worthy of the keys or anything. We were just having fun and using it as an opportunity to learn."

Another important factor that contributes to the effectiveness of active learning is that students must come to class prepared (Michael 2007, 44). *Student preparation* for Discipleship Survivor required minimal work, which likely contributed to broader participation. Demonstrating this point, Participant Nineteen commented, "[It] was a good way to learn on your own, but it wasn't too much extra work—if you wanted to, you could just Google the disciples." When a class is large, however, it is unrealistic to expect that every student will do the necessary preparation, even when it does not require a lot of work. In the case of Discipleship Survivor, while students were encouraged to do their own research, it was not actually necessary for everyone to do their own part for the activity to run smoothly. Rather, since not all students shared their arguments in each class, the activity was not compromised if only some students prepared. As seen through the use of the Facebook group chat, since students stayed in their seats during the activity, they were also able to look up information on their laptops as the discussion progressed; this gave students the opportunity to participate even if they did not prepare in advance.

This leads to an even more important factor in the success of the activity: *student collaboration*. While a minority of students would have the chance to verbally argue against or defend a disciple during the class, the whole class was still involved, as everyone had to listen to arguments in order to know who to vote out of the boat each week. This point is demonstrated through Participant Fourteen's interview comment: "Even though I never did any research for the activity, a lot of other people did, and those people saying what they discovered in class actually taught me things that I didn't know." By learning from their peers, students stayed engaged and were all able to participate through voting at the end of each week's discussion. It is a form of student-to-student collaboration, which is particularly effective in enabling deep learning to take place (see Dede and Frumin 2016, 6; Fullan and Langworthy 2014, 2). And since the instructor did not have

control over the evidence and arguments that students would use or the order in which the disciples would be removed from the boat, the activity is also an example of a "subject-centered" activity in which everyone in the room, including the instructor, is working together on a problem (see Parker 1998, 116–117).

This also raises a problem we found with the activity. While being interviewed, some students commented that they did not like the way that people participated (or did not participate) in the activity. For example, four interview participants noted that they would have liked if more people contributed to the discussion. Participant Eighteen said, "It's difficult to encourage everyone to participate and share their thoughts." Likewise, Participant Twenty-one said, "Near the end [of the semester] it was a lot of the same people contributing so we didn't hear as many different opinions," and Participant Nineteen rightly noted, "Input equals output, so when people don't participate the activity isn't as effective as it could be." One way this might be addressed in the future is to have students break into dyads or small groups and discuss evidence together in order to establish one or two key points to make in the debate.

Continuing with the theme of participation, four interviewees commented on not liking the obscure reasons that students gave in opposition to certain disciples. For example, Participant Two said, "People who gave dumb reasons for getting people out were funny at first, but it was a little annoying." Similarly, Participant Fifteen said, "I did not like it when arguments for or against a particular disciple became arbitrary, rather than based on actual research." Student Eighteen also brought up an important issue, saying, "Serious thoughts that came up couldn't be talked about because there was only so much time to share." One way of addressing this is to use a week perhaps part way through the semester and assign particular standpoints to groups of students who will research their role (e.g., merchant, peasant; Roman administrator) and form arguments for and against particular disciples based on this position.[17]

In a class of seventy to one hundred people, there are evidently going to be different interests and different levels of investment in the activity, which could lead to concerns about seriousness. Participant Nineteen spoke to this, saying, "If there's only a couple people who are majors, compared to others who are taking the class as an elective, it causes there to be a lot of differences in knowledge and interest. It would probably be a better activity in an upper-year course (such as a fourth-year seminar class only for religious studies majors), because people would be more equal."

Sometimes active-learning exercises are not interesting enough to engage and motivate students (Andrews et al. 2011, 401). And if students are not thoroughly interested in the active-learning exercises, they may not be effective. Further, some students simply do not want to participate in active learning (Michael 2007, 45).[18] If they are not used to active-learning activities, they often report not knowing how to do them, not liking them, and not wanting to do them (Michael 2007, 45).[19] Passive learning is easier for students, as active learning often requires student preparation; this makes it more risky for instructors, as they have to assume that students will do their part prior to attending class (Gleason et al. 2011, 5). For this reason, *institutional and disciplinary context* can play a vital role in the use of active learning in large lecture courses. That Discipleship Survivor took place in a religious studies course seems to have contributed to its effectiveness. First, there are other religious studies classes at Queen's University that incorporate active-learning activities. As such, many students in the class were likely used to participating in active learning, making them more comfortable with participation during the activity.[20] Similarly, Ascough has incorporated active learning into his other classes, making him more comfortable with facilitating the activity. While being interviewed, multiple students commented on Ascough's importance. When asked "Do you think that this type of activity is appropriate within a religious studies course?" Participant Seventeen replied, "Prof. Ascough made sure. He was very respectful and supported the class discussion well."

More importantly, most interviewees suggested that not only was it appropriate, but that activities like Discipleship Survivor *should* take place in religious studies. As explained by Participant Sixteen, "One of the core tenets of religious studies that

17 We are grateful to one of the anonymous *Journal on Teaching* reviewers for this suggestion.
18 There were a few USAT comments that Discipleship Survivor took up too much time, and it is possible that these students thought the activity was a waste of time, as it is not traditional learning. As explained by Michael, one of the barriers to active learning is student expectations of what learning is (2007, 44). If students feel that they are wasting their time playing a pointless game, it is understandable that they would be against it.
19 These are common initial (not long-term) student objections to active learning. Elementary and secondary school systems are also changing traditional learning environments by incorporating their versions of Active Learning Classrooms into their schools, called "flexible seating classrooms" (Paterson 2019). It can be expected that in the future, as students begin to graduate from high school with experience in flexible seating classrooms and having participated in active learning, they will be more open to it in a higher-education setting.
20 Michael (2007, 44) explains that one of the barriers to active learning is that students do not know how to undertake active learning.

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we are taught in first year is to view all religions agnostically through the lens of our academic study." Participant Thirteen furthered this point, saying "In religious studies you're supposed to learn how to be respectful of other people's thoughts, and with this we had to be . . . [it is] a good reflection of how religion should be studied in academia."

CONCLUSION

Although Discipleship Survivor is a fun way to open each class of a course in New Testament, much more importantly it engages students and is effective in helping them learn how to deploy historical evidence in argumentative reasoning. Although first conceived as an icebreaker, it is now scaffolded into the course design insofar as the instructor uses the student comments and observations to review and/or anticipate material that is part of the core teaching. Designed with constructivist learning principles in mind, the effectiveness of the game also relies on instructor confidence and transparency, student preparation and collaboration, and a broader institutional context that supports and enables active learning. It is a good demonstration that deep student learning can take place when we open up space for students to engage the subject matter in new and creative ways. As such, the activity serves as an exemplar for other instructors to make lecture-based courses more interactive and engaging.

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ARTICLE

Collaborative Wikis as Final Exams

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ABSTRACT

In an age where we, our students, and our educational institutions value the distinctive benefits of collaborative learning and the new possibilities of digital resources, collaborative wikis hold promise for deeper and more integrative kinds of learning than individualized assessment tools focused on retention of information. Especially in settings where community formation and collective construction of knowledge are valued, wikis offer many advantages: they nurture more integrative forms of learning; they foster constructive collaboration with peers; they tap into digital resources that are inexpensive and readily available; they work well for both synchronous and asynchronous learners; and they engage different kinds of learners in more dynamic ways, provoking less stress than many quizzes and exams. Collaborative wikis deliver more than simply final products for assessment—they offer a process of learning that entails listening, integrating, and teamwork in ways that can have a more enduring impact. Without neglecting the needs of formative assessment, collaborative wikis are constructive tools for reviewing course material and fostering deeper forms of learning.

KEYWORDS

wiki, collaborative, collaborative learning, active learning, online education, exam, group discussion

I like traditional, closed-book, individualized final exams. I really do.[1] For instructors, comprehensive final exams are cumulative, often easy to assess, and focused on individual learning and retention. They have also been central to how I learned and was trained. But over years of teaching, I have come to the realization these kinds of comprehensive exams may not be the best strategy for assessing deep and integrative learning—at the very least for my discipline (biblical interpretation) and my particular teaching context (a medium-sized theological seminary that values community formation).

1 I am indebted to the Academic Teaching and Biblical Studies section at SBL/AAR in November 2019 in San Diego, CA, for their constructive feedback on this essay at the 2019 session "The Digital Debate: Pros and Cons of Technology in the Classroom."

In my experience, many students face significant anxiety and stress around quizzes and exams that focus on retained information. Many others struggle with motivation, seeing less relevance or constructive significance in an exam (rightly or wrongly) for formative learning. Finally, some learners face greater challenges with assessments based largely on individualized retention of subject matter. As an example, a student from my first semester teaching comes to my mind: he had documented learning challenges, came from an underprivileged educational background, and had failed the course the last time around. He was intelligent and verbally articulate in many ways, but he regularly floundered in courses that assessed his learning primarily through forms of individualized memory recall. No one who encountered him thought him unintelligent in any way. It just seemed that our conventional forms of assessment neither gauged his intelligence nor fostered holistic learning for him appropriately.

Figure 1. *Wikipedia Monument by Mihran Hakobyan (Slubice, Poland) (Courtesy of Wikipedia)*

In many of our teaching contexts today, we place increasing value on things beyond simple mastery of information. We may value things like listening, original thinking, integration of learning, active learning models, cross-cultural sensitivity, use of digital resources, oral communication, leadership skills, and collaborative teamwork. After all, these are the very kinds of competencies needed by learners to function effectively in professional careers (NACE 2019; Laal and Ghodsi 2012; O'Donnell and Hmelo-Silver 2013). Many of us orient some of our student learning outcomes around these values and competencies. Even for those of us who teach in academic disciplines and contexts that emphasize mastering information, strategies for collaboration and shared leadership are desirable skills. As Lynn Wilson points out, "The call to collaborate is everywhere you look. Whether you or your students see it as a difficult but necessary element or embrace collaboration as an advanced way to solve problems, it is central to almost any professional endeavor" (Salmons 2019, foreword). In addition, we all teach, learn, and live in an increasingly connected world where digital resources offer distinctive new opportunities for collaboration and shared learning. This landscape only encourages us, as teachers, to employ and experiment with learning approaches that are more interactive, collaborative, and connected (Zhang 2013; Loewen, Lester, and Duncanson-Hales 2014).

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In environments that prioritize learning outcomes beyond mastering information, collaborative wikis hold promise for nurturing deeper, more integrative, and more holistic forms of learning. As one of my students observed, the learning experience of a collaborative wiki was more than a means toward a polished product—it was an educational process that entailed listening, integrating, and teamwork in ways that yielded a more enduring impact. Although they come with particular challenges that make them less optimal for some teaching contexts, wikis foster and encourage collaborative learning and digital literacy in ways that many educational settings and instructors highly value.

Collaborative Learning in Perspective

Collaborative learning is more than simply learning together. It is learning by working together with others, hearing their perspectives, integrating their insights, and sharing in a collaborative endeavor toward a constructive new purpose (Kuh 2008, 10; Gale 2016, 17; cf. de Arriba 2017, 365). Educational research continues to emphasize the distinctive benefits of collaborative learning models, assignments, and tools: they tend to foster higher levels of thinking, oral communication, and leadership skills; they promote more student-learner and peer-to-peer interaction; they expose learners to a greater diversity of perspectives; they promote higher self-esteem and lessen learner anxiety; and they generally increase learner retention and responsibility (Laal and Ghodsi 2012; O'Donnell and Hmelo-Silver 2013; Sawyer 2019, 42–44). As these benefits suggest, the process of collaborative engagement typically enriches and enhances the learning experience, whether or not this translates into better performances on individualized student assessments that focus on mastery of information.

Collaborative learning, after all, is not necessarily a superior approach to education—it simply prioritizes different student learning outcomes. In *The Creative Classroom*, Keith Sawyer (2019) points out that research on the benefits of collaborative classroom conversation shows mixed findings. Some studies show that collaborative small group discussion enhances learning, while other studies show no clear evidence that it does. But more recent research sheds light on this apparent inconsistency, which stems from the learning outcomes that are prioritized.

In learning environments where mastering and information is the backbone and reproducing it later is the goal (what Sawyer calls "shallow knowledge" [2019, 13]), collaborative small group discussion may or may not help. After all, the learning goals deal with individualized recall of information, which small group discussion may or may not help. But in learning environments characterized by more dynamic and holistic forms of engagement, collaborative group discussion tends to help learners with processing and owning ideas (what Sawyer calls "deep knowledge" [2019, 5]) in ways that foster integration (Pai, Sears, and Maeda 2015; Sawyer 2019, 44; Manion and Alexander 1997). In short, collaborative small group discussion does not enhance all kinds of learning, but it certainly does a certain kind of learning—one more focused on integration and ownership.

As this research suggests, the distinctive benefits of collaborative learning may not be measurable by individualized forms of assessment. Gerry Stahl makes this point, arguing that collaborative learning's benefits are not necessarily reducible to or measured effectively by individual learning outcomes (Stahl 2010). Collaborative forms of learning, it seems, deserve their own sets of outcomes. This does not mean collaborative group work is irrelevant to individual outcomes. It just means collaborative learning yields outcomes that may not translate precisely to outcomes prioritized by more individualized approaches.

Janet Salmons draws a distinction between collaborative and cooperative learning, even though many experts use the two notions synonymously. She describes cooperative learning as merely a division of labor among participants, where each is responsible for a portion of the project. Collaborative learning, however, involves a reciprocal engagement by learners in a coordinated effort to solve the problem together (Salmons 2019, 6; Roschelle and Teasley 1995, 70). The distinction here is whether learners have the autonomy to make their own decisions about the process, roles, leadership, and approaches to problem-solving. In cooperative learning, the course instructor decides these things, giving little decision-making authority to learners.

Salmons further fleshes out some specific forms of collaborative learning in what she calls a "Taxonomy of Collaboration." She places forms along a spectrum of "synergy," ranging from those that require very little trust and shared work to those that entail high levels of trust and working together. She identifies six forms on this spectrum:

- **Reflection**: Individuals align their own knowledge, attitudes, and skills with group efforts. Individuals make sense of and prepare for roles in collaborative efforts.
- **Dialogue**: Participants agree on group expectations, timelines, processes, and tools. They exchange ideas to find shared purpose and coherence with the tactics needed.
- **Review**: Participants exchange constructive mutual critique and incorporate others' perspectives. They evaluate which elements to include and how to integrate them.
- **Parallel Collaboration**: Participants work to each complete a component of the project. Elements are combined into a collective final product.
- **Sequential Collaboration**: Participants complete stages of the work, building on each other's contributions in progressive steps. All are combined into a collective final product.
- **Synergistic Collaboration**: Participants synthesize their ideas to plan, organize, and complete a product that melds all contributions into a collective final product. (Salmon 2019, 3-23)

As the forms progress, they advance from forms that reflect limited synergy and require little trust (like Reflection) toward forms that reflect high levels of synergy and expect high levels of mutual trust (like Synergistic Collaboration). Each specific form may advance or lead to other forms that entail higher levels of synergy and trust (Salmons 2019, 12–13).

Seen through this spectrum, I find that collaborative wikis often require and foster high levels of trust and synergy. Not only do wikis require reflection and dialogue, but they also expect review and parallel collaboration. And in many cases, where learners take moderate risks of vulnerability, sequential and synergistic collaboration take place. In short, collaborative wikis expect and encourage high levels of mutual trust and synergy.

What is a Wiki?

A Wiki is a "web-based tool (or website) collaboratively created by multiple users, where each user can typically add/delete/modify content directly" (Kurt 2017; Malamed 2019).[2] It is not wedded to a specific program (like Wikispaces), but does use the internet to allow two or more people to construct together a body of information by a process of creating and editing pages. The most famous example, of course, is Wikipedia—an online, collaborative encyclopedia that hosts more than forty million articles in over three hundred languages and boasts approximately half a billion visitors per month (Wikipedia).[3] Other well-known examples are WikiHow, Wiktionary, and Open Street Map, just to name a few.

Wikis have become popular especially in the last ten to fifteen years, buoyed along by major online hubs like Wikipedia, Wikispaces, and Wikia. By many standards, the popularity of wikis may have peaked around five years ago—when Wikipedia contributions were at their peak, and Wikispaces was still in its prime. Since then, Wikispaces has dissolved, while Wikipedia continues to have widespread use despite a slight decline in contributions and views.

Still, despite some shifts in the programs that are widely used, the fundamental principle of wikis—collaborative creation using technology—is hardly in decline. If anything, the practice has shifted from being simply a buzzword or new fad to becoming a staple tool among other technology resources for teaching in a digital age.

2 This definition is based on both Serhat Kurt's (2017) and Connie Malamed's (2019) definitions. Kurt borrows from Franklin and Van Harmelen (2007, 5).
3 Of course, since this data is self-reported, it may be that the numbers are inflated.

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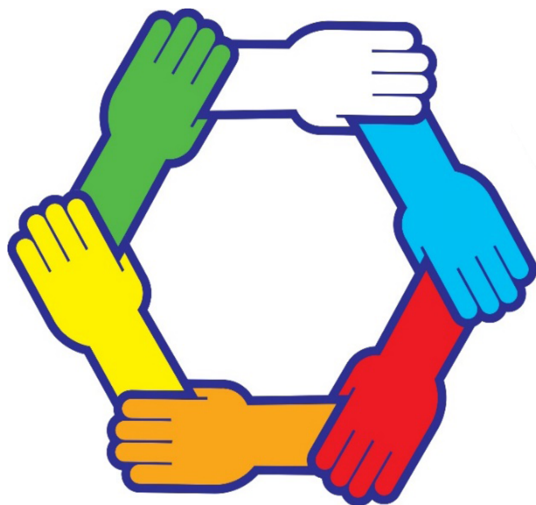
There are many free and user-friendly wiki sites available. For example:

- **Confluence:** Well-known wiki software for the enterprise
- **DokuWiki:** Specializes in managing documentation
- **EditMe:** Low-cost platform for business or classrooms
- **Mediawiki:** Free software engine used for Wikipedia
- **MS Teams Wiki:** If you are using MS Teams, you can create a wiki tab
- **Nuclino:** A modern wiki branded as a "collective brain"
- **TikiWiki:** Open source and free wiki software
- **Wiki.js:** Open-source wiki software[4]

In addition, Wikimatrix.org has an online comparison tool that compares selections from around two dozen online Wiki sites (or programs) and identifies the perks of each. It is a great tool for narrowing in on the most desirable program. I have also used Google Docs as platforms for several wikis in my courses—including the example I share below—and it has been effective for my purposes.

Figure 2. *Helping Hands (Vector Stock Image)*



An Example Case Study

In this section, I present an example of a collaborative wiki used as a major assignment in one of my courses. It illustrates many of the distinctive benefits and challenges of using collaborative wikis in teaching, both of which I will discuss afterward.

The course's institutional context is a medium-sized, mainline Protestant theological seminary. The seminary offers all its courses in various modes (asynchronous online, synchronous online, residential, residential intensive) to students,

4 Adapted from Malamed (2019). Wikispaces and Wikia used to be prominent online wiki resource sites, but they are both no longer operational.

three-quarters of whom are distance learners. Although the technology support is adequate (site support, hardware, web-conferencing, and video-recording program subscriptions), instructors typically must implement and manage their teaching technologies themselves.

In fall 2019 I taught an online course on the New Testament Gospels to a dozen distance students training for church ministry leadership. The students were evenly split male and female, all middle aged or older, spread out across the United States, and 75 percent white/Caucasian.[5] Two of the course's learning outcomes focused on reading and interpreting texts, which earlier assignments prioritized and evaluated on individual levels. Two other course learning outcomes focused on collaborative teamwork and integration of the course material. These foci served as intended outcomes for the collaborative wiki assignment.

For the assignment, I allocated students to small groups of three and tasked them with collaborating on a substantive, written presentation about each of the four Gospels. In two to three thousand words total, these collective presentations needed to describe the date, original audience, themes, theological emphases, distinctive traits, and major characteristics of each of the Gospels. I prescribed these categories as recommended areas to address. Aside from these recommendations, the assignment remained open-ended for each group to respond to as they saw fit. For the sake of consistency of submission, I set up separate, editable Google Documents for each team. I also set some basic ground rules for participation, asking that every member have equal voice in decision-making and equal share in contributing, with individualized tracking of their contributions in place as a measure of accountability. Finally, I used an online poll to schedule an hour of time for each group to start their collaboration with a synchronous, web-conferenced meeting (by Zoom). This was the first time any of the participants had done such an assignment. For some, it was the first time they came to understand what a "wiki" is.

I have used collaborative wikis as class activities in several courses, but this was the first time I used them as an evaluated, major assignment. There were several, immediate positive results.

- The students turned in better material. All the submissions rivaled what only the best students submitted in past years for a comparable assignment.

- The students had a positive learning experience (see Figure 3). Based on an anonymous poll I conducted (with a 100 percent return rate), over 83 percent of the students had a positive experience—with all other votes "neutral."

- Most of the students (58 percent) said they would prefer this kind of assignment over an individual paper (see Figure 4). Just 17 percent would not prefer it, and 25 percent voiced no strong opinion.

- Most interesting of all, a clear majority of students (near 70 percent) said they believed they learned more from the process of a collaborative wiki than they would have working individually (see Figure 5).[6]

5 The remaining 25 percent were African-American (8.3 percent), Latinx (8.3 percent), and Native American (8.3 percent).
6 Seventeen percent believed they would have learned more from an individual paper, and another 17 percent had no strong opinion.

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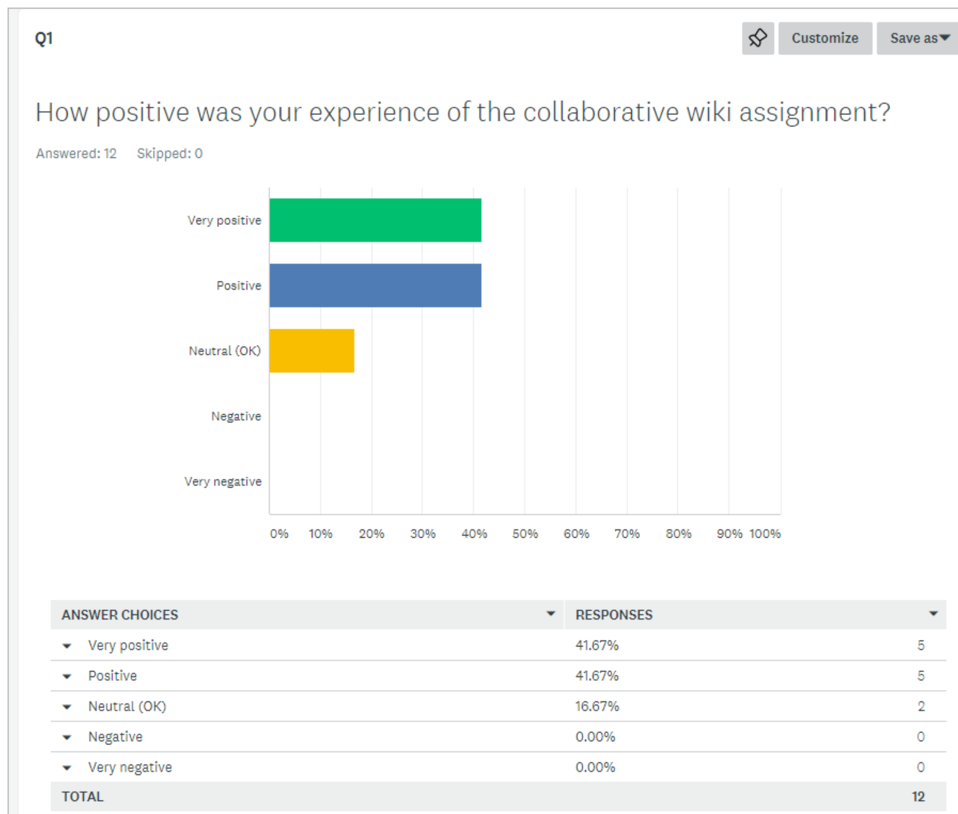
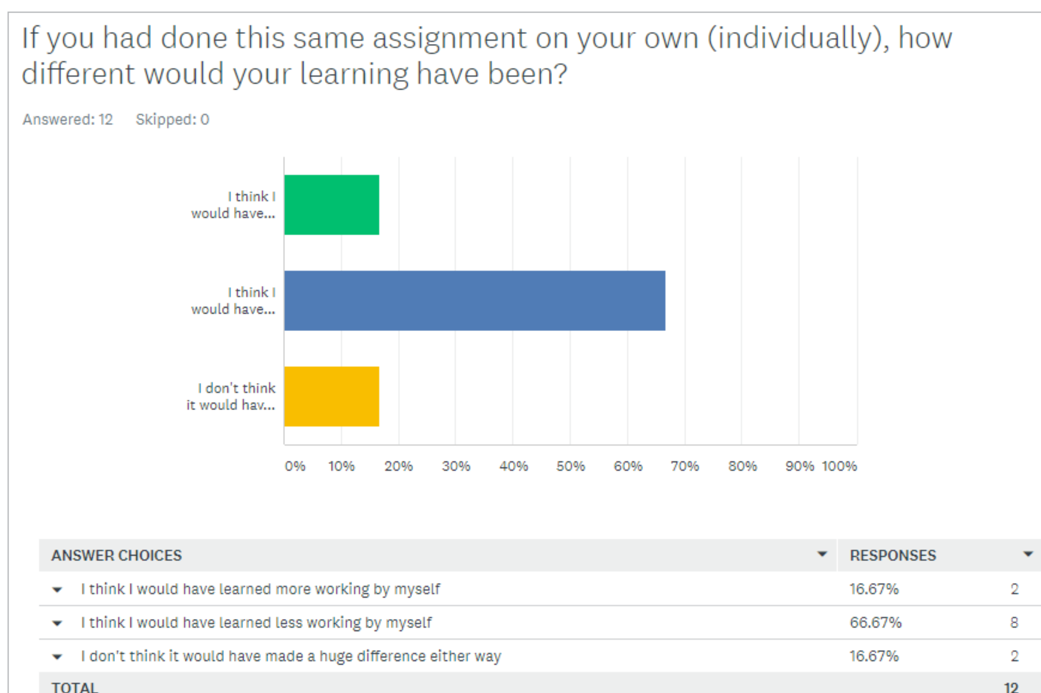
Figure 3. Survey Results



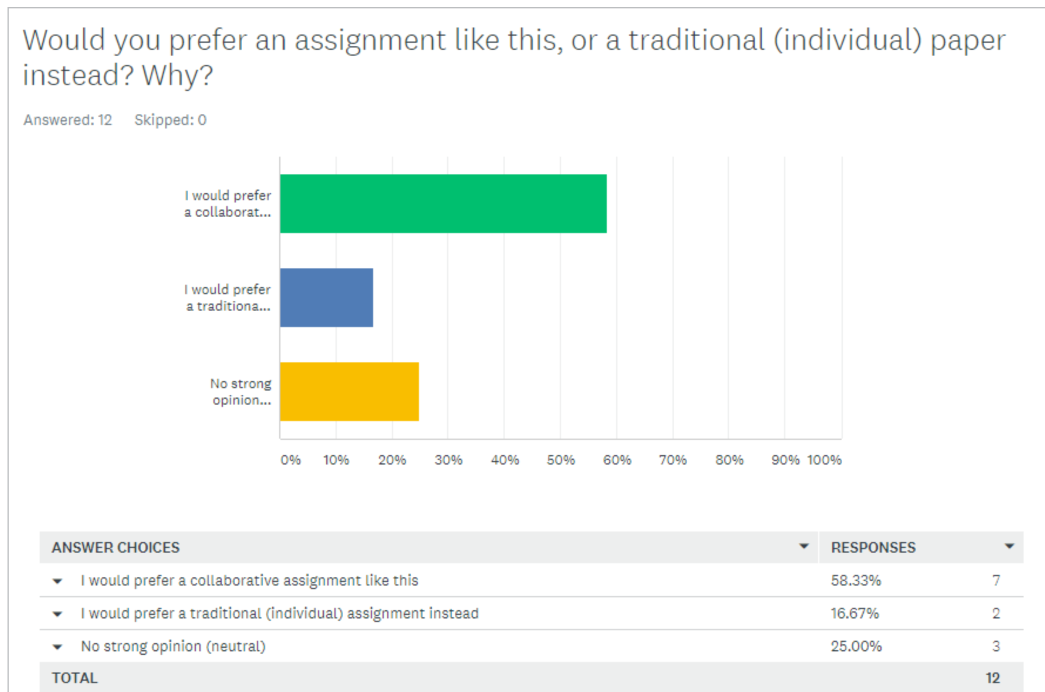
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very positive	41.67%	5
Positive	41.67%	5
Neutral (OK)	16.67%	2
Negative	0.00%	0
Very negative	0.00%	0
TOTAL		12

Figure 4. Survey Results



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I think I would have learned more working by myself	16.67%	2
I think I would have learned less working by myself	66.67%	8
I don't think it would have made a huge difference either way	16.67%	2
TOTAL		12

Figure 5. *Survey Results*



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I would prefer a collaborative assignment like this	58.33%	7
I would prefer a traditional (individual) assignment instead	16.67%	2
No strong opinion (neutral)	25.00%	3
TOTAL		12

Clearly, most students enjoyed the experience of the assignment. Based on the unsolicited comments I received (in addition to the questions answered), the best part of this experience for learners was the process of dialogue and interactive engagement leading up to the assignment's submission. Most students found this process to be relationship-building, creativity-nurturing, and enhancing to integrated and authentic learning. In my observation, the assignment's collaborative work also bore greater potential for better integration. In prior forms of this class, I have conducted a similar assignment in an individualized format, and the collaborative submissions outshone the average quality of the individualized submissions I received in past years. My tracking of individualized student contributions showed some discrepancies (i.e., not all students contributed the same amount), which is a shortcoming of this assignment. However, all students contributed sufficiently—and at a higher level of integrated learning. As one student worded it, working in a "team offered more than the sum of its parts. When one [person] added something, it would trigger a new thought by another person." At the end of the day, the assignment addressed the two outcomes of teamwork and integration quite well.

Two clear shortcomings arose in conducting this assignment. The first, as mentioned above, is less individualized accountability. Like any group project, collaborative wikis place less emphasis on individual efforts. Not all my students found the collaborative wiki preferable to an individualized assignment (see Figures 4 and 5). My sense is the few who did not (two out of twelve) may have been "achievers," less situated to benefit academically from collaborating with others. My students were aware that the wiki tracked their individual contributions, which only encouraged equal sharing of the participation (advocated by de Arriba [2016]). However, in my experience, multiple layers of editing make individualized tracking more convoluted than clear. As with any group assignment, it is more an ideal than a reality that all students have an equal hand in every area of the assignment.

The second shortcoming involved group dynamics that required attention. In one of the small groups, one class member communicated to me early on about a forceful group member who was supposedly dominating their group's conversation and work. I addressed the matter by reiterating our basic ground rules for group work to all the students, emphasizing how highly I valued (and would be looking for) equal distribution of the workload among members. Whether influenced by my follow-up or not, the concern did not persist. Based on a check-in I conducted, it seems that by subsequent group interactions, any differences and tensions had been overcome or sufficiently addressed. The student (mentioned above) later noted that their concern stemmed largely from a negative experience during the first Zoom meeting, centered largely

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on differences in personalities (and modes of processing), and misunderstandings of each member's intentions. Still, this minor experience underscores the wisdom of other wiki-using instructors who point out that appropriate instructional support is a must for using wikis successfully (Cilliers 2017, 491–492; Zheng, Nijya, and Warschauer 2015).

Although only a small-scale case study, this example illustrates some of the benefits and shortcomings of using collaborative wikis as major assignments, both in my own experience and in the experiences of colleagues of mine.

Wikis: The Benefits

First, wikis require more integrative thought, active learning, creativity, and original writing than assignments which focus on mastering and reproducing information. As Tami Eggleston points out, "Wikis provide a vehicle for exercising most, if not all, of Bloom's 'higher order thinking' activities" (2011). Wikis foster what many studies call "deep knowledge" (vs. "shallow knowledge" or "surface learning") more deliberately and effectively (Sawyer 2019, 44; Laal and Ghodsi 2012, 489). As forms of collaborative learning, they also foster higher levels of thinking—like problem-solving skills, articulating opinions, integrating ideas, and responding to critique—than traditional forms of individualized learning (Laal and Ghodsi 2012, 488; Webb 1982). Finally, as forms of active learning, wikis have more potential to tap into innate interests of learners (Laal and Ghodsi 2012, 488). For learners in my teaching context—a theological school focused on training ministry leaders for diverse social settings—these outcomes are extremely valuable.

Second, wikis promote collaboration, which has a distinctive potential to foster more authentic forms of learning (Cilliers 2017, 489). Viewed through the lens of Janet Salmons's taxonomy of collaboration (discussed above), the experience of a wiki assignment in my course generated forms of collaboration best described as sequential collaboration—and in some cases, synergistic collaboration. As one student shared, the final product was "greater than the sum of its parts," since the learners' shared work spurred one another on in mutually constructive ways. This not only has the potential to enhance productivity and achievement (Laal and Ghodsi 2012), it also promotes a constructive classroom environment—one that values and fosters an atmosphere of interactive learning and communal dialogue. In short, this kind of collaboration sends a clear message: working well with others matters. In our evolving understanding of what significant learning is in the twenty-first century, this kind of atmosphere is important. Today we are increasingly aware that learning and formation are not just cognitive transactions—they involve holistic and interpersonal engagement with learning communities. As Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger point out: "Learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities—it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person" (1991, 53).

Third, wikis use technology in ways that promote digital literacy skills, and in ways that are often readily accessible and at no additional cost. Learners today work in an increasingly digital environment, where tools for collaboration across distance are becoming more and more necessary. Furthermore, learners in most settings are increasingly familiar with basic digital platforms and programs, making those who struggle to adapt a minority—though an important group nonetheless (Cilliers 2017, 489). As Nathan Loewen points out:

> The distribution of social-friendly devices is increasing, where simple and reliable tools are also fairly affordable. . . . The Internet is becoming more widely available around the world, too; and this is accompanied by a correlative increase in the potential for intercultural and regional awareness. I think it should be entirely possible [for us teachers then] to imagine teaching and learning that reflects the social dynamics that accompany these contextual changes. (Loewen, Lester, and Duncanson-Hales 2014, 7)

In a world that is "connected," the medium of our assignments becomes as important and instructive as their final products. For these very reasons, Chris Paris finds wikis especially beneficial for implementation in classroom settings:

> I highly recommend the use of wikis in the classroom. In fact, I believe they may be a better way to conduct research in the digital world. Our students no longer carry backpacks or briefcases full of articles. Their information is stored on laptops or tablets. While the data may be more easily accessed, it still needs the organization that a wiki can provide. (Paris 2014)

In short, collaborative wikis encourage and foster facility with digital literacy, in ways that are relevant, worthwhile, and practical.

Fourth, wikis work well for online and hybrid classrooms, as well as residential ones. Since the editing functions of wikis allow readily for collaboration across both distance and time, the tool works well for hybrid classrooms that involve both residential learners, synchronous distance learners, and asynchronous learners. What several of my asynchronous students valued the most about the assignment was the relationship-building that took place, after they were grouped with people they would not otherwise have engaged in such extended conversation. In learning environments that value collaborative problem-solving and leadership, this is a real gain (Cilliers 2017, 489). That said, wikis foster collaboration and relationship-building primarily in learning environments where these virtues are already prioritized, valued, and facilitated as part of the learning experience. As Karen Kear points out, "the nature of the learning is not inherent in the technology but is created through interaction between students, their peers, and teachers, and is related to the cultural context. . . . To put it another way, technology does not determine outcomes" (Kear et al. 2016, 16, 18). In other words, collaboration and relationship-building may be fostered by wikis, but those outcomes are determined to a larger degree by the classroom atmosphere, cultural contexts, and learning environment. Still, wikis are valuable assets toward achieving these goals in hybrid classrooms.

Fifth, wikis provoke less stress than many assignments, especially those focused on committing material to memory like traditional exams. At my institution, I am entering a role of responsibility for ADA documentation and serving as a liaison between students with documented learning disabilities and faculty. I have already seen how widespread anxiety-related challenges are among students—especially around exams and memorizing material. Collaborative assignments like wikis allow more time for processing, extended reflection, and collegiality with others. For most learners (not just those with documented learning challenges), these factors alleviate stress, diminish isolation, and encourage time management practices that are more realistic and effective, and may even increase self-esteem (Laal and Ghodsi 2012, 487). Given these factors, forms of social cooperation associated with collaborative learning not only yield better learning and results, they may also alleviate unnecessary stress and anxiety in the learning experience.

Wikis: The Shortcomings

Not all of my students would have preferred a collaborative wiki over a more traditional, individual assignment. And there are reasons why.

First, like many group projects, collaborative wikis place less emphasis on individual efforts and accountability. Unfortunately, this sometimes serves to help the less motivated in the class more than the achievers (Yeo and Arazy 2012). This dynamic is not unique to collaborative wikis: it is true for most group projects used as evaluated assignments. And in contexts where individualized performance and evaluation are very important, collaborative wikis may not be an optimal assignment. Individualized tracking of learner contributions—where a wiki platform shows the activity of all individuals—is a constructive step toward rectifying this issue (de Arriba 2017, 364–365). This can also help address a related issue: the potential for plagiarism, which is a concern with online sharing assignments if appropriate safeguards are not in place (Cilliers 2017, 490–492). Logged-in identities for learners, however, helps to track their individual contributions and to monitor (and prevent) any inappropriate forms of information sharing. Even so, multiple layers of editing can make reports of individual work cumbersome to interpret easily (Arazy et al. 2010; Bryant, Forte, and Bruckman 2005; Suh et al. 2008).

Another strategy for addressing this issue is to implement forms of peer evaluation as well as self-evaluation. In view of the different goals of individualized and collaborative learning, Jan van Aalst suggests that peer evaluation and self-evaluation may help gauge individual efforts behind group projects (van Aalst 2013, 289–290). Due to various factors, learner evaluations (peer and self) are somewhat subjective, and in some cases unreliable (if learners are not trustworthy). But many instructors (including myself) find them a helpful, albeit imperfect reflection of the work that has gone on in collaborative groups (Panitz and Panitz 1996). In my experience, where there are major distinctions between the contributions of group participants, they are often happy to clarify those distinctions to an evaluating instructor.

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Another way to enhance individual accountability in collaborative wikis is to assign specific tasks to individual members. Doing so places limits around the collaboration, allowing it to be no more than parallel or sequential—not synergistic (discussed above; categories borrowed from Salmons [2019, 12–13]). Still, such boundaries may be necessary, especially in situations where peer-to-peer trust is limited, learner impetus for shared collaboration is low, or the potential for miscommunication is higher than average (Zheng, Nijya, and Warschauer 2015; Cilliers 2017). At the end of the day, wikis are an assignment well-suited to address outcomes oriented around collaborative leadership and creative problem-solving, not necessarily outcomes focused on individualized mastery of material.

Second, group dynamics require deliberate attentiveness and moderating, and sometimes direct intervention. To alleviate group imbalances, it is helpful to establish ground rules or best practices at the outset—or even better, to invite the group to craft their own social covenant to ensure equal voice and participation. For distance learners, another best practice is to budget time, where possible, for a synchronous, web-conferenced gathering for each group at the start, to ensure higher levels of empathy and reciprocity in their ensuing interactions. In environments where learners are unfamiliar with each another and interpersonal trust is low, it is helpful to clarify the goals of constructive critique and strategies for its use on others' work. This can help critical idea-sharing and alleviate hurt feelings. Recent studies suggest that the written (versus oral) form of a collaborative wiki requires a higher level of risk from participants who volunteer their contributions (Arazy et al. 2016). Thus, it is helpful to introduce editing of group members' work as an activity that must be constructive, upbuilding, and for the good of the group. As others who use wikis point out, appropriate instructional support greatly helps successful implementation (Zheng, Nijya, and Warschauer 2015; Cilliers 2017, 491–492).

Third, clarity about the value and goals of collaborative learning are needed, especially in certain learning contexts. Karen Kear et al. describe a classroom experience where a collaborative wiki assignment did not yield collective writing and reciprocal editing to the extent that the instructors had hoped and intended. It was caused by conflicting ideas about the nature of education: "The new kinds of educational activity based on collaboration [i.e., a wiki] . . . were resisted by some students; the activity did not align with their views on what education should involve" (Kear et al 2016, 15). In some learning contexts and for some individual learners, explanation—even persuasion—is necessary for a wiki to yield its full potential as a collaborative exercise. In the context of collaborative learning, greater significance is attributed to the process of group work than in other forms of education, and this needs clarifying.

Conclusions

When student learning outcomes focus on collaborative teamwork and integration of course material, wikis offer valuable learning opportunities for collaboration with others, high levels of integration, and practice with digital literacy tools.

Collaborative wikis require active learning, interpersonal collaboration, and higher levels of integrative thinking (problem-solving, articulating ideas, responding to critique) than assignments that focus primarily on mastery and recall of information. These dynamics tend to encourage more creativity, originality, memory retention, and what many call "deep (versus surface) knowledge." Collaborating with others, moreover, often reduces learners' anxiety, increases self-esteem, and enhances social competence. Finally, collaborative wikis promote digital literacy and work especially well for online and hybrid instructional settings.

Collaborative wikis do, however, present particular challenges. First, discerning each participant's efforts in a group project is not always clear. These challenges may be addressed by individualized tracking of contributions, peer and self-evaluation, and assigning specific roles or tasks to individuals. Second, group dynamics are not always harmonious or constructive, requiring ground rules and moderating from the instructor to ensure healthy dynamics and leadership. Third, as forms of collaborative learning, wikis yield the best results when learners have clarity in understanding the nature, value, and significance of collaborative learning (versus forms of learning more focused on individualized efforts). Finally, since wikis focus a great deal on creative and collaborative construction, they are simply less focused on more individualized student learning outcomes like mastering a set body of traditional information.

I find collaborative wikis to be optimal major assignments at the end of courses that survey wide swaths of literature, especially where other assignments are more individualized. Wikis bring together distance (and residential) students in meaningful and less stressful ways to engage in review and integration of course material, often with more lasting significance. For these reasons, at least for my teaching context and several of my courses, wikis are a more constructive concluding exercise.

Collaborative wikis are not necessarily "better" than traditional, closed-book, individualized final exams—wikis are simply focused on different student learning outcomes that are valuable all their own. For these reasons, wikis may serve various purposes in a course: as a mid-semester assignment, as an activity in preparation for an exam, or simply as a method of class discussion. While serving as lecturer at Vanderbilt University, Chris Paris conducted a semester-long wiki in a class on the Bible in American culture. He asked students to collect pop culture references to the Bible from books, movies, TV shows, music, comic books, and other resources. "The wiki proved to be essential for conducting research and looking for trends to create a thesis for the final paper. The use of the wiki in this course achieved a nice balance between the individual and community aspects" desired by the course outcomes (Paris 2014). Finally, wikis are useful not just for educational settings: they may be used by companies, businesses, religious communities, and civic associations to build collaborative resources and databases that are updated, organic, and readily accessible (Wallace 2007).

One of the benefits of collaborative wikis is the process of collaborative learning. In my experience, wikis tend to yield products of a higher quality, but that is not the main reason I use them. Where I teach, collaborative formation is an institutional value—working constructively and effectively with others is a valued learning goal of my school. While the final product is important, the collaborative process is no less important. And in an educational age where we increasingly value active learning, student initiative, diverse voices, opensource research, open-ended questions, collaborative problem-solving, and working well with others, collaborative wikis have a role to play in making our classrooms more networked, digitally-savvy, and interesting.

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ARTICLE

Teaching Religion with Data

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ABSTRACT

The humanities in general and religious studies in particular are currently seeking new ways to address the learning needs of today's students. This article discusses one approach whereby humanities students are taught the analysis of data using a variety of web-based technology. Using the class we taught as our primary example, we discuss the challenges and successes we had bringing data analytics to humanities/religious studies majors. In the end we show how humanities students can gain a new understanding of how to answer religious studies questions while gaining skills valued in the contemporary marketplace.

KEYWORDS

data analytics, religious studies, technology, software, robot-proofing

Introduction

Religious studies is in a crisis. From the abandonment of organized religion by the most recent generations (Cooper et al. 2016) resulting in declining majors (Reed 2016) to the targeting of the university in general in the culture wars (Giroux 2019), religious studies fights for its survival as part of the humanities in today's university. At the same time, technology has advanced—its power surpassing many previous limitations and finding its way into new areas. This results in both opportunity and peril; it leads to new ways of asking questions about our world, but also threatens students and faculty who are not comfortable with the advances.

In this environment, some are starting to rethink the religious studies curriculum. This article will look at one particular experiment at a public university in the South. The course, Religion in the Digital Age (RDA), was designed to address some of the concerns that religious studies and other humanities programs face. The class employed digital technologies to introduce religious studies students to data analytics in hopes of both increasing the technical skillset of religious studies graduates while also providing new ways for them to ask and explore religious studies questions.

The Background of Religion in the Digital Age

The Millennial Generation (and Gen Z) are rejecting organized religion and are generally suspicious of the applicability of religion in general (Reed 2016; Barna Group 2018). Traditional religious studies programs and seminaries are seeing declining enrollment and consequent mergers and elimination of programs and schools (Kronk 2017; Walton 2017; MacDonald 2016; Jiménez 2017; Ross 2017; Schackner 2014). At the same time, students are demanding that college majors provide a clear pathway to employment (Twenge and Donnelly 2016) and, apart from ministerial or academic jobs, this road is not apparent for religious studies majors.

In addition, there are larger challenges facing universities. The humanities, in particular, are under attack from conservative elements in our culture who feel that the reading of Joyce or Plato or examining the Battle at Waterloo is time wasted. Others feel that skills developed within a humanities liberal arts curriculum, beyond a waste of time, are akin to indoctrination as part of a covert liberal agenda (Jaschik 2017). The rise of a ubiquitous internet has led to the cultural diminution of expertise (Nichols 2018). With academic credentials no longer the criterion for authority, now a host of self-appointed experts speak through social media outlets. All this has led to a re-envisioning of the university system as vocational, teaching students "marketable skills" and decrying anything not directly connected to that goal.

Into this maelstrom the private sector has interjected its thoughts about education and its future. Calum Chace, whose book *The Economic Singularity* predicts the end of most jobs through automation and artificial intelligence, suggests students today should "study computers," but then backtracks to say "give yourself as broad an education as you can" (2016, 278–9). Bill Gates said if he was entering college today he would study Artificial Intelligence and, if not that, then STEM (Elkins 2016).

While it is clear that the study of technology is important, it's just as clear that this is not a complete answer to concerns about widespread underemployment in the future. Calum Chace (2016) and Martin Ford (2016) have both made strong arguments that with an increase in robotics and artificial intelligence many of the careers that were once staples of the economy (including jobs in technology) may be subject to automation. Beyond the elimination of manufacturing jobs, which we have seen over the last several decades, they predict that white collar workers, from legal assistants to doctors, may soon also be replaced by automation. The conversation about the possibility of a post-work world in which the majority of people can no longer find full-time employment has begun. What kind of education will be required in such an environment?

Some are starting to question the siloed approach of the university which pits STEM and the Humanities in opposition. Tech entrepreneur and publisher Tim O'Reilly in his book *WTF? What's the Future and Why it's Up to Us* suggests that the subject of study is not of the greatest importance; rather, it is the method of analysis that is key:

> I studied Greek and Latin in college. Everything I learned about computers, I learned on the Job. The *knowledge* I learned in college was useless to me. The habits of mind that I formed were what mattered, the foundational skills of study and particularly the ability to recognize patterns. . . . It's not just knowledge that we have to teach, it is the ability to learn. (2017, 345–6)

What O'Reilly suggests is that analysis, what we often refer to as critical thinking, is essential for the college student regardless of their subject of study. Thus, for O'Reilly himself (a proud classics graduate), the value of the skills typically emphasized in humanities programs should not be underestimated.

Too often, we have not asked if all critical thinking is the same. The elision of difference between humanities programs has led some universities to contemplate eliminating individual programs and majors and replacing them with consolidated majors (Flaherty 2017). But such a move shows the weakness of O'Reilly's argument. If the upshot of humanities is critical thinking, then why does a university need multiple majors to accomplish that? Could a single humanities program (say English or history) not produce the same effect?

As advocates for humanities programs, we need a more refined argument than that we are teaching critical thinking in English, and history, and religion, and classics. Instead, we must demonstrate that religious studies offers something apart. We will leave other disciplines to make their own arguments about their benefits, but we suggest that in religious

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studies we are teaching more than just critical thinking. While we certainly are teaching critical thinking, we are also teaching other skills such as empathetic reasoning, textual analysis, social systems study, psychological interpretation, political implications, and so forth. Likewise, religious studies examines the various dimensions (social, psychological, political, economic, etc.) of beliefs and practices, rituals and texts.

Yet as important as what religious studies does, we find ourselves in need of expansion as well. The new coin of the realm is data and a survey of religious studies curricula shows that this is not an area that religious studies programs have adopted. There are some pioneers: the University of Alabama has created a Digital Humanities in Religious Studies course, the University of Virginia has started a Digital Humanities Certificate Program, and Iliff School of Theology has started an Experimental Humanities lab. These programs, courses, and centers, however, represent the exception rather than the rule.

Nevertheless, the power of data and its analysis continues to grow and religious studies curricula dare not ignore it. An hour watching television includes multiple commercials by businesses who want to “harness data” to optimize profits. In politics, the post-fact environment has led to an increasing reliance on quantitative data as a way of eschewing the subjectivity of mere assertion. Graduates of our program who have gone into ministry report that church boards, often populated by business people, often ask for data to support the distribution of church resources. [1]

Some, though not many, scholars of religion are doing this sort of work. The Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Religion Research Association, and the Sociology of Religion and Religion and Social Sciences units (of the American Academy of Religion) all provide opportunities for scholars to present their use of data. Yet, we do not see significant integration of this work into religious studies curricula at the undergraduate level. Religious studies programs tend towards text and cultural analysis rather than building quantitative literacy in relation to religion. The failure to take quantitative literacy seriously puts students in religious studies departments at a disadvantage when they graduate and enter the workforce. There is no doubt that in the employment world it is important to be able to work with spreadsheets and numbers, to speak the *Lingua Franca* of the digital world.[2]

This is not a new problem. The social sciences tried to bring an understanding of data to the general college student (Sweet and Strand 2006)—often termed “Quantitative Literacy” (QL). Yet even in sociology courses, surprisingly, there is a lack of data analysis focus. A 2006 study of sociology course syllabi showed only 11.9 percent had goals related to data analysis and even fewer dealt with technological literacy (1.5 percent) (Grauerholz and Gibson 2006). Pedagogical work on developing QL in introductory sociology courses focuses on using group work to pursue a particular research question and engage in hands-on analysis of data (Caulfield and Caroline 2006).

To this end, resources for teaching QL have appeared on the internet. The “Integrating Data Analysis” project worked with faculty in departments (largely social scientific) to create course modules to teach and enhance QL in the mid-2000s (Howery and Rodriguez 2006). More recently, the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) has created a series of both self-directed and classroom-based modules to teach QL as well as how to use the data resources that the ARDA provides.[3]

Increasingly, QL entails not just knowing how to use datasets appropriately, but also the recognition of the limitations of such datasets (Nowakowski, Sumerau, and Mathers 2016). Although recognizing one’s own position and the biases that may come along with that is addressed, social scientists still teach QL through the active use and analysis of data

1 This is not to say that there are not legitimate critiques of the use of this data, particularly as a way of understanding religion (Silver 2015; Wuthnow 2015; Ramey and Miller 2013). Wurthnow (2015), in particular, has lodged complaints about the use of “polls” to understand religion (though see the criticism of Blankholm [2017] and Wald [2016]). But this importantly makes our point: it is only with careful exposure to the appropriate use of data, as well as the raising of questions about those limitations (as we did in our class), that an educated quantitative literacy can be formed. On the other hand, as Wald (2016) points out, to say that religion is so complicated and individual as to be essentially uncapturable by data is another retreat to the *sui generis* argument.

2 This is not restricted to the business world. As noted above, we have increasingly heard reports of church boards demanding data and, certainly, in the nonprofit sector, the use of careful data tracking has become an important part of transparency and accountability.

3 The ARDA is the largest repository of religion-related data sets in English on the internet. For our class, we made use of several datasets from the ARDA and instructed the students doing quantitative research that the ARDA should always be the first place they looked for datasets applicable to their question (http://thearda.com). For teachers, the ARDA provides a repository of syllabi related to the sociology of religion as well as lesson plans, assignments, and quizzes.

even if that data may be flawed. The creation of hands-on experiments and analysis is understood to lead to a deep and important understanding of social issues such as inequality (Arabandi, Sweet, and Swords 2014) or local demographic trends (Burdette and McLoughlin 2010).

More recently, the notion of QL has been positioned within a wider and more robust debate that includes new and expanded ideas of "literacy" as well. In his 2018 book, *Robot-Proof: Higher Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, Robert Aoun suggests a new model he calls "humanics," arguing:

> We need a new model of learning that enables learners to understand the highly technological world around them and that simultaneously allows them to transcend it by nurturing the mental and intellectual qualities that are unique to humans—namely, their capacity for creativity and mental flexibility. (Aoun 2017, 53)

For Aoun, this does not mean the humanities lose out against STEM. Instead, he seeks to integrate the humanities and STEM through several "literacies."

His first literacy is what he calls "technological literacy" (Aoun 2017, 55). He defines this as a "Knowledge of mathematics, coding, and basic engineering principles" (2017, 55). Clearly, this is within the STEM arena. However, Aoun spends most of his time, not praising the advances of STEM, but talking about the need for all of today's students to have experience with coding.

The second literacy that Aoun advocates for is "data literacy" (Aoun 2017, 57). Here he notes that data is increasing in size and importance in our world. Larger data sets are providing the opportunity to understand things in novel ways. Additionally, these options will only grow. The much-vaunted "Internet of Things" may provide the kind of micro-level understandings of individual's behaviors multiplied billions of times over that will give us unparalleled insights into human values and practices. But, as Aoun notes, the keys to understanding all this data is "interpretation and context" and this is a realm where religious studies excels.

Aoun's third literacy, what he names "human literacy," is particularly suited to the humanities (2017, 58). He argues, "Human literacy equips us for the social milieu, giving us the power to communicate, engage with others, and tap into our human capacity for grace and beauty" (Aoun 2017, 59). The religious language is clear here, and Aoun goes on to talk about other things which are the strengths of religious studies: the ability to "challenge presuppositions," "respectful inclusion," understanding how to "communicate and motivate" people, and the all-important question of "why?" beyond the "how" and "what" that the other literacies give us (2017, 60). This literacy is certainly in the religious studies wheelhouse.

Aoun proposes four "cognitive capacities" on top of these three literacies. Here he includes "critical thinking," "systems thinking," "entrepreneurship," and "cultural agility" (2017, 62). With the exception of entrepreneurship, religious studies programs have prided themselves on the cultivation of all of these. The understanding of a religion, its systemic organization, the way it creates its participants and enforces its norms and structures, are part and parcel of what religious studies attends to. The process of creating that analysis is, of course, critical thinking; once a student understands that process in one religion, the transfer of the process to other religions happens quite seamlessly. This results in the kind of cultural agility that Aoun describes as "empathy, discretion, and a very human nuance" (2017, 70).

This model of Humanics emphasizes what religious studies programs are already creating—students who have most of the competencies and some of the literacies that Aoun recommends. Aoun does not make these recommendations arbitrarily. As the title of his book indicates, he sees a time in which robots and artificial intelligence will replace many jobs, white collar as well as blue collar. At some level, Aoun, a techno-optimist, sees that as positive. Many jobs that are mind-numbing drudgery, whether in the factory or in the office, will be offloaded to machines. But if that is the case, then what sort of education will facilitate people into jobs that will replace these old jobs? That is what Humanics hopes to accomplish.

Religious studies already does much of what is encompassed by Humanics, but religious studies programs have, by and large, avoided teaching data and technological literacy. For religious studies to be a full player in Humanics this must change.

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Religion in the Digital Age

In fall of 2016, a THATCamp[4] discussion about teaching data analytics to religious studies students led to two conclusions: First, there was wide agreement that a course like this should be taught. Second, at least amongst the participants of the discussion, no one had made this a part of their program's curriculum.[5] As a result, the authors of this paper resolved to think carefully about constructing such a class.

The THATCamp discussion produced a list of technologies that the participants thought students should be taught. Spreadsheet programs like Microsoft Excel topped the list, but numerous other tools for data management and analysis were included. We determined that we would narrow this down through focus groups to determine whether certain programs posed too great a learning curve and what sorts of technical problems we might expect. We conducted the focus groups in the summer of 2017[6] and through them decided web-based software was preferable to downloaded software, even if that occasionally meant the software was less powerful. Recognizing we needed access to a computer lab, we secured one on campus for the fall.

The pedagogical goal of the course was to give students experience analyzing quantitative data related to religion. We asked each student to create an electronic portfolio that would demonstrate their ability to analyze data and do research using that data. The portfolio contained mini-projects of single-issue applications and a final paper that integrated traditional humanities research techniques with supporting and supplemental quantitative data analysis.

We structured the class in two parts. We used the first part of the class focused on the research process. The students were taught to define a good research question, consider the data needed to answer the question, and conduct a literature review. We integrated technical and research skills, drawing on library faculty to show us different resources, both print and data. Students were encouraged to discuss their individual projects in these sessions and think together about ways information could be found. The class discussed different kinds of research questions: descriptive, explanatory, hypothesis, and theory (Thomas 2017, 10–16). Their final projects were individual ones, but the class worked together to master the technologies, find appropriate literature and data, and present mini-projects to the class. The professor and the TA were both available to meet with students and work through problems that came up.

With this in place, the second second part of the class focused on learning software products related to data analysis. Different programs were selected in accordance to the different types of data the students were using. Google n-grams helped us understand cultural movements while the GSS Data Explorer gave insight into a particularly large scale survey (the General Social Survey), et cetera. In each case, it was not about learning the technology for its own sake, but using it to further their research goals. We conducted in-class demonstrations for each technology and students followed along. In general, Reed would give a demonstration to the class while Doyle would observe and take notes regarding student participation and comprehension. Doyle would also help individual students who fell behind or had technical problems. The presence of a technical assistant was essential for the smooth running of the class and we would highly recommend others attempting this do the same.

Software Instruction

As noted before we made sure that the software we used was web-based. This made the technical administration easier, and it eliminated cost considerations because the web-based products were free for academic use. The class used several different products: Aportfolio (an electronic portfolio system used by our university), Google Sheets, Google N-Grams, Google Trends, GSS Data Explorer, and IBM Watson Analytics.

4 THATCamp (http://thatcamp.org) is a pre-conference meeting held annually the day before the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion. THAT stands for "The Humanities and Technology." That Camp is described as an "unconference" and focuses on participation and spontaneity. At AAR, this is generally where religion scholars who have an interest in technological applications to religion meet and discuss experiments, products, and class usage of technology.

5 Obviously, it is possible that the self-selected group was out of touch with the entirety of the field. Certainly, religion scholars trained in the sociology of religion and psychology of religion are teaching methods classes that do include quantitative literacy. However, the consensus was that there was not an established model that included data and technological literacy in most religious studies programs.

6 This project was funded by a Wabash Center grant.

Aportfolio

One of the challenges of this class was to enable students to display their learning. The electronic portfolio product standard at our university, Aportfolio, seemed to be ideal. It allows posting of text and graphics and students could personalize their portfolio. We assumed that since the product was part of required freshman-sophomore writing classes, our students would already be familiar with it. This assumption was incorrect. Students were not all experienced with Aportfolio. A few students had worked with it in previous classes, but about half the class had not. We brought in a university trainer to demonstrate the software, but while students with backgrounds in web design took easily to Aportfolio, most of the class never gained a complete understanding of the product. In the end, we deemed the system too complicated for most students to use with the limited training they were given.

Lack of an easy-to-use online portfolio program remains a challenge for the class. We need a system to showcase student projects; Google Sites has been suggested as an alternative, though we continue to explore options.

Google Sheets

Part of doing data analytics is understanding how data works. Most datasets are best understood as a combination of rows and columns like in a spreadsheet. Thus we decided to include a spreadsheet program as a foundational component to the class. We chose Google Sheets over Microsoft Excel for three reasons: our university has adopted Google for its productivity suite of programs; Google Sheets is web-based, meaning it will run on any platform including Chromebooks, which are increasingly popular alternatives for students due to their low cost; Google Sheets is a free product, and does not require a license.

In class, we offered tutorials on Google Sheets. Students learned basic spreadsheet manipulation, how to use things like hiding columns and filtering columns to answer questions, and then moved on to basic functions such as sum, count, subtotal, and counta. Ultimately we taught them how to graph results displaying an analysis of the data. For the most part, students were able to keep up with the introductory material.

Using the Public Religion Research Institutes Values Survey from 2015,[7] we discussed how we interrogate quantitative data. What conclusions can we draw, and what conclusions should we not draw about the data?

While this was an interesting entree into dealing with data, it did not go flawlessly. Some students struggled to make a copy of the "view only" document that we sent to them and others struggled with basic usage like hiding and unhiding columns. These particular challenges were not surprising given that over half the class had not worked with Google Sheets before. While demonstrations occasionally had to be paused so that students could catch up, the presence of the TA ensured that individual difficulties did not delay the entire class. Overall, the demonstration-style lectures accommodated the full range of student abilities.

After covering the basics, the class began working with the QUERY function in Google Sheets. While not as powerful as SQL itself (Structured Query Language -- the preeminent language for the manipulation of data), students could learn and understand the way that components of SQL work (like select, from, where, and aggregation functions). The QUERY function allowed students to write SQL-like statements to extract data from the larger sheet and engage in a basic level of coding. The advantage of this, as opposed to introducing more conventional programming languages like Python, Java, or Go, was that it was immediately applicable to the data that the students were analyzing.

By the end of the unit, students demonstrated a marked improvement in their ability to use Google Sheets. But, it became clear that students needed what we called "micro-tutorials," videos that reminded them how to do discrete actions. Using the Wabash grant, we were able to create the videos and make them available for the class (Reed 2021).

7 This data is available from the PRRI and can be downloaded in SPSS format (.sav) from their website (https://www.prri.org/data-vault/). For the purposes of the class, we resaved the data in .xls format for use in Google Sheets.

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Student presentations offered an occasion to help students see the relationships among research question, dataset selected, and method of analysis. We helped students craft more exact phrasing of their research question and data interpretation. We highlighted this cycle again and again through the course of the class.

Big Data

Big data is a term used often in the media. The ability to make use of big data, the ways to access it, and the insights it offers are of growing importance both in the academy and in the workplace. To introduce us to the usefulness of big data, as well as its limitations, students read excerpts from *Everybody Lies: Big Data, New Data, and What the Internet Can Tell Us About Who We Really Are* (2017) by Seth Stephens-Davidowitz as well as two of his articles (Stephens-Davidowitz 2014; Stephens-Davidowitz and Varian 2014).

To explore big data, we used two big data sites: Google Ngrams and Google Trends. Google Ngrams provides web-based access to the Google Books Scanning project through which Google has scanned in books published from 1500 to 2008 from a wide variety of libraries. Google currently has over five million books in this database. Google Ngrams allows the user to enter words or phrases and see their use in published books over time. The results of these searches can often show the invention of terms and their popularity in written culture. Google Trends shows anonymized Google searches since 2004 indicating the popularity of particular searches. Google Trends allows one to look at the data both in terms of sheer numbers and where particular searches were generated.

Using Google Ngrams we used as an example the term "Personal Savior" tracing its use since the 1500s. Given that most of our students were raised in the Evangelical South, they were surprised to see that a term that for them seemed eternal, which they assume came from the Bible, was really non-existent until the late 1800s. They were surprised to find that its use did not show significant growth until the rise of fundamentalism in the early 1900s. The term virtually disappeared during the 1950s with the dominance of mainline denominations but it recurred with more frequency during the late 1970s and '80s with the popularity of the Evangelical movement. Showing that a term could have such a recent history was enlightening to students and showed the power of Ngrams.

Using Google Trends, we were able to chart moments when certain ideas burst onto the public scene. For instance, a search for "Women Priests" showed a great deal of traffic around the time when Pope Francis seemed to rule out the possibility. Likewise, we were also able to track the rise and fall of particular ideas. For example "Megachurch" had a great deal of interest between 2004-2006 with a steady decline thereafter. We did the same for "Christian Science" but with a focus on the regional searches. This showed the decline of the Christian Science denomination in the U.S. alongside its ongoing relative strength in developing nations.

The class caught on to the basics of both Google Ngrams and Google Trends quickly. There was little need to slow down to allow students to catch up, and the only time that students voiced any confusion was in the application of some of the more complex Ngrams features. Students enthusiastically presented their first Ngrams assignment findings on the second day of class and required minimal feedback to prepare for the final project. The groups effectively identified their research question, used Ngrams and Trends to produce relevant graphs, and presented appropriate analyses of their findings.

However, the groups struggled to provide meaningful interpretations of their findings. They had mastered the software, but it was not always clear they had thought through the "so what?" question. This provided the opportunity to prod students to make sure they did not allow the visual nature of the results to overwhelm the point. Visualizations need to be a way of telling a story, but they are not the whole story.

GSS Data Explorer

The General Social Survey (GSS) is the most important dataset for the social sciences. A bi-annual poll of over two thousand people, GSS has been administered since 1972. Conducted by the National Opinion Research Council at the University of

Chicago, the GSS is the gold-standard for opinion research. Now including more than five thousand variables, the GSS is the go-to database for most social scientists looking to assess cultural and political trends. Religion is no exception. Many articles related to religion—from the rise of the “Nones” (the religiously unaffiliated) to the effect of religion on health and well-being—contain GSS data in their reports. The importance of the GSS cannot be overstated.

The GSS Data Explorer provides a web-based portal to the GSS data. Using the GSS Data Explorer, a researcher can select various variables and then engage in a variety of analyses: correlations, regressions, and multi-level tabulations. The GSS Data Explorer does not have any visualization tools itself,[8] producing for the most part either tables or the results of statistical tests. However, a user can extract data from the GSS and download that data in a variety of formats, including .xls format for import into Google Sheets.

The GSS Data Explorer has a usable interface. Using the “shopping cart” metaphor, the user selects the variables of interest. Then they go to the analysis section of the site and select between correlation, cross-tabulation, multi-level tabulations, and regression. The user drags and drops the variables from the cart for the different rows and columns, filters various variables (select a specific year, specific denominations, etc., depending on the variables chosen), and then runs the analysis.

The GSS Data Explorer gave us the opportunity to teach some basic statistical concepts that are essential for working with data. Many religious studies majors are math phobic; they often have fled math-oriented majors to become religious studies majors. But our level of statistics can be understood at an intuitive level with proper instruction (Wheelan 2013), and students who can understand the language of basic statistics are better equipped for the world after graduation.

Correlation was the first concept we covered, emphasizing the distinction between correlation and causation. We discussed at length the significance of the results of a chi-squared test as part of its cross-tabulations analysis and how p-value functions influence confidence in the results of a correlation. We revieweddifferent kinds of data: numerical, ordinal, and categorical. Depending on the kind of data we are working with, different tests and products are possible or excluded. Once we got past some problems logging on, students learned the GSS with relative ease and seemed comfortable using it. Surveys conducted at the end of the class indicated that students, while previously unfamiliar with the GSS, were generally confident in their ability to use it after presenting their projects. Most students also indicated they believed they would use the GSS again in future academic or professional endeavors.

IBM Watson Analytics

IBM’s Watson remains one of the bestl-known natural language processing computer system products in the analytics industry to date. Watson made a name for itself when it beat two human champions at Jeopardy! (Markoff 2011). Later, Watson was able to hold its own in a debate on space exploration (Krishna 2015). Between those feats (which had more flash than practical application), IBM produced Watson Analytics. This product is intriguing because it offers a natural language interface to conduct data analysis. The user uploads their own data, and then they can ask questions like “What is the number of Muslims by state?,” “What drives the response ‘Islam has different values?,” or “What percent of Evangelicals are high school graduates?” This was by far the most sophisticated and powerful program we used in class. (IBM offers a free subscription to students and teachers to use Watson.)

We used the PRRI Values Survey from 2015 again in this segment. Once uploaded, we were able to create “discoveries.” A discovery allows the user to ask questions of the data. Watson will then produce a visualization as a response. One can inspect the data, change the parameters of the question, or copy and modify it. Eventually, one can export the visualization for use in presentations. When showing students how to use this, we also showed students how they could bring data from the GSS to Watson.

8 The GSS data explorer has no visualization tools for analyses that the user creates. However, there are some pre-programmed analyses that do have visualizations located in the “Key Trends” section of the website.

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The power of Watson is its natural language interface. However, this interface is dependent on the titles of each column. Thus to make maximum use of Watson, the data must be cleaned beforehand: descriptive titles need to be cleared of punctuation and symbols. We created a clean dataset for use in the class demonstration and offered instruction on how to clean the titles. Additionally, because it uses a natural language interface, awkwardly titled columns lead to awkwardly phrased questions. For instance, in one example the PRRI title for a column was "Islam numeric." Asking Watson "Islam numeric by state" does not exactly flow, but will produce a color-coded map of the United States with Muslim populations. Oftentimes, we (and the students) had to play around with the wording in order to get Watson to produce the results we wanted. This led to some initial frustration with the interface as it did not quite live up to its reputation of being as easy to use as simply asking a question as you would conversationally.

After several days of working with Watson, students became accustomed to the requirements of forming questions and became more appreciative of its power. The ability to ask questions and get visualizations as answers allowed students to focus less on the technology and more on the central question: "What am I really asking?" Student presentations showed that they knew how to use the software and in some cases went beyond the expectations of a mini-project to create a full presentation. We were able to discuss where there were gaps in students' knowledge, where their questions needed better formation, and how they might make improvements to their presentations.

There are some flaws with Watson. Beyond the problem of data cleaning (which is a challenge for all data analytics programs) Watson fails to deal with percentages. Given that most of the data we use in religious studies is categorical, counts are less helpful. The answer that four hundred people think God is personal versus seven hundred and fifty people who think God is impersonal is often not sufficient to answer the question, particularly if the question is a subset (e.g. nones or mainline Christians). The more helpful approach would be to calculate percentages, but Watson does not do this automatically and doing it manually can lead to errors. Still, Watson provided an important addition to the class.

Conclusion

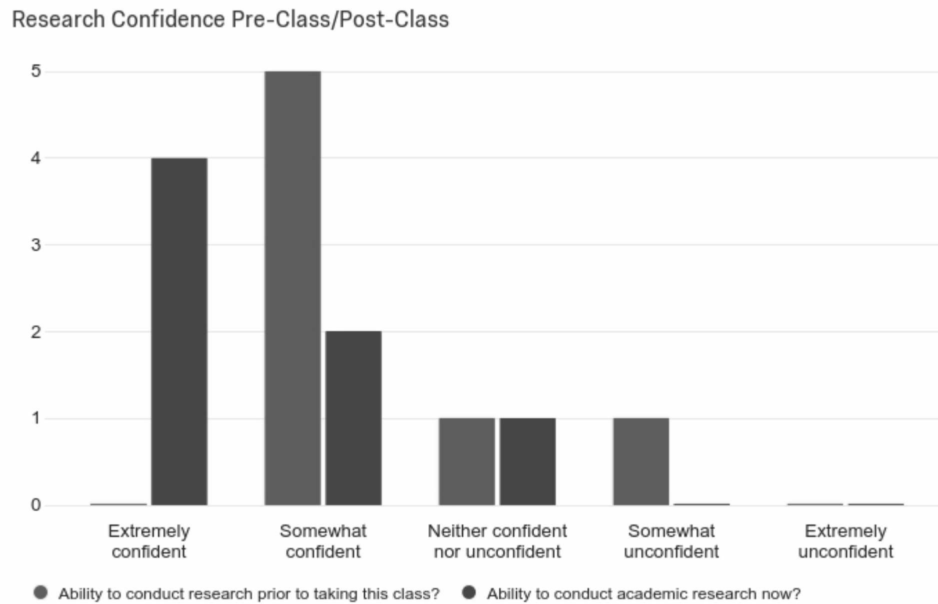
The pedagogical goals of the class were to have students engage in the research process by creating a research question, reviewing the literature, and writing a research paper that included numeric data. In future iterations of the class, the portfolio issue will need to be resolved in order for this goal to be achieved.

Reflecting on our goals, introducing multiple software packages might have had the downside of not enabling the students to master any. In future forms of the class, it might make most sense to concentrate on just three technologies: a spreadsheet (which provides a good entry into understanding the form of data), Structured Query Language (SQL) to facilitate the filtering and comparison of the data, and finally a visualization program to create charts. Minimizing the number of technologies would perhaps allow students to spend less time learning the programs and more time with the data.

A post-class survey showed several interesting results (see Figure 1). The survey asked students to reflect on their confidence in several areas before and after the class. Asked how confident they were in their ability to conduct research before the class, students generally said they were "somewhat confident," but no student said they were "extremely confident." However, after the class, the majority said they were "extremely confident" in their ability to conduct research. Likewise, before the class students said they were "somewhat" or "extremely" lacking in confidence in using quantitative analysis tools, but after the class, the majority were either "somewhat confident" or "extremely confident." No student chose one of the "lack of confidence" options. Thus, in terms of research skills in general and data literacy in particular, students in the class clearly saw marked growth in themselves. In our post-class survey, most students thought they were "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to use the technologies we had introduced in the future.[9]

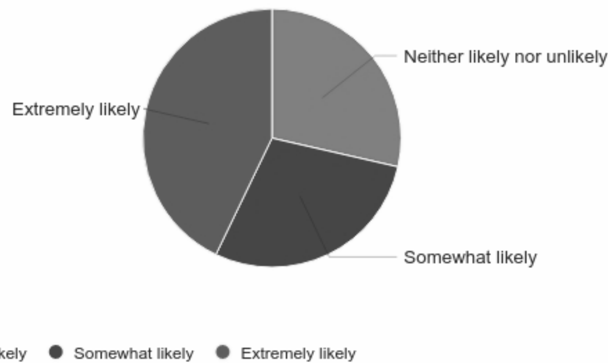
9 The one exception to this is the General Social Survey Data Explorer. An equal number of students said they were "not likely" to use it again as said they were "very likely."

Figure 1



But, perhaps more important, when asked whether they were likely to use research and quantitative analysis tools in their future careers, the majority said they expected to, with the largest group (43 percent) saying they were "extremely likely" (no respondent selected either of the "unlikely" options; see Figure 2). Students saw the future value of the work they had done in the class.

Figure 2



While students indicated they were likely to follow a variety of paths from business to graduate school to public service, no one in the class said they were likely to go to seminary. It is clear that we were not appealing to pre-ministerial students; they did not see the value in our class (see Figure 3).

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Figure 3

Field	Choice Count
Grad school (Religious Studies, Humanities, Social sciences)	5
Non-Profit/Government Work	3
Other	2
Public Service Programs	2
Business	2
Grad School (other- eg. medical school, law school, MBA)	0
Seminary	0

This is a problem because ministerially-minded individuals have great need for these skills. As churches continue to experience membership decline, resource allocation is going to be increasingly dependent on quantitative analysis. Programs that show gains for the church are going to be more likely to receive funding. Churches often draw from the business community for their Elder and Deacon Boards who oversee church activities and these people who see the value of data in their everyday work will expect the same from their church. The ministers and church workers of the future will need a command of data literacy to make their arguments. The days when churches made decisions based on spiritual "leading" and/or prayer may be behind us.

In our class, we understood data literacy not as an end in itself, but as a means by which we might answer religious studies questions in new ways. We recognize that the numbers themselves are a means to understanding phenomena, to answering questions. It is easy to get wrapped up in the excitement of a powerful software application or a dazzling visualization which seems to shed so much new light on the question. And yet, as we did in our class, we worked to redirect students back to the essential fundamentals: What is your question? How does your data enhance your explanation? And most importantly, what does it mean?

While younger generations may be decreasingly interested in the structures of organized religion, that does not mean, as many have pointed out, that there is no religious impulse (Kosmin and Keysar 2013; Masci 2016). Part of our task in religious studies programs is to show how our work remains relevant. Integrating data and technology into our reflection on religion is an important part of building the religious studies major for the future.

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ARTICLE

Culturally Responsive Teaching Toolbox

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ABSTRACT

Twenty-first century teachers face challenges across many disciplines. Teachers are tasked with added roles: resource provider, instructional specialist, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader, and lifelong learner (U.S. Department of Education 2017). Equipping teachers with new learning trends is paramount to student success. Research indicates that the best way to increase student achievement is to have qualified teachers with specialized skills (Sparks and Killion 2007; Gay 2013). Teachers need to cultivate an understanding of cultural diversity in the classroom to effectively promote engagement. This paper will discuss culturally responsive teaching and multiple strategies for preparing teachers with a culturally responsive skills toolbox.

KEYWORDS

culturally responsive teaching, strategies, curriculum, inclusive

Misconceptions exist regarding culturally responsive teaching (CRT). I've heard it claimed that it focuses only on holiday traditions. But, CRT is much more than that. CRT builds from the strengths of students' cultural experiences, while acknowledging that different heritages and languages affect attitudes and approaches toward learning. When skills are linked to lived experiences, "they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily" (Gay 2000, 106). Teachers who utilize CRT practices value students' cultural and linguistic background and view this knowledge as capital to build upon, rather than as a barrier to learning. According to CRT, to engage students, teachers must recognize that students' views are rooted in their culture. Equipped with this knowledge, teachers can create learning activities that connect skills-based practices and further engagement.

According to Aceves (2014), another type of engagement is culturally responsive feedback where students receive individualized support from teachers. Teachers share individualized support while being cognizant of student preferences and culture. This strategy incorporates students' responses, ideas, languages, and experiences into the feedback loop, while inviting students to construct new understandings of what they are currently learning (McIntyre and Hulan 2013). This helps in several ways: boosts self-esteem, monitors comprehension, and challenges thinking. Teachers can create such opportunities for feedback in an online environment through discussion.

Training Teachers for CRT

As the student demographic changes, the need to prepare twenty-first century teachers requires tools to reach a more diverse group of students. Teachers are already taught skills for meeting Maslow's Needs (physiological needs, personal safety, social affiliation, self-esteem, and self-actualization) in their lesson plans, course design, and educational programs (Hanson 2018). Updated skills must be taught such that teachers possess awareness, communication, modification of design, and efforts to accommodate differences (Nisbett 2003). Teachers need to consider how their cultural ideals influence the design decisions and activities that they implement. Villegas and Lucas (2002) encourage educators to include preparation strategies through coursework, learning experiences, and field experiences for success with diverse students by cultivating skills, such as the ones named by Krasnoff (2016, 2):

- Socio-cultural consciousness
- Attitude
- Commitment and skills
- Constructivist views
- Knowledge of student's life
- CRT

These skills prepare teachers to meet real world demands. This approach enables teachers to view differences as assets and to become agents of change in the classroom.

Geneva Gay defines CRT as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for [students]" (2010, 31). A way to grow these skills is to build relationships. This can be accomplished in the community with partnerships or even simply by assigning a buddy for a sense of belonging. These skills will help the teacher engage all students.

According to Pedro Noguera, to engage urban students, teachers must allow students to become active participants and learners. This differs from the existing mindset of expecting students to adapt their learning to the way in which they are taught (Noguera 2003). This needs to be included in the lesson plan and not be an afterthought or add on. It is important to have the classroom showcase different cultural themes.

When looking at culturally responsive design, the focus is on mirroring the student's cultural learning style and tools. It must be relatable to capture their attention in multiple ways. Specifically, in cultures that rely on oral tradition for information acquisition, techniques that connect learning to lyrics and music turn content into knowledge. Some ways to make content more culturally engaging are gamification, collaboration, community creation, and storytelling (Hammond 2015, 137).

The first step to creating culturally responsive lessons is for the teacher to look internally and shift their mindset to be culturally inclusive and open. This includes examining norms, beliefs, and behaviors that are passed down from one generation to the next. Upon examination, the gap between the teacher and student can be bridged and understanding and student success can be improved.

To achieve this, teachers should observe their surroundings by doing something as simple as taking a neighborhood walk. The teacher will come to know the community in which the school population is located. This is best accomplished when guided by a local student. Be mindful of things such as:

- shapes in building design,
- minerals and rocks present,
- the types of suppliers in an area,
- styles of music being played,

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- variety of games played,
- flags and symbols being displayed.

Next, take a look at community assets. This can be accomplished by selecting adults from the community that are culturally different from yours. Consider:

- What are people in this community particularly good at accomplishing?
- Describe how you would like to see the community five or ten years from now.
- Identify any barriers.

This will help to see the community through the eyes of someone who knows it intimately and through a different lens.

Finally, focus on the community resources. Find out who the local residents of the community see as leaders.

- Who do members of the community recognize as spokespersons?
- Are there particular organizations that community members belong to?
- Are there organizations (formal and informal) that people in the neighborhood identify with?

Be sure to get the perspective of the residents and look at religious institutions and community centers to make a map of the community.

It is important that teachers be taught to explore multicultural awareness by examining their own beliefs, setting high expectations through challenges and engaging activities (Hillberg, Tharp, and DeGeest 2000), incorporating critical thinking and parent involvement, and considering social justice with the cultural community. These skills work well in traditional and online settings.

Design CRT Activities

View students in the class setting and consider what they are reading, how they are interacting, and their role in curriculum decisions. Add this information to the findings from the neighborhood walk and consider ways to adapt traditional lessons to be more inclusive. Here is an example from the Southwest region of the U.S.:

Science Crop planting, hunting, fixing mechanical things	**Literacy** Bible study, family stories, family letters
Math Selling, managing income, budgeting	**Social studies, history, geography** Local mapping, local history, building codes, immigration routes
Health, PE Childcare, first aid procedures, games, childcare	**Arts** Folk music, carpentry, textile design, masonry

Based on the observations in the Southwest, these findings could be incorporated into different lessons.

As seen through differentiation and universal design for learning strategies, CRT could also be incorporated into the curriculum in an online platform. This approach would develop designers who can adapt lessons to students' diverse backgrounds, nourish relationships with families and communities while positively promoting cultural differences into the framework of instruction.

Lessons can be adapted to incorporate CRT ideas. A typical activity, such as creating a family tree, can exclude students with distant or unknown relatives. Such assignments can be altered to focus on primary relationships. This can be accomplished by adapting a typical family tree to include an interview of family members. Additional ways to broaden a family tree assignment to be more inclusive would be focusing on community resources through surveys, conversations with family members, and video interviews. Adaptations are compared in the table.

Traditional Lesson	Culturally Responsive Lesson
Family Tree	Video Interview of family members
Classics Literature Reading- Fitzgerald . . .	Globally diverse texts; different cultures
Current Events - CNN & Fox news	Current Events from a multi-cultural view: BBC, Aljazeera news . . .
Oral presentation of local area/ state	Include students' native countries
Language tutoring	Organize ESL students as peer language tutors
Local Guest Lecturer	International Guest Lecturer via Zoom
Field Trip	Virtual Field Trip internationally
Mnemonic device for science to tune of ABC song	Mnemonic to tune of culturally relevant song
Government class will write about different ways that citizens can participate in democracy	Have students write officials describing something in their lives that the official has the power to impact and offer a solution.
Students are asked to select a famous scientist and write a biography with a credible source.	Students find a scientist of color or diverse background and write a biography based on a credible source.
Learn Vocabulary terms	Practice Orally, sing terms Game such as a puzzle or Kahoot Social interaction Make it a story

Based on neuroscience, culture and background make learning easier as the brain processes information linked to prior knowledge (Hammond 2015).

Teachers need to adapt their teaching styles to meet the academic needs of all students (Banks 2013). Best practices of CRT techniques equip teachers with the skills to change their internal perspectives and to understand all students so that meaningful engagement activities can be created.

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ARTICLE

Grading Rage in the Pastoral Care Classroom: Tension, Trust, and Possibilities of Creative Transformation

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ABSTRACT

Do you have a story about grading and frustration, anger, or even rage? Assessment and grading can elicit rage for both learners and teachers. The author was surprised in a semester where rage both made the learning environment precarious and also contributed to learning. What is the role of rage in teaching and learning? Is it possible to assess rage? Can rage lead to creative transformation of classroom cultures and support students in achieving learning goals? Can rage sharpen pedagogical commitments? The author reviews a critical incident of unexpected grading rage that emerged in her three-hour, once-a-week master's level introductory pastoral care classroom, what she did about it during the semester, how three strategies she employed could be helpful for teaching and learning religion and theology more broadly, and lessons she is still learning from it. When grading rage emerges in and beyond the pastoral care classroom, teaching and learning misunderstanding stories, facilitated by neutral questions in charged contexts, can make room for creative transformation when supported by third voices.

KEYWORDS

pastoral care, rage, grading, class participation, misunderstanding stories, neutral question, tension, trust, creative transformation, theological education

Introduction

Do you have a story about grading and frustration, anger, or even rage?[1] Many complain about grading in general, with increased voracity at midterm and finals. While grading, moments of deep insight revealed in student work can appear alongside assignments that demonstrate little evidence of learning. Professors may exclaim that they

1 The author thanks the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning Theology and Religion writing the scholarship of teaching and learning cohort

won't spend more time grading an assignment than it seemed students spent working on it. Grading can also be frustrating for students when professors complain about having to grade the very assignments we designed. Students ask what a grade means: what is its purpose? Students know that grades have financial and vocational implications. When it comes to grading, brilliant work can spark new connections and insights for students and teachers. Yet, professors can look at a stack to be assessed and know that they will likely receive the same compensation for hours spent crafting personalized thoughtful feedback as colleagues who seem to spend much less time and energy on the daunting task or who can assign grading to teaching assistants. This is particularly poignant for adjunct professors. Grading well is often unacknowledged labor unincorporated into job performance markers or course evaluations, adding additional layers of invisible and often gendered labor to an academic vocation (Muhs et al. 2012; Chronical Review 2018). Grading can be enraging.

Grading frustrations can lead to anger and/or apathy for students and for teachers. Various stakeholders in theological education, and higher education more broadly, argue about the meaning of grades, how grades do and don't work to measure learning, how grades can and do discriminate and assume normative standards that aren't accessible to every student or teacher. Should course design support any and all students to thrive with an equitable opportunity to earn excellent grades or is a bell-curve a better standard? Some argue for eliminating grades all together (Nilson 2013, 91; Nilson 2016). Once grades are submitted, petitions for grade changes can come in quickly, often with accompanying pressure from administration, coaches, or colleagues. Claims of grade inflation are raised against schools, departments, course formats, disciplines of study, and/or faculty members. I once had a professor who told the class that they had simply run out of time and decided to give everyone who turned in the final assignment a 100 percent without reading any submissions, which was both grace-filled and infuriating. Grades earned can vary widely in a class or school, sometimes leading to resentment over a grade from one course that simmers and seethes into subsequent semesters.

There are many ways that grading and rage intersect from rage about grading, rage of professors, rage of students, rage at injustice in systems and structures, grading rage itself. In this paper, I use the doubleness of the phrase "grading rage" to address *both* rage about grading and the possibility of grading rage. During the Fall term of 2016, rage emerged in my introductory pastoral care classroom. It started as rage about grading, but over the semester sparked my reflections on the role of rage in learning. In retrospect, its presence was not shocking given the context of the U.S. Presidential election during the semester (Gambino and Pankhania 2016). But rage connected to the increasingly disrespectful tone of the 2016 Presidential campaign wasn't the only thing that was going on.[2] The class and political climate exacerbated a rage that was already there. Rage preceded and shaped the context and content of this course. Why?

Most students in the course had entered seminary alongside a major curriculum revision that foregrounded interdisciplinarity, calling faculty to teach and think together across disciplinary lines throughout the curriculum rather than only occasionally by elective. Innovation required faculty to stretch pedagogies, to place disciplinary expertise in constant conversation with curiosity and challenge, to partner with colleagues in creating something new. For faculty, this required trust, assessment, ongoing innovation, relational investment. Behind the scenes, the best innovation is also a precarious experiment, unmasking methodological divergences, pedagogical differences, vulnerabilities across rank, and embodied differences—exposing tensions that can be less evident when each teaches their own solo classes.[3] But, we were teaching faith leaders for a diverse and complex landscape and wanted a curriculum that valued collaboration over solo performance.

We heard mounting anxieties and frustration from some students that faculty seemed more vulnerable, less certain than students expected or desired. Yet, engaged in practicing something new well, the faculty improved and made tweaks and changes through the first few years. As a faculty member experiencing significant curricular revision for the first time, I learned that it invites students into both the excitement and the uncertainty that accompanies innovative collaboration. As a faculty collegium, it is not possible to work out *everything* in practice ahead of time even when guided by thoughtful

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2 Others have interrogated challenges to teaching during the Fall 2016 election and ensuing Trump presidency, which exceeds the scope of this paper.

3 Joe Bessler's (2008) metaphor of theological school faculty as an orchestra influenced both the curricular innovations and my subsequent thinking of faculty collaboration.

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planning, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and shared values. We were trying to create something new while modeling appropriate levels of vulnerability required to do so. Within the school, experimenting with possibilities of creative transformation required trust but also elicited tensions.[4]

By the time graduating students reached the end of their course of study, many were ready for something that felt more certain, more stable. At least three factors contributed to the increased stress present even before my Fall 2016 course. First, students were taking a pastoral care course that I had been teaching and improving over ten iterations of the course. While I was always assessing and reshaping the course design, it was not the kind of major pedagogical experiment I might attempt in a new elective or that we were all trying in new required courses. However, the subject matter of the course and a large part of its content were the very skills that had been required in all of the more experimental co-taught classes; skills that were both exciting and frustrating for students: listening, humanizing embodied differences, exercising appropriate vulnerability, paying attention to interrelationships of theory and practice, and studying ministerial trust, risk, boundaries, and burnout.

Second, the faculty had decided to all use faculty titles (Dr. McGarrah Sharp versus Mindy in my case) so that we were addressed similarly across the curriculum and in co-teaching environments. Prior to this, there had been an uneven, yet often cherished, practice of a first name culture. Ironically, faculty titles are a way of naming classroom authority (such as denoting scholarly training, naming power differentials in grading, and claiming shared responsibility for curricular decisions), yet a major student complaint was faculty vulnerability. This cultural shift revealed different understandings of vulnerability, creativity, and leadership.

Third, the intercultural national climate during the summer before the Fall semester class was increasingly tense; public discourse in the last six months before the 2016 presidential election included increasingly divisive rhetoric. It pitted Christians against Muslims, heterosexual purity against LGBTQI+ solidarity, and seemed to justify identity-based violence against women. This context required faith leaders competent in listening, assessing, and responding to personal and communal risks.

Surprised by Rage

Even with school and national tensions in the air, I was still surprised by rage in a course that I knew to have a solid design with fewer challenges than other newer areas of the curriculum. Over the course of the semester, even more surprising than the presence of rage in the classroom (which I describe below), were its unexpected benefits: student ability to reflect on their learning through rage, the relevance of my research to understand what was happening, and how every student not only finished the term, but also that rage became a point of reflection for me and for students long after the class ended. It made me wonder how rage might serve teaching and learning.

Could course design and assessment with room for rage contribute to learning outcomes? How would or could one grade rage? Trained in practical and pastoral theology and ethics, I believe rage is a useful, healthy moral emotion (Swinton 2007; Moon 2017), especially when teaching theology and religion in precarious times. What would it look like to recast rage not only as reactionary but also as an intelligence to be cultivated and assessed?

Tension

Even though I teach pastoral care practices and regularly invite students to take a deep breath and pay attention to their breathing, I don’t often think about the air in the room until it becomes thick with tension. While no classroom is or should be a counseling session, there are always parallel processes at play. Every class session about listening well is also a

4 It is also important to place the school in the larger context of an ecology of theological schools specifically and higher education more broadly also facing multiple forms of challenges around trust, tension, and transformation.

listening exercise. Every reading assignment is an invitation to read not only the assigned text, but also the individual student self and group dynamics in the class. Whatever happens in class is itself a case study; class participation creates additional class content.

Therefore, it is particularly important to include class participation in the final grade earned for a pastoral care class. I anticipate that student class participation can and will include moments of deep insight as well as confusion and conflict, but I don't typically think of including rage on participation assessment rubrics. I think carefully about the rubric since I give the class participation grade more weight than some of my colleagues in other fields. There is significant disagreement in the scholarship of teaching and learning about whether to grade participation, how to grade participation, and how to clearly communicate the process for grading participation.[5] Since class participation assessment factors prominently into the final course grade earned, I communicate and discuss participation in the syllabus and during class time throughout the semester.

I spent the summer prior to Fall 2016 working on my pedagogy as part of curricular assessment and innovation mentioned above. I decided to be more specific in the participation assessment grading rubric and ask students to use it to self-access their own participation. (See Figure 1.) With under fifteen students in the residential class, I could expect some contribution from all voices every week of the three-hour, once a week, semester-long course. This seminar-sized group also had greater potential to discern the participation of the whole than might be the case in a much larger class.

Figure 1: *Class Participation Assessment Rubric*

Class Participation Assessment Rubric	Always	Often	Occasional	Rarely	Never
1. Has the student consistently participated in the class discussion in an attentive, thoughtful way? Have more talkative students done the hard work of listening? Have quieter students done the hard work of speaking? Have all students paid attention to how much space they are taking up in the conversation and how that affects others?	20	18	15	10	0
2. Do the student's comments show that they have completed and thought about the reading in advance of the class?	20	18	15	10	0
3. Does the student show up on time, attentive, and prepared to participate?	10	9	7.5	5	0
4. Have the student's comments stayed on topic? Has the student refrained from devoting too much class time to issues that do not contribute to group learning?	10	9	7.5	5	0
5. Has the student's energy level (body language, eye contact, avoidance of creating distractions) enhanced the energy level of the class as a whole?	10	9	7.5	5	0
6. Has the student refrained entirely from actions that could be interpreted as disrespectful, rude, offensive, dismissive or abusive?	10	9	7.5	5	0
7. Have the student's comments been cordial, charitable, and collegial? Has the student taken care to refer other students' comments in a gracious way, and to listen to critique when it is offered?	10	9	7.5	5	0
8. Has the student stayed on task during small group exercises?	10	9	7.5	5	0

5 In the professor teaching tactics blogosphere, for example, one can find a range of practices and cautions around grading participation (see for example Taylor [2018], Croxall [2010], Weimer [2014]). See also Blodgett (2017).

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Total points available per semester	100	90	75	50	0

When I adapted this class participation grading rubric for this and other classes, I wasn't thinking about its usefulness in evaluating rage. I wasn't thinking about rage at all. But, from the first day of the course, rage was in the air with particular strength as my students discerned their callings to serve religious communities in a complex world of tensions and possibilities.

Tension was in the room when I arrived on the first day of class. I had taught every student previously, although this particular student configuration had never to my knowledge existed before. When we started basic introductions and I invited someone to go first, no one said a word. When we went over the syllabus, as I mentioned one assignment's title, a student loudly proclaimed, "I hate this assignment!" Throughout the three hours, body language was defensive with arms crossed and little eye contact. Opening listening exercises in small groups failed to change the energy in the room. What was happening?

Reviewing the participation rubric proved awkward. Were we being thoughtful with each other and doing the hard work of listening well? Already, not much. Were we reading well, or at all, before commenting? As evidenced by the "I hate this assignment" comment before reviewing the assignment, resistance to reading well was already voiced. Were folks ready to participate as a collective learning community? I couldn't say yes with confidence. Was student engagement building the energy in the room? No, energy was depleted. Had class members refrained from actions that could be interpreted as disrespectful, rude, offensive, dismissive, or abusive? Not only was the course design being dismissed, but students were dismissing each other. Had students' comments been cordial, charitable, and collegial? Had the students taken care to refer to other students' comments in a gracious way, and to listen to critique when it was offered? No and no. There were moments of laughter and relief and it wasn't entirely awful, but that first class session unfolded awkwardly and strangely. I know that anxiety can be high during the first three weeks of a course until it settles into a more predictable rhythm (Sharp and Morris 2014), so I hoped that we would regroup the next week. However, the second week was about the same—tense with palpable resistance. I tried various teaching strategies that had worked well in the past, mixing up the time with different learning activities, but to no avail. Was it the assigned classroom space or time? Tensions in the school? The tense national climate? I started to wonder if we would be able to learn together.

After the second week (and earlier into the semester than my usual practice), I facilitated a participation self-assessment and conversation using an unusual means: email. Clearly, participation had been strained so far, with some students seemingly uninterested and others holding back their own participation, sensing their peers were checked out. Outside of class, several students had already shared privately that they didn't owe their vulnerabilities to peers who didn't care. I had received unsolicited emails about the class with various grievances and suggestions. Between the second and third class, I sent an initial evaluation of how I thought we were doing, and asked students to reply with their self-assessments using the participation rubric. I noted that we had a lot of room for improvement; the class as a group was operating closer to the "never" side of the spectrum than the "always" side. Sending this by email between classes was likely a mistake, but pre-zoom, I had few options given that the commuter students only gathered in shared time and space once a week. At the time, I felt that I couldn't wait a whole week to invite reflection on participation and hoped reflection could help us shift into a more generative mode of learning.

By the next class, almost every student had replied with their self-assessment, and almost every self-assessment was seething. More than one student had copied administrators. Half of the students didn't come back from the ten-minute break halfway through the third class meeting—they were in an administrative office. Students who had already been intentionally withholding their voices retracted to near silence. Questions came like darts: How dare I reduce perceptions of body language to a number on a seemingly arbitrary scale? The rubric points were perceived as diminishing student effort and disrespecting student diversities. How dare I grade participation, trying to measure quality of attention with metrics?

Since the first class, I had also met with administrators and been transparent about the class. I had called upon mentors and found support in Nancy Lynne Westfield's Wabash blog contributions, particularly her naming challenges and gifts of teaching students where they are (2015). In addition to palpable tension, something stunning also happened. I received

the angriest, but also some of the deepest student learning reflections I had ever seen. Students articulated that the rubric didn't work for them because they learn by . . . [several paragraph-long explanations of learning successes, challenges, efforts, systemic barriers, and access points]. Somehow rage had opened a floodgate of deeper reflections on learning. I had an "aha!" moment and did something I'd never done before in my teaching—I set aside my course plan for the day and instead used my scholarly research on intercultural conflict to reflect on what might be going on in the class in the moment.

When students came back late from the break, I shared my research on misunderstanding stories. I had just published a book on the generative role of tension in intercultural pastoral care (Sharp 2013), but I had not planned to use it for class because it builds on concepts that students were still learning in this introductory course. But, why not try it now?

Misunderstanding Stories

I developed a theory of misunderstanding stories to inform pastoral theology's movement toward a more postcolonial paradigm (2013). I had not planned to teach my own book but was going to mention my research at end of the semester alongside other advancements in the field beyond the introductory level. However, I found my research on misunderstanding stories a useful way to honor and engage rage and its resultant tension. The class was expressing rage about grading participation, but this was not the only issue. If I had thought that the rage was simply acting out, my pedagogical instincts would have been to wait until after class to address students privately and not to change my lesson plan. Since parallel process was part of class content and the collective rage was accompanied by collective deeper reflections on learning, I saw a unique opportunity for developing a misunderstanding story in the moment. Rather than teaching about how other people might develop misunderstanding stories, we could practice it in real time.

What is a misunderstanding story? A misunderstanding story is a developmental achievement in a relationship in which some presenting conflict or breech in the relationship leads, through discrete (yet not necessarily linear) stages, to a renewed relationship in which all parties can claim the misunderstanding as one of the many stories that describe the life of this relationship. I developed the theory of misunderstanding stories from my experience of being amazed at how intercultural friendships can be sustained, and even grow, in the face of deep cultural disagreements. In the relational contexts of teacher and students in a course, could we also achieve a misunderstanding story where rage induced by the participation rubric was a presenting conflict?

I mapped out the misunderstanding stories theory on the board (see Figure 2), naming class dynamics that were alive in the room and in which I was also a participant. Something goes wrong in a relationship (breach) that leads to a crisis around the relationship's future (crisis) and willing parties then have an opportunity to navigate between ending the relationship (cut off or rupture) or moving toward a continued relationship that works to incorporate the breach into a shared misunderstanding story. I could see all of these elements in the class.

First, there was a presenting conflict or relational breech in the rage over the grading of participation in a pastoral care class. Second, there was an ensuing crisis which characterized the moment—would we be able to learn? Third, we needed to make a choice. We could choose to cut off the relationship. Options included students dropping the class, me requesting to be removed from the class (even though I was the only one who taught it at the time at my school), or reformatting the class by pedagogical principles other than what I valued in my discipline, such as removing participation as a category of assessment or shifting to more lecture and less small group work. Alternatively, we could try to stay in relationship and work collaboratively to achieve a misunderstanding story. The process of developing a misunderstanding story could take the rest of the semester if not longer, I explained, because engaging the process raises deep and difficult questions about identities, the past, feelings and emotions, reconciliation, accountabilities, and the need for clear communication moving forward. Further, we would need even more forthright reflection on individual and group participation to move toward a misunderstanding story.

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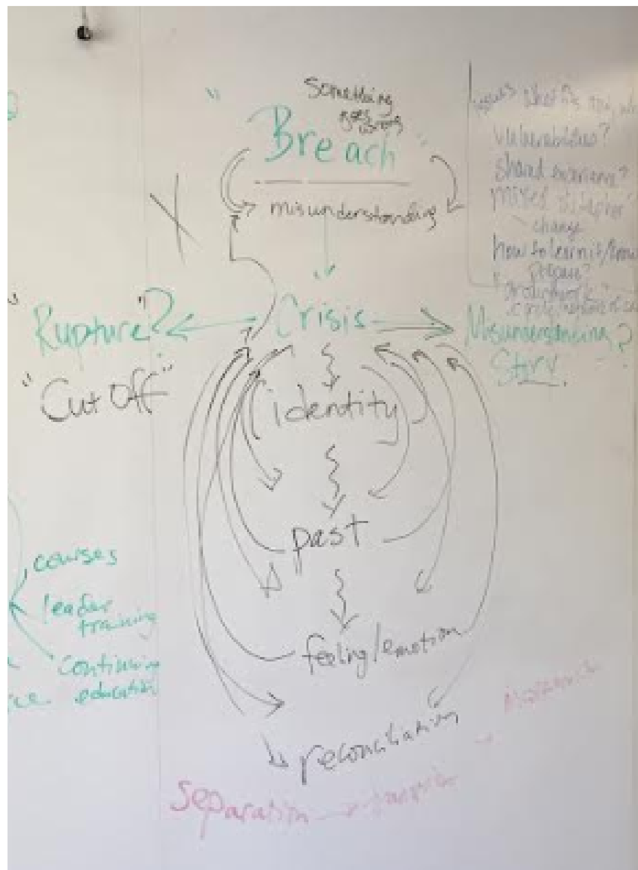
Figure 2: *Class Map of Misunderstanding Stories Theory*



Even without reviewing the psychological, theological, and postcolonial conversation partners behind my theory of misunderstanding stories in depth, introducing the concept when I needed it was surprisingly effective. It named tensions in the room and invited the learning community to contemplate our collective desire to learn. I reiterated my commitment to engage the process of misunderstanding stories while continuing to teach the class (with the full support of and regular debriefing with my administration). As a class, we acquired some language to describe the process in the room. I decided to keep the rubric, but instead of points, left the questions open for students to locate evidence of their participation in the range from intentional engagement to opting out. Each week, in every learning activity, we negotiated the process of moving toward a misunderstanding story. After this intervention, the class continued and all students completed the course. It wasn't easy, but it was possible. I found that I needed to add support both inside and outside of the classroom.

Neutral Questions in Charged Contexts

Spontaneously drawing on misunderstanding stories to process rage in a pastoral care class, I learned something new about my research: neutral questions can facilitate the process of moving from breach through ensuing crisis toward developing a misunderstanding story. I had used neutral questions in writing and teaching for years, but I had not connected neutral questions to my research on the relational negotiations involved in developing intercultural misunderstanding stories. A neutral question is a question that is intended to assist another person to speak, trusting that the person has something to say and can sharpen and deepen their unique contribution. As choreographer Liz Lerman outlined in her *Critical Response Process*, a neutral question is a question that invites "the artist to think more reflectively than [they] might if the opinion or solution were directly stated" (2003, 21). Neutral questions, though they can be difficult to formulate at first, focus feedback on what the author is aiming to create and communicate to an audience. Lerman suggests using food as an analogy to teach students about neutral questions.

To introduce neutral questions, I distribute food, such as small baggies of homemade granola (Lerman is known to use cupcakes). Non-neutral comments (what Lerman calls "permissioned opinions") include comments to me (the maker) like "the granola is good," or "the granola is not salty enough," or "I don't like granola." A neutral question, in contrast, is offered to the maker for the purposes of deepening their creative process, so that the maker will be motivated to go back to work and create more in their distinct voice. Neutral questions activate a desire to learn. In the granola exercise, examples of neutral questions could include being asked what stories the granola evoke for me (I could share about my grandmother's homemade granola) or what I might add to a future batch (pecans, obviously, though I kept it nut free on purpose). Neutral questions are helpful tools in peer editing because they direct students toward eliciting the next best thought, sentence, title, or connection in the author's own words about what they are uniquely equipped to offer through their creation. The question isn't "here's how I would write your paper" but rather "how would you expand on what you are writing?"

Given tension and fragile trust in the class, peer review could be risky. If we were going to be able to learn together as a class, we would need to ask and respond to neutral questions. When I suggested this to the class a student exclaimed, "There is no such thing as a neutral question!" They remarked that any and every question implies a judgment. Untangling neutral questions and permissioned opinions helped to distinguish the quality of attention to the misunderstanding story process, but students were not convinced.

When discussing rage, instead of saying "You are [fill in the blank]," which shares an opinion about another's tone and intention (often offered without permission), a neutral question demonstrates curiosity, inviting another person to voice what they want to share. For example, neutral questions in the context of rage could include: "Who shares your passion and rage?" "Who in your family or among your trusted mentors called you into ministry?" "What is your six-word memoir and what role does rage play in it?" "Who supports your thriving?" When asking about the past, neutral questions might sound like, "When in the past did you address your rage faithfully?" "Where have you had permission to practice listening to rage?" In a classroom setting with high tension and low trust, I offered such neutral questions as free writing assignments.

We practiced neutral questions both for peer review to support individual writing assignments and to help craft a misunderstanding story in the aftermath of the collective grading rage. As the professor, I tried to place rage into a range of emotions being held in the class and taught neutral questions as a strategy for increasing trustworthiness among the learning community. Still, we needed an additional layer of support to help the class weather our learning experience.

Third Voices

In Fall 2016, rather than just being able to name what transformation could look like in a hypothetical care situation that we practice in class and students demonstrate on the final exam, the class itself needed to experience creative transformation to make learning possible. Every pastoral care theology or theory implies a theory of change or transformation where transformation is the lived experience of healing, liberation, or other pastoral goal (Reyes 2016, 107; Graham 1996). One of my learning outcomes is for students to be able to identify the theory of change or vision of transformation in the variety of pastoral theologies we study throughout the semester. Some pastoral theologies are geared more toward individual healing and others more toward systemic restoration or revolution. Post-colonializing pastoral theology, which is at the heart of my own research and one example of many pastoral theologies in the introductory class, involves creative transformation (Lartey 2013; Lartey 2018; Sharp 2019). For pastoral care to be transformational rather than merely transactional, long-term efforts are needed over an extended period, a lifetime even. We had three months. What kind of pedagogical intervention could help sustain the possibility of teaching and learning?

A challenge with grading rage as a valid form of participation is that it is so unwelcome and often felt to be threatening. Was rage diagnosing with precision a potentially toxic environment and/or was rage contributing to a toxic environment? The feeling of being "under attack," or carrying the expectation of being "vulnerable to attack" as womanist pastoral theologian Chanequa Walker-Barnes describes as an embodied consequence of white racism, is toxic (2014, 81). Of course,

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this complexifies across diversely racialized and othered identities so often held in contrast to white normativity. This underlying dynamic alone produces rage, illnesses, and oppressions. Toxicity is poisonous and does not support learning, but creative rage can—with support for teachers and students.

In addition to continued transparent debriefing with my administration, I invited third voices into the class both in class meetings and as homework. By third voice, I mean an invited guest in addition to professor and student. Students and I covenanted with ourselves and each other to increase our commitment to disciplines of self-care, spending time in every class session to report on our respective commitments. I added breathing and meditative exercises to already planned contemplative class session openings. I distributed resources for students, asked students to be in contact with trusted mentors outside the class, and stayed in contact with my own trusted mentors and friends to debrief and strategize pedagogical challenges and opportunities around rage in the classroom. This class weighed on me and I needed to and did bolster my support systems. The students and I needed to renew our spirits. Mentorship invites a third voice into support systems for individual participants in the learning environment.

Third voices can also support the collective learning space. After the third week of class, I invited a "pastoral consultant" to attend at least a portion of every remaining class. While some guests had already been scheduled, since I had neither a teaching assistant nor a co-teacher it was important to bring in other voices to cut the tension as the class and I discerned our ability to teach and learn together, to grade participation, but more than that, to care about participating well in a learning environment. Pastoral consultants listened to small group case study role plays and offered feedback on pastoral strategies.

These visits culminated in a planned exercise on pastoral care amid congregational conflict with a professional mediator. Interestingly, this class performed very well at role playing someone else's group conflict and seemed much more at ease with the exercise than any other semesters in which I had used the exercise. Throughout the class, pastoral consultants served as wisdom partners who engaged the class from their professional role. This rotating third voice buttressed mentorship in the class, provided multiple voices who valued learning practices of pastoral care well even and especially in the presence of challenging circumstances, and therefore supported collective learning.

Going Deeper: Rage, Race, and Possibilities of Learning Trust

Misunderstanding stories, neutral questions, and third voices supported learning in the presence of rage. With learning more possible, we could also go deeper with it, navigating anxieties and trust to think through the racialized dynamics of rage. While we did some of this work in the three month course, I have continued to think about rage, race, and learning trust in the five years since it ended.

Learning can lead to deeper trust just as trust can make a way for deeper learning. Trust in the face of anxieties is a basic concept, informed by developmental and other psychologies, in pastoral care. In the introductory course in pastoral care, I account for trust in the face of anxieties in my course design and classroom structure (Sharp and Morris 2014). Course content addresses trust and anxiety both in assigned texts and in supplemental lectures. For example, I introduce the importance of trust in pastoral care relationships, a basic human need according to the developmental psychologies that have influenced the field (Glaz and Stevenson-Moessner 1991; Erikson 1997) in important, but not unproblematic ways (Sharp 2013, 78-104). Across therapeutic, cultural, and theological modalities (Frank and Frank 1961), technically called "therapeutic alliance," the kind of trusting professional relationship that I was teaching my students is one that embodies a reliable quality, invites the appropriate vulnerability to be present in the face of someone disclosing suffering, and instills confidence in collective investment in good pastoral care responses. Without this kind of alliance, says psychologist Nancy McWilliams, any potential healing relationship is just an "empty ritual" (2011, 17).

Developing trust in a context of both predictable anxieties and unpredictable rage—was complicated. Rage is not necessarily considered a problem in pastoral care and theology, but its treatment in the field is not unproblematic either. My working definition of pastoral care is learning to ask the question, "what is going on?" and then believing what is heard and staying in relationship in the face of what is shared. This way of practicing care evokes vulnerability, risk, a range of emotions, and,

sometimes, rage. The *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* defines "Rage and Hostility" together, with rage referring to "furious, uncontrolled anger," while hostility is "aimed at injuring or destroying." Rage is characterized as destructive, self-serving, and something that requires intervention (Patton 1990, 1038-1039). From the root word "rabies," rage is associated with "fury," "violent anger," "great violence," "unabated violence," "madness," "disease," and the opposite of "calm" (Dictionary.com 2018). However, there are other important ways to think about rage.

White feminist pastoral theologian Kathleen Greider observes that "sometimes aggressiveness," which can be a precursor to rage, "seems to provide us with the backbone to stand up to violence and do right by one another" (1997, 2, 29). In *Reckoning with Aggression: Theology, Violence, and Vitality*, Greider promotes developing a relationship with one's rage to direct action, support healthy confrontation, and counteract tendencies to retreat into guilt or shame in response to rage around unjust structures (1997, 96). In *Eloquent Rage*, black intellectual Brittney Cooper shares how she engaged a messy "process of . . . becoming okay with rage as a potential feminist superpower" when rage is focused with precision (2018). Pastoral theologian John Swinton likewise argues for meeting the moral emotion of rage with lament and thoughtfulness rather than revenge, spite, or uncareful criticism (2007). In my class, I wondered if rage could join with trust to serve the functions of pastoral care: healing, guiding, sustaining, encouraging, nurturing, reconciling, liberating, empowering, and resisting harm (Lartey 2006, 62-68).

Many minoritized scholars have written about rage as a constructive, creative resource while white-identified scholars have been more silent or considered rage to be detrimental to health and wholeness. Rage is certainly not a black-and-white issue, even while scholarship on rage identifies white supremacy as an ingredient of the righteous indignation of rage. As a white professor of pastoral care and theology, I choose to interrogate my whiteness with help from conversation partners and practices of accountability. This is ongoing work in which I have a lot to learn even while I attempt to shape justice-oriented practices informed by my ongoing learning (Sharp 2019).

Rage has many forms and decibels, can manifest in overt or subtle ways, and can contribute to destructive, as well as to creative transformation in groups of learners with different life experiences and perspectives. When some students report just waking up around issues of racism, patriarchy, and neocolonialism of many intersecting forms, rage can result for both awakening students and their classmates who have not had the same luxury of social slumber. Along with increasing divisiveness in the national fiber of Fall 2016, my class was also all over the map with respect to the drivers and objects of their rage. Rather than ask my students to write about rage instead of other assignments, I invited them to complete the semester's writing assignments in the presence of rage.

In the pastoral care classroom, we practice holding a variety of emotions, including anger. "Most of us have received little help in learning to use our anger to clarify and strengthen ourselves and our relationships. Instead, our lessons have encouraged us to fear anger excessively, to deny it entirely, to displace it onto inappropriate targets, or to turn it against ourselves," writes psychologist Harriet Lerner (2014, 10). Pastoral theologian Andy Lester argues that rage can be a form of love that compels Christians to act as change agents (2003). In the pastoral care classroom, we practice. We practice naming emotions imagined, witnessed, and felt, and invite others into these practices.

Casting rage as a tool for healing and transformation, pastoral theologian Lee Butler describes how African spirituality becomes a resource in pastoral care for "[transforming] our rage into a divine courage to stand against the destructive force of the enemy and declare that we are entitled to the same promises of the nation: of life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness" (2006, 173). Butler reclaims rage as a creative tool, coining the phrase "Rage/Creativity" to honor coping skills deeply embedded in communities who have survived and thrived with dignity in the face of soul-crushing conditions (2006, 161-166). "Rage develops," Butler writes, "when my humanity is denied and my existence is controlled by a force that seeks to diminish my identity. . . . The task, however, is not to deny the rage, but to transform its energy into a creative force" (2006, 165). Rage can be creative. Rage can be a form of deep care. Rage can be focused precisely on what needs changing, and now.

Trusting professional relationships need to be able to hold rage without letting it fuel destructive impulses toward the basic human dignity of anyone involved. Rage can characterize keen attention to pain that informs wise practice. Shouldn't I rage? Shouldn't rage be part of teaching and learning prophetic and pastoral care? I believe that what ethicist Emilie

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Townes calls the radical truth telling of pastoral and prophetic pastoral responses is a key to joining rage and trust in pastoral care (1996, 150-156). In "Waking up to Privilege," psychology and women's studies professor Stephanie Shields writes about the labor of the whole class when some members with markers of race, gender, and other intersectional privileges have to be "push[ed] to acknowledge their unearned privilege and exercise the social responsibility that follows that acknowledgement" (2012, 39). I can relate as a teacher, observer, and in my own learning process.

As a white-identifying pastoral theologian, I connect rage silence with my ever-ready complicity in white supremacy even while I work against that complicity. This work is itself enraging given that rage from multiple sources across student, teacher, institution, and wider contexts can converge in mutually amplifying, and at times confusing, ways. Who gets to express rage? Who gets to evaluate and assess it? What kind of curriculum includes creative rage? Is there always a destructive edge or at least risk? Again, I wonder, is grading rage possible? Could it be part of a life-giving learning environment?

More than fifty years ago, novelist and social critic James Baldwin wrote that to be relatively conscious in the world is to be in rage almost all the time (1961, 205). Baldwin was talking specifically about the righteous rage black folks in the U.S. should and do feel with the relentless and cruel barrage of racism. Fifty years later, racialized violence remains relentless and cruel. In contrast, as a southern white woman, I was raised to avoid or diffuse rage as inappropriate or necessarily destructive. My social location has muted my own desire to rage and connected embarrassment to the thought of ever doing so. "Imagine," writes bell hooks, "what it is like to be taught by a teacher who does not believe you are fully human [and therefore] really believes [you] are incapable of learning" (2010, 2). Is there room for rage in theological education? And if so, how does one teach and learn rage with such tension in the air?

Pedagogical awareness in course and classroom structure is one way I equip students to practice pastoral care well and to learn to establish trust in their pastoral encounters. While the classroom is not appropriate ground for therapeutic alliance, it is a fertile place for pedagogical alliance, a supportive relationship that encourages healing, growth, and thriving, and can maximize potential for listening, recognize misunderstandings, practice good boundaries, and learn to make room to hear and address trauma, suffering, and heartaches of life and love. These practices are difficult to teach; they are precarious even (Greider 2008, 52-58). If this is a larger pedagogical and vocational goal, course design and learning activities need to include practice. This may well require making room for rage: wrestling with identities, histories, accountabilities, futures, and hopes.

Conclusion

Ethicist Keri Day writes, "Our culture is a culture right now that's being led by fear. You can feel the fear. It's in the air" (2018). When rage emerged in my class in a particularly surprising way, I wanted to face my own fears around it, to treat it with curiosity. In reflecting back on the semester to write this article, I revisited Audre Lorde's (1984) *Sister Outsider*, a book that has helped me in my own awakening around teaching while white. "I know the anger that lies inside me like I know the beat of my heart and the taste of my spit," writes Lorde in "Eye to Eye." "It is easier to be angry than to be hurt. . . It is easier to be furious than to be yearning. Easier to crucify myself in you than to take on the threatening universe of whiteness by admitting that we are worth wanting each other," Lorde continues (1984, 153). In my class, I wanted to believe in the possibility of learning not instead of, but rather in the presence of fear and rage as resources.

Fear, tension, rage, and pain are in the classroom in new ways, even though fear is not new in a country whose creation included chattel slavery (Douglas 2015) and the annihilation of indigenous communities (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). There is a reason I start my introductory pastoral care classes with Howard Thurman's reminder that loving care is up against what he calls the three hounds of hell: fear, hate, and deception (1949). I teach listening skills in a context where many yearn to be heard and included. I teach in a field that prioritizes care and belief of survivors of domestic violence in a political context that often diminishes and normalizes domestic violence. I teach practices of family systems and family support in a country whose immigration policy has been to separate families, justifying, even celebrating caging and

medicating children without consent. I teach practices that affirm *imago dei* and demand human dignity in a country where Islamophobia, homophobia, white supremacist nationalism, patriarchy, neoliberal market-driven exploitation, and other fears of the other abound.

My school, city, and nation were tense going into the Fall 2016 semester; it was a fraught semester to be teaching about and assessing participating well in communal learning. In the class itself, I did three things, all unplanned, that helped us towards this goal: name the rage with my research on misunderstanding stories, emphasize neutral questions to support trustworthy peer review in course assignments, and add third voices in and around class sessions. Over the semester and beyond, I was surprised to find that rage, when named if not bidden, could serve the learning process. It was a difficult experience as rage also unmasks respectability politics that keep white supremacies and other unjust structures in place even by well-meaning, self-proclaimed, or aspiring antiracist allies among teachers and students, myself included.

Remarkably, well after the semester ended, every single student from the class shared an unsolicited reflection on their class participation, claimed forms of creative rage, and in some cases, offered an apology for forms of rage that contributed to harm. In the pastoral care classroom, teaching and learning misunderstanding stories, facilitated by neutral questions in charged contexts, can make room for creative rage. Room for rage in class participation can raise mutual awareness around crucial matters of identity, ethics, and justice, which can open pathways for pedagogical challenges and surprises. Learning and trust can deepen in mutually supportive ways. Sometimes, when they bend toward creative rage, the most difficult, enraging, stretching learning experiences can continue to inspire learning for teachers and students well beyond any one course of study.

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ARTICLE

Black and Jewish, Female and Clergy: Co-Teachers Practice Self-Disclosure in Religious Studies Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Presenting ourselves as objective and detached observers is the teaching of a former era. If we want our students to be able to understand themselves in the real world, teachers must model how to analyze the ways in which identities influence how we "read" histories, traditions, texts, and contemporary realities. Two female teachers, Black and White, Jewish and Christian, ordained clergy of their respective traditions with professional lives as academics at a public university, made self-disclosure a mindful practice and an integral part of a class exploring the ways religious narratives could empower and disempower. Using the ways Hagar is figured in varied religious traditions permitted both teachers to model an academic approach to the subject while also acknowledging how their identities affected their reading of the texts. In turn, students learned how to practice identifying the way their multiple identities impact how they read the world around them.

KEYWORDS

self-disclosure, identities, racism

Addressing Race and Gender in the Classroom: The Impact of Self-Disclosure

Julia Robinson Moore

Today's students are exposed to a host of social, political, and racial constructions that can deliver extremist views of Muslims, Jews, immigrants, and people of color. What does a contemporary classroom look like when stereotypes of race, class, and gender are reified by social media sites and embedded in our students' experience? How does race and gender-scripting play out in an academic environment that is dominated by White men? Further, how are these embodiments of "othering" compounded by religion?

We set out to explore these questions in our 2018 co-taught course, Religion and Power: Subjugation, Liberation, and Social Change in America. One of us (Barbara Thiede) is a self-identified White Jewish female and rabbi; the other (Julia Robinson Moore) is a self-identified African American female and ordained Presbyterian minister (PCUSA). Given the multiple identities we represented and the content and aims of the course, we made a conscious decision to make self-disclosure an integral part of our pedagogy.

We teach at a public university with high racial diversity. Forty-six percent of the students attending UNC Charlotte are minorities or people of color. Minorities made up the majority of students in our course. We teach courses that cover the history of antisemitism, particularly in Europe, and racism in America. About half of the students in the course had taken classes with us before which did not center self-disclosure.

This paper offers a self-reflective analysis of the impact of racial and gendered dynamics in the classroom and the impact of instructor self-disclosure on those dynamics. As teachers, we remained conscious and aware of the power we wielded over the students both spatially (we stood in the front of the class) and functionally (we held their grades in our hands).

Self-Disclosure

Students may self-disclose publicly on the first day of class when the attendance roll is called out and they are invited, as they often are in smaller classes, to introduce themselves to one another. Typically, students disclose their place of origin, a favorite hobby, or even some details about their family background. Yet for students of color and for those who are part of the LBGTQ community, a kind of enforced self-disclosure occurs as soon as they enter the classroom.

Many students of color experience a type of projected self-disclosure based on the phenotype of their skin tone. Asians, African Americans, Latinos, and peoples from the Middle East are readily scripted by one other, as well as by the predominant Caucasian culture, based on historical myths that have long been projected upon bodies of color. As a result, students of color are in a constant state of an externally mediated self-disclosure regarding their racial or ethnic makeup, projected upon them by a dominant White society. Walking into the classroom, students of color "self-disclose" in ways that do not offer them agency or choice. Instructors of color experience the same oppressive reality.

What happens in the classroom when the instructor does not accept an "enforced" self-disclosure script handed to them by society, but publicly and deliberately chooses to self-disclose racial, religious, and gender identities on their own terms? And how is this type of self-disclosure—from a power position of leadership in the classroom—then complicated by religion? In both our cases it was certainly possible not to self-disclose about our own religious affiliations or even, to some extent, about our ethnic identities. Doing so with deliberation was a new experience for both of us.

Intentional self-disclosure in terms of race, gender, and religion is a powerful teaching tool when it models for students the ways in which those realities can be negotiated in real time. Careful and deliberate self-disclosure allows the student and the teacher to experience the intersectionality of race, gender, and religious paradigms, which often remains hidden in the curriculum-laden material being taught to students. Presenting course content without personal reference of any kind can obscure the racial and gendered dynamics occurring in a classroom. Materials on gender, race, and religion remain objectified, and often separated from the lived experience of individuals discussing them.

The Course

As full-time faculty members at a public university, we designed our course, Religion and Power, as a conscious examination of ways in which religions, religious leaders, and religious communities create abusive conditions. We wanted to consider how all three could disempower and subjugate, ally with power to oppress, and become part of legal, political, social, and economic systems of control. Our intention was to focus on Christian and Jewish traditions, though we also invited a guest speaker to address our course themes in regard to Islam. We co-taught most of the bi-weekly, seventy-five-minute

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class sessions together, responding and reacting to each other's lectures, assignments, and jointly-planned activities throughout. After each class, we reviewed and discussed our own impressions of students' reactions to the course material and to our own lectures. We also made it a regular practice to go over our interactions with one another.

Our decision to use self-disclosure as a teaching tool within the course was guided by the following considerations: (1) How self-disclosure on our parts would affect how our students learned; (2) How self-disclosure would work to reflect realities and challenges in our institutional culture (UNC Charlotte); and (3) How self-disclosure might speak to the (then) historical moment. We decided to start the processes of self-disclosure around race, religion, and gender, beginning with ourselves, on the first day. During the first three sessions of our semester we discovered that issues of race, religion, and gender would permeate our classroom experience—in part because of self-disclosure.

Only one of us could be present on the first day of class. I (Moore) led that first day, self-disclosing my racial and religious background (Black and Christian) to students, but not my colleague's background. This was a curious response on my part as Thiede had given me her express permission to tell the students of her racial and religious background in her absence. My reluctance to disclose Thiede's background was apparent during the class discussion that followed. Students were assigned a small group activity in which they were to pay attention to gathering as a diverse community. The majority of students segregated themselves along a Black-White binary, while Latino and Asian students congregated in another group. First, students were to write down three racial stereotypes that came to mind when they thought of African Americans, Asians, Latinos, Arab Americans, and Whites. Thereafter, each group shared their lists aloud via a team captain.

Again, though I (Moore) had disclosed my racial and religious background to the students, I did not openly list or invite students to address the racial and religious stereotypes of Jewish people. Even as students openly expounded upon a plethora of readily available stereotypes and racially-loaded associations—such as Caucasians as rich and Protestant, Arab Americans as Muslim and terrorists, and Latinos as Mexican and Catholic—neither the students nor the myself discussed issues of anti-Semitism or Judaism during that class. Given that our university—and, in fact, the country as a whole—is dominated by a Christian majority, this is not particularly surprising.

When Thiede and I spoke later, we discovered that each of us had become acutely aware of concerns around speaking for one another or about one another. It was not the last time the work of co-teaching would result in extended after-class conversations about how each of us negotiated and mediated our racial-religious differences, both in and outside of the classroom. We wondered what might have happened had a Jewish and White instructor been the sole teacher, introducing herself as such and then leading a class activity about race and religion in America. Would the typical Black-White binary—a binary many American students and instructors are familiar with—have been disrupted? When no self-disclosure of a given "other" is possible, does that other simply fail to exist? In other words, if there is no Jew in the classroom, does a Jew exist for either students or teachers? Racial and religious diversity can hardly be discussed in terms of personal experience when so few instructors self-disclose such identities openly in their classrooms in the first place. It is worth noting that our student population is—at least at UNCC—more racially diverse than the full-time faculty by far (Whites constitute 75 percent of the teaching population).

We opened the second class meeting (when we were both present) by speaking about our decision to self-disclose—in particular regarding race and religion. We stated that our subject matter for the semester was chosen to reflect and mirror our own multiple and intersecting identities and spoke specifically to the contents of the syllabus. We then described how we identified in terms of gender, race, and religion. I (Moore) noted that I had not described Thiede's background during the first class and had not directed students to include stereotypes of Jews and Judaism. Thiede then articulated ways in which her Jewishness could be hidden. As a White woman, she noted that she could easily have taught the previous class without introducing either Jewishness or Jewish experience into the class discussion. I added that my own light-skinned appearance could affect people's expectations of my "blackness" as a self-identified African American (was she Black or "mixed"?). We then asked our students to identify where they stood in relation to our material and class discussions in terms of race, religion, gender, and class. Thus, our second session became an exercise in modeling—and inviting—self-disclosure.

Gender became a salient category after our third class. We had invited a White male guest speaker to discuss effective reading skills with our students. Both of us noticed that all of our students—both male and female, from all ethnic groups—seemed more attentive to the male teacher than they had been in the first two classes. This was particularly obvious when the male instructor asked students to engage in various activities as part of the class experience. We noted that students listened and responded promptly to every instruction, where we had both experienced having to deliver instructions two or three times in previous sessions because students chatted amongst themselves or had to have instructions repeated for them. During the next class, we shared our perceptions with students. Some responded with an ah-ha moment of shock and surprise while others questioned our observations. A discussion ensued around gender, race, and "perceived" gendered spaces in the classroom. Students discussed their responses to the male teacher's instructions and acknowledged that we both had had to repeat instructions where the male teacher's directives were heard and followed immediately.

By our fourth session, we had discussed race, religion, and gender, as well as the effects of all three on the classroom learning experience. Throughout the semester, we spoke openly with students about our experience of class discussion, class language, and class reactions to the difficult topics we were addressing. Outside the class, we wondered if too much self-disclosure could be counterproductive and limit the amount of trust, safety, learning, and empowerment. At the end of the semester we were both convinced that it had not. The evaluations of the course suggest that students had embraced and appreciated our decision to teach with self-disclosure.

We were always aware that we were, in combination, providing nuances that we could not have offered as individual teachers. In every class we taught together, we consciously addressed our multiple identities and how they impacted our own reading of the material we were teaching. If students had come into our class already exposed to racial stereotypes—such as African Americans being ignorant, Jewish people being untrustworthy, and women being incapable of exercising authority—then two female teachers—one African American and the other Jewish, both with doctorates, standing in a course as instructors with power over student grades—represented disruption of racial, religious, and gendered categories. This disruption was possible precisely because we explicitly and repeatedly named our identities and because we were teaching in concert. After all, as we told our students, I (Moore) could have presented to students as some unidentifiable "mix" of races. Had she not revealed her Jewish religion, Thiede could have been assumed to be another representative of the dominant White Christian culture at our university.

One could argue that instructors of color and women who openly self-disclose to students around race, religion, and gender can unsettle and refocus pejorative perceptions held by students. Teachers who choose not to self-disclose around race, gender, and religion may be unintentionally creating learning climates that preserve the unspoken "elephants" of racial, religious, and gender biases in the room. Again, in racialized and gendered societies, there is always some form of automatic and enforced self-disclosure that occurs in the classroom. However, when racial and gendered self-disclosure is modeled as the deliberate intention of the instructor, a disruption of the gendered and racial processes of "othering" occurs. It is a teaching moment for both instructor and the student.

Complicating Race and Gender with Religion: The Story of Hagar

Barbara Thiede

One part of our course featured a close look at the story of Hagar. We chose this biblical narrative because it was familiar to our students, all of whom came from a Christian background. Many of our students openly described themselves as practicing Christians. Our choice was also determined by the potential in Hagar's narrative to speak to multiple issues, including ethnicity, class, and gender. The semester included exploring Hagar's role as an important figure in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim tradition.

Our class included twenty students, of whom 65 percent (thirteen) were people of color who identified as Asian, Indian, Latino, and Black. Women outnumbered men, constituting 60 percent (twelve) of the class. Two students identified as LGBTQ.

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We disclosed our pedagogical intentions for the Hagar unit the week before it began: We would examine the varied interpretations of the Hagar narrative offered by Jewish, Muslim, and Christian traditions, so that students could examine how those three traditions "read" the text and portray Hagar. Here, we clearly employed a standard explanatory model of religion. We would also discuss ways in which our various identities affected our perspectives on the Hagar narrative and asked our students to be willing to do the same.

A guest lecturer offered our students an introduction to Muslim traditions' reading of Hagar with comparison to Christian readings. Students learned how artistic representation elevated or denigrated Hagar and Ishmael in both Muslim and Christian art and how contemporary Muslim women had employed Hagar's story to fight oppression.

During the next class, I spoke to Jewish readings of the text. These include both a critical assessment of Sarah's treatment of Hagar and a vociferous defense of the same. I then asked the students to read together by working through the story, nearly verse by verse. We analyzed how Hagar's ability to determine her fate was affected by the use of power by Sarah, Abraham, and the Israelite God, Yhwh. Students explored each verse under consideration in terms of race, class, and gender. We worked to "map" the movement of characters in regard to their location and status.

I asked students to imagine that they were telling Hagar's story in the modern age. Who would the characters be? How would they look? Where would they work? Both African American and Latino students named the ways in which women of color, limited and oppressed, still work as cooks, maids, and nannies for White employers. Some discussed the history of sexual abuse of women of color by White masters. Asian students spoke of family members who had worked in menial jobs for White managers. This discussion elicited almost full participation from students of color and was lively and engaged.

During the next class, I presented material that I expected—and admittedly hoped—would unsettle the trajectory of class conversation. I demonstrated how Christian tradition had used the Hagar story to vilify and condemn Jews and Judaism, primarily using Paul's reading of Hagar in his Letter to the Galatians. In that text, Paul defines Hagar as the ancestor of the Jews. Her son was born "according to the flesh" to an enslaved mother. Jews, Hagar's son's descendants, were thus slaves by lineage and inheritance. For Paul, the enslavement of the Jews was defined in specific terms: they were enslaved to a dead law that had been superseded and made obsolescent by the advent of Jesus Christ. Sarah, a free woman whose son was born of a divine promise, is the ancestress of the Christians, who were, in contrast, freed from this dead law.

I explained how supersessionist Christian tradition had created a taxonomy in which Christianity was represented in opposition to Judaism. Jews became associated with legalism, materialism, carnality, and particularism (among other characteristics) in contradistinction to Christians, who were represented as soulful, spiritual, and universal.

Figure 1: ***Binary Oppositions in the Discourse of Christian Europe Regarding Jews***

Christian	Jewish
soulful	legalistic
family, clan	priesthood, hierarchy
universal	particularist
spiritual	material, carnal
chaste	sexual
all-embracing	all-hating

I explained the Christian teaching of contempt that emerged, in part, from Paul's teachings, and its impact on the development of antisemitism in European history. I put this history in context, describing resurgent antisemitism in America, which relies heavily on the trope of Jews as carnal and materialistic. I presented statistics demonstrating the rise in bullying at elementary and high schools across the U.S. during, and after the 2016 presidential campaign as well as the

rising numbers of hate crimes against Jews. I also mentioned that my own congregation had worried about violence and attacks because I had been singled out by a local right-wing and potentially White supremacist leader after I spoke at a protest after the Charlottesville rally of White supremacists in August of 2017. I mentioned that this was not the first time I had been targeted by such groups. I deliberately made personal connections to the history I described. I was curious about how students might respond to my self-disclosure.

Student comments immediately after my lecture continued to focus on negative tropes around Black and Latino people, essentially avoiding all the implications of my self-disclosure. Instead of staying with the effects of Christian readings of the narrative on Jewish history, students returned to the safer question: How did the Hagar story reflect their own experience? They scripted me largely as a White woman rather than as a Jewish woman. They scripted Hagar as a woman of color rather than—as Paul and significant Christian traditions had done—as a Jew. They appeared to have entirely avoided the discomfort of having to "own" how their own traditions had supported narratives that oppressed Jews.

In the next class, I noted that presenting material on Christian teachings of contempt was particularly challenging in our class. Under normal circumstances, I teach the history of antisemitism either as a course in its own right or as an important part of a semester-long course on Jewish history. In both cases, I have the opportunity to contextualize the material and to present it over multiple class sessions, if not for an entire semester. In this context, I was introducing centuries of complex historical material in a twenty-minute lecture. And, because I had openly self-disclosed as a Jew with direct experience of antisemitism, I faced an entirely different setting. As the only Jew in the room, I explained, it was uncomfortable to tell all other participants that traditions they had grown up with and, in some cases, openly subscribed to, had been directly responsible for the oppression of "my people." The response was muted; students clearly did not feel able to discuss what I had described. On the face of it, our students got "stuck" in the part of the process that was about themselves. And yet, I suspected that the power I had as their instructor may have caused a measure of uncertainty and hesitation: could students, in the face of that power, address the teacher's personal, and sometimes painful, history directly? This is dicey territory.

It turned out that students did not remain silent where the topic of my Jewishness and Jewish experience was concerned, however, as the semester progressed. Two events appear to have played a role. We used the class before spring break for a review of our pedagogy. Students were asked to journal privately about the ways in which our decision to use self-disclosure had affected their learning experience. To the extent that students were comfortable doing so, we then conducted an open conversation.

We experienced this conversation as profoundly enlightening; it was a learning experience for us both. First, Latino students noted that much of the material, group work, and discussion seemed to presume a largely bipolar world, one in which conditions of Blackness and Whiteness "drowned out" the experience of Latinos and Asians in the class. Though the next class unit after spring break included material that intentionally focused on various minorities (specifically Asian Americans and Native Americans), it was clear that our course planning had privileged a conversation about race for half a semester that did not afford enough nuance nor room for all our students to feel safe and included. We ourselves represented a Black and White binary; we had composed a syllabus that reflected our own identities as a result.

Second, White students spoke honestly about the challenges of contributing to conversations about race and the fear of giving offense. Black students and White students engaged in a delicate and enlightening conversation that would have been unlikely weeks earlier—eight weeks of engaging discussion about Black history in the U.S. and addressing White privilege had made this possible.

The class discussion elicited an extraordinary openness about the challenges of learning in a way that truly reflected every student in the room. Later, in our own review of this class session, we noted that no one spoke to religious difference. Again, the only non-Christian in the room was one of the teachers; this may have led students to hesitate before addressing issues of religious difference. Much later the students demonstrated that they had been processing the outcomes of exploring the Hagar narrative in ways that surprised both of us.

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We invited a local bishop and activist to speak about LGBTQ issues and Christianity. In her opening remarks, the bishop self-disclosed as a gay and Black Christian. The bishop was aware that I was the only Jew in the room and during her lecture, she repeatedly asked me to confirm various data points. She herself insisted that the “Old Testament” was filled with “laws” that legislated all aspects of Jewish life. With dramatic flair, she listed any number of biblical restrictions with a tag line about the supposed consequences of violating such restrictions. “You eat pig, you are going to hell,” she announced. “You mix linen and wool, you are going to hell.” She delivered these statements as facts during her lecture.

The next day I assumed students would want to compare the bishop’s presentation to one I had given earlier in the semester, because although we had used the same biblical texts to discuss the same topic (biblical texts and homosexuality), our presentations had been quite different. Students focused instead on the bishop’s interactions with me. Two Latino students noted that the bishop had presented the class with exactly the images of Jews and Judaism I had described weeks earlier when I had lectured on Christian teachings of contempt that define Judaism as a “carnal,” “legalistic,” and presumably punishing religion. White students noted that the bishop’s use of the term “Old Testament” rather than “Hebrew Bible” was derogatory for Jews—a fact they had learned from me earlier in the semester. Students asked why the bishop had not explored New Testament texts in her lecture as well as texts from the Hebrew Bible, pointing out that there were certainly texts in the New Testament that were frequently used in the public debate about homosexuality. Finally, they noted that she was unable to pronounce my name, which they experienced as disrespectful.[1]

I admitted to the students that I’d been quite concerned about tag lines that were based on Christian traditions and interpretations of Jewish law as harsh and arbitrary. I also noted that her understanding of the texts she was referring to was not as sophisticated as I had hoped: there is no such thing as “hell” in Hebrew Bible, after all. I also acknowledged that the bishop had portrayed Judaism as legalistic and punitive. She also consistently referred to Hebrew Bible texts as “Jewish” and representing “Judaism,” which constituted, for me, a distortion of history; these texts were written for Ancient Israelites and they were not “Jews” as we understand that term. But my reactions to her visit were focused on what I regarded as her ignorance about ancient Israelite and Jewish history. I was frustrated about the inaccuracies that permeated her lecture. But, while I was clearly uncomfortable about the way she had tried to employ me to buttress her arguments, I didn’t expect our students to pick up on that.

It was surely easier for our Christian students to identify another Christian’s treatment of a Jew as problematic. By focusing on the lecturer’s apparent insensitivity or ignorance, they avoided self-examination around their ideas about Jews or ideas they might have been exposed to. There was no clear evidence that my self-disclosure had led to any personal self-evaluation around religious difference on their part. I do suspect that there may have been personal awareness that they did not reveal directly; certainly the reaction to the bishop’s presentation was the most nuanced response to religious differences we experienced during the semester. If there had been no Jew in the room, and if I had not self-disclosed, my students might not have experienced any cognitive dissonance during the guest lecture.

CONCLUSION

Though, on the face of it, our students seemed primarily to focus on their own concerns and identities in relationship to the material presented, they did sometimes find their way into the experiences of others. This was particularly true in their conversations with one another about the different identities they themselves represented. Moreover, the reaction of a classroom of students who came from Christian backgrounds to what seemed to be Christian stereotyping of a Jew was salient and important for us: it demonstrated that the teachers’ pedagogical intent and conscious self-disclosure did not uniformly result in mere “me first, me too” learning outcomes.

We hope to teach the course again. We would like to create concrete measures around the issues we explored in this trial version of the course. We hope to establish evaluative tools to help us understand what happens in the minds of our

1 I did not experience disrespect in the bishop’s inability to pronounce my last name correctly. Few people do pronounce it correctly.

students and ourselves. Disclosure can contribute to a classroom environment which promotes trust, safety, learning, empowerment, connection, and community. Self-disclosure can elicit both comfort and discomfort for us and our students. Indeed, it did.

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ARTICLE

Communicative Methods for Teaching Biblical Hebrew

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ABSTRACT

The field of Second Language Acquisition has long since reached consensus that the most effective way to teach a foreign language is through "Communicative Methods" that immerse students in the language as soon and as fully as possible, requiring them to hear and speak—not translate—the new language. Are there lessons from this we can learn for teaching classical languages such as Greek and Hebrew? Below is an edited transcript of a panel sponsored by the National Association of Professors of Hebrew at the 2017 conference of the Society of Biblical Literature. The publication of Paul Overland's textbook, *Learning Biblical Hebrew Interactively* (2016), provided the occasion for a group of Hebrew language instructors to reflect together on the challenges and possibilities of Second Language Acquisition communicative methods for teaching Biblical Hebrew.

KEYWORDS

second language acquisition methods, aural and oral immersion, Greek, Hebrew, language pedagogy, communicative language teaching, multiple intelligences, brain-based learning, learning styles

Communicative Language Teaching Reduces Barriers to Learning Biblical Languages

Paul Overland

Two barriers deter students who contemplate learning biblical languages: impracticality (doubts of usefulness) and intimidation (fears related to language learning). Modern language instructors have successfully reduced these barriers, owing largely to an approach known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

CLT takes the following approach.[1] For modern language learning to be useful, the learner should be able to negotiate everyday experiences when he or she travels to the region of that language. Buying transit tickets and groceries, meeting one's neighbors, interviewing for employment, expressing likes and dislikes, asking directions—the traveler will want to be prepared to navigate communicative exchanges such as these—hence the title, "Communicative Language Teaching." While learning grammar and vocabulary remains vital, in the CLT classroom they serve the greater goal of achieving communicative competence. As they use the language to execute practical functions, students acquire the language more deeply, thus achieving greater automaticity.[2]

Fortunately, gains realized through CLT are not limited to those learning modern languages. They can benefit classical language learners as well (for the purposes of this article, "classical" refers to any language with no living native speakers). Thus, the American Classical League (2020) has embraced standards matching those of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. The following paragraphs summarize how modern approaches to language teaching (principally CLT) are reducing the learner-barriers of intimidation and perceived impracticality, with examples drawn from an introductory textbook for Classical Hebrew, *Learning Biblical Hebrew Interactively* (Overland 2016).[3]

Learners are not the only persons affected by intimidation and concerns about impracticality. When considering transitioning to a CLT approach, instructors similarly may hesitate, registering a sense of intimidation in the face of an unfamiliar pedagogy, and concern of potential impracticality. After exploring solutions for learners, this article will consider solutions for instructors as well. This will be followed by an overview of a textbook offering a CLT approach to Biblical Hebrew.

Lowering Barriers for Learners

The Barrier of Intimidation

Consider first how CLT reduces the barrier of intimidation—that anxiety sensed by many when contemplating study of any foreign language. CLT reduces intimidation through two principal means: kindling learner interest and supplying context. Each of these helps to lower a student's affective filter, thereby increasing receptivity to language learning.

Learners find language learning engaging when it enables them to exchange information about topics of interest to themselves. Consequently, CLT orients learning around actual communication (the exchange of messages and ideas). This contrasts with approaches such as the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), which instead concentrates on textual analysis through parsing and consulting rules of grammar.

1 For a more complete introduction to CLT, see Brumfit and Johnson (1979), Lee and VanPatten (2003), Savignon (1997), Tarone and Yule (1989), and Wong (2005). Resources focusing on second language literacy include Grabe and Stroller (2006) and Urquhart and Weir (1998).

2 Automaticity refers to the ability to understand and compose messages directly in the target language, without recourse to one's native language for decoding.

3 *Learning Biblical Hebrew Interactively* (Overland 2016) hereafter abbreviated *LBHI*. This textbook grew out of the Communicative Hebrew Learning and Teaching Project (Cohelet Project), a three-year collaboration funded by the Wabash Center. For a description of the Cohelet Project, please see Overland, Fields, and Noonan (2011).

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CLT optimizes a learner's interest by encouraging communication in four ways. First, each CLT lesson enables learners to perform an activity connected with everyday life, such as introducing themselves to a classmate and learning that classmate's name. In contrast, each GTM lesson focuses on language analysis—introducing successive morphological, grammatical, or syntactic components of the language being learned in the target language (abbreviated L2).

Although vocabulary and grammar remain essential to a CLT language-learning experience, it is the communicative activity (such as self-introduction) which will occupy the foreground of a given lesson.[4] Those elements of vocabulary and grammar necessary for engaging the intended communicative activity now serve as means to a communicative end, rather than comprising the end itself.[5]

Second, a CLT course kindles learner interest by ensuring that the learner controls the outcome of his or her L2 communication. Consequently, the messages that students exchange carry a measure of authenticity, called "meaningful communication." CLT avoids messages that, while grammatically accurate, lack any connection with actual life (known in CLT as "display sentences").

CLT achieves authenticity by posing L2 questions that invite response by selecting from among multiple correct answers. Thus, if inquiring what activities a learner enjoys, response options encompass a range (e.g., eating, traveling, talking, running) from which the learner may choose, forming a grammatically correct response.[6]

A third aspect of kindling learner interest involves the use of realia and pictorial illustrations. By positioning a simple visual aid such as a plastic fish beneath a desk, an otherwise static display sentence such as, "The fish is under the table," can become a meaningful communication.[7] The learners observe that the fish actually has been placed under a table. By giving one of the class members a second, smaller fish, one could easily employ meaningful communication to teach the comparative: "Your fish is smaller than my fish."

The fourth feature kindling learner interest involves the use of L2 stories (see Adair-Hauk, Donato, and Cuomo-Johansen 2005, 198-213). Stories ignite a sense of curiosity as successive episodes unfold. Learners subconsciously wonder, "What will happen next to the fleeing, drowning prophet?" As increased curiosity draws learners into the story, their sense of fear over language learning proportionately fades. L2 becomes a vehicle enabling them to reach a desirable end. If illustrations accompany a story, then a learner's interest increases all the more, further lowering the barrier of intimidation.

A rather comprehensive example integrating language-learning with a multiple-episode story may be seen in the *LBHI* textbook, with its serialized story spread over eleven units, illustrated by over 230 sketches.[8] Successive episodes of the story integrate the vocabulary and grammar resident within the corresponding lesson module. In addition, dialogic exchanges embedded within the storyline often model those communicative activities that students will engage in that same module. Thus, if an activity will train students to report what their group of friends plans to do later that day, within the corresponding story episode several of the characters will describe what they are planning to do.[9]

In addition to reducing a sense of language-learning intimidation by kindling learner interest, CLT lessens anxiety by broadening the context within which the learner encounters L2 elements. CLT supplies context in three ways.[10]

4 CLT courses are organized around a what is known as a "functional syllabus," referring to practical communication tasks (functions) which students will learn to perform during the course (such as introducing oneself, and other everyday tasks described above). A functional syllabus contrasts with the "grammatical syllabus" typical for GTM courses. Instead of occupying center-stage, grammar now serves the goal of achieving communicative competence. Although literacy remains the end-goal for students of classical languages (not learning to ask directions or buy groceries), nevertheless, the "interest factor" kindled through hands-on language activities remains a prominent asset in the classical language classroom that embraces a CLT approach. As the course progresses, the activities themselves will suitably shift toward facilitating L2 conversations centered around literary observations arising from the biblical text.
5 For a sample communicative activity, please see the self-introduction exercise in *LBHI* §1.1.ט [tet], I:88–89.
6 For an example, please see *LBHI* §3.1.א. [*alef*], I:182–4.
7 Cf. LBHI §2.4.ב. [*bet*], I:153–5.
8 I.S. Paul Nation observes that an accompanying picture assists learning vocabulary since the picture leads to "mental elaboration that deepens or enriches the level of processing" of the target lexeme (2001, 69).
9 E.g., *LBHI* Jonah Episode 5.1 and activity §5.1.ג. [*gimel*], I:317–22.
10 Since certain elements that kindle learner interest also contribute to context, what follows at times will overlap what was described above.

The first example of context has already been encountered: weaving vocabulary and syntax into a serialized story. When woven into a story, new vocabulary no longer exists in sterile isolation. When memorizing the verb "to sit," learners will recall that in the story a sailor invited a prophet to board his vessel and then sit down. When learning the noun "water," they may remember the story dialogue where a passenger asked a crew member for a drink of water. To provide context for participles, the characters in the story may describe various activities that round out their respective occupations.[11] Thus vocabulary gains dynamic context.

Second, context may be supplied by providing a large number of examples illustrative of a particular L2 form. When introducing the *3mpl* conjugation of the *yiqtol* (imperfect) tense / aspect, a CLT approach will "flood" the learner with multiple verbs in that specific conjugation. This enables students to focus on features that characterize that particular form (a principle known as "focus on form").[12] In contrast, the GTM would not limit focus to one form at a time, but would present a complete paradigm at once (e.g., a full verb paradigm of the *qatal* / perfect conjugation). Further, GTM would supply a modicum of illustrative verbs, rather than flooding the learner with a large volume of examples.

Third, modern language textbooks foster awareness of context by supplying brief insights concerning the indigenous culture where the L2 originates. In classical language textbooks this can take the form of concise articles about city defenses as part of a unit introducing the words "gate" and "wall." Such articles are well-suited to enrichment with photos.[13]

The Barrier of Impracticality

Consider next how CLT overcomes the barrier of impracticality—the assumption that language skills will not yield sufficient practical benefit to justify the time needed to learn them. CLT embraces a user-centered, design thinking approach to teaching. After determining those specific ends for which the student wishes to acquire the language, CLT packages the language training to achieve those discrete aims. In the case of modern languages, practical ends may include purchasing transit passes, asking directions, interviewing for a job, or discussing current events.

For classical languages, the learning goal focusses on literacy, not conversational ability. Within literacy, the goal further focuses on the ability to form higher-order observations (i.e., the ability to detect nuances and literary structures, discernment of which depend on the reader's ability to notice lexical, thematic, and syntactic emphases that often go untranslated). Equipped with these sensibilities, the L2 learner can formulate his or her own independent observations. Furthermore, he or she will be in a better position to assess the validity of interpretations implied by Bible versions and encountered in commentaries. Especially when reading poetry (which in the Hebrew Bible represents 60 to 70 percent of the corpus), higher-order observations considerably enhance one's grasp of a text's message—a distinctly practical dividend of language learning.

If higher-order insights form the chief practical benefit of classical language literacy, how does a CLT approach advance that aim? CLT raises the learner's ability to form higher-order L2 insights by optimizing automaticity. As noted earlier, automaticity refers to the ability immediately to grasp the meaning of an L2 expression (written or spoken). With automaticity, one no longer must divert mental attention to decoding an L2 text, converting it to one's native language (L1) before grasping its meaning. As a result, more of the brain's attentive energy is freed up to observe nuances and literary structures within the text.

What, in turn, fosters automaticity? CLT explains that automaticity develops in two phases. First, the learner must receive a high volume of comprehensible L2 input—both oral and written.[14] So modern language specialists advise: "for progress in

11 E.g., occupations of sailors and a prophet in 3.2 Jonah Episode, LBHI §3.2, I:200–4.
12 E.g., LBHI §4.1.א. [alef], I:258–9.
13 E.g., an article and photo from Megiddo regarding casemate walls, LBHI §8.1.ח. [chet], II:138–9.
14 Concerning meaningful input Krashen observes: "The goal is to focus the student entirely on the message; this requires the use of topics and activities in which real, not just realistic, communication takes place" (1985, 56). Elsewhere he explains that "[t]he best input is so interesting and relevant that the acquirer may even 'forget' that the message is encoded in a foreign language" (Krashen 1982, 66). This contrasts the use of "display sentences," described earlier. Savignon affirms that "[t]he importance of meaningful language use at all stages in the acquisition of communicative skills has come

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reading, classroom time will be better spent in increasing proficiency and exposure to the spoken language generally than in attempting to teach comprehension skills" (Walter 2008, 470). Second, learners must generate a high level of L2 output, which also must be meaningful.[15] Consider first the need for L2 input.

In a CLT course, students will experience increased L2 input, both written and oral. They may encounter written input in five ways. First, within the instructions for each communicative activity the student will encounter L2 dialogue prompts together with model responses. For example, an activity may lead them to describe what they plan to do tomorrow. Both the question prompt and a model reply appear in L2.[16] Second, if the course embeds vocabulary and grammar in an L2 story, each story episode will supply considerable L2 input (in addition to verb paradigms and vocabulary lists). Third, story comprehension questions in L2 provide additional written input.[17] Fourth, culture articles may include more common Hebrew expressions pertinent to the topic at hand.[18] Fifth, a given unit would be accompanied by selected L2 Bible readings corresponding to that unit's content. Of these five, L2 input in a GTM-styled course will typically be limited to vocabulary lists, verb paradigms, isolated display sentences, translation exercises, and Bible readings.

In addition to L2 input of a written sort, learners in a CLT classroom experience substantially more L2 oral input than in a GTM classroom. This occurs primarily in three forms. First, oral input results from reading-aloud any of the forms of written input listed above.[19] Second, since CLT activities often are designed for dialogue, as an activity is produced in class it results in L2 oral input issued both by the instructor and by any classmate who may be participating. Even homework projects resulting in written L2 may be solicited by the instructor in a subsequent class, resulting in oral input for those classmates who listen as one of their group reads aloud his or her composition (Lee and VanPatten 2013, 195-216).[20] Third, according to the measure of an instructor's steadily increasing ability, he or she will supply L2 input through immersive classroom navigation interactions. These range from simple greetings, to taking attendance, to distributing or collecting homework.[21] As learners' abilities increase, the instructor may lead class discussions concerning insights arising from observations rooted in the syntax of Bible readings, all the while remaining within L2.

Beyond increasing L2 input (both written and oral), CLT observes that automaticity (and thus higher-order observations) follows as students learn to generate a high volume of L2 output—using what they have learned to carry out short projects using L2. Admittedly, at the earliest stage the "projects" may be kinesthetic, requiring L2 understanding but no actual output of L2. Thus, a student may show by manipulating objects on a table that he or she understands a teacher's L2 instruction: "Place the stone in the cup" (a method known as "Total Physical Response," or TPR).

Later the student will be able to engage more sophisticated tasks that involve L2 output. These may involve responding orally to L2 questions posed in class such as, "What did you do yesterday?," using L2 to poll class members concerning their preferences, or responding to L2 comprehension questions following a story they have been reading.[22]

Class navigation provides another occasion for students to generate L2 output with a clear sense of practicality. Such navigation may be student-initiated, such as requesting help by saying (in L2), "I have a question," "Please repeat," "I don't understand," or by asking, "How would one say [insert desired expression] in Hebrew?"[23]

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to be recognized by language teachers around the world" (1997, xi).

15 In order to be meaningful, output must remain to a certain degree under the learner's control, so that he or she may provide new information during the exchange (Lee and VanPatten 2003, 54, 121).

16 E.g., LBHI §4.3.ג. [gimel], I:285–6.

17 For the serialized story within LBHI, comprehension questions are available to instructors through the website (www.LearningBiblicalHebrewInteractively.com).

18 E.g., a brief article regarding hematite, spherical, and duck weights of the Ancient Near East, accompanied by photographs (LBHI §2.4.ה. [heh], I:158–9).

19 E.g., thirty-eight story episodes, numerous activity instructions, and over 225 Bible selections appear in LBHI.

20 Paul Sulzberger further observes: "Our ability to learn new words is directly related to how often we have been exposed to the particular combinations of the sounds that make up the words. Neural tissue required to learn and understand a new language will develop automatically from simple exposure to the language" (2009, 9). Regarding the role of aural output skills (silently generating the sound of what one reads) for the development of skilled readers, see Pressley (2006, 51).

21 For greetings and inquiring wellbeing, see LBHI §2.2.א. [alef], I:123–4. For additional classroom navigation expressions and conversation topics, see Overland (2016b).

22 Cf. LBHI §6.4.ו. [vav], I:429–30; §7.5.ב. [beit], II:91–2; and §3.2.ב. [beit], I:208–12, respectively.

23 See LBHI §4.2.ג. [gimel], I:273; §1.3, I:94; §3.3.א. [alef], I:221; and §2.1.ד. [dalet], I:113–4, respectively.

To summarize, biblical languages courses taught with a CLT approach will benefit learners as they reduce intimidation by kindling interest and by supplying context, while at the same time they enhance practicality by increasing automaticity. Whereas some respond to students' reluctance to learn biblical languages by offering simpler versions of the difficult task of language-learning, a CLT-styled course repackages the complete grammar and vocabulary of a traditional course into a more learner-friendly curriculum, enlisting as allies the learner's natural inclination to communicate meaningfully and to visualize concretely. As a result, a CLT approach makes it possible to graduate learners able to handle the language in a more robust and more deeply internalized fashion, than would be typical through a GTM approach.

Lowering Barriers for Instructors

Learners are not the only persons in the language learning enterprise who encounter barriers. For their part, instructors may feel intimidated by the prospect of transitioning to a CLT pedagogy. Again, the effort required for such a transition may make it may seem impractical. After all, these instructors already have mastered the L2 grammar, memorized a considerable volume of vocabulary, and may have taught a given language (such as Biblical Hebrew or Koine Greek) for years using the GTM. The prospect now of having to comprehend oral L2, or the expectation to compose L2 (whether written or oral) may place some among us in territory that is both unfamiliar and intimidating. The discussion that follows will focus on Biblical Hebrew, although the concepts are applicable to other classical languages as well.

Despite their accumulated skills, understanding aural Hebrew and composing in Hebrew (oral or written) will strike some instructors as overwhelming. Two solutions help to lower this barrier. First, instructors need to be reassured that they need not be L2 fluent in order to be able lead a communicative classroom with considerable effectiveness. The instructor need only control a bit more of communicative Hebrew than what the student controls at any given point. Since the student begins with zero Hebrew, the initial amount that the instructor needs to control communicatively is only slightly more than zero. Granted, when students realize they are encouraged to experiment with the language, they will occasionally attempt expressions beyond their present learning (and beyond the instructor's present control). This is an encouraging indication of student engagement, even though the composition may be incorrect. At this point the instructor need only affirm the attempt and respond, "We will learn how to say that, later in the course. At present, let's stay with the type of expressions and vocabulary we know."

The second solution lowering instructor-intimidation involves supplying complete scripting of all Hebrew expressions needed for conducting the activities associated with a given module. If the module calls for students to tell what destination they would like to visit when traveling, the textbook would supply the prompt question and sample answer in L2, ready for use. That much is available in both the instructor and student editions.[24]

In the case of *LBHI*, further aids appear only in the instructor edition. At the outset of each unit the instructor edition presents a unit overview. The instructor version provides a summary of the grammatical goals before each segment, together with suggestions for how to introduce it. In the case of activities, the instructor version routinely offers suggestions explaining how to carry out the activity effectively, together with a list of simple props that may be helpful. Finally, for the Jonah Episodes, the instructor version supplies an interlinear translation.

Although the various L2 scripting aids such as are supplied within *LBHI* may dismantle an instructor's feeling of intimidation, he or she may harbor doubts concerning the practicality of embracing a CLT approach. After all, have not many (including ourselves as instructors) fared rather well, using the GTM?

CLT responds to the question of practicality from both the learner and the instructor perspectives. Consider first the practicality of CLT from the learner's perspective. As laudable as is a track record of students who have learned Hebrew successfully through the GTM, this perspective overlooks evidence of a far larger proportion of students who would have

24 LBHI §2.3.ה. [heh], I:142–3.

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learned languages more effectively and efficiently if a Second Language Acquisition (SLA) approach such as CLT had been available to them.[25] Providing a CLT approach is more practical, from the standpoint of better serving a broader scope of students.

Consider next the practicality of CLT for instructors themselves. Instructors who already are proficient readers of Classical Hebrew, but who had not before cultivated automaticity skills in hearing and composing Hebrew, report anecdotally that, after beginning to teach with a CLT approach, their own Hebrew literacy noticeably improves. This will position them to form higher-order L2 observations with greater depth and frequency than before. Most would concur that such a gain is eminently practical.

A CLT Approach to Biblical Hebrew

Learning Biblical Hebrew Interactively presents a CLT curriculum for first-year Classical Hebrew. Following a presentation of the alphabet, the student is helped to acquire the language through a series of immersive, communicative activities that are ready for classroom use. The activities are synchronized with progressively more complex grammar and syntax, as encountered through instructional explanations and incorporated into successive episodes of an illustrated serialized story. By the end of the course the student will have had the opportunity to master a sophisticated level of literacy (including poetry and an introduction to cantillation), equivalent to the more rigorous among other first-year textbooks.

While the student learns over five hundred high-frequency words and encounters customary paradigms (including strong and weak verbs), and rules of grammar and syntax, the focus remains on internalization of the language through L2 input and language utilization (generating meaningful communication), rather than rule-memorization and accelerated parsing. The learning is multi-experiential, with over 230 illustrations and photos. In addition to over 225 guided Bible readings, the learner gains insight into the world of Classical Hebrew through more than forty concise articles on cultures. The instructor edition (paginated the same as the student edition) supplies teaching tips for each segment, enabling the instructor to employ the material with little effort.

A number of additional resources are freely available to students, instructors, and visitors through the textbook website (http://www.LearningBiblicalHebrewInteractively.com/student). These include instructional videos, vocabulary videos, culture videos, and Jonah Episode PowerPoint shows, keyed to each textbook portion.

For example, when learning the comparative, in addition to reading the textbook explanation and examples, a student (or instructor) may view a brief instructional video keyed to that segment. The video walks the student through that portion of textbook, highlighting portions and supplying additional comments to aid understanding (*LBHI* §3.1.ז. [*zayin*], I:193–4).

If they wish, instructors may refer students regularly to instructional videos as part of the homework process. As a result, class time may be spent reinforcing learning by reviewing Bible translations and engaging activities already completed as homework (a flipped classroom approach).

Early in the course, as students are growing accustomed to vocalizing Hebrew, the vocabulary video segments provide audio support to train proper pronunciation. These resolve any uncertainty concerning pronunciation and may be reviewed until the learner pronounces words reliably.

Brief videos introduce each culture article as well. In addition to audiating each Hebrew word found in an article, the video presents textbook photos in color (the print version is not in color). Whether examining Hezekiah's Tunnel (*LBHI* §11.1.ז. [*zayin*], II:321), Megiddo's gateway (§8.1.ח. [*chet*], II:138), a Phoenician ivory (§9.1.ה. [*heh*], II:179), a roller olive press (§4.4.ז. [*zayin*], I:299), Lachish sling stones (§7.4.ט. [*yod*], II:84), gold foil jewelry (§6.3.ח. [*chet*], I:418), or a Canaanite jar with dipping pitcher (§4.1.ז. [*zayin*], I:263)—the web clips visually enrich the culture articles.

25 According to a study by Deagon, 90 percent of post-secondary students enrolled in a classical course will learn more effectively in courses that take a CLT approach (2006, 27–49).

Also available on the textbook website is a full complement of PowerPoint shows corresponding to each of the thirty-eight illustrated Jonah Story episodes. Captions provide the storyline dialogue. By clicking on any line, the student may reinforce pronunciation and practice listening skills by hearing it read aloud. Since each show may be downloaded, instructors may more easily use them in class for reading practice or class discussion of a given episode.

Additional resources supporting instructors include course calendars, vocabulary quizzes, L2 reading comprehension questions, and unit assessments. Consistent with story-style learning, quizzes include illustrations, and assessments are configured as L2 stories. Resources such as these are available upon request through the textbook website for instructors who adopt the course textbook.

Paradoxically, the barriers of intimidation and impracticality that often deter language learners may actually work to the learner's and instructor's favor. When those barriers press Classical Hebrew instructors to utilize solutions supplied through CLT, then students stand to gain substantially. Due to the varied avenues CLT employs for kindling interest, a CLT curriculum will appeal to a broader range of learning styles (or multiple intelligences). By cultivating automaticity, learners will deepen their ability to form higher-order insights in the biblical text. The sense of personal reward fostered by such insights makes it easier for students to realize the practicality of their decision to study the biblical language.

Accounts of Student Experience

A student in Jennifer Noonan's online Hebrew course at Columbia International University provided the following account of his experience. This CLT course employed the *LBHI* textbook.

***Student*:** This was not my first time learning a language. I've studied both Spanish and Mandarin at the college level. I've also taken four semesters of Greek, and now I'm learning Hebrew. Both the Spanish and Mandarin classes had a very conversational, immersive, environment in the classroom. Then I took Greek in an online format.

My experience in Hebrew 1 online, using this textbook, was very different from my experience in a Greek 1 online class. The Greek class used a textbook through which we learned all the paradigms and had to memorize everything ourselves. The role of the instructor was really just in testing. But the textbook we used in Hebrew 1 and 2 was focused much more on interacting and using the language. I had to generate my own thoughts, put them into Hebrew, and express that to my classmates and the instructors.

I felt that having to use the language in those ways—reading it, and learning from it, and then also communicating with it, from a very early point—really helped my learning, and was much more similar to the way that I learned Spanish, in particular . . .

I found *LBHI* most helpful as I was learning a new topic in a chapter . . . the presentation was really helpful for that initial learning. As I went through the course, however, if I wanted to review a topic that we had covered a few chapters previously, I found it was a little difficult to navigate the textbook to find the grammatical information that I was looking for. So that was one frustration I had working through the textbook.

Earlier on in the course, I really enjoyed using the serialized artwork and story format. I found it very helpful. Maybe if there was vocabulary that I was a little less familiar with, seeing a picture sort of primed my brain to expect a certain word, which helped me learn and grasp the vocabulary. Then, if I was able to read the whole frame in the story on my own, I could look at the picture and confirm yes, I actually got this right. It was great having that immediate feedback, both to help me to read it, and then also to confirm that what I was grasping from the text was indeed correct. So early on, I found it helpful.

As we went on, I didn't stay on top of the vocabulary as much as I should have. I found that, as the story was incorporating lots of vocabulary from past units, it was harder for me to read. That was probably due to my own negligence.

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. . . Each section has a heading at the top so that you can read the Bible. That was encouraging: from the first days in the course, reading the actual text of the Hebrew Bible, and finding that I could actually understand what was going on . . . It made me want to learn more. It made me want to engage with the course.

Then, at times, as we moved into some of the syntax, and relationships between clauses in narrative preterit, and things like that, I found that I could see things in the Hebrew text, even in a first or second semester course that maybe I couldn't see in the English translation. I could at least be more sure of some of the syntactical relationships between clauses that, in the English, I could try to hope to understand and guess at what was going on. That was encouraging too.

***Bob Stallman (Northwest University)*:** After using this curriculum for one year with a class of undergraduates, one student told me how very helpful it was for him to generate Biblical Hebrew in oral conversation and in writing. Learning Biblical Hebrew with SLA methods helped him internalize and retain the language much longer and much more thoroughly than he had expected. He found the Bible excerpts at the end of each unit to be motivational. These kept the goal in sight: to be able to read the Bible more effectively. He found that element very inspirational.

On the other side, I heard from many students that they sometimes found the interactive exercises too complicated. Sometimes the grammatical discussions contained explanations that were a bit difficult for them to follow.

Overall, I think the thoroughness of the material and the amount of grammatical metalanguage may make this curriculum somewhat more suitable for graduate students, but I would like to hear from others about their experiences.

***Steve Cook (Johnson University)*:** I had one student who had completed a total of three semesters using SLA approaches. She wanted to meet with me over lunch and read through the book of Ruth. We spent thirty to forty minutes once a week doing that, using no English whatsoever. We weren't translating it. We were asking kind of circling questions about what was going on. She already knew what the book of Ruth said. She wanted to read it out loud, and be able to answer questions about it. We did that. We went through the whole book of Ruth. Then she stopped. For about a year she was doing something else. In preparation for this discussion, I asked her about that experience. She said that just a couple weeks ago she had picked up the book of Ruth again and read the whole thing. It just flowed so well. She had a lot of retention: in her ability to not just recall raw memory, but to actually process the language as language. She told me how encouraging that was for her.

Teachers' Reflections on Using Communicative Methods

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Discussion

Introductions

Steve Cook: I am professor of Old Testament at Johnson University in Knoxville, Tennessee. I've been teaching Biblical Hebrew since 2004. I teach undergrads, and I have used Dr. Overland's material with students for the past two years.

Jennifer Noonan: I've used this textbook three different times, each time in a summer intensive course teaching to a mix of graduate and undergraduate students, but in two very different contexts. First, I taught two summers at the Evangelical

Theological College in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. These intensive courses consisted of two, three-week sessions each summer for a total of six weeks to cover the entire textbook. The other context was online for Columbia International University's seminary, which was also a summer intensive: eight weeks each to cover Hebrew 1 and 2 (sixteen weeks altogether).

Benjamin Noonan: I serve as Associate Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew for Columbia International University (CIU) in Columbia, South Carolina. I've used *LBHI* for several years as part of teaching CIU's first-year Biblical Hebrew sequence, which spans two terms. I've taught this sequence with *LBHI* in both sixteen-week residential and eight-week asynchronous online contexts. My students for these contexts were both undergraduate and graduate students because CIU cross-lists its biblical language courses.

Bob Stallman: I teach at Northwest University near Seattle, a Christian liberal arts university. In the 2015-16 academic year I had a class of eight undergraduate students and used this material in a traditional semester format of three hours per week.

Teaching Grammar and Vocabulary

Benjamin Noonan: I found *LBHI* to be effective overall regarding grammar. *LBHI* covers all the basic grammar that a first-year textbook should, and even covers some grammar topics in detail that aren't always treated in depth by your typical Biblical Hebrew textbook: e.g., *wayyiqtol* and verbal disjunction (§§7.1-3), poetry (§§10.1-3), and the *Qal* passive (§11.1). The introduction of grammatical forms by frequency rather than the typical order of presentation is beneficial from an SLA perspective, although *LBHI* contains some notable exceptions to this principle (e.g., presentation of the *Nifal* before the more common *Hifil* and *Piel* stems).

Regarding vocabulary, *LBHI* prepared my students well for second-year Hebrew, which at CIU assumes the students have learned all words occurring more than a hundred times (approximately 425 words total). Nevertheless, the quantity of vocabulary in *LBHI* is a bit much because the textbook lists discrete conjugated forms deriving from a single root (i.e., "chunks") as individual vocabulary entries. The quantity of words to learn was often overwhelming to my students, and only once they became familiar enough with the Hebrew verbal system did many of my students find it easier to focus on learning the verbal root rather than all the conjugated forms.

Steve Cook: In some cases, the textbook introduces a grammatical element very gradually, and sometimes overly so. For example, the first common singular of a given conjugation is introduced in one segment with corresponding 1cs verb forms placed in the vocabulary list, while the remaining forms of that same conjugation are introduced in separate segments afterward, each also with corresponding verb forms in the vocabulary list. This conjugation is introduced over numerous segments and hence multiple weeks of class time. My students and I found this pace frustrating.

But on the positive side, this also means that vocabulary lists are populated by inflected forms, rather than being introduced only once in root form. Thus, a given root may appear many times in vocabulary lists, based on inflection or stem variations. It is helpful that asterisks mark the roots that have been introduced in earlier lists. If you're going to have inflected forms in vocabulary lists, this is the right way to do it.

Also, the *yiqtol* is introduced before the *qatal* which, depending on your pedagogical philosophy, could be a good thing or a bad thing. In hindsight, my students found that sequence to be a bit awkward, as do I. I prefer to start with the *qatal*.

Bob Stallman: I found it helpful that the book separated the vocabulary lists, distinguishing "Words for Responding" from "Words for Hearing." The words for responding were the higher-frequency words, which we expected to actually use in class. For the fall semester, when we covered units 1 through 5, there were 200 words in that category and 155 words for hearing, so about 355 words in total. And it's probably about the same in the second half, too. I compiled all of these into a supplement so students could see all of the words together. At the end of a unit, students can see all the primary words they should know, with the inflected forms taken off. This created a summative moment, so students could have some

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confidence going forward. As they reached into new material, they could solidify what was behind them. It's common for students to struggle with vocabulary; I felt that dividing it into those two categories and providing that kind of summary helped them.

Benjamin Noonan: The resources on *LBHI*'s website are a great supplement to the textbook. Of the resources available online, I made most use in the classroom of the PowerPoint illustrations for the serialized Jonah story.[26] I downloaded them and projected them onto the screen so that the students and I could read through them together. My students also made use of other resources available on *LBHI*'s website, particularly the instructional videos.

In addition, I also developed some of my own materials to make more effective use of *LBHI*. For example, I created vocabulary flashcards, keyed to the vocabulary for the different units in *LBHI*, in Quizlet. My students especially appreciated this additional resource.

Jennifer Noonan: I supplemented Ben's Quizlet with photographs that I took. This worked really well. In addition, I found the videos on the website very useful for developing the online course. I had to produce only a handful of videos to supplement them because the videos were already there, online, available for me to use. I could just refer the students to the videos for lecture material. That took a large burden off of me for the online version of the course.

Student Engagement and Response

Bob Stallman: There are quite a few Bible readings at the close of each unit. I didn't make an attempt to go through all of them; I just sampled a few to show how the lesson works in the actual text. The Bible readings tend to be isolated, pulling out verses that illustrate certain things, and that's a helpful feature. On the other hand, when I have taught Hebrew using other materials, we'll select a passage such as 1 Kings 21. By proceeding through a connected passage, certain vocabulary will naturally be recycled. In contrast, the isolated Bible readings felt a little more fragmented than what I was used to. But the payoff was that the isolated verses did illustrate vocabulary or grammar corresponding to what we had learned in that module. So that allowed us to look at an isolated verse and say, "Look at what's happening here. We just saw that."

Steve Cook: I found the Bible excerpts at the end of each unit to be one of the strongest features of the material. In the past, with other books I've used, I've often found that students struggle greatly in making the transition from the grammar book to actually reading "real Hebrew" (as opposed to the artificial exercises that are in the book). But Overland's book presents Bible excerpts all along the way, helping my students to make the transition to real Hebrew much more smoothly than they have in the past.

Benjamin Noonan: I also appreciate the "You Can Read the Bible" readings found at the end of each chapter. *LBHI* presents a good variety of passages, from a variety of genres, and thereby provides students with valuable practice in reading authentic Biblical Hebrew. My students found the "You Can Read the Bible" readings very helpful in this regard, and it certainly aided them in achieving a good standard of literacy, in addition to providing encouragement and motivation. However, these readings did not seem to facilitate the transition from reading to exegesis, which becomes a significant focus during the second year in CIU's Hebrew sequence, as much as I had hoped. This may be an issue with the structure of our curriculum as well as with how we define literacy and fluency, but it is an issue nonetheless.

Jennifer Noonan: The online class had a range of outcomes; it seemed to be dependent on the amount of time the students put in. For the face-to-face classes in Ethiopia, I was really pleasantly surprised by the level they were able to achieve, especially considering that they were learning the language in English (which was their second, or third, or fourth language) and that it was compressed into six weeks. It was just amazing how well they did over that time and how much fluency they had gained.

26 Vocabulary, grammar, and communicative activities in LBHI are carried along by a serialized and illustrated story, fancifully expanding on the account of Jonah, beginning toward the close of Unit 1 and extending through the last unit (Unit 11).

Bob Stallman: I found the literacy level was much higher than when I taught in a straight GTM way. We were reading much more quickly and comprehending things much more automatically. Other times that I've used communicative approaches, we'll read the biblical text—but then we'll talk about it more. We'll answer questions about it. And we do all this using Biblical Hebrew as our medium of exchange and try to just stay completely away from English. With these materials, I didn't have time enough to do that kind of an activity, which I think has helped general literacy.

Jennifer Noonan: In regard to retention, on one occasion I was messaging back and forth with one of my former students in Ethiopia and, in the midst of the conversation, she switched into Hebrew, initiating a Hebrew conversation with me in that messaging exchange. I thought that was great evidence of her continuing on with the language even though she was no longer taking the course.

Steve Cook: One thing I regard as a drawback with this book is that it contains an enormous amount of grammatical metalanguage. The students are still expected to process grammatical terms like "indicative," "volitional," "telic," "locative," "frequentative," and so forth. I would like, if possible, to reduce the use of such terms in a more natural SLA environment. At times, I felt like this material was trying to move things in a communicative direction but without really leaving the GTM behind. And so, in trying to achieve the goals of both SLA and GTM, it comes up a little bit short on both.

Jennifer Noonan: I have another story about a different Ethiopian student. We were translating the Ten Commandments and got to, "Do not make an idol for yourself." He said jokingly, "Well does that mean I can make it for someone else?" This joke shows that he was thinking along the lines of how to interpret the text; it was beyond the level of just getting the Hebrew words it into English.

Benjamin Noonan: *LBHI*'s communicative activities seemed to provide my students with a literacy level higher than that of my students taught with a GTM approach. This is largely because the communicative activities provided a real-life context for the language. My students appreciated the activities because they gave Biblical Hebrew a real-life context—in their words, using vocabulary and grammar within a communicative setting helped the language to "stick" better.

The communicative activities in *LBHI* also made learning more enjoyable. CIU typically offers its first-year Biblical Hebrew sequence in block format, which means that classes meet for approximately three hours once a week. This can make for a lengthy class session, especially when the class meets during the evening. But, *LBHI*'s creative activities made the learning experience more fun for my students. This in turn helped to lower their affective filters, enabled them to automatize certain processes, and overall increased their learning.

Nevertheless, I had some students who struggled with the communicative activities. Many, but not all, of these students were ones who wanted a GTM approach. This was especially true of introverted students, students with natural language ability, and students who had already taken Biblical Greek, which is taught at CIU using GTM. These students didn't like engaging in communicative activities when they felt like they had not already mastered the material. They didn't want to try using the language in a communicative context and instead preferred learning from vocabulary lists and grammatical paradigms.

Bob Stallman: As a teacher I found that I really needed to focus more on teaching students rather than on teaching Hebrew. I had to consider their learning styles. Some people are naturally reserved and responded to creative ways to draw them into the activity. Sometimes, despite having students of one gender in class, we would do an activity which required both genders, using fun props to play act. This lightened the attitude of the whole class and took their minds off the application of rules that seemed to stand between their first language and what they were trying to learn. So, a bit of humor and awkwardness actually helped with acquisition of the language and automaticity.

Steve Cook: A trick I've used in these situations is to give students a gendered doll and have them carry out the instructions for the doll.

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I would echo all of the positives that everyone has mentioned. But in terms of another negative of this material, I would note that the activities for many segments have instructions that my students have found difficult to follow. They come to class and say that they read the instructions three or four times and still couldn't quite figure out what they were supposed to do until I explained it to them. But I wasn't always sure, either. This was an issue that recurred a number of times.

But in general, the activities that required students to generate Hebrew and use it interactively were very helpful.

Another positive feature of the book is that from time-to-time Hebrew wording is even embedded into the grammatical explanations (e.g., *LBHI* II:236). As the book goes on, there's more and more of these sorts of Hebrew phrases sprinkled in that the students are expected to read and follow. I find that a plus.

Bob Stallman: I think the cartoon serialized story of Jonah is a strength of the book, just in its concept. Sometimes I would point to different objects in the pictures and ask, "What's this?" or "What is Jonah going to do next?" Most students said the images and story really livened up their experience of the language and helped them appreciate the comical and dramatic elements of the Jonah story.

Benjamin Noonan: I agree that the serialized Jonah story is another strength of *LBHI*. Reading through the Jonah story was a key component of my class sessions, and students responded extremely well to it. In fact, for many of my students, the Jonah story was their favorite feature of the textbook because it gave them a context for learning vocabulary and grammar. My students appreciated how the Jonah story is entertaining and creative, and how it also gives *LBHI* a coherent narrative. Overall, the Jonah story does an excellent job of incorporating and reinforcing the vocabulary and grammar learned in each unit.

Jennifer Noonan: In Ethiopia, my students would not let me end the class unless we had done at least one part of the Jonah story. Even if we were running out of time, they insisted. And so, we did.

Advice for Faculty

Jennifer Noonan: Each time I teach in this way, I get a little better. So, I would say you should start where you can. Start small. If you have to continue using your GTM textbook and supplement with something like this textbook's interactive activities, then start there. And each time you do it, add a little bit more. Don't expect to jump in and be able to conduct the whole class in Hebrew. Do what you can, where you are, and keep adding each time around. Keep pushing yourself. I think that would be my advice.

Benjamin Noonan: My advice is similar. I say: give it a try without setting your expectations too high, especially at the beginning. The communicative approach is probably very different from the training most Hebrew teachers—including myself—received. Thus, most instructors will likely need to implement it gradually. It can take quite a bit of extra time and effort to plan a communicative class session, and you have to allow yourself to make mistakes and learn as you go along. But, the payoff is more than worth it. You'll gain a greater understanding of Biblical Hebrew yourself, and you'll see your students become more fluent and enjoy the language more.

Bob Stallman: I think a major benefit of SLA is that it can be brought into the class in small or large doses. You don't have to make a huge transition to it if you don't want to. If you're more familiar with your GTM textbook, SLA can work well to supplement this. For example, talk about a Bible story using Hebrew for questions and answers. The class could act out the story with students speaking Hebrew lines. Also, the teacher can bring props from a Bible story into class and pass them around, practicing Hebrew. "What do you have? What do I have?" Put people in a circle and give each a different item. Then pass the items around clockwise, practicing Hebrew: "What did you have? What are you going to have? What is she going to have next?" Create an opportunity to work with a little vocabulary and see how students respond and participate.

Another bit of advice is to find ways to expose yourself to a lot more spoken Hebrew. It can be by listening to the Bible, but it can also be using the online learning programs Duolingo or Rosetta Stone. Biblical Languages Center has audio that works with pictures quite well.

In the flipped classroom, students must do a significant amount of work before the next class. It's helpful when the teacher finds ways to monitor the extent of their investment and reward that. For example, I've made handouts that identify each task I expect students to complete prior to our next meeting. At the beginning of class, students turned these in for credit. They liked having my expectations spelled out clearly and appreciated being recognized for keeping on pace.

Benjamin Noonan: One of the main hurdles I experienced in using *LBHI*—a challenge that has more to do with the textbook itself than the communicative approach—was the textbook's organization. As we've already noted, *LBHI* contains many helpful activities and other items in addition to the grammar explanations. However, the presence of so many different components often made it difficult for the students to find what they were looking for, especially if they were looking for a grammar explanation. In fact, the scattered organization of the textbook is probably the most common complaint I receive from students about *LBHI*. To help the students in their struggle to find material in *LBHI*, I produced grammar summary sheets and vocabulary lists keyed to the textbook's relevant sections.

Bob Stallman: I think that professors have different preferences for the way they like their materials to look and be organized. Some prefer diagrams and charts; others are much more text heavy, or prefer an outline. The assessments provided for teachers were really designed well at the conceptual level, though I reformatted them to make it easier for students to understand what they were being asked to do. That kind of adjustment is inevitable and I think it's far better to have something to work with than to make up quizzes and exams from scratch.

Steve Cook: When I was considering switching to a communicative style for teaching Hebrew, I knew it would take a long time to learn the new method. And this was indeed a hurdle at first. I didn't learn Hebrew through a communicative style. I learned with grammar-translation. I've been steeped in that for years and years, and I'm pretty good at it. And I taught Hebrew that way for a number of years. Making the transition to a communicative style was, and remains, very difficult. I don't feel up to it. I feel like David trying to put on Saul's armor, to steal Bob's great analogy. It's not just a matter of what textbook I'm using; it's a matter of switching approaches as well. That's tough. It's very tough.

Bob Stallman: Personally, I can say that as a result of communicative teaching, I myself know the language much better. This ease and joy with Hebrew encourages students to keep reaching for more.

Jennifer Noonan: I think for me it's fun and it really engages the students. In technical language, it lowers the affective filter so that students are not so nervous or scared. They can really participate and enjoy and engage and potentially learn more because that wall isn't up.

Bob Stallman: This took much less preparation time than what I've spent in some other cases. I love producing supplemental material, and I know I have to scale back because more is not always better. But I've found that, with the exception of needing to reformat a few things and providing some collated vocabulary lists and so on, pretty much everything was there in the materials. I needed to spend less prep time as a teacher working on that sort of stuff.

Steve Cook: The material in Overland's book is divided into units, modules, and segments. A segment will be identified as "4.2.*alef*," which can be a bit confusing at first; it takes the students a while to get used to that system of labeling sections. Also, I found that the modules and segments vary in length from one unit to the next. That's another thing that takes a while to get used to. A module may have three segments or may have as many as eight or nine. So, from one day's class to the next, students have to spend uneven amounts of time preparing for class. This affects my own prep time as well. But in comparing this book to other grammar books I've used in the past, my own startup time the first year was about the same.

Jennifer Noonan: I feel like there's a learning curve, and each time I go through the materials I do a little more and a little better. I started with some level of fluency, but not nearly as much as would have liked. I keep going through it, and the next time around I do it a little better. There are some things that I've decided that I'm just not up to. I'll just skip it. But that's okay—the next time around I'll catch it.

Bob Stallman: For a teacher who is trying to transition into the SLA approach for Hebrew, Paul Overland's book gives a lot of help though pretty specific activities. It models many kinds of learning activities and helped me to create new ones of my

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own that worked for the specific class of students I had during that semester. A teacher doesn't have to have true fluency to be effective at running an activity that helps students to work with a particular element of grammar. Little by little, I've found my own command of Hebrew growing beyond translation into generating fresh expressions. At the same time, it's been instructive to listen to my students answer questions that I put to them. Real communication is so helpful, even when vocabulary and grammar are in the early stages of development. This particular textbook provides a lot of opportunity for practice.

Steve Cook: I find the interactive exercises to be just plain fun. I've accumulated bags and bags worth of props and toys, such as plastic horses, swords, grapes, and all sorts of stuff. The use of props helps students to remember the vocabulary really well. I show them a picture of a family and have them point out who the "ach" [brother] is and who is the "ēm" [mother] and the "av" [father], and they remember that really well. It's a great way to teach vocabulary.

Responses

Paul Overland's Comments

Regarding the effectiveness of *LBHI* for teaching grammar and vocabulary, instructors' comments clustered around (a) a comparison concerning the extent of grammar and vocabulary covered by comparable textbooks, (b) elements of grammar and vocabulary within *LBHI* that reflect CLT influence, and (c) the value of supportive materials available in the *LBHI* website.

First, let's consider the extent of grammar and vocabulary covered. The instructors' comments concerning the extent of grammar and vocabulary are crucial, since an observer may wonder whether a CLT approach might either bypass essential elements of grammar, or leave a student with too small a vocabulary. Responses indicating that grammar and vocabulary covered by *LBHI* corresponds to what instructors would expect in a first-year Hebrew textbook (or a bit more, in some areas) confirm that the intended goal has been met or exceeded. Since lists of grammatical principles, syntax, and vocabulary frequency lists were regularly consulted while writing the textbook, such an assessment was expected, but is nonetheless gratifying.

Consider next the observations about grammar and vocabulary that reflect CLT influence. There are three. First, an instructor's appreciation for the vocabulary list distinction between "words for responding" and "words for hearing." This distinction helps students prioritize memorization, recognizing the difference between the need for output (responding) and the need for input recognition (hearing).

A second observation involves the gradual pace by which a learner encounters the components of a verb paradigm. According to CLT, in order to achieve automaticity only one element of a given paradigm should be introduced at any point (enabling what is called "focus on form"). Consequently, verb conjugations are introduced one person-gender-number at a time, not as completed paradigms. Such an approach will strike the GTM-trained instructor as needlessly gradual, but marks the path enabling the learner to achieve automaticity. To help orient learners, a full paradigm of the conjugation appears each time a new component is introduced.

In a third observation an instructor wondered why the *qatal* conjugation (in part connected with past tense) was not introduced before the *yiqtol* conjugation (in part connected with future tense). From the vantage of morphology, a good case can be made that a student will be able to memorize the *yiqtol* (future) paradigm more easily if he or she has already memorized the simpler *qatal* (past) paradigm. The fact that *LBHI* introduces *qatal* forms after students have mastered the *yiqtol* (albeit not by memorizing paradigms) illustrates that CLT (unlike GTM) is not driven primarily by a grammatical or morphological scheme. The team of Hebrew instructors designing what later became *LBHI* determined that communicative activities engaging a future tense scenario would serve students best. Thus, they sequenced activities (and grammar) in that fashion.

Finally, consider instructors' comments concerning supportive materials available from the textbook website. One instructor displayed the PowerPoint files of illustrated Jonah Episodes in class, while another outfitted the entire course in

an online format, taking advantage of the existing set of instructional videos. Such feedback is gratifying, since part of the intent was to create sufficient materials so that instructors would be able to run the course with little or no need to invent new materials for a face-to-face setting. It is inspiring to learn that some have built new materials to aid students even more (e.g., online course-formatting, Quizlet vocabulary tools).

Consider next the field observations concerning how well students interacted with the CLT approach of *LBHI*, and the level of literacy they achieved. It is helpful to distinguish between factors that helped students overcome a sense of intimidation (students in the United States with little or no success in learning modern languages tend to recoil in fear at the prospect of studying a classical language), in contrast to factors that resolved a perception of impracticality (that studying biblical languages is impractical for future ministry). Notice first the factors pertaining to students' feeling of intimidation: two assets and two critiques.

Two assets helped students overcome intimidation: the serialized story and the numerous activities. Observed benefits that derived from the L2 story included the following: (a) the story supplied context, thus simplifying the task of learning both grammar and vocabulary, (b) artwork helped bring language learning to life, and (c) comic elements within the plot lightened the overall atmosphere, helpfully diverting attention from the rigor of linguistic analysis. These results match what was anticipated.

As for benefits derived from L2 activities, first, the activities ushered the L2 learning into a real-life context. During an activity, learner attention focuses less on language learning, and becomes preoccupied with completing the task or exchanging information (in L2) as stipulated by the activity. Second, the change-up that varied activities bring to a class session makes the course more enjoyable for students—particularly when they meet in three-hour blocks. Again, these outcomes are consistent with expectations.

In addition to assets, instructors offered two critiques of *LBHI* pertaining to learner intimidation. The first involves metalanguage or technical linguistic terms included within the book. While on the one hand instructors felt the extent of grammar covered in *LBHI* met or exceeded what they would look for in a first-year textbook, on the other hand some would have preferred fewer technical terms. It is worth noting that, with one principal exception, *LBHI* seeks to relegate non-essential technical terms to footnotes and the appendix in hopes that they will not encumber students, while at the same time placing those terms within easy reach of instructors who may wish their students to become comfortable with the metalanguage. That exception involves the explanation of various modal nuances within the *yiqtol* (imperfect) conjugation (§5.4.א [*alef*], I:352–9). Depending on a given course's goals, some instructors may opt to withhold this information until a more advanced course.

A second critique relating to learner intimidation surfaced among certain students reluctant to attempt L2 communication. Some of these had grown accustomed to GTM from Greek courses, and, not surprisingly, anticipated navigating Hebrew from an equivalent pedagogical approach. Consequently, the very communicative activities which appealed to some classmates made other learners shy away. The principal factor underlying their reluctance can be traced to a fear of making mistakes. Fear of mistakes comprises an obstacle common to all introductory L2 learning, irrespective of language or textbook. Consequently, CLT instructors have developed various techniques to lessen its effect, including the following. First, students need overt reassurance that they will be praised for attempting, not penalized for failing perfection at the first try. Second, during oral conversation, student errors can be corrected subtly by restating correctly what a student said mistakenly (known as "recasting"). Third, one should explain that, absent students' language production errors, an instructor would not know what features of grammar or syntax merit reteaching or deeper explanation. So, errors benefit overall learning. Fourth, instructors should capitalize on moments of uncertainty (as when a student hesitates to respond, searching for a term or expression). By supplying students with particular L2 class navigation expressions, a student can remain in L2 even when searching for how to finish a conversational response. Most helpful are phrases such as "Help me!" or "How would one say in Hebrew [insert L1 word or phrase being sought]?" Fifth, instructors should model candor concerning the mistakes that they, too, commit. This gives students permission to make mistakes when attempting to express themselves in L2. Combined with an explanation concerning the gains documented for communicative language learners (e.g., automaticity leading to retention and higher-order observations), these techniques can help hesitant students engage communicative activities.

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Notice the factors that indicate, or facilitate, practical value gained from language study. The practical gains revolve around the skill of literacy, language retention, meaningful L2 communication within *LBHI*, and the gain registered through Bible readings included in *LBHI*. Two of the four instructors observed specifically that the communicative approach was responsible for a higher level of literacy ("much higher," in the words of one instructor), when compared with other students they had taught using GTM textbooks. The students "were reading much more quickly and comprehending things much more automatically." Since literacy constitutes the principal goal of classical language learning, the compact assessment offered by these two experienced instructors carries considerable significance.

In addition to literacy skills displayed while a course is in session, the ability to retain and continue using the language after the course has disbanded indicates quite persuasively that the student regards the language learning as highly practical. Such was the account of a student who initiated a Hebrew messaging-conversation with her instructor after the CLT course had concluded. According to students in another CLT course, the real-life L2 activities helped them retain the grammar and vocabulary (those activities made the language "stick," as they put it). These student responses confirm the effectiveness of CLT pedagogy.

Meaningful communication at the textbook level constitutes another component within *LBHI* that enhances a student's sense that the language has practical value. "Meaningful communication at the textbook level" refers to instances where, in the middle of a paragraph introducing an activity, a grammatical explanation, or a cultural note, the textbook will switch from English to Hebrew (e.g., II:236). This feature registered as an asset in the opinion of one of the instructors. The exclusive use of Hebrew for map labels illustrates the same meaningful communication strategy (cf. maps in I:564–5, also II:554–5).

Another element within *LBHI* that contributes to practicality derives from the selected and connected Bible readings. The "You can read the Bible" heading is found at the close of each unit. Several skill-graded excerpts follow, together with comments concerning the context from which they are taken. *LBHI* contains more than 225 Bible excerpts and two connected readings (those connected readings may have been overlooked by one instructor, who wished for longer readings). Notice again how involvement with Bible readings affected one student (as described earlier):

> That was encouraging: from the first days in the course, reading the actual text of the Hebrew Bible, and finding that I could actually understand what was going on. That was really encouraging. It made me want to learn more. It made me want to engage with the course.

That practical value derived from frequent Bible readings confirms the observation of one instructor who opined that "early and frequent inclusion of Bible readings is one of the strongest features . . . enabling students to make the transition to real Hebrew much more smoothly than they have in the past." Students' enjoyment of Bible readings is not unique to a CLT-styled textbook. The difference consists in the background comments that preface each reading.

Periodically the textbook author has observed instructors wondering how students may fare when transitioning from a CLT first-year Hebrew course to a second-year course in exegesis of the Hebrew Bible. One instructor in the present panel whose students registered strong literacy skills ("higher than my students have had when I taught with a GTM approach"), nevertheless remarked that their skill with Bible readings did not translate easily into exegetical facility. Since higher literacy that follows CLT training regularly makes possible higher-order literary insights, one wonders what are the aims of such an exegesis course. For exegetical courses that measure skill in terms of rapidity of narrow parsing, CLT-trained students may not perform so well as GTM-trained students. But for exegetical courses that prize the ability to trace themes across broader reaches of a text in L2, the observation of L2 literary devices, and automaticity that strengthens facility with translational nuances, CLT-trained students typically will excel. Perhaps, then, what is needed are exegesis courses conducted immersion-style in Classical Hebrew, so that students may converse in Hebrew concerning Hebrew texts (see Overland 2013).

The instructors' insights concerning how to begin teaching with a CLT approach center on three suggestions. First, begin gradually. Even while using a GTM textbook, begin incorporating a few CLT activities. Add a bit more each year. This is

sound advice. At some point, the instructor will reach a point of enjoyment and confidence regarding this partial CLT approach. He or she will realize that the added benefit and enjoyment resulting from transitioning to a fully CLT textbook and classroom will outweigh concerns associated with that shift.

Second, don't be concerned that your fluency with Classical Hebrew is insufficient to employ CLT with substantial benefit. Of those currently using CLT, few are fluent. This does not prevent them from realizing benefits. As regards fluency, the instructor needs to know only a bit more than the students. By using scripted activities, the need for fluent generation of Hebrew is minimized. And when students observe the instructor searching for correct words or expressions, they are emboldened to experiment with generating Hebrew themselves.

Third, take advantage of supportive materials available to instructors using *LBHI*. These range from weekly vocabulary quizzes (styled in a CLT manner) to reading comprehension questions (for the serialized Jonah Episodes) and unit-level assessments. The instructor may employ these as is. Or he or she may adapt and improve, according to the particular situation. Available to both the instructor and student are the web-based instructional videos and the Jonah Episodes PowerPoint files (with embedded audio of the Hebrew story). Finally, the Syntax Summary found toward the end of the second volume may support students who need a systematic recap of elements of grammar and syntax (II:395–409).

Looking Forward, Jennifer E. Noonan

In this panel discussion, we have seen how communicative and interactive methodology for teaching Classical Hebrew works in the classroom. So, where do we go from here? I would like to address two issues to consider for the future. The first is oral-preference learners and the culture of secondary orality that is developing in print-preference cultures and its relevance for language learning. The second is technology, specifically interactive language learning in an online environment.

The first area for consideration is orality and secondary orality. I would first like to define oral- versus print-based cultures, keeping in mind that we are talking about a continuum. According to Ong, a primary oral culture, on one end of the continuum, refers to "a culture totally untouched by any knowledge of writing or print" (2012, 11). Oral cultures communicate primarily, and often exclusively, by means of speaking and listening and not reading and writing. By contrast, print-based cultures, on the other end of the continuum, rely heavily on reading and writing (Ong 2012, 50, 55; Lovejoy 2012, 31).

Table 1: Learning preferences of students from oral- and print-based cultures (Moon 2012, 31)

Category	Oral Learners' Preference	Print Learners' Preference
Dialogue	Learn mostly in dialogue with others, often communicate in groups	Learn mostly alone, often communicate one to one
Oral Art	Appreciate clarity/style of speech through oral art forms (for example, stories, proverbs, songs, drama)	Appreciate clarity/validity of reasoning through interesting literature
Experience	Learn best when teaching is connected to real events, people, and struggles of life	Learn by examining, analyzing, comparing, and classifying principles that are removed from actual people and struggles (events are examples)
Holism	View matters in the totality of their context, including everyone involved (holistically)	View matters abstractly and analytically (compartmentally)
Mnemonics	Mnemonic devices like stories, symbols, songs, rituals, repetition serve as valuable memory aids	Written words can be recalled later; therefore, value brevity and being concise. Stories merely help illustrate points
Participation	Respond to a speaker and participate in a storytelling event	Read alone and listen quietly

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While the differences between these two types of cultures appear to be superficial, research has shown that the ability to read and write affects how people in these cultures process information and affects their learning preferences. The chart above summarizes some of these differences in learning preferences.

One of the significant things to notice in this chart is that oral-preference learners like to learn together with other people, in dialogue, using things like stories, songs, and proverbs. On the other hand, print-preference learners like to learn by themselves with a book, analyzing and categorizing. As a result, an oral-preference learner is more connected to real-life events and looks at the totality or the whole, whereas print-preference learners look at individual pieces and parts of the whole. Oral-preference learners prefer mnemonics, whereas print-preference learners assume that if they can find it in a book then they don't need to memorize it.

The significance of this chart is twofold. First, those who identify as oral-preference learners prefer teaching methods that are more interactive, that involve storytelling, that align more with the activities that are used in a teaching grammar as Paul Overland's textbook does. This stands in contrast to the more traditional GTM approach in which a student effectively learns by himself or herself, by memorizing. Those who are identified as oral preference learners clearly outnumber those of us, myself included, who identify as print preference learners. At least 80 percent of the world's population is made up of oral preference learners (Madinger 2013, 19; Lovejoy 2012, 31). Those of us, primarily in the West, who are print preference learners are in the minority.

The second issue related to orality is that in places like the United States, where historically there have been more print-preference learners, the times are changing. Print-based cultures have a growing population of learners who exhibit the learning preferences of what is known as secondary orality. According to Ong, a secondary oral culture is developing in the "present-day high-technology culture, in which a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print" (2012, 11). One might add to this list such recent developments as the internet, Facebook, Zoom, and texting. Ong goes on to say, "The electronic transformation of verbal expression has both deepened the commitment of the word to space initiated by writing and intensified by print and has brought consciousness to a new age of secondary orality" (2012, 133). Further confirmation of this development comes from a recent study by Moon of over two hundred American seminary students from a variety of cultural backgrounds over a five-year period (2012, 31). In this study, Moon found that slightly over half of the students had a preference for oral learning. If oral-preference learners really do respond better to a communicative and interactive style of language teaching, and if oral-preference learners really do outnumber print-preference learners, then one's teaching methodology should adapt accordingly. Interactive teaching is not just a passing fad, but it is becoming more and more necessary in our culture of secondary orality.

The second forward-looking issue to address is the adaptation of interactive teaching methodologies, such as those used in *LBHI*, for the online, distance-learning environment, which is an ever-growing segment of higher education. I speak primarily from experience here, having created an online Hebrew 1-2 sequence using *LBHI* for Columbia International University. There were a number of adaptations that had to be made in order to get the course online, including lectures, translation homework, and assessments. However, the big issue is, "How can we make online distance learning interactive?" Therefore, I will focus on the interactive discussion board forums I created for this course.

The discussion board forums for this course were asynchronous discussions that required the students to interact with each other in Hebrew; each had a prompt that was adapted from the *LBHI* textbook. For the first couple of forums, initial posts and replies were in the form of audio files. The students didn't have to do any typing in Hebrew. They didn't have to deal with the Hebrew fonts and the new Hebrew letters. They just recorded themselves saying, "*Shalom. Hashalom lekha*?" ("Hello. How are you?"), and then they responded to their classmates with another audio file. Once they became more familiar with the Hebrew alphabet, they were able to use an online keyboard, so they didn't have to master the physical Hebrew keyboard layout. All they had to do was take their mouse, click on the letters they wanted and then copy and paste the word they had created into the forum.

A different discussion board forum required that they ask two different classmates, "What did you do yesterday?" For this forum, it was important that the students identify which classmates they were addressing in the initial posts, so we could

differentiate masculine and feminine forms. Then the students replied with whatever they did yesterday. In another forum, the students had to ask a classmate, “What do you want?” Again, they had to specifically select which students they were addressing so that they could practice doing masculine and feminine forms correctly. Later in the course, during the unit on the narrative preterite, I asked the students to start a story using at least three of these verb forms. For the reply phase, they were required to go back and complete a couple stories started by their classmates, using at least two more of the narrative preterite forms.

I didn’t limit the forums to audio files and print, however. I also required the use of some photographs to help in this interactive forum. For one of the forums, the initial post required the students to choose two classmates and tell them, “Go to” something. This was early on in the class, with somewhat limited vocabulary, so posts included: go to a table, go to a chair, go to bread, and so forth. Then, in reply, students had to take a picture of themselves in that place or with that item. For another forum, the student’s initial post was a photograph of himself or herself performing an action with friends. In addition to the picture, the student had to include the question, “What are we doing?” in Hebrew. Again, they had to use the correct masculine and feminine forms, because a couple of groups were all female, which would require a different form in Hebrew. In the reply phase, their classmates had to answer the initial question, describing the photo using participles. For example, “You are eating.”

Looking further forward, we could go on to include videos. That is not something I did for this particular class, but it would be quite possible to require students to post a short video of themselves walking, sitting, or drinking. This approach doesn’t have to be limited to still photographs, text, and audio. Looking even further forward, an online language class could incorporate virtual worlds (an online 3D environment, populated by avatars) (Sadler and Dooley 2013, 159). These virtual worlds allow students to interact with other avatars by audio, by moving their avatar, or by text.

Technology certainly adds some exciting options for us. However, a word of caution: “The potential benefits of collaborative exchanges, whether set in the classroom or managed online, as always, depend more on sound pedagogical design of the tasks the participants are asked to perform rather than the actual locus of the learning event” (Blake 2009, 823).

As we hone our pedagogical skills for teaching languages and Biblical Hebrew specifically, we continue to look forward. Understanding oral-preference learners and familiarity with online teaching options will help us in that endeavor.

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ARTICLE

Understanding the Complexity of Identity in Yehud and the Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the lesson plan for discussing Ezra-Nehemiah and Persian Period Yehud. Class readings provide a helpful framework for looking at the complex identities within the classroom and learning about the diversity of identity and thought in Yehud. Primary and secondary sources illustrate that multiple forces shape identity. A class activity allows students to recognize and address the complexity of identity and the power relations that undergird identity formation. Students then engage the biblical text and discuss not only the complexities of identity in Yehud but also the dynamic processes of imperialization and decolonization. Specifically, students begin to see how the text reflects multiple groups, interests, and perspectives, sometimes in competition. Students also consider the issue of intermarriage in both Ezra and Nehemiah. Students often return to discussions of their own experiences of bilingualism, ethnic differences, race, and their mothers' and grandmothers' influences on their own education.

KEYWORDS

identity, Yehud, Persian Period, intermarriage, imperialization, decolonization

Introduction

Students are not required to take my undergraduate course, Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, but it might serve as an "Ultimate Questions" or "Vital Past" Linfield curriculum requirement. Thus, I have a range of students who have different interests and familiarity with the biblical texts or religious students; students might be religious studies majors or minors, they might be taking this religious studies class to fulfill a liberal arts curriculum requirement, or they might simply be interested in taking this course for an elective credit. Because this might be the only religious studies course students take, I tend to foreground student need, learning, and development over pushing the content of the course. I tend to be mindful of how students learn, what they need in a liberal arts "core curriculum" course, and when material content can serve the larger goals and purposes of a liberal arts higher education (critical reasoning, self-reflection, understanding diversity, effective communication, and so forth).

As I approach the end of the semester at least three realities shape my situation. First, and despite repeated course lessons stressing the contrary, many students might still assume, even in the twilight of this introductory course in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, that the biblical text contains monolithic perspectives and clear, consistent reasoning and practices. It is the Bible, after all! Second, some students, especially those who have no confessional attachment to the text, might still feel distant from the biblical text, having a difficult time seeing how this ancient text connects to their lives. Third, an interest in identity formation.

Both the general context of higher education today and my specific context at Linfield University provide opportunities for closely considering the complexities of identify formation. Linfield is a small university located in the Willamette Valley and wine country of Oregon. The college boasts a strong liberal arts core, but the school primarily attracts students who want to enter into business, nursing, or education professions. Many students also come to Linfield to participate in our successful Division 3 athletics programs. Students are typically full-time and of traditional college age. At the same time, institutions like Linfield are enrolling more and more first-generation college students, persons of color, bilingual and multilingual students, students with significant financial need who are fearful of accumulating debt, students with significant emotional, mental, physical, and academic need or assistance, and so on. As a result, many of the factors that shape students' lives become a focal point of our class discussions.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah might be the perfect texts to utilize as a vehicle for student conversations about the complexity of identity. Through these texts, students address the first two elements of the situation as they consider the multiple perspectives and inconsistent argumentation about the issue of intermarriage in the Bible; they also experience how the texts might be relevant to their lives, regardless of confessional affiliation. Ezra-Nehemiah texts, as well as secondary sources on Persian Period Yehud, provide important fodder for discussing the complexities inherent in determining identity. The question arises, how might students better understand identify formation in light of Ezra-Nehemiah and Persian Yehud?

If we can highlight the issues inherent in discerning identity in Ezra-Nehemiah and Yehud, students will not only better understand these texts and their historical context, they might also begin to understand some of the complexities involved in identity formation, particularly the impact of imperialization and decolonization processes. Students might also better understand their own identities and the hybridity that both modern imperialization and decolonization can create. These primary and secondary sources illustrate that multiple forces shape identity.[1]

The Set Up and Lesson

The course begins with general discussion of ancient Southwest Asia (the region and geography, religions and polytheism, cosmology, other ancient texts, and a basic timeline), and then follows the Tanakh canon. This lesson on identity in Ezra-Nehemiah occurs in the last two to three weeks of this one-semester introduction to Old Testament course. Students write two essays (one on a chapter of their choosing from *The Bible Now* [Friedman and Dolansky 2011] and a second on a topic in the Hebrew Bible of their choosing), and take a midterm that tests content, usually through the book of Judges. Students complete reflection essays for their final exam.

This lesson falls within a one-hundred-minute session. In the preceding class session, students will have read Third Isaiah and other prophetic texts from the Persian Period and will have been introduced to the Cyrus Cylinder and Persian policies of settling and rebuilding local regions in the empire. For this particular lesson, students come to class having read excerpts from Ezra-Nehemiah and two articles from *Judah and Judeans in the Persian Period*. These are "Constructions of Identity in Postcolonial Yehud" by Jon L. Berquist (2006) and "The *'am ha'ares* in Ezra 4:4 and Persian Imperial Administration" by Lisbeth S. Fried (2006).

1 Berquist argues, "Identity refers to the pattern that *multiple forces* produce" (2006, 63).

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The books of Ezra and Nehemiah contain descriptions of how groups of Israelites returned from Babylonian exile. The books contain correspondence between Persian officials and the Judean groups, detailed lists of families returning and participating in the building projects, accounts of threats to the building endeavors, and the reinstatement of Temple practices.

Class Activity: “Who Are You?”

I lead the students through a class activity where the students identify “Who they are.” Using PowerPoint slides, I ask a series of questions. First, I ask, “Who are you? Without thinking too much about it, what are the first five ways you would identify yourself? What five identity markers immediately come to mind to identify who you are?” I provide two or three minutes for this. I then use Berquist’s (2006) categories of identity: Ethnicity, Nationality, Religion, Roles, and Language. I supply the following questions:

- What is your ethnicity?
- What is your nationality? Nationalities?
- What is your religion, if any? Branch/Denomination?
- What are your roles/jobs? What are your labels?
- What language(s) do you speak?
- Now answer all of these questions for your parents and your grandparents.

Answering these questions directed at self, parents, and grandparents takes a little longer. I usually give ten minutes for students to reflect on these.

In small peer groups of three, student then discuss their answers. They are also asked to reflect on the following questions:

- How do the five identity markers you listed coincide with the other categories?
- In what ways do you align with or resist these identity markers? Are you antagonistic to any of these markers?
- Are any of these identity markers determined for you?
- To what extent do these categories determine who you are? And do these identity markers fully encapsulate who you would say you are?
- How complicated or clearly defined are these elements of your identity? What roles are overlapping/contradictory?

Students learn about their classmates; articulate elements of themselves that may or may not be obvious to their peers; find commonalities and unique qualities in each other’s experiences, backgrounds, and families; and hear about struggles and challenges inherent in various elements of identity. These discussions take fifteen minutes.

We come back together as a class for about ten minutes, and I ask students to comment on their group conversations. In discussing these questions, students begin to recognize within themselves and for each other that identity is multidimensional and fluid. They see how sometimes these markers are predetermined and that they might embrace or resist such markers at different times in their lives. In this way, students begin to address the labels, roles, and power relations that undergird the formation of their own identities.

One Latinx student remarked that in her top-five list, she failed to identify as Latinx, and more specifically, Mexican. The fact that she did not list herself as Mexican was noteworthy because people often mistake her for being a Pacific Islander or even Asian instead of Latinx, let alone Mexican. In a session of a dozen students, with ten who self-identified as cisgender women and two who identified as cisgender men, *all* of the women had some sort of gendered identity marker ("woman," or a gendered relationship like "daughter" or "sister"), while *none* of the men had a gendered identity marker, perhaps highlighting how normative maleness is in our society. Many students remark on the backgrounds of their parents and grandparents, and that their families have lost or become distant from their heritage. Many of my Latinx students, however, comment on the value of being bilingual and how they have been able to aid their older family members.

As a segue into discussing the biblical material, I ask the students to consider what they know generally about the importance and formation of identity in Ancient Israel. Students will be familiar with the social organizations of family, clan, and tribe; they will have some familiarity with inheritance and marriage practices; they will have read stories that detail how the Israelites/Hebrews related to the Egyptians and Canaanites. I try to steer students to the recognition that Americans tend to value individualism and focus on the individual. But ancient people might not have thought of themselves in quite the same way as we do. The easiest way to do this is to focus on marriage: Why do people get married today? When do they get married? Who is involved in the decision to create a marriage union? How does marriage inform identity? How might this be different from what we have learned about ancient Israel? The individualized choices about marriage that many people make today do not look much like the reasoning and practices in ancient Israel. In this way, we, twenty-first century readers of the biblical material, need to be mindful and bracket our individualism. This discussion on individualism and the ancient world takes about ten minutes.

Hebrew Bible Group Work and Discussion

We then shift gears to focus specifically on Ezra-Nehemiah and the secondary sources. My hope is that students will be able to complete a close reading of the biblical text and discuss not only the complexities of identity in Yehud but also the dynamic processes of imperialization and decolonization. Specifically, students begin to see how the text reflects multiple groups, interests, and perspectives—sometimes compatible, sometimes in competition. The students study the "identities" of various groups, roles, and characters (e.g. Ezra, Nehemiah, the groups that they lead, the Persian officials, the *'am ha'ares*, the returning *gôlâ* community, and those who scholars have called remainees and returnees).

First, we briefly discuss elements in the articles. I use Lisbeth Fried's (2006) article to identify who the players are in Yehud. This helps provide content for the imperial context. I ask, "Who does Fried argue are the *'am ha'ares*"? For Fried, "The meaning does not change. . . it refers to the landed aristocracy of an area. . . . in Persian empire, they were the satrapal officials who administered the government" (2006, 125). They are the landed aristocracy, the real political power. And this is an indicator that the land is in control of strangers. I emphasize that clearly there were conflicts between various people: those who were already in Jerusalem, those returning, Persian officials, and others.

Then I move to elements of Berquist's article. I point to the first pages of the Berquist article and ask students to identify and explain the terms that Berquist says are problematic. For example, what does "Judah" represent? Does it reference a geographic region, a political entity? And what is meant by "Judeans?" Is it an adjective? A noun to indicate persons who have something to do with "Judah" during the Achaemenid Period? Who counts as Judean? (Berquist 2006, 53). I also ask, "What other categories does Berquist identify as problematic for describing identity?" This should be relatively easy for the students, given the exercise they have just completed on ethnicity, nationality, religion, language, and roles. I like to give at least fifteen minutes to this discussion that pinpoints elements of the two articles.

With this clarified context, I have the students reread passages in Ezra and Nehemiah in small groups. Students consider the problems with intermarriage in these texts for approximately twenty minutes. Students focus on Ezra 9, especially verses 1-4 and 10-15 and Nehemiah 13:23-27. If there is extra time, I ask students to look at Nehemiah 5:1-12. Before they break into their groups, I first ask students to glance at where these passages fall in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. In both texts, the issue of intermarriage falls at the end of the books, directly following a number of reforms, dedications, and reestablishment of practices. Then I provide the following questions and instructions:

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- What is the specific problem with intermarriage in each passage?

- What historical figure does Nehemiah use as evidence for his argument? Now read 1 Kings 11:1-4. In his interpretation of this particular story, does Nehemiah mention either his rationale for opposing intermarriage or the rationale within the particular story he cites?

- How do these arguments against intermarriage relate to each other?

When they are finished with their small group work, we come back together as a large group for fifteen minutes to debrief. Students note that in Ezra, the problem with intermarriage is that the "holy seed" has mixed itself (4:2). In 1 Kings 11, the problem is that foreign gods are introduced when foreign wives are taken, resulting in Solomon's heart being turned after foreign gods and not whole for the Lord (11:2-4). Solomon experiences and allows the introduction of foreign worship and practices. For Nehemiah, the problem is that the children (of non-Judean wives) are no longer speaking the language in Judah; they now speak a foreign tongue (13:24). Nehemiah cites Solomon as evidence for the problem with marrying foreign women. But he does not note that there is a difference in the rationale in 1 Kings 11 and his own argument for *why* intermarriage is so bad. In summary, while the issue for all three texts has to do with the problem of intermarriage, the rationale is slightly different in all of them.

In this discussion, the class returns to the Berquist article. Berquist focuses on the fact that Nehemiah is concerned that children do not speak the language of the people but instead speak various languages, and this is considered a key loss to identity (2006, 64). Berquist also points out the irony that Nehemiah finds bilingualism or multilingualism problematic in a text that is itself bilingual and "in which issues of translation are vital" (64). While his focus on language is helpful, because as Berquist rightly points out, "postcolonial studies highlight the role of language as a basic element of identity formation, maintenance, and transformation" (64), these three texts show a merging of multiple factors that contribute to identify formation, moving beyond primarily linguistic concerns. The examination of these three texts more adequately complicates the processes of identity formation as religious, ethnic, national, and linguistic concerns all intermix and ebb and flow in terms of their relative importance to the problems with intermarriage.

Conclusion

In the remaining minutes of class, students often return to discussions of their own experiences of bilingualism and their mothers' and grandmothers' influences on their own education. I ask students to consider which decisions they have made for themselves, and which decisions their mothers and their grandmothers made, regarding how their personal or family identity was formed. I then ask students to rethink: "What decisions were made for you? What is forced upon you? How are you autonomous; how are you not? How has this changed over time?" This helps students reflect on how the processes of imperialization and decolonization determine identity, try to categorize people, and how people are sometimes complicit, sometimes unaware, and sometimes antagonistic to these processes.

In closing, I take a quote from Berquist and ask the students to see themselves through Judean eyes, as they might imagine similar processes in their own identity formation. I insert the parenthetical phrases. Berquist writes, "Understanding Judean identity formation (and our own identify formation) involves complex analysis of multiple social levels (e.g. ethnicity, politics/nationality, religion, and myriad other complex social patterns/roles) with attention to numerous processes in which people internalize the forces of imperialization and decolonization" (2006, 64). In these ways, a fantastic interaction between the texts of Ezra-Nehemiah and the students' own lives fosters deeper understanding of the biblical text, deeper understanding of one another, and a deeper understanding of the processes that shape who we are.

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ARTICLE

From Multicultural Students to Intercultural Pedagogy: Creating *Convivencia* in the Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Creating an effective learning environment in a multicultural classroom requires more than attention to content and bibliography. I had to make the pedagogical move from the primary importance of exegesis to the indispensable need for hermeneutics. And not just any hermeneutical theory; one built on the very diversity I found in the classroom. In a word, I needed to learn to teach *latinamente*. I had to transform from being a teacher to becoming a host, gathering co-learners around the table, and recognizing and valuing the diversity already present.

KEYWORDS

convivencia, hermeneutics of engagement and otherness, intercultural community, *Latinamente*, pedagogy

At the conclusion of my Introduction to the New Testament course, I invite the students to a symposium. They prepare dishes from their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and I provide the paper products and the ever-important libations. The goal is simple: to create a space wherein these newer students can enjoy commensality, conversation, and conviviality. The more jaded of my colleagues might call this an end of class party. But this is graduate school, so I call it a symposium.

One symposium was of special note. After each student had narrated his or her offering, explaining the tradition behind it or the cultural significance, we began the parade around the buffet table. While we sat in the dining room and marveled at the heretofore unknown talents of our classmates, I was wonderfully aware that we were experiencing a taste of the heavenly banquet. Our Bible is replete with images of food and feasting: Passover lambs, manna in the desert, oil and bread during famine, bitter scrolls eaten by prophets, new wine in old skins, dining with reprobates, multiplying scarce resources to feed the hungry, bread and wine as meal, memory and true presence. How wonderful to be fed and satisfied by God's word and our bread.

But eucharist isn't just about eating. It's also about response. One of the seminarians who is from Vietnam had brought his guitar. He asked to play for the group. Though attentive, he had never spoken up during class. As he played, another Vietnamese seminarian sang a traditional song. He would pause to translate the lyrics and explain the differences among North, central, and South Vietnam. The applause was thunderous. The sound of understanding and appreciation, of connection. The guitar was passed to a Latino lay minister who sang a tribute to the mothers in the room. Two lay women from the Philippines quickly searched a neighboring student's iPad to find the chords for a national Filipino song. A Chinese seminarian sang of freedom and love. Another Vietnamese seminarian stood and sang in English in praise of God. Mexican, Vietnamese, Chinese, Filipino . . . the lyrics and voices filled the room. Beside me, a new student studying for pastoral Ministry in the Archdiocese was absolutely enthralled. She kept saying, "This is the church. This is the church." The spontaneous music fest concluded as a Chinese student intoned an Irish ballad, "You Lift Me UP," and the entire room began to sing. It was as if the prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled: "On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples/A feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines" (Isa 25:6).

While that gathering remains an emotional highlight in my teaching career, upon reflection I realized that the sharing of cultures occurred only after the course had ended. I taught a multicultural group of students as if they were all Anglos in my doctoral alma mater. I espoused the tenets of historical critical method, leaving the application to their liturgy and to their pastoral professors. I may have sprinkled my bibliography with international authors, but I didn't take seriously their contribution. I taught the old way to a new church.

And then I experienced an epiphany in—of all places—a faculty seminar. Professor Carmen Nanko-Fernández asked a question of one of the senior systematic theologians. "Why do we hyphenate theologies from other cultures, but when we refer to the dominant theology, we just say, 'theology,' as if it is normative and the rest are derivative?" "Huh," I thought, "that's true. Why do we do that?" I wish I could say that the older, white systematic theologian shared the same response. Instead, what ensued was an *apologia* of biblical proportions. To continue the biblical metaphors, at that moment something like scales fell from my pedagogical lens. I realized that I was teaching a multicultural group of students and I should be engaging an intercultural pedagogy. Thus began my interest in teaching *latinamente*.

Rather than setting my sights on the eschatological banquet, I turned, rather, to the here and now. In other words, I moved from the primary importance of exegesis to the indispensable need for hermeneutics. And not just any hermeneutical theory, but one built on the very diversity I found in the classroom. I had to turn from being teacher to becoming host, gathering co-learners around the table, and recognizing and valuing the diversity already present.

Intercultural community has as its goal "*convivencia*, a living together as community that is predicated upon analysis of the complexity of that living with hopes of living together justly and well" (Nanko-Fernández 2010, xviii). My first step in engaging an intercultural pedagogy was creating *convivencia*, which Latino biblical scholar Jean-Pierre Ruiz notes is "an expression that does not easily translate into English because it is more than mere fellowship" (Ruiz 2015, 113). The second step was setting the table *en conjunto*.

In the Matthean version of the wedding feast, the kingdom of God is compared to a grand invitation which the king sends out to his guests (Matt 22:1-14). When the invited guests fail to appear, the king widens the guest list (Matt 22:9-10). The least likely are now invited to the feast, but as the parable continues, "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt 22:14). An invitation does not guarantee a seat at the table. In my exploration of interculturality and pedagogy, I have had to elbow my way to the table, so to speak, privileging a particular way of reading that values the perspectives of the other.

The hermeneutical strategy I now use builds on the intercultural criticism espoused by New Testament scholar Fernando Segovia (1995, 59). His "hermeneutics of engagement and otherness" holds in creative tension the contextualized biblical text and the contextualized reader, in order to evaluate the contextualized interpretive results, reception, and aftereffects.

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> [The hermeneutics of engagement and otherness] opts for humanization and diversity—it resists both dehumanization, any divestiture of all those identity factors that constitute and characterize the reader as reader, and rehumanization, any attempt to force all readers into one and the same particular and contextualized discussion. Finally, it seeks to acknowledge, respect, and engage the other—it opposes any attempt, implicit or explicit, to overwhelm or override the other, to impose a definition upon it, to turn the other into an 'other.' (Segovia 1995, 72)

Such a reading strategy upholds diversity as a value, not a stumbling block. Ruiz notes that

> Embracing a hermeneutics of engagement and otherness . . . makes it possible to recognize that the diversity of readers in the world *in front of* the text . . . reflects analogous diversity in the world *behind* the text. (Ruiz 2011, 7)

With this hermeneutical lens, the particularity of the text and the particularity of the reader meet across the divide of distance, allowing Scripture to speak to an intercultural community. As students at a Catholic graduate school of theology and ministry, my students need a practical way to create this *convivencia*. But, as Ruiz acknowledged, "There are no recipes for engaging in biblical interpretation *latinamente*, no cookbooks or television programs where the top chefs of this craft share their secrets" (Ruiz 2015, 113).

Taking Ruiz's comments to heart, I had to start from scratch. In order to read the bible *latinamente*, I developed a reading strategy that builds on the table fellowship metaphor through the hermeneutics of engagement and otherness. The first half of the class session is given over to lecture, while the second is for small group discussion and integration. In the second part of the class, the students address four questions, pausing to read and reread the text under study at the beginning of each question.

1. Who's at the Table?
2. What's on the Table?
3. Where is the Table?
4. Are we all nourished?

First, "Who's at the table?" attends to agency. Are those with whom we read sitting at the adult table or relegated to the kid's table? As Nanko-Fernández rightly notes about agency:

> Representation based on undifferentiated sameness or uncritical accompaniment results in this case in a profound loss of agency for those communities already under-represented in the leadership of the church and in ministry on all levels. (2010, 43)

One way to assure that we are all equal subjects—including the biblical text—is to attend to: the reader's social location and the text's social location.

Each individual at the table is invited (though not compelled) to describe their social location, or as Gittins' suggests, one's social geography.

> People do not simply inhabit the world—they live in a particular world, where certain features like this mountain, this lake, this ocean, or this forest have a particular importance in their lives. (2015, 67)

The Maori of Aotearoa (New Zealand) include in their personal introduction the name of their mountain, river/lake/sea, founding ancestor, tribe, marae (meeting place), home location, parents, and finally their name. Ask a Chicagoan where they live and they will most often name their parish, even if they are not Catholic! Inviting those around the table to introduce themselves recognizes diversity and values it. Though the students are in the same group every week, they nonetheless "introduce" themselves each time they gather, recognizing that our social location is never stagnant.

The text's social location is another way of asking "What is the information about the Scripture that we need in order to meet it on its terms?" The students are to think of the biblical passage itself as an invited guest to the table, an other we know little about. It did not originate in our time, culture, or language. Its worldview is foreign to today's readers. But just because its origin is ancient, doesn't mean that it doesn't have meaning for us today. That meaning must emerge in dialogue with our understanding of ourselves and the needs of our community. Here the students bring what they have learned from the lecture and their own reading to the table.

Second, "What's on the table?" recognizes the plurality of traditions or cultural scripts that are condiments, utensils, placemats, and serving platters allowing us to eat with ease and enjoyment. I was in Honduras not long ago, and on every table at every meal we had a variety of "salsas." Coming from the bland North where ketchup is both a vegetable and a seasoning, I didn't quite know what to do with this array of sauces. Only by trial and error did I discover what enhanced the food's flavor and what seared my lips like hot coals. Just as too much salt can be harmful, not everything on our table serves our nutritional needs. An interesting question in an intercultural gathering is who decides which cultural expression is acceptable and which is taboo.

Our next step is a practical one: "Where is the table?" Where is the locus of our engagement with the text? Since the students are learning this methodology to use in their own ministerial settings this question has special relevance. Where they gather matters. And when they gather matters. The expectations of small group discussions in a classroom are very different than the expectations of a basic ecclesial community. Likewise, what is the stuff of daily lived experience, *lo cotidiano*, that surrounds us as we read and study our Scripture? As María Pilar Aquino notes, "active paradigms, traditions, and categories supporting the social construction of reality reside and operate in the daily life of people" (Aquino 1999, 38). In other words, our biblical study should not be divorced from our lived reality.

Finally, we conclude our study with the most important question, "Are we all nourished?" After we have fed on the Word of God, are we strengthened? Empowered? Challenged? Does our reading together feed us individually and as community? Or was this simply a snack. A little renewed boost of energy but nothing substantial. The question that the students conclude with is "Now what?" As the letter of James admonishes us: "be doers of the word, and not merely hearers" (James 1:22). To be active doers of God's word is to be attentive listeners, yes. But it is also to be avid participants. My students learn that studying Scripture is not a spectator sport.

Teaching *latinamente* has not only altered my pedagogy, it has had a profound effect on my students, many of whom have never had their own theologies valued. "Contextual theologies, like those that arise from the reflections of Latin@ theologians, unmask claims of those who confuse their particularity from the norm" (Nanko-Fernández 2010, 44). Engaging an intercultural hermeneutic transforms a multicultural classroom into a community of *convivencia*, a true foretaste of that heavenly banquet.

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Transformation and Resistance in the Interfaith Classroom: Reflections on Teaching in the Canadian Context

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ABSTRACT

Although Canada is a religiously plural society, interfaith theological learning remains uncommon. This reflective paper explores the experience of team-teaching at Emmanuel College's Master of Pastoral Studies Program. The Master of Pastoral Studies is a professional degree with Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist streams that trains students to become chaplains, psycho-spiritual therapists, and spiritual care providers in the Canadian context. Using anecdotes from our classroom experiences, this paper reflects on three values central to inter-religious learning: cultivating a vulnerable "open stance" in dialogue, understanding interfaith teaching as active resistance that contributes to spiritual transformation, and placing ourselves as instructors as the "guide within the group." Interfaith learning calls us to risk and courage, believing that spiritual transformation happens as we encounter difference with openness and humility. As teachers, we model for our students how to engage with one another to build peace in response to individual and societal trauma and discord.

KEYWORDS

interfaith, interreligious, peace building, spiritual care, role-play, facilitation, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam

Introduction

This reflective paper explores the experience of team-teaching in an interfaith program with Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist streams.[1] Toronto is one of the world's most diverse cities, with 51.5 percent of residents identifying as visible minorities in a 2016 government census (Statistics Canada Survey 2017). Although Canada is a religiously

1 The authors would like to thank Emmanuel College, Dr. Pamela Couture and Dr. Pamela McCarroll, and the European Society for Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies, who welcomed the presentation that birthed this paper. We also thank those present at the workshop who gave constructive feedback, Rosedale United Church for their ongoing support through the Teaching Fellowship the authors were awarded, and our students in the Master of Pastoral Studies program whose journeys have shaped our own.

plural society, interfaith theological learning is relatively uncommon. The Toronto School of Theology, the "largest ecumenical consortium for theological education in Canada" is comprised of seven member colleges. Emmanuel College, where we are PhD students in practical theology, is the only college within the Toronto School of Theology that offers inter-religious learning.

Alongside Dr. Pamela Couture, we team taught a course in the Master of Pastoral Studies (MPS) program: a professional degree that trains students to become chaplains, psycho-spiritual therapists, and spiritual care providers within the Canadian context. In the MPS program, we have students who are seeking to provide pastoral counselling within their specific faith context as well as those seeking accreditation with the provincial college to practice psychotherapy as a registered health professional.

The dynamic and diverse group who made up the fall 2018 Introduction to Counseling and Spiritual Care Practices class included twenty-four students from a variety of cultural backgrounds, gender identities, and self-identified disabilities. It is worth noting that they belonged to a range of faith communities including religious and cultural margins. The classroom was approximately one-third Muslim, one-third Christian, and one-third Buddhist and non-religious. We had an Imam, a Quranic scholar, two Buddhist monks (Tibetan and Shinto), a doctorate in Tibetan Buddhism, an ordained Presbyterian minister, and two Masters of Divinity students in the process of seeking ordination. The majority of students were people of color and cultural minorities. Their ages ranged from mid-twenties to late-sixties.

As a result, the classroom was a site of active resistance and peace-building where we invited students into an "open-stance space" in order to learn from one another through listening, dialogue, and role-play. Reflecting on our personal experiences, responses, and actions over the twelve weeks we walked alongside these students, we have come to believe that interfaith learning calls teachers to a stance of openness and bravery, believing that spiritual transformation happens when we encounter difference with humility. Through this, instructors move from teaching students what to believe to modelling for students how to engage with one another in order to build peace in response to individual and societal trauma and discord.

Fostering Transformation through Ritualized Role-Play

On our final day of class, we invited students to bring an item that symbolized their learning over the twelve weeks we had spent together. Each person had the opportunity to share what they brought and what it represented to them. One student brought his Quran and shared that at the age of fifteen, he had memorized the Quran in its entirety. Though he knew the words, he told us, he didn't necessarily understand their meaning. He went on to spend seven years studying the meaning of the Quran; after this, he felt he was able to speak confidently about what the Quran was saying. "But now," he concluded, smiling, "I read the Quran and there is a whole new layer of meaning! I see the human dimension of it in a way I didn't before! First, I learned the words, then I learned the historic interpretations, and now I am exploring it for today."

After several other students shared, another Muslim student, who had come to Canada specifically to take this course of study, spoke up. "I am so thankful to be here, because I have never before been in a space where I could discuss these sorts of things. At home, I worked for an interfaith charity, but even though we were friends, we could not talk about these things. I could look up some things on the internet, but I have never been able to listen to different perspectives and ask questions like I can here."

Building on Pamela Couture's framework from "Ritualized Play Using Role Play to Teach Pastoral Care and Counseling" (1999), our twelve-week course spent five sessions engaged in role-plays. Students were divided into two groups of twelve with attention to religious diversity within each group, and we facilitated role-plays for the same groups of students throughout the semester. Each three-hour session included one hour of active role-playing and two hours of structured debrief. The debrief always began with the students' emotional response to the characters they had been invited to play before moving to naming what the spiritual care providers did well, and then to a discussion of the ways different religious and spiritual frameworks would affect care provision in the given scenario. Our scenarios for the fall semester included: an aging parent with post-surgery complications in the hospital; a non-suicidal student self-injuring in a university residence;

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first-responders to a violent attack on a faith community; a mental-health hospitalization; and a gender-transitioning young adult. Students were invited to be "co-constructors" of the role-play narrative (Couture 1999, 100), finding their voice as the narrative progressed and building on their experiences from one role-play to the next. As instructors, we genuinely did not know how the role-play would unfold; the students held the scenario in their hands. Role-plays also allow for the sobriety of spiritual care to be balanced by a certain amount of playfulness (Couture 1999, 101); shared laughter was encouraged as it recognizes that the role-play *is not real* and allows for the release of emotional tension. Debriefing moments of laughter help students identify moments of anxiety and to build bonds with one another.

Our role-plays were intentionally designed to complement and explore the ideas presented in the course texts, and student assignments included a written debrief of their own emotional engagement with the role-play as well as book reviews that integrated textual concepts with the themes and dilemmas experienced in the role-play (Couture 1999, 99). This partnership of theory and embodiment leads to insights that cannot be found simply through book-based learning. In debriefing one role-play, a student exclaimed, "I read the book and really liked it, but as soon as the role-play started, everything I read flew out of my head! I couldn't recall any of the strategies!" The written assignment following the role-play helps bring these two learning experiences together and integrates the pre-reading with the experience as it unfolded in class. Participation in well-structured role-plays, in short, fosters a deeper way of knowing than simply reading and discussing theories. In our situation, it also sets the groundwork for more substantial, embodied experiences of field education and supervised chaplaincy placements (i.e., Clinical Pastoral Education).

What Is an Open Stance? Safety, Bravery, Resilience, and Valuing Difference

As teachers in training, we are very interested in the current conversation in North America regarding safe spaces and brave spaces. Arao and Clemens define "safe spaces" as learning environments where students can expect to be able to engage with one another in dialogue over controversial, difficult, or sensitive issues with honesty, sensitivity, and respect (2013, 135). Safe spaces have recently come under scrutiny by members of the academy and students alike as students have blamed their schools for "bombarding" them with discomfiting or distressing viewpoints that necessitate the creation of a literal safe space, away from the "scary ideas" of the classroom, where they could recuperate (Shulevitz 2017). Indeed, what happens when classroom dialogue leaves the polite sphere, and moves towards a more provocative space?

According to Arao and Clemens, what is needed are "brave spaces." Brave spaces shift towards "emphasizing the concept of bravery instead, to help students better understand—and rise to—the challenges of genuine dialogue on diversity and justice issues" (2013, 136). As a teaching team, our pedagogical framework emphasized the need for courage within the classroom space. Boost Rom (1998, 405) argues that this shift from safe to brave spaces is key as we ask students to journey with us into spaces that are often precarious and uncertain:

> We have to be *brave* because along the way we are going to be "vulnerable and exposed"; we are going to encounter images that are "alienating and shocking." We are going to be very unsafe. Bravery is needed because learning necessarily involves not merely risk, but the pain of giving up a former condition in favour of a new way of seeing things (as quoted in Arao and Clemens 2013, 141).

In order to create a brave space, Arao and Clemens recommend establishing "ground rules" for the classroom (2013, 143–149). Their ground rules (or common rules) for brave spaces use a collectivist approach, allowing all participants to dialogue together and shape group norms. This demonstrates that facilitators are open to learning from participants and disrupts the common expectation that all knowledge flows from the teacher or facilitator. Two of their most foundational ground rules are:

- *Agree to disagree*. Some of the richest learning occurs when students are willing to explore conflict and seek to understand opposing viewpoints. This means that we as facilitators must welcome disagreement and encourage students to offer contrasting viewpoints, not to retreat from conflict and discomfort.

- *No attacks*. Attacks are most often defined as forms of extreme disrespect. A helpful question for clarification around personal attacks is: what is the difference between a personal attack on a person and challenge to an individual's idea or statement of belief? Challenges are not necessarily attacks although they may lead to uncomfortable experiences or defensive reactions, which can then be explored by students.

In class, Dr. Couture emphasized the importance of clarifying key language choices: the language of brave space and the ways in which bravery are often conceptualized as a masculine, warfare-related stance of pressing onwards despite opposition, rather than one of vulnerability, peace-building, and mutual reception.

Given the potential for bravery's potentially violent associations, Rahuldeep Singh Gill's (2017) work on "resilient places" is worth noting. Gill believes that Arao and Clemens' work on safe spaces is important and he stands in solidarity with them, but he also believes it is important to push farther than safe spaces in order to create places of resilience. According to Gill,

> *resilience* [is] the ability of an individual to adapt to and overcome harmful stimuli in healthy ways that lead to good outcomes. Resilient people can bounce back from traumatic events. They bend but they do not break. They absorb. They retain. They have the ability to take in others' viewpoints. (2017, 204)

Individuals, institutions, facilitators, and organizers of the learning context need to be resilient as well as the learners within the classroom context. Gill's suggestions for creating resilient spaces on campus include:

1. Seeing the institution as responsible for providing a resilient context for individuals, while also acknowledging that individuals must take responsibility for their own actions as they act out the institution's mission and values.

2. Using a model of "interfaith cooperation" which moves us from our own individualistic worldviews (which he defines as "an inclusive term standing for faith, religion, or secular identities" [Gill 2017, 203]) and challenges us to think about the larger "us" of the collective order, working towards a common good, building stronger communities, and preventing civil strife.

3. Anticipating how individual worldviews affect and complicate how we engage with other social groups. For example, how can a Muslim Student Organization with conservative members work with an LGBTQ+ group on campus? Gill maintains that it is the quality of our relationships across areas of disagreement that form the basis of our resilience, moving us beyond stereotypes and misconceptions.

4. Encouraging individuals to draw on their own worldviews for resilience as they are "repositories of values, practices, and profound meaning" (Gill 2017, 205). In a diverse society, we have a responsibility to know about one another's resilience systems because these systems enable us to bring deep meaning to the collective, decreasing the scope of future conflict and increasing mutual understanding.

Gill argues that interfaith work that stretches across worldview boundaries provides the context for participants to commit to coming back to the table to interact with one another, acting courageously even when they may disagree on issues of ultimacy (Gill 2017, 205–206). Gill's image of interfaith dialogue taking place at a table where all are welcome and brave enough to be themselves in order that rich cooperation may take place is a vivid picture of what we desire in our classrooms. In such a space, participants make a commitment to return to the table even when interactions are difficult and wounds may be sustained that are caused by erroneous assumptions about one another. In these resilient spaces, discussion, dialogue, healing, and transformation can take place.

Gill cautions that a focus on individual resilience runs two risks. First, "members of already oppressed or derided groups face unfair burdens and risk" (Gill 2017, 204). Gill reminds us that inequities of power are present in cross-cultural engagements, and we must keep this truth in the front of our minds as we engage with one another in the interfaith

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classroom. Second, he points to the stressful environment of the university that can grind down students and teachers alike as the semester advances and work piles up. It is key that we do not forget our purpose, which is to facilitate interfaith dialogue, learning, and cooperation with integrity and compassion throughout the academic year.

One way that we can help create the context for resilience in our classroom is by asking our students to adopt an open stance in all our dialogues. An open stance refers to the way in which an individual approaches dialogue or conflict, and can best be understood in contrast to a closed stance.[2] On any given issue, the same belief can be held with an open stance that provides space for dialogue and seeks mutual understanding, or a closed stance that shuts down conversation and is uninterested in learning about alternate perspectives. A simple example can be seen in the age-old debate, “Which makes a better pet: a cat or a dog?” The same perspective, that dogs are superior companions, can be communicated in two very different ways:

- Open stance: “I have always been a dog person, myself. I wonder why someone would choose a cat.”
- Closed stance: “Dogs, absolutely. There’s really no question there.”

An open stance assumes that dialogue and difference are welcomed and valued. In the classroom context, we have found that how a belief is communicated may have a greater effect on the conversation and the emotional response of students than the perspective itself. By facilitating a classroom policy of an open-stance approach to dialogue, we hope to help students cultivate vulnerability and curiosity towards one another and towards worldviews that differ from their own. This creates space for the meaning-making work that is central to our classroom endeavours.

Interfaith Teaching as an Act of Resistance

One role-play in particular caused the class to grapple with the difficult task of meaning-making. Two weeks after the mass shooting of eleven people at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, the teaching team decided to create a role-play that asked the students to wrestle with the complexities of this act of violence and its impact on first responders to the scene. Students played the roles of paramedics, fire-fighters, and members of the police force as well as the chaplains who were asked to provide care to the first responders two weeks after the incident took place. The students inhabited their roles with authenticity and grappled with the horrors of the shooting.

Following the role-play, students gathered to debrief and discuss their thoughts and feelings. Students expressed sadness and feelings of despair regarding the broken and violent state of the world. It was comforting to hear the wisdom that Dr. Couture shared with the class about interfaith learning: we were in fact *not* doing nothing in that moment; the very act of sitting together that morning in class was an act of resistance. Coming together in solidarity from various faith traditions was a bold act. Hope existed between the words we spoke to one another, hope existed in the act of listening to one another and, at points, crying together. Dr. Couture’s words situated what we were doing in the classroom into a larger socio-political context. For people who question the importance or relevance of theological education, here was concrete evidence that it *is* meaningful.

In one role-play group, the experience of being “triggered” by a sensitive issue brought further opportunities for individual and communal peace-building. As a Muslim student reflected upon the experience of playing a Muslim first responder in the role-play, who had fears about his physical safety in the United States, he was visibly shaken from the emotional toll the role had placed upon him. The student remarked that in daily life he is afraid to take the subway to school in Toronto and to walk around on university campus as he is visibly Muslim, which he fears makes him a target for harassment and violence. The class respectfully listened to his comments and empathized with him.

2 The concept of “open” vs “closed” conflict stances belongs to Dr. Wanda Malcolm from Wycliffe College, and came to us via a personal conversation with Elizabeth in 2017.

Amy[3] has a Muslim partner who also has fears about safety and travel, and she invited the students to share times when they may have felt similarly and were afraid because of their faith. The group ended up having a lively discussion that seemed to strengthen friendships between students.

This classroom experience prompted us to seek out resources concerning triggers within the classroom. Kathy Obear's (2013) article, "Navigating Triggering Events," identifies multiple "roots" that may help social justice educators explore the intrapersonal issues that influence triggered reactions for both themselves and their students, including current life issues and dynamics, and unresolved past issues, traumas, and wounds. It is important that as facilitators we reflect upon our feelings as we enter the classroom. When we are feeling centered, rested, joyful, well fed, and healthy, we are less likely to feel deeply triggered. Obear explains that daily demands such as illness, relationship problems, financial concerns, challenges at work or school, and stress over national or world issues "deplete our ability to shield ourselves from the impact of comments and behaviours" (2013, 167). As facilitators, we can also ask ourselves if the triggering situation reminds us of any past traumas. Recognizing that our "current reactions are fueled by unresolved old wounds helps [us] to disentangle [ourselves] from the retriggered roots and focus on what's really going on in the present moment," Obear writes (2013, 167).

These triggering events should not be considered signs of weakness or signs that we cannot handle difficult conversations in the classroom. Triggering events can lead us to seek out paths to healing as we courageously and honestly "explore the past and identify unfinished business and unhealed wounds" (Obear 2013, 170). We have a responsibility to work for our own healing so that we can journey alongside others in their own transformation.

Peaceful resistance like this moment of vulnerability and solidarity with our Muslim student are pivotal in the spiritual transformation of both students and teachers. Marginalized voices and those from positions of power are all in the process of transformation; sometimes, this comes out in ways that are difficult to manage or insensitive to the experiences of others in the room. Operating from an open stance moves an individual from a defensive position to one of vulnerability, where they begin to articulate the fears, anxieties, and assumptions that may undergird verbal "attacks." As the facilitator, it can be tempting to shut down difficult conversations by disallowing certain language or perspectives, but this can also short-circuit the growth of both individuals and the learning community. Instead, an important part of our own transformation as teachers was to become vulnerable by relinquishing an authoritative position within the classroom. Utilizing role-plays and class discussions as major components of classroom learning inevitably affected our position as instructors.

This is the beginning of peaceful resistance. Being present to another's emotions, their grief, and their fears moves interfaith dialogue from the realm of the theoretical or political into the relational. By refusing to hold the "other" at arm's length, we are equipping students to engage with difference peacefully, hopefully, and personally.

The Teacher as a "Guide Within the Group"

Contemporary conversations on the primary function of educators propose many images and frameworks. Erica McWilliam advocates for the addition of "Meddler in the Middle" to the more established models of "Sage on the Stage" and "Guide on the Side" (2009, 281). While the "Sage on the Stage" is obviously not an appropriate fit for our context, McWilliam critiques the "Guide on the Side," saying that it can become "an excuse for passivity" in which the instructor sits "at the margins of the physical, mental, and emotional activity" in the classroom (2009, 287). Her alternative model, the "Meddler in the Middle," describes an "active interventionist pedagogy in which teachers are mutually involved with students in assembling and/or dis-assembling knowledge and cultural products" (2009, 288). While this is a helpful image for the classroom setting she describes, in which the highest value is creativity, theological space is centered on the value of transformation, and to us, "meddling" suggests a coercive interfering with the students' process of growth and integration. We propose that as theological instructors, we act as a "Guide Within the Group."

3 Our classroom used first names for everyone, whether professor or student (including ordained students and those with other titles), as a way of challenging the power structures that are often implicit in the use of titles, and to establish that respect and vulnerability co-exist in our learning space.

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Rather than being relegated to the side lines of the classroom, we view the theological teaching profession as a calling that attends not only to the academic learning of students, but to their spiritual development as well. Bonnie Miller-McLemore writes, “the fact that practical theologians teach the actual practice of practices implicates the teacher” (2012, 192) to be engaged in self-reflection alongside their students, committed not only to the analysis and deconstruction of belief and practice for both student and instructor, but also to their “post-deconstruction reconstruction” (204). We are perpetually engaged in the deconstruction and reconstruction of practices as we encounter both the human and Divine Other; embodying an open stance alongside students is essential to transformation within the classroom.

The story of the class’s final role-play, which explored the story of a trans-masc (female to male gender identity) young person whose parents were not supportive of their transition, illustrates the complexity and importance of guiding from within the group. As one group reached the debrief question of how providing care for this character might look in each of the faith traditions represented, one student said, “The Bible is clear that homosexuality is not okay.” Three seats away from them sat another student, who had shared previously that they left their conservative Christian faith community because they were gay and could no longer live in denial or despair regarding their sexual orientation.

As the classroom facilitator, Elizabeth was instantly aware that she needed to navigate this conversation with extreme care. She began by pausing the student who cited the Bible and reminding them of a distinction she had made earlier in our debrief: there is a difference between sexual orientation and gender identity. She asked them to focus on the presenting dilemma of a transgender person. She then gave them space to speak again, while directing them to speak from their own experience rather than on behalf of all of Christianity. As they strayed from the specific question of how they would provide care, Elizabeth asked them to articulate what spiritual care would look like in the context of the beliefs they were sharing with the class. Meanwhile, she was aware that the gay student had quietly left the room (we had established and reiterated throughout the semester that if students needed to excuse themselves for their own self-care, they were welcome to do so).

Cognizant of the gay student’s discomfort and also the importance of bracketing her perspective and emotional reaction, Elizabeth invited other students to respond to the first student’s perspective. A student from a more liberal Christian denomination spoke up to advocate for alternate interpretations of biblical passages often used to deny the morality of non-heterosexuality.

With only ten minutes left for the debrief, Elizabeth was concerned that this, rather heated, exchange would deny space for other religious perspectives to be voiced on the core issue of our role-play. So, she calmly interrupted to say: “I recognize that this is a conversation that has a lot of emotional weight for many people in the room, but because of our time limitations, I want to shift away from the question of what is a ‘Christian perspective on homosexuality’ to hear from the Buddhist and Muslim students about how they would approach caring for a transgender individual in their community context.” Students from both traditions spoke up, the student who had left the room returned, and at the end of the allotted time, Elizabeth thanked everyone for engaging in dialogue around what she knew to be a sensitive and complicated issue in many religious spaces.

As students dispersed for a break, Elizabeth took a moment to gather herself. She felt shaky and sweaty, and she knew that her responsibilities were not quite done. Once she felt more grounded, she sought out the student whom she had initially redirected.

“I just wanted to check in and see how you’re doing,” she said to them, “I know that conversation was quite intense, and I really pushed you to stay within a specific focus.”

“It was intense,” they replied, “and it was hard to explain myself. But listening to [the Muslim students] really helped me and gave me something to think about.”

Elizabeth was surprised and delighted. She knew she had contributed little content to the conversation, but she recognized that her facilitation choices had done what was needed by holding space for other voices. In that particular situation, it was not her perspective as a person of power and a person within the student’s faith tradition that gave the student new insights to consider, but the voice of a peer and an “other.” Elizabeth told the student how pleased she was to hear they had found the other students’ perspectives helpful, and that if they wanted to talk further about the range of Christian

perspectives on sexual orientation, she was available and happy to do so at a time that worked for them. They thanked her for checking in with them, and initiated giving her a hug, which Elizabeth interpreted as their way of communicating that they felt comfortable with her and with how she had handled the situation.

Elizabeth also made a point of checking in with the student who had left the room, saying, "I want you to know that I noticed you had left, and I'm glad you did what you needed to take care of yourself." She asked if there was anything they would suggest she do differently in a similar situation: "How can I care for you or someone in a similar position when I'm facilitating a conversation around sexual orientation and faith?" The two had a rich conversation about their spiritual journeys, and Elizabeth left feeling that a relationship of trust and mutual respect had been maintained.

This story encapsulates the difficulty and the delight of transformative teaching in an interfaith context. The ritual of role-play set the groundwork for what we expected would be a vulnerable conversation. As the Guide within the Group, Elizabeth was actively involved in navigating conflict with attention to the diverse voices and emotional experiences of the students. Her obligations did not end when the class discussion concluded because the goal of spiritual transformation invites her to give pastoral attention to the emotional and spiritual needs of our students. By embracing an open stance, she took the risk of giving space to voices she could not control rather than speaking a corrective or definitive perspective, and she made herself vulnerable by giving the two students who were most obviously affected opportunities to provide feedback. Together, the class resisted the socio-political narratives of being consumed by argument and debate, the temptation to ignore voices that differ, and the assumption that spiritual insights must come from within one's own tradition.

Next Steps and Conclusion

We recognize that we speak from a place of privilege within Canadian society, and that our teaching team—exclusively cis, white, female, and Christian—does not reflect the diversity of our student population. While we deliberately brought our own life experiences around disability, gender, sexuality, interfaith relationships, and encounters with suffering to the classroom learning experience, we also reflect on our limitations and shortcomings, and in the process of writing this paper, we have identified two important shifts we want to include in next year's course.

One, we want to include the students in a conversation on classroom guidelines at the start of the semester in order to establish conversation parameters in a more collaborative manner than has previously been the case. Creating classroom guidelines together provides the opportunity for students to co-create the learning environment as a place where each of them feels welcomed and posits instructors as co-learners alongside them. It also opens the door to discuss what happens if someone does not adhere to the agreed upon guidelines, which helps to prevent and diffuse the tension generated in difficult moments.

Two, we also believe that we have a responsibility to more fully address the religious violence that has occurred (and continues to occur) in Canada, especially with regards to Indigenous peoples and their oppression. Some students (mostly, but not exclusively international students) were unaware of the historical genocide of Indigenous people in Canada, the more recent Residential Schools that removed Indigenous children from their homes, or the disproportionate representation of Indigenous peoples in contemporary Canada's penal system and records of missing and murdered women and children.

Teaching for transformation in an interfaith context is no simple task. We cannot remain aloof from the difficult work of vulnerability, humility, and opening ourselves to encountering the Divine in the "other." We experienced that personally and communally in our fall 2018 classroom. We believe that the ripple effects of the twelve weeks we spent together will be seen and felt throughout the lives and communities of our two dozen students, and in our own academic careers.

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ARTICLE

Seeking a Pedagogy of Honesty

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ABSTRACT

With multiple cultural, academic, and religious forces urging students and faculty to default to varying degrees of academic and personal dishonesty, we need to seriously consider how the structures we implement as educators reinforce or undermine those urges. After briefly considering some of the varieties of academic dishonesty we face in religion and theology classrooms, this essay proposes an alternative model for a flow of communication that short-circuits usual expectations and encourages an ethos of honest participation. The proposed solution, called a Discussion Plan, represents an attempt to make the classroom's center of gravity the honest questions, honest observations, honest confusions, and honest exasperations that are uniquely relevant to the actual students of the particular class. This intentional dismantling of regimes of dishonesty with a pedagogy of honesty requires vulnerability and the hard work of active engagement but pays off with richer student participation and creativity.

KEYWORDS

academic honesty, academic dishonesty, test, quiz, communication

Academic dishonesty is a big problem, and it's not limited to what we normally associate with it. Sure, we need to set high standards to make sure that neither we nor our students commit the fraud of plagiarism. Of course. But plagiarism is merely the flowering of a deeper and more sinister root, just one of the many faces of academic dishonesty that inspire me to function according to a pedagogy of honesty.[1]

1 The content of this essay emerges from my more than two decades of teaching religion and theology in high school and undergraduate classrooms interacting with more than 1500 students and numerous generous and gifted teaching colleagues. Chief among those colleagues is Dr. Claire Bischoff, who generously provided valuable feedback on this essay. It is somewhat uncomfortable to admit that rather than relying on outside research, the content of this essay flows directly from my practice of classroom teaching. With that in mind, perhaps it will become clear that a pedagogy of honesty demands that we not simply hide behind what the teaching "experts" write but rather start by interrogating our own teaching practices and responding to the needs of the actual students in our care.

We admit students to college so that they can learn something new. And yet, many college classrooms operate in such a way that students feel they can only speak up if they know something with absolute certainty. That attitude begs a question: If they already know it all, why would they be taking this class? In this sort of environment, is it any wonder that so many of our students have anxiety about speaking up in class?

We are awash in an insidious contemporary imperative to know, think, and say everything all at once—and always in the currently fashionable, politically correct way. The social media frenzy to police thought and expression puts all at risk of violent virtual skewering.[2] The sharpened knives of critics are always ready to cut down anyone who does not say exactly the "right" thing in exactly the "right" way with every "correct" term and every "correct" nuance included. There is fear of being shamed for "trying on" an idea, for saying something out loud for the first time, and possibly not getting it quite right. That fear can drive a person to a kind of academic dishonesty that blindly parrots the coercively required stance as if it were one's own. That fear sometimes also drives self-censorship to maintain the silent illusion of competency. Such obfuscation is another kind of academic dishonesty. Mere submissive conformity to an authority and the retreat into silence are two potent versions of academic dishonesty, indeed.

It is easy to see the double-edged cultural sword that relishes the hatred of elitists[3] (because common sense can supposedly understand what experts know, just without all the pesky work) while seemingly needing to defend our stance as if it is a final and irreversible moral decision made by a credentialed expert. It's a disastrous recipe that silences the wary and empowers the aggressive.

In theology the toxic imperative toward certainty is redoubled when someone feels the intense shame that they should know scripture, should know about worship practices, should understand convoluted theologies. And then especially in religion and theology classrooms we run the risk of adding to those shoulds. Here come clichés about faith in impossible things and the supposed weakness of people without faith. That can lead students to assert certainty where there is none. Such assertion in a classroom is one form of academic dishonesty that may inhibit other students from speaking up at all since they are so afraid to be wrong. Again, we see a noxious sludge of fear and dishonesty.

Meanwhile, the sometimes-severe demands of religious and confessional orthodoxy and a long history of mutual excommunications are not just dusty historical artifacts. Theology and religion habitually wield some sharp and blunt instruments of intellectual violence. We should be honest about that.

The stakes seem so high to our students to claim to be right and to aggressively defend their rightness, even in the face of contradictory evidence. And the impotent and immature theology some of our students arrive with only makes a culture of honesty more difficult to nurture. What I like to call the rampant Santa theology (the old, bearded, white, male, all-seeing, all-knowing, all-righteous inflictor of reward-and-punishment schemes according to the results of universal surveillance) does not withstand adult critique, mature questions, and righteous doubt. But if Santa theology is the only kind our students have received in their first decade and a half of religious education, we cannot be surprised if they are urged toward two insidious forms of academic dishonesty: (1) unmerited dedication to absolutely defending that theology, or (2) being absolutely unwilling to take a risk to discuss the rich theologies we ask them to consider.

2 While examples of character assassination or cancel culture for not placing one's toes exactly on the presently fashionable line are too numerous to mention, one notable illustration merits highlighting. JK Rowling has been aggressively called out on social media for her views on sex and gender. In a blog post, she patiently explains her position ("J.K. Rowling Writes about Her Reasons for Speaking out on Sex and Gender Issues," *JKRowling.com*, June 10, 2020).

3 To get a sense for the attitude that deplores elitism, here is a helpful article: "Elitists, crybabies and junky degrees: A Trump supporter explains rising conservative anger at American universities" (Sullivan and Jordan, *Washington Post*, Nov. 25, 2017).

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Quizzing as a Dishonesty Trap

Add to all of this the longstanding classroom convention of quizzes and tests. The mindset behind quizzing appears to encourage academic dishonesty rather than hampering it. How? At their heart quizzes seek to prove what content a student has or has not retained from a reading, a lecture, or a unit. When testing is the means by which we seek to determine the edges of a student's appropriation of course material, we set a dishonesty trap.

When students know a test is coming, they plead for (even sometimes demand—I know because I was a student who made such pleas and demands) all the questions that could be asked. Worse yet, students then want to use large amounts of class time to go through the questions and write down the precise answers. Handing over the questions (and answers) artificially reduces the vast complexities we are meant to consider—and amounts to an act of widely-practiced academic dishonesty by the professor.

What else do students do? They cram to remember the answers to the possible questions just long enough to take the quiz. This is academic dishonesty because it is absurd to imagine that cramming is something we can honestly call learning. And what if the professor declines to hand over the list of questions? When cramming is not possible, the student's job becomes convincing the professor they know what they might not actually know. Here again academic dishonesty reigns.

That is only a partial list of forms of academic dishonesty; no single solution can address all its faces. Recognizing the pervasive, multivalent complexities of academic dishonesty seeping into every aspect of academic life led me to seriously change my teaching in recent years, in search of a pedagogy of honesty.

Planning for Honest Discussion

If students complete a reading assignment and think their next job is to have to pretend they understood it, academic honesty is crushed. Seeking a pedagogy of honesty means we need strategies that reinforce students' honest expression. The solution I have worked out for my courses is a strategy that makes a "Discussion Plan" (DP) the engine that runs the course.

Discussion Plans[4] require students to meet the challenge of the reading by thinking their own thoughts and composing a responsive paragraph and a minimum of two critical thinking questions that quote the actual words of the reading. A Googleable question or a question that can be answered by a dictionary do not count. Good critical thinking questions contain a genuine quest to explore, discover, and discuss. Important here is that these are the student's own unvarnished first responses—unfettered by my views on the subject. Often students wish to know what I think before they formulate their view. But, if I provide my stance before they have a chance to try it out for themselves, the risk is that they will merely conform to my more authoritative position—and such conformity is another dishonesty trap. So, the DP should be composed of what the student (not the professor) really wants to investigate from the assignment. I impress upon my students that what I need to get from a DP is their honest engagement: tell me what made sense, what made no sense, where you felt supported, what made you mad, where you agree, where you disagree. When each student's own genuine quest grounds the class discussion, we experience a palpable relevancy to the ideas in the reading.

A second feature of the DP is that discussion does not wait for class to begin. Students post their DP the night before class to a "Conversation Circle," a small group that remains constant over the semester. In this stable Conversation Circle, ideas get flowing before the class meets face-to-face. Students must respond by posting a reply to one Conversation Circle member before class starts. Then, in-class discussion begins with that Conversation Circle as a home-base before we have large group discussion.

4 Why is this called a Discussion Plan? The idea is simple: I tell students, if they are called to lead the discussion for a few minutes during class they will be able to bring forward their actual response and their actual questions written in their plan for what they wish to discuss. For the student worried about speaking up in class, the DP is a safety zone: when they need to talk, all they may have to do is read their question to spark conversation. They have their plan at their fingertips, so do not necessarily have to improvise on the spot. The DP can help decrease anxiety which is frequently an impetus toward academic dishonesty.

Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, when students post their honest engagement with the assignment, I have a sacred obligation. I must read their initial DPs and make modifications to my lesson plan.[5] The exquisite vulnerability of students asking true questions, and expressing true confusions, angers, or delights is a delicate reality which must be handled with care. My job is to weave their DP work into what we do together. The students need to recognize their concerns and their questions reflected in what I have prepared when we gather. And this is when the light comes on for students. When I stop by a Conversation Circle and ask someone to highlight something they have written, or when students see their worries folded into the plan for the day, they know it is tangibly advantageous to bring their full honesty to the course.[6]

The DP requires one more crucial component. During class, students must annotate their printed DP. Their mission is to get their questions into the conversation and get some kind of answer or further question during class. In a way, students come to class having generated their own quiz, composed of questions they uniquely and individually care about. So, in the space I ask students to leave after each paragraph and after each question, they are required to write something more about the observation and the question. In this self-generated "quiz": further exasperation at an as yet unanswered question (or even an unanswerable one!), a new question, a restated question, a revised question, a big aha! Moment, a provisional answer, a new connection, a classmate's insight, and even sometimes my suggestion. All of these can be the "correct" answer they write.

After class, I collect and read what students wrote during class. Here is where I find out whether we accomplished what was required, or if more work needs to be done. I write comments responding further to what they wrote during class. They get the DP back from me when next we meet.

Some Preliminary Reflections

What just happened? When things go as planned, rather than a standoff where all of us are trying to score a rhetorical point, or misdirect away from our misunderstanding, or hide our inadequacies, DPs create a flow of communication that bears directly on the relevancy of students' honest questions and responses. I depart that final reading of their in-class notes with a good sense for what was and was not accomplished during class. And I did not have to quiz anyone. This method of communication-flow with my students requires timeliness and keen attention. But those are small prices to pay for the gains of the many benefits of honesty.

Though DPs are a rigorous tool, I have regularly gotten feedback that this is a successful method. For instance, one student wrote in an evaluation, "The use of Discussion Plans is one of the most effective learning tools I've ever received in any class." Another wrote, "The Discussion Plans are my favorite thing."

Finally, permit me to mention one more kind of academic honesty that's my constant task. I must be willing, and even eager to say the words, "I don't know," when I don't know. If students see the truth that I can be honest about the horizons of my knowledge, it makes it safer for them to be honest. There is spaciousness and freedom in this kind of honesty.

Though more needs to be said, since I have implemented these efforts toward a pedagogy of honesty, I have observed a decline in plagiarism and other faces of academic dishonesty. But every semester I am greeted with students who have been formed and harmed by cultural, academic, and religious enforcement regimes that have taught them habits of dishonesty. So, every semester unteaching that dishonesty with a pedagogy of honesty is my sacred responsibility.

5 I should add, and this is no small thing, if anything prevents me from reading their DPs, I apologize and let them know right at the start of class.
6 It is still disconcerting to me that students frequently express surprise that I have read, considered, and included their ideas into class activities. Sadly, many are accustomed to receiving little feedback, and unaccustomed to experiencing their genuine contribution to the learning of their classmates. But, once the light goes on and they realize this is for real, many students are inspired to pour even more honest energy and creativity into their DPs and the course as a whole.

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ARTICLE

Developing and Assessing Empathy through the Study of Christian Heresies in an Introductory Christian History and Theology Course

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ABSTRACT

Empathy is a nebulous concept that is touted in many schools' curricular goals and striven for by many instructors. Unfortunately, lack of a shared definition and reliable measures for empathy hamper efforts to determine whether this goal is realized. Defining empathy as "the ability to know the internal state of another," this study explores the effect of a learning project focused on Christian "heresies" on students' empathy by developing and refining tools for assessing empathy in student writing. The intervention included scripted role-playing and reflection, group discussion, and an essay in which students discussed the appeal and rejection of a particular heresy in the persona of a "heretic." Quantitatively, we found no significant effect in time or group comparison on an empathy questionnaire; qualitatively, we found an upper-middling level of empathy in essays, and a large effect in group comparison of student responses to a simple prompt to define a "Christian heretic."

KEYWORDS

introductory religion course, empathy, heresies, assessment, role-playing

INTRODUCTION

The study of Christianity is core to the curricula of a range of institutions. Within humanities or social studies options at public universities, Christianity forms a substantial element of introductory religion courses. Many Christian-affiliated colleges and universities require a course, or series of courses, on Christianity—its history, theology, or sacred texts. For both public and private institutions, the rationale for these courses goes beyond content. Instructors at public institutions often consider religious studies an aid to the development of ethical perspectives or helping students acquire an interest in asking their own questions and seeking answers (Walvoord 2007). At Christian institutions, the rationale for such requirements may include affirming a Christian mission,

providing a lens through which to approach the other academic disciplines, training students to engage their own faith tradition intellectually, and—more recently—developing Christian and academic virtues and character. The institutional site for the present study—a mid-sized, research-focused Christian university in the Southwest whose first-year student population is over 90 percent age twenty or younger—justifies its requirement of The Christian Heritage (a freshman-level course on Christian history and theology) in terms of the following outcomes: students should "demonstrate knowledge of the Christian scriptures and heritage that enables engagement with others from a Christian perspective;" "become informed and productive citizens of a democracy and servant leaders of faith communities;" and "pursue and cultivate faith, hope, and love" (Baylor University 2016). While shaped by this institutional setting, the present study seeks to develop and measure a subset of character-development goals applicable to a range of institutions.

Perceiving a lack of engagement with Christian and academic character development in his Christian Heritage courses, one of the authors (Richmann) attended a "Forming Christian Character in the Classroom" workshop sponsored by his institution. Through this workshop, he determined to develop practical wisdom in his students, especially by intentionally cultivating what Thomas Aquinas called "*ratio*," discursive reasoning, or "the ability to consider and compare alternative possibilities" (Schwehn 2018). This virtue is not distinctively Christian; discursive reasoning is a vital ingredient for all critical thinking. It is also closely linked with what Stephen Brookfield and Stephen Preskill call "Democratic Dispositions," such as hospitality, humility, deliberation, and appreciation (Brookfield and Preskill 2005). More specifically, the author's intent was to help students develop *empathy*, a disposition that is key to the consideration of alternative possibilities as well as vital to historical interpretation. This connected also to the institution's understanding of the common core curriculum, of which The Christian Heritage course is a part. According to the "Core Curriculum Vision" document, students "will . . . gain a deeper understanding of and empathy for people from other societies, races, genders, ethnicities, and socio-economic statuses" (Baylor University 2016). Honest empathy does not mean all alternatives are "equal," nor should empathy forestall commitment or conviction. Rather, students should seek, through the empathetic reflection on new or unfamiliar views, to arrive at more informed, articulate, and defensible values and intellectual positions. Furthermore, we presumed that empathy correlates with students' sense of personal connection to the material being studied, which conscientious instructors are always seeking as a way to tap into the benefits of intrinsic motivation (Foster 1999).

Empathy in Context

Empathy is a complicated concept. Scholars disagree on the definition, the origin, and the effects of empathy. According to one expert, researchers use the term to refer to at least eight different phenomena (Batson 2011). As Batson argues, these concepts are not aspects of a single phenomenon, but "stand-alone psychological states" (2011, 3).[1] For the purposes of this study, empathy is *the capacity to know the internal state of another*. This is not necessarily to feel as the other feels (which we believe is better captured by the term "sympathy"), nor is it the ability to know exhaustively or perfectly what another is thinking, but the ability to infer another's thoughts with reasonable accuracy through the clues of language, context, and analogy to one's own experiences. Thus it is connected to imagining how another is thinking and feeling and imagining how one would think and feel in another's place[2]—particularly in relation to the motivations for the other's specific behavior. The desire to respond compassionately—while mentioned in many definitions of empathy—is less applicable in arenas of "observational empathy," like the historical study of religion, where the "self" does not directly interact with the "other" (Barrett-Lennard 1981).

The English language did not have the word "empathy" until 1908, but this does not make the concept less important. David Hume suggested that the phenomenon we now call empathy is the foundation for all social perception and interaction (Batson 2011). Some today argue that the development of empathy in students is one of the central tasks of higher education (Thompson 2014). Furthermore, empathy should be seen not only as a goal of education, but as a tool for education. Empathy is necessary for serious study in any of the humanities disciplines. Critical inquiry and full understanding of human behavior, regardless of methodology, requires the ability to appreciate the perspective of the humans under scrutiny—their motivations and their intentions. At least one school of thought holds that the study of

1 For this reason, Batson urges researchers to "recognize the different phenomena, make clear the labeling scheme one is adopting, and use that scheme consistently" (2011, 8).
2 Batson's (2011) concepts 5 and 6.

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history demands that scholars use the human "gift of empathy" to make sense of human behavior in different times and cultures from our own (Bebbington 1990; Southgate 2005); increasingly, history teachers recognize this "perspective taking" as central to teaching history (Wineburg 2001). Religion is another helpful example. Many scholars agree that "phenomenological approaches to religious studies . . . assume the importance of empathy to engaging religious differences and developing a critical understanding of these differences" (Trothen 2016, 245). "Highly effective" religion instructors commonly include empathy in learning objectives (Walvoord 2007). A college course in religious history occurs at the intersection of multiple concerns related to empathy in students.

Empathy is not only important, it can be developed. Although some scholars despair of the ability to quantify "historical empathy" (Endacott and Brooks 2018), and we've heard faculty colleagues claim "you can't teach empathy," research indicates educational interventions can improve cognitive (as opposed to affective or behavioral) empathy.[3] In particular, research in pre-professional education demonstrates that "role-playing and other simulations" are effective at enhancing empathy (Trothen 2016, 251; Porter 2008). As with other cognitive phenomena, many factors determine the degree to which empathy can be developed, and one major factor may be a person's prior beliefs about the malleability of empathy, such that those who believe empathy can be developed expend greater empathetic effort in difficult situations (Schumann, Zaki, and Dweck 2014).

The Project: Nature, Purpose, and Challenges

The primary tool for developing empathy in this study was a multifaceted project in which students in an experimental group investigated a single Christian heresy of their choosing. This project entailed, for the experimental group but not for the comparison group, role-playing exercises, a small group workday prompting students to consider their own interest in the heresy they chose to study and the commitments and assumptions undergirding the teaching, and a four-question essay (described below). At the beginning of the semester, students received a list of suggested topics, movements from the first six centuries of Christian history that were regarded as heretical by the dominant strand of the faith, as represented by the first four ecumenical councils. The chronological approach of the class allowed them to read and participate in class sessions on these subjects before selecting one. While this approach is similar to previous attempts to foster empathy through identification with a distinct religious group, the present project allowed students to choose their group rather than being assigned a historical identity (Porter 2008). Although this may seem to counteract the intent for students to encounter foreign viewpoints, since students may choose to study a group they already identify with, we believe the intrinsic motivation involved in choice outweighs the potential drawbacks. Besides, for the students in these classes, all heresies are by definition "other," since no students self-identified as adherents of these groups; any student affinity would be superficial and inconsequential.[4]

Heretics are the "other" on the margins of one's group rather than completely beyond it; they share most theological problems with the dominant group yet differ in one or more of their solutions. We speculate that such groups are similar enough to engage feelings of solidarity yet different enough to require substantial effort to appreciate. In other words, heresies occupy the intersection of self and other that is the arena of empathy. Yet these potential benefits are also potential liabilities. On one hand, students may encounter the familiar terms used by heretical groups and fail to appreciate the different presuppositions behind the terms or the precise meaning those terms have for heretical groups. On the other hand, heretical groups pull students further from the dominant narrative, familiar concepts, and—for most students involved in this project—their own faith tradition.

3 The cognitive domain "involves the ability to know and understand that other people have diversity of perspectives." This maps nicely to the definition used for this study. The affective domain "involves the sharing of the other's emotional state." The behavioral domain is "the intention to respond in a way that communicates a compassionate awareness" of the other's emotions (Trothen 2016). The affective domain may be better captured by the term "sympathy," and the behavioral domain may be better labeled "compassion."

4 Although "non-orthodox" Christian groups continue to flourish, we discounted the possibility that any participants identified with a historically heretical group for two reasons. First, although some modern groups, like the Latter-Day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses, have a Christology similar to Arianism, there is no historical connection between the groups, and they arrive at their theology by means of different logic and framework. The same is true for the relationship between pre-Nicene modalism and Oneness Pentecostalism. Second, a recent student body survey showed that no students at this institution identified as Monophysite or Nestorian Christians, the two major early heretical groups that have survived to the present day.

This perceived difference between heretical positions and students' own faith adds an additional challenge to the empathetic study of heresies at a Christian institution. While students might willingly memorize facts about other religious viewpoints, for several reasons, they are less likely to engage with heresies empathetically, that is, to take these positions seriously as reasonable answers to the fundamental human questions religions address. Research shows that people often do not remain empathetic when they feel greatly dissimilar to the person or group to whom they are asked to relate (Schumann, Zaki, and Dweck 2014). This suggests that any instructor aiming at developing empathy must actively work to reduce the perceived difference between the self and other. Likewise, empathy is strained when people believe empathizing may be distressing or discomforting (Schumann, Zaki, and Dweck 2014). Students who view their faith as sacred space and privileged commitments might view opposing religious ideas—not to mention critical scrutiny of one's own religion—as threatening. Instructors therefore run the risk of shutting down both learning and empathy if students interpret a generous approach to heresies as an attack on their own commitments. According to the Triune Ethics Theory of decision-making, one who feels threatened is driven by the "safety ethic," which automatically excludes the "engagement ethic" associated with empathy (Fleming and Lovat 2015).

To further counter students' tendency to dismiss heretical viewpoints, the project framed "heresy" in political and social terms rather than as incorrect theology or practice (Pagels 1979). Additionally, the texts students were required to consult for initial detailed information about the heresies they chose to study (González and González 2008; Wilhite 2015) have been noted for their fairness and generosity in interpreting heresies. It further noted the task was not to defend the orthodox position or point out the flaws of the heresies but through historical investigation to gain understanding of heretics and appreciate the role they played in prompting the "orthodox" Christians to refine and articulate their positions. That is, that heresies were not fended off by orthodox Christianity so much as they were forced out of a narrowing dominant group (see Appendix A). These ideas were reinforced in an in-class workday through guided reflection and discussion.

The first phase of the project for the experimental group involved public role-playing of scripted hypothetical discussions between a representative of a heretical group and a representative of the orthodox party. Each scripted conversation was about five minutes long and involved two students. These conversations were spread out individually over the course of nine class sessions. Previous research on empathy development through the study of religion has suggested that role-playing, particularly when coupled with listening exercises, helps facilitate students' understanding of other viewpoints (Trothen 2016). Students who were not directly role-playing watched and then reflected for about five minutes, using a series of guided questions related to their perceptions of the experience of the heretic (see Appendix B). While only sixteen students out of fifty-two students publicly role-played, all students had multiple experiences of witnessing and reflecting on the conversations. This purposeful debriefing "allows the awareness gained in the exercise to be clarified and reintegrated into [the student's] own inner life," that is, helping to clarify the self in relation to the other (Burns 2001, 20). This phase was also meant to pique students' interest in the heresies and help them decide which group to focus on for the second phase of the project.

For the second phase of the project, students in the experimental group researched, developed, and wrote a response to a series of questions involving their Christian heresy. In order to help "loosen the boundaries of the self, encourage flexibility, and increase the permeability of the self's enveloping membrane" (Burns 2001, 20), the prompt required students to craft responses from the point of view of an adherent of the heresy they were studying (see Appendix A). Previous work has found that, when asked to imagine oneself or another particular person in a specific historical circumstance, students display enhanced empathy, and their writing includes more details and emotions (Brooks 2011; Leur, Boxtel, and Wilschut 2017).[5] Additionally, because peer discussion has shown promise in developing students' empathy (Ashby and Lee 1987), students spent a whole class session (one hour and fifteen minutes) in small groups of five-six discussing questions designed to prompt them for the essay:

5 Leur et al. (2017) also found, however, that a first-person imagination yielded greater presentism and moral judgments.

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1. Why did you choose to study this heresy?
2. Identify the theological, philosophical and/or religious commitments of this group. For instance, What is authoritative? What makes creation different from God? How does Christianity relate to Judaism? (or, How does the 'Christian God' compare with the 'Jewish God'?) What does the work of Jesus accomplish? How do humans get the benefit of Jesus' work?
3. In one or two sentences, describe the central teaching of this heresy in *the most charitable (yet accurate) way possible* (that is, explain it in a way an adherent of this teaching would approve of).

The instructor and a graduate teaching assistant engaged the groups during the session, and each group wrote their thoughts on poster board and presented them to the instructor or teaching assistant.

For the essay, students responded to these questions in 1,000-1,500 words:

1. What theological problem are you trying to address?
2. What is your solution?
3. Why is this solution attractive to you and other people you know?
4. Why do you think your position was rejected by others?

Before final submission of their essays, students were required to submit an outline of their answers to these questions. Each outline was read and commented on by the instructor or teaching assistant.

In addition to engaging the challenge of developing academic virtues, this assignment aimed to meet two additional challenges. First, through guided questions rather than an open-ended argument, it provided a focus for writing that, we hope, leads students through lower-order to higher-order thinking, in which students not only remember, but understand, apply, and analyze information (Bloom 1956). For our purposes, these higher-order skills are synonymous with "critical thinking," in which students do more than identify or repeat information but actually *manipulate* information in some way—for example, through comparisons, application to novel situations, or putting knowledge in their own words. This guided-questions approach is framed, in part, by our belief that writing in lower-level courses should not be guided by hopes that students will learn to write according to disciplinary conventions (e.g., write like a historian of religion, crafting fine-tuned thesis statements, charting their own original historical arguments, etc.) but acquire critical thinking skills that can serve them well in their own fields. Importantly, the goal of achieving empathy works in tandem with the goal of leading students to higher-order thinking, since research shows "an inverse relationship between empathy and dogmatic thinking or intolerance of difference" (Burns 2001, 16).

Second, the empathetic study of heresy can give instructors a fresh approach that incorporates the critical tools of religious studies without sacrificing personal or institutional convictions. Since critical study is greatly enhanced by attention to *difference*, a Christianity course which has no benefit of a comparative religions approach may particularly profit from deeper investigation of heresies. It is also important for teaching at a Christian institution, where there is a likelihood that students and instructors alike may perceive the task to be understanding or confirming one's own religious tradition, which can result in little attention to marginal voices or—when they are treated—focusing on their theological errors or faults. More intentional engagement with Christian heresies may counteract this tendency.

Methods

Participants

Participants were students enrolled in two sections of The Christian Heritage. One section ($n = 60$) served as the comparison group and was taught by an instructor otherwise not involved in this study. This course was not a control group, strictly speaking, as the content and pedagogy were neither monitored nor controlled. Rather, this course serves as a loose proxy for the results of a typical instructor at our institution not specifically concerned with teaching for empathy. The other

section (*n* = 52), taught by one of this study's authors (Richmann), served as the experimental group. The experimental group was distinguished by the role-playing exercises, small group discussion workday on students' chosen heresy, and the four-question essay described above. This study received our institution's IRB exemption, part of which entailed students consenting for the results to be shared for the potential benefit of future instructors.

Tools and Procedures

This study used mixed methods, gathering qualitative and quantitative data to determine if the project enhanced students' empathy. Qualitative data came from two student artifacts: the four-question essays (experimental group only) and a post-project questionnaire with an open-ended question (comparison and experimental groups). Because written work often prioritizes the finished product or "correct" answers, it may give less insight into students' progression of thought than, say, interview or group work observation data. Yet written work can be carefully crafted to prompt students to articulate their thought processes (Ashby and Lee 1987, 65).

Table 1. Modified Five Levels of Empathy (substantive changes in italics)

Level	Ashby and Lee	Modified
Level 1: "Divi" Past ("divi" is British slang for "thick")	regards the behavior of those in the past as stupid and unintelligible	regards the behavior of those in the past as stupid and unintelligible
Level 2: Generalized Stereotypes	uses conventional accounts of people's intentions, situations, values, and goals, without reference to context	*misrepresents context* or uses conventional accounts of people's intentions, situations, values, and goals, without reference to context
Level 3: Everyday Empathy	uses evidence of the historical situation but treats it largely in modern terms and often involves some form of personal projection ("What would it have been like for me if I had been there?")	uses evidence of the historical situation *but leaves context implicit or incomplete*; often involves some form of personal projection ("What would it have been like for me if I had been there?")
Level 4: Restricted Historical Empathy	acknowledging that standards for historical behavior differ from ours, uses evidence of the specific situation to understand historical behavior, giving individual actors the benefit of the doubt and explaining institutions somewhat narrowly in terms of their explicit functions	uses evidence of the historical situation, *making the context explicit but not well-connected to historical actors' beliefs or behaviors*
Level 5: Contextual Historical Empathy	considers a wider picture beyond the overt goals or intentions of people and institutions and explores the ways in which standards for historical behavior differ from ours	considers a wider picture beyond the overt goals or intentions of people and institutions, *attempts to integrate the concerns of opposing stances, or acknowledges and explicitly connects multiple relevant contexts to historical actors' beliefs or behaviors*

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Essays. In assessing the four-question essays, raters used a modified set of five empathy levels (Table 1) originally developed by observing school-age children working in discussion groups as they explain and discuss historical topics (Ashby and Lee 1987).[6]

To establish some context and baseline for rating, two raters assessed six essays independently and compared the results. Ratings on five of the six essays were identical; one essay received different ratings (3 from one rater; 4 from the other). The rest of the essays were rated by a single rater. While individual student writing often displayed multiple levels, each essay was given an overall level, generally associated with the highest level unambiguously achieved.

Open-Ended Response. At the end of the semester, all participants (comparison and experimental) were asked to respond to this question:

> *How would you describe what a "Christian heretic" is to someone who has not taken this class?*

Through inductive analysis, student responses to this question were coded in three groups: Descriptive, Non-understanding, or Judgmental. Descriptive responses generally explained heresy as a social construct: deviance from dominant or majority belief with no inherent positive or negative value. While recognizing that this principle of contextualization does not guarantee empathy in any given situation, it is evident in all empathy. We suspect that recognition of this principle can be a useful foundation for empathy in more specific situations. Non-understanding responses were those that were either left blank, contained blatant inaccuracies, were nonsensical, irredeemably vague, or admitted not understanding the term "Christian heretic." Judgmental responses displayed a negative view of heretics and/or made no attempt to contextualize heresy, often referring implicitly to deviance from static or objective theological truth. While it is possible to empathize with an idea or group and still have a negative view of it, such a position requires more nuance than was evidenced in these responses, which were *completely* negative and/or *totally* lacked any contextualization.

Empathy Questionnaire. In addition to quantifying the empathy level of essays and categories for open-ended responses, quantitative data came in the form of a validated empathy questionnaire, the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (Davis 1980, 1983; See Appendix C) administered at the beginning of the semester and again at the end of the semester to all participants. The IRI is composed of four independent subscales each measuring a facet of empathy.[7] Each subscale consists of seven items, each of which participants respond to using a 5-point Likert-type scale (0 = Does not describe me well to 4 = Describes me very well). Although this tool was designed as a general empathy scale rather than for measuring historical empathy, its use is an advance over previous methods which have been tied generally to specific historical topics rather than a generalized empathetic capacity (Endacott and Brooks 2018; Hartmann and Hasselhorn 2008; Huijgen et al. 2014). Furthermore, historical empathy has been linked to pro-social behaviors like conflict resolution and self-awareness, suggesting that empathy is to some degree transferrable from *historical* subject to *interpersonal* subject (Gehlbach 2004). As Ashby and Lee (1987, 64) put it, "pupils who . . . have learnt the kind of moves that help them achieve empathy, have not just taken a step forward in their history [education], but are more likely to be able to cope with the present world." Since this study defines empathy as *the capacity to know the internal state of another,* the "perspective taking" subscale of the IRI is particularly applicable, although a previous study on historical empathy found no change on IRI scores or the "perspective taking" subscale (Dillenburg 2017).

To explore correlations between empathy levels and beliefs in the malleability of empathy, we administered the Theories of Empathy (ToE) scale (Schumann et al., 2014, see Appendix D) to all participants at the beginning of the semester. Students

6 This tool has limitations for the current project, since it emerged inductively from discussion groups (not written work) with school-aged children (not college students). Yet it is most applicable framework available in the literature. The fact that students in the present study scored on a range of the levels (see Results section) suggests that developmental differences between school-aged children and college students are not a significant factor. On the other hand, the need to modify Ashby and Lee (1987) arose from the difference in student task. The original levels developed from observation of students, in group discussion prompted by open-ended questions, "making sense" of historical behavior researchers expected to appear strange to students. As such, the original levels failed to capture some of the nuances of student responses in this study, such as nominal empathy without rationale and application of historical evidence without referencing potential differences in meaning across time.

7 Davis's IRI includes subscales Fantasy (Imagination), Perspective Taking (Cognitive), Empathetic Concern, and Personal Distress (Affective).

indicated their level of agreement with six items on the ToE using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree). Negative items were recorded, and a mean ToE score was calculated such that higher scores indicate greater belief in the malleability of empathy.

As explored in the "Limitations and Further Research" section below, this type of quantitative data, while potentially useful in offering generalizations and comparisons, risks obscuring the nuances of students' experiences and performance. As will be seen below, qualitative data in the form of student writing provides greater insight into the unanticipated themes of student learning and depth of student understanding.

Results

Essays

The median empathy rating for essays (n = 50) was 3. Although writing displayed a range of empathetic levels from 2 to 5, most students' essays were rated level 3 (see Table 2). Given the ordinal nature of our ratings, we used Spearman's correlation to explore the relationship between empathy ratings and student essay grades, which were given independently. We found a moderate correlation between empathy ratings and student grades on the essay, $r = .49986$, $p = .0002$; significant at $p < .05$.

Table 2. Essays Rated on Empathy Levels

Level 1	0
Level 2	9
Level 3	30
Level 4	9
Level 5	2
Total	**50**

Level 1. No student writing was assessed at this level.

Level 2. Writing at this level overgeneralized to the point of distortion. One student, in ostensibly giving reasons for Docetism's appeal, claimed, "Most early Christians were not very intelligent due to lack of education[,] so Docetism was very convenient for many." Another student also pushed the appeal so far as to misrepresent the heresy (Arianism) she was trying to explain. "How can one be the same as the other? . . . Jesus came from human flesh, God did not, so what exactly makes them the same?" Not only did this student omit the importance of monotheism as theological context for Arianism, she also implied that Arians did not teach Christ's incarnation. It was not only the heretics or Christians in general who were stereotyped. One student, in explaining the orthodox reaction to Docetism, stated, "This concept was impossible to grasp by the traditional and widespread teachings of the mainstream church."

Students also rated level 2 if they misrepresented the context. One student, writing about resistance to Pelagianism, argued, "Most [people] enjoyed the thought of being able to live how they pleased and just paying for their faults to reach salvation." This student appears to be importing notions about medieval indulgences into her discussion of Pelagianism. Furthermore, since the prompt asked students to write in the persona of an adherent of a heresy, some students took this as license to caricature the *orthodox*. According to one student, "Pelagius's theology was rejected solely because of Augustine and the sheer amount of power that he had over the public and the mainstream church." This "control," claimed the student, resulted in "closed mindedness" among the orthodox. Another student referred to the orthodox opponents

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of Pelagianism as "those who wish to deny the truth of God's intention for human nature." This hints at a challenging subtlety of empathy; it is not the same as identification. Said another way, the distinction between empathy and sympathy is crucial, since empathy requires perspective-taking while maintaining critical perspective.

Level 3. Student writing in level 3 often referred to the logic or simplicity of the heresy when seeking to explain its appeal, while making only minimal attempt to contextualize the logic or failing to demonstrate full understanding of the context. Such students portrayed logic and simplicity as self-evident and timeless. As one student wrote in persona of a Pelagian, "By believing in our ability to keep the commandments, we ascribe to the command[']s fairness." This student does not acknowledge that concepts such as "fairness" are historically determined and socially constructed. In discussing Monophysitism, one student claimed, "Logically by the fact that one is infinite and the other is finite, Jesus' human portion was overwhelmed [by divinity] to the point that while it was still there, it was likely undetectable." "Many Christians chose Modalism," wrote another student, "because it was closely related to something that was already being praised by high members of the church [i.e., the Trinity] . . . But I think that the handful of us Christians that didn't fully understand it, looked for a similar concept, but with a more simplistic and coherent reasoning." If this student had demonstrated an appreciation for the fact that "the Trinity" was not yet a fully formed concept in the third century and explained why Modalism was simpler and more coherent than orthodox views of the godhead, these statements could have reached level 4.

This appeal to logic was sometimes implicit and could even factor into a negative assessment of the heresy, even though they were prompted to write in persona of a heretic. One student wrote that Arius' "literal interpretation of the New Testament is ultimately flawed in that it tries to describe the unknowable God and the Trinity in limited, human terms." Another student, writing on Pelagius, wrote, "Where Pelagianism failed and the reason it ended up being rejected by so many . . . is because of the many fallacies it contains . . . These clear ideas that are so contradictory to scripture is arguably the greatest reason that Pelagianism was declared a heresy." These types of comments frequently appeared in the "why do you think your position was rejected by others?" section of the essay, which suggests that some students had difficulty fairly presenting the opposition through a lens that still maintained a basic posture of openness to the heresy—a challenging sort of double-perspective-taking exercise.

While mentioning historical context, student writing in level 3 often left the origin or impact of context implicit or incomplete. For instance, one student rightly noted the moral and social chaos of Rome in the fourth century ("Rome was a mess"). But rather than concretely connect the social conditions with Pelagius' ascetic alternative, the student simply presented Pelagius as a sauntering hero, who offered "an alternative to the current way of living in Rome." More detail on Rome's "mess" and Pelagius' moral "alternative" would likely have moved these reflections to level 4. Many students took for granted rather than explained why early Christians regarded Hebrew scripture or apostolic tradition as authoritative. As one student put it, "If you look to scripture there is evidence or proof that what Pelagius believed could very well be true." Another student commenting on Pelagius overlooked the biblical/theological context even while emphasizing social context: "Many of these [new converts] continued to live in their old, sinful ways, yet carried the Christian title . . . Pelagius soon spoke out and pressed for better behavior from Christians." This statement may have rated level 4 if the student had explained that Pelagius judged Roman Christian behavior by certain inherited biblical standards and admonitions.

Level 4. Level 4 writing made historical and theological context explicit and loosely connected this context to heretical teachings and orthodox responses. After mentioning the Jewish Revolt and Roman hostility to Judaism, one student wrote, "Marcion's teachings provided a reason for Gentile Christians to break from the Jewish roots of Christianity." In establishing the "problem" that Modalistic Monarchianism sought to solve, another student wrote simply, "Wanting to uphold the belief in there only being one God could be traced back to Judaism." Such responses indicated students appreciated the origins and impact of the context for heresies but often failed to connect all the historical dots (e.g., why was Christianity largely beholden to Jewish monotheism?).

Level 5. The distinguishing feature of this level is an attempt at comprehensiveness: students acknowledge multiple issues in context as relevant for explaining historical beliefs and behaviors. As one student explained:

> Ebionism is a broad stroke for mitigating conflicting theologies. There are a lot of differences to be found between Jesus' teachings and what is written in the Old Testament that are resolved in this way of thinking, as well as the issue of monotheism is addressed directly in this wonderful sect. The greatest strength of this religion is that it solves multiple theological problems that have been the topic of debate for some time now.

This student's articulation of the multiple problems of Christianity's relationship to Judaism set the stage for empathetic treatment of both Ebionism and orthodoxy. This implies an appreciation for how opposing historical stances can be integrated by explaining their common concerns. In this student's words, Ebionism provides "a way to follow Jesus while still remaining faithful to the Mosaic teachings," something all early Christians favored.

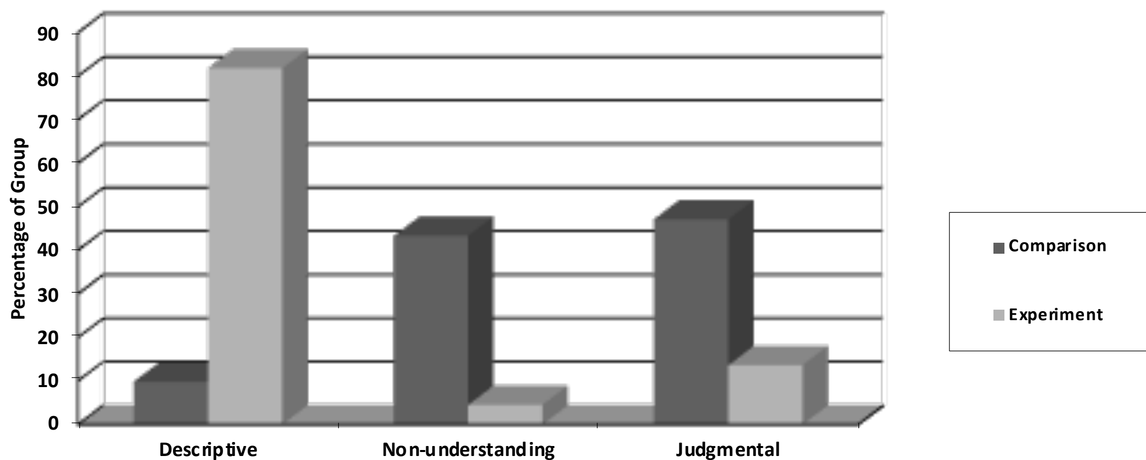
Open-Ended Response

Overwhelmingly, a greater percentage of students in the experimental group gave Descriptive responses (see Table 3). They were much more likely to explain heresy as a concept relating to social or historical realities, rather than religious truth as such. In a particularly articulate response, one student asserted that a Christian heretic is "Someone w/ unconventional theological beliefs for a specific time in history. It really depends on the historical time period because Christianity is not a static set of beliefs." Correspondingly, students in the experimental group were far less likely to give Judgmental responses. It was much more typical of the comparison group, for instance, for a student to respond that a heretic is "someone who takes Christianity and twists it for their own purposes," to call heresy "untrue," "incorrect and/or harmful," or to refer to a heretic as "one who distorts or perverts the Gospel." Also worth noting, students in the experimental group were much less likely to give a Non-understanding response.

Table 3. Comparison and Experiment Group Open-Ended Responses

	Comparison Group (n = 51)	**Experimental Group (n = 44)**
Descriptive	9.8% (5)	81.8% (36)
Non-understanding	43.3 % (22)	4.5% (2)
Judgmental	47.1% (24)	13.6% (6)

Figure 1. Comparison and Experimental Group Open-Ended Responses



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In the comparison group, many students seemed to have confused “heretic” with “hypocrite,” leading to some of the Judgmental responses. As one student remarked, a Christian heretic “is someone who goes against his or her own beliefs.” Such responses may more properly belong in the Non-understanding category, but there is insufficient evidence to make this claim.

Empathy Questionnaire

All statistical analyses were done using IBM SPSS Statistics V. 25.[8] Pre- and post-test data was available for 43 students in the comparison group and 38 students in the experimental group. Students who were missing either the entire pre- or post-test were removed from analyses, and missing values on individual items were replaced with the median. We ran Pearson correlations between students' scores on the Perspective Taking (PT) subscale of the IRI and their ToE scores. Students' pre-test PT scores were not significantly correlated with their ToE scores, $r = .12$, $p = .272$, but their post-test PT scores were marginally related to their ToE scores, $r = .22$, $p = .051$. Greater perspective-taking showed a small- to medium-sized association with greater belief in the malleability of empathetic ability. This trending effect disappeared, however, when students were split into groups.

To explore how the experimental manipulation affected students' self-reported empathy over the course of the semester, we conducted a 2 (time: pre- or post-test) x 2 (group: comparison or experimental) repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) on students' scores on the PT subscale. Time was a within-subjects variable and group was a between-subjects variable. There was no effect of time, $F(1, 79) = 0.35$, $p = .554$, group, $F(1, 79) = 2.40$, $p = .125$, or their interaction, $F(1, 79) = 10.36$, $p = .119$. We next ran a 2 x 2 repeated-measures analysis of covariance ANCOVA with ToE included as a covariate. This allowed us to control for any effects of students' beliefs about the malleability in empathy on their PT scores over time. In line with expectations, ToE scores approached significance in accounting for variance in students' PT scores, $F(1, 78) = 3.33$, $p = .072$. The size of the effect of ToE scores on PT scores was small to medium, $d = 0.41$. With ToE scores included as a covariate, time remained non-significant, $F(1, 78) = 0.99$, $p = .322$, as did the time by group interaction, $F(1, 78) = 2.76$, $p = .101$. However, group became marginally significant, $F(1, 78) = 2.88$, $p = .093$, and had a relatively medium-sized effect on PT score change over time, $d = 0.41$. After controlling for ToE scores, those in the comparison group had slightly higher PT scores than those in the experimental group ($M_{Comparison} = 19.61$, $SE = 0.58$; $M_{Experimental} = 18.18$, $SE = 0.61$).

Discussion

The results from the project are mixed. The essays give consistent evidence that, following this intervention (although not necessarily as a result of it), students display “Everyday Historical Empathy,” meaning that in explaining a heresy, they use evidence of the historical situation but often leave context implicit or incomplete, frequently with some form of implicit personal projection, such as appeal to what seems “logical” or “simple.”

The open-ended responses showed clearly that the experimental group was more able to describe “Christian heretic” as a socially constructed category rather than judge it as theologically, morally, or intellectually deficient. The intervention, with multiple learning activities centered on contextualizing heresies, seems to have enabled students to better understand the nature of heresy as a historical phenomenon.

In contrast, the intervention did not have significant effects on participants' PT scores on the IRI. In other words, this exercise in historical empathy has not resulted in measurable gains in interpersonal empathy, results consistent with Dillenburg (2017). Although the comparison group had slightly higher PT scores, this was not observed as a time by group interaction, pointing to a pre-existing characteristic of the comparison sample rather than a result of the intervention.

8 IBM Corp. Released 2017. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 25.0 Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.

Limitations and Further Research

While it may be good that no essays were rated level 1, there are many ways to explain this. As noted above, the prompt itself led students away from any hostile or dismissive approach to the heretics they studied. If given an open forum to "make sense" of heresies, these students may have performed differently. Evidence from the essays does not illuminate the crucial difference between student performance on a graded assignment and genuine student attitudes and dispositions. For a fuller picture, additional research could compare graded written work with observation of open student discussion. This may help us to see how much effect the wording of a prompt and the nature of the task (graded or non-graded) have on empathy levels.

The issue of transferability remains opaque. We do not know to what degree the experimental group's penchant for non-judgmental description of "Christian heretic" may transfer to how students conceive of other historical actors and institutions. Further studies could, for instance, focus an intervention on one often-disparaged historical subject (e.g., heresies) and measure students' attitudes about another disparaged or stereotyped subject (e.g., liberal theology in a more conservative institutional context or fundamentalism in a more liberal environment).

The IRI purports to measure empathy in personal, everyday interactions. To register effects of the intervention on the IRI, participants ostensibly need to develop, transfer, enact, and report interpersonal empathy. Each of these steps provides an explanation of our findings that this intervention did not significantly affect students' PT score on the IRI. Participants may not have become more empathetic in a general sense, in which case this intervention was not pedagogically effective for teaching empathy. They may have developed *historical* empathy (as suggested by the open-ended responses and the essays) without transferring this to everyday *interpersonal* empathy. Cognitive research shows that transfer is among the most sophisticated learning tasks and is especially challenging when knowledge is overly contextualized (National Research Council 2000). If historical empathy is regarded as an important outcome on its own (without regard to interpersonal empathy) it may require its own psychometric tools to assess—a task for further research. Still, we cannot conclude from this limited study that historical empathy does not transfer to interpersonal empathy; perhaps this process takes longer than a semester, and studies of greater longitude could provide more insight. Items on the PT subscale also focus on enacting empathetic behaviors and attitudes (e.g., "I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision."). Again, time is a factor; perhaps a semester is not long enough to give participants enough opportunities to enact such empathetic dispositions in daily life. Finally, as with all questionnaires, the IRI relies on self-reporting, measuring self-perceptions of attitudes abstracted from interactions, not actual attitudes in the moment of interaction. Participants could be behaving in more empathetic ways without realizing it.

The weak correlation between IRI and ToE might challenge previous findings (Schumann, Zaki, and Dweck 2014). It should be noted, however, that these previous studies explored the relationship between a malleable mindset regarding empathy and expending empathetic effort, not changes over time of self-reporting of interpersonal reactivity. Additional studies could confirm or refute our finding, but instructors attempting to "teach empathy" may be heartened by the suggestion that the effect is not necessarily predetermined by students' existing malleability mindset.

A major limitation of this study is its small scope. In particular, a larger comparison group and/or a more rigidly controlled comparison group would give more reliable data on the open-ended response. If, for instance, the comparison group class simply did not spend much time learning about heresies, their inability to describe "Christian heretic" as a social construct may be more related to lack of familiarity than lack of empathy as such.

Finally, the lack of comparison group for essays limits the inferences we can draw. The essays provided key data but were also part of the intervention itself. In this model, a comparison group writing the same essay is not possible. Additional studies could devise writing assignments common to both experimental and comparison groups that are not part of the intervention.

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Implications for Teaching

A benefit of assessing student writing with the modified empathy levels is that it can help instructors distinguish between lower- and higher-order thinking. The moderate correlation between essay levels and grades suggests that empathy is an element of critical thinking, particularly as a major category for grading was development of argument, including "explanation of points of comparison/contrast . . . main points are . . . legitimate, based on sources, and establish relevance." Many students included a great deal of accurate and pertinent information (lower-order thinking) without displaying much empathy. Essays on Modalism, for example, often mentioned the importance of monotheism in their appeal but also failed to explain why monotheism mattered to early Christians. In discussing Monophysitism, one student explained at length the challenge of reconciling divinity and humanity in the single person of Jesus, but he never explained the Greek thought-world that gave Christians their notions of the attributes associated with divine and human. An essay on Marcion presented the "problem" of "the incompatibility between Jesus of Nazareth's teachings about the love of God and the violent acts accredited to, or ordered by, YHWH, the god of Israel as reported in the Old Testament." While this student named the central matter of Marcionism, she did not make explicit *why* this incompatibility posed a problem—that is, the dominant Christian belief that Jesus represented the God of the Old Testament. Insofar as empathy or perspective-taking coincides with historical understanding of cause-and-effect relationships, the concept of empathy can provide instructors a helpful view of the ways to encourage, support, and assess higher-order thinking.

The results of this study suggest that role-playing exercises and written explanation of a Christian heresy, in persona of a heretic and refined in discussion with peers, can help students develop empathy for Christian heresies. But there is room for improvement. In mid-semester feedback forms, several students in the experimental group, without specific prompting, mentioned the helpfulness of the role-playing exercises, suggesting more and variated role-playing might have a greater effect on empathy. As empathy has been shown to develop fluidly in conversation with peers (Ashby and Lee 1987, 86), we speculate that more group work and small group discussion related to Christian heresies may increase the effect.

Furthermore, instructors who wish to increase the likelihood of empathy transfer to other areas of historical study or to interpersonal interactions should consider learning activities associated with transfer, such as balancing instruction on the specifics of Christian heresies with more general discussion about the nature of heresy, solving multiple distinct cases that help students abstract key principles themselves, prompting students with analogous experiences when addressing new situations (without telling them *what* or *how* to apply this information), or requiring students to reflect on their own thinking (National Research Council 2000). For example, the project outlined above could be extended to focus on a second heresy. Rather than research in books and articles, however, students would be asked to learn about the heresy by conducting an interview with the instructor playing the role of an adherent of the heresy. The instructor would answer questions politely but tersely, meaning students who wanted fuller information would need to formulate probing, gracious, and empathetic questions. They would then craft questions for a hypothetical interview attempting to understand someone who has very different views from them on some religious, political, or social issue. Finally, they would write a brief reflection describing how they connected these three major assignments. Such an exercise would engage students in the abstraction and particularizing, application to new situations, and metacognition associated with transfer.

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APPENDIX A: Essay Prompt

Heresies: The Forgotten Heroes of the Christian Tradition

A major theme in the study of Christianity is "heresy vs. orthodoxy." Heresies are schools of thought that came to be considered incorrect or even dangerous by most other Christians. This majority, then, defined its core theological stance as orthodoxy, or "correct belief." Although there may be good theological reasons for rejecting particular heresies, it is important to understand that heresies played an important role in shaping Christianity. Oftentimes, the orthodox stance on an issue was only defined in the course of reacting against theological ideas that didn't "sit right" with the majority. This majority then worked hard to explain its position in positive terms that clearly excluded these heresies. In other words, orthodox Christians have heretics to thank for helping them articulate their positions!

In this essay, you will focus on one of the major heresies of Christianity. Your task is NOT to defend the orthodox position or point out the flaws of the heresies. In fact, it is almost the opposite: I want you to gain sympathy and understanding for the "heretics" of the Christian tradition by attempting to explain and analyze its historical context and its theological content. You will do this by answering four questions, in the persona of an adherent of this school of thought:

1. ***What theological problem are you trying to address?*** (Give full historical context and explain the logic that led to this way of thinking.)

1. ***What is your solution?*** (Be detailed and precise.)

1. ***Why is this solution attractive to you and other people you know?*** (Give attention to both historical and theological issues. Historical arguments focus on the natural human forces that were at play, such as power structures, wealth, or personalities. Theological arguments focus on the internal logic, consistency with sacred texts and traditions, compatibility with cultural assumptions, or rhetorical power of the position.)

1. ***Why do think your position was rejected by others?*** (Also consider historical and theological issues.)

Heresies/Heretics to consider:

Docetism
Marcionsim
Modalism/Modalistic Monarchianism
Arianism
Montanism
Ebionism
Donatism
Pelagianism
Monophysitism

APPENDIX B: Role-Playing Response Form

Reflection Questions (for observers of role-playing)

1. What do you think was the most important issue for Joseph in this conversation? What makes you think this?
2. Do you think the Joseph got points across? What makes you think this?
3. Imagine yourself in Joseph's shoes. How do you feel about this conversation when it is over? Include in your response a specific exchange from the conversation.

APPENDIX C: Interpersonal Reactivity Index

NAME____

The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate letter on the scale at the top of the page: A, B, C, D, or E. When you have decided on your answer, circle the letter on the answer sheet below the item number. READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING. Answer as honestly as you can. Thank you.

ANSWER SCALE:

A B C D E

DOES NOT DESCRIBE ME WELL — DESCRIBES ME VERY WELL

1. I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me.

   A B C D E

2. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.

   A B C D E

3. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view.

   A B C D E

4. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.

   A B C D E

5. I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.

   A B C D E

6. In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease.

A B C D E

7. I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it.

A B C D E

8. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.

A B C D E

9. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.

A B C D E

10. I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation.

A B C D E

11. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.

A B C D E

12. Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me.

A B C D E

13. When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm.

A B C D E

14. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.

A B C D E

15. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments.

A B C D E

16. After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters.

A B C D E

17. Being in a tense emotional situation scares me.

A B C D E

18. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.

A B C D E

19. I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies.

    A B C D E

20. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.

    A B C D E

21. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.

    A B C D E

22. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.

    A B C D E

23. When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character.

    A B C D E

24. I tend to lose control during emergencies.

    A B C D E

25. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.

    A B C D E

26. When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me.

    A B C D E

27. When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces.

    A B C D E

28. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.

    A B C D E

APPENDIX D: Theories of Empathy Scale

Using the scale below, please indicate your agreement with each of the following statements.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

STRONGLY DISAGREE STRONGLY AGREE

1. A person's level of empathy is something very basic about them, and it can't be changed much. ______
2. Whether a person is empathic or not is deeply ingrained in their personality. It cannot be changed very much. ______
3. People can't really change how much empathy they tend to feel for others. Some people are very empathic and some aren't and they can't change that much. ______
4. No matter who somebody is, they can always change how empathic a person they are. ______
5. People can always change how much empathy they generally feel for others. ______
6. Anybody can change how empathic a person they are. ______

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ARTICLE

Enhancing Transfer of Learning from Seminary Classes to Pastoral Ministry

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews the research on transfer of learning in order to inform the broader conversation about formation for ministry in theological education. It defines transfer of learning, and contextualizes it for theological education, as: the effective and continuing application by pastors to their performance in ministry of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs gained through seminary learning activities. The essay reviews three significant models of learning transfer, including Baldwin and Ford's (1988) generative model, and discusses the three broad variables that affect transfer: individual learner characteristics, the design of the educational program, and the context of the work and ministry environment. The article concludes with six recommendations for enhancing transfer of learning from seminary classes to pastoral ministry and presents two, brief case studies from seminary classes exemplifying these recommendations.

KEYWORDS

transfer of learning, transfer of training, application of learning, theological education, seminary education, Baldwin and Ford

INTRODUCTION

Cafferella and Daffron, in their definitive work on *Planning Programs for Adult Learners*, lament,

> Though transfer to practice is considered to be an important part of the [educational] planning process, this component continues to be neglected. Rather, it is often assumed that the application of what was learned at an education or training program somehow just happens and any resultant changes are the worry of someone other than those responsible for [teaching] the program. (2013, 227)

Likewise, one of adult education's foremost senior scholars, Sharon Merriam suggests, "Perhaps because the adult education literature is relatively silent on the topic of transfer, many adult educators have only a cursory

understanding of the nature of transfer, including what facilitates or what hinders the process" (Merriam and Leahy 2005, 2). As Merriam and Leahy go on to note, the vast majority of studies on transfer of learning come from the fields of professional training (e.g., Continuing Professional Education) and Human Resource Development. If the field of adult education generally has not adequately accounted for transfer in its planning and implementing of educational programs, what about theological education? Not surprisingly, in a recent search I conducted, I found no journal articles which directly and primarily addressed the concept of transfer of learning and applied it to the context of theological education and training for pastoral ministry.[1]

In this article I will seek to address aspects of this gap in application. My purpose is to provide a review of the research on transfer of learning from social science literature over the last thirty years[2] and then to suggest implications for theological education. I will first define the concept and present three significant models of transfer of learning. Then, I will address various dimensions of transfer addressed by these models. Third, I will discuss the three broad variables that affect transfer: individual learner characteristics, the design of the educational program, and the context of the work and ministry environment. Finally, I will propose six recommendations for enhancing transfer of learning from seminary classes to pastoral ministry and present two, brief case studies from seminary classes exemplifying these recommendations.

The research on transfer of learning has broad implications for the prevailing models of theological education,[3] for the design and goals of entire seminary curricula,[4] and for supervised ministry programs (or clinical pastoral education). My purpose is to provide a gateway into the concept of transfer of learning for seminary educators in the hopes of informing the broader conversation about formation for ministry in theological education. The essay concludes with several recommendations for designing and teaching courses to enhance students' ability to transfer classroom learning into pastoral practice. I confine my recommendations to individual seminary classes and offer two case studies as illustrations. The essay concludes by suggesting further avenues of research for bringing the literature on transfer of learning into generative conversation with the significant literature on formation in theological education.

Definition and Models

The concept of transfer from the classroom or educational program to the work or ministry context is variously described as "transfer of learning," "transfer of training," "applications process" (Cafferella and Daffron 2013), or simply "application." Especially within professional practice, transfer of learning focuses on how professionals make meaning using the knowledge gained from an educational program within their professional context (Daley 2001; Daley and Cervero 2016). A frequently referenced definition of learning transfer comes from Broad: "The effective and continuing application by learners—to their performance of jobs or other individual, organizational, or community responsibilities—of knowledge and skills gained in learning activities" (1997, 2). The literature typically uses the language of the applications of knowledge, skills, and abilities or attitudes (KSAs) to describe what are transferred (e.g., Daffron and North 2011; Blume et al. 2017). Thus, a contextualized definition of transfer of learning for pastoral ministry might be: The effective and continuing application by pastors to their performance in ministry of knowledge, skills, attitudes (KSAs), and beliefs gained through seminary learning activities.

A central feature of the definition of learning transfer includes the notion of effectiveness or success in transfer. All models of learning transfer seek to enhance, deepen, and broaden the application of learning to the work and ministry context. While numerous models of transfer exist, I will review three of the most significant. In 1988, Baldwin and Ford developed

1 Using the ATLA Religion database and Google Scholar, I searched for articles using combinations and variants of the following key phrases: "transfer of learning," "transfer of training," "application of learning," "theological education," and "seminary education." I found no journal articles which directly and primarily addressed the concept of transfer of learning within the context of theological education and/or clergy education. I found a handful of articles and a few dissertations which only mention the concept or discuss it in a minor way as part of much larger discussions on different topics.

2 While the literature on transfer of learning can be traced back as early as 1901 to Edward Thorndike (Blume et al. 2010), Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model and research program changed the landscape and have set the agenda for all subsequent research in this area (Merriam and Leahy 2005; Daffron and North 2011).

3 For discussion and historical perspective on the prevailing models of theological education see Aleshire (2010, 2018, 2021) and Miller (2007, 2014). For an important challenge to the models of theological education from a missional perspective see Cronshaw (2012).

4 Important resources in this regard are Foster et al. (2006) and Shaw (2014).

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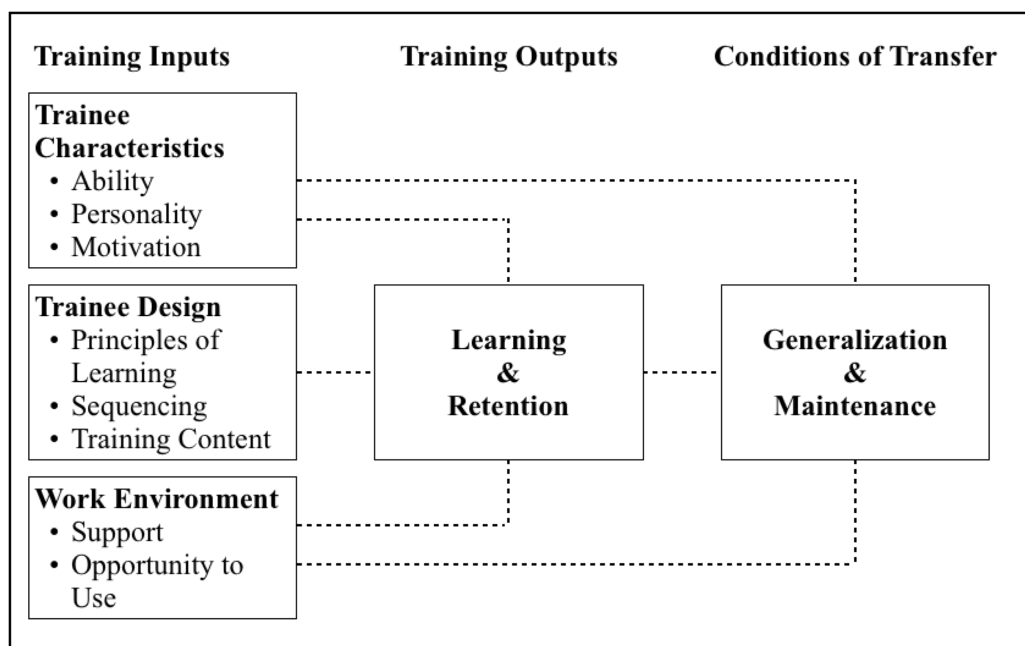
their initial "Model of the Transfer Process" (Figure 1) in an article that reviewed and critiqued the transfer research from 1901 to 1987 and suggested new directions for research. The field responded, and their model has become the most cited, discussed, and developed model in the literature (Merriam and Leahy 2005; Blume et al. 2010; Daffron 2011). Their model describes a process comprised of training input factors, training outcomes, and conditions of transfer. The three training input categories classify the main variables in transfer effectiveness.[5] Baldwin and Ford (1988) observed that the research to date had tended to focus on training design and that much more research was needed in the areas of trainee characteristics and the work context (cf. Cervero 1985). As can be seen in their model, Baldwin and Ford (1988) placed a strong emphasis on the planning stage and on incorporating all the stakeholders (i.e., learner, trainee, planner, teacher, trainer, supervisor, and organization as whole), which they posited should lead to successful transfer. While their model presents important interactions between training inputs, learning outcomes, and learning transfer, it is still somewhat mechanistic and linear.

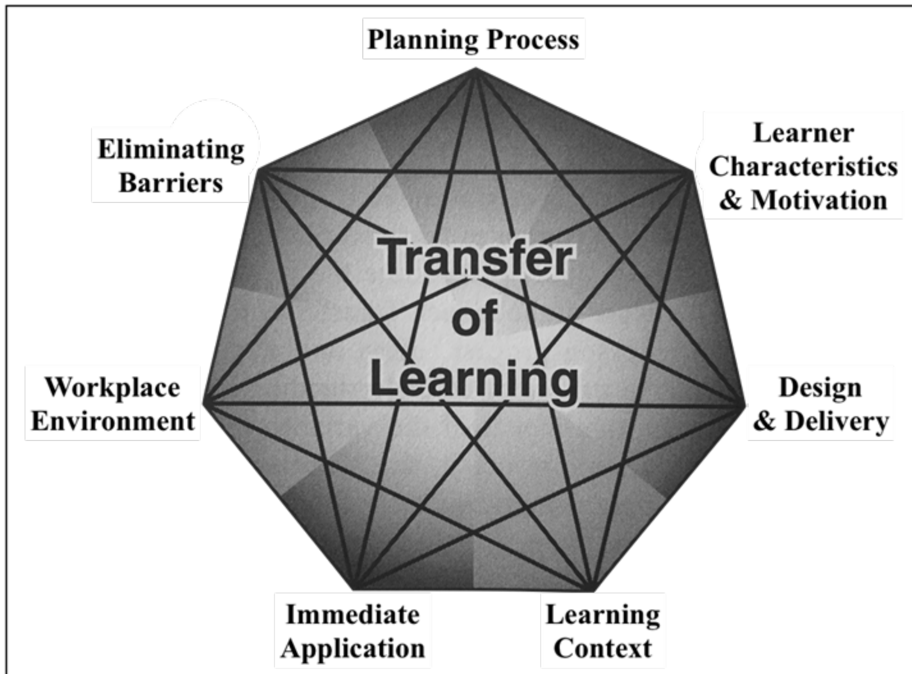
Figure 1: Model of the Transfer Process (Baldwin and Ford, 1988)



As research advanced, framed by the Baldwin and Ford (1988) model, researchers recognized how significant the sociocultural context of the work environment was to transfer (e.g., Clark 2002; Bates and Khasawneh 2005; Baldwin, Ford, and Blume 2009; Daffron and North 2011).[6] Further, researchers also discerned that the dimensions of learning transfer are interrelated, dynamic, and multidirectional (e.g., Daffron and North 2011; Blume et al. 2017). Within this line of thinking, Daffron and North (2011) posit the Successful Transfer of Learning Model (Figure 2). They state, "We designed this graphic to illustrate the multifaceted, nonlinear, and interactive nature of the model. Transfer of learning is indeed a complex and perplexing process" (2011, 8). Their model incorporates all the stakeholders in the learning process across all phases of training (i.e., pre-, during, and post-training) and intertwines the stakeholders' responsibilities, phases, and the seven variables discerned in their research.

5 For a thorough discussion of these three variables, see the section below on "Variables that Affect Transfer."
6 I will discuss this in more detail below when I discuss the variable of the context of the work environment. From the perspective of learning theory, cf. the concepts of "situated cognition" and "situated learning" (Brown, Collins, and Duguid 1989; Lave and Wenger 1991; Wilson 1993).

Figure 2: Successful Transfer of Learning Model (Daffron and North, 2011)



The interactive model of learning transfer developed by Daffron and North (2011) can be supplemented with the recent model developed by Ford and his colleagues (Blume et al. 2017), which represents the most recent revised model of Baldwin and Ford (1988). Blume et al.'s Dynamic Transfer Model (DTM; Appendix 1), develops

> a dynamic, iterative model of transfer over time from an interactionist perspective. The focus of such a model is the examination of the links from intentions to transfer at the end of training, to initial attempts in using the training, and then to the continuation of training transfer over time that impacts work behavior and performance. (2017, 2)

The significance of this model lies in the emphasis it places upon the participant's purposeful intent to transfer learning during the post-training phase over an extended period of time and many iterations as mediated by the contextual factor of the work environment and personal trainee characteristics. In their previous research (Blume et al. 2010), Blume and his colleagues found that the majority of empirical studies from 1988 to 2008 evaluated the use of transfer immediately following (or shortly thereafter) the training program and were mostly self-reported by the trainee. They called for future studies to evaluate the effectiveness of transfer after longer and multiple intervals post-training using other measures in addition to trainee self-reporting. The DTM (Blume et al. 2017) takes up this perspective and seeks to provide a framework for such research and practice.

The three models I have reviewed should not be understood as competing models, but rather used in a complementary fashion. Each model assumes that a collaborative process exists between all stakeholders (i.e. learners, planner, teacher, and workplace or ministry supervisor and peers) in order for transfer to be maximized. Each model accentuates an important perspective on effective transfer of learning, which the others do not. Baldwin and Ford (1988) highlight how important the planning process, especially before the educational program, is for transfer. Daffron and North (2011) emphasize that none of the variables of transfer can be abstracted from the others as more significant, but all must be attended to in devising plans for successful learning transfer. Blume et al. (2017) stress the dynamics of the post-course phase, as socio-culturally embedded learners actively personalize application to their work and ministry contexts over time.

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Dimensions of Transfer of Learning

In this section, I will describe three dimensions of learning transfer which the above models propose and incorporate: generalization, maintenance, and personalization.

In Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model, they proposed the main dimensions, or conditions of transfer of learning, as "generalization" and "maintenance," which subsequent research has taken up as categories of measure (Baldwin, Ford, and Blume 2009; Blume et al. 2010; Blume et al. 2017). "For transfer to have occurred, learned behavior must be generalized to the job context and maintained over a period of time" (Baldwin and Ford 1988, 63). "Generalization refers to the extent to which trained skills and behaviors [and attitudes] are exhibited in the transfer setting" (Baldwin and Ford 1988, 95). For example, how well have pastors generalized the skills of exegesis learned in seminary classes and transferred it into their practice of regular teaching and preaching? Or how have they generally applied a charitable attitude toward diverse people in their congregations and communities based on similar attitudes cultivated through navigating learning experiences with diverse seminary colleagues?

In contrast to generalization, "maintenance concerns the length of time that trained skills and behaviors continue to be used on the job" (Baldwin and Ford 1988, 95). Decreases or increases of application over time could be considered by different types of "maintenance curves," which represent the change in KSAs "exhibited in the transfer setting as a function of time elapsed from completion of the training program" (96) (see Appendix 2 for Baldwin and Ford's diagram). For example, how well do pastors who have studied Greek and Hebrew in seminary maintain proficiency in those languages within the practice of ministry? Or how well do pastors maintain their knowledge of church history as a lens through which to evaluate contemporary theological, social, and institutional movements?

While generalization and maintenance continue to be main dimensions of learning transfer, subsequent research has discerned the importance of "personalization" (Daley 2001, 2002; Daley and Cervero 2016; Baldwin, Ford, and Blume 2009; Blume et al. 2017). A personalization perspective recognizes the learner as an active participant in learning and transfer. It emphasizes the learner's agency and that, although the ministry context and culture provide contours and constraints to application, some level of individual choice exists to "discard, maintain, apply, or modify training knowledge and skills in [the] work context" (Blume et al. 2017, 7). Daley (2001) describes this process of personalization as the way in which the knowledge from continuing professional education (CPE) becomes meaningful in professional practice. She concludes that professionals

> did not see transfer of learning as an outcome of their educational endeavors; they viewed transfer as an integral part of the meaning-making process. New information learned in CPE programs was added to a professional's knowledge through a complex process of thinking about, acting on, and identifying their feelings about new information. Professionals indicated that new information had to connect to other concepts before it was meaningful to them, and part of the process of making knowledge meaningful was to use it in practice in some way. Thus, transferring information to practice was essential to the process of meaning making because often, in this process of using information, the professionals again changed what the information meant to them based on the results they observed. In other words, incorporating new knowledge is a recursive, transforming process, rather than a simple, straightforward transfer of information from one context to another. (Daley 2001, 50)

Daley and Cervero (2016) build upon Daley's (2001, 2002) earlier work and suggest a model of learning in CPE in which the personalization of transfer occurs through the interaction between the professional's new KSAs (developed through constructivist and transformative learning experiences), the work context, and professional development practice (see Appendix 3). Daley and Cervero's model provides a holistic and integrative view of learning transfer within the professional's experience. Thus, for example, in the ministry context, deeper learning transfer occurs when pastors not only seek to apply newly learned homiletical skills but decide how they will personalize these skills in a way that works for them and their ministry context.

The dimension of personalization in learning transfer, or the meaning making process in professionals' application of CPE, is also described by other terms in the literature, especially as developed in the ideas of "closed" and "open" skills

(Yelon and Ford 1999; Baldwin, Ford, and Blume 2009; Blume et al. 2010; Yelon, Ford, and Bhatia 2014; Blume et al. 2017). A trained closed skill is one particular way to act, done in a precise way (e.g., exegeting a passage of Scripture or creating a congregational budget). Open skills are more creative and adaptive, with no one right way to do them. Open skills give the individual freedom to perform based on trained principles or theory (e.g., writing and delivering a sermon or leading a new ministry initiative). In open trained skills, professionals make personal choices whether to and how to apply the principles and procedures learned in training to their job contexts (Yelon, Ford, and Bhatia 2014). In summary, the goal of personalization in transfer of learning is that *open* KSAs would transfer far and deep in the life and the professional and ministerial context of the learner.

For effective transfer, classroom learning must be generalized across learners' work and ministry contexts, maintained successfully over time in their real-world practice, and purposefully adapted and meaningfully contextualized to their environments. How can such transfer be effectively accomplished? In the next section, I will address the three significant variables which determine whether learning transfer is successful.

The Main Variables that Affect Transfer of Learning

The literature generally discusses three broad variables that affect transfer: individual learner characteristics, the design of the educational program, and the context of the work environment (e.g., Baldwin and Ford 1988; Merriam and Leahy 2005; Baldwin, Ford, and Blume 2009; Blume et al. 2010; Daffron and North 2011; Blume et al. 2017).

Individual learners have sets of characteristics which they bring to training, through which they experience classroom instruction, and out of which they apply the learning. While the learner's cognitive ability is the single largest predictor of effective transfer to the professional context (Blume et al. 2010), and personality traits such as conscientiousness and extraversion are also significant predictors of learning transfer (Naquin and Holton 2002), there are other factors that can be directly addressed by educational planners and teachers to enhance transfer. Two key factors include learner motivation and self-efficacy.

Motivation to learn, and to transfer one's learning to the work and ministry context, is a significant variable in effective learning transfer (Daffron and North 2011). Motivation is complex and can be affected by numerous elements. Students who participate in training voluntarily, rather than fulfilling a mandatory requirement, tend to have higher motivation to learn (Blume et al. 2010; Daffron and North 2011) due to the difference between intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation (Wlodkoswki and Ginsberg 2017). Those who attend classes voluntarily tend to see value in learning new KSAs and expect to change as a result of the educational experience (Daffron and North 2011). Thus, seminary educators can capitalize on this aspect of student motivation to enhance transfer since nearly all seminary students have voluntarily chosen to enroll in seminary.

But, what about "mandatory" training or "required" seminary classes in which students tend to enter demotivated or with little motivation to learn? Even in these cases, faculty members can plan and communicate in a such a way to seek to increase motivation. They can design the educational experience so that what participants learn will be valuable to them and the learned KSAs will be immediately applicable in their ministerial roles. Further, this value proposition could be communicated to the participants before the educational program begins. If students have a positive expectation for value, and the training subsequently delivers this value, then this tends to increase learning motivation, and subsequently transfer (Daffron and North 2011).

While motivation ultimately remains a function of the individual learner's agency, motivation to learn can be enhanced by teachers adopting a series of motivational strategies for their course design and delivery methods (Wlodkowski and Ginsberg 2017). Motivational scholars, Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (2017), propose a Motivational Framework for Culturally Inclusive Teaching which includes four broad strategies:

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- **Establishing Inclusion:** Creating a learning atmosphere in which learners and teachers feel respected and connected to one another.

- **Developing Attitude:** Creating a favorable disposition toward the learning experience through personal relevance and volition.

- **Enhancing Meaning:** Creating challenging and engaging learning experiences that include learners' perspectives and values.

- **Engendering Competence:** Creating an understanding that learners are effective in learning something they value.

In addition, motivating teachers display a series of common characteristics including expertise in their field, empathy in their classroom leadership, enthusiasm for their subject, being clear and structured in their presentation and delivery, and being culturally responsive to diverse learners in the classroom (Wlodkowski and Ginsberg 2017).

Closely related to motivation to learn, and related to Wlodkowski and Ginsberg's (2017) "engendering competence," is the quality of learner self-efficacy. Higher self-efficacy tends to result in more effective transfer of learning (Blume et al. 2010; Daffron and North 2011). Self-efficacy is "the feeling one has about being able or capable of completing a specific task successfully. Those with strong feelings of self-efficacy are able to overcome difficulties in complicated tasks" (Daffron and North 2011, 44). Thus, teachers should seek to employ teaching methods and practice scenarios within the class itself which seek to engender competence in using the new acquired KSAs. For example, to promote self-efficacy in the student, a theological educator could design an exegetical or theological term paper to be developed over a series of stages, instead of turned in all at once. During each stage, the instructor could provide feedback and encourage iteration apart from a formal, graded assessment which would not occur until the final submission of the paper at the end of the semester. Such an approach tends to build a learner's sense of personal ability to complete a difficult task over several iterations successfully, thereby facilitating the formation of the learner's self-efficacy.

Besides individual learner characteristics, the design of the educational program can enhance or impede learning transfer to the work and ministry context. Numerous strategies have been shown to promote successful transfer before, during, and after the formal educational program.

Before the training begins, one of the most important commitments to plan for transfer is the collaboration of all stakeholders in the planning process (Cervero and Wilson 2006; Daffron and North 2011; Cafferella and Daffron 2013). So important is collaboration that Daffron and North state: "The program planning process is the beginning of what must be a collaborative process for all the stakeholders in continuing professional education. If the process is not collaborative, even from the first stage, the transfer to practice is likely to fail" (2011, 12). They suggest that collaborative input should come from educational planners, trainers, teachers, organizational managers, supervisors, and the learners themselves. A common method of collaboration with an eye to successful learning transfer is to conduct a needs assessment so that the class topics can be accurately targeted to the learners' contexts (Daffron and North 2011; Cafferella and Daffron 2013). The assessment must not just include the needs of the work and ministry context, but the perceived needs of the learners themselves. "When the training content meets needs of the learners, then learning is more likely to transfer" (Daffron and North 2011, 14). This aspect of pre-course, collaborative design represents both a critique and a challenge to theological education. To what extent have seminary administrators and faculty members sought to include the churches, denominations, other ministries, students, and alumni who they serve in their educational planning? To what extent is such collaborative planning even feasible?

In addition to planning for transfer before the class begins, strategies exist that teachers can employ during the class which tend to enhance learning transfer. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2015) advocate active learning strategies consistent with andragogical principles. In the same vein, Daley and Cervero (2017) argue teachers ought to view themselves less as deliverers of content and more as facilitators of "learning, growth, and change in professional practice. It means that when CPE providers create programs, they will need to . . . incorporate methods that encourage participants to link the content

of the program to their actual practice and their work environments" (26). Based on their review of the empirical research, Baldwin and Ford (1988) identify four basic learning principles which link the program to the work context and have been shown to lead to effective learning transfer.

- **Identical elements:** Transfer increases "to the degree that there are identical stimulus and response elements in the training and transfer contexts" (Daffron and North 2011, 66). For example, the educator may seek to match the course experiences of simulations, problem solving, role playing, etc. to the real-world setting of the ministry context.

- **General principles:** Practical skills are taught along with the general rules or theoretical principles that underlie those skills (i.e., theology connected to praxis).

- **Stimulus variability:** Using different examples to illustrate a concept helps learners to generalize and personalize the new KSAs to their work setting.

- **Conditions of practice:** "Conditions of practice include a number of specific design elements, including massed or distributed learning, whole or part training, feedback, and overlearning" (Baldwin and Ford 1988, 67). Basically, this principle recognizes the importance of practice with feedback within the educational program itself (Daffron and North 2011).

In short, learning transfer tends to be more successful if, during the class, the facilitators employ active learning methods within a learning context that replicates as closely as possible the authentic work and ministry context of the learners.

The design of the training does not end with the conclusion of the formal program but should continue post-training (Cafferella and Daffron 2013). In fact, there are post-class strategies which can be employed which continue to promote learners' transfer. Daffron and North (2011, 74-75) and Cafferella and Daffron (2013, 224) suggest several common strategies.

- Teachers could have leaners develop their own application plan for their ministry context before the end of training. This plan can include things like how to share what they have learned with their supervisor and their peers, what changes will need to be made and what barriers will need to be addressed for successful application, or what feedback will need to be solicited from supervisors or mentors.

- Teachers can provide follow-up assistance to leaners through techniques such as coaching, follow-up sessions, refresher courses, and mentoring.

- A student could be paired with a "learning partner" within his or her organization, as both seek to personalize and apply the new KSAs.

- Students could set aside some time daily or weekly for personal reflection related to transfer attempts.

In summary, when teachers thoughtfully design and deliver the educational program (including pre-, during, and post-class elements) with transfer of learning in mind, more effective and successful transfer tends to occur within the learner's work and ministry context.

In addition to individual learner characteristics and the design of the training program, the third main variable of learner transfer is the context of the work or ministry environment (e.g., Cervero 1985; Baldwin and Ford 1988; Merriam and Leahy 2005; Baldwin, Ford, and Blume 2009; Blume et al. 2010; Daffron and North 2011; Blume et al. 2017). Daffron and North put it directly: "Much to our surprise we have found that a large portion of the responsibility [of transfer] falls directly on the organization" (2011, 140). While seminary educators have no control over this variable and in most cases have no direct influence upon their students' ministry contexts, educators can still be mindful of this reality. As they are able, teachers can become acquainted with their students' contexts, pray for their students especially related to their contexts, and coach students about the opportunities and challenges of their contexts related to class learning.

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Blume et al. (2010) identify support, climate, and organizational constraints as the most significant aspects of the work environment affecting transfer of learning. Support includes supervisor and peer support. To what extent is the learner's supervisor not only supportive of professional development, but actively encouraging training and providing constructive feedback and evaluation of the learner's attempts to apply new KSAs? Similarly, how supportive, encouraging, and ready to learn are the learner's peers in the ministry context as the student returns from training?

In addition, the climate, or culture, of the organization can enhance or stifle learning transfer (Daffron and North 2011; Bates and Khasawneh 2005). To what extent can the organization be described as a "learning organization" (Senge 2005)? How open is the organization to change and innovation? Dwyer describes a positive work climate as having at least five qualities: "It must be emotionally safe; free from intimidation and rejection; high in acceptable challenge; a place of active participation, and a place where learners can experience a relaxed alertness" (2001, 312; summarized in Daffron and North 2011, 114). In sum, healthy, positive psychological work and ministry climates tend to maximize learning transfer, while unhealthy and negative climates tend to minimize transfer. As previously mentioned, theological educators have no control over this aspect of their students' ministry climates, but, as they are able, they can help to guide students in critically reflecting upon the health of their contexts with an eye toward how class learning might transfer.

According to Blume, et al. (2010), a third aspect of the context of the work environment is organizational constraints. "Constraints" need not be understood only negatively, but also as "contours." Daley (2002) explains how the sociocultural context of professional practice provides "frames" which both constrain application and provide a lens through which professionals view their work. She identifies four characteristics through which professionals use new knowledge in their work, including allegiance to the profession, the nature of professional work, variations in organizational culture, and the level of independence and autonomy. Her final characteristic, autonomy, bears further discussion (2002, 79-80). Along with Yelon and Ford (1999), Daley (2002) observes autonomy to be a significant contour to how and how much learners transfer learning to their work context. Typically, early career professionals enjoy less autonomy than later career professionals do. Additionally, professionals in more traditional or bureaucratic organizational systems tend to have less autonomy. Depending upon the level of autonomy, the supportive role of the participant's supervisor becomes more or less important, impacting the effectiveness of transfer. In regard to this variable of transfer, seminary educators could be mindful of what ministerial stages are represented by the learners in their classes. How can teachers tailor their encouragements toward transfer for the young, student pastors compared to the older, seasoned pastors in their classes?

In this section, I have surveyed the three main variables discussed in the literature which directly affect learning transfer of newly acquired KSAs from an educational program to the work and ministry context. These variables included individual learner characteristics, the program design and delivery, and the organizational/ministry context. While I have discussed these three variables separately, in reality they are immediately intertwined and dynamically related, consistent with Daffron and North's (2011) Successful Transfer of Learning Model and Blume et al.'s (2017) Dynamic Transfer Model.

Enhancing Learning Transfer from Seminary Classes to Pastoral Ministry

Above I contextualized Broad's (1997) definition of learning transfer to pastoral ministry as *the effective and continuing application by pastors to their performance in ministry of knowledge, skills, attitudes (KSAs), and beliefs gained through seminary learning activities*. Based on the preceding discussion of the literature, what contextualized strategies could seminary faculty use to foster their students transfer of learning from classes into pastoral ministry? In this final section, I will propose six recommendations for enhancing transfer[7] and offer two, brief case studies from seminary classes exemplifying these principles. While the foregoing review of the literature may have broader implications that challenge the predominant models of theological education or suggest significant revisions to how administrators and faculty design entire seminary curricula and curricular goals, these remain outside the scope of this article. I believe these larger questions would constitute valuable avenues for further research and discussion in theological education.

7 The recommendations which follow mostly assume that seminary students are embedded and actively serving in some kind of pastoral capacity in a local church, which is more formalized than an ordinary lay member's service in the local church. Thus, I assume that at minimum they are serving as formal interns, if not paid part-time or full-time ministry staff members or pastors. I have attempted to provide recommendations which would be suitable for students who have both little pastoral experience and significant pastoral experience.

Recommendations for Enhancing Transfer from Seminary Classes to Pastoral Ministry

Assess students' learning needs related to pastoral ministry. As the above models demonstrated, assessing students' actual and perceived learning needs tends to enhance transfer of learning from seminary classes to pastoral ministry. Seminary faculty members, as the content experts in their disciplines, generally know what their students need to learn in any given course. However, without conducting some kind of learning needs assessment, faculty members do not know what a particular group of students needs as learners, what a particular group of students needs based on their pastoral experience, or how a particular group of students would express what they perceive to be relevant to their ministry contexts. Additionally, incorporating students' expressed learning needs or ministry interests into how the class content will be considered exemplifies a collaborative approach between professors and students. As previously discussed, a collaborative approach to class design tends to increase transfer of learning. Thus, at least some kind of learning needs assessment before or at the outset of a class would be highly beneficial. Numerous options, from formal to informal methods, exist.[8] For example, faculty members could send out surveys or questionnaires to students in advance of classes, seeking information such as students' prior knowledge in the content area and students' pastoral experience and contexts. Even orienting questions can serve as learning needs assessments. Questions such as, "As you begin this class, what question do you have related to pastoral ministry which you hope is answered through our discussions?" or "What central opportunity or challenge in ministry are you facing which this class might help to address?" can unearth the learners' perceived needs. Collegial conversations with students inside and outside of class can also serve to identify developmental needs. With this information, faculty members can tailor their classes to enhance learning transfer into pastoral ministry.

Integrate students' ministry context into the class. The research has demonstrated that one of the three most significant variables for transfer of learning is the students' ministry context. To what extent do students' ministry contexts provide supportive and healthy organizational climates in which to apply seminary learning? How do the organizational contours and stages of pastoral experience diminish or broaden the possibility of transfer of learning? While in most cases seminary educators have no control or direct influence upon their students' pastoral contexts, they can encourage students to integrate their ministry context into the class. This goes in two directions. First, faculty members can encourage students to bring their prior and current pastoral experience with them into class. For example, "What have you learned from your pastoral experience that connects, nuances, or seems to disagree with this aspect of theology we have been discussing?" Second, faculty members can encourage students to critically reflect upon their ministry contexts, seeking to identify what aspects of their contexts might hinder or promote transferability of class learning. For example, "Reflecting on the pressures and demands of your congregational context, what can you do to create space to apply what we have been learning?" Further, within the class, professors can leverage the pastoral experience of the seasoned pastors in their classes to stimulate the applicational thinking of novice pastors. Outside of class, as time allows, faculty in any theological discipline could seek to "pastor" some of their students, coaching and praying with them about their ministry contexts. In all these ways, more purposeful integration between students' ministry contexts and seminary classes tends to deepen learning transfer.

Demonstrate and communicate the importance of personalized application. As seminary faculty seek to encourage students' integration between their ministry contexts and the classroom, they can specifically demonstrate and communicate the importance of personalized application. As discussed above, a central dimension of transfer of learning is personalization. Blume et al. emphasize how personalization acknowledges the learner's agency and that individual choice exists to "discard, maintain, apply, or modify training knowledge and skills in [the] work context" (2017, 7). Thus, any KSA learned in a seminary class must be personalized by students in order to be transferred into their pastoral ministries. To foster this personalization, theological educators can set the expectation that one of the most important goals for the class is to apply the learning to the students' pastoral context.[9] The expectation for and examples of application can be built into lectures, class discussions, written assignments, tests, and any other learning methods used. Moreover, faculty can share

8 For excellent resources on classroom assessment techniques (CATs), see Angelo and Cross (1993) and Barkley and Major (2016).

9 I recognize that the most important goal for many students is simply to "get a good grade" by demonstrating what they have "learned" on graded assignments and tests. While theological educators cannot escape this reality, they can acknowledge its existence as an extrinsic motivator and an inferior reason to learn. In contrast, they can seek to design their courses and teach in ways that activate intrinsic motivation in their students and demonstrate the deeper learning constructed through application and personalization.

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real-life stories of how they have personalized the KSA under discussion in pastoral ministry themselves or how they have seen their own pastors apply this KSA. Further, faculty could transparently model personalization appropriate to the course content. For example, a professor lecturing on the doctrine of sin could pause and tell a specific story about an idolatry he or she has struggled with, and how much he or she needs God's grace because of that struggle.

Use motivational and interactive teaching methods. The models reviewed in section one emphasize that motivationally informed and interactive teaching methods based on principles of adult learning tend to enhance the transfer of learning. While motivation to learn and to apply the learning to ministry ultimately resides in each student, there is much seminary educators can do to teach in ways that seek to activate intrinsic motivation in their students.[10] In fact, motivational scholars, Wlodkowski and Ginsberg, argue that "every instructional plan also needs to be a motivational plan" (2017, 45). Further, the more interactions students have with class content the deeper the learning is (Ambrose et al. 2010). The *information* presented in class or in textbooks should be *transformed* by the students through multiple learning tasks into applicable KSAs for pastoral ministry. Some of these learning experiences can be designed to "provide authentic practice" (Yelon, Ford, and Anderson 2014, 948), which replicates as closely as possible the ministerial context for use of the KSAs. For example, when writing a lecture, theology professors can consider, "How might pastors use this aspect of theology as pastoral practitioners facing today's cultural challenges?" Or, a class in pastoral leadership can run a semester-length simulation in which students are assigned various roles on a church board, debating a significant policy change for the church. In sum, transfer of learning for their students increases when seminary faculty employ teaching methods consistent with andragogical principles and aim to facilitate the learners' agency.

Provide applicable tools and resources for pastoral ministry. The creation of classroom tools and aids which can also serve as valuable real-world ministry resources enhances learning transfer. Yelon, Ford, and Anderson observe, "[Students] used program session notes, slides, checklists, decision aids, charts, lists of principles or skill steps, diagrams of processes, annotated models, and mnemonics" back in their work contexts (2014, 948). Seminary faculty could be more deliberate in designing their PowerPoints, notes handouts, assignments, or discussion guides in ways that could be easily adapted to local church ministry practice. Other suggestions might be:

- Choose textbooks and resources which have enduring value and could be referenced and used fruitfully in local church ministry, not just in the academic seminary context.

- Teach students how to use Bible software so they can utilize it for their future teaching and preaching preparation.

- Design assignments where students build their own timelines, diagrams, or charts of periods of church history, biblical covenants, or relationships between the categories of systematic theology. These student-created resources can become personalized, go-to references for pastors to build upon in their congregational teaching ministries.

- In pastoral theology courses, provide templates for liturgies, planning guides for different kinds of services, personalized guides for congregational program planning, rubrics for evaluating Christian education materials, or case studies that could be reused in church board training sessions. Then, have students work with and personalize these templates for actual use in pastoral ministry.

Require a contextual and/or team project. A contextualized project, which links classroom learning and learners' ministry contexts, can be an effective way to enhance transfer. Many seminary classes require at least one major research paper as a key assignment for the course. Why not adapt the research paper into a contextual project, which links some essential KSA from the class with a real-time ministry opportunity, challenge, or problem in the students' congregational contexts? Even better, the project can be a collaborative project, with two or three students working together, since so much real-world pastoral work is conducted collaboratively through ministry teams and church boards. Students are not only actively personalizing their learning to their specific context, but they are also learning how to navigate the interpersonal dynamics

10 See especially Wlodkowski and Ginsberg's (2017), which I discussed above in section 3.1.

of a seminary team in ways that closely mirror the actual dynamics of team-based pastoral ministry. With either project approach, transfer of learning can be further enhanced by requiring both student self-assessment and peer assessment, along with ongoing faculty support, feedback, and assessment (Yelon, Ford, and Anderson 2014).

Two Case Studies from Seminary Classes

Case 1: Transfer of learning in Educational Ministries and Leadership. As an applied class in pastoral theology, Educational Ministries and Leadership was designed to be a contextualized and personalized class, thus enhancing transfer (Nelson 2019b). From the outset students are expected to incorporate their ministry experiences and contexts with the course learning. They are encouraged to critically reflect upon the course learning and consider how they might apply it to their ministries during every opportunity for interaction. Interaction with the course content, instructor, and between students occurs regularly through asynchronous forum posts, critical reflection responses to the instructor, and synchronous video conference class discussion sessions. In all these interactions, contextual application to ministry (with personal examples) is discussed and is a required part of interactions. Further, in these interactions the instructor has self-consciously adopted a teaching posture of "coach," attempting to teach in ways resonant with andragogy and adult motivational learning theory. The instructor also gives examples from his own experience in pastoral ministry illustrating the educational theology, theory, or problem under consideration.

The four writing assignments and one team learning project were also conceived as ways to transfer learning into pastoral ministry (Nelson 2019a). The writing assignments vary in length from two to five pages, but each requires students to interact with the theory and theology discussed in class, critically reflect upon a relevant aspect of their ministries, and then discuss what they have learned. For example, for one assignment students experiment with three new (to them) teaching methods in a live teaching event in their ministry settings and then reflect upon what they learned and how they might incorporate their learning into their pastoral development. For another assignment students write a case study based on their own experience of a leadership challenge in their ministries. They then pilot that case study in a discussion group in their context and reflect upon what they learned from that experience. The team learning project is an iterative project over the course of half the semester. It requires several stages including planning, proposal, implementation (i.e. executing the teaching plan in at least one team member's pastoral context), team reflection, and a final presentation to the whole class.

This course in educational ministry and leadership could be improved in at least two ways based on the research and principles of transfer of learning. First, while some attention is given to informally assessing the pastoral learning needs of the students, much more could be done. A more formalized learning needs assessment related to the course focus could be conducted before the semester begins. Students could be asked to obtain feedback from other leaders in their pastoral contexts, seeking particular avenues in which they could develop and mature through this course. As the instructor gains a clearer, collective sense of the students' ministry contexts, they could tailor the learning tasks and navigate the discussion in ways which apply the course content more specifically. Second, while the textbooks were chosen for their possibly enduring value and translatability to pastoral ministry, much more could be done to produce applicable tools and aids to educational ministry and pastoral leadership. For example, one of the written assignments could be changed to have students create their own philosophy of educational ministry in the local church. This could serve as the first draft of a living document which succinctly summarizes the pastor's convictions about educating God's people and could guide his or her ministerial development.

Case 2: Transfer of learning in Interpreting the Synoptics and Acts. For the second case, I reviewed the syllabus for the course, Interpreting the Synoptics and Acts (Jipp 2019), and had a conversation with the professor about his intentional course design and teaching methods. The class exemplifies several principles which enhance transfer of learning into pastoral ministry. First, one of the expressed goals of the class is to develop "the skills necessary to be effective interpreters of" the Synoptics and Acts within pastoral ministry, not just as an intellectual or academic pursuit. One student learning outcome states, "Use the Synoptics and Acts as resources for theological reflection, preaching and teaching, pastoral leadership, and pastoral care."

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Second, toward that outcome, the instructor designed the major writing assignments, the final exam, and a team learning project to encourage students to adopt a pastoral mindset about key challenges, themes, and cultural applications of the scriptures. Over the course of the semester students write five short papers (five to seven pages in length) in which they address a key theme or specific issue in the Synoptics or Acts, decide upon their own view, and suggest implications relevant to contemporary leadership, discipleship, or cultural challenges which pastors face. One paper prompt serves to illustrate the kind of scripturally-informed, pastoral thinking required of students: "How do the Gospels function as resources for how we think about mass incarceration, relationships with immigrants and refugees, consumer/wealth and possessions, and/or leadership. Pick one topic." In a similar way, the instructor designed a major portion of the final exam as a series of case studies drawn from real pastoral scenarios and involving key themes and interpretative challenges from the Gospels or Acts. Students must demonstrate both their interpretative ability and pastoral sense in discussing the case studies. Likewise, the team learning project forces students to consider interpretative traditions different from their own and to discuss what they can learn about their own pastoral attitudes and practice of ministry in a multicultural world.

Third, the instructor uses various teaching methods including interactive lectures, break-out small-group discussions, case studies, Greek language recitation sessions, and group presentations. While the course requires work in Greek, the instructor seeks to demonstrate its use and teach language skills in ways which are more conducive to real world pastoral practice in teaching and preaching. Additionally, the instructor teaches with enthusiasm for the subject, knowing this tends to motivate students to engage more fully in the class. He creates time to meet with students outside of class to get to know them and their ministry opportunities and challenges. This in turn informs how he more specifically tailors applicational thoughts and examples to the specific students in his class.

Thus, this second case provides a helpful example of how seminary courses in Bible, theology, or church history (i.e. courses outside the applied courses in pastoral theology) can be designed and taught to enhance transfer of learning into pastoral ministry. While this second case has many strengths related to transfer, it could be improved by incorporating a plan for formal and informal student needs assessments. The instructor could also consider ways to include collaborative planning with the students and further options for personalization of assignments depending upon the students' pastoral contexts.

Conclusion and Request for Future Research

In this article, I sought to introduce the research on transfer of learning to theological educators. In reviewing three significant models of transfer (Baldwin and Ford 1998; Daffron and North 2011; Blume et al. 2017), I discussed the key dimensions and variables of transfer, which include individual learner characteristics, the design of the educational program, and the context of the work or ministry environment. Based on my review, I suggested a contextualized definition of transfer of learning for seminary education as *the effective and continuing application by pastors to their performance in ministry of knowledge, skills, attitudes (KSAs), and beliefs gained through seminary learning activities*. I concluded by proposing six recommendations which theological faculty could use to enhance transfer to pastoral ministry among their students and I discussed two cases studies demonstrating transfer.

Part of the purpose of this article was to expose theological educators to the literature on transfer of learning and suggest its importance to seminary clergy education. It is only a beginning: it suggests avenues for further research and encourages conversation between this field and other contemporary, better-known streams of research on pastoral education. Thus,

- How might transfer of learning (formation?) inform formational models of seminary education (e.g., Aleshire 2018, 2021; USCCB 2005)?
- How might learning transfer and the literature on practice in the professions (e.g., Foster et al. 2006; Benner 2001; Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1986) mutually benefit one another?
- How does transfer relate to pastoral development as "reflective practitioners" (e.g., Schön 1984, 1987)?

- What new generative insights might emerge by synthesizing the literature on the formation of the “pastoral imagination” (e.g., Dykstra 2001, 2008; Foster et al. 2006; Campbell-Reed and Scharen 2011; Scharen and Campbell-Reed 2016) and transfer of learning?

- Finally, how might administrators and faculty members in theological schools reconceive of the design and goals of the entire seminary curriculum with an eye to enhance transfer of learning?

I offer up these questions for further research in the spirit of the Apostle Paul’s admonition to Timothy, enjoining the perpetual task of gospel transfer from generation to generation: “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

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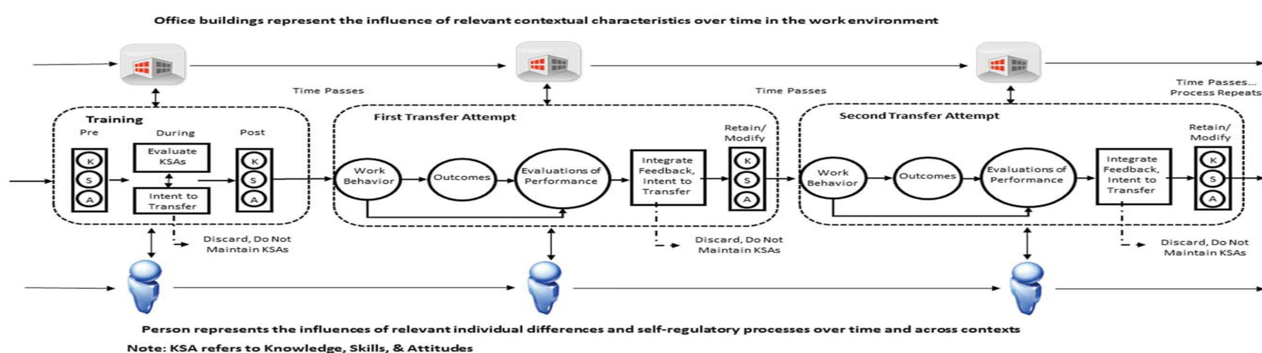
Appendix 1: Dynamic Transfer Model (DTM) (Blume et al. 2017, 3)



Appendix 2: Types of Transfer Maintenance Curves (Baldwin and Ford 1998, 97)

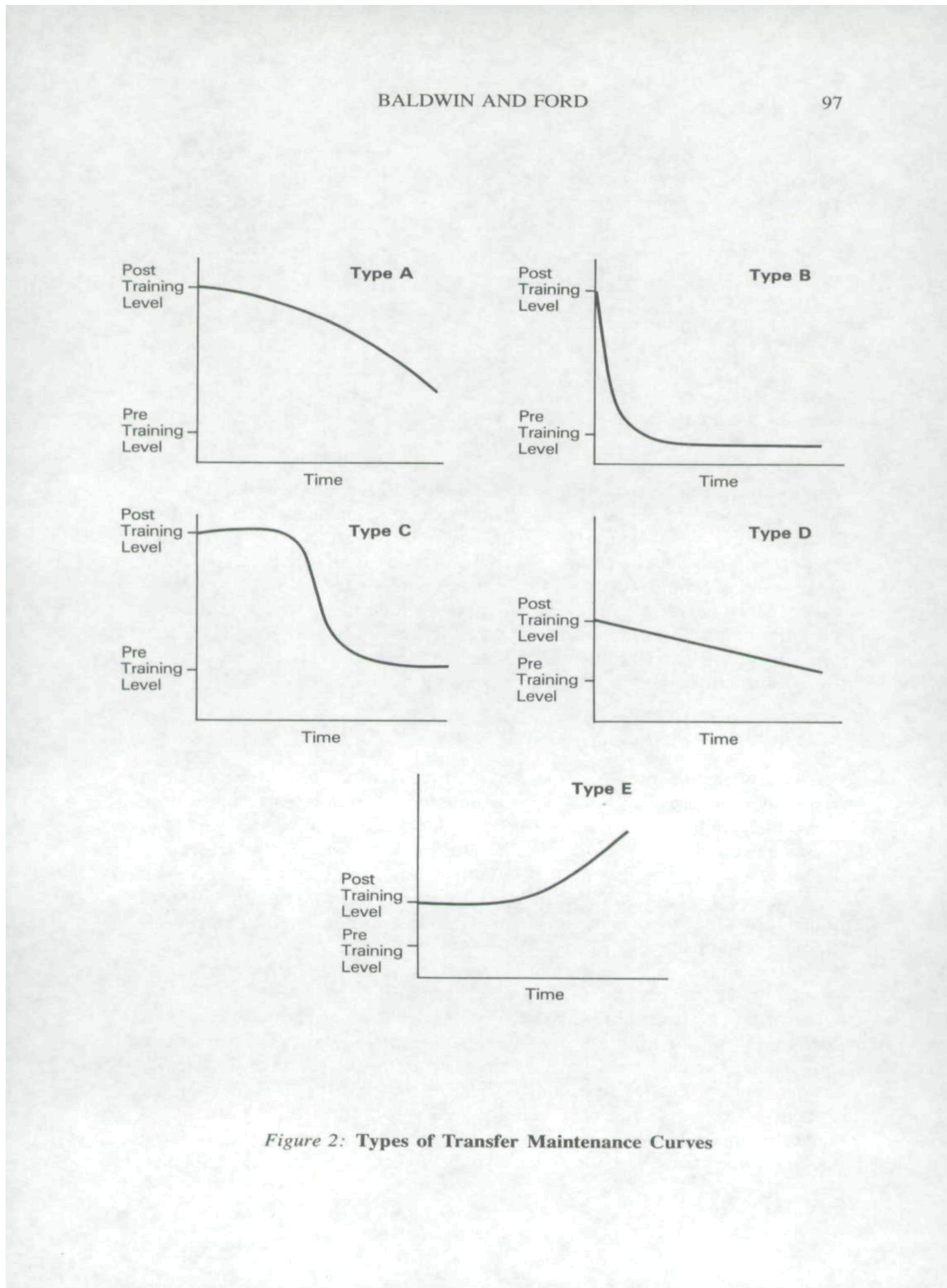


Figure 2: **Types of Transfer Maintenance Curves**

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Appendix 3: Model of Learning in CPE (Daley and Cervero 2016, 21)

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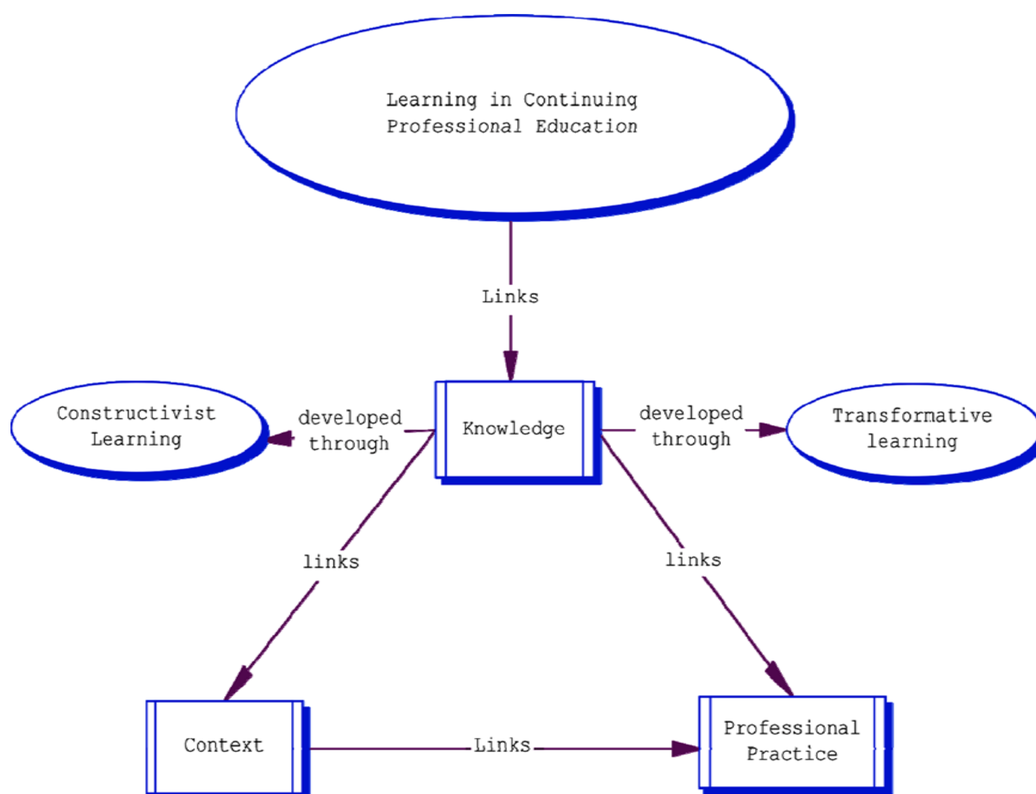
> little pieces that come from all over and in and of themselves they don't mean much, but when you put them together you have a beautiful picture. Continuing education and client care are more like that for me. I take little pieces of what I learn from many places and put them together until I have my own picture. (Daley, 2001, p. 47)

This metaphor of *creating a mosaic* depicts the process of actively constructing a knowledge base from practice.

In expanding Cervero's (1988) model of learning, we need to further develop an understanding of how knowledge is constructed, how it is linked with professional practice, and how the context affects the process (see Figure 2.1). Additionally, in newer work, Dirkx, Gilley, and Maycunich-Gilley (2004) indicated that the identity of the professional is intimately intertwined with the process of developing and sustaining knowledge for professional practice.

Figure 2.1. Model of Learning in CPE (reprinted with permission Copyright © 2000 John Wiley & Sons)



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ARTICLE

The Online, Asynchronous, Accelerated, Compressed, Modular, Standardized, and Adult Undergraduate Course in Biblical Interpretation: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The long title of this article reflects the multiple dynamics at work in a new type of class commonly found in adult degree completion programs in higher education. These characteristics are briefly surveyed in order to show how they impinge upon one another to both limit and complicate strategies for effective learning. These dynamics and complications are illustrated by exploring how they affect teaching and learning in an undergraduate class on biblical interpretation. The article closes by considering further strategies that may be employed in this highly constrained type of class.

KEYWORDS

online, asynchronous, accelerated, modular, adult, scripture

The deluge of adjectives in this title is intentional, for it captures the dynamics of a new kind of course that has emerged in higher education. The rise of online education, the surge in non-traditional adult enrollment, and the innovations of degree completion programs have coalesced to make this new kind of course common for many students working their way to a university degree. Research, to be cited below, has been done on many of the individual adjectives above: studies about online learning, explorations of how to craft an asynchronous discussion, descriptions of the characteristics of adult learners, and so on. Many studies have explored program level features and needs in the success and attrition of students in adult degree programs (Kasworm 2001; Todd et al. 2015; Decker 2017). However, only a handful of studies have analyzed the dynamics of teaching and learning in specific classes within this larger educational paradigm. The scholarship of teaching and learning (like most other forms of research) prefers clear, isolatable research questions rather than the fuzzy and murky situation of multiple, simultaneous considerations, but these elements all impinge on one another in this new kind of class. Putting these qualifiers together creates a set of compounding constraints that complicates the search for teaching strategies because the recommendations for good teaching from one domain (e.g., multiple repetitions of an activity across time are helpful for learning in an online environment) often are frustrated by

another necessary factor (e.g., these courses must be accelerated and compressed to have fewer assignments across less time). This case study will open by unpacking this new type of course and my experience teaching a class of this type on biblical interpretation in an adult degree completion program. It will then discuss the factors listed in the title and how their combination limits and complicates the selection of teaching-learning strategies. Finally, the article will close with possibilities and suggestions to help facilitate a better learning experience within this type of course.

A New Kind of Class in Context

This case study arose out of my aim to create and teach this new kind of course well, so a brief disclosure of my background and experience will help situate the following discussion. After working in three one-year visiting professor positions on traditional campuses, I was hired by Indiana Wesleyan University (IWU) in 2010 to teach in the College of Adult and Professional Studies, which offers a variety of accelerated undergraduate and graduate degree programs for working adults. Such programs bring college degrees into reach for adults who often work full-time. They can take courses part-time and still complete an associate degree in two years or a bachelor's degree in four years (or less). As a full-time faculty member, I teach regularly, oversee course offerings in Bible and the Biblical studies major, and work with several adjunct instructors. I have written and taught several courses in this system, and my reflections in this article draw on my own experience as an instructor and course writer for this new kind of class. This essay will touch on a class that I teach frequently entitled BIL-202: Inductive Bible Study, a six-week online course practicing a method of biblical interpretation required for students pursuing an associate degree in Christian Ministry.

IWU's adult programs fit into a larger trend of higher education which has seen dramatic growth over the past twenty years. While IWU's adult enrollment hovers around eight thousand students, many other schools in this domain have even larger numbers of students in similar systems ("Best Online Colleges" and "Top Adult Degree Programs").[1] While some statistics indicate that enrollment in adult degree programs may be plateauing (Barrett 2018), the adult degree completion program is already an influential piece of the higher education landscape, and it is here to stay. These large programs have developed their own culture and pedagogical norms that are built with this new kind of class. Thus, this new kind of class has reached a degree of institutionalized establishment, and it too is here to stay. While each school has its own distinctive formula for programs and classes, most of the courses offered have a mix of online, asynchronous, accelerated, compressed, modular, standardized, and adult elements as mentioned in the title. Let us turn to a brief survey of these characteristics.

Online

Online classes have become a common modality for higher education. While some students in adult degree programs take onsite, face-to-face classes, the vast majority of students complete their programs entirely online, and enrollment in online courses continues to rise (Lederman 2018). The same is true at IWU where I teach—onsite enrollment has decreased over the past ten years while online enrollment has continued to grow.[2] These trends have intensified during the pandemic. Online classes typically make use of one of a handful of learning management systems (LMSs) such as Moodle, Brightspace, Canvas, or Blackboard (Mansfield 2019). The LMS provides an integrated virtual platform for delivering course content, organizing learning activities, guiding student progress, and assessing student work. LMSs have evolved from mere content delivery platforms to being a comprehensive learning hub for content, communication, activities, and assessment (Sulun 2018). The material in an LMS is often primarily text-based, though social media formats and video have come to play increasing roles. New and innovative tools for online student learning are always emerging (e.g., Flipgrid, Thinglink, Quizlet, Padlet, etc.), and various creative activities can be employed (e.g., research, curating, annotating, wiki-building, gamified tasks, problem-based case studies, etc.), but six categories cover most of the options for assessable

1 A Google search gives the following approximate enrollment numbers: Purdue Global—29,000, Capella University—37,000, Ashford University—41,000, Kaplan University—45,000, Walden University—53,000, Southern New Hampshire University—63,000, Liberty University—101,000, and Western Governors University—110,000.

2 In 2013, IWU had 6920 students enrolled online and 3371 enrolled onsite (a roughly two-to-one ratio). By 2019, those numbers had shifted to 7550 online and 858 onsite (an almost nine-to-one ratio).

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online assignments: discussion boards, quizzes/tests, writing tasks, multimedia creations, adaptive simulations, and collaborative projects (which are often done on one of the preceding types).[3] Online learning has matured to the point that significant books have been published on the principles and practices for excellent online teaching (Stavredes 2011; Means, Bakia, and Murphy 2014; Miller 2014; Boettcher and Conrad 2016; Nilson and Goodson 2018).

These texts on online instruction have short sections on asynchronous features, which is a common component of online education (e.g., Stavredes 2011, 167–72; Miller 2014, 25–26; Boettcher and Conrad 2016, 9–12, 47–52; Nilson and Goodson 2018, 184; but not mentioned in Means, Bakia, and Murphy 2014). Stavredes (2011, 2–30) focuses on online education for adult learners, but Miller (2014), Means, Bakia, and Murphy (2014), Boettcher and Conrad (2016), and Nilson and Goodson (2018) make almost no mention of andragogy or the situation of adult learners. Only Boettcher and Conrad (2016, 305–16) discuss accelerated/intensive courses. While most mention modules as a helpful form of course content organization, they do not consider the pedagogical dynamics in much depth (perhaps only briefly, Boettcher and Conrad 2016, 51). All of these helpful books assume that the online course is created by the person who will teach it as opposed to the type of course being considered in this case study that is standardized and distributed to others to teach. Thus, while helpful insights have been provided by research and theorizing about online education, such work often fails to address other characteristics that are concomitant components of online learning.

Asynchronous

The majority of undergraduate online courses at IWU (and many other schools) are also asynchronous. This means that there are no specifically designated times for student work and participation. Learning activities are designed to be done by individuals at their own selected time and then uploaded to the LMS for students and instructors to interact with at other times. Such courses are desired by and designed for adult students who need to fit learning into busy lives alongside multiple commitments to family, work, and community. Good research has been done regarding online asynchronous classes, mostly focusing on how to improve student engagement, especially in discussion boards (Bender 2003; Riggs and Linder 2016; Ergulec 2019).

Asynchronicity limits options for personal interaction and many common classroom processing activities (e.g., think-pair-share or minute papers). However, self-pacing and delayed responses are built in components of asynchronous courses, and these have the benefit of providing time for critical thinking and careful writing (Conrad and Donaldson 2011, 25; Soon and Quek 2019). At IWU, phone calls and virtual chat sessions between instructors and students are allowed (even encouraged), but they cannot be required, and many students cannot participate due to schedule demands. Recall that many robust resources on online teaching infrequently consider the dynamics of an exclusively asynchronous online class (Boettcher and Conrad 2016, 9–10, 51–52; Miller 2014, 25–26.). Thus, exactly how the online nature of a class and the asynchronous nature of a class interact, support, and limit one another is not directly addressed.

Intensive, Compressed, and Accelerated

The next set of qualifiers suffers from a lack of definitional clarity. "Intensive," "compressed," and "accelerated" have all been used to describe classes that are shortened in some way. I reserve "intensive" to describe adaptations of traditional, face-to-face classes from a typical fifteen-week semester into a short period of one to four weeks during which the students attend full-time and in person for several days in a row (sometimes with preceding or follow-up assignments). "Compressed," then, describes a class designed to be offered in a shortened term usually from five to eight weeks and taken concurrently with regular work responsibilities. At IWU, most online undergraduate courses are either five or six weeks long. These can be online with no class contact hours or face-to-face, with the latter having a once-a-week class session of three to

3 For instance, St. Leo University lists the following types of assignments that may be encountered in an online class: Reading, discussion posts, analyzing visuals, writing reports, and doing group projects (2019). Another list includes responses to reading/videos, research papers, blogs, journals (all primarily writing tasks), discussion boards, exams, wikis (usually collaborative), case-based assignments (also usually written), and adaptive assignments (Fuster 2017). IWU's LMS has four categories of activities: assignments (typically written but sometimes multimedia), discussions, quizzes, and virtual assignments.

four hours. Finally, “accelerated” describes a class that reduces the contact and work expectations usually associated with a traditional credit hour. A significant amount of research has been done on student experience and satisfaction in online-accelerated programs (e.g., Bielitz 2016; Gazza and Matthias 2016; Burke 2019; Soles and Maduli-Williams 2019). However, only a handful of studies, like Trekles (2013), which deals exclusively with graduate education, have analyzed the pedagogical/androgogical dynamics and learning outcomes of courses in such programs.

Under the Carnegie Unit system, a typical three-credit semester class has forty-five hours of in-class contact time and an additional ninety hours of out-of-class work for a total of 135 hours of learning activity (International Affairs Office 2008).[4] Online asynchronous classes blur the in-class versus out-of-class division, but accelerated classes reduce the total number of hours of learning activity by varying degrees. Most of the classes that I teach (including BIL-202: Inductive Bible Study) aim for twenty-five to thirty hours of student work per credit hour, resulting in a three-credit class with approximately seventy-five to ninety hours of learning activity, which is forty-five to sixty fewer hours of contact/work than a traditional three-credit class. Thus, student learning is “accelerated” in that adult students supposedly learn material faster, or more efficiently, or more effectively, and thus can achieve the same learning outcomes in less time than traditional students (see further below under adult students). In my context at IWU, such accelerated learning is explained by two factors. First, adult students bring a host of life skills (e.g., time management, reading comprehension, application) that enable them to organize and process their learning more effectively. Second, adult learners bring a framework of existing knowledge that enables them to integrate new learning more efficiently rather than doing the harder and slower work of building such a framework (cf. the discussion of “knowledge structures” in Miller [2014, 99–102]). However, as will be discussed below, I have found that many of my adult students lack both of these capacities, confounding the theory that underlies acceleration from an andragogical perspective.

Good research has been done demonstrating that students *can* learn equally or even more effectively in compressed and/or accelerated formats (Floyd 2017; Thornton, Demps, and Jadav 2017). However, this research is complicated by the lack of clarification about exactly which kind of class is being studied (e.g., compressed classes are sometimes also accelerated but not always).[5] Conflicting research also shows that time on task is a key factor in learning achievement (Boettcher and Conrad 2016, 39–40), that students retained learning better from eight-week compressed classes in comparison to five-week compressed or sixteen-week traditional versions (Deichert and Maxwell 2015), and that students in courses that were accelerated and compressed learned less than students in the traditional semester version of the course (Bruehler 2014). The acceleration and compression of courses limits the opportunities for repetition or recursivity, which has been cited as one of the keys to memory and learning (Inglis 2014, 70–72). Again, it should be noted that some major studies of accelerated, compressed, and intensive courses do not give serious consideration to the additional demands of a course being online or asynchronous. For example, Nilson and Goodson (2018, 156) assume that student workload is the same in online and face to face courses. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (2010, 6) assume a face-to-face class as the most common format for intensive and accelerated classes. The courses under consideration in this case study are online, asynchronous, compressed (into five or six weeks), and accelerated (with only approximately eighty work hours). Each piece adds to the mixture of compounding constraints.

Modular

Continuing in the domain of time, most versions of this new kind of class are modular. Typically, at IWU and specifically in the BIL-202 class, the modules are built on time units rather than topics/content (contrast the content-based modular design explained by Shaw [2017]). Most adult undergraduate online classes at IWU are divided into week-long workshops that begin on Tuesday and end on the following Monday. Many assignments are introduced and completed within this one-week time span (e.g., discussions and quizzes), though some larger projects (like research papers) are threaded across several weeks with scaffolded assignments that build on one another. Often, modules will follow a predictable pattern to

4 While the Carnegie Unit has been subject to scrutiny and criticism, it is still the mostly widely used norm across higher education (Silva, White, and Toch 2015).

5 Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (2010, 2) can differentiate between the shortened time window of “intensive” classes and the reduced contact and work time of “accelerated” courses. However, in much of the book they speak of “accelerated or intensive” courses together (as in the title) without any distinction between the dynamics of the two factors.

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reduce the strain of students acclimating to a new set of instructions/assignments each week (though see Boettcher and Conrad 2014, 51). Other adult degree completion programs (e.g., Western Governors University) give students a flexible window of time to complete content-based modules. The week-long modules of adult, online classes at IWU may or may not overlap with natural content divisions, and research has shown that such modularized courses can lead to a fragmentation of knowledge (Cornford 1997). Only a limited amount of research has been done on the learning effects of modularization, and it primarily deals with content-based modules (that are time flexible) rather than time-based modules (e.g., Schluep, Bettoni, and Guttormsen 2006).

Standardized

These courses at IWU are also standardized. This means that a single master course is created through the collaboration of subject matter experts, instructional designers, and academic administrators. This master course establishes everything for the class: materials, assignments, instructions, rubrics, and so on. This single master course is then copied into various sections and facilitated by contingent/adjunct faculty (and sometimes the course writer too). Adjunct instructors are generally not permitted to change anything in the live course and are responsible primarily to provide guidance to students, participate in discussion forums, and grade all assignments.

Course/curriculum standardization has been hailed as a solution to rising higher education costs (CCAP 2015) and as a way to improve quality while depoliticizing content choices (Ake-Little 2019). However, others have decried course/curriculum standardization as an outgrowth of entrenched political establishments. Such standardization can reinforce the status quo, reduce critical thinking, and undercut innovative research (Lucey and Lorsbach 2012; Sparapani and Callejo Perez 2015). Standardization places severe limits on an instructor's ability to adapt a course to develop the engagement and agency of adult learners (as recommended by Taylor, Marienau, and Fiddler [2000, 297–99]). While standardization raises important philosophical and political questions, the focus of this article is on the pedagogical dynamics that it introduces into courses. Degrees of disconnect and differences between the perspective of the course creators and the instructor may cause confusion or tension in the facilitation of the course (Bart 2010). Perhaps most importantly, instructors do not have the freedom to adjust the course in any way to adapt to students' interests or needs. Finally, again, key publications related to online education proceed on the basis that one is creating an online course for oneself to teach, not for someone else to teach (e.g., Miller 2014, 196–208; Jung 2015, 39–40).

Adult Learners Enter the Mix

The theory and practice of adult learning has become its own arena of study and practice in the past few decades. Knowles (1973) constructed an andragogical model that highlighted core assumptions about adults as learners. This model stresses that adult learners are self-directed, interested in the pragmatic results of learning, and desire to connect their learning to their experience (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson 2005, 64–68). However, Knowles is far from the only voice on adult learners, and his perspective has been critiqued as being based on ambiguous or untenable assumptions about a narrowly idealized adult learner (Hartree 1984; Darbyshire 1993) that have not been validated by empirical research (Taylor and Kroth 2009). Wlodkowski (2010, 5–6) stresses that adult students prioritize learning situations that respect their personhood and experience while stressing the relevance of what they are learning. Jarvis (2004, 67–117) takes more of a humanist approach grounded in empirical research and emphasizes adult learning as an existential enterprise of developmental experiences that contributes to the growth of a person holistically across their lifespan (emotionally, cognitively, socially, vocationally, and so on).

The andragogy-pedagogy divide has been blurred by the rise of "emerging adulthood" (Chiang and Hawley 2013) and the opening up of "adult" degree programs to traditional age college students.[6] Adult, or non-traditional, learners typically take classes as part-time students, dealing with the challenges of financial need, lack of previous educational success, and the competing demands of full-time work and family (Kazis et al. 2007, 7–9; Kara et al. 2019, 13). In this complex

6 IWU lowered the enrollment age for adult degree completion programs from twenty-one to eighteen in 2013.

mix of adult learning research, my own experience leads me to three broad considerations as I approach teaching adult learners at IWU. First, many adult learners come to classes with an eagerness to learn but a relative lack of skills in formal education, especially around the crucial tasks of reading and writing (see also Means, Bakia, and Murphy 2014, 143–49). Second, almost all adult learners bring a deep and complex set of work and life commitments that leads them to squeeze formal education into the limited margins of their schedules. Finally, adult learners bring a wealth of life experiences that can sometimes facilitate and sometimes frustrate their learning.

Adult students who have prior experience with the subject matter and skills being taught in the course can often learn new content in the same arena more quickly and effectively by integrating their learning into already existing webs of knowledge and practice (Jarvis 2004, 251–52). However, adult learners in my classes often describe their accelerated learning experience as "drinking from a fire hose." They recognize that they are getting a huge dose of information and practice that can quench a thirst, but they also subjectively experience this valuable learning as coming at them far too fast. Furthermore, accelerated and standardized classes have limited time to assess students' existing knowledge-base and lack the flexibility to change the course appropriately (as suggested by Inglis [2014, 62–65]). Adult students can often fall into epistemological habits that cognitively and affectively privilege currently held beliefs and paradigms, thus hindering their learning process (Kasworm 2008, 31–32; Blair 1997, 16, 21).

This survey of online, asynchronous, accelerated, compressed, modular, standardized, and adult courses sets forth the various elements and dynamics that affect the creation and teaching of this kind of class in the context of adult degree completion programs. As noted above, each of these elements has been explored in-depth in several studies but mostly in isolation from one another. Occasionally, a book or article will consider two factors together (e.g., online-asynchronous, adult-accelerated, or standardized-modular). However, almost no studies examine three or more of these dynamics at the same time, despite the ways that they impinge on one another and create a scenario of compounding constraints that complicates the teaching-learning enterprise in this type of class. We turn now to consider some of the complications that I have encountered through the lens of a particular class.

The Complications of Compounding Constraints

As one who has written and facilitated several courses in this new paradigm, I begin by saying that the first compounding constraint is myself. Despite pursuing higher education through a doctoral degree, I have never taken a course that resembles the courses that I now teach. I lack the shared experience that would give me insight and sympathy into the learning experience of most of my adult students in these online classes, and I struggle to place myself as a learner in their shoes in order to craft practical and transformative learning experiences. The observations and reflections in this essay come from approximately ten years of teaching full-time in an adult degree completion program. I have had to make myself a student of my students and of this new kind of class, and I admit that there was much that I learned only through missteps and mistakes. This is compounded by the challenge of seeing through my years of study to my students' current level of learning as relative novices.

I am also embedded in an institutional context. Accelerated-online-adult programs are shaped by the pragmatic and financial demands of the higher education marketplace, where programs must compete to offer working adults temporally and economically feasible pathways to a degree. These forces encourage practices like accelerated courses to make degrees achievable in a shorter time span and adjunct-instructed standardized courses that reduce costs. I am also a part of the educational culture of IWU which comes with its own norms such as time-based week-long modules and required asynchronicity in most undergraduate courses. These external forces can be pushed back to some degree, but they continue to form some of the constraints that intersect in this case study. I now will explore several constraints that have arisen from my own attempts in writing and teaching these courses, from the insights of my colleagues, and from relevant studies in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

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Undergraduate Biblical Interpretation

The example course under consideration in this case study is BIL-202: Inductive Bible Study.[7] Students take prerequisite introductory courses in both Old Testament and New Testament. However, these two courses (also accelerated and compressed) are often not enough to adequately overcome the biblical illiteracy that can exist even among students enrolled in a degree in Christian Ministries (Hanson 2010; Stetzer 2014), especially with regards to the Old Testament. Additionally, many students find the Inductive Bible Study (IBS) method taught in this class to be overly academic and difficult to connect with their prior "devotional" or "spiritual" approaches to the Bible. These student quotes relate a common reaction:

> To be honest, I do not like the IBS method at this point in time. I completely understand breaking down Scripture and making sure that I study it to get a more clear interpretation of what the Spirit is trying to lead me towards, but I feel like this method is personally taking part of that away from me. I feel like it is too methodical and is personally hindering what the Spirit is trying to help me realize.
>
> This is very stressful. I am an emotional wreck. The truth is I am so nervous about doing the wrong thing that I am not having a spiritual experience at all. So, I am missing out on the benefit of this process.

These comments resonate with the dynamic noted by Newell:

> Examining the cultural and literary nature of the Bible seemed to interfere with its signal as an inspiring and inspired document. Given the importance of the student's faith commitment, coupled with a strong attachment to his previous way of reading the Bible, in retrospect it is not surprising that this new approach evoked serious resistance. (2003, 191)

Not all students experience this degree of cognitive dissonance, and some students even cite how this challenging new way of reading Scripture using literary and cultural tools has benefitted their spiritual life. Even those students who sense a spiritual benefit recognize that this is a new way of reading Scripture that is unfamiliar and uncomfortable. This newness puts into play Jarvis's assertion (mentioned above) that the key characteristic required for accelerated adult learning is not general life experience but familiarly with a particular body of knowledge or practice. These students may have years of experience in reading the Bible devotionally, but they have little to no experience with the discipline of critical biblical interpretation; therefore, they are not well prepared to learn interpretation in an accelerated format. In the case of BIL-202: Inductive Bible Study, undergraduate adult learners have less time than a traditional class to both critically evaluate previously formed reading habits and also learn a very different set of habits and principles. This is not learning that can take full advantage of the momentum of an adult learner's set of pre-existing competencies but learning that involves reevaluating those habits and reintegrating them into a larger paradigm—work that is both cognitively and affectively demanding.

Parsing Materials

The next compounding constraint is that of appropriate materials. Many college-level textbooks are written for traditional, semester-length, non-compressed, non-accelerated classes. As an example, the book *Inductive Bible Study* by Fuhr and Köstenberger (2016) bills itself on the back cover as "an ideal textbook for courses in biblical interpretation." This textbook has fifteen chapters—surely, it is not a coincidence that this is the same number of weeks as a traditional college semester. The textbook *Grasping God's Word* (Duvall and Hays 2012) has thirteen chapters devoted to interpretive method plus nine additional chapters devoted to particular biblical genres and an appendix on inspiration and canon. A compressed and accelerated course could only use approximately two-thirds of these textbooks at the most, leaving significant portions of the textbook out of the course. This is exacerbated by the fact that in an internal study at IWU adult students in accelerated

7 For those unfamiliar with the Inductive Bible Study Method, two common textbooks are Bauer and Traina (2011) and Duval and Hays (2012).

programs were shown to have poorer reading skills than students in traditional semester-length programs.[8] Thus, our adult students, who tend to read more slowly, need to read the same amount of material in less time. Again, most adult students in BIL-202 do not have a store of relevant background knowledge that would allow certain portions of the reading to be omitted (and this is not to mention the number and scope of assignments that must similarly be truncated in some way). This is further complicated by trying to guide adult students through the course while they are also doing the hard work of reevaluating long-held beliefs about the Bible and their habits of reading it.

The rise of curatable materials and open educational resources offers both help and further challenge. Many valuable resources (both print and multimedia) are freely available online. However, my search to find relevant hermeneutical resources for a course in Bible study method has run into several roadblocks. There are simply not as many open educational resources in biblical studies as there are for many other fields. OER commons, "a public digital library of open educational resources," identifies four resources on the Bible at the college level that are primarily survey courses (not hermeneutics courses like BIL-202) and one stand-alone module on reading creation myths. The MERLOT database has several video lectures from an Old Testament/Hebrew Bible course and two other courses that are surveys of the Bible. There are online resources for learning IBS, but their diversity presents an additional complication. The Seedbed website houses some general descriptions, a handful of examples, a few videos, and several audio lectures about IBS. But these would need to be selected from and complemented by other materials to create a coherent college course. The Navigators have a brief overview of IBS, but it describes "paraphrasing" as one of the steps—a practice I explicitly discourage in my own classes. An online search for IBS resources brings up materials associated with Precept Ministries (Precept or Precept Austin). These resources present a more popular and overtly evangelical approach to IBS with several of its own distinctives and emphases. Different pieces from different theological and theoretical perspectives would have to be woven together in a kind of "Frankencourse" stitched together by the course writer. In my own experience, I have not had success at piecing together resources from different sources to create a coherent and effective learning experience for adult students in this new kind of class. The shifting voices, forms of presentation, theoretical frameworks, and ideological perspectives in each resource must be worked through by an adult student already struggling to make sense of this new approach in the midst of other long-standing commitments to Scripture and its interpretation while juggling the demands of life and work in an accelerated course.

Compressing Discussions

Discussion boards are a staple of asynchronous, online learning. Several studies have explored best practices in such discussions and documented notable gains in student learning, especially around critical thinking (e.g., Foo and Quek 2019; DiPasquale and Hunter 2018). However, the modular, standardized, compressed, and accelerated nature of these courses forces several limits onto these discussions. First, almost all discussion boards take place within the time constraints of a single week-long module. I have organized BIL-202 into six modules that all work with Paul's letter to the Colossians: An introduction to IBS, a paragraph observation, a book-length observation, two modules on interpretation, and then a final module on application. The course currently has one discussion in each module that explores the primary task of that week with initial examples. Additionally, modules three through six have another discussion that reflects back on the task and main assignment of the previous week (see further below on grading). However, the gradable discussion must occur within one week. Usually, a discussion gives the student until the end of day four of the module (typically Friday) to make an initial post. The instructions ask students to respond twice to classmates and once to the instructor by the end of the seventh day of the module (typically Monday).

This schedule usually results in an initial student post on Friday, instructor and classmate responses on Saturday and Sunday, and then some opportunity for continuation and redirection of the discussion briefly on Monday. The compressed, accelerated, and modular constraints typically limit discussions to one or two exchanges. This is further affected by the constraints of online communication, which mostly uses text-based posts (though video posts are becoming more

8 Quarters might also be considered "compressed," transitioning a fifteen-week semester into ten weeks. However, quarter-based calendars (usually) do not have to address the issue of acceleration (fewer time-on-task hours). Again, while moving from fifteen to ten weeks offers some challenges of sequencing, the primary driver under consideration for texts and reading here is that the adult students must be assigned less work than in a traditional three-credit (135 work hours) course.

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common). These communication and timing issues can also be affected by the standardized nature of these discussions. When constructing a discussion, I often have discovery goals that I hope students will realize as they process the material. I do not state these overtly in the prompt or instructions, but allow them to emerge through the interactive learning of the discussion guided by the facilitator (as recommended by Cuthrell and Lyon [2007, 360–61]). However, such discovery goals are difficult to communicate to adjunct faculty who often teach the course. Instructor guides can be placed in our courses, but they are not frequently accessed. Also, adjunct faculty may come from other paradigms that do not see the importance of that goal or have different goals, thus guiding the discussion in other directions (a dynamic I have seen in many adjunct instructor observations). Because the course is standardized, discussion prompts are not supposed to be changed to address the interests or needs of a particular group of students, though they may be interjected alongside the primary discussion. In my experience, these discussion boards often fail to probe issues, engage in dialogue, and reach meaningful learning conclusions before the class must move on to a new set of discussions in the next time-based module. Many questions and issues must be left hanging, never to be returned to, in the pressing pace of these classes.

Frustrating Group Projects

Similar dynamics have led our department team to remove most group work from Bible classes in our adult degree completion program courses. Despite several attempts to reconceive of and reorganize group projects, our team of faculty, administrators, and instructional designers have not been able to find a satisfactory way to make group projects work successfully in this type of class with our students. This is also despite our shared belief that group work is important for developing team skills in our students and that Scripture is intended to be read in community. Group assignments are very difficult to complete in the scope of a week when communication is limited to email (and the occasional video chat or phone call) and when students must navigate tight schedules (many adult students do most of their work over the weekend). Scaffolding group work across multiple weeks/modules means potential confusion when the subject of that threaded group assignment is following a somewhat different track than the focus of the current module. One must also consider the precious limited time in an accelerated class. Extending group work for a particular assignment across multiple weeks means taking away time from other assignments that address the current module's primary topic and task. Each week must also have some kind of graded deliverable to induce students to complete the stages of group work. One article on best group practices states, "Providing two or three weeks to complete a group project online may not provide ample time . . . Consider designing group projects that span several weeks and build on the overall content of the course" (Scherling 2011, 15). However, these compressed classes barely last "several weeks." The time constraints of modules, compression, and acceleration complicate group collaboration in several ways.

Even when group assignments were carefully scaffolded, roles were clarified, and specific activities were built into the course, students repeatedly expressed frustration about time and communication constraints in end of course evaluations. One student said,

> Group Projects are not helpful. They slow down individual study and productivity. I spent many unproductive hours waiting for others to complete their part of the project. I simply do not have time to wait on others in order to complete an assignment. Sometimes, others would not complete their part of the assignment until the last hour.

The work that was turned in by groups often failed to meet the intended outcomes of those assignments, and students would comment on the sub-standard nature of their work, citing the difficulties caused by the dynamics of group projects. Again, this is after repeated attempts to improve the group assignments based on research and best practices (as presented in Scherling [2011] and Stavredes [2011, 141–46]). We have kept a couple of simpler cooperative projects in the program, but have concluded that the compounding constraints of adult students in modular, standardized, accelerated, and compressed courses do not create a conducive environment for genuine collaboration.

Sequencing Assignments

The interrelated issues of sequencing and grading have presented perhaps the most unresolvable conundrum in the context of these courses. Recall that almost all modules are one week long. Instructors have up to seven days to return graded assignments to students according to IWU policy. IBS stresses that the observation of biblical passages should precede interpretation, which in turn precedes application. The steps are sequential, and the holistic nature of IBS upholds the integral role of each step in the method. Week/Module One provides an introduction to and overview of IBS. Then, students observe Colossians 3:1–4 for Week/Module Two. After this, they move immediately on to an observation of the book of Colossians as a whole in Week/Module Three, usually before receiving feedback on their detailed observation of 3:1–4. The survey of the entire book often causes students to realize new insights into their detailed observation, but the pace and length of the class prevents them from returning to that task. The insertion of the whole book observation in Week/Module Three at least gives the students time to receive their detailed observation back with some feedback before moving on to interpretation, which uses questions formulated in the detailed observation process. Then, in Week/Module Four of BIL-202 students interpret some aspect of Colossians 3:1–4 that they observed in Week/Module Two. They must then develop an application of the interpretation of that passage in Week/Module Five, most likely before they have received any feedback on their interpretation, which is not due back to students until the end of Week/Module Five.

This organization attempts to provide students the time to receive and act on feedback whenever possible. However, the pressures of the compressed class cannot be accommodated at all turns. Week/Module Six asks students to observe and interpret a passage of their own choosing from Colossians as a summative project. The book survey (from Week/Module Two) plays a bit of a role in this assignment, but this culminating assignment must take place in one week with only limited input and guidance on a discussion board that occurs simultaneously in that final week. In a non-compressed class, students could receive feedback on each step before needing to move onto the next. However, in this compressed version, flaws in a preceding step skew results in the next step, frustrating students and their learning. The compressed and accelerated nature of the class also prevents the final project from being scaffolded. It must be crammed into the final week with only the smallest opportunity for feedback during that same week. The demands of each week's/module's content, shortened by the accelerated format, do not leave space for scaffolded preparation for the final assignment. While the class scaffolds hermeneutical tasks according to the principles of IBS, the modules also tend to fragment from one another as students must keep pace with a new set of material each week with little time or incentive to learn from instructor feedback on previous assignments. The limited time period, modularized weeks, accelerated pace, and reasonable period of one week to complete grading make it very difficult to incorporate iterative practice, the interleaving of various activities, and spacing of similar activities across multiple sessions (all recommended by Miller [2014, 200]).

The Search for Strategies

The changes and suggestions below reflect my search for strategies to deal with the compounding constraints of the course. I have revised BIL-202: Inductive Bible Study twice in the past five years—with a major revision occurring five years ago and other minor revisions implemented two years later along with a few improvements since then. The survey below relates some of the changes that have been made to address the challenges of the course as well as offering possibilities for future changes. Of course, we offer far more than biblical interpretation courses in our religion and ministry programs for adults at IWU. These same challenges appear and similar strategies may be relevant for other courses offered in this format (preaching, theology, worship, church history, etc.). It is my hope that my search for strategies in the particular example of BIL-202 may illuminate new options and possibilities for other courses that share similar educational constraints.

Supporting Adult Learners

Small, practical adjustments employing the online and asynchronous dynamics of this course could be put in place to continue to ease some of the challenges adult students face in this type of class. Template documents for each IBS task were created and provided in this course in the last revision. (These templates were added into courses later in the program as well). The templates provide headings and formatting for each required component of a given step in IBS,

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accompanied by comment reminders in the margins regarding the function of each section and what should be included in it. This saves busy adult students the work of formatting documents as well as providing real-time guidance while they are thinking through or writing up that specific task of the overall IBS method. Other possibilities for supporting adult learners might include a video interview with a previous (successful) student in the course in the first workshop (see the suggestion by Miller [2014, 182–83]). This would establish the relevance of the course for adult students, help incoming students imagine success in the course, and offer students strategies for successful learning. Next, gateways could be set up in the learning management system that require students to complete certain activities (e.g., complete a quiz or review feedback) before having access to later, larger assignments that build on these. Finally, as mentioned above, adult students have faced serious affective and spiritual challenges as this course (painfully) stretches their habits of reading Scripture. In light of these personal challenges, it may help their motivation if some early assignments are graded only for completion. Experience at IWU has shown that formative assignments must have points assigned to them to encourage students to complete them, but the threat or actuality of poor grades detracts from motivation. Discussion boards in the IWU online class culture often serve this formative function, but moving a skill into a full written assignment might provide better preparation for future summative assignments. Students can be given full feedback for some assignments (without the danger of a poor score) and thus digest the constructive feedback more effectively.

The culminating IBS assignment of the class allows students to choose their own passage from Colossians for observation and interpretation, following the principle of andragogy that adult students seek choices and self-determination. However, our adult students (with little to no experience in critical biblical interpretation) often feel paralyzed or flustered by this choice. Students have most of the final week for this integrating assignment, but they often express that they have a difficult time wrapping their minds around the process that they have just learned in a holistic fashion. From my perspective, students tend to choose passages that they already feel theologically comfortable with and then skew their work toward their presuppositions, following well-established cognitive habits (as noted above). Week/Module Two has students perform a detailed observation of Colossians 3:1–4. Alongside this selected passage, the materials could explain why 3:1–4 was chosen and point out other key passages in Colossians that students could begin to consider for their final project. Highlighting these critical passages would both give students some hints for their book survey (in Week/Module Three) and help them start thinking about the culminating study in Week/Module Six. This would allow for some scaffolding toward the culminating project and provide some guidance for their choices. This could assist our adult students who are adjusting to a new paradigm while facilitating steps toward self-direction (Taylor, Marienau, and Fiddler 2000, 300–301).

The Benefits and Costs of Focus

The previous version of the class used a typical semester-length textbook, and all its contents were squeezed into the six weeks. It covered the IBS method and had chapters on hermeneutics and various biblical genres, providing a well-rounded introduction to biblical interpretation. However, this led to students skimming the long readings and having very little time for actual interpretive work on the biblical text. At the major revision, I addressed this challenge by creating all of my own materials for the class, focusing on the IBS method and removing supporting material on hermeneutics and genre. Each module includes a document that describes that step in detail, complete with bulleted lists, charts, and appropriate graphics. These are complemented by a series of accompanying examples on 1 Peter (a detailed observation, book survey, interpretation, and application). These examples are provided in document form, but I also created screencast videos where I walk through each example clarifying processes, techniques, and principles presented in the written IBS guides. One challenge is that creating materials like this probably doubles the workload of writing a course, but it concentrates the learning materials and assessments so that they can directly address the narrowed aims of the learning outcomes in accelerated and compressed courses for adults. Creating your own course materials allows for an even better fit with backward design and the benefits such design brings (Reynolds and Kearns 2017). Thus, the creation of a class in this new format often requires the creation of appropriately focused materials, amounting to nearly the production of a short textbook.

The new materials resulted in a more direct and more manageable class for adult students, but it also removed a substantial amount of supporting material on hermeneutics and genre, leaving only a narrow focus on the IBS method and epistolary material in the New Testament. We also removed any collaborative assignments, judging that we did not have a suitable

solution to this challenge yet. These changes resulted in a class that students find more streamlined and convenient with no noticeable decrease in related learning outcome achievement. These continuing challenges in the revisions have led me to reconsider the outcomes of the course with laser focus and clear limitations. The accelerated and compressed nature of the course, further restricted by its asynchronous, online, modularized, standardized, and adult dynamics, means that I must scale back broad course outcomes and focus them on very specific tasks, sacrificing broader understanding and literacy in hermeneutics and biblical studies for the necessary elements that can be achieved within these constraints. However, this can limit the development of a student's larger web of knowledge. Removing supporting materials prevents the emergence of various "spokes, chains, and nets" that support the integration and memory of new skills and information (Kinchin 2016, 35–52; Miller 2014, 99–102).

Fortunately, most adult degree completion programs work with a predetermined sequence of courses and few electives. Many, though not all, students who take BIL-202 will go on to take further Bible classes that have this course as a prerequisite. That means elements like hermeneutics that can be taken out of this course can be woven into later required courses. Some consideration of hermeneutics is now incorporated into a later class which also has students use the IBS method on prophetic writings to provide some diversity of experience with different biblical genres. It might also be possible to remove the final, culminating project from BIL-202 with the plan to incorporate a more independent IBS project of this type into a later course. The constraints still exist within each course, but the ability to know the sequence of courses allows for one to consider how outcomes and goals can be scaffolded across an entire program, ameliorating some of the pressures present in any one course. This means that the curriculum map of the program and knowledge of assignments and emphases within each particular class provide crucial context for developing or revising any particular class so that all the pieces of this puzzle can fit together into a pathway of learning.

Adaptive Learning

Adaptive learning technologies allow for the construction of quiz-like activities that evaluate a student's answer, provide appropriate pre-loaded video and/or text feedback (whether right or wrong), and then direct the student to either review questions/material (if the answer was wrong) or toward harder or new material (if the answer was right) in real time. Adaptive learning platforms include programs like Realizeit and Smart Sparrow, which have been shown to have beneficial results on student learning and engagement (Shelle et al. 2018; Dziuban et al. 2016; see various studies collected at Realizeit). The IBS method entails sequenced steps. The three basic steps are observation, interpretation, and application. Each one of these steps has associated principles and techniques. Currently, students must practice these within the limited scope of a one-week discussion and then learn through their mistakes in the major assignment for each week. This is frustrating for students who feel that they do not have a decent grasp of a task before being asked to carry it out in a graded assignment. There is simply little opportunity for preparatory practice or review.

An adaptive learning program could contain a large bank of shorter, objective, scaled exercises that ask students to apply what they encountered in the documents and examples on IBS to biblical texts. These would be graded on a completion/competence basis—as soon as students reached a certain level of competence according to the scaled questions, they would receive full credit. Each module would have its own focused set of activities (e.g., Week/Module Two focusing on observation), but students would be able to return to these for more practice if desired, and some elements of earlier modules could be included in later modules to interleave the learning and reduce some of the modular fragmentation. These adaptive learning tools fit the standardized nature of the course. They would both norm some differences across various instructors and reduce the grading workload to allow more time for feedback on major assignments. Adaptive learning technology requires significant investment both on the part of the institution to support the technology and on the part of the course development team to build the program for the particular course. However, it holds the promise to increase adult students' sense of agency, provide for effective practice, and be a more efficient learning tool in a compressed and accelerated class (Miller 2014, 183–84).

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Decompressing Learning

The sequencing of grading remains an unsolved dilemma. Currently, students are asked to discuss the feedback from their previous assignment starting on day four of a week/module, even though our policy states that instructors do not need to have graded assignments back until day seven. As the course writer, I know of this rhythm change, and we inform all of our adjuncts who teach this course about it, but we still run into occasional timing problems with the grading and discussions. Even I occasionally have schedule demands that make it difficult to get assignments graded and returned in less than four days.

A possible strategy to address this would require substantive innovation in the course delivery practices of the institution—decompressing the class from six weeks to twelve weeks. Boettcher and Conrad (2016, 79–104) use the paradigm of four phases to construct an online course, but that means only one-and-a-half weeks per phase in a six-week course! Spacing out the course over more weeks would allow for more effective engagement, better scaffolding of assignments, and ample time to receive and learn from feedback. This change would have students take two three-credit classes at the same time (BIL-202 and another class). This could also be done with another course that is particularly constrained by compression, resulting in a dual benefit. While this would not affect the online, asynchronous, accelerated, modular, standardized, or adult dimensions of the class, at least it would remove the constricting dynamics created by the compressed nature of the course. It would also enable students to still complete two courses in twelve weeks in keeping with the accelerated program pace for working adults.

This could take a couple of different formats. Two courses could run simultaneously with students putting six to eight hours of work into each class each week (rather than twelve to sixteen hours of work into one course). This has the downside of potentially dividing students' attention or complicating their cognitive load by requiring them to shift between two courses/disciplines. Or, courses could alternate weeks with BIL-202 one week, then a week on another class, back to BIL-202, and so on. This would allow time for grading and feedback but could create an even greater sense of disjunction between the modules of each course. These formats would have to be evaluated for their effectiveness to see if the easing of the compression of the class is outweighed by any negative consequences of these scheduling innovations.

CONCLUSION

Learning to teach and create online, asynchronous, accelerated, compressed, modular, standardized, and adult undergraduate courses in Biblical studies is an ongoing journey for me. For the first several years, I did my best to learn the format and work within it, exploring each dynamic of the class for its strengths and weaknesses. As I engaged in writing courses, I began to see more clearly how these various dynamics impinged upon one another, and I felt the compounding constraints constrict the teaching-learning options available to me and my students. As I turned to research in the scholarship of teaching and learning, I found some particular insights on particular elements (e.g., formulating good discussions), but I also often discovered that crucial dynamics that I had to work within (e.g., week-long modules) were not considered. Over time, have found some techniques that can thread this narrow path, tried some approaches that have not worked successfully, and continued to search for strategies and tools that will facilitate profound learning in my students. This case study is a part of that journey, both reflecting back on it and envisioning some possible ways to move forward. My hope is that it offers a bit of hard-earned wisdom for others to use and prompts further research and insight into how to build and teach this new type of class.

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ARTICLE

Theological Education for Sense-sational Leadership: Cognitive Science, Christian Agility, and the Case for Sensory Theological Education

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ABSTRACT

In a century of rapid technological change, escalating religious conflict, and seismic shifts in how people live and worship, those in Christian ministry require more than quick thinking skills. They must reason imaginatively, face change with flexibility, and reinvigorate tradition while simultaneously supporting transformation and growth. What kinds of pedagogies cultivate the creativity, vision, and flexibility such leaders require for ministry today? This paper brings together research from theological education and cognitive science to show how pedagogical practices that engage the senses can help Christian leaders develop "agility": namely, an ability to think and act in ways that are both discerning and dynamic, flexible as well as faithful. I argue that theological pedagogies that prioritize the senses in the pursuit of knowing God, others, and the material world, when coupled with attunement to the Holy Spirit, can help Christian leaders exercise Spirit-led agility in their ministries today.

KEYWORDS

cognitive science, embodied pedagogy, theological education, Christian ministry, creative religious education

Christian history is full of them: daring leaders and creative dreamers, people like Mother Jones, Martin Luther King, Jr., Ella Baker, and Cesar Chavez, as well the more ordinary yet hardly less innovative and inspired educators, ministers and activists who regularly seek to respond to changing socio-political and cultural contexts and issues, including the current world-wide "double pandemic" of COVID-19 and racism (Countess and Minter 2020). What do such leaders share in common? While diverse in cause and differing in contexts, such persons were and are vision-casters and action-takers, people who saw possibilities despite difficulties and believed God's peaceable reign was not merely plausible in theory but pursuable in practice. And so they pursued that reign of peace and justice with faithfulness, creativity, and profound care.

Today's world continues to demand creative and transformative leadership. Peter Murphy, editor of *Imagination*, describes such creativity as an ability to ask "what-if?" and "if, then?": what if this reality, situation or practice could be otherwise, and if it can be, then what does it imply we do? (Murphy, Peters, and Marginson 2010, 3, 5).

While Murphy speaks of societal leaders in general, his comments prove relevant for the leaders of the peculiar "society" that is the Christian community. Indeed, the terrain of ministry is complex, and creative solutions to pressing problems are needed. Like their forebearers above, Christian leaders must ask "what if?"—what if God's justice came in concrete ways for an oppressed community? What if a struggling congregation could thrive again?—as well as "if, then?"—"if justice is possible, then what does it mean for us now? If thriving is conceivable, then how might we move towards it?" This ability to ask "what if?" and "if, then"—to refine theory and practice in light of God's promised reign and current contexts—is best described as Christian *agility*.

That Christian leaders today require agility is not itself a novel claim. Indeed, few would disagree that ministry of various kinds requires immense flexibility and creativity as well theological competence. Changes in theological education over recent years reflect this awareness, with seminaries and theological schools shifting towards more holistic, integrative, and experience-based models of education.[1] That said, the prioritization of abstract language and discourse over and above aesthetic and creative pedagogies can inadvertently inhibit the kind of agile, creative thinking Christian leaders require. [2] Furthermore, while the need for "agile" Christian leadership is readily apparent, few scholars have examined cognitive science research on creativity and agility or its implications for theological higher education. Such research is important, for it is agile thinking, coupled with attunement to the Holy Spirit, that can enable Christians to communicate the knowledge and love of God in creative, faithful, and transformative ways.

Cognitive scientist, Wilma Koutstaal, in her book *The Agile Mind*, defines agile thinking as "ways of representing and processing (using) information and knowledge that [are] flexibly, creatively, and adaptively attuned to changing circumstances and goals" (2014, 3). She argues that mentally agile people are able to draw upon and use the "full continuum of levels of specificity of representations—ranging from the highly abstract . . . to the exceedingly specific (e.g., item specific, concrete, episodic, subordinate), as well as any of the number 'basic-level' midpoints in between" (4). This paper focuses on one aspect of this continuum and its implications for cognitive agility: sensory and materially-grounded thinking. By sensory and materially-grounded, I mean thinking that draws upon the material reality that we perceive via our senses and engage through physical or imaginary interaction (see Koutstall 2014, 389). [3] The sensory and material can include objects, visuals, the physical environment, people, specific memories or experiences, and activities. While a broad category, all of the above share the characteristic of materiality.[4]

I concentrate on sensory knowing from the perspective of cognitive science for two reasons. First, interaction with sensory and concrete inputs can provide noetic content for reflection and refine the abstract thought crucial for theological thinking and construction of grounded theories (Liebert 2005, 90-92).[5] Specifically, sensory thinking and interaction, by inviting learners to pay attention to specifics and utilize under-engaged senses, can sharpen learners' observation skills

1 Conversations about "transformative" models of theological education have abounded over the last two decades. The following are simply a selection; clearly scholarly work on the subject exceeds this list. Katie Cannon argues for an African American model of theological education that takes seriously power dynamics and oppression in the context of the classroom (2011,17–24). See also Drescher (2009, 137–40); Davis and Wadell (2016, 90–105); K Johnson (2015); Keating (2010); Shaw (2016, 205–16); Smith and Smith (2011); Fleischer (2006, 147–62); Das (2000,103–9); and Hess, Brosmer, and Moore (2015, 170–85).

2 Luke Johnson (2015) gives an excellent overview of the overemphasis on verbal language to speak about and encounter God. Keith Johnson (2015) laments the segregation of practice from theological reflection and provide an overview of the movement from scholasticism to the re-structuring of the university such that theologians needed to make a case for their scientific merit. Courtney Goto's article captures the emphasis on the verbal and abstract well (2016a, 80-82). Other resources on creative pedagogy include Hamman (2011), Elkind (1980, 282–93), Goto (2016b), Goldburg (2004, 175–84), Dyrness (2001), Illman and Smith (2016), Hart, Hopps, and Begbie (2012), Begbie (2000), Harris (1991), Graham, Walton, and Ward (2005), and Moore (2004).

3 Though I will explain in more detail below, Koutstaal (2014) underscores that all thinking is sensory, and that semantic knowledge is linked to language, perception and action. This is because we draw on various sensory modalities to form memory.

4 I use materiality even in reference to "imaginative interaction" because such interactions require attention to specific details. One might think, for example, of imaginative prayer. In praying imaginatively, we draw on ours or others' experiences of material reality to construct a scene. The act necessarily demands grounded thinking, making our imagining an engagement with materials of human experience. See especially Koutstaal on "sensory-perceptual simulation" (2014, 141–44).

5 This is the main claim of Goto's (2016a) article. See also Harris (1991) and Saliers (1980, 265–78). Koutstaal's main claim regarding the sensory and material is that our knowing is linked the physical world; when we pay closer attention to it, we gain new insights for thinking and problem solving (2014).

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(Koutstaal 2014, 153), enable them to notice new details of context or content (140-43), and help them to develop a greater repertoire of leadership skills through engagement with diverse media. Second, many who advocate for sensory knowing and pedagogies in theological education turn to theological aesthetics, embodiment and ritual theory, or communication theory to support their arguments. Few incorporate cognitive science research on how sensory and concrete thinking can foster the cognitive skills Christian leaders require (Winnings 2011, 266-70; Flaman 2011, 252–56; Brown and Strawn 2012). My reason for drawing on Koutstaal's research in particular is both because of her comprehensive treatment of cognitive agility and the attention she gives to sensory and embodied knowing. [6]

The paper proceeds in three parts. Part I seeks to situate the argument within theological education's wider turn towards the sensory and aesthetic, with a focus on the limited interaction with cognitive science. Part II examines Koutstaal's research on the role of sensory thinking in fostering cognitive agility and draws preliminary connections to the act of theological reflection. Part III addresses practical implications for integrating sensory and materially-grounded thinking into theological education. By helping theological students utilize their senses and attend to materiality, educators can correct the overemphasis on abstract representations of knowledge and better foster the cognitive and spiritual agility required for ministry today.

Coming to our Senses: Literary Review of the Sensory in Theological Education

I have argued above that theological educators must prepare Christian leaders who demonstrate agility, who can ask, "what if?" and "if, then?" and join God in bringing peace and justice into reality. I have also claimed that sensory and concrete thinking, essential for agility, remains underutilized in theological education. This is not, however, to dismiss scholars seeking to correct the overreliance on verbal and abstract representations in religious education and formation more generally (Goto 2016a, 80-81). Indeed, theologians have given increased attention to the sensory dimensions of knowing in the last half century, and the desire to recover the place of the aesthetic, sensory and embodied has spurred many to reimagine how engagement of the senses might enrich theological reflection and spiritual formation (Ballard and Couture 2001; Baab and Kelly 2011; Ryken 2005; Taylor 2011; Viladesau2013). While theological educators anchor their arguments in various theological and non-theological fields, efforts to link sensory engagement and theological education are most common in two areas of research.

The first is that of theological aesthetics, which focuses on how the arts cultivate theological sensibilities.[7] Scholars in this domain explore how sensory experience, imagination, and art supply theology with vital information about the world, God, and self. Richard Viladesau articulates the resourcing role of the arts for theology well when he writes, "the aesthetic realm provides theology with 'data' concerning its three objects (God, religion, and theology itself), as well as with knowledge of the cultural matrix to which these are related in reflection" (2013, 11). This is because, as Viladesau puts it, "Art and symbolic behavior objectify aspects of consciousness that are nonverbal, but are not for that reason pre-rational or pre-spiritual" (16). In other words, sensory experience, imagination, and art are themselves forms of knowledge, as well as avenues for knowledge expression and creation.[8]

Theological aesthetics' growth as a field has had spillover effects in the area of Christian education and formation. Indeed, many monographs and scholarly articles in recent years have explored this relationship between aesthetic experience and educational ministry, whether in the academy or congregation. Courtney Goto's recent work on creativity and education identifies artistic creation as a central mode for constructing and reforming knowledge of God (2016b, 2010). Similarly, Maria Harris's *Teaching as Religious Imagination* (1991) shows how the senses and materiality foster knowledge creation.

6 This is not to say that scholarship linking cognitive science and religion is lacking. On the contrary, Justin Barrett (2011) and Harvey Whitehouse (2004) have articulated cognitive theories of religious thinking and transmission that identify religious traditions as shaped and constrained by the material world. That said, neither author connects his research to conversations about religious and theological education, which is why I have chosen to engage with the cognitive science research directly. See Koutstaal (2014), chapters 4 and 11, for her focus on sensory knowing.

7 Richard Viladesau provides an excellent summary of the history of "aesthetics" in general, as well as theological aesthetics in particular. He understands theological aesthetics as the consideration of "God, religion, and theology in relation to sensible knowledge (sensation, imagination, and feeling), the beautiful, and the arts" (Viladesau 2013, 11). Also, the following provide introductory resources for thinking about aesthetics theologically: McCullough (2015), Brown (1993), and Farley (2001), and Wolterstorff (1987).

8 Many draw on Balthasar's theological aesthetics to anchor their work, as well as research from the fields of communications and literary criticism. See for instance, Baab and Kelly (2011), Begbie (2007), Bakhtin, Holquist, and Emerson (2011), and Balthasar, Fessio, and Riches (2009).

As concerns spiritual formation, James McCullough's (2015) research on the arts and spirituality explores how the arts provide gateways for theological reflection on and spiritual connection to God. Jeremy Begbie's (2002) reflections on aesthetics and theology in the context of worship pinpoint liturgical practices as theological expressive and formative. While the above is hardly comprehensive, it suffices to show the increased attention to how aesthetics connect to Christian education and formation.

The other conversation concerning the senses and Christian education focuses on "practices." Specifically, the "practices" discussion in practical theology has sought to nullify the segregation between lived spiritual, liturgical, cultural, and moral practices, on the one hand, and theological reflection on the other.[9] Practical theologians engaged in research on practices argue that practices possess "normative and generative functions" and serve as central vehicles for developing "phronesis," or "practical wisdom" (Richter 2014, 206, 213). This focus on how practices inform and orient human knowing has inspired a number of publications in recent years.[10] The Lilly Endowment-funded *Practicing Our Faith* project explored how various faith practices inform and reflect individual and communities' theologies (Bass and Copeland 2010). Don Saliers' work on liturgy and worship as "transformative rituals" (2005a, 310) similarly gives attention to the embodied nature of knowing (2005a, 2005b, 1994, 1996). James K.A. Smith's analysis of cultural liturgies and worship (2013, 2009) and Craig Dykstra's research on faith practices also emphasize that practices, as embodied, sensory activities, carry "epistemic weight" (1997; 2008; Wigger 2017; Dykstra 2002; Bass and Dykstra 2011; Dykstra 1987). That said, much of the research on practice focuses on how ministers or Christian leaders might think about practices in congregational or community contexts. Less research exists on how embodied practices function in theological education.[11]

On the one hand, it is clear from the above that research exploring how the sensory and concrete relate to theological reflection is increasing. On the other, few scholars have brought cognitive science insights on agile thinking, and particularly the sensory and materially-grounded thinking upon which it depends, into conversation with methods in higher theological education. In addition, many do not treat the senses as unequivocally essential for the knowledge creation and spiritual formation that occurs in theological classrooms; rather, the sensory and material are presented as useful, additional avenues for the formation of Christian leaders (McCullough 2015, 14–15).[12] My goal in drawing on cognitive science is to expand the conversation concerning the role of the sensory and material in theological higher education and thus sharpen educators' efforts to foster agile Christian leaders. This kind of interdisciplinary dialogue between cognitive science and Christian education is particularly fitting for a practical theological project that seeks to examine and transform Christian faith and practice in light of the "situated and embodied character of human life" (Cahalan and Mikoski 2014, 3). Specifically, I employ Don Browning's (2010) critical hermeneutics to bring the theological disciplines, natural sciences, and social sciences into a mutually enriching and critically engaging conversation, with the aim of promoting theologically faithful and critically reflective educational praxis (Cahalan and Mikoski 2014, 4; Osmer 2008, 4-42). I use Browning's method because it recognizes the hermeneutical nature of all interpretation without dismissing the potential for both scientific and theological research to provide insights into reality (Browning 2010, 24). In this case, bringing non-theological disciplines and research tools aimed at analyzing lived experience (Cahalan and Mikoski 2014, 3) into conversation with Christian Scripture and theology provides an avenue to practice "distanciation": namely, "a process of critically examining our own theoretical and historically shaped assumptions" through dialoging with alternative perspectives (Cooper 2011, 27). Though cognitive science possesses its own hermeneutical biases, engaging with such research can help Christian educators think more critically and holistically about how concrete and sensory engagement can help theological students better exercise the agile thinking that Christian leadership requires.

9 The following provide helpful introductions and overviews of the "practices" conversation: Bass and Copeland (2010), Bass and Dykstra (2008), Volf and Bass (2002), Bass and Dykstra (2011), and McGuire (2005, 117-134).

10 James K. A. Smith (2009, 2013, 2016) is a good example of someone whose work depends on a theory of embodied knowing and the power of habit to shape our sensibilities, including thought and action. Many anchor or at least draw on Alasdair MacIntyre's (2007) work to justify the idea that Christian practices cultivate "virtue."

11 This is not to say that it doesn't exist; rather the orientation of the "practices" conversation tends towards congregations rather than theological higher education. Examples, however, of research on practices in the context of academic classrooms include: Bass and Copeland (2010); Miller-McLemore (2012); Dreyer and Burrows (2005); Goto (2016a); Graham, Walton, and Ward (2005); and Das (2000).

12 Courtney Goto is an exception, however. She identifies all people as artists, thereby making artistic creation a central avenue to theological reflection. That said, her explanation is somewhat limited and relies heavily on theology (2016a, 84–85).

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Please DO Touch: The Sensory Support for Agility

Cognitive scientist Wilma Koutstaal, in her book *The Agile Mind*, claims that agile thinking entails movement between different modes of thinking and different levels of specificity (2014, 4, 24-25). In terms of modes of thinking, agile thinkers must be able to exercise the high concentration or control characteristic of critical analysis (4, 25; also see chapter 7), as well as the automatic thinking that supplies intuitive insights.[13] Agility also requires movement between levels of specificity, where specificity refers to the content or "what" of thought (4, 11, 25). This content ranges from abstract ideas to very specific objects, memories or materially grounded concepts (14-16). A person's ability to utilize the full range of the continuum is what constitutes agility (7, 25-26). Over-reliance on one mode of thinking or level of representation, on the other hand, restricts flexible action and creative thinking.[14]

Attention to sensory and material inputs belongs to what Koutstaal calls "specific representation" (2014, 14). While such engagement can occur from either an automatic or controlled state and constitutes only one aspect of agility,[15] I focus on it both because of its underuse in theological education, as well as the perceived separation between the sensory and material and reasoned theological reflection.[16] Courtney Goto, in her article "Thinking Theologically by Creating Art," captures this unbalanced prioritization of the abstract and verbal well when she writes, "Unfortunately, ministry, as well as seminary training, suffers from an overdependence on verbal, cognitive approaches to theological reflection . . . aesthetic practices have often been marked as something different from and other than 'theological reflection' . . . the arts have often been kept separate from (and therefore treated as marginal to) the heady business of theologizing, even though artistic expressions of faith *are* theological statements" (Goto 2016a, 80-82).

Goto's observations concerning the "limitations of the sayable" (2016a, 80) and the artificial divide between artistic creation and theological reflection are particularly perceptive when it comes to thinking about how the sensory and concrete relate to agile thinking. Koutstaal, in a chapter called "Thinking with Our Senses," questions common conceptions of thinking as an internal activity that occurs "largely independent of the physical environment" (2014, 125). She argues, instead, that the physical world, rather than ancillary to thinking, supplies the material from which all abstract thoughts are birthed (125, 161-66).[17] Stressing the sensory roots of concepts and ideas, she writes, "Even thinking that appears to proceed without any overt reliance on such external aids—such as thinking that is highly abstract—nonetheless builds on foundations of mental concepts that are, at least in part, forged through an individual's interactions with the concrete world of sights and sounds, and embedded actions within it" (125). Some of the clearest expressions of the physicality of our concepts that Koutstaal describes are in common phrases like "jumping to conclusions" or "trial by fire" (137, 170).

Koutstaal is not alone in her claims regarding the sensory roots of knowing.[18] Interpersonal neurobiologist Daniel Siegel similarly underscores the environmental and material influences on our thinking.[19] He argues that learning, at its most

13 Koutstaal distinguishes agile thinking from dual-process theories of cognition precisely because she views the intuitive and automatic process of thinking as indispensable for agility (2014,17-23). See Kahneman (2013) for someone employing dual-process theory. Koutstaal ultimately argues for the "essential role of intuition, not only in exceptional cases but, rather thought the warp and woof of human cognitive endeavor" (2014, 22-23).

14 Koutstaal's central claim in *The Agile Mind* is that overdependence on one mode of thinking or kind of representation reduces agility and comprises creativity, problem solving, and critical thinking. This overuse can occur in relation to all four poles. Excessive control can stymie imagination, foster rigidity, and lead to rigid concept-formation (2014, 64-66). Thinking that relies too heavily on automatic or intuitive reason leaves us unable to envision a world beyond the model we have already set (79). Likewise, overly abstract thinking disconnected from specific experience impairs our problem-solving abilities (60-70), while thinking that is too specific inhibits the creation of "rules" that we can transfer to other contexts (55-56).

15 As I mentioned in the outset, this paper hones in on one corner of the quadrant, not because I believe the sensory-perceptual bears the most significance for Christian education, nor because I think focus on the sensory-perceptual is always a good thing, but because the senses are typically underutilized as channels for knowledge-building in theological education.

16 Although I do not directly engage the dimensions of highly deliberate and more automatic modes of thought, they nevertheless surface throughout, since we can engage the sensory and material from either highly controlled or more automatic states depending on the context.

17 Also, see Mareschal, Quinn, and Lea (2010) for a helpful introduction to concept-formation, especially chapter 2.

18 Cognitive scientists studying the relationship between vision and cognition similarly point to correlations between the situational context and the categories and abstract concepts people create. Other cognitive scientists looking at concept formation identify material dimensions to abstract construals. See, for instance, Henderson and Ferreira (2004) and Mareschal, Quinn, and Lea (2010).

19 Interpersonal neurobiology (IPNB) is a relatively new interdisciplinarity field that brings together research from neuroscience, human biology, and psychology to theorize human relationality, well-being, and psychological development. On the one hand, IPNB, in seeking to join often siloed domains of study, offers a much-needed integrative approach to understanding human development. At the same time, while IPNB seeks to address a gap in understanding as regards the impact of human biology on relational and psychological experience, it can be critiqued, like many interdisciplinary fields, for a lack of conceptual clarity around key ideas (e.g. intrapersonal attunement; neural integration; and mindfulness), as well as its mixed methods approach. Additionally, Jarmie and Harris' work critically analyzes IPNB from a hermeneutical perspective; she argues that the field's main theories can be understood as cultural artifacts, reflective of and helping to solidify cultural "truths" about human connectedness (2018, 10). While she does not seek to undermine IPNB basic theories, her work suggests that it is necessary to situate IPNB research in relation to a wider cultural context focused

basic level, represents the multiplication, pruning, and transformation of the brain's neural pathways,[20] which are constructed and altered by means of environmental input (Siegel 2010, 40). In other words, the material aspects of life—our experiences at home and work, our interactions with objects and the environments in which we live and move—impact the neural pathways in our brains. Siegel's definition of the mind as an "embodied and relational, emergent self-organizing process that regulates energy and information flow" (2017, 62), underscores that thinking is not a disembodied activity. On the contrary, generating thoughts entails "a remarkably subtle interplay" between brain, body, and environment (Koutstaal 2014, 125). In short, human beings are organized for touching, tasting, feeling, hearing, smelling, and acting our way towards knowledge (2014, 125).

That words and ideas rely on sensory inputs for their construction ultimately means that theological educators cannot divorce materiality and reasoning, the sensory and sensible, the logic of art and the logic of God. Yet how, specifically, does engagement with the sensory and concrete contribute to agile leadership? In the following, I highlight four ways that sensory thinking and concrete engagement contributes to the agile thinking required for leading with agility today.

Flexible Noticing. First, sensory thinking and attention to the concrete helps learners develop "flexibility in noticing" (Koutstaal 2014, 143). Flexibility in noticing involves an ability to look at a situation, idea, or reality from diverse angles and perceive the diversity feature comprising the reality itself. In theological education, noticing practices tend to involve texts. Students approach a theological idea or historical topic by noticing the features of an argument—the logic, the coherence, the validity of the author's claims—or notice in a writing or lecture the words the author or presenter uses to describe her topic. Less often are learners given opportunities to approach a theological issue by means of sensory engagement. Unfortunately, prioritizing verbal and abstract representations can restrict learners' "orienting sensitivities," namely the extent to which they are "sensitive" to different features of an idea, situation, or topic.[21]

Sensory engagement, on the other hand, allows students to expand their perceptual frames so that they literally see more of reality (Koutstaal 2014, 144-46). For instance, rather than begin a class on the Hebrew psalms by inviting learners to analyze a psalm's structure, learners might listen to selections of psalmody and pay attention to their features: the cadence, length and sound of words, tone, its concordance or dissonance. In this case, using one's senses cultivates greater flexibility in learners' noticing. The details that seemed salient when they read the texts may no longer be the ones that catch their ears when they hear the psalm performed.

Greater flexibility in noticing contributes to agile thinking in a number of ways. First, using one's senses and body helps learners perceive situations, people, or objects in novel or enhanced ways (Koutstaal 2014, 144-46), and this, in turn, leads to richer descriptions and higher theoretical understanding.[22] Just as a hearing the psalm may have shifted the learner's conceptions of it, abstract ideas are enriched when we approach them from multiple angles and by means of multiple modalities (2014, 141). Second, greater flexibility in noticing can help learners arrive at new strategies for solving problems. New details provide new leads, and like detectives who unearth clues in inconspicuous and unexpected places, flexible noticers often see commonalities and solutions where others perceive confusion (142). This is, in part, because flexible noticers do not simply "accept the way events have been perceived, and conceived, by others" (142); rather, like the Jesuits who "find God in all things" (Barry and Barry 2009), flexible noticers rely on multiple senses to draw a more comprehensive picture of what is going on in a given situation.

For theological educators concerned with helping learners accurately assess future ministerial situations, guide congregants through challenging problems, or devise creative ways to meet a community's needs, providing avenues for them to closely examine concrete granular details through physical, sensory, or imaginative engagement is essential. Practicing such sensory and concrete thinking allows them to generate more precise "maps" of their context, a person's

on understanding "human trauma, growth, and development" (10). Despite these critiques, IPNB remains a rapidly growing field with the potential to help religious scholars conceptualize the role of relationships and the material world in human growth and development. For more of Siegel's work, see *The Developing Mind* (2015). For an example of a scholar bringing IPNB into dialogue with spirituality, see Hollingsworth (2008). For a hermeneutical conceptualization of IPNB, see Jarmie and Harris (2018).

20 See Siegel (2015, 47); for further study, see chapter 2.

21 Koutstaal links orienting sensitivity to insight, reflection, and imagination (2014, 143).

22 One reason flexibility in noticing is so crucial is that humans are "cognitive misers": we rely on sparse abstract and verbal information to construct concepts. When we fail to notice in greater detail or use our senses and bodies to examine the world or ideas, we end up with "depleted concepts" (Koutstaal 2014, 137-8, 143).

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life, or even how the Spirit might be working in the midst of their or their community's lives. Moreover, by noticing a wide variety of details—for example, where mothers with children gather in the community, how a parishioner looks when he shares about his family life—learners engage in a kind of cognitive and spiritual attentiveness similar to what Simone Weil calls "*attente*" (2009, 59, 71-72).

Fine-tuning Ideas. Second, sensory and concrete thinking can help correct concepts and refine ideas (Koutstaal 2014, 40, 151). This is because paying attention to concrete or sensory details—whether physically or imaginatively—halts automatic processing, and this processing "pause" provides an opportunity to more clearly perceive inadequacies in one's ideas (2014, 93, 99). For instance, a learner might, based on previous encounters with Calvin's theology, conceive that Presbyterians are restrained in their worship, focused on critical thinking and uninterested in charismatic connection with Christ. Yet, were that learner invited to attend an animated Presbyterian worship service, she might find her categorical assumptions about Presbyterians and their theology challenged and her ideas re-formed.

Using sensory and concrete engagement to "pause" learners in their thinking processes is especially useful in light of humans' propensity to be "sensory-perceptual misers," overly reliant on abstract and sparse verbal information in the construal of an idea or concept (Koutstaal 2014, 137). Fuzzy-trace theory describes how this miserliness manifests in abstract concept formation: humans reduce cognitive taxation by recruiting limited fragments of information, which they then convert into "minimal representations" just sufficient to allow successful behavior" (2014, 14, 40). This ability to rapidly generate simplified pictures of reality—called "gists"[23]—allows us to quickly size up a situation, often within milliseconds,[24] identify potential threats, categorize what is occurring based on abstract ideas, and quickly decide how we want to respond (Henderson and Ferriera 2004, 12-13). In generating gists, we often "gravitate to the lowest, least precise level in this 'hierarchy of gist' that the task will allow" (Koutstaal 2014, 40). In other words, while gists save us valuable cognitive energy,[25] they often inaccurately capture reality.

Thinking concretely or using one's senses to revisit the reality one seeks to describe, however, can sharpen and refine theory. Just as paying attention to the details of a map when one is lost helps a person discern other possible routes, so using all our senses to attend to the material and specific features of a situation contributes to problem solving (Koutstaal 2014, 71). and enhances flexibility of action (73). In this way, sensory and materially-grounded thinking both dis-orient and re-orient us. The lost person does not simply tune into the topography of her surroundings once she is aware that she is lost. She becomes aware that she is lost precisely in the act of paying attention! Indeed, only when the shop fronts and street signs no longer look familiar does re-orientation become possible. Yet it is by continuing to attend to the details—this time both the concrete details of the map and the surroundings—that she creates a more comprehensive and complex "gist" from which to abstract a new course.

In sum, returning to the concrete and sensory details of reality—particularly the lived reality of faith—keeps Christian leaders epistemologically humble, cognitively agile, and spiritually "tuned-in." Rather than assume that what one is saying, doing, or thinking matches reality, material and sensory thinking helps learners re-vision theologies and revise plans of action. This re-visioning and revising of concepts and action through sensory attentiveness is particularly relevant for preparing Christian leaders building communities of faith in a climate of increased political and religious polarization and division. Indeed, such leaders must be able to place themselves in others' shoes, relax narrow constraints, nuance their opinions based on new information, and identify avenues for collaboration without dissolution of diversity. Moreover, they must be able to discern the movements of the Spirit, to find in the mundane details the presence and provision of God.[26] These skills of creative problem-solving, mutual understanding, and spiritual attentiveness require attending to

23 Henderson and Ferreira describe gists as a "general semantic interpretations," that include, "establishing the identity of a scene . . . some semantic features of that class of scenes, and some aspects of the scene's global spatial layout" (2004, 12).

24 Henderson and Ferreira argue that, "the evidence is overwhelming that gist can be apprehended very rapidly and can in turn influence various other visual and cognitive processes (e.g., biases about the presence of particular objects) and behaviors (e.g., eye movement)" (12). The research they cite finds "gists" can emerge with 30-50 milliseconds of "scene onset" (2004, 12-13).

25 Siegel's research on memory suggests that not only do we try to reduce mental energy by automatizing ideas, we actually engage in "selective forgetting" so as to not overwhelm the mind with unnecessary details (2015, 82). Christina Cleveland's work on stereotyping and its effects on disunity within the Christian community are particularly insightful. She too highlights how our biological desire to reduce "cognitive taxation" connects to biasing (2013, 47–49).

26 That the Spirit indwells creation and that God speaks to us in the ordinary details of life is a recurring theme in Christian theological reflection. See for instance, Brown (2006), Moore (2004), Wolfteich (2010), and L Johnson (2015).

the particulars of material reality (Koutstaal 2014, 152). By incorporating avenues for learners to exercise sensory thinking, theological educators can equip learners develop more accurate theological, contextual, and spiritually-attuned "gists" that can, in turn, guide them towards agile leadership.

Fostering Psychological Proximity. Third, sensory thinking can help learners cultivate kinship:[27] *kinship* with information and the realities that information aims to describe. Such kinship is crucial for Christian leaders, for one cannot truly know God unless one feels *kin* with God. One cannot truly know a community without seeing its members as kin. In short, when one's subject matter is God, God's people or God's world, psychological proximity is of essence; true competence coincides with kinship.[28]

Sensory and concrete engagement fosters this kind of kinship, because it requires learners to get intimate with the subject matter, whether physically or through imaginative simulation. For instance, creating a sculpture as a way to reflect on a "significant theological question," as Courtney Goto invites learners to do in one of her classes (2016a, 86-87), allows people to practice "interiority," presence to oneself (Frohlich 2005, 75). This presence to oneself—a kind of deeper knowing of one's own internal thought life—by means of art allows learners to physically see how they construct theological ideas out of material realities, as well as invite them into a "revelatory experiencing" of the Spirit.[29] Goto stresses that in using physical materials to reflect theologically, learners "create a bridge that expresses some of the complexity of their faith. The bridge provided by art can bring together disparate, discordant, or even nascent bits and pieces . . . it can express in the moment, for example, what is in the making, as well as what has been lost yet remains" (Goto 2016a, 86).

Abstract concepts, by contrast, can foster psychological distance from ourselves and the reality, object or person we desire to know. Indeed, this is the basic claim of construal level theory: namely, that level of concept formation—abstract or specific—affects how physically or psychologically distant a person feels from concept's subject (Liberman and Förster 2009). Liberman and Förster describe psychological distance as what occurs when we are confronted with an idea or concept that "is not part of one's direct experience" (2009, 1330). The more abstract the concept or generalized and non-specific the language, the less connected the subject seems to one's direct experience and thus, the less proximal one feels to the person or thing (2009, 1331; Koutstaal 2014, 103). The converse is also true: the more specific, concrete, or sensory the concept, the more psychological proximity experienced (Liberman and Förster 2009, 1337).

Koutstaal notes how time and space also inform concept-formation. She observes how greater physical distances in space or time "implicitly and unintentionally elicit effects of psychological distance," and this psychological distance, in turn, results in more abstract construals of the person, object or event (Koutstaal 2014, 105). Objects or persons that are physically or temporally near or with which we have had experience, however, foster psychological nearness and lead to more specific descriptions. Koutstaal sums up well why this is so when she writes, "physical distance actually changes our perception. What we can "see" and "know" when physically near to, versus far from, objects or events, differs, and this learned experiential knowledge, based on our physical senses and ways of acting in the world may be mirrored or analogically extended into our mental and conceptual world" (2014, 105).

This relationship between physical distance, psychological distances and abstract conception formation challenges educators who often rely on abstract language to talk about God or the life of faith. For instance, how might conversations about concern and care for the "Other" inadvertently limit love for such Others if the discourse remains theoretical and abstract? While it is helpful to name and examine the linguistic and symbolic practices by which humans establish us-them dichotomies and notions of "otherness," if our discussions fail to engage specific situations, issues, or communities

27 I am drawing on Jesuit Gregory Boyle's (2005, 2011) use of the term "kin" to describe intimacy, a way of relating to other that includes them into our circle people we "family." Using "kin" is a way to convey, in a more sensory way, what it is like to truly understand something (see Koutstaal on deep understanding, which is cultivated by drawing on various modalities, including the senses [2014, 389-90]).

28 This idea of kinship is also connected to Parker Palmer's understanding of how truth and community are related. For Palmer, "to teach is to create a space in which the community of truth is practiced" (2007, 95). This vision of teaching stems from a fundamental claim that reality is communal; moreover, we can only know that reality by being in relationship with it (95-97). This model has the "Great Subject" at the center, with the "knowers" creating an interconnected and dynamic web around the center. By means of their dialogue and engagement with one another around the subject, they come to practice and discern Truth. One does not ascertain this truth by mastering "the conclusions"; rather knowledge is gained through "our commitment to the conversation itself, our willingness to put forward our observations and interpretations for testing by the community and to return the favor to others" (104).

29 Goto defines revelatory experiencing as a destabilizing experience that allows learners to experience the divine mystery in new ways (2016b, 3; also 2016a, 87).

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where such love of Other is practiced or afford person opportunity to practice love for others themselves, the psychological distance may very well remain. Materially grounded, specific thinking or sensory engagement—whether in the form of case studies, actual physical interaction, observing or participating in a dramatic performance, or reflecting verbally about particular moments one has experienced this love for Other—can reduce the actual and perceived physical distance between the learner and Other they aim to know and love.

Fixing Functional Fixedness. Fourth, sensory and concrete thinking can counter functional fixedness. Functional fixedness "occurs when we become stuck or fixed upon one way of looking at an object, particularly a way of looking at an object that is in accord with its usual function or purpose" (Koutstaal 2014, 127). It does not take much effort to imagine how this occurs in churches; indeed, controversies concerning "who moved the chairs?" and "why are we having sleepovers in the sanctuary?" afflict congregations across the board. Clearly, agile leaders must help their congregants reimagine how worship spaces, pulpits, and even entire church buildings function in light of God's call upon a given community.

Yet, functional fixedness need not only occur in relation to objects and spaces. On the contrary, functional fixedness often features in our thinking. Koutstaal describes how we can adopt excessively narrow construals of reality that restrict our perception, both of reality and of possible alternative (Koutstaal 2014, 132-34). Abstract concepts, as "broad, general notions" that shape how we interact with objects and interpret new ideas, can contribute to this limiting of perception (2014, 132). This is, in part, because abstract ideas connect to the categorization systems we use to organize reality, which may or may not be sufficient for addressing current situations (132). For Christian leaders and the communities they serve, this conceptual form of functional fixedness often manifests in how we define what is or is not of God, how we interpret Scripture, the way we think worship spaces work, or who counts as Christian. Such ways of thinking—when resistant to critical reflection and refinement—make us unable to "freshly perceive and conceive new possibilities" (133).

Inviting learners to "take a long, loving look at the real," can help them counter functional fixedness, both in themselves and their congregations (Burghardt 1989, 14–17). This is because the "real"—real people, real poverty, real pain—broadens our conceptions of the truth. They force us to get intimate with reality rather than define it from a distance. Jesus is perhaps one of the best examples of what this "long, loving looking at the real" really looks like. He spots Zacchaeus in the tree (Luke 19:1-10, NRSV). He points to lilies in the field and birds flying through the air (Matthew 6:25-34). He dreams up poignant parables based on present day particularities. He touches the sick and turns with love towards a bleeding woman tugging on his cloak (Luke 8:28-48). He uses mud and spit to heal the blind man's eyes (Mark 8:22-25). By "going granular" through sensory and concrete engagement, theological educators help learners develop more comprehensive ideas of the real that is God's world. Moreover, if permitted to use their senses not only to think theologically about God but actually encounter God in the classroom—say, through imaginative prayer or *lectio divina*—they might even re-perceive who God is, how God works, or what God wants for themselves and this world.

Summary. The above has underscored the significance of the sensory and concrete for agility. This narrow focus is not intended to disparage the value of abstract representations for theological learning. On the contrary, educators want learners, especially those who lead the Church, to develop theological accounts that go beyond particular, context-bound expressions of Christian faith. We may desire them to "automatize" formal systems of doctrines or acquire a knowledge of significant biblical themes and historical events in both the church and wider world. We hope that leaders will, likewise, be able to articulate that God is Triune, however abstract the notion might be, and understand the significance of this claim for Christian faith. We sincerely desire that our learners will possess the theological breadth to discuss difficult topics of theodicy, atonement, death, resurrection, violence, and love. We want them to have automatized practices of prayer and habits of discipleship, including patience, joy, compassion, service, listening, and honesty.

Yet the internalization of such knowledge and practices can, if engaged from an overly abstract mode, result in a theoretical knowing of God increasingly divorced from lived experience. Learners might become automatic in their prayers and even have a rich understanding of what prayer "does." Yet if they don't actually engage in praying, practice it in our classrooms, or encounter it concretely in the context of theological reflection, their ideas about prayer may linger at the level of the abstract. We can help them develop theologically rich, abstract understandings of grace. Yet, if we do not provide opportunities for them to experience grace on a sensory level, we not only diminish their understanding, we allow one of their most basic and most pivotal avenues of knowing God—their bodies and senses—to atrophy. This is problematic

since abstract ideas, as we saw, when decoupled from the experiential knowing acquired through the senses, grow brittle and inaccurate. By contrast, the more frequently we engage learners in theological reflection at the level of sensory and concrete experience, the more likely they are to develop richer concepts of who God is, what the life of faith ought to look like, as well as the skills to translate those concepts into the arenas of life and ministry.

Incarnation and Incarnate Knowing: The Sensory and Concrete God

It is clear from the above that the senses are significant for fostering nimble, cognitively agile leaders. Yet are the senses and concrete world truly indispensable for knowing God?

A quick glance through Christian history suggests that humans have long found the senses an avenue for encountering and worshipping God. Images and icons, sensory-laden Sunday services, metaphorical methods of reading Scripture, and bodily participation in prayer: cultivating Christian understanding and faithfulness were aesthetic and sensory acts (McGuire 2005, 124). Erik Palazzo's observations about medieval Christian worship helpfully capture how the sensory and theologically sensible manifested Christian worship.

> The sensory dimension of medieval liturgy, in which the images and all the artistic creations fully participated, was a major component in the anthropology of the rituals of the medieval church. [central to this the sensory dimension were] not only the artistic creations intended for the ritual itself, but also all kinds of liturgical expressions that appealed to the senses . . . the liturgy in general—but more particularly medieval liturgy—constituted "synthesis of the arts" par excellence, so much so that "sacred art" itself could become "liturgy." (Palazzo 2010, 25-26)

Palazzo argues that the aesthetic dimensions of the liturgy prioritized the senses as primary channels for knowing God; the "auditory," "visual," and "tactile," as well as olfactory and gustatory elements of the liturgy, rather than auxiliary to theological proclamation, "signified truths of faith" (2010, 26). Yet the liturgy was not the only arena in which sensory knowing proved central to faith formation and expression. Ornate church buildings and the commissioning of cathedrals served as channels for expressing commitment to the Divine. The five senses, influential in Western mysticism, also provided a way to "integrate the sensory with the spiritual dimension of human experience . . . to counteract any tendency towards a purely intellectualist understanding of consciousness of or union with God" (Sheldrake 2013, 573-75). Reformation era pageants and tableaux: these too brought together sight, sound, and the sacred (Ehrstine 2002). To this day art, music, liturgies, festivals, prayers, buildings, banners, websites, and icons continue to give form to Christian faith.

Yet, the fact that Christians have, throughout history, employed the sensory and aesthetic as a way to worship and know God does not necessarily communicate something intrinsic to our or God's identity. Is there something more fundamental to who God is and how God relates to God's creatures that would implicate our senses in the knowing and loving of God?

If we hone in on how God repeatedly chooses to relate to the creatures God crafted and calls God's own, we cannot escape God's inordinate commitment to revealing Godself through the material, sensible world.[30] From the theophanies threaded through the Hebrew Scriptures, the signs and wonders performed in Egypt, and the creation of the Temple to the angel's visitation to Mary, Jesus' resurrection appearances, and the physical outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God elects to be seen, felt, heard, and ultimately, more fully known (Savran 2009).

Yet, it is in the scandal of the incarnation—a baby born in Bethlehem—that God's intentionality in revealing Godself visibly and tangibly is most manifest (Loades 2013). Ann Loades describes the incarnation as "the most signal exercise of creative initiative" (2013, 555), the avenue by which we behold the "image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). As the author of

30 The following is a selection of resources highlighting material reality as a plane of divine revelation and a means by which God reveals Godself. It is not intended to be exhaustive but demonstrative that God is, in fact, intentional in relating to humans through the physical and sensory world. Not included here are those resources from early Christianity that simply prioritize the sensory as a means of knowing God. I include those in a footnote below. See Balthasar, Fessio, and Riches (2009, 59–51); Brown (2006); L Johnson (2015); Schmemann (2003).

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John's gospel reminds us, the Word—a concept—became flesh (John 1:14). In other words, through Christ, God declares the abstract insufficient. Bones, breath, a beating heart, and body: these are the vehicles God chooses to reveal Godself and restore communion with God's creatures.

That God becomes incarnate implies that our senses are crucial channels for clearly perceiving God's identity. In other words, the incarnation does not simply affirm God's commitment to revealing God's self through sensory and concrete modes. The incarnation and bodily resurrection of Christ affirm that it is our material nature and sensory capacities that permit humans both now and in eternity to most fully commune with God (see especially L Johnson 2015; Wright 2008). We see this prioritization of our senses and the material world for knowing God in Jesus' ministry. Indeed, Jesus repeatedly invites people to "come and see," to encounter him rather than simply talk with him from a distance. We observe this when, instead of minimizing physical bodies, Jesus makes them central to his ministry. Indeed, we rarely learn what Jesus says without seeing first what he does for specific, concrete human beings: he heals people's eyes, mends broken bones, alleviates ailments, anoints the sick, and even raises the dead.

We see this this prioritization of the senses again when the author of 1 John reminds us that the first followers' concrete engagement with Christ proved pivotal for their convictions: "that which was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—this life was revealed, and we have seen it . . . " (1 John 1:1). Even the apostle Paul, king of theological abstractions and occasional disparager of the "flesh," does not ultimately despise the senses or body. On the contrary, it is he who urges the congregations under his care to enact the love of Christ by attending to one another's physical needs. It is he who praises the churches of Macedonia for their collections for the struggling saints in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:1-3). It is he who pays close attention to who gets to eat at the Corinthians' communion celebrations (1 Corinthians 11:17-34) and uses earthy metaphors and imagery to communicate his vocational identity (1 Thessalonians 2:7; Galatians 4:19; 1 Corinthians 3:2).

Of course, this physical experience of beholding, touching, smelling, hearing, and tasting God in the flesh that profoundly nourishes the first followers' insights into the reality, nature, and desires of God, is not something we in the twenty-first century can replicate in full. Nor did beholding Christ in the flesh necessarily translate into right understanding of who Christ was. Time and time again we witness the disciples waffling, as they literally walk with their teacher along the road, about Jesus' identity and purpose. Yet, the disciples' difficulty in discerning the Divine does not declare the sensory and material inessential.

While we who follow Jesus today cannot behold him physically, the Gospel accounts, the sacraments, and the Spirit who speaks to us in the ordinary material of life bring us into connection again and again with the sensory and concrete Christ who makes God known (L Johnson 2015; Farley 2001). This continued affirmation of our senses for knowing God is perhaps most obvious in our celebrations of the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist (Zizioulas 2011; Schmemann 2003; Saliers 1994). Indeed, these "visible means of invisible grace" enable us to encounter the risen Christ again and again in a concrete-like form. Moreover, the formal sacraments and the "informal" sacrament of every-day life remind us that God takes seriously our material lives and chooses to remain engaged with us in them.[31]

Highlighting God's commitment to being known via the material world is not to say that God is only committed to the sensory and specific. On the contrary, God, like a good agile leader, "oscillates." This agility is on display at Creation, as God moves between high control and "under-control,"[32] specific representations and more abstract claims. God begins with great focus and granularity: shaping the stars, ordering the seas, forming the animals, separating day from night, and crafting humans from the very *humus*—the dust of earth (Kindschi 2017). That said, after surveying all God has crafted, God stands back and abstracts from the particulars: "God saw that it was good." All of this creating, of course, takes immense concentration and control, and so God chooses, on the final day, to revel in "under-control": to Sabbath. That this balance

31 Moore develops a theory of "sacramental teaching" based on an understanding of the sacraments as mediating God's grace and "enabling the community to participate more fully in the grace of God that is everywhere revealed" (2004, 9). Her central assumptions are that "God is the primary Teacher and that God's sacred creation is a source for learning. The relationship between God and the world is primal. Ordinary reality mediates God's grace, and ordinary people, situations, and objects are vessels of the Holy. Thus, all aspects of life—even the margins of society—are imbued with God's presence" (Moore 2004, 4-5, 9-13, 49–53).

32 By under-control, I mean "automatic" or defocused attention, which is on the extreme range of Koutstaal's levels of control (the "how" of thought). On the Sabbath, God is "less" focused than during the last six days of high intensity work (Koutstaal 2014, 117–20).

between particularities and generalities, intense activity and rest, reflects God's way of relating to the universe and the conditions under which both humans and the natural world flourish communicates the significance of moving between "poles" of specificity and control.

On the other hand, humans are sensing creatures, and our God is a God who wills to be known "in flesh, dwelling among us" (John 1:14). Lest the point be missed, then, abstract ideas about God uncoupled from sensory and concrete engagement with God and God's world will inhibit a deep and full understanding of Christian faith, the Subject of it, and the agility required to make both known in faithful, creative ways in the world. Indeed, excessive reliance on the abstract not only distances learners from the concrete sources and means that allow them to interact with the world and expand their theoretical ideas (Koutstaal 2014, 126); it also distances them from the God we hope they will come to more deeply know and love. The danger that theological education must seek to avoid, then, is the abstracting-away of God. By helping learners use their senses, theological educators facilitate communion with the God who became concrete so that they can better use their knowing and loving to lead in agile ways.

Taste and See: Cultivating Agility through Sensory and Concrete Engagement

The notion that humans come to know the world through interaction with it and that God reveals Godself by taking on flesh has important implications for how theological educators think about how the material world, sense perception, and learning connect. Specifically, if thinking involves all three spheres—the brain, body, and environment—and it is through these that we encounter God, this means that cultivating agile Christian leaders must pay attention to the material and sensory.

In the following, I provide three principles for theological educators seeking to incorporate "thinking with our senses" into their classrooms, with a focus on the benefits such principles have for nurturing creativity and agility of thought.

First, educators can focus learners' attention on the concrete manifestation an idea, object, or specific memory. For Christians, this kind paying attention to the concrete reflects an attitude of "wonder"[33] and is not unlike the discipline of attentiveness to God essential for Christian faith. As noted above, this attunement to the sensory-perceptual properties of objects and ideas can occur physically or imaginatively (Koutstaal 2014, 132), and might include rearranging or re-categorizing objects and ideas within a material space or via our imagination (2014, 143). For example, a course on the Gospel of John might involve students in performing a dramatic readings of Jesus' "high priestly prayer," with a focus on how the concrete details of the text translate into different sensory, tonal, and contextual choices in different student groups. This tuning into the sensory aspects of Jesus' prayer and articulating them in a concrete, non-verbal way can help learners reform or nuance their understandings of what the gospel writer seeks to communicate. This is, in part, because engaging with objects and ideas through scene construction supplies us with a robust fund of particular experiences that enrich our concepts and train us to look for insights in a variety of places (64).

Second, educators can incorporate mindfulness-based activities that allow learners to focus their attention on a bodily activity, scene, memory, or object. Koutstaal describes mindfulness as a "process of focusing on present experiences, paying attention in a particular way" that typically involves "intentional and nonjudgmental awareness of moment-to-moment experience" (2014, 91). Mindfulness activities, by strengthening of persons' abilities to monitor and alter automated ideas, can lead to re-"perceiving" (95): a meta-mechanism by which learners can refine ideas and thoughts (98). Mindfulness and contemplation with the Christian tradition similarly invite people to re-perceive God by focusing upon God through mind and body (Keating 2009, 2010; Gallagher 2008; O'Brien 2011; Fleming and Ignatius 1996). Mindfulness practices in theological education might take several forms.[34] Learners might mindfully attend to icons in a course on Eastern Orthodox Christianity in order to develop richer understanding of this particular branch of Christianity. A

33 Moore describes this orientation towards God's transcendental immanence as "a hermeneutic of wonder" (2004, 54–55).
34 The following are also helpful for thinking about contemplation, mindfulness, and education generally: Lichtmann (2005) and Barbezat and Bush (2014).

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teacher might invite students studying Exodus to mindfully pray imaginatively through specific texts. Holy listening might provide pastoral students a way to deepen their understanding of attentive presence. When practiced from a posture of holy wonder, such mindfulness and contemplation can lead to deeper knowing of God as well.

Third, educators can provide platforms for learners to “enact their thinking” (Koutstaal 2014, 149-54). Koutstaal describes the enactment of thinking as using one’s imagination or physical body to engage with external objects or spaces (2014, 141). Enacting one’s thoughts, rather than expressing them in speech, can bring clarity to internalized ideas and highlight new connections (141-45). This is because words, while they convey certain aspects of reality, cannot capture the messy, unruly thing that is lived life or faith. Acting out one’s thoughts might take the form of concept-mapping a pastoral-parishioner interaction with physical materials, or art. It can include dramatic reading, creating a physical depiction of a Biblical text and moving around characters in a scene, or drawing a picture. It might involve sculpting or music creation. Regardless of the method, allowing learners to bring into form their internal thoughts can invite them into a “revelatory experiencing” that awakens them to Spirit’s movement in their lives or brings new insight into the life of faith.

It ought to be clear at this point that the sensory and material are not intended to replace critical analysis and abstract theologizing. Nor are they the only ways to cultivate agility, knowledge, or love. Rather, incorporating the senses into our curriculum and pedagogies balances theological education’s over-dependence on abstract concepts and contributes to the agile thinking Christian leaders need.

CONCLUSION

Christian Agility in a Constantly Changing Age: Cultivating “Sense-sational” Leaders

My claim has been that agile Christian leaders pay attention to the real: the sensory and material world encountered through touch and taste, sight and sound, hearing and imagination, so that they might more deeply know God and how to guide communities in God’s ways. This capacity to “taste and see” the sensory is crucial for Christian leaders who will compose liturgies, shape worship or communal spaces, select garments, collaborate with musicians, develop promotional material, design curricula in theologically conscious ways, and much more. It is crucial for leaders who will blur boundary lines, foster forgiveness, revitalize ailing communities, and lead people in ways and justice and peace. While abstract thinking certainly serves a vital role in helping such leaders ascertain commonalities across particulars, develop categories, and abstract rules for transfer (Koutstaal 2014, 56), failure to engage with the sensory or material will inhibit the theological depth, spiritual imagination, flexibility of vision, and creative problem-solving agile Christian leaders require (2014, 63).

Of course, cognitive agility is not all that Christian leadership entails. Lest we confuse the means with the end, agility is not the final telos towards which theological education points. Rather agility is a penultimate goal that serves the ultimate telos of communicating Christ’s death and resurrection in loving, faithful, and contextually-attuned ways. Cognitive agility, then, must partner with and enhance “spirituality agility”: an ability to notice and tune into the Spirit who remains at work in our world. Yet training learners to use their senses and think concretely can assist them in cultivating this spirituality agility and allow them to begin “seeing God in all things.” By learning to look long and lovingly at the real that is God’s concrete and sensory world, future leaders of the Church can cultivate both the cognitive and spiritual agility to proclaim and pursue God’s reign in ways that are theologically reflective, innovative, and in step with the Spirit’s voice.

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ARTICLE

Building Philosophical Partnership: Using Havruta to Teach Philosophical Reading Skills

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the potential benefits of applying a technique of paired text study, Havruta, usually used for the study of Rabbinic texts to teaching philosophy in both undergraduate and divinity school settings. I also explore recent research on the significant gender gap in philosophy, which shows that much of the gender disparity occurs just after students' initial introduction to the discipline; some of this research suggests that this gap is linked to a "brilliance mindset," in which students think that success in philosophy is based almost entirely on raw talent, rather than a set of skills. I discuss how Havruta can be used to help students understand that it is possible to learn how to read and to think philosophically, thereby helping combat this misconception.

KEYWORDS

reading, philosophy, gender, Talmud

The Importance of Teaching Philosophical Reading Skills

Recent studies have documented a substantial gender gap in philosophy: only around 30 percent of philosophy BA recipients in the United States are women, with widening disparities persisting into graduate school, postdocs, and junior and senior faculty positions (Thompson et al. 2016, 1).[1] Significant racial disparities have been documented as well: data collected from the National Center for Education statistics found that in 2003, only 2.3 percent of faculty in degree-granting philosophy programs were African American and only 1 percent were Latinx (NCES 2011).

In the case of the gender gap, research has shown that much of this disparity develops very early in a student's engagement with philosophy. Several studies have shown that the gender ratios in introductory philosophy courses roughly match those of the undergraduate population as whole, but that many fewer women go on to take further courses in philosophy (see Paxton, Figdor, and Tiberius 2012; Thompson et al. 2016; Thompson 2017). This

1 This is based on data collected by the U.S. Department of Education for the year 2012.

suggests that one important way to combat the ongoing gender (and, perhaps also racial, though there is less concrete data on this) disparities in the discipline would be to examine how these courses are taught. However, introductory philosophy courses are not the only places where students are introduced to philosophical material. Students' first encounters with philosophy can also occur in religious studies and seminary settings, where students may be even more anxious about how "difficult" philosophy seems to be, and where many students encounter philosophy out of necessity or degree requirements rather than by opting affirmatively to take a philosophy course.

Research on the gender gap in fields across the university suggests that beliefs about "field-specific ability," or a raw talent that cannot be taught, are especially strong predictors of gender balance in a given field (Leslie et al. 2015). A survey of faculty, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows across all disciplines found that philosophy had some of the strongest field-specific-ability beliefs across any field in the university, including STEM fields, as well as one of the largest gender gaps (Leslie et al. 2015).

Another study, surveying undergraduates in an introductory philosophy course, found that students who hold a "brilliance mindset" about philosophy—the view that being good at philosophy is about being "brilliant" rather than a skill that can be learned over time—were less willing to continue in philosophy; the study also found this belief effected students' reported "willingness to continue" significantly more for women than it did for men (Thompson et al. 2016, 17). Another study found that students were more likely to hold brilliance-based beliefs about philosophy at the end of Introduction to Philosophy courses than they were at the beginning of the course. Researchers found no similar increase in the prevalence of brilliance-based beliefs about psychology after an introductory course in that discipline (Brock et al. forthcoming, cited in Thompson et al. 2016). In her recent paper, "Explanations of the Gender Gap in Philosophy," Morgan Thompson writes "If these results generalize, it suggests that philosophy may have the stereotype that it requires natural brilliance to succeed in philosophy; because such beliefs lead women to be even less interested than men in a discipline, it could partially explain the gender gap" (2017, 7). While less concrete data has been made available, similar patterns may explain racial and economic disparities in the field.

In this paper, I propose a pedagogical strategy that can be used to combat the brilliance mindset in philosophy, especially when encountered in religious studies and seminary settings, by breaking down a part of the philosophical process that is usually left to students to perform alone, with only limited guidance from instructors: philosophical reading. In most philosophy courses, students are sent to do the readings on their own, and then come to class to hear a lecture on the ideas in those texts; often, they are left to do the "matching" between the words on the page and the ideas presented in lecture with little or no guidance. If they are lucky, they also get a chance to explore the implications of those arguments, and to offer objections, in a smaller discussion-based setting. Even for students learning in smaller liberal arts settings, philosophical education often focuses more on identifying the strengths, weaknesses, and implications of a given argument than it does on discerning the argument in the text. While the strategies I discuss here will be aimed primarily at teaching philosophical material, they are also well-suited for use in religious studies and theology classrooms, where students often encounter philosophical material with even less explicit instruction about how to think and read philosophically.

More empirical work would need to be done to show a direct link between philosophical reading and the brilliance mindset, but my experience suggests that it plays a role: students who are new to philosophy often struggle to understand the ideas conveyed in philosophical texts, but they also notice that others (their instructors and fellow students with more philosophical experience) are able to decode philosophical texts much more quickly and easily. If the reading skills that these more successful readers use are not broken down and explicitly discussed in class, then the perceived gap in "getting" philosophical texts may lay the groundwork for the brilliance mindset.

There is some scholarly literature on how to teach philosophical reading. Scholars have tended to suggest two solutions: either provide explicit information on how to read philosophy in the hopes that students will internalize it, or implement sets of classroom practices which incentivize and promote good philosophical reading practices. For example, David Concepción (2004) recognizes that many students in introductory philosophy courses lack the "background information" that is "idiosyncratic to philosophy" which is necessary for decoding philosophical texts. To address this, Concepción suggests giving students a "How to Read Philosophy" handout which provides them with the requisite knowledge thereby

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dispelling the belief that "reading philosophy is just like reading anything else" (2004, 352). However, students may need more than a description of how to read philosophy in order to become effective philosophical readers; like other skills, demonstration, practice, and direct description of the methods used can all be helpful.

Other scholars have suggested that annotation practices and group work may help students develop their philosophical reading skills. For example, Clair Morrissey and Kelsey Palghat suggest an online annotation technique designed to facilitate a shared conversation about the assigned readings (2014). Morrissey and Palghat, however, did not directly engage questions of how to read or decode philosophical texts; instead, they developed what appears to be a helpful tool for documenting students' reactions to the readings. In contrast, the techniques I recommend here aim to shape the process by which those reactions are formed.

David Silvermintz (2006) suggests that working in small groups to read during class can help students learn to decode philosophical texts. Below, I suggest a similar method, but with alterations designed to make specific reading practices explicit in order to help students practice them. I argue that some combination of explicitly thematizing what it is that successful philosophical readers do, along with opportunities to practice these skills in a supported classroom setting, can help students become more successful philosophical readers.

In contrast to this relatively limited literature (see also Walker, Trafimow, and Bronstein 2017; Vázquez 2014), there is a significant body of research on how to teach undergraduates to read scientific papers.[2] This research assumes that scientific reading is a specific skill that is different from other kinds of reading, one that students can be taught to perform, and one that they can become more proficient at over time. Because scientific reading is similarly technical and relies on particular structural patterns specific to the discipline in question, it may be a more useful model for thinking about how we ought to both teach and research philosophical reading than models from other humanities disciplines.

There is also a substantial body of research documenting the low rates at which undergraduates in all disciplines complete assigned reading, with some studies finding that only around 30 percent of students in many undergraduate courses regularly complete the assigned reading (see Brost and Bradley 2006). One scholar sharply noted that, "Armed with a yellow highlighter but with no apparent strategy for using it and hampered by lack of knowledge of how skilled readers actually go about reading, our students are trying to catch marlin with the tools of a worm fisherman" (Bean 2011, 33). A key part of combatting both the brilliance mindset and the general sense of disengagement in undergraduate courses is to teach students "how skilled readers actually go about reading." To this end, the methods I suggest below may be adapted to many other fields, especially those which ask students to learn to read texts that are structurally or terminologically different from those they have encountered elsewhere in their education.

In my own teaching, I have found that the brilliance mindset is also pervasive among graduate students who have had little or no previous contact with philosophy, and that it is especially strong among second-career students who have spent long periods of time away from academic work. Many of my students hold the "great" philosophers (especially those who had significant influence on the theological tradition, with which this student population tends to be more familiar) in high esteem, and often assume that these texts are especially difficult to understand, and that, once understood, their arguments should be assumed to be correct. Some students expressed disappointment when they discovered that these canonical thinkers held beliefs that were obviously implausible in the light of contemporary scientific advances or cultural shifts.

2 See for example, Kinchin (2005), Robertson (2012), Spiegelberg (2014), and Letchford, Corradi, and Day (2017).Notably, much of this research is geared specifically toward the biological sciences, which, in Leslie et al. (2015), was shown to have both a significantly smaller gender gap, and a significantly less pervasive brilliance mindset.

What is Havruta? Why Might Philosophy Teachers Want to Use It?

The technique that I propose is borrowed from a different time, place, and culture: Havruta is a traditional form of paired text-study used in yeshivas (singular yeshivah), Jewish institutions of higher learning dedicated to the study of rabbinic and Jewish legal texts.[3] The word “Havruta” is simply the Aramaic word for friendship; in rabbinic literature it is often used to refer specifically to the relationship between study partners. This method takes diverse forms in many different contexts, but as I describe it here, it consists of three main parts: (1) reading the original text aloud, one or two lines or sentences at a time; (2) translating each line into a mutually familiar vernacular in order to reconstruct the flow of the argument in the text; and (3) discussing the newly translated content, either by asking questions (such as “What does so-and-so mean by x?” “Do you agree with A’s view?”) or by offering alternative ways of interpreting what the text is saying. This process always takes place aloud, working in a pair. In traditional settings, the pairs sit in rows with the teacher, learning with her own study partner, sitting at the front of the room. In many yeshivas, a “*shoel u-meshiv,*” literally “ask and answer,” will circulate through the room to help students understand texts that they find difficult. Pairs also consult one another for help.

This makes the basic structure and physical environment of the yeshivah quite different than that of the university or seminary classroom or library. University libraries are characteristically quiet, leading students to think that learning is an individual process, best carried out silently; the yeshivah structures learning as a dialogical process.[4] Often, even students who are studying a text alone will read aloud, mimicking their half of a standard Havruta conversation.

There has been some academic work on Havruta as an educational tool for studying Jewish texts outside of the traditional yeshivah setting, including in university teaching. However, there is no comparable literature for using Havruta to study other kinds of texts. In their book *The Philosophy of Havruta*, education scholars Elie Holzer and Orit Kent (2014) describe their use of Havruta in a post-college program designed to prepare teachers for work in Jewish elementary schools. Holzer and Kent analyze the structure of Havruta interactions within the context of education studies, and they also describe the advantages and challenges of using Havruta in the classroom. My analysis draws on their work while recognizing several important differences between their setting and the philosophy classroom, including differences in the student population, texts studied, and overall educational goals. Most significantly, the structure of Havruta as I describe it here differs from the one offered in Holzer and Kent (2014). While their framing is quite helpful, it focuses almost entirely on reading narrative, rather than legal, rabbinic texts. In the yeshivah, Havruta is used for both genres, but I adapt the presentation of Havruta slightly here to make it closer to the strategies used with legal texts, because these tend to have a structure more similar to philosophical texts. The Havruta exercises I used in my classroom ask students to move sequentially through the three stages of Havruta learning: reading the original text aloud slowly, line by line; “translating” the text into more familiar language; and discussing and raising questions about the text’s content or argument. For the most part, I use this method to help students close-read texts that had already been assigned, using around fifteen to twenty minutes of a fifty-minute discussion section; the remaining time was reserved for group discussion of what students had found during Havruta time.

Havruta is modeled in the rabbinic texts which it is used to study. Rabbinic literature is a diverse, genre-bending corpus of legal, narrative, and exegetical material. Much of the material circulated orally before being written down and most scholars argue that rabbinic texts were written down between 200-800 CE. While it is likely not a record of a literal conversation between Havruta partners, much of Rabbinic literature was woven together by an editor into a dialogic structure, modeling the kinds of conversations that it wants its readers to have when they encounter this literature.

The Rabbinic corpus also includes direct descriptions of particular teacher-student and Havruta relationships. In perhaps the most famous example, Rabbi Yoḥanan mourns the loss of his most talented student Reish Lakish:

3 There is some irony in using this technique to combat problems that are helping to produce a gender gap in philosophy, because the yeshivah itself, and the Havruta techniques used there, have only recently become accessible to women; most yeshivas remain all-male institutions. As in the literature about the gender gap in philosophy, some have argued that the very structure of Havruta, especially its often argumentative tone, can be alienating to women. Research in philosophy has shown that women do not find philosophy classrooms to be “too combative,” and I suspect that the concern about similar problems in traditional Havruta contexts are likely products of other ways in which women’s full participation in the life of the yeshivah remains limited rather than the argumentative nature of some Havruta-based learning environments. See Thompson et al. (2016, 24).

4 Some recently renovated university libraries are changing this, with increased space for discussions and group work.

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> The Rabbis said: Who will go to calm Rabbi Yoḥanan's mind and comfort him over his loss? They said: Let Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat go, as his statements are sharp, i.e., he is clever and will be able to serve as a substitute for Reish Lakish. Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat went and sat before Rabbi Yoḥanan. With regard to every matter that Rabbi Yoḥanan would say, Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat would say to him: There is a ruling that supports your opinion. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to him: Are you comparable to Reish Lakish? In my discussions with the Reish Lakish, when I would state a matter, he would raise twenty-four difficulties against me in an attempt to disprove my claim, and I would answer him with twenty-four answers, and the law would be broadened and clarified. And yet you say to me: There is a ruling which is taught that supports your opinion. Do I not know that what I say is good? Rabbi Yoḥanan went around, rending his clothing, weeping and saying: Where are you, Reish Lakish? Where are you, Reish Lakish? Rabbi Yoḥanan screamed until his mind was taken from him, i.e., he went insane. The Rabbis requested for God to have mercy on him and take his soul, and he died. (B. Bava Metzia 84a) [5]

In this story, the Havruta relationship is modeled as a both adversarial and friendly: Reish Lakish offers a relentless stream of objections to his Havruta's legal arguments, but he does so in the spirit of a shared intellectual and religious endeavor. For Rabbi Yoḥanan and Reish Lakish, legal and logical objections form the basis of a deep friendship. As we will see below, this kind of relationship shares certain structural features with the Socratic dialogue that is the precursor to many contemporary philosophical discussions.

Having studied rabbinic texts in a yeshivah setting myself, I found Havruta to be an attractive model for teaching philosophical reading because of the similarity between the Havruta relationship as described in rabbinic texts, and that of philosophical dialogue partners. In both cases, the corpus of texts often models the dialogical relationship that interlocutors are supposed to imitate when studying it. The relationship between Havruta partners bears some similarities with the relationship between philosophical dialogue partners I have had in my own education too. At the same time, though, my Havruta discussions often were more productive than many philosophical discussions I experienced in purely academic settings, in part because my Havruta partners held me responsible for their learning as well as for my own. In their study, Holzer and Kent note that "Havruta text study challenges the habits and norms of the traditional classroom," by confronting them with "the need to be actively involved in the dynamic of peer learning" and expecting the student "to take into account her partner's success as well [as her own]" (2014, 60). My own experiences learning in Havruta suggest that it might be an attractive vehicle for building a more collaborative intellectual culture in the philosophy classroom without sacrificing the critical edge that often characterizes successful philosophical discussion.

The Havruta relationship, as described in rabbinic literature, is often characterized by a mixture of adversarial and cooperative features. On the one hand, it is the Havruta's responsibility to challenge the arguments and interpretations offered by her partner; in more traditional settings these objections are often offered in a forceful and loud tone. On the other hand, Havruta relationships are also designed to be collegial; the argumentativeness is in the service of a shared goal: developing an understanding of the texts at hand.

Philosophical discussion often shares these two, sometimes opposed features. Participants in a philosophical discussion, or class, should be focused on furthering a shared philosophical agenda: developing a deeper understanding of an idea, argument, or question.[6] But, in practice, many philosophical conversations tend more in the first direction than in the second; this dynamic is only heightened when student-teacher power dynamics are added into the mix. In introductory courses, students often first encounter philosophical conversation through Plato's Socratic dialogues. Even scholars who are generally partial to Socrates's pedagogical style note that Socrates's dialogues often rely on an apparently hierarchical relationship between Socrates and his interlocutor. Socrates (or the teacher asking Socratic questions) is supposed to lead the less knowledgeable or less skilled interlocutor to understand the true structure (and, more often than not, logical flaws) of their way of thinking. In his book *Socrates as an Educator*, Gary Allen Scott notes that "In Plato's Socratic dialogues, the larger-than-life philosopher seems superior to every interlocutor with whom he converses, and although he always appears eager and willing to learn from those he examines in conversation, he never seems to learn much of substance, if anything, from his interlocutor about the topic under discussion" (2000, 27). Whether or not this initial impression is

5 Trans. modified from Sefaria.
6 Scholars of rabbinic literature have noticed these structural similarities. See Labendz (2013) and Boyarin (2009).

correct as an evaluation of the Socratic dialogues themselves, it may lead students to think that philosophical dialogue relationships rely on a hierarchy of knower over and against a non-knower or learner; it may also reinforce existing beliefs and tendencies that lead students to be reluctant to participate in classroom discussions if they do not feel that their ideas are fully formed. The ways in which Socratic questioners reveal truths or ideas that otherwise seemed invisible to the learner may also help contribute to the brilliance mindset.

In contrast, Havruta, when executed well, relies on an even playing field between two learners who share a desire to gain information from a text. While one partner may have a better understanding of a given text or idea, this is not decided from the start by the structure of the relationship; both partners are trying to make sense of something together. As Holzer and Kent describe, this requires students to make both "challenging" and "supporting" moves. They note, however, that "Students paired with one another will not naturally engage in supporting and challenging each other's ideas in substantive and constructive ways" (2014, 145). Instead, they argue, "It is the responsibility of educators to help students cultivate such practices through the design of the learning environment and the teaching we do in it" (145). This is rarely done explicitly in philosophy classrooms; students often do not learn how to perform supporting moves in discussion because so much emphasis, in both classroom discussion and writing, is put on developing objections to others' philosophical positions.[7] Thus, using Havruta in the philosophy classroom provides an opportunity to make both the process of philosophical reading, and the process of philosophical discussion more explicit to our students, allowing them to become more confident in performing both challenging and supporting moves (Holzer and Kent 2014, 123). Havruta also gives students the opportunity to practice these skills in a more intimate setting than the full-size seminar, often out of full earshot of the instructor. This allows students to gradually develop the confidence they need to participate more fully in standard classroom discussion formats.

The empirical research on the gender gap in philosophy suggests that, while women do not disproportionately feel that the philosophy classroom is "too combative," they do have a more significant gap between their grades in introductory philosophy courses and their overall grade point averages (Thompson et al. 2016). Research in other fields has shown that women respond more negatively to what they take to be poor grades than their male peers do (Thompson 2017, 3). This concern about grading and evaluation may also contribute to an unwillingness to offer risky ideas in discussion, or even to participate at all, especially in courses where participation in discussion is weighted heavily in grading. Because Havruta allows students to try out ideas without direct supervision from an instructor, who is likely grading them on class participation, it may help students who would otherwise be reluctant to participate more fully, and it may also give students space to try out newer or unorthodox philosophical approaches.

I discovered that Havruta has other benefits in the classroom. Because philosophical texts are almost always presented to students in English in anglophone classrooms, students often do not expect to have to translate between philosophical language and more familiar ways of speaking and writing. They may be demoralized when they initially find texts very difficult to understand. In her article on using study guides to teach Talmud in university settings, Beth Berkowitz notes that, "When sense-making is working properly, it becomes invisible, and we do not realize the almost miraculous powers that each of us possess to create coherence" (2016, 26). Berkowitz then uses her study guides to "halt" students' efforts at "meaning-making" to allow them to understand the full structure of the texts they are reading (2016). I used Havruta in my philosophy classroom in a similar way—to help students see that making meaning out of philosophical texts is not miraculous, but rather is something that can be broken down into manageable units.

Berkowitz (2016) also stresses that "halting" this meaning-making process can make students more aware of the limits of their understanding of a text; I found that students in introductory philosophy courses were often well-aware of these limits, but felt uncomfortable or ashamed about them. The translation step in Havruta normalized explicit discussion of what students did *not* understand. While many students expect to immediately understand what they read, the translation

7 I noticed that this emphasis had significant effects on the way that students approached both philosophical discussion and essay prompts. Often confronted with the "reconstruct and evaluate" philosophical assignment—which asks students to describe a philosophical position, offer what they take to be the strongest objection to that position, and then either defend or refute the objection—students felt that they had to come down on the side of the position that they reconstructed, because that was the next step in the philosophical dialogue. Students were very reluctant to embrace the idea that defending or supporting an objection could make for good philosophical writing. This suggests that these assignments may promote an overly rigid, "back and forth" model of philosophical debate, which does not allow both supporting and challenging moves to grow organically out of one another.

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step in Havruta makes it clear that making sense of the text is in itself a substantial task; this helps keep students from becoming demoralized if they do not understand a text or argument on first reading. This also forces students to read more slowly. While many students are taught to “read for general comprehension” and not get hung up on particular passages, this approach can be counterproductive when reading technical philosophical texts, where understanding an initial set of definitions is often required to make sense of the argument going forward.

Havruta allowed me to borrow from a flipped classroom style of teaching, giving me the opportunity to directly supervise and help students perform work that they would usually do alone at home. At its inception the flipped classroom was, in part, an effort to transplant pedagogy from the humanities to the sciences; an early article on flipped classrooms noted that “Professors have flipped courses for decades. Humanities professors expect their students to read a novel on their own and do not dedicate class time to going over the plot. Class time is devoted to exploring symbolism or drawing out themes. And law professors have long used the Socratic method [8] in large lectures, which compels students to study the material before class or risk buckling under a barrage of their professor’s questions” (Berrett 2012). However, Havruta gives us the tools to flip the classroom in a different way, allowing instructors to help students do what is usually assumed to be homework—their reading assignments—with the help of both peers and the instructor. To this end, I also borrowed a technique that is common in more contemporary *batei midrash*, giving students a printed sheet that contained both excerpts of the texts themselves and specific questions and instructions for their reading practice, allowing me to structure not just what students read, but *how* they did so.[9] These handouts gave me a space to explicitly discuss and explain particular reading practices. Many instructors give students reading questions to think about as they read, or to answer once they have done the reading, but these questions are often used primarily to help students focus on the most important material. The questions I used were deployed as tools for the reading process itself. On my handouts, questions were intermixed with the texts themselves and asked students to not only think about or focus on the reading, but to do something active with their partners; I also sometimes asked students to underline, circle, or mark certain passages or features in the provided text.

As with other flipped classroom approaches, Havruta allows for highly differentiated instruction. In the traditional Yeshivah setting, students of a variety of levels learn together in a single room; this model is particularly appealing for classrooms with a mixture of majors and non-majors, or a mixture of graduate and undergraduate students.

How I Implemented Havruta in My Classroom

I began introducing some Havruta-like elements as an advanced graduate student, while TA-ing a course in Theological Aesthetics at a Divinity school affiliated with a private R1 institution in the northeast. I usually had students break into small groups to read passages from the assigned text aloud (students had read the text in full in advance) and try to rephrase it in their own words sentence by sentence. While some students found this helpful, many reported (in informal, anonymous “Keep, Quit, Start” midterm evaluations) that they did not want to continue this form of group work. My suspicion is that many students simply did not know what they were supposed to do in the group or what role they were supposed to play in the group. Holzer and Kent also noted similar difficulties in their study, writing “It would be a mistake to assume that students of all ages easily adapt” to learning in Havruta. “Chances are good,” they write, that students “have not had similar (and successful) previous successful experiences. Some may have had collaborative experiences in, say, sports, but unlike the disorganized and open-ended nature of Havruta text study, roles in sports are closely guided by the rules of the game, the coach and the referee” (Holzer and Kent 2014, 60). It was clear, then, that students needed more direct instruction about *how* to learn in Havruta for this approach to be beneficial.

8 The Socratic method used in law school classrooms is slightly different than the one used in many philosophy classrooms, in part because it uses the Socratic questioning of the teacher as a tool to test the students’ comprehension and retention of the material, and not just to probe a philosophical question. This use of the term draws on the power dynamics that I highlighted above: in the law school version of the Socratic method, the questioner is always in a position of power and superiority over the person responding to Socratic questioning.

9 Called the “source sheet,” this approach to teaching rabbinic texts is relatively new, though it has spread quite rapidly. The source sheet seems to have come into being with the advent of the copy machine—some credit “Yavneh,” an Orthodox student group on American college campuses, with developing it in the 1970s, while others attribute it to Israeli Bible scholar Nehama Leibowitz. See Andrew Silow-Carroll (2017) and Kraut (2011). Thanks to David Wolkenfeld for pointing this out to me.

As I continued to implement Havruta learning in other courses, I found that the two-person partnership was more effective than larger groups, because it made it harder for some students to dominate the group's discussion.[10] For each Havruta Exercise (I called them "Reading Exercises," except in Jewish settings where students were familiar with Havruta from their required Rabbinics courses), I passed out a handout that consisted of three parts: the goal of the exercise, passages from the relevant text(s), and questions for discussion, which appeared either before or after each passage. During the first few weeks of a course, I also included some general instructions about how Havruta should proceed. Upon receiving the handout, students performed all three steps of Havruta learning. After students worked for around twenty minutes in Havruta, we reconvened and discussed our findings as a full class.

Part A of the handout, the goal, is designed to help students know what they are supposed to accomplish in a given conversation. This gives students tools to evaluate how successful they were at a given task, so they do not evaluate themselves based on their expectations about how a "good student" would have done in the exercise. This allows the teacher to signal to students that it is reasonable to have different expectations for different kinds of reading, and to communicate that even if a reading effort does not lead to full comprehension of the text, it can still be productive. For example, below are statements of goals used in Havruta exercises in a course for both undergraduates and divinity school students:

> **For a discussion of Kant's *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*:**
>
> **This exercise has two main goals:**
>
> - To work together to practice reading Kantian prose, such as it is.
> - To understand the basic moves/structure of *Kant's argument for the supersensible choice of a radically evil disposition.*
>
> **For a discussion comparing versions of the argument from design:**
>
> **Goal:** One of the advantages of doing philosophy in a religious studies department/setting is that we get to pay a little more attention to history. So today, we are going to put on our intellectual historian hats and practice tracing an argument through time.

I would sometimes use the goal as an opportunity to give students a preview of the structure of the argument that they were being asked to reconstruct. I would often use goal statements to preview argumentative structures that we would see throughout the semester. In addition to the problem/solution structure in the example below, I also used similar goal statements to help students learn to recognize arguments from analogy:

> **Goal:** To trace out Reich's basic argument in this chapter. The argument has two parts: (Keep this structure in mind as you read other texts. You'll find it pops up a lot elsewhere.)
>
> - ***Problem*** with Marx/ways that Marx is usually read
> - ***Solution*** provided by Freudian psychoanalysis

Identifying these argumentative structures was one tool I used to help make the reading process an explicit part of classroom instruction.

10 I used this methodology in three courses, two at a private R1 university in the northeast and its affiliated divinity school, and one at a major American Rabbinical school. One of the courses at the R1 institution served a mixture of divinity students, on both the academic and ministry tracks, as well as undergraduates. The second course served entirely undergraduates, and was cross-listed in philosophy, African American studies, and education studies, drawing students from a wide range of majors.

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Following the goal, each handout contains a few passages of text. When I was teaching standard, semester-long courses I used excerpts from the assigned reading, but in a summer course that met four days a week, I used Havruta as a tool for introducing students to a wider range of texts without adding too much to their reading load, especially when the course met on sequential days. This allowed me to give students examples to which they could apply theoretical paradigms learned in class.[11]

Selecting passages is an especially difficult part of preparing these exercises; the main challenge is to avoid giving too long a block of text. I usually chose to give no more than a couple of paragraphs, depending on how much time I planned to allot Havruta. (Usually this was no more than twenty minutes in a fifty-minute discussion section. This is a significant difference from the traditional model, which often allows students to sit in Havruta for several hours at a time).

Accompanying each reading were a few questions or prompts, designed to help the students accomplish the goal. For example, the following is an excerpt from Richard Swinburne in a handout on the argument from design with associated reading questions:

> The data inexplicable by science to which I have drawn attention—the uniform behavior of objects in accord with laws of nature, and the special character of those laws and of the intimal (or boundary) conditions of the Universe—are readily explicable in terms of the action of a God, omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing) and perfectly free. He is constantly active, moving the stars and atoms in a regular way (as we may move our bodies in a regular way in the patterns of a dance), and in just such ways as, together with the primeval matter which he makes, to bring forth animals and humans. Being omnipotent, he can do this. Being omniscient, he will see good reason for doing it. A regularly evolving world is beautiful, and the humans who will eventually emerge can learn how the world works—which they can do only if there are simple laws of nature for them to understand—and then they can themselves choose to some extent how to form the world for good and for ill. It is good that there be humans playing a role in the creation process. God, being perfectly free, will not be prevented by irrational forces from bringing about what he perceives to be good. (Pojman and Rea 2014, 209)
>
> With your partner, do the following; be ready to share your findings with the class.
>
> 1. Make a list of the different ways that Swinburne describes the world. What kinds of terms/analogies does he appeal to?
>
> 2. This paragraph is formulated both as a response to an anticipated objection (something that Swinburne thinks his opponent might argue) and an argument in its own right. Which of the descriptors that you identified in (1) does Swinburne think obviously point to design? Which does he think his opponent might use to refute him?
>
> 3. Compare and contrast Swinburne and Paley's descriptions of the world [a similar passage from Paley appeared earlier on the handout]. In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different?

The main goal of these questions is to give students a specific task to complete as they read that is more specific than the usual philosophical request for students to "identify" or "reconstruct" the author's argument. Especially when teaching courses in philosophy of religion which often cover texts that use a variety of philosophical methodologies, it is important to teach students that the goal of reconstructing the author's argument can be accomplished in a variety of ways. To help students develop this competency, the handouts allow students to practice several different structured reading strategies; for each, I stated explicitly (either in writing or while introducing the exercise) *why* a given strategy was used for a specific text. For example, we might focus on tracing a given metaphor or analogy through a continental philosophical text, while

11 For example, in a summer course, Sexual Ethics in Modern Jewish Thought, I provided students with several short excerpts of text, and then asked them to reconstruct what two theorists we had read early in the course—Judith Plaskow and Cynthia Ozick—would make of each passage. The handout for this assignment had students first read and summarize the excerpts themselves, and then apply ideas from Plaskow or Ozick, before selecting textual evidence from those thinkers to support their readings. While many assignments in both philosophy and religious studies ask students to apply theoretical paradigms to examples, breaking down the reading process helps guide students through their first few times using concepts in this way.

focusing on premise-conclusion structure for more analytic ones. I would point to textual cues that made it clear that a particular form of argumentation was being used. This helped students learn that the strategies that competent readers use to understand a text are not chosen at random but are instead informed by features of the texts themselves. By thematizing different reading tools and processes, these worksheets help demystify philosophical reading and combat the brilliance mindset.

During the philosophy of religion course, some students expressed concern that they could not apply the kinds of close reading that they performed in Havruta for the all texts they were assigned to read on the syllabus; it was simply too slow to apply broadly.[12] When I suggested that they didn't need to do this for every page assigned, but only for some passages, it became clear that students felt unsure about how to select passages on which to focus. This led me to develop an exercise that would allow them to practice a more independent version of the kinds of reading we had practiced in Havruta. Near the end of the semester, I had students generate a set of questions about an assigned text. With their partner, they chose one question to focus on for the class period and then identified a passage they thought could help them answer their question. Then students chose a reading strategy from a list of the strategies we had used. The students then used the strategy to analyze their chosen passage. Each pair discussed which strategy they wanted to use, implemented it, and then evaluated whether their strategy was successful.

Below is the list of techniques I introduced in the Philosophy of Religion course:

1. Spell out an argument in premise-conclusion structure. Assess validity and soundness.
    - Understand any objections that the author considers his/herself. Clarify how they link up with the main argument. Which parts of the argument do they challenge?
2. Begin by offering a tentative definition of a key term in the text, then update your definition in light of the different ways the term is used throughout the text. (We practiced this with Kierkegaard.)[13]
3. Compare and contrast two versions of an argument in order to clarify the similarities and differences between them. (This can be an explicitly historical comparison, but it does not have to be.)
4. Make a list of the descriptive and normative claims in the argument. Clarify the relationship between them. To what extent are they dependent on one another?
5. Consider how these arguments might rub up against particular lived experiences. Do these experiences affect the strength of the argument? If so, how?

Once students had selected which question they wanted to work on, I provided them with the following instructions:

1. Once you've selected your question, think about which of the above strategies would be most useful for answering it. Be ready to explain why you chose this approach to the class.
2. Use this strategy to answer your question as best as possible. Note any areas where you are still confused/ have more work to do.
3. Evaluate how successful your strategy was in resolving your question. What worked well and what didn't?
4. Sometimes the best thing to come out of trying to answer a question is a better, more interesting question. See if you can formulate a "thicker" question (that goes beyond mere comprehension) that has come up as a result of your investigation.

12 Berkowitz (2016) expresses similar worries about "over-teaching" (from her own reflection on her teaching, rather than from students themselves) in her article.
13 We used this technique for excerpts of Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1992).

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5. Make a note of any other non-question thoughts/observations that you've developed.

This exercise is designed to help students consolidate the skills that they have developed over the course of the semester, allowing them to begin to implement the kinds of reading that they practiced while working through previous Havruta handouts, but in a more independent way. It may also be helpful to have students self-generate this list of tools for philosophical reading, either as a class or individually, before doing this kind of exercise; this may help them feel more ownership over the techniques that they have learned. Repeating this process a couple of times during the semester, and not just at the end, may also be useful. This kind of exercise could also be tied to passages students need to review for an upcoming writing assignment or exam. It also allows students to assess their own strengths and weaknesses as philosophical readers, recognizing that they may be particularly comfortable with one way of reading but need more practice with another.

Structure in the Classroom

I often used Havruta exercises in the middle fifteen to twenty minutes of a fifty-minute class period. We usually started with a brief introduction of the main questions under discussion, or with a more frontal presentation of key ideas, concepts, or historical background. Then students form pairs and perform the exercise.

Some teachers may worry that Havruta decreases the amount of material that they can cover in a single class session. This is a significant concern, and it highlights the fact that Havruta is best used as a tool in classroom discussion, where the goal is to help students learn to think with the reading, rather than to help them work through a chunk of material in a linear way from beginning to end; it is best used in conjunction with more standard lecture formats, and not as a replacement thereof. Rather than thinking of Havruta as covering less material, it is better to think of it as a way to teach a particular skill—philosophical reading—that would not be covered elsewhere.

There are many ways to arrange Havruta pairs. I usually allow students to select partners on their own, often based on physical proximity in the room (which also helps save transition time). Occasionally I have students count off so they have to work with someone new. Having a consistent partnership seems to benefit some students, since it allows them to build a working relationship with a particular person over time. However, this is a high-risk, high-reward strategy since some partnerships will by nature go less well than others. Though Holzer and Kent report that some students expressed concern about the "match" with their Havruta partner, I found that students' anxiety about working in a given pair was often quite low, because they knew the exercises would be brief and that they would not be "stuck" with any given partner permanently (2014, 72). This is something that has to be negotiated by each teacher and each group of students and is dependent on context.

As Holzer and Kent note, in the traditional structure of a *beit midrash*, teachers are also engaged in their own text study often with a Havruta of their own, while other (usually more junior) teachers circulate to answer questions. This seamless integration is made possible by a relatively smooth intellectual hierarchy, where the boundary between student and teacher is quite fluid, and where there are often several instructors of various levels of seniority available at any given time. This kind of integration of the teacher's own learning and that of the students' may not translate well in many university teaching settings, but it is useful to try to emulate this as much as possible. I made sure to circulate periodically to help students if they were stuck or did not understand a passage or question, but I spent a significant chunk of Havruta time reviewing the texts I had given students to read, being sure to model active reading by marking up the text and taking my own notes. I also instructed students to raise their hands if they needed help; they were uncomfortable with this at first, but after I made a few informal visits to each Havruta, they began to seek me out when they had a question.

These *shoel u-meshiv* interactions are pedagogically important and have the potential to either significantly reinforce or destabilize the brilliance mindset. On the one hand, having someone who is very familiar with the text come over and solve a problem quickly and easily can reinforce the brilliance mindset, making it seem that the instructor has some set of mysterious skills that allows them to decode a text that the students do not understand. Given the brilliance mindset's gendered context, this danger may be especially significant for male instructors helping female students decode a text. To

avoid this, it is important to help the students decode the text on their own, rather than providing them with an answer, even if this would allow the students to proceed more quickly. Many stuck pairs will ask questions in the form of "What does [Author] mean by X?" or simply "I don't get it. What does this mean?!" Borrowing from my own experiences studying rabbinic texts in a *beit midrash*, I began each interaction with a stuck pair not by answering their question directly, but by asking them to first explain what they already understood about the text and the context of the difficult line or term. There are often misunderstandings upstream that cause a problem with answering a given question; after working together to correct these, we can return to the problematic passage, and guide students through figuring out the passage together.

Students sometimes lacked a key piece of context that would have allowed them to decode a particular word or phrase. I was surprised by how many times students were misled by differences between colloquial meanings of terms and technical philosophical uses of the same words. While I sometimes included glossaries of terms I thought would mislead or confuse them on the handouts, my students found many more instances than I was able to recognize. Watching my students read in Havruta allowed me to recognize anew how much of philosophical writing is in its own idiolect, something I rarely notice since I spend so much time with these texts. In these cases, I provided the requisite context or technical meaning of a term, and then allowed the students to try to reconstruct the argument again on their own. If several pairs had the same problem, I would briefly interrupt Havruta learning to explain the relevant term or put it up on the board. I would also emphasize that gaining familiarity with philosophical texts over time would make the relationship between colloquial usage and philosophical usage less mysterious.

When helping a stuck Havruta pair, it is sometimes useful for the teacher to read the passage aloud herself, and then reconstruct how she herself would go about answering the students' questions. This often involves not only translating the text into language the student can understand but also pointing out the textual clues that you, as a teacher and philosopher, use to come to your conclusions about a text. Doing this work is rewarding as a teacher and a scholar; we rarely think about how we do our own philosophical reading, and these kinds of interactions help us clarify our methods.[14]

Occasionally, students get stuck on a difficult term or concept that is one of the central difficult questions under discussion, or something that is a subject of significant scholarly debate. In these cases, it is important to affirm that the students have come up with a solid question which might not have an easy answer, and then ask students to begin to contemplate why this question is important to them. This also helps students learn the difference between comprehension questions that ask what the text is trying to say and evaluative questions that ask about the implications of the ideas in the text. Understanding this distinction is especially important for philosophical writing, and eventually, for independent research in philosophy. If students have significant trouble understanding the basic flow of a text, it will often be very difficult for them to make this distinction.

Havruta pairs will naturally finish their work at different paces. It is helpful to include two different sets of material on the Havruta worksheet: one set of material that you want all students to cover and some extra material that quicker pairs can get to if they have time. It is important to impress on students that going faster is not better in this case. I often describe Havruta as a "negative race" where doing well is correlated with going slowly. Allowing students to go at different paces allows for more differentiated instruction than is often possible in seminar settings; this is especially helpful when teaching in mixed graduate and undergraduate environments, or in environments where some students have a great deal of philosophy background and others are new to philosophy.

It was sometimes difficult to predict the amount of time that some Havruta exercises would take. This required my lesson plans to be quite flexible and sometimes created situations where students did not cover all of the material that they (or I) might have wanted them to in a given discussion. On the other hand, this unpredictability was instructive for me as a teacher, because it gave me real-time data on which material was challenging or confusing for students and which they found relatively easy to understand. While it is sometimes possible to do this in a seminar setting, being present as

14 In the introduction to their book *Learning to Read Talmud: What It Looks Like and How It Happens*, Marjorie Lehman and Jane Karanek describe how explicit reflection on instructors' own reading processes served as the foundation of the pedagogical reflections included in their book (2016, xv–xix).

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students read allowed me a much closer view of how my students were learning. This was quite humbling; I was often quite wrong about where students would get stuck. However, I was able to then use this information to develop future lesson plans and assignments.

As Bloch-Schulman (2016) notes, much of the literature on teaching philosophy relies on what he calls the "unjustified armchair method," where philosophy teachers assume that explanations that clarify ideas for them will also work equally well for students. Bloch-Schulman argues that this approach assumes that "I was able to learn through this method, and thus my students will be able to learn through this method as well," without giving much attention to differences between students and the teacher (2016, 6). The Havruta format, and especially the *shoel u-meshiv* type interactions with Havruta pairs, allows teachers to collect real-time data about how specific groups of students are learning, and what particular challenges they are facing. This goes beyond cultivating a student-centered mindset in which the teacher imagines how their students, given their backgrounds and environments, might react to a given text or idea; it allows teachers to directly observe how they do so.

Finally, each Havruta session was followed by a brief discussion as a whole class. If the goal of the exercise was to reconstruct an argument then the discussion consisted of a brief review of that reconstruction followed by an evaluation of the argument, discussing possible objections and responses to it. Where appropriate, I noted that this was the structure of their paper assignments. Some Havruta exercises also pushed students to think about a comparison or other kind of broad evaluative claim; in these cases, post-Havruta discussion time was used to explore these ideas as a group.

While some have suggested that a "pair and share" model allows quieter students to prepare more to participate in seminar discussions,[15] Havruta offers a much more robust form of preparation for class discussion, since it allows students to engage in more sustained reflection about the text before jumping to the evaluative questions that would often begin a more standard seminar discussion, or even some pair and share models. This approach also helps foster collaboration; students often cite something that they discussed as a pair, or something that their partner had pointed out, and share it with the group. As a teacher, I try to point out and praise students for building on one another's work in this way; this is a good way to help students learn the importance of what Holzer and Kent call "supporting moves" (2014). I also encourage students to share with the class if they and their partner had a significant disagreement, usually by asking one student to reconstruct the other's position; this also helps students see that they are responsible for thoroughly understanding positions with which they disagree.

In the summer course in which I used Havruta, I asked students to write a brief (two to three paragraph) response to some of their Havruta discussions, due before the next class meeting. This provided an opportunity for students to engage in some second-order reflection about their discussions. I saw students frequently discuss their partner's ideas and thinking in these responses, performing both supporting and challenging moves. While writing assignments are not an essential part of the Havruta methodology, they can be used successfully in some settings.

More empirical work would need to be done to conclusively demonstrate that Havruta can help shape students' mindset about philosophical reading. Nonetheless, anecdotal observations in my classroom suggest that Havruta helps students understand that they are capable of becoming better philosophical readers. In a course evaluation, one student wrote that Havruta was a "good way for each of us to test our own comprehension of the readings and, ultimately, to gain a fuller understanding of them."

Areas for Further Exploration

It might be useful for students to engage in more sustained thinking and reflection about how the process of learning in Havruta differs from other ways in which they have been taught to interact in the classroom. This is especially useful in religious studies and seminary contexts, where engaging in this practice of learning is also experiencing a specific way of

15 Green notes that some research on college seminars has found that in many seminars four to five students account for over 75 percent of class discussion (2000).

knowing that is historically rooted in a particular religious tradition. Havruta is both a tool used for study and an object of study itself. In explicitly Christian settings, this can also be useful for helping students think about the diverse ways that religious communities approach the study of sacred texts; to that end, comparisons with other methods of reading sacred texts, like *lectio divina,* may be particularly fruitful.[16] Similarly, for students already familiar with Havruta from the study of rabbinic texts, applying this methodology to a new body of texts can prompt productive reflection about genre and about the Havruta relationship.[17]

In the introductory philosophy classroom, however, explicit reflection on the differences between standard seminar settings and Havruta may be counterproductive; focusing too much on how the usual philosophy setting is competitive or adversarial, for example might reinforce damaging assumptions that contribute to the brilliance mindset, or help create a stereotype threat which may hurt the performance of students who are socialized to think of themselves as not combative or argumentative.[18] It may be more useful, in these settings, to simply create a philosophical environment where the kind of collaborative, but still forceful discussion that characterizes Havruta is the norm. Ultimately, students and teachers will have to adjust this to the contexts in which they are working.

It may also be useful to explore how to incorporate Havruta teaching into a fully flipped classroom model that really does have students do their homework (i.e. course reading) in class, while having students watch lecture content at home. It is unlikely that this would fully replace course readings—Havruta allows students to cover only a small fraction of the material that is usually assigned in introductory philosophy courses—but it might provide a vehicle for decreasing the "at home" reading load, while allowing students equal exposure to important concepts. This model has been particular successful in STEM, has been implemented in some humanities courses, and might be particularly useful in philosophy as well.

Conclusion

Louise Antony argued that the persistent gender gap in philosophy best explained by a "perfect storm" of factors which have collaborated to create conditions where women are much less likely to continue their study and advance in the profession (2012). Such a storm is likely also brewing in religious studies and seminary education, though its gusts and currents may blow is in different directions. In both cases, we will need pedagogical, institutional, and even political, innovation if the "perfect storm" is to clear.

Advocating for and working toward such systemic change can seem daunting, especially when there are so many factors at play. As Leslie et al. (2015) show in their study on the brilliance mindset, both men and women, both instructors and students, hold the brilliance mindset about their own field in ways that are correlated with the gender gap. Thus, a real change in the field will require not only changing the way that students think about our field, it will also require us to change our own assumptions about what factors contribute to success in philosophical inquiry and professional life. One of the most effective ways to do this is to watch our students learn that they can, with hard work, *learn* to be good philosophical, readers, writers, and thinkers.

16 For an overview of one approach to this, see Elkins (2019).

17 Given the gendered history of Havruta described above, it is important to be aware that students who are already familiar with Havruta may have significant assumptions about what Havruta is and who it is for that can impede their learning; instructors should be aware of this as they implement these methods in this context. It may be useful to have students write about their experiences learning in Havruta, both in the past and the first times it is done in class. Holzer and Kent provide several model exercises for doing this with students who have some background in Jewish text study (see chapter 3 of Holzer and Kent [2014]).

18 Some research has shown that the stereotype that some groups are less good at a given task or discipline affects performance in that discipline; the classic case of stereotype effect is that women have been shown to underperform on math tests when told that women are often thought to do worse in mathematics. However, more recent research has challenged this view. For more on this research see Spencer, Steele, and Quinn (1999) and Flore and Wicherts (2015).

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TEACHING TACTIC

Exploring the Use, Impact, and Reception of the Bible through Multimodal E-Portfolios

Bradford A. Anderson
Dublin City University, Ireland

The context

I use this project in a large, undergraduate introductory course on the Jewish and Christian scriptures.

The pedagogical purpose

Students explore the use and impact of the Bible in ways that correspond to their own interests, and do so in a multimodal context that encourages creative engagement that is not limited to written exposition.

Description of the strategy

Students create a project exploring some aspect of the use and reception of the Bible. They are encouraged to find an example of how the Bible has been used in society and culture that relates to their own interests, whether that be music, film, literature, politics, art, etc. They use our university's e-portfolio platform, which allows students to create a digital, interactive project. This platform allows for a more engaged and creative project that includes written exposition, but which can also include hyperlinks, images, audio, and embedded video. Students use a template that has three sections which they need to populate: (1) a short biographical section where they introduce themselves (2) a project section, where they creatively highlight the results of their research on the use of the Bible, and (3) a reflection section, where they consider the project and its implications for their understanding of the Bible.

Why it is effective

When introducing students to the Bible, fostering interest in and engagement with the subject can be a challenge. This project helps students relate the subject matter to their own interests, bringing the Bible closer to the world in which they live. The results via student feedback have been very positive and the projects have been extremely creative and broad ranging, exploring the use of the Bible in areas ranging from medieval art, to political speeches, to hip-hop, to video games. The e-portfolio platform allows for a multimodal presentation. This lends itself nicely to the nature of the project (which often involves visual or aural dimensions), while also encouraging students to be creative in their presentation of the material. Finally, I give instructions on fair usage and copyright regulations regarding media, which means that students are thinking about using digital resources fairly and appropriately, as well as how to cite such resources—an increasingly important skill.

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TEACHING TACTIC

Teaching Dissent through Debate: Feminist Perspective on the *Mikveh*

Marcella C. Clinard
Texas Woman's University

The context

In my seminar on feminism and religion at Texas Woman's University, we study Judaism, Christianity, and Islam from feminist and social-justice perspectives. During our unit on Judaism, I focus one day on feminist perspectives on *niddah,* family purity laws, and the use of the *mikveh* for ritual purification after menstruation.

The pedagogical purpose

This teaching strategy was born out of my desire to motivate students to wrestle and struggle with the various and conflicting ideas they encounter instead of simply agreeing with the perspectives of whatever author I assign that day. I do this by outlining three different contradictory feminist perspectives on the *mikveh* and having students debate each other from their assigned perspectives.

Description of the strategy

Before class, students read about menstruation and the practice of the *mikveh* from several perspectives and read about menstrual customs and prohibitions across religions and cultures. In class, I assign students to argue for one of three conflicting feminist perspectives on the mikveh, each of which can be supported by assigned texts:

1. The practice of *niddah* and *mikveh* is a way for men to control women's bodies and sexuality.
2. Obedience to the rules of *niddah* and *mikveh* is a spiritually empowering practice beyond human logic for women who practice it.
3. Feminists should reclaim the *mikveh* and create new, inclusive rituals and spaces.

Students meet in groups to plan their arguments and then move into debate groups where each student is responsible for arguing for their assigned perspective against students from other groups.

Why it is effective

Making students debate each other reminds students that there is usually not a singular feminist perspective on complex religious questions and that various feminist perspectives are often mutually exclusive. By assigning perspectives, I depersonalize the competing viewpoints, and students feel free to argue their point without fear of offending other students. Engaging students in open-ended debate without a teleological goal of arriving at the correct answer seems to be an appropriate way to engage students in the study of Judaism, but the basic format of this debate can be used with a variety of topics. When I first taught this lesson, I ended by pushing students to explain their own opinion, but I found that students responded to the activity with a respect for all perspectives and a deeper appreciation for the complexity of the issue.

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Ditch the Site Visit, Assign an Interview

Kevin Singer
College of DuPage and Waubonsee Community College

The context

For the last seven years, I have taught world religions courses at two large community colleges in the western suburbs of Chicago. For the last three years, I have taught exclusively online. My students are local to the suburbs and are typically of traditional college age with a few adult learners mixed in.

The pedagogical purpose

Like many world religions professors, I asked students to observe the happenings at a place of worship and write about it. After several years I became tired of reading the same mundane, unsurprising reflections. Early in my career I noticed that students who had personal relationships with people of other faiths were exponentially more curious and enthusiastic about the course material. This gelled with survey results that those who have personal connections with someone in another religious group are more likely to be favorable toward that group. As Diana Eck argued, exposure to diversity alone is insufficient to inspire productive exchanges across lines of difference; dialogue and interpersonal encounter are a must. I found that an interview with a religious or spiritual leader invites more critical thought and more active participation than an observation, as well as opening a personal connection. The interview is a memorable encounter that students draw inspiration from in course assignments and dialogue.

Description of the strategy

Students identify a religious or spiritual leader in the local community to interview. If the student does not know someone, their classmates and I make recommendations. I have found that leaders with official roles and significant leadership responsibilities solicit the most insightful and credible responses to students' questions. Students then develop questions based on content covered in the course. Typically, questions pertain to the interviewee's beliefs on the afterlife, science, politics, and pressing social issues like homosexuality, immigration, abortion, climate change, and gender. Students must perform the interview in person or over the phone and summarize the interview and their impressions in two to three pages.

Why it is effective

The change from observation to interview quickly paid dividends for my students. Interviews generated heightened curiosity and appreciation for the course content. In course evaluations and final exams, students frequently referenced the interview as a transformative moment in their learning. An opportunity to ask their burning questions resulted in many of their presuppositions being challenged and reevaluated. This resonates with findings that both safety and bravery are needed for students to become more appreciative of other worldview groups.

Next semester, assign an interview instead.

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TEACHING TACTIC

The One Question that Will Transform Your Classes

Kimberly Harding
Colorado Mountain College

The context

Many of us long for deeper, transformative moments in our classrooms, but do not know how to cultivate such spaces with ease. Over the past few years, I created and have used a program called Ascend and Transcend, designed to acknowledge the sacred work of teaching and learning across all formats. The program follows the five steps of the Arc of Transcendence. Although Ascend and Transcend has been successful, not every instructor can commit to an entire program. However, many of the benefits, such as greater awareness, presence, and engagement, can be accomplished by focusing on one key question of the program,

The pedagogical purpose

This simple activity creates moments of awareness and presence for what we are doing in the classroom as both teachers and students. Learning, and by extension, teaching, are never easy, but they become next to impossible when we are not present enough to learn or teach. By answering this question, we provide the recognition of why we have come to class and what we are seeking from our classroom experience. Sharing my own insights about what brought me to class on any given day has helped my students' engagement and focus. As they answer the question themselves, it provides them an opportunity to reflect upon their state of presence and their expectations in the learning environment, things that often go unrecognized.

Description of the strategy

In Ascend and Transcend, we begin each class by asking, "What has brought you here—to this moment?" The instructor and students can handle the question in a way that best serves the class. Instructors can ask students to write a personal response, sit quietly and think of their answers, or discuss answers as a class. It is important that the instructor shares his or her answer with the class.

Why it is effective

Considering "What has brought you here—to this moment?" is effective, because in the most immediate and gentle of ways, it guides one into a state of engagement. Teaching and learning do not evolve from our passivity or lack of presence. Teaching and learning manifest as the result of our conscious decision to "show up" for this sacred work. To succeed, we must be able to reflect on the choices we have made and the outcomes we are seeking.

This simple question has transformed the teaching and learning experience for my students and for myself. My students gain a window into what has brought me into the learning environment on any given day. Likewise, I have gained insight into what is motivating my students. Why do they show up for class? What are they hoping to gain? Students have told me that this question has helped them to raise their grades and become better students.

Try it. Ask yourself and your students, "What has brought you here—to this moment?" and be brave enough and present enough to answer authentically.

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TEACHING TACTIC

What? No Piercing? An Undergraduates' Guide to Biblical Law

Giovanna Czander
Dominican College

The context

Dominican College of Blauvelt is an independent four-year and graduate studies liberal arts college in Orangeburg, NY. The college is a Hispanic-Serving Institution. The total enrollment is just over 1860, 74% of which are undergraduate students.

The pedagogical purpose

For years, I have struggled to effectively teach biblical law, the topic of my own scholarship, to undergraduate students. Students' increasingly disengaged reaction to biblical law was frustrating. How could students not see how interesting this topic actually is? How could they not realize what valuable skills could be gained by studying biblical law? How could they not take advantage of the theological concepts underlying biblical laws that would be so valuable in their own ethical and affective lives? The fact that I was successful in teaching at least the basic concepts and dynamics of biblical law to my graduate students, however, kept nudging me. How could this topic also be successfully taught to undergraduates?

A Wabash Center workshop for pre-tenured faculty and a Wabash Summer Grant to work on the intersection between my scholarship and teaching offered insights and tools. I designed a module devoted to biblical law for my Introduction to the Old Testament undergraduate class.

The project goals were: (1) To create and scaffold, in a new way, assignments, worksheets, and activities to introduce students to the content, shape, and dynamics of biblical law; and (2) to identify ways in which students would invest in learning about biblical law.

Description of the strategy

The first major guiding insight is that reading is a complex activity. Undergraduates need a more detailed breakdown of tasks to perform when "reading" something. In a packet of worksheets on selected biblical laws I asked questions that analyzed them from different perspectives (historical-critical, sociological, literary, theological, etc.) and engaging different skills (such as those in Bloom's revised taxonomy: remembering, comprehending, applying, analyzing, evaluating, creating [Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 2010]). The packet also provided continuity between assignments on biblical law and showed that biblical law is a relevant topic.

Students begin by considering the many rules we are surrounded by since childhood. They read an excerpt from *All I Need to Know about Life I Learned in Kindergarten*, by Robert Fulghum. After separating rules that mean the same thing they meant when they were in kindergarten from those that have acquired a different layer of meaning, students reflect on the specific rules they grew up with—which rules were hated? What did they do about it? This creates a sense of familiarity and personal engagement.

Then comes the "shock therapy," designed to both challenge previous knowledge and preconceptions on biblical law and function as a "hook" for students to immediately relate to the material. Students are generally familiar with the ten commandments and with the "eye for an eye" principle (though not correctly understood). They assume that biblical laws either do not apply to them or are about "what not to do." A few questions immediately challenge these assumptions: Does anyone have tattoos? Piercings? Does anyone like cheeseburgers? Bacon? Do you wear any mixed fabric clothing? Do you know that these are forbidden in the Bible? Does it matter to you? These questions and a clip from *West Wing* on the problematic consequences of a literal application of biblical laws capture students' curiosity and convey that most biblical laws are not to be understood literally, and that they may have functions beyond prescription.

Why it is effective

The scaffolded analysis of the laws requires the use of different skills to achieve the goals listed in Bloom's revised taxonomy. For the creative component students tweet the law to their friends (using the underlying principle identified in that law) and create a law of their own using the "What if . . . ?" logic employed in casuistic (= case-based) biblical laws. Peer-learning and team-building are fostered as students work in teams to analyze and discuss questions on biblical laws.

Piloting the newly designed module on biblical law produced both expected and unexpected results. As expected, students were more interested in the topic and related to the texts. However, the results of the assessment were below expectations. What was utterly surprising were the final papers and brief presentations students did on how the study of a specific biblical law affected their lives. Nearly all the students found that biblical laws, beyond their literal off-putting formulation, are indeed closer to their own lives and, in some cases, enhance and nuance their understanding of God. Not every student emphasized a theological insight related to their law but all did find a value that was relevant to their lives and society. The depth of personal engagement with the laws was completely unexpected.

Students were surprised by the many possible ways one can look at laws. In a final non-graded anonymous assessment of the module, they agreed that the study of biblical law develops critical thinking skills, enhances detailed analysis, and involves metacognitive skills. Most importantly, they took away the idea that biblical laws are not there to be practiced as stated, but are there to be explored, analyzed, and dissected until they reveal their underlying principles and values. Students learned that biblical law is not just about life in general, or life in ancient times, but is about their own life. This confirmed my hypothesis that the study of biblical laws is a pedagogical gold mine but needs to be prospected carefully and with the correct tools.

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TEACHING TACTIC

Assessing Vocabulary Acquisition Using Spaced Repetition Software

Daniel Cole
Trinity Theological College, Perth, Australia

The context

I use this tactic in a beginning-level Koine Greek class. Although it works particularly well for language learning, it could be easily adapted for other subjects.

The pedagogical purpose

Every theological language course that I have encountered uses quizzes of some kind to assess vocabulary acquisition. Yet both logic and experience show that such quizzes are pedagogically problematic: most students cram for the quizzes beforehand, increase their stress levels in the process, and then forget a significant proportion of the vocabulary in the days and weeks that follow. These problems only multiply in an online learning environment. To address these concerns and train students in long-term language learning, I have developed a method of assessing vocabulary acquisition that measures the quality, quantity, and regularity of vocabulary creation and review.

Description of the strategy

On the first day of class, we explore the two fundamental vocabulary learning skills (memory associations and active recall) and their benefits for learning. I then introduce them to Anki, a highly customizable and free flashcard system, whose vocabulary reviews are based on a spaced repetition algorithm (here is a full introduction). I provide verbal and written instructions on how to set up their decks. I also provide a template that creates additional fields for their memory associations that can be hidden and revealed independent of the question and answer sequence. After practicing creating new cards with memory associations, the students are expected to add new vocabulary items into their Anki deck and review it at least five times per week.

Students then digitally submit their Anki deck six times over the course of a semester: once near the start to make sure they understand the nature of the task, then five times, spaced every two to three weeks, to ensure that they remain on top of the creation and review of their cards. Anki provides in-depth reporting features and an open database structure, which I use to assess the quality of their cards and reviews. On this basis I provide written feedback and a grade out of twenty, marked according to a rubric provided with the syllabus.

Why it is effective

This assessment structure trains students to put time and energy into learning methods missing from traditional quizzes: the creation of associations to strengthen memory pathways and active recall with decreasing frequency over time. By assessing both the memory associations and the regularity of students' reviews, this assessment structure encourages the formation of good learning habits in an efficient manner that promotes effective long-term learning. The digital nature of the assessment structure also allows for simple student revision, submission of their entire system, and easy storing of submissions.

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TEACHING TACTIC

Tackling Islamophobia in a Course on Religion and Politics: Bringing Muslim Women's Voices into the Classroom

Shyam Sriram
Butler University

The context

I was a visiting faculty member at the College of Charleston from 2018 to 2019 and currently teach at Butler University. The former is a midsize, Southeastern public university and the latter a smaller, Midwestern private university. Both serve overwhelmingly white student populations. In the spring of 2019 and 2020, I taught a seminar on Religion and American Politics with a focus on the Muslim American experience.

The pedagogical purpose

According to a 2019 report from the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, Americans who have close, personal friendships with Muslims and "know something about Islam" are much less likely to be Islamophobic. In a 2017 Pew study, respondents from fifteen European countries were asked to evaluate a negative statement on Muslims. In every country, people who knew a Muslim personally were more likely to disagree with the statement.

Description of the strategy

I used two main texts: Bozena Welborne et al.'s *The Politics of the Headscarf in the United States* (Cornell UP, 2017) and James Morone's *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (Yale UP, 2004). The former introduced Muslim women's voices through interviews and surveys, and the latter introduced the history of religious, immigrant, and racial moral panics. Students engaged with the texts through directed readings, group discussions, and focused essays on hijab, cultural appropriation, civil religion, and othering. The second step was unpacking the roots of Islamophobia (and antisemitism). I used the 1997 groundbreaking report from the Runnymede Trust and the work of Joshua Shanes to put antisemitism in historic and current context. Lastly, I infused the seminar with online and face-to-face interactions. Examples included BBC's "10 Things Not to Say to Someone Who Wears a Burqa"; a Zoom conversation with Aubrey Westfall, one of the authors of *The Politics of the Headscarf* (2017); the Jewish-Muslim couple social experiment; learning about modest fashion; and (almost)[1] hearing from an all-female Muslim panel.

Why it is effective

This tactic worked because it was sincere. On the first day of class, I introduced myself as a Hindu convert to Islam; students recognized my passion and felt comfortable asking questions in a way that made learning about religion and politics not overwhelming. In multiple reflections, students spoke of a truly profound way of thinking about Islam and holding themselves and their family and friends accountable for Islamophobic (and antisemitic) speech.

1 The event was cancelled due to a tropical storm.

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TEACHING TACTIC

Filling the Gap with the Map

Jin H. Han
New York Theological Seminary

The context

Just as one can take a horse to water but cannot make him drink, so Bible teachers can lead students to the Bible, only to have them not recognize the places in which the biblical characters lived. After experimenting with a few map exercises, I realized the great contributions that maps could make to students' understanding of the history and literature of the Bible.

For decades, I have taught Old Testament at a metropolitan theological school that serves second-career students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Most of them start their theological education after a sizable hiatus. They bring rich life experience, but many of them have little to no prior instruction in humanities, let alone geography. To help first-year students make friends with maps, I introduced the assignment of drawing a map of tenth century Judah under David and Solomon.

The pedagogical purpose

My goal is to help students read and hear the Bible as a story that takes place in time and space on earth. While they work on the map, they review the topography of the land. As one might expect, they typically color the coastal plain green and the dry terrain on the eastern side of the Judean mountains brown. Occasionally, mishaps take place; a student makes the sea dark brown or the Sea of Galilee half the page. Frequently, the Jordan becomes the river of Mark Twain's imagination, "four thousand miles long and thirty-five miles wide."

Description of the strategy

To support students, I instituted the following incremental steps. On the first day of class, I describe this assignment along with its rationale and hoped-for learning outcomes. In the fifth week, students receive further details through a prerecorded lecture that surveys the land of the Bible and highlights key locations for the kingdom of David and Solomon (e.g., Jerusalem as the capital of the United Monarchy, Hazor and Megiddo, the port of Ezion-geber). After we study the reign of David and Solomon, the class has about four weeks to complete the map assignment.

Why it is effective

The map exercise provides multiple benefits. First, while the bulk of course activities center on verbal reasoning and writing, the map assignment gives students a chance to imagine the biblical living place multidimensionally. Furthermore, the map assignment employs their sensory capabilities. Many students delight in discovering an artistic talent they never knew they had. One student enjoyed the map assignment so much that she prepared the map on a door-size wooden panel. When I asked her to reclaim her massive map from my office, she smiled and replied that I could keep it—she liked it so much that she made another one for herself.

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BOOK REVIEW

After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging

Willie James Jennings

Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2020 (x + 165 pages, ISBN 978-0-8028-7844-1, $19.99)

Reviewed By

Andrea C. White

Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York

Willie James Jennings' *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* is a genre-bending theology of pedagogy. Meditation and memoir, poetry and narrative—its multifarious forms unveil the confessions of a theological educator. The artform renders Jennings' critical lens all the more incisive, with critical race theory the ubiquitous subtext and (true to form) keen theological perceptions saturating every page.

If good teaching requires grappling with institutions' racial economies and laying bare the meaning of their secrets, then *After Whiteness* is indispensable for critical pedagogy. *After Whiteness* is both an indictment and an invitation, a commissioning of sorts. In its mode of indictment, the colonialist project of knowledge production is interrogated and charged with peddling plantation pedagogy, as Jennings calls it. Theological education, he explains, is an inheritor of the tragic history of Christianity and a crucial site for the soul-killing cultivation of whiteness and masculinity. Theological education operates inside the energy of colonial design and race logic, and therefore, must be redeemed, its future recalibrated. But we know redemption, Jennings declares, only in pieces. With his theology of pedagogy as resource, he commissions those in theological education to mobilize as secret agents for fragment work. Theological educators are summoned to shatter reigning regimes of the white aesthetic, break the pretense of self-sufficiency, critique the sanctification of mastery. The urgent task is formation—formation marked by eros, holy desire, the erotic soul longing for gatherings that break boundaries and cross borders. Contrary to the sacralization of isolating individualism and intellectual performativity, the cultivation of belonging, Jennings contends, is the goal of all education. Effective teaching requires attending, bestowing special care for the embodied experience of learning, embracing the realities of fatigue and fragility. Educators are called to convene and gather and make a home together—among the fragments.

After Whiteness will sit prominently on the bookshelf beside *Being Black, Teaching Black: Politics and Pedagogy in Religious Studies*, edited by Nancy Lynne Westfield (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008) and *The Scope of Our Art: The Vocation of the Theological Teacher*, edited by L. Gregory Jones and Stephanie Paulsell (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002). Yet Jennings' text belongs to a genre quite its own. Marked by thick description, gripping in its affective range—from fatigue and despair to joy and wonder—its intimacy gives the feeling of an offering, a treasured gift. Indeed, Jennings offers a wisdom-filled vocational vision that emerges from decades of living inside theological education, not in the posture of an omniscient master who hoards and polices knowledge as possession, as private property, but rather as one who gently directs attention to the joy of not knowing, the wonder in which all thinking and learning begin. The text itself is a practice in the art of attending: fearlessly honest, aesthetically alluring, theologically compelling. Those who work and live in theological education may come to wonder how we made do without it.

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BOOK REVIEW

Critical Race Theory in Teacher Education Informing Classroom Culture and Practice

Keonghee Tao Han and Judson Laughter, editors

New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2019 (vii + 179 pages, ISBN 978-08077-6137-3, $37.95)

Reviewed By

Barbara A. Fears

Howard University School of Divinity

"I don't see race" is a statement that suggests a race-neutral or colorblind perspective. Race, however, delineates a power relationship, not a collection of phenotypic features (1). The contributing authors of this edited volume discuss the power dynamics in education, which they unanimously agree serve the interests of the hegemony, erase historical and contemporary injustices experienced by the subaltern, and uphold a particular socio-political perspective as normative. The normative hegemonic perspective is not restricted to race, but includes multiple, intersecting, socially constructed identities such as sexuality, ability and ethnicity. For these educators, whenever a hegemonic perspective is presented as normative in course material or in instructor attitudes, the experiences of the subaltern are disregarded, their voices muted, their experiential knowledge delegitimized, and all students miseducated. These scholars, therefore, challenge the notion of objective, context-neutral perspectives in educational encounters, and offer self-reflexive and classroom practices for teacher awareness and student engagement that make multiple subaltern experiences visible, their voices heard, and their experiences recognized as legitimate epistemology. Their insights have direct relevance to theological education.

Starting with critical race theory (CRT) as the analytical framework, scholars from a cross section of academic disciplines (such as early childhood development, adult learning, educational leadership, curriculum and instruction, and so forth) suggest methods for enhancing teacher literacy about biases in the classroom. The book is divided into three sections. Part I, "CRT and Teacher Education," describes the origin, evolution, and current use of CRT as an analytical tool for examining race and racism in education theory and practice. Part II, "Beyond Black and White," presents educational concerns from the LatinX, Asian, Native American, Queer, and anti-Blackness perspectives within CRT and highlights concerns specific to these communities such as: immigration, model minority stereotype, indigenous people, sexual identity, and the normalization of anti-Blackness. Part III, "Beyond CRT," examines Ghanaian, Fijian, Kenyan, and Confucian epistemologies and proposes an embrace of these non-western ways of knowing in teacher education. The final chapter prepares teachers to be agents of social change and proposes a pedagogy of compassion intended to transform power relationships in ways that respect human dignity and liberation (157).

Although the US is technically a former British colony, the shift to teacher education in a global context seemed abrupt and questionable for inclusion in a book about a theory (CRT) that originated in US law. Nevertheless, the insights and recommendations of the contributors speak to US theological education, which is experiencing increasing numbers of students of color, who both demand and deserve to have their stories reflected in the course curriculum, in the faculty who teach them, and in the administrators who make decisions concerning them by offering ways these institutions can be more sociopolitically inclusive. The authors also provide critical data about the educational formation of students both here and abroad, to religious educators, who employ and encourage narrative pedagogies (e.g., Engaged, Story Linking, Shared Christian Praxis), as well as to faculty and student recruiters.

THE WABASH CENTER
JOURNAL ON TEACHING

BOOK REVIEW

Educational Politics for Social Justice

Catherine Marshall, Cynthia Gerstl-Pepin, Mark Johnson
New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2020 (xiv + 264 pages. ISBN 0-807763-23-3, $47.82)

Reviewed By
Patrick Flanagan
St. John's University, NY

Education is a complex political reality. To dismiss this truth is to be oblivious to the power dynamics that comprise the educational system. All one has to do is consider the myriad of impactful processes involved in education, including the development of strategic plans, composition of school boards, hiring practices, curriculum development, funding priorities, and instructional design, to see that this is true. In this well-researched text with various helpful diagrams and charts, veteran educators Catherine Marshall, Cynthia Gerstl-Pepin, and Mark Johnson describe the realities of educational politics and identify where they see it lacking. Their task is not merely to expose the soft underbelly of education, but also to propose a social justice framework in which to imagine its repair and reconstruction. Their concern for an authentic, inclusive education for all should have broad appeal to public and private education leaders, school administrators, concerned teachers, engaged students, and responsible taxpayers.

In the first chapter, "Power, Democracy, and Social Justice Values," the only chapter in Part I, "Centering Justice in Educational Politics," the authors do not hold back in exposing the injustices they see in our educational system. An overarching critique they observe is the injustice that flows from inequitable power structures. From the inception of schools in America, these power dynamics have disadvantaged many to the benefit of the fortunate few. With its myriad of economic inequalities, classicism, and elitism, our present system—not to mention its blatant discrimination and, in some cases, outright oppression—proves problematic for a democracy that celebrates inclusivity. It does not prepare our students for an honest future.

The authors judge our current educational system to be broken. It is fractured, particularly in its assistance of students in need. It is inadequate and favors those who are privileged because of their positions of power. The authors are not without hope but recognize that significant repair work by all is needed. Their proposal is grounded in a social justice framework.

"Multiple Arenas of Educational Politics" is an accurate description of the second part. It peels back the layers of politics and demonstrates how they are connected. As the authors discuss governance structures and policymaking processes in this section, they point to and explain from their perspective the power structures that pay more attention to some issues, concerns, and people than others. Theirs is an effort to rectify the systematic injustice through honest assessment, active dialogue, and collaborative steps.

Chapter 2, "Micropolitics: 'Hidden' Conflicts and Power," digs deeply into the microlevel of politics evidenced in personal relations and community engagements. Chapter 3, "Democracy and Community in Districts?" begs the question of what and how democracy is meted out when communities either have been ignored or chose not to be concerned with educational policy. Chapter 4, "State Policy Shifts and Cultural Idiosyncrasies," fills the void of civic knowledge so pervasive among the citizenry. It names the critical people in government that need to be called to greater accountability. Chapter 5, "Federal Policy Communities and Interest Groups," discusses the local, state, and federal politics: their weight, and how they intersect. Chapter 6, "Global Education Politics," builds upon the first chapter in this section. Conversations are happening, and policy is being composed on the international level that cannot be ignored.

Finally, the third part, "Making Connections for Policy Action," is the authors' clarion call to action. From their experience, the authors propose practical ways to navigate the system. Their practical response is a social justice framework whose goal is equity. An inclusive process, it may involve uncomfortable conversations that challenge historical narratives that have preempted the advancement of ideas and truth. Personal experience should not be dismissed as subjective but must

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be taken into account. Chapter 7, “Policy Webs, Pendulum Shifts, and Interconnections,” demonstrates the interconnected nature of education policies and larger civic problematic matters. Where there are challenges in one area, they most assuredly reflect a deficiency or concerns in another. Chapter 8, “Leading for Justice and Equity,” is rich with practical illustrations of how those concerned with the future of education have successfully achieved safer equitable spaces and strategies.

This text is not for the fainthearted. Although some might find it hopeful, I would argue that most would find it problematic for all the wrong reasons. It is distressing to read as the authors reveal the politics and policy processes that have militated against equity. Educational and political leaders may dismiss it as yet more evidence of the signs of the times they believe, falsely, will eventually simmer down or vaporize, or as simply another appeal to the diversity, equity, and inclusion crowd—a crowd they are also hoping will dissipate. It will not; it cannot. Students’ lives are at stake. The burden of social justice then, in the absence of attentive and risk-taking educational leadership, falls to parents and teachers who historically have made the needs of their students a priority, often to the point of self-neglect. Parents and teachers are called to be front-line advocates for social justice. *Educational Politics for Social Justice* provides an essential guide to appreciating the landscape of the educational system in America (although I suspect that their observations, conclusions, and suggestions could apply to other systems throughout the global village), understanding its underlying political bedrock, and proposing specific tools and strategies to advocate for the centering of social justice in educational politics.

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BOOK REVIEW

Latinx/a/os in Higher Education: Exploring Identity, Pathways, and Success

Angela E. Batista, Shirley M. Collado, and David Pérez II, editors

Washington, DC: NASPA Student Personnel Administrators in Higher Education, 2018
(xxiv + 358 pages, ISBN 978-0-8010-9878-9, $44.95)

Reviewed By

Daniel Orlando Álvarez

Pentecostal Theological Seminary

This edited volume is pioneering work from and for the Latinx/a/o community in higher education. Batista, Collado and Pérez have edited an important work that describes the reality of Latinx/a/os in higher education and advocates for their success in the pursuit of education. The goal of this volume is twofold. First, it highlights promising pathways to help Latinx/a/os in higher education. Second, it focuses on necessary conditions that allow Latinx/a/o students, faculty, and professionals to thrive in institutions of higher learning, including career advancement in higher education.

I find this book to be a necessary read for those concerned with the future of Latinx/a/os' development in the US for several reasons. Latinx/a/os are now the largest minority in the US. Furthermore, by 2043 minorities in the US will be the majority of the population and there is much work to be done to establish equity for them for them (xviii). In the case of Latinx/a/os, by 2060 they will consist of 119 million people, or 28.6 percent of the population of the US (xviii). The issue is that while Latinx/a/o population grows, it is a part of a complex system in the US where it is still relegated to the lowest attainments in education and economic development. For those who work with and for the Latinx/a/o community, it is good to read a book that is sensitized to these struggles and actively thinks about how to engage and foster Latinx/a/o growth.

This is the main reason I recommend this book. The book introduces basic ideas that an educator must know about Latinx/a/os in order to effectively build bridges and be an ally in higher education. The book also describes different strategies for being successful in these processes. Although it could be more detailed, these are solid readings that spur the administrator, staff member, or faculty member to do additional research and encourage stronger organizing for the success of Latinx/a/o students.

The book narrates candid stories of successes, struggles, and failures. It also contains surprising statistics that may debunk stereotypes about these students. This is the type of nuancing that Latinx/a/o advocacy needs. The book also charts controversial waters, such as the inclusion of undocumented immigrants and Dreamers in higher education. It allows faculty and administrators to understand how institutions of higher learning may navigate the murky situations these students in legal limbo face.

Overall, this book is an easy read demonstrating the difficulties and hard work that goes into achieving success in the Latinx/a/o community. It also gives a realistic picture of what this success looks like for these students. Both educators and administrators in community colleges, universities, and seminaries will be better prepared to address issues regarding Latinx/a/os in their community by reading this book. "There is much to celebrate and much to do" (326).

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BOOK REVIEW

Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America's Classrooms, 2nd edition

Tyrone C. Howard

New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2019 (xx + 183 pages, ISBN 978-0-8077-6309-4, $28.77)

Reviewed By
Stan Chu Ilo
DePaul University

The need to close the achievement gap in America between African American, Native American, and Latinx students and their White student counterparts is an ongoing concern for educators, politicians, policy makers, parents, and American society in general. However, one does not often see a book that goes beyond ideological differences to offer an evidence-based study and a comprehensive diagnosis of the problem, while at the same time designing some evidence-based interventions and best practices. This is what Tyrone C. Howard has done in this impressive book.

This book argues that race and culture play decisive roles in both the teaching and learning processes. However, the book shows that there are other variables which also come into play in maintaining the poor educational outcomes for minority students, including the quality and commitment of teachers. The seven chapters of this book focus on three fundamental ideas: the data on the opportunity gap, Howard's diagnosis of the problem, and his design for intervention and best practices through case studies.

In chapters one and two, Howard analyses the data that show that there is a pervasive achievement gap in American schools between White students and African American, Native American, and Latinx students. The evidence offered is quite sobering in terms of how this nation is failing her young people from these racial groups. Chapter two uses data to demonstrate the changing demographics of America. Readers learn in this chapter that there is an urgent need to develop multicultural educational models that will not only meet the educational needs of minorities, but prepare both White and minority students to meet the changing cultural landscape of America. Howard argues that the changing demographics, tectonic cultural shifts, and diversity of today's America demand that we overcome current dominant and mainstream white normative education and embrace an inclusive and equitable education which meets the needs of racially and culturally diverse schools and societies.

Chapters 3 through 5 offer a diagnosis of the problem. The heart of the problem, Howard writes, is the prevalence of a deficit model of cultural understanding and normativity of Whiteness and associated epistemological frames and pedagogical practices which do not fulfil the requirements of culturally responsive pedagogy. The other elephant in the room is the pervasiveness of racism in American schools and society, most particularly anti-blackness. The author employs critical race theory to show the destructive impact of cultural modelling, color blindness, dominance pedagogy, and racial frames of reference, as well as how instructional and internal racism widen the achievement gap in American schools.

Chapters 6 and 7, to my thinking, offer the most original contributions of this book. The author offers some best practices for developing cultural competence, racial awareness, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Through a study of four schools, Howard identifies success stories in closing the achievement gaps. Using these, readers are given five qualities which produce high achieving students: visionary leadership, effective instructional practices, intensive academic intervention, explicit acknowledgement of race in the school, and parental and community engagement in a partnership between home and school.

This book is an important field manual for all teachers who care about equity and inclusive education. It describes how to create a safe school culture for every student no matter their background and offers some problem-solving strategies and pedagogical innovations that can promote student success and reduce prejudice in school, while creating an empowering school culture. The strength of the book is that Howard brings his own experience as both a teacher and a parent to the text.

He also brings the experiences of many teachers into this text. The narrative method—using the stories of the joy and pain, hope and despair of many students—employed to illustrate points in this book appeals to me as a theologian and a teacher of religion. Religious educators who embrace the message of this book will find in it “a paradigm of possibility, a stand of empowerment, a framework of faith, a firm belief in the intellectual prowess of young people” (144) for accompanying young people from low-income and diverse backgrounds to unlock their intellectual prowess and realize their boundless God-given potentials and innate goodness.

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BOOK REVIEW

After the Protests Are Heard: Enacting Civic Engagement and Social Transformation

Sharon D. Welch

New York, NY: New York University Press, 2019 (272 pages, ISBN 978-1479857906, $28.00)

Reviewed By

Xochitl Alvizo

California State University, Northridge

Starting with the premise that the Trump administration signaled not the death throes of white supremacy but the pangs of its rebirth, Sharon D. Welch calls on liberals and progressives to take responsibility to mitigate evil. In her book *After the Protests Are Heard: Enacting Civic Engagement and Social Transformation,* Welch urges her reader to help contain seven windigos, among them rapacious globalization, exploitative and extractive capitalism, greed, and domination, and to do the work of building and enacting progressive politics. She writes this book for a broad progressive audience and exhorts those who have some level of social and economic power to *do more*. She boldly calls out white progressives in particular for failing to "work with our fellow African Americans, Latinx, Native American, and Asian American citizens to do what was needed" to stop authoritarianism and explicit racism's "resurgence now and prevent its rise in the future" (3).

Welch invites progressive activists and institutional insiders to move from "prophetic witness and critique" to building the goal and vision that inspires their activism in the first place. Challenging the reader to give up on the notion of assured linear progress, she provides theories, tools, and practical examples to intentionally enact "our expansive best and contain our defensive and insular worst" (194). Its central thrust is toward an ethic of reciprocity and belonging that accounts for the human capacity for both evil and justice, instead of an ethics of "the savior who solves problems for others" (40-41).

To resource her readers for informed, strategic, collaborative-minded, and responsible action, Welch covers multiple theories of social change—what has worked, what has not, and what can be learned. She explores these theories based on research studies of various movements in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Key among the weaknesses she identifies is the lack of leadership which is needed to follow prophetic critique with "catalytic engagement" for social transformation. Her goal is to equip progressives for responding to the "theological and ethical imperative of prophetic critique" with "power, creativity, and ongoing self-critical accountability" (51).

After the Protests Are Heard provides practical examples of "direct institutional change" through stories of actual small businesses, socially responsible investing, and community economics (78-98); all are meant to highlight "environmentally sound and socially just economic development" (77). Welch grounds the various tools and technologies for living out "practices of plentitude" in a vision of "a beloved community of generative interdependence" (128-133). In her drive to have liberals and progressives live out their values in businesses, schools, parenting, and civic life (20), she challenges her readers to live into the *yes* of beloved community actively, creatively, and responsibly.

Identifying herself as one who has been an activist protesting from the outside demanding change of those on the "inside," and now one who finds herself on the inside of institutional power, Welch contributes a practical resource to the scholarship of religion and social transformation, religion and social justice, civic and community engagement, and social ethics. Her book is a timely resource for both the practical theological and religious studies classroom offering concrete models and theoretical accounts aimed at expanding the student and future leaders' imagination for civic engagement and collective action. She concludes the book with a discussion guidebook for use by groups or for self-reflection (196). This book can be used in the undergraduate and graduate classrooms of religious studies and practical theology with both the novice of civic engagement and the seasoned leader ready for a new resource.

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BOOK REVIEW

From Lament to Advocacy: Black Religious Education and Public Ministry

Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, Annie Lockhart-Gilroy, Nathaniel D. West, editors

Nashville, TN: Wesley's Foundery Books, 2020 (xx + 239 pages, ISBN 978-1-945-93574-9, $39.99)

Reviewed By

Tracey Lamont

Loyola University, New Orleans

This edited volume emerged from a gathering of Black religious educators at the 2015 Religious Education Association annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. They asked the pressing question, "What should we do?" in response to the continual shootings and other violence perpetrated on unarmed black men, women, and children; how can religious educators address the magnitude of challenges facing Black communities (xii, xiv)? Given our polarized, racially unjust society—quick to separate religion and faith from politics and the public sphere—this book could not be timelier.

The text engages the reader through interdisciplinary scholarship across multiple lines of inquiry, from Joseph Crocket's essay on the intersection of critical pedagogy and Black Lives Matter, Anne Streaty Wimberly's chapter on womanist theology and formation, Mary Young's curricular methods "for learning and acting community" (82), a pedagogy of what Nathaniel West names "Prophetic Inquiry" drawn from Afrocentric practices of ubuntu and ujima (51), to Sarah Farmer's "macrolevel approach to prison ministry that explores core pedagogical commitments" through religious education (140). Each chapter illustrates one or more of the five components of justice education, which, as Wimberly describes, includes a "holistic orientation" of relational, physical, psychological, economic/vocational, and spiritual characteristics (xxv-xxvi). Through this, the authors explore how religious educators can teach and learn from lament, black identity development, and advocacy.

Annie Lockhart-Gilroy, in her epilogue, states clearly just how important it is for religious educators to engage in public ministry. She writes, "whether explicitly or not, public spaces present their own curriculum" and too often this curriculum, as Nancy Lynne Westfield notes, teaches Black people "to be complacent and to participate in their own oppression because of the identities we embody" (231). This volume provides religious educators with what Lockhart-Gilroy calls "a counter curriculum—a curriculum that counters society's curriculum by first calling out the lie that it is, lamenting the messages we have internalized, and then countering with public advocacy centered in religious education" (232).

This work advances the field by placing religious education in critical dialogue with public ministry and presents important theoretical frameworks and practical pedagogical approaches for religious educators to envision their praxis as a public ministry for the transformation of society. The authors in this volume illuminate the history, ancestry, culture, heritage, and lived experiences of Black religious educators, individuals, faith communities, and, in particular, contemporary Black youth (Richelle White and Cynthia Stewart's essays) by making it clear that faith communities have a vital role to play in teaching young people how to be leaders in their communities (xv).

The essays in *From Lament to Advocacy* are important for graduate and doctoral students engaging in pastoral ministry, social justice, public theology, and religious education, and are equally as important for scholars in religious education as a resource filled with dynamic pedagogies and curricular approaches that help address systemic racism and the challenges facing Black communities. As such, this edited volume challenges all ministry leaders and religious educators to consider the implications of their praxis in a world in need of reconciliation and healing.

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BOOK REVIEW

Change Agent Church in Black Lives Matter Times: Urgency for Action

Valerie A. Miles-Tribble

Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020 (xiii + 477 pages, ISBN 978-1-9787-0174-8, $144.69)

Reviewed By

Jonathan C. Roach

Honoka'a Public Library, Hawaii State Public Library System

This vital study represents years of scholarly work by Valerie Miles-Tribble, who serves as an associate professor of ministerial leadership and practical theology at Graduate Theological Union/Berkeley School of Theology. In light of Eric Garner "being choked while saying, 'I can't breathe,' and dying while detained in that chokehold on a city street by New York police," she asks the question: "Where's the church?" She spends the next 477 pages determining where the church is and laying out a course to where she believes the church should be (1).

For this work Miles-Tribble employs a womanist lens with interdisciplinary, contextual approaches, and theoethics praxis in her dense and well-footnoted volume. She achieves both her goals: to provide "a relevant, multilayered resource that offers academic points of discourse and stimulates further analysis" and "to encourage Christian pastors—as leaders, practitioners, and theologians—to integrate public witness into their vocational roles of justice leadership" as she situates Black Lives Matter (BLM) within a broader era (5, 7).

The volume is organized into three parts. The first part offers societal perspectives. The three chapters in this section explore the argument for congregations and clergy to be change agents, problematic issues in the practice of being a change agent, and societal complexities in the reconstruction, segregationist, and integrationist eras as well as examining the differences between the Civil Rights era and BLM. In particular, Chapter 2, "Toxic Silence," provides an important discussion on avoidable pitfalls such as sexism, classism, ego, and hierarchy as well as supporting literature in these areas. Part Two presents theoethical perspectives and Part Three provides two chapters of contextual perspectives "to equip or prepare congregants for social reform ministry activism in the public square" (49).

Immersion in this volume is like joining a massive interdisciplinary, scholarly conversation. It provides an important roadmap to the scholarly literature and the BLM movement. Although this volume was finished before the BLM voices of 2020, it is timely for current discussions and valuable for historical perspective. Because of this volume's price point and its complexity, this book is not the best buy for individual clergy or congregations who are seeking a how-to manual. But, this volume should be in academic libraries seeking cross-disciplinary impact in the theological disciplines, education and formation, leadership, and social sciences.

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BOOK REVIEW

about Museums, Culture, and Justice to Explore in Your Classroom

School: Questions Series

Therese Quinn

New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2020 (xv + 96 pages, ISBN 978-0-8077-6343-8, $24.95)

Reviewed By
Jody Washburn
Walla Walla University

Part of the School: Questions series edited by William Ayers, *about Museums, Culture, and Justice* provides a frank synopsis of the potential and shortcomings of museums in America, particularly as resources for educators creatively employing museum resources as tools for teaching justice. Beginning with a forthright discussion of the irony of museums being public resources, but not consistently accessible to, or representative of, the publics they serve, Therese Quinn provides a compelling short history of museums combined with brief deep dives into various aspects of the function, design, and use of museums.

As Kevin Kumashiro points out in his foreword, Quinn walks the reader through a nuanced engagement with museums demonstrating how students and educators can learn "from museums, even while remaking them" (xv). For example, citing *Uncomfortable Art Tours* led by art historian Alice Procter, Quinn calls educators to invite students to visit a museum and note things they might cite if they were to give an "unsettling" tour of the museum (35-36). Where might there be hidden histories or agendas? What labels are confusing? Who or what is left out? What could be done to improve the labels or selection of content? Espousing a collaborative approach that actively resists narrow, top-down authority, Quinn cites approaches such as community collaboration and team exhibit development as examples of how decision making can be intentionally shared leading to the empowerment of more diverse leaders and to more representative exhibits (30, 78).

In a brilliant modeling of the inclusive values and approaches she champions, Quinn describes ancient Babylonian princess Ennigaldi as the curator of the first "museum" almost 2600 years ago (11-12). Quinn also provides countless examples of exhibits and online resources featuring underrepresented community members. One particularly timely exhibit that moved me was *Art and Healing: In the Moment*, an exhibit at the Minnesota Institute of Art featuring space for reflection and artworks by various community members inspired by Philando Castile's life and tragic death (51). In the call to action threaded throughout her book, Quinn does not settle for telling educators to cite women and people of color and make space for members of the LGBTQ+ community or people with disabilities. Rather she fills her book with their voices, their projects and ideas, and countless examples of ways for educators, community leaders, and students to engage with multiple perspectives and continually make room at the table.

This book is a treasure chest for anyone invested in holistic pedagogy. I found numerous assignment ideas that I plan to integrate into an archaeology course I teach centered on the world of the Bible. While I have previously employed physical artifacts and multistage integrative assignments periodically in the course, I now have ideas for making almost every assignment collaborative, hands-on, and intentionally focused on traditionally minimized or ignored perspectives. The book's focus on museums makes it easily applicable to archaeology, but I would argue that the emphasis on justice throughout the book makes the principles, observations, and ideas for engagement adaptable to many religion and theology courses.

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BOOK REVIEW

Being a Teacher Educator in Challenging Times: Negotiating the Rapids of Professional Learning

Mike Hayler and Judy Williams

Singapore: Springer, 2020 (vii + 185 pages, ISBN 978-981-15-3848-3, $87.20)

Reviewed By
Scott P. Bayer
Claremont School of Theology

This volume is a duoethnography that charts the journeys of two individuals to becoming teacher educators and shows how their journeys influence their teaching. Growing out of an earlier edited volume that explored the journeys of other teacher educators, Hayler and Williams wondered what they would learn if they captured their own journeys. This volume is a record of their experiences.

This volume captures the collaboration and perspectives of a professor of education from England (Hayler) and from Australia (Williams). The authors ask the question, "How have our personal and professional life experiences shaped who we are as teacher educators"? (24). This key question rests on the authors' foundational assumption that the identity of the person teaching determines the "what, how, and why they teach" (77). This book then examines the teacher educator's journey, discovering the various influences that shape an educator's identity and pedagogy.

Structurally, the book follows Hayler and Williams through their journeys in becoming teacher educators, ending with five chapters on working as teacher educators. Two early chapters of the book chart how both Hayler and Williams fell into careers as teacher educators and show how these early experiences shape their teaching. These narratives challenge readers to search their own lives for experiences that shape their teaching.

The latter chapters note political, institutional, and personal challenges of teaching while offering encouraging narratives about collaboration, pedagogy, and identity. The authors show how a teaching context, institutional and personal, shape a teacher's identity. Despite constantly changing contexts that shape identity, teacher educators grow and develop through self reflection, which is a key resource to grow during challenging times (179). The book concludes with a discussion that succinctly identifies its key findings.

The volume is chock-full of references to other literature for further research. However, its true success is in making the reader have an experience by reading another's narrative, provoking the reader to examine his or her own story and how it affects their identity and teaching. This book also demonstrates collaboration within both the text and methodology. This challenges today's individualism and encourages scholars to reimagine the task of scholarship.

While some may dismiss this work due to its narrative nature, this would be a mistake; the stories make the work memorable and have a transforming, not just an informing, effect. Indeed, a key contribution of this book is that it teaches the power of story, reminding teachers of religion to anchor their content to stories and historical events. Similarly, this book is a test case in self study, illustrating the power of reflecting on one's journey and how this reflection can construct identity and influence one's teaching. Ultimately, this book does not just offer information, but offers an experience as the stories of others challenge the educator to examine their journey, pedagogy, and identity. This book belongs on the religion professor's bookshelf as a reminder of the benefit of self-reflection to discover one's identity and how that identity shapes how a professor teaches.

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BOOK REVIEW

Inequality, Innovation, and Reform in Higher Education: Challenges of Migration and Aging Populations

Maria Slowey, Hans G. Schuetze, and Tanya Zubrzycki, editors

Switzerland: Springer, 2020 (330 pages, ISBN 978-3-030-28226-4, $109.00)

Reviewed By
Bernadette McNary-Zak
Rhodes College

This recent book in the Lifelong Learning Book Series focuses on two underrepresented, yet impactful, groups in the future of higher education: migrants and older students. Employing an intersectional approach, the book engages "the central role that socially engaged higher education might play in addressing these challenges, enhancing lifelong learning opportunities and facilitating more positive outcomes for both individuals and societies" (3). As a result, its twenty-one chapters are both theoretically and practically oriented; chapters typically analyze case studies for broader principles and future applications. Chapter authors are teachers and scholars of higher education whose work and intellectual interests span the globe.

The book is organized into four parts. In Part I, "New Demographics and Lifelong Learning," the editors supply an introductory chapter that frames migration and aging as global trends requiring a response from higher education. Part II, titled "Contemporary Patterns of Migration and Higher Education: Opportunities for New Lifelong Learners," contains ten chapters centered on access and training for migrant students. The seven chapters in Part III, "Aging Populations and Changing Life Course Patterns: Implications for Higher Education and 'Longlife' Learners," tackle questions related to the educational needs of adults in all life stages. Finally, Part IV, "Reflections and Outlooks," has three chapters that offer a larger view of current trends and projected outcomes.

While scholars of religious studies and theology may find this book's earlier chapters of particular interest, these final chapters are especially valuable for ongoing conversations about the teaching and learning of migrant and aging populations in the discipline. In Chapter 19, "Mobility and Migration: Freedom and Threat?," Pavel Zgaga attends to recent shifts in mobility and migration patterns to offer a timely assessment of the societal and democratic roles of higher education and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). David Istance takes a similar approach by recognizing shifts in aging in Chapter 20, "Learning, Education, and Active Aging: A Key Policy Agenda for Higher Education." Istance offers several initial considerations for the education and learning of older adults. He proposes wider use of the term "active aging" and invites institutions of higher education to identify themselves as community partners and knowledge providers for this population. The final chapter, "Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: New Frontiers—Old Barriers," by Han G. Schuetze and Maria Slowey, explores the implications for "lifelong learning" in higher education with particular attention to the usefulness of that category, as well as trends and new developments that will inform future work on the topic.

Relevance, access, and rights are global concerns in higher education; the realities of migration and aging provide higher education with challenges and possibilities for teaching and learning of all students in all stages of life.

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THE WABASH CENTER
JOURNAL ON TEACHING

BOOK REVIEW

Developing Faculty Mentoring Programs: A Comprehensive Handbook

David Kiel

Denver, CO: Academic Impressions, 2019 (xii + 569 pages, ISBN 9781948658089, $75.00)

Reviewed By
Forrest Clingerman
Ohio Northern University

A faculty mentoring program is both valuable and complex work. Valuable, insofar as good faculty mentoring advances student success, institutional goals, and a faculty member's work satisfaction. Complex, because a good mentoring program navigates several layers of an institution, promotes individual and corporate objectives simultaneously, and relies on "soft skills" and at times maybe even a bit of luck.

Given mentoring's value and complexity, Kiel's handbook is a resource for faculty who are directing a departmental or institutional program, whether that program is designed for new, mid-career, or senior faculty (or all three). *Developing Faculty Mentoring Programs*' biggest strength is its comprehensiveness. The first chapter sets out ways of framing the objectives, identifying design criteria, and undertaking the practical work of a mentoring program. The following chapters focus on particular stages in a faculty member's professional life; Kiel also is explicit about how mentoring can address the recruitment and retention of faculty from underrepresented identities. The final chapter offers ten practical suggestions for starting and maintaining continuity, such as how to integrate a program into existing institutional policies, how to identify assessment practices, and how to plan to produce action. Included throughout the book are concrete examples for a wide array of institutional types.

Appendices take up half of Kiel's handbook, offering worksheets that direct developers through a process of planning and implementation. The workbook allows the reader to apply Kiel's suggestions in a guided way.

While this book was not written with religious studies departments or theological schools in mind, it is directly applicable to these situations. There are many great examples and ideas in Kiel's volume for anyone who is involved in a departmental mentoring program (including the mentoring of graduate students as teachers and scholars), or participates in campus-wide initiatives.

Yet the strength of *Developing Faculty Mentoring Programs* might very well limit its usefulness for many readers. Sometimes Kiel's book seems so focused on cataloging information that he neglects the streamlined synthesis necessary for understanding how the pieces fit together. At its worst, parts of the book seem like a file of raw material about mentoring instead of an analysis of that material – this makes the lack of an index all the more surprising! The crush of facts and examples becomes especially evident when comparing Kiel's book to other mentoring handbooks, such as Susan L. Phillips and Susan T. Dennison's *Faculty Mentoring: A Practical Manual for Mentors, Mentees, Administrators, and Faculty Developers* (Stylus, 2015). For example, Phillips and Dennison's handbook has one sixth the page count as Kiel's book. Yet *Faculty Mentoring* similarly contains worksheets and guidelines for setting up a mentoring program. What makes Kiel's work so lengthy are the extensive examples (in some cases Kiel gives verbatim passages from websites and the like) and the diversity of its institutional application. Even though Phillips and Dennison's book misses the nuance of Kiel's approach, its advantage is how it offers a simplified synthesis for approaching mentoring work.

For readers wishing to do a deep-dive into mentoring, or who have specific questions related to an institutional type or faculty career stage, Kiel's handbook has a wealth of information. For these just dipping their toes in the water, however, *Developing Faculty Mentoring Programs* might be slightly difficult to navigate.

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BOOK REVIEW

Mid-Career Faculty: Trends, Barriers, and Possibilities

Anita G. Welch, Jocelyn Bolin, and Daniel Reardon, editors

Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill Publishers, 2019 (225 pages, ISBN 978-90-04-40816-6, $54.00)

Reviewed By

Steven C. Ibbotson

Prairie Colleges

After the editors' introduction sets out the framework for the book, Part 1 begins with a summative review of the literature on the current state of mid-career faculty. The next three chapters take an in-depth look at significant barriers and challenges for mid-career faculty. Specifically, DeFillipo and Dee discuss the concept of faculty vitality and how it can be sustained both individually and institutionally (chapter 2). Rockinson-Szapkiw then addresses the challenges facing academic mothers at mid-career (chapter 3). In a similar manner, Graham and McGarry focus on barriers diaspora women encounter at this stage in their academic careers (chapter 4). Each chapter suitably blends the authors' experiences with supporting research to clearly demonstrate the concerns.

In Part 2, faculty from various universities share how they have successfully supported mid-career faculty. Donals shares how the University of Wisconsin-Madison piloted a program making time to support faculty mentoring (chapter 5). Buch, Dulin, and Huet explain their involvement in a comprehensive program at University of North Carolina Charlotte that enabled mid-career faculty to improve success in a six-step career planning process (chapter 6). Plummer, Pavalko, Alexander, and McLeod describe the establishment of faculty writing groups over a five-year period at Indiana University that increased support, community, accountability, and thus academic promotion for faculty at various career stages (chapter 7). Along with Bhardwaj, Hahs-Vaughn, and Scott, Hernandez describes how a faculty mentoring program provided meaningful guidance for her career at University of Central Florida, and they examine other institution-wide strategies UCF uses to assist mid-career faculty (chapter 8). In chapter 9, Rispoli provides additional research on the various forms of career mentorship, and analyzes their strengths and weaknesses.

The narratives in Part 2 describe the impact of strategies implemented to counter the challenges mid-career faculty face that were outlined in Part 1. Mid-career faculty and administrators will find the examples easy to replicate and modify for their particular contexts. Chapter 10 by Cavazos-Vela, Morales, Vela, and Fisk, seems to be identifying strategies for administrators to help mid-career faculty, but just repeats the content of the previous chapters. Thus, the conclusion by Reardon seems redundant.

While *Mid-Career Faculty* would be beneficial to faculty and administrators alike in addressing mid-career challenges, chapters 5 through 9 contain all the content and issues of the other chapters and provide practical solutions, while the remaining chapters are preamble and review. In addition, there are some awkward spelling and grammar errors, especially in the opening chapters, which are disappointing.

A mid-career faculty person would find this book helpful, although the primary audience is the academic administrator seeking to encourage and support mid-career faculty. The strategies identified in Part 2 are feasible, practical, and do not take extensive additional funds to enact. Certainly, each described university developed their programs over a period of years, yet the principles can be readily transferred to other contexts. For those serving as department chairs, academic deans, or other administrative roles in teaching theology or religious studies, these suggestions would be beneficial.

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BOOK REVIEW

Success After Tenure: Supporting Mid-Career Faculty

Vicki L. Baker, Laura Gail Lunsford, Gretchen Neisler, Meghan J. Pifer, and Aimee LaPointe Terosky, editors
Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2019 (xiii + 365 pages, ISBN 978-1-62036-680-6, $35.00)

Reviewed By
Beverley McGuire
University of North Carolina Wilmington

As a mid-career faculty member—which can mean up to seven years after tenure, or more than ten years from retirement after tenure—I was eager to read this book. It shares perspectives of mid-career faculty that resonate with my own experience: increased service and administrative work, a lack of financial resources to support research and writing, rising demands to demonstrate accountability and efficiency, increased pressure to obtain external funding through grant applications, and feeling undervalued and taken for granted by one's institution. The authors also point out that when mid-career faculty assume new positions in academic leadership, it can result in new definitions of what constitutes professional success and also present challenges in how to balance loyalty to one's discipline and to one's institution (123).

Success After Tenure offers ways in which faculty members and institutions can find opportunities despite such manifold challenges, emphasizing the importance of faculty *agency* (what faculty believe to be possible and what they do to move towards these goals) and *strategic response* (how faculty can uphold their priorities and passions despite their increased workloads). The authors summarize a history of faculty development in the United States, beginning with the age of the scholar (1950s to 1960s) focused on advancing faculty scholarship, the age of the teacher (mid-1960s to 1970s) emphasizing teaching skills, the age of the developer (1980s) focusing on faculty needs across career stages and faculty learning communities, and the age of the learner (1990s) shifting the focus to student learning (Sorcinelli et al., *Creating the Future of Faculty Development,* [Anker, 2006]). As many would agree, we are now in the age of evidence with "a focus on assessing the impact of instruction on student learning, of academic programs on student success, and of faculty development within institutional mission priorities" (Beach et al., *Faculty Development in the Age of Evidence,* [Stylus, 2016], 12). They acknowledge that the social environment plays a significant role in a mid-career faculty member's ability to make changes and commit to new practices (117), emphasizing that fit and feelings of belonging factor into a faculty member's career growth, professional development, productivity, and sense of satisfaction (168).

The authors suggest several ways for improving faculty vitality, including balance, challenge seeking, creativity, curiosity, motivation, optimism, and risk-taking (167). Many authors suggest that scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) provides a means for mid-career faculty to build on or re-identify their scholarly paths (100). They draw from Ernest Boyer's expanded vision of scholarship that includes discovery, integration, application, and teaching: "a recognition that knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice, and through teaching" (Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered,* [Jossey-Bass, 2016], 86).

Hillary Steiner suggests that synergistic citizens—those whose capacity for self-reflection, interest, and agency prompts them to seek out opportunities for being creative, productive, and relevant in their teaching—would particularly benefit from teaching in first-year student learning communities, which allow faculty "to reimagine their pedagogical approaches through an interdisciplinary, scholarly lens" (142).

The authors underscore the vital role of faculty writing groups, support for sabbaticals, leadership institutes and faculty development workshops, and they emphasize the power of mentoring and peer networking for mid-career faculty. Regular check-ins can be an important source of accountability, allow one to vent frustration or share progress, and enable small group or individual coaching. Mentors can help mentees reflect on their career decisions, review obstacles, and workshop ideas of how to overcome barriers (186).

The book acknowledges that women faculty and faculty of color are disproportionately burdened by service demands (205), that gender adversely affects career progression, with women spending longer at the associate professor rank and being less likely to advance to full professor (225), and that implicit bias and other barriers contribute to a lack of women's visibility, mobility, and leadership in academic institutions (161-162). To develop mid-career women's sense of agency around their career advancement, they emphasize the importance of workshops, mentoring, and networking programs (228). The chapter titled "Navigating a Foggy Climate: Women Associate Professors' Sense of Agency and Work Environment Experiences" identifies five areas where women face greater challenges than men at the same rank: workload, work-life balance, resources, networks, and agency in career advancement (285). The authors present a set of recommendations that are useful for departments and programs interested in reducing ambiguity in service expectations, creating more equitable workload distributions, reducing ambiguity in available resources and professional networks, and demystifying standards for promotion (303-305).

This book will interest not only mid-career faculty members like myself, but those responsible for faculty development at their colleges, universities, and theological schools. The chapters cover a broad range of institutional contexts and present evidence from substantial bodies of research.

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BOOK REVIEW

Open(ing) Education: Theory and Practice

Dianne Conrad and Paul Prinsloo, editors

Boston, MA: Brill/Sense, 2020 (xx + 399 pages, ISBN 978-90-04-42296-4, $54.00)

Reviewed By
Matthew Bingley
Georgia State University

The open education movement seeks to make quality learning materials freely available to all. Its proponents argue that everyone benefits when they have access to quality education. More recently the open education movement has sought to define open education not just in terms of sharing materials, but to open up education as an activity, to make it more participatory and inclusive. In this spirit Conrad and Prinsloo present an anthology of articles on a variety of open educational contexts.

The authors define "open" in contrast to what is "closed." If closed connotes "hegemony and power" (2), then open suggests practices of collaboration, sharing, and, especially, inclusivity. This dichotomy is only a starting point, however. The book is about educational practice in the liminal spaces created by the constructs of open and closed. With this understanding, much of the book uses the metaphor of an ecology to describe open (or opened) practices. What is open is variously applied to resources, pedagogies and classroom practices, disciplines, institutions, and multi-institutional collaborations, as well as to the concept of education itself. Opening education can mean deprivatizing institutions, as chapter 8 argues, or it can refer to cross-disciplinary collaboration, as chapter 13 illustrates. As a "pedagogy of small" (364), open education locates participation in and ownership of education and knowledge in communities, whether physically present or online.

The strength of the book is the vision it lays out for what education could be with open practices in mind. Open education aims to "develop critical digital/web literacies and to foster agency on the part of all learners" (18). Open education is transformative in facilitating people's agency to engage in culturally meaningful activities (41). Open education is a public good (341).

This book also presents case studies for how institutions have put openness as access, collaboration, and inclusivity into practice. Chapter 5 shows how local knowledge preserved in open formats fosters sustainable development. Chapter 11 discusses how a multi-institutional collaboration called OpenMed shares open resources to improve educational quality. Chapter 14 presents a case study of how Birkbeck College made learning available online, asynchronously, to include learners who would otherwise be barred from attending in-person daytime classes.

The book does raise critical issues with the misappropriation of openness. For example, chapter 4 shows how the idea of openness can be used cynically, such as when private institutions use MOOCs to advance their brand recognition, effectively using a tool of open education to advance the agenda of a private or "closed" institution. While "one of the core concepts of openness is inclusivity" (3), chapter 7 argues that since open resources are not regulated, many educational materials may not be accessible, effectively walling those materials off from some potential learners.

This anthology is not a how-to manual for incorporating open practice in your classroom. It a framework for transforming the practice of education. None of the articles deal with teaching in religious studies specifically. *Open(ing) Education* provides a useful and aspirational framework for deconstructing educational hierarchies that limit student engagement with learning, and examples of how this can be done effectively.

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BOOK REVIEW

Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals, 2nd ed.

John C. Lyden

New York, NY: New York University Press, 2019 (viii + 302 pages, ISBN 9781479811991, $25.99)

Reviewed By

Shauna K. Hannan

Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

Although studying film in the religious studies classroom and studying the religious content of film in a cinema studies classroom are neither surprising nor new, seeing film as religion strikes a different chord. Sixteen years after the publication of its first edition, the second edition of *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals* continues to assert that film, even films without explicitly religious content, functions religiously. John C. Lyden makes his case by identifying how film appropriates aspects of Clifford Geertz' definition of religion. For example, like religion, film provides symbols in order to "mediate worldviews as well as systems of values" thereby establishing certain moods and motivations. Even more, film, like religion, forms an order of existence that attempts to deal with chaos and, like religious ritual, creates "a sense of reality that points to a different way of viewing the word from that provided by ordinary experience."

Part I of the book connects elements of religion such as myth, ritual, and morals to the moviegoing experience. Ultimately, Lyden claims that the dialogue between religion and film is "another form of interreligious dialogue." The author admits that Part I is largely unchanged from its first edition despite his nod to Kent Brintnall's challenge that "religion is just as suspect popular culture." Taking heed of this caveat could have yielded updates to Part I.

Conversely, the changes in Part II indicate a helpful suspicion of "films that may reinforce prejudices or provide support for status quo hegemonies." This second part of the book offers an examination of how distinct genres of film (e.g., gangster, romantic comedy, science-fiction) function like religion. The concrete changes for the second edition include, for example, adding subcategories for some film genres and adding the genre of war movies. Most importantly, Lyden incorporates his increased appreciation for a cultural-studies approach that "actually pays attention to the diversity of ways in which viewers may interpret a film." Unlike Part I, which unfortunately is not updated to include new and more diverse scholarship in religious studies, Part II seems to make use of a diversity of contemporary voices in film studies.

The conclusion of the book is new and confidently restates its assertion that examining films as one examines religion can help to more clearly "evaluate their power and the ways in which they influence us."

The book is sure to benefit the religious studies classroom as it encourages the reader to consider deeply what makes a religion religious. Even more, it pushes one to examine possible religious aspects of the secular realm. The reader is helpfully cautioned against quick generalizations in favor of deep examination of specifics. (Geertz, with his claim that all religion is local, would be pleased.) Lyden's second edition of *Film as Religion* provides some insight into why "moviegoing" is increasing and "churchgoing" is decreasing.

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THE WABASH CENTER
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BOOK REVIEW

Religion and Film: Representation, Experience, Meaning

Stefanie Knauss

Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Publishing, 2020 (103 pages, ISBN 978-90-04-42675-7, $84.00)

Reviewed By

Jeena Grace Charles

St. ThomasUniversity, Miami

In her short but intense work, *Religion and Film*, Stefanie Knauss offers an overview of the budding academic field of religion and film studies. Knauss traces its origin, development, significance, and validity and concludes with her thoughts on prospects for the field. She also presents a wide-ranging literature review of the field that places her work in a broad academic context. Referencing sixty-eight films from different languages and cultures throughout the book helps her support her arguments. Though this e-book is neither an in-depth nor a comprehensive study of the field, it covers all the relevant aspects and general trends in religion and film and comes in handy as an excellent starting point.

The book is divided into 4 chapters. In chapter 1, "Representations of Religion(s) in Film: The Study of Film as Text," Knauss explores the potential and limitations of approaches that deal with films as texts that represent religion in film. Chapter 2,"Religious Films: It's in the Eyes of the Beholder," considers religious films from the perspective of the spectators. It also explores how films function as religion and evoke spiritual responses. The chapter concludes with a critique of an audience-centered approach.The cultural significance of religion and film and the similarities in their cultural role are explored in chapter 3, "The Quest for Meaning: Religion and Film as Agents in Cultural Processes." Chapter 4,"Why and How Do We Do What We Do?: The Question of Theory and Method," situates the discipline of religion and film in a methodological context.

Knauss presents textual, audience-centered, and cultural approaches to films. "Text-based approaches locate religious meaning in the film itself" and " audience-oriented approaches argue that films 'become' religious or acquire religious significance in an encounter with their viewers" (25). She describes how film functions as religion in a post-secular world. Film viewing becomes a religious act that evokes spiritual response and effects in the spectator. This sacramentality of films becomes an aspect of God's communication with humans (44). This is possible because both religion and film try to visualize the non-visual and non-comprehensible.

The cultural approach to film describes how both religion and film maintain, as well as subvert, existing social hegemonies. Knauss refers to the idea of circuit of culture developed by the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies to reveal power relations, oppressions, and resistance struggles behind the multi-layered meaning formation in films. She argues that "the analysis of film and religion as cultural agents requires a multi-dimensional approach that includes the various factors at play in their interrelationships" (64).

Hence, in the final part of thebook, Knauss gives a methodological framework for the field of religion and film by drawing from different approaches such aspostcolonial theory,realism, formalism, auteur theory, communication theory, genre analysis, semiotic film theory and analysis, psychoanalytical film theories, phenomenological film theory, cognitive film and media studies, reader response theory, and postmodern theory. Finally, Knauss asserts that the relationship between film and religion is a "dialogue" in which differences are to be appreciated in order to enrich diversity in cultural context and scholarly discourse.

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BOOK REVIEW

Preparing the Higher Education Space for Gen Z

Heidi Lee Schnackenberg and Christine Johnson

Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2019 (xvii + 253 pages, ISBN 9781522577638, $140.00)

Reviewed By
Eric Fehr
Northwest Seminary and College

Members of the next generation, "Generation Z" (Gen Z), are now entering college. Some of them will decide to pursue graduate theological education. Gen Z students are unique in that they have grown up in an online connected world. There has not been a time when they did not have access to the Internet or smartphones. Social media and online collaboration are the norm. How are educators to ready themselves for this eventuality in the classroom and their pedagogy? The era of students sitting in a classroom listening to their professor while taking notes is becoming a relic of the past. Teaching Gen Z students is an opportunity to change, adapt, and connect with students using technology.

Preparing the Higher Education Space for Gen Z includes nine chapters on how Gen Z students communicate, learn, and engage with each other. The main forms of communication for Gen Z students are through social media, online learning, and collaboration. Each chapter includes the benefits and challenges of using various technologies, such as: social media, cloud computing, technology for teaching students with disabilities, the classroom experience for Gen Z students, and lastly texting to communicate with Gen Z students.

Each chapter articulates the given topic clearly and with suitable examples. All types of educators across all disciplines will find this textbook a useful resource to prepare for teaching Gen Z students. The book offers a reasoned approach to the benefits and challenges of using tools like social media and texting. While these forms of communication are second nature to Gen Z students, they are often not utilized in the classroom. Yet, studies show that many faculty have personal social media accounts (6). The issue is not that faculty do not know how to use social media; the primary question is how educators can integrate these tools into the classroom in ways that are helpful for a student's learning experience. Several authors offer personal examples of how they have used social media, texting, and cloud computing in the classroom. Also, each chapter includes benefits and challenges; the authors are not so naïve as to think that such tools are not without their problems. Last, each chapter concludes with a bibliography of resources.

Preparing the Higher Education Space for Gen Z is a welcome addition to the growing discussion on how to teach Gen Z students. The book offers useful advice on how to use the online tools these students are familiar with in ways that the previous generation was not. Although different chapters repeat some definitions, theological educators will enjoy this textbook on how to prepare to teach Gen Z students. Traditional forms of teaching might overlook how to use new methods of communication and learning in the classroom. In chapter 2, Melissa Martin, Rachel Hugues, and Alison Puliatte highlight that "Generation Z students are inherently different than previous generations. These students may need adapted forms of instruction in order to match their learning styles" (32). This book offers beneficial tools and discussions on how to teach, build community, and communicate with Gen Z students with integrity and professionalism in meaningful ways.

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BOOK REVIEW

Critical Perspectives on Interreligious Education: Experiments in Empathy

Najeeba Syeed and Heidi Hadsell, editors

Boston, MA: E.J. Brill, 2020 (viii + 252 pages, ISBN 978-9004420021, $64.00)

Reviewed By
John M. Thompson
Christopher Newport University

As an experienced 21st century instructor of religion and philosophy, I have long been aware that my students and I inhabit religiously pluralistic classrooms. To borrow from Durkheim, this is a "social fact" that poses numerous challenges and opportunities—challenges and opportunities that differ significantly from those that shaped my own undergraduate experience. That's one reason why I so welcome this collection of essays compiled by Najeeba Syeed and Heidi Hadsell. It offers university and college (and presumably secondary school) instructors a fascinating array of pedagogical ideas, techniques, and tools informed by scholarly theory and classroom practice. The result is a useful and provocative handbook of how to teach about religious and theological matters during these promising (and perilous) times.

This book is comprised of eleven of essays from a group of scholars (including established professors and graduate students) arising from a series of ongoing conversations in a project on "Interreligious Education and Pedagogy." These teacher-scholars come from an array of institutional and faith backgrounds, primarily in theological and seminary settings. While each essay addresses distinct issues (e.g., institutional/denominational resistance, educational outreach to the larger community, the internal complexities of personal theologies), each author shares a commitment to grounding pedagogical points in personal experience and theory. This is the type of book that lends itself to diving in at various points rather than reading straight through from cover to cover. Still, I would especially recommend that readers begin with Judith Berling's introduction and then turn to Heidi Hadsell's conclusion, as both pieces frame the overall discussion.

Naturally there are a few essays that warrant special attention. For example, Monica Coleman's essay, "Teaching African American Religious Pluralism," challenges received notions of personal and communal religious identity by closely examining African American religiosity as a lived experience. As she and her students discovered, African American religious life is distinctly pluralistic, calling for adherents and scholars to wrestle with issues of multiple religious belonging and transreligious spirituality that defy neat intellectual categories. As such, examining African American religious experience offers important theological tools for students of all backgrounds, not just those who identify as Black. Christine Hong echoes some of Coleman's points in her essay on interreligious education. While Hong focuses primarily on her Korean American experience (which she describes as both transnational and trans-spiritual), her discussion directly challenges the white and Christian assumptions that inform academic views of non-white and non-Christian communities. Indeed, one of Hong's strongest points underscores the fact that some (I am inclined to say "all") religions have been hybrid realities from the very beginning. Finally, John Thatamanil's essay suggests a reimagining of "comparative theology" that harkens back to its ancient origins as a quest for "interreligious wisdom." The latter is particularly interesting in that Thatamanil finds such striving involves practical and experiential embodied learning (i.e. meditation, devotional exercises, yoga, etc.). My sense is that such embodied learning holds great promise for contemporary college students (at least those in my classrooms) who by and large come from nominally "Christian" (or secular) families yet often express keen interest in "Eastern spirituality."

I do not intend to slight any of the other authors included in this volume; I have learned (and am still learning) from each chapter. I would agree that the book's subtitle, "Experiments in Empathy," is most apt. More important, my sense is that this book reflects the early stages of a process of rethinking and reimagining theological and religious education in the 21st century. Such thoughts, I must confess, gives me pause. While I share the authors' strong commitment to values such as solidarity, friendship, and cooperation, when I look at our larger national and global situation, particularly in light of the harmful policies and inequalities laid bare by the ravages of COVID-19, I strongly doubt such values are widely shared. Instead, I wonder if the authors and others dedicated to interreligious education and understanding might better see ourselves, like the nameless wanderer from the Bruce Springsteen song, as "hunters of invisible game."

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BOOK REVIEW

Preparing the Next Generation of Teachers for 21st Century Education

Siew Fun Tang and Chee Leong Lim, editors

Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2018 (xx + 377 pages, ISBN 9781522540809, $168.00)

Reviewed By

Charing Wei-Jen Chen

Chicago Theological Seminary

This book is a collection of nineteen essays written by professors from different areas at Taylor's University (Malaysia) since this institute started a new process of teaching and learning evaluation in 2012. The goal of this project is to enable the students to be more independent and self-directed learners outside the classroom by revising pedagogies with technologies. The reusing of experienced pedagogy and curriculum that the teachers were trained with is not a good idea in the twenty-first century. It also reveals a lack of awareness and ability to apply technology to discipline and domain knowledge by the teachers. By using a "360 degree" evaluation and feedback system, this institute measures students' engagement, gathers feedback from learners, and identifies the strengths and improvements that each teacher can use for their teaching. The project also includes studying how a lecture recording system can enhance self-directed learning, how Moodle management can create a healthy self-guided learning environment, and how a project-based learning approach can assist in gaining skills professionally, digital experiences beyond audio/visual modules in class or on online platforms, and cross-cultural learning experiences.

This project shifts from a teacher- to a learner-centered learning paradigm by providing successful examples with e-learning tools and activities. Instead of merely memorizing and regurgitating facts from the teacher, learner-centered teaching requires conversation between teachers and learners to set up individual reasonable goals; everyone takes on a proactive role and learns something beyond the class. The teacher is the role model and prevents students from getting overwhelmed, guides them to proper resources, and helps them to self-evaluate, their learning. Blended learning, which integrates traditional face-to-face interaction and technology-based learning, should be considered when designing classes for more engaging and meaningful learning experiences, especially for Gen Y and Z learners who are technology-proficient. More additional references provided via technology and collaboration are encouraged and expected to both physical and virtual class.

E-learning tools (such as Zoom for distant lecture and discussion and Canvas for weekly assignments and term papers) are very common. However, these tools are more helpful if the teacher and the institution have redesigned pedagogies that reflect the different learning and teaching philosophies of the digital world, rather than complain about the inconvenience and time consumption of those new technologies. Taylor's University adopted a Moodle-based e-learning environment that assists the students in self-directed and collaborative leaning and assists them in developing practical skills from different disciplines. If you sometimes feel technology is a burden in your teaching or that there is a gap between your institution's requirements, your expectations, and students' experiences, especially the accumulating needs of the online classroom and the fast-changing needed interdisciplinary knowledge, this book will provide inspiration and insight through these different live examples. If you could have some impact on an institutional setting, this book empowers making smooth and efficient changes—in the beginning, it is the learner.

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THE WABASH CENTER JOURNAL ON TEACHING

BOOK REVIEW

Reach Everyone, Teach Everyone: Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education

Thomas J. Tobin and Kirsten T. Behling

Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2018 (312 pages, ISBN 978-1946684608, $26.99)

Reviewed By

Rachel Miller Jacobs

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

While universal design for learning (UDL) has been successfully in use in the K-12 world since the nineties, higher education has lagged behind in adopting its principles and practices. Most institutions of higher learning agree that UDL is a good idea, yet UDL practices have usually been delegated to, or taken on by, one professor, program, or office rather than being implemented institution-wide. It is this situation that Tobin and Behling are seeking to remedy with their book.

They do so in three interconnected ways: they reframe UDL as something other than disability advocacy, they provide a framework for integrating UDL into all aspects of students' interactions with an educational institution, and they make the case to campus leaders that UDL is not only a way to comply with accessibility law but is also sound educational and business practice. Their hope is that UDL will move from being about projects (making this course accessible to this student) to being about the culture of a school (how an institution attends to all parts of the student experience).

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 (chapters 1 and 2) provides an overview of UDL as well as the legal requirements with which UDL helps institutions comply—the "stick" approach. Part 2 (chapters 3 – 6) argues that now is the right time to adopt UDL, noting the benefits educational institutions are likely to reap by doing so—the "carrot" approach. Part 3 (chapters 7 – 11) shares specific projects, programs, and plans for implementing a UDL culture throughout an educational institution in a scaffolded way: beginning small and adding both breadth and depth over time.

What is so useful about this book is this comprehensive approach: it addresses both the system and its component parts rather than focusing more narrowly on the work of a few employees or offices. In its suggestions for specific populations (campus leaders, faculty services staff, student services staff, faculty members), this book addresses all components of a large university; in its focus on cultural change, however, it is equally applicable to a small school without these specific offices or staff members.

Two things have remained with me long after I closed the book. The first is the mindset change it advocates. Issues of access are frustrating to teaching faculty, especially in small institutions with limited resources. When I start thinking in terms of accessibility, however, I can be both proactive and more imaginative. This imagination is fueled by the "thought exercises" that end each chapter. These brief learning activities provide the scaffolding that could become a UDL redesign plan of an educational institution.

I am also reminded that while those of us in theological education care about legal compliance and sound pedagogy, our commitment to God's *shalom* offers us additional resources and motivation for the slow, organic work of becoming places that welcome and value our students in all their variety and particularity. This book can help us move in that direction.

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JOURNAL ON TEACHING

BOOK REVIEW

Enhancing Education and Training Initiatives Through Serious Games

John Denholm and Linda Lee-Davies

Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2017 (xiv + 311 pages, ISBN 978-1522536895, $148.00)

Reviewed By
Emily Kahm
College of St. Mary

Enhancing Education and Training Initiatives Through Serious Games by John Denholm and Linda Lee-Davies is a highly technical, theoretically-oriented text that outlines both the justification for and best use of games or simulation activities as learning experiences. Its eight chapters lay out the research and vocabulary of educational games, explore their design and development, and offer examples from business courses with commentary on their uses. Because of the specialized, and often difficult, language and the business backdrop of the authors, theological educators are likely to find only chapters one, four, five, and six to be relevant and should expect to do significant critical reflection in order to translate the concepts and examples into games or simulations that would suit undergraduate or graduate students in religion or theology.

The authors, both based at the University of Manchester, UK, come from commercial and academic backgrounds; Denholm is in engineering and Lee-Davies is in business and leadership. The diversity of their experiences likely informs the central premise of the book—that games or simulation activities, properly used, are effective means of teaching relevant theoretical material, not just the "soft skills" of communication and teamwork. Educators who have used unorthodox projects in academic courses can attest to how well unique, experiential learning enhances students' retention of material.

Theological educators may gain some useful reflective material from the sections where the authors address interactivity in learning contexts broadly, such as Chapter 4, "Academic Training." The authors provide exhaustive points to consider when aiming for a more collaborative style of classroom, including the technological norms of one's particular generation and the generation of students, the social structure of a classroom and power dynamics, and the level of competition or cooperation students feel as a group. While the text does not go so far as to specify how an instructor might shape each aspect of their classroom culture, readers will certainly gain a new set of questions to ponder about the cultures they create through their teaching style and whether those standards encourage or discourage shared learning.

While the text is well-researched and addresses an important aspect of pedagogical techniques, it is not necessary for theological educators to read it in its entirety, primarily because the mismatch of disciplines puts readers in the position of reimagining nearly every aspect of game structure the authors introduce. This challenge might prove invigorating for those who are especially attuned to the intricacies of the theories that undergird the text, but readers should expect to gain the most from the more broadly framed portions while noting that the examples, though engaging, will not provide a template for game-based instruction in a theological context. Most theological educators are likely to prefer a more introductory book for expanding their repertoire of teaching skills. This text is ultimately only suited for theological educators who are prepared for the demanding task of translating the specialized language used by these authors into their own pedagogical framework.

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BOOK REVIEW

None of the Above: Nonreligious Identity in the US and Canada

Joel Thiessen and Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme
New York, NY: New York University Press, 2020 (259 pages, ISBN 978-1-4798-6080-7, $30.00)

Reviewed By
Nathan E. Fleeson
University of Georgia

None of the Above: Nonreligious Identity in the US and Canada provides a fresh look at the growing place of religious nones in society, raising questions that have yet to be answered about what has been an underrepresented group of people in religious studies. This includes asking about how we understand nonreligious identity in Canada which, despite having developed a significant nonreligious population earlier than the US, has largely been ignored. Thiessen and Wilkins-Laflamme use statistical data and interviews to outline a sociological picture of nonreligious identity. Their outline includes what causes people to choose a nonreligious identity, the diverse ways one can be nonreligious, how a nonreligious identity affects sociopolitical beliefs and activity, and how those with a nonreligious identity relate to those of religious identity, and vice versa.

Thiessen and Wilkins-Laflamme also do an excellent job asking about how regional differences affect the makeup of nonreligious identity for various regions. This is one of the many reasons for incorporating a survey of both Canada and the US, but also of regional differences within the countries. The authors draw important connections between how the (non) religious identity of a region plays a role in how easy it is to be nonreligious and how it can play a role in the population's political activity.

While none of the chapters are specifically oriented towards teaching about nonreligious identity, they contain important information to better understand the nuances of this group that will benefit students. While connected together, each chapter makes an important contribution and has a strong enough framework that it could be assigned to students on its own. This book would fit well in an upper-level sociology of religion course, but it may be a bit data heavy for more introductory or humanities-oriented courses. The authors do a great job explaining their data and its impact for understanding religious nones, but one works through a lot of graphs, predicted probabilities, and lists of data along the way.

Especially valuable to teachers of religion will be the second chapter which explores the many ways one can identify as nonreligious. For this, the authors draw on definitions of religion, looking at the categories of belonging, belief, and behavior, to argue that while religious nones may belong to the same category of "nonreligion," they can have widespread religious and spiritual beliefs and behaviors. This distinction will be important for better teaching students about religious nones. We already see the value of these distinctions at work in the chapters on sociopolitical beliefs, where Thiessen and Wilkins-Laflamme point out that belief and behavior can have a greater impact than belonging. As such, one might see how our field's struggle with defining "religion" shows up in our definitions of "nonreligion."

None of the Above: Nonreligious Identity in the US and Canada makes an important step to better understanding the diversity of nonreligious identities, how that varies between the different regions of the US and Canada, and the impacts a subtype or region can have on sociopolitical beliefs or interactions with other (non)religious identities. As such, it would make a valuable addition to any course exploring the rising group of religious nones.

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BOOK REVIEW

Student Culture and Identity in Higher Education

Ambreen Shahriar and Ghazal Kazim Syed, editors

Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2017(xvii + 366 pages, ISBN 1522525513, $66.98)

Reviewed By
Katherine Daley-Bailey
University of Georgia

Student Culture and Identity in Higher Education is about identities in transition within higher education and sits at the intersection of the study of identity, education, and culture. The intertwining nature of these three terms makes disentangling them an impossible task but that is not a task the reader need undertake. For this volume is not about strict definitions or contested boundaries, but rather it is about the relationship in-between, the murky liminal space in which self and other are undone. The volume's postmodern and postcolonial ethos points the reader towards intersectionality, fluidity, and co-constructed knowledge. The topics of this volume require one to make peace with ambiguity and the pedagogical methods employed by the various contributors (Transformative Learning, Iceberg Theory, socio-contextual theories, and so forth) require students and instructors to brave the disorientation and discomfort that comes with authentic intercultural competence. Not only are instructors and students called upon to investigate their preconceived notions of others, institutions and policy makers are encouraged to investigate their deep-seated assumptions. Many of the contributors to this volume emphasize that students within institutions of higher education are not blank slates and hail from diverse backgrounds. So, educational policies and practices that assume a monolithic student body are missing the diversity and multiculturalism in their midst.

The chapters exploring these pedagogical methodologies note the challenges and rewards of their implementation. Transformative learning, for example, does not refer simply to exposure to difference but to a type of "reflective and critical learning that entails a reconfiguration of the student's sense of self, and one which relies heavily on active engagement in dialogue with those who are different from themselves" (Hart, Lantz, and Montague, 41). Green and De Cruz, citing Freire, note that transformative learning requires that individuals "be taught to critically examine the frameworks in which they live, learn, and work" (61). Critical examination of systems we inhabit often generates discomfort but this discomfort provides opportunity for growth. Transformative learning causes a "cognitive and emotional disequilibrium that offer(s) the opportunity for an individual to re-evaluate those features of identity which they had hitherto taken for granted, as well as to see and hear the other person differently" (46). Second language learners, according to Sachie, experience something similar as they are "constantly organizing and recognizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world through using the language" (20).

As institutions of higher education shift towards a consumer-focused model, transformative learning might be a hard sell. One can imagine few individuals enthusiastically signing up to be "transformed," and yet this is the aim of higher education. As an educator in religious studies and advisor in romance languages, I have seen the benefits of this methodology in action. Pushing students to question systems is paramount to higher education.

The chapters on women and the cultural attitudes regarding gender in higher education in places like China, Oman, Uganda, the UK, and the US are nuanced and go beyond surface distinctions, exploring the influence of ancient religions, traditional values, and economic initiatives on attitudes towards women and education. The reader is confronted with the living realities and the complexity and contextual nature of what we mean when we talk about blanket terms like gender and education around the world. These chapters include some unexpected surprises like the role of the Communist Party of China played in promoting a woman's right to education in the 1960s (78) or the popularity of the view in Chinese society, even as late as 2015, that "ignorance is a woman's virtue" (82). Bride price and polygamy are still practiced in Uganda and are just two of the social obstacles which individuals (without structural change) cannot easily overcome. Professional Ugandan women working in elite universities still face a number of challenges within and outside of the university. For example, the cultural mandate that women bear the bulk of the housework responsibilities means that these women do not have access to the same networking opportunities as their male peers. Hudson's chapter on identity and game design

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surprises with the report from the Entertainment Software association that in 2016 adult women made up a larger portion of the game-playing population than do boys under the age of eighteen (114). Even with these numbers, there is still a lot of work to be done on improving gender diversity in game creation education.

Any reader interested in the ways institutions of higher education around the world are responding to the challenges of identity formation, defining and implementing intercultural education, or dealing with the limitations of policy would do well to read this volume.

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BOOK REVIEW

The Power of Partnership: Students, Staff, and Faculty Revolutionizing Higher Education

Lucy Mercer-Mapstone and Sophia Abbot, editors

Elon, NC: Elon University Press, 2020 (260 pages, ISBN 978-1-951414-03-0, $6.62)

Reviewed By
Steven C. Ibbotson
Prairie Colleges

With an email dialogue between the two editors as a preface, an introductory chapter consisting of a poem and an essay, and a comic-strip like graphic before section 1, readers begin to understand the non-traditional nature of this book's discussion of partnerships in higher education.

In section 1, the authors use various genres to describe the power and politics of Student as Partners (SAP). Clearly defining the terms and identifying the real and perceived challenges of historical hierarchies within higher education, each chapter provides a solid, though repetitive, introduction to the professional and personal dynamics at play.

Section 2 describes the intersections that occur in various SAP partnerships. The challenges of the roles and responsibilities both faculty and students face are complicated by the constant changes both experience during a project. Again, the authors use various genres to explain and address these parts, with varying degrees of usefulness and interest.

Section 3 moves the conversation forward by providing examples of partnerships and how they can grow individuals and institutions. Sasha Mathrani and Alison Cook-Sather present an interesting example, bringing the disciplines of biology and education together to illustrate personal development in SAP opportunities. Anne Bruder's honest sharing about the individual students who helped her teaching increase in effectiveness through unique classroom experiences was inspiring. Lucy Mercer-Mapstone and Sophie Abbot conclude the book with a good summary of the common themes discussed. The final section was by far the strongest part of the book.

The book's varying quality and genres made it seem like the main ideas of each section were covered multiple times, with little new information or perspective offered in the different chapters. The unconventional nature of the work made it difficult to feel progression in learning and understanding the concepts of SAP or any sense of later chapters building upon the others. Positively, most chapters give evidence of research despite their unique presentation formats.

For teachers of theology and religion, there is little application until the third section of the book gives consideration to the principles introduced in the earlier sections. In this respect, the book is disappointing. While creative, much of the content in the first two sections is so repetitive that it becomes frustrating. Even though the authors accomplish their purpose of acquainting the reader with challenges and benefits of SAP, this reviewer cannot recommend the book's content as beneficial.

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BOOK REVIEW

Theme-Centered Interaction (TCI) in Higher Education: A Didactic Approach for Sustainable and Living Learning

Sylke Meyerhuber, Helmut Reiser, and Matthias Scharer, editors

Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2019 (xxii + 328 pages, ISBN 978-3-030-01047-8, $149.99)

Reviewed By
Jonghyun Kim
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

How we do make a good learning experience? All teachers would like to know the answer to this question. In this book, co-editors Sylke Meyerhuber, Helmut Reiser, and Matthias Scharer, address this question by focusing on a learning process called "Theme-Centered Interaction" (TCI) to generate a balanced relationship among an individual learner, a learning group, and a learning theme with relation to a global context, not just a classroom. The idea of TCI comes from social psychologist and educator Ruth Cohn. The book introduces Cohn's TCI approach to building a better learning environment in higher education.

By offering diverse experiences of TCI through twenty contributors who work in various fields such as the social sciences and in religious contexts, Meyerhuber, Reiser, and Scharer explore the possibility of its application to a broader field. As described in chapter two, learning, for Cohn, is not assimilating the subject matter by attending to what a lecturer says.

We cannot exist as an individual learner in a classroom; we participate as members of a learning group that has its own different social and cultural background. Further, as Scharer notes, "a person becomes fully human by addressing the world with its many challenges, assignments, and knowledge" (73). Within this understanding of the learning environment, the subject matter cannot be determined by a lecturer alone. Instead, it should be created through "an interplay between people around the theme" (65).

Here, the lecturer is not just an expert who has special knowledge to give a right answer to their students, but is also a learner who learns "what their students need in order to learn the best they could" (ix). An individual learner is not passive but engages with other members of the class to participate in the learning process. Regarding this, M. E. Hess, in chapter eight, observes that Cohn's "Theme-Centered Interaction" process provides "a flexible yet structured, open yet bound, hospitable yet charged framework through which to shape reflective practice" (217).

In my opinion, the primary purpose of the lecture is to teach something to those who have no knowledge or skill regarding a certain topic. For example, teaching factual information focuses on delivering the content itself. In that case, critical feedback on the topic during the learning process might distract from the content, which must be delivered in a classroom. But as described in this book, forging an appropriate theme is the most important task, especially in higher education, in shaping a fully responsible human being with relation to others and the world. Disturbance in a group is an unavoidable factor. This book is valuable for all those who want to create a learning environment in order to start a meaningful conversation around a topic.

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BOOK REVIEW

Catalyzing the Field: Second-Person Approaches to Contemplative Learning and Inquiry

Olen Gunnlaugson, Charles Scott, Heesoon Bai, and Edward W. Sarath, editors

Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2019 (xxiv + 235 pages, ISBN 978-1-438472836, $85.00)

Reviewed By

Beverley McGuire

University of North Carolina Wilmington

This book is third in a series on Contemplative Learning and Inquiry (Gunnlaugson et al., 2014, *Contemplative Learning and Inquiry across Disciplines*; Gunnlaugson et al., 2017, *The Intersubjective Turn*), which focuses on intersubjectivity—an empathic experience of how others are experiencing the world. Drawing on Edmund Husserl's insight that shared experience gives rise to intersubjective phenomena, Martin Buber's description of dialogue and the *I-Thou* relationship, and Thich Nhat Hanh's discussion of interbeing, or a shared ontological reality, the editors seek to bring greater attention to the intersubjective field of relationality. Whereas previous contemplative studies scholarship sought to redress the imbalanced attention to third-person perspectives by drawing attention the first-person forms of contemplative practice, this volume seeks to draw attention to second-person approaches of collaborative discernment and shared contemplative states of knowing through various applied case studies of second-person contemplative pedagogies.

Religion and theology faculty will be interested in Kathryn Byrnes and Jessica Caron's discussion of contemplative inquiry in a community of learners; Nancy Waring's discussion of insight dialogue; an interpersonal meditation practiced developed by Gregory Kramer; Ian Macnaughton's exploration of bringing attunement, presence, resonance, feeling states, and somatic experiences within a group setting; Mary Keator's application of *lectio divina* in purely secular contexts of higher education; and Sean Park's outline of how to employ relational and contemplative practices in a first year seminar. Those who focus on faculty development may find Thomas Falkenberg's essay interesting, as it discusses teaching as a contemplative professional practice that invites self-study and working with one's inner life, or Arden Henley's discussion of how to establish an intellectual and professional praxis-enhancing commons.

Several of the contemplative activities described could be adapted by religion or theology instructors, including Byrnes and Caron's "educational autobiography" assignment where students prepare a creative five-minute presentation sharing meaningful educational experiences and their impacts, or their poetry recitation assignment where students choose or write a poem demonstrating mindfulness for them, and then memorize and recite it twice for the class. Véronique Tomaszewski outlines how she uses deep listening for conflict resolution, having students hear, understand, and then respond from a place of centered attention. Sean Park has students identify a skill to work on within three core values of self-awareness, empathy, and character, writing weekly reflections on what they are struggling with, where they saw growth, and what questions arose about the skill, and collecting evidence that they later share about how they worked on the skill and the outcomes that resulted from their work.

Mary Keator explains how she uses techniques of *lectio divina* (sacred reading) in her class, having students read aloud mindfully, slowly, and carefully, and then select a word, phrase or sentence that spoke to them, which they write down, repeat, and reflect on. They then share it to the class. Another activity she employs are listening cafés where students form groups of four or five, selecting three lenses in which to look at the story and three meaningful questions to prompt deeper reflection about the story.

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BOOK REVIEW

The Negotiated Self: Employing Reflexive Inquiry to Explore Teacher Identity

Ellyn Lyle, editor

Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2018 (xxiii + 235 pages, ISBN 978-90-04-38890-1, $39.00)

Reviewed By

Leslie Cara Fuller

Southern Methodist University

The Negotiated Self presents a series of nineteen reflections on teaching identity from different practitioners and educators of teachers. The result is a diffuse definition by example after example. By taking a step back from planning and executing, these teachers create space to consider their ongoing development and to emphasize the need for teaching with authenticity and presence.

Ellyn Lyle curates the essays that share experiences through creative expression, meditative practice, reflexive inquiry, and conversations with others about what it means to be a teacher. She writes, “A teaching life, while deeply meaningful, can also be marked by feelings of disconnection” (6). Lyle proposes reflexivity as a way to counteract such feelings. David Jardine’s foreword begins the book in this same vein: just as the curriculum is a process, so too is the teacher. Instead of presenting an outline of the volume, he reflects on the common themes that result from the recognition of the fluidity of one’s teaching identity in relation to students, subject, and practice.

The educational theories of Palmer, Freire, Pinar, Dewey, and others make frequent appearances, but this volume is primarily one of reflection, not theorizing. This is far from traditional academic writing with theses, evidence, and theories. Instead, it is something more meandering, but also more revelatory. The essays toward the beginning focus mostly on reflection through creating. Models show how photography, poetry, storytelling, handicrafts, gardening, and personal narratives can serve as vehicles for the reflective work.

The collection then shifts to more direct conversation with theorists. The most compelling of these is Lana Parker’s engagement with Levinas, noting “Teaching is an ongoing process of facing the Other. As such, teacher identity is subject to the Other as it is repeatedly called into question” (128). The last chapters present the work of inviting others to reflect on their teaching through conversation. The contributors demonstrate that understanding oneself is not a straightforward task, so they write or craft or play their way through the reflection and hope to come up with a better sense of self-understanding on the other side.

“Identity is inevitably complex, multi-voiced, and always under construction” (50). In a time in which teaching, its methods, and the identity of the teacher have all been called into question, this volume provides many entries for faculty hoping to process and reassess their own roles and identities. It might be even more helpful for faculty developers brainstorming ideas for inviting faculty to reflect on their teaching identity. In the fields of theology and religious studies—which often result in a variety of fluid identities—these reflective approaches may be especially fruitful. Few of the contributors mention religion explicitly, but they do address the balance of multiple identities and how personal convictions influence one’s teaching positionality. It is a collection that invites one’s own reflection in response.

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BOOK REVIEW

A Guide to Collaborative Communication for Service-Learning and Community Engagement Partners

Rebecca J. Dumlao

Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2018 (192 pages, ISBN 978-1620361085, $27.50)

Reviewed By

AHyun Lee

Wesley Seminary at Indiana Wesleyan University

Rebecca J. Dumlao engages in collaborative communication and offers strategies and knowledge through real-life examples to build service-learning and community engagement partnerships.

Chapter 1 focuses on "being and doing collaboratively" in individual interactions. Dumlao focuses on who a person is and how self-reflection impacts their communication with others. Communication is the integral process of sharing and understanding meaning while maintaining collaborative efforts (Pearson and Nelson, *An Introduction to Human Communication* [McGraw-Hill, 2000], 6).

Dumlao describes these experiences as the foundation of partnership communication in chapter 2. It begins with a partnership between two people who share common goals of trust and respect. Collaboration examines how people think, interact, and work with each other to build a brighter future.

Chapter 3 lists the five frameworks of collaborative communication: (1) Connect and build trusting, effective relationships; (2) Converse in ways that participants are heard and understood; (3) Envision the possibilities of what can be done together; (4) Commit to one another and the joint work toward creating solutions; and (5) Understand partner patterns that make this relationship unique. Chapter 4 includes specific practices and collaborative communication processes by applying these five frameworks.

In chapter 5, collaboration requires communication practices which extend the partnership to the community. Dumlao integrates the framework of collaborative communication with topics of cultural differences and conflict management while supporting collaborative relationships in chapters 6 and 7. She provides practical strategies for creating a safe space where people tell the truth, listen empathically to other's experiences, and form a supportive communication process.

Chapter 8 introduces creative ways to celebrate the partnership, affirm accomplishment with collaborative communication, and extend community engagement through storytelling, artwork, webinars, and short audios and videos.

How does using the framework of collaborative communication construct and impact the intersectionality of multiple and ever-shifting identities? Partnerships need to be understood beyond individuals because communication also conveys institutional and social expectations. Focusing on interpersonal partnership often overlooks the reciprocal and mutual accountability of individual, interpersonal, and communal communication.

In sum, collaborative communication can happen when individuals listen to each other with "relational empathy." This involves mutual creativity in communication and leads to a "third culture" (109) where relational empathy forms unique values and norms through conversations, and service-learning and community engagement transforms culture. This book is valuable for empowering partnerships at all levels for those who want to work more effectively in relationships and community through building service-learning and community engagement.

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BOOK REVIEW

Teaching Sexuality and Religion in Higher Education: Embodied Learning, Trauma Sensitive Pedagogy, and Perspective Transformation

Darryl W. Stephens and Kate Ott, editors

New York, NY: Routledge Taylor and Francis, 2020 (224 pages, ISBN 978-0-367-34688-1, $160.00)

Reviewed By

Matilde Moro

Virginia Commonwealth University

It is difficult to find comprehensive courses, much less texts in Christian, Jewish, or Muslim studies, about sexuality and religion. When theologians do teach sexuality to students preparing for the ministry it is often a special course offering. Traditionally the subject of sexuality has been avoided, and when students are asked whether they have heard a leader address sexuality directly—in worship, a sermon, a class, or a camp training—most answer "never." However, through a *via negativa* of sorts, sexuality has been taught from the pulpit; in schools of training; in religious institutions that teach history, scripture, and pastoral care; and through theology itself as it issues prohibitions, affirms world views, negates people's humanity, and silences or forces submission (or outright rejection) of people who do not fit the accepted norm.

For those of us who do teach sexuality in both liberal arts and theological settings, not teaching sexuality is the problem. Avoiding how human sexuality has been interpreted by the church through time has led to a crisis of institutional and larger faith proportions. Avoiding ethical problems related to abuse of power, sexual abuse, domestic violence, sexual hierarchies of power divided by gender and sexuality, and other issues related to sexual violence has not prepared pastors and faculty well for their work. Whether part of a worshiping community or a teaching institution, all need to confront the denial of human sexuality as a central ethical topic that theologians must address.

This text offers a range of voices and techniques to use in the classroom. It is an anthology that addresses both methods of teaching sexuality and experience-based, theoretical approaches about what students need to learn. The text is divided into four sections. The first section describes the larger methodological approaches of embodiment-, trauma-, and transformational-informed pedagogies. The methods, in a way, are also goals for students of theology and ministry to incorporate into their repertoires of pastoral approaches to people. Section Two is centered on religious studies and addresses a variety of approaches and perspectives including transnational, colonial assumptions, critical teaching about Islam, the erotic, queer studies, and cross-cultural approaches to abortion and religion. Section Three is about religious institutions and theological training itself and includes spirituality and interactive digital pedagogy, role play in Jewish pastoral care, equipping teachers of sexual ethics, and critical fidelity or pastoral confidentiality in the classroom. The last section includes two detailed models of how to approach sexual ethics as a subject in theological education and how to train faculty to teach sexuality and religion. The chapters in this anthology are extremely helpful and needed in the theological academy and in our houses of worship alike.

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BOOK REVIEW

Inhabitance: Ecological Religious Education

Jennifer R. Ayres

Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019 (xiv + 202 pages, ISBN 978-1-4813-1137-3, $39.95)

Reviewed By

Annie Lockhart-Gilroy

Phillips Theological Seminary

For decades, many have been calling people's attention to our ecological crisis. Theologians have focused on the call to be caretakers of the earth, and environmental educators have sought different ways to teach the importance of care for the earth. As a religious educator, Jennifer Ayres stands at the intersection of both fields and challenges the fields to think a little differently about ecological education. To the theologians she reminds, "[t]he theological claim that the planet is our 'common home' demands a reimagining of human life and responsibility, the order and direction of human affections, and the very heart of Christian faith itself" (7). And to the environmental educators who have tried to convince people of the importance of caring for the earth through science, she writes "dismissing the affective dimensions of learning, however, and situating ecological consciousness too fixedly in the sciences, risks failing to cultivate a transformative ecological faith" (23). Instead, Ayres calls for a kind of ecological embodied pedagogy that is "[g]rounded in an understanding of God as creator and redeemer of the world, an understanding of ecosystems as extensions of community, and an affective and relational way of knowing the world, . . . [E]cological religious education cultivates inhabitance through a set of embodied, affective, and reflective practices" (43).

Arguing that environmental education has not and cannot alone solve various ecological problems, *Inhabitance* explores a certain type of embodied pedagogy by asserting "The educational challenge is daunting—it requires a fundamental rethinking of what it means to be human" (5). Ayres states that one cannot simply learn about a subject; there also needs to be an understanding of embodiment that stems from an ecological imagination. *Inhabitance* calls for learning different ways of knowing—good ecological learning is learning of the head and heart. Ayres argues that traditional ways of teaching environmental science through facts and figures can have a better impact by incorporating the heart as well as the head. She not only has a theoretical pedagogical discussion, but also embarks on a conversation on educational practices that would benefit classroom learning as well as action by congregations and various organizations.

This is a wonderful text to be used by scholars and practitioners. Ayres's focus on different ways of knowing would provide rich conversation for various education courses. *Inhabitance* could also be used in Christian Education classes in congregations for lay people who seek a better way to know and care for their environment. The text also gives examples of how congregations have embodied the notion of inhabitance and how that has influenced their ministries. Additionally, since religious education is interdisciplinary, (Ayres notes theological, sociological, and philosophical groundings), and different areas are explored with great depth, sections of this text can also be used in various theology and sociology classes that seek a new way of thinking about our relationship to the world that we inhabit.

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BOOK REVIEW

Transforming Ethnic Studies in Schools

Christine Sleeter and Miguel Zavala

New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2020 (xi + 176 pages, ISBN 0807763462, $29.25)

Reviewed By

Elizabeth Laura Yomantas

Pepperdine University

Transforming Ethnic Studies in Schools conceptualizes ethnic studies as an emerging field in K-12 education. Ethnic studies is defined as "an anti-racist, decolonial project that seeks to rehumanize education for students of color, center subjugated knowledge narratives and ancestral knowledge, and build solidarity across racial and ethnic differences for the purpose of working towards social justice" (167). The authors, Christine Sleeter and Miguel Zavala, are both highly-regarded scholars known for their work in this field; their journey to joining the struggle for ethnic studies is a highlight of chapter 1.

The book opens with the seven hallmarks of ethnic studies: curriculum as a counter-narrative, criticality, reclaiming cultural identities, intersectionality and multiplicity, community engagement, pedagogy that is culturally responsive and mediated, and students as intellectuals. The text then explores these hallmarks through an analysis of different dimensions of ethnic studies. Sleeter and Zavala first review a traditional curriculum to demonstrate how it is not ideologically neutral but is positioned from Eurocentric perspectives. Then, the authors review the literature of how ethnic studies affects all students—including both students of color and white students. Following the robust literature review, Sleeter and Zavala showcase examples of excellent ethnic studies curricula in connection to the hallmarks. The authors then introduce an empirical study in which they interview nine ethnic studies educators about their perspectives and experiences teaching ethnic studies. In this chapter, their findings address a gap in the literature, which includes research on the hallmark of students as intellectuals. The final chapter of the book discusses how K-12 ethnic studies can further advocacy and program sustainability.

Transforming Ethnic Studies in Schools is crafted so that both scholars and practitioners can engage with the text in meaningful ways. The book is theoretically, conceptually, and academically robust with thorough research and analyses—and yet the text is clear and reader-friendly. In addition to being accessible, the book is intelligible to both educators who are new to ethnic studies and those who have experience and background in the field. For educators who are new to ethnic studies, the book provides foundational knowledge that is essential to understanding this emerging field. For educators who have experience with ethnic studies, this work provides comprehensive content and consistently challenges the reader to think in new ways and further the field. Additionally, the book makes constant connections between curriculum reform and reinvigoration and the possibilities that ethnic studies open for the transformation of teaching and learning in pursuit of social justice.

Transforming Ethnic Studies in Schools is particularly valuable for teachers of religion and philosophy because the book provides a robust foundation for ethnic studies curricula. As students enter higher education, they may or may not have experienced ethnic studies in their K-12 education, which can influence the ways they engage with curriculum and learning in the religion and philosophy classroom.

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JOURNAL ON TEACHING

BOOK REVIEW

Where there's a Will . . . Motivation and Volition in College Teaching and Learning: New Directions for Teaching and Learning 152

Michael Theall and John M. Keller, editors

San Francisco, CA, 2017 (116 pages, ISBN 978-1-119-47623-8, $29.00)

Reviewed By
John W. Fadden
St. John Fisher College

Teachers recognize that student motivation impacts their learning. But how should teachers go about motivating students? In recent decades, scholars in a variety of fields have begun to develop models for understanding motivation and how to apply it in those fields, including education. This special edition of *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* is dedicated to the motivation, volition, and performance (MVP) model developed by John M. Keller in *Motivational Design for Learning and Performance: The ARCS Model Approach* (New York, NY: Springer, 2010). The chapter authors relate the model to diverse aspects of teaching and learning in higher education.

Part One, "Foundations," has two chapters. First, John M. Keller provides an overview of his MVP model, highlighting his work on motivational design of instruction by focusing on the components: attention, relevance, confidence, satisfaction, and volition (ARCS-V). He provides a brief but helpful section on motivational analysis (both students' and teachers') as well as designing motivational tactics and strategies. In the second chapter, Todd M. Zakrajsek brings research discoveries from neuroscience that relate to learning and filters and organizes them through the MVP model. The chapter provides practical insights from neuroscience for the educator to incorporate into their courses.

Part Two, "Applications," provides five chapters in which the authors employ the MVP model to analyze examples of learning and teaching in higher education. While none is specifically for teachers of religion or theology, the insights are translatable. In a relevant chapter for those switching courses to an online setting, Jennifer L. Franklin draws on the MVP model in the context of online learning design to establish and maintain student motivation. Next, DeBorah D. Graham and Michael Theall apply the MVP model in order to develop learners' professional values and attitudes in teacher education. Then, Karen A. Becker discusses how the model relates to her experiences teaching college survival skills in a reading and study skills program, designing the course to develop MVP-related habits in learners. In a particularly helpful chapter for understanding the model, Marilla D. Svinicki examines the ways that instructional design professionals involved in faculty development can support faculty to motivate learners. Finally, Michael Theall discusses the MVP model in relation to the evaluation of faculty, and how proper motivational strategies might turn evaluation into a more beneficial experience.

Part Three, "Outcomes," consists of two chapters. In an interesting chapter on student assessment, Thomas A. Angelo considers how to assess student motivation throughout a course using Keller's ARCS-V to suggest measurable outcomes for determining if motivational strategies have been successful. In the final chapter, John M. Keller and Michael Theall review the previous chapters and offer recommendations.

A strength of this collection is drawing attention to the MVP model and its practical applications in diverse higher education settings. While this reader was frustrated initially with the overview and felt that Keller's monograph might be needed to comprehend the model adequately, reading the other authors helped ease this frustration. They provided fruitful discussions relating pertinent parts of the model to diverse aspects of learning and teaching. The accessible examples suggest that one does not need to read the monograph to begin implementing motivation strategies into courses. The volume is both informative and practical for those in higher education.

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BOOK REVIEW

Organization and Newness: Discourses and Ecologies of Innovation in the Creative University

Michael A. Peters and Susanne Maria Weber, editors

Boston, MA: Koninklijke Brill NV Publishing, 2019 (xxxiv + 278 pages, ISBN 978-90-04-39481-0, $119.00)

Reviewed By

Bernadette McNary-Zak

Rhodes College

To what extent does the organization and structure of higher education promote and inhibit creativity? The twenty-one chapters in this book come out of a series of international conferences focused on a holistic and collaborative approach to the definition and role of the creative university (x). The majority of participants and institutions represented are located in the European Union. Centered on the observation that education resides "at the center of the economy/creativity nexus" (vii), the book asks whether "education systems, institutions, assumptions, and habits [are] positioned and able so as to seize the opportunities and meet the challenges" (vii).

The book opens with a brief preface that frames and situates study of the creative university. A formal introduction then frames the purpose of the book, to analyze newness from the perspective of organizational education (xx), and supplies a synopsis of the content. The book is divided into two parts: chapters in part one are organized around the theme of "analyzing organization, newness, and innovation;" chapters in part two focus on the theme of "strategies and actors." An epilogue, which plays with the idea of heterotopia, closes the book. Endnotes appear at the end of each chapter; references are provided at the end of the book. Scholars of religious studies and theology will find the book of limited value; with that in mind, select chapters of possible interest representing different approaches are identified here.

The first part of the book includes the chapter, "Between Organization and the New: How Lists Are Used to Create (or Reduce) Innovation," by Fabian Brückner. The chapter shares some of the results from ongoing ethnographic research of how lists function at several social services organizations. Noting the ubiquity of the practice, the author's close study attends to the "dialectic tension between the writing down and the sorting out phases" of making a list (15), and emphasizes the cognitive dimension of list making. Another chapter, titled "Organizing a New Political Culture: Women Writers and Shifts in Meanings, Power Relations, and Social Web of Society," by Ramona Mihăilă is in the second part of the book. The author locates the contributions of Romanian women in the ninteenth century and posits the impact of her finds on operative categories and constructions of European history.

This book engages a topic of ongoing consideration in higher education. Stronger editorial oversight may have resulted in a more cohesive book, and the prevention of occasional grammatical and stylistic errors. The approach and range of topics covered enables this book to serve as a resource for those interested in organizational studies.

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BOOK REVIEW

Designing Effective Feedback Processes in Higher Education: A Learning-Focused Approach

Society for Research into Higher Education Series

Naomi Winstone and David Carless

New York, NY: Routledge, 2020 (xvi + 208 pages, ISBN: 978-0-8153-6163-3, $39.95)

Reviewed By

Rob O'Lynn

Kentucky Christian University

Academic progress rises and falls on both how an instructor provides feedback and how a student receives feedback. In this volume, Naomi Winstone and David Carless, two leading international scholars in the area of academic feedback (Winstone in the UK and Carless in Hong Kong), join forces to streamline their various strands of research into one unified, "learning-centered" approach to designing systems that articulate effective feedback in higher education. Published jointly by Routledge and the UK-based Society for Research into Higher Education, this volume pulls together a massive amount of research conducted through the "Feedback Cultures in Higher Education" project, a year-long project that examined "the proximal and distal influences on the common ways in which feedback processes are enacted in contemporary higher education" (1-2). The project focused on three "strands" related to feedback: the practice of feedback, the cultures that influence feedback, and the process of developing a new set of best practices for improving feedback.

As instructors who love our subjects—especially those of us who teach practical matters (for example, this reviewer teaches preaching and practical theology)—we want our students to love it as much as we do and practice what we teach as competently as we practice it. When it comes to feedback, however, there are two significant problems that prevent the feedback process from being successful—how the instructor gives feedback and how the student processes it. Offered poorly, it can come across as harsh or even cruel rather than insightful or corrective. Taken poorly, it can lead to dismissive or withdrawn behavior. Either way, the learning process has been short-circuited. The good news, according to the authors, is that both instructors and students can learn "feedback literacy" (25).

According to the authors, feedback literacy is like any other form of literacy (such as digital, cultural, emotional, or critical). In short, it is a learning tool that is socialized by the student's learning environment. This connects to the instructor because, anecdotally speaking, instructors teach as they were taught. Unless instructors have intentionally facilitated change in their pedagogy, they will naturally teach as they were taught. Thus, both the student *and* the instructor must learn the language of feedback, with the instructor setting the tone as learner in order to facilitate a healthy environment for effective feedback. This process of developing literacy in feedback involves three practices, according to the authors: learning to appreciate the purpose and process for feedback, learning to harness the emotional impact, and learning to take action in feedback.

This volume arrived in the mail at just the right moment. I was developing a professional workshop on evaluating sermons in an online homiletics course for practical theology professors who found themselves now teaching online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I was able to integrate some of the basic concepts from this volume into that lecture to help these colleagues visualize the possibility of providing effective feedback in a pedagogical environment that they were not accustomed to. Additionally, as one who values peer-to-peer feedback, this volume provides both a framework for visualizing what a healthy culture of feedback can look like and a process for articulating constructive and healthy feedback.

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BOOK REVIEW

Locating US Theological Education in a Global Context: Conversations with American Higher Education

Hendrik R. Pieterse, editor

Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2020 (xvii + 180 pages, ISBN978-1-5326-1886-4, $25.00)

Reviewed By
Daniel D. Scott
Tyndale University

The speed with which American institutions of higher learning adapted to online delivery of classes during the COVID-19 pandemic suggests US theological education could continue to adjust to global demands and could do so quickly. Adaptation to the globalization of higher education has until now been slow within US theological education. The pace could quicken and this book could help.

In the introduction, Hendrik R. Pieterse, the editor of the volume, lays out the background of this conversation within the ATS and poses the question: "With the ecology of global theological education growing increasingly salient . . . how do US theological institutions 'locate' themselves amid these changes so as to be both *responsible participants* and *creative shapers* within it?" (xii). The answer, "locating," both as "locus" and "role," becomes the framing theme of the book.

The chapters by Hendrick Pieterse ("Internationalizing Theological Education? Musings on a Neglected Concept"); Namsoon Kang ("Global Politics of Knowledge and US Theological Education: From Globalization to Planetarization"); Brent Waters ("Globalization and Global Theological Education: Learning to Navigate the World of Creative Destruction"); E. Byron Anderson ("Church Affiliation and Higher Education in a Secularizing World: Insights and Questions for Theological Education"); and Lester Ruiz and David Esterline ("From 'Globalization' to 'Global Awareness and Engagement': Perspectives, Challenges, Futures") relate to "locating as place" and are concerned with how US theological education fits into the context of global theological education.

The chapters listed above by Pieterse, Ruiz and Esterline, and Rivera, along with those by K. K. Yeo ("'Made in the USA': A Chinese Perspective on US Theological Education in the Light of the Chinese Context"), and Margaret Eletta Guider ("The Globalization of Theological Education: A Roman Catholic Perspective") consider the idea of "locating as role" or what roles US theological institutions play in terms of global theological education.

As US theological institutions give consideration to both their place and their role in the global context, this collection of essays provides an excellent overview of the issues and provides some suggested courses of action and solutions. As a result, it should be required reading for faculty book clubs, academic planning committees, faculty senates, and cabinets. The issues raised are important to consider.

Institutions of higher learning are considering their global context in the development of their strategic plans more and more. This takes the form of branch campuses, joint degree programs, academic centers, online learning, and so forth. Witness the growth, for example, of institutional partnerships on various continents to offer MBA and law programs. Seminaries, faculties of religion, and other forms of US theological education must adapt to the trends of globalization and give consideration to their place and role in this. As is becoming increasingly evident, the "world is flat," (to borrow the catchy title of Thomas Friedman's 2005 international best seller from fifteen years ago). US theological education must recognize this fact and adjust its stance accordingly. This volume could, and should be, used as a primer.

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BOOK REVIEW

International Trends in Educational Assessment: Emerging Issues and Practices

Myint Swe Khine, editor

Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2019 (x + 104 pages, ISBN 978-90-04-39342-4, $54.00)

Reviewed By
Anne-Marie Ellithorpe
Vancouver School of Theology

This slim edited volume is comprised of selected and invited papers from international scholars, presented at the first International Conference on Educational Measurement and Assessment, in 2017. The focus of this book is on issues, practices, and trends; it is not a how-to-guide.

The first chapter concentrates on the global three-yearly "Programme for International Student Assessment" that evaluates how successful fifteen-year-old students are likely to be in applying school knowledge and skills to "an uncertain and challenging future" (1). Peter Adams notes the possibility of achieving excellence with a strong degree of equity, and highlights the unacceptable data of indigenous students in his home country performing at a level approximately three years below non-indigenous students (3,4). Of further concern are indications from various countries of a weakening in students' "sense of belonging to the school community," along with a significant percentage of students indicating that their sense of safety and well-being at school was being "violated" by the bullying behaviors of other students (5). Assessment data of this nature is relevant to the concern of public theology for the common good and highlights concerns to which scholar-practitioners must be attentive in their work of advocacy and community building.

What then is the role of the teacher, the school community, and of assessment itself? Patrick Griffin and Nafisa Awwal advocate for a competency-based approach to education, where the teacher and community's role is transformative rather than transmissive (63). Don Klinger reminds us of the variously attributed truism: "Not everything that matters can be measured, and not everything that is measured matters" (57). Readers are reminded that change is best based on a thoughtful analysis of what skills are most needed for students' educational journeys and future lives, and the teaching and learning (rather than the measurement) thereof.

Elsewhere, learners come to the fore. While studies on assessment reform tend to focus on systems and teachers, thus "silencing young learners," Vicente Reyes and Charlene Tan advocate for listening to the voices of learners, to whom issues of assessment are most relevant (35). While challenges persist in balancing the effectiveness and efficiency of assessment, feedback that is both meaningful and timely is recognized as invaluable in supporting ongoing learning (40). Mark Russell and his co-authors note that student assessment literacy can be fostered through induction processes that highlight the interrelationship between assessment tasks and develop student awareness of assessment types, whether formative, summative, or diagnostic (48). Faculty are to collaboratively reflect, on a continuing basis, on how they conceive and implement assessment, and to utilize interdisciplinary tools developed for this purpose (49). Listening to learners and fostering learner assessment literacy within religious and theological educational contexts may also prove invaluable, even if assessment is taking place on a smaller scale.

This volume has value for religion and theology educators, not only in terms of principles regarding assessment, but also for the social and educational issues it draws attention to. While some papers are highly specialized, this resource is nevertheless a source of invaluable insights, whether one's work is focused on specific learning contexts or on the improvement of education systems.

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BOOK REVIEW

Partnership in Higher Education: Trends between African and European Institutions

African Higher Education: Developments and Perspectives Series, Volume 4

Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis and Christine Scherer, editors

Boston, MA: Brill Sense, 2019 (219 pages, ISBN 978-90-04-41185-2, $48.00)

Reviewed By
Jim Wilson
Independent Scholar,
Fargo, North Dakota

Woldegiorgis and Scherer provide a useful and needed examination of current trends in higher educational partnerships across multiple domains between Africa and Europe. This is accomplished in a multitude of ways. Divided into ten chapters, the research is both complimentary and representative of a large swath of countries and stakeholders across both continents. It includes case studies of current higher education partnerships and how they are impacted by internationalization. This volume hopes to "stimulate a new generation of scholars who are inspired to work on and understand the paradigms of higher education partnerships within an ever changing international and global context" (vii). The issues highlighted within its chapters include quality assurance standards, joint degree programs, curriculum development, a study of the higher education partnership between Maghreb and European institutions, and the internationalizing of higher education through service learning. These and other endeavors are seen as a fostering the quality of teaching, learning, and research.

An overarching theme throughout *Partnership in Higher Education* is the belief that collaboration and international partnerships are essential to the health of all institutions of higher learning desiring to successfully navigate across different national boundaries, as well as within the global marketplace. It is expected that these strategic alliances "should be based on principles of mutuality, reciprocity, equality, accountability, and shared responsibility" (204).

A colonial legacy shared amongst African higher education institutions continues to impact them and provides a crucial point of reference for matters of collaboration and partnership with their European counterparts. Common challenges faced by higher education on the continent include coming to terms with an inherited colonial education infrastructure, poor and unstable governance, segregation along colonial lines of language, brain drain, and unequal donor-recipient relationships.

Another key challenge for African universities in a postcolonial context has been finding new ways to align their academic programs with their countries' own national interests. Finding ways to support local and regional economic development, the eradication of poverty, and the promotion and sustainable use of natural resources remains imperative.

The relationship between African and European institutions of higher learning is evolving and there needs to be continuous dialogue on matters of policy and practice, particularly in this era of globalization. All collaborations and partnerships need to consider sustainability, funding, capacity, political commitment, mutual trust, and shared interests.

Although *Partnership in Higher Education: Trends between African and European Institutions* does not offer any new partnership models, it does provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the issues and trends in twenty-first century African institutions of higher education.

This book would be welcomed addition to anyone engaged in collaborative research or joint education programs with partners in other countries. It also provides a useful reference for understanding postcolonial educational theory in a real time, and for any educator working in a multicultural setting.

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BOOK REVIEW

The Teacher's Role in the Changing Globalizing World: Resources and Challenges Related to the Professional Work of Teaching

Handle Niemi, Auli Toom, Arto Kallioniemi, and Jari Lavonen, editors

Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2018 (v + 154 pages, ISBN 978-90-04-37257-3, $54.00)

Reviewed By
Daniel D. Scott
Tyndale University

No one anticipated the incredible change in the teacher's role that would come as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Within days, teachers of all age levels were suddenly compelled to adapt their teaching techniques and styles in response to social distancing. For many, this meant providing instruction completely online.

A global group of scholars, presciently, called attention to the need for teachers to adapt to twenty-first century realities, including the need to prepare teachers for cyber learning for themselves and their students. As Mingyuan Gu from Beijing Normal University says, "With the development of new technology, teacher's traditional roles are . . . facing . . . more challenges" (109).

In order to meet the challenges of the various educational environments and systems, a variety of solutions are offered. The Finnish educational system calls for high professional autonomy and responsibility; the American higher educationsystem, likewise, requires decentralization and professional autonomy. Educators from Finland and Estonia call attention to the delicate balance between the role of the teacher and the person of the teacher. Scholars from China and Singapore, meanwhile, call for a new role for twenty-first century teachers that goes beyond the Sage, Guide, and Meddler to include Knowledge Broker and Pedagogical Weaver so that teachers might have the "identity and capacity to adaptively employ a blend of different pedagogical roles when necessary" (28). Contributions from scholars in Estonia and Malta draw attention to the need for professional development for in-service teachers. Dutch scholars point to the need for teacher education policies to be reformulated to allow for innovation and reform.

Ee-Ling Low of the National Institute of Education at the Nanyang Technological University shares a story about such rethinking in Singapore. Teachers in Singapore make a pledge upon entry into pre-service education and upon graduation from pre-service. The pledge confirms that there is one central mission of the teacher: to guide students to become good and useful citizens in an ever-changing world. As a result of the massive problems confronting the world, education systems need to adapt. In order to prepare students to solve the world's problems, teachers in Singapore are urged to allow students exposure beyond the walls of the school "via digitally enabled, simulated forms of reality" (138). In so doing, students will be prepared to take on jobs not yet created.

A concluding chapter summarizes the contributions of the other nine and makes the case that teachers are part of educational ecosystems and that they, therefore, "must identify, analyze, and manage educational systems and their subsystems and understand what comprises teachers' roles within the systems" (141). That is, teachers must adapt to their surroundings as they prepare twenty-first century learners to adapt to an ever-changing world.

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BOOK REVIEW

More Than a Moment: Contextualizing the Past, Present, and Future of MOOCs

Steven D. Krause

Louisville, CO: University Press of Colorado (xx + 145 pages, ISBN 1607327864, $22.95)

Reviewed By
Matthew D. Campbell
University of North Alabama

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are a recent phenomenon within higher education and have weathered a tumultuous existence since their inception in 2008. In *More Than a Moment: Contextualizing the Past, Present, and Future of MOOCs,* Krause examines their brief history while offering incisive commentary on these courses from a variety of perspectives. Readers interested in the historical rise of MOOCs, how faculty and students have interacted with them, or the decidedly murky future of these courses—and potential attempts to integrate wide digital connectivity into education—should enjoy Krause's thoughtful text.

Krause begins by examining the original MOOC, a seemingly obscure Canadian course that blossomed into a purported instrument of disruption within higher education. A thoughtful discussion of the economic activity that accelerated interest in MOOCs follows, along with a larger discussion of their inability to gain wider traction. These reasons include an inability to replicate institutional education in an online environment (authentic interaction with professors and peers), a chronic underestimation of higher education's ability to withstand market forces, and a critical misunderstanding of student preferences.

With this context in place, Krause examines MOOCs from three viewpoints: as a natural continuation to current distance education technology, from the perspective of students, and from the perspective of faculty members. By outlining the technological forbearers of MOOCs—correspondence courses, courses employing radio and television, and traditional online coursework—it is much easier to understand the meteoric rise of MOOCs. Similarly, Krause's personal experience as a student and instructor within this style of coursework imbues the text with authentic insight.

After reviewing these perspectives, the text ends by speculating on the future prospects of MOOCs within higher education. Krause is particular to note that although MOOCs have not been entirely successful in higher education, "it would be a mistake for distance education skeptics to assume. . . that the MOOC moment is over and there is no reason to pay attention to them anymore" (117). At the same time, *More than a Moment* does not imagine a future where MOOCs are the dominant modality for higher education, but rather where they are a continuing facet of the larger educational landscape.

Any faculty member who seeks to learn from past attempts at innovation within online learning would be well served to read *More than a Moment.* As universities grapple with providing a high-quality, socially-distanced education, administrators would also benefit from the concise, authoritative appraisal that Krause offers in his text. Though written before the COVID-19 pandemic, his conclusions are prescient and timely. While the broader world has been upended from the fallout of COVID-19, faculty members must continue reimagining what education can be and should be for their students.

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BOOK REVIEW

Dilemmas and Decisions: A Critical Addition to the Curriculum

Patrick F. Miller

Boston, MA: Brill/Sense, 2018 (150 pages, ISBN 978-9004368095, $17.99)

Reviewed By

Nick Gesualdi

Johns Hopkins University

At its core, Miller's well-researched, reasoned, and written *Dilemmas and Decisions: A Critical Addition to the Curriculum*, explores the distinction between dilemmas and problems. At first glance one might be tempted to use the terms "dilemma" and "problem" interchangeably with little regard to their difference in meaning, but upon reading this text, the moral chasm between the two is apparent. According to Miller: "problems have solutions and disappear as soon as these are found. Dilemmas on the other hand leave you with an aftertaste and a sense of regret about the rejected alternative" (ix). Throughout the book, Miller weaves in additional context to describe this distinction, leaning on philosophy, classical literature, secondary school education, and psychology to buttress his argument that instead of a pedagogical focus on problem-based learning, a focus on dilemmas would yield more substantive results, rooted in critical thinking, for students.

Prior to an exploration of the application of dilemmas throughout secondary education, Miller delves deeply into the philosophical underpinnings that delineate the difference between problems and dilemmas. While a solved problem inherently has no leftover attributes—it's solved—a dilemma results in a moral remainder "cost" that exists as regret or guilt (35). One particularly striking realization and discussion occurs in chapter 3, where Miller explores how the late adolescent period of development is rife with turmoil that characterizes a developmental dilemma. As late adolescents develop their own identity and navigate the choices inherent in that development, moral remainders exist and schooling should leverage those experiences to expose students to more intensive learning experiences designed around dilemma.

While defining a purpose for education is a conversation for another book—or, more realistically, a series of books—Miller elevates a very important purpose: "dilemmas and differences of opinions are the lifeblood of a thinking society and some of the essential prerequisites of democracy" (65). If, even in the context of burgeoning anti-democratic trends in Western democracies, a role of education is to prompt and promote democracy, meaningfully incorporating dilemmas within secondary education is of paramount importance. We need to move beyond the simplistic notion of measuring and designing learning to focus around the idea that the most important thing is to arrive at the correct solution, and to do so in the quickest way possible (x). Explicitly incorporating dilemmas into secondary curriculums will offer students the chance to leverage their own funds of knowledge (social/cultural capital and identity based) to the topic, and will allow for exploration via a conceptualization that better reflects the democratic ideals and underlying purpose of education.

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BOOK REVIEW

Advancing the Learning Agenda in Jewish Education

Jon A. Levisohn and Jeffrey S. Kress, editors

Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2018 (219 pages, ISBN 1-618118-79-X, $30.99)

Reviewed By

S. Tamar Kamionkowski

Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

Editors Levisohn and Kress begin their volume with an important assertion: while the variety of Jewish learning environments and pedagogies has increased over the past few decades, the field in general still lacks rigorous attention to the articulation and assessment of learning outcomes. The editors of this book seek to remediate this issue. This volume addresses a wide range of settings like Jewish day schools and summer camps, but it is important to note in this journal that none of the contributions explicitly address rabbinical education.

The essays in the book are organized into three sections, "Learning from the Learning Sciences," "Learning from Jewish Education," and "Conceptualizing Learning Outcomes." In truth, the three sections are somewhat misleading since the essays overlap in multiple ways and do not fall clearly under the three main categories.

Readers of *The Wabash Center Journal on Teaching* may be especially interested in the essays that explore hevrutah (paired) study as a learning activity and as a tool for religious acculturation. Ari Kelman argues that Jewish learning modalities center on the social dimensions of learning and that teachers need to be as mindful of the social dimensions as the cognitive learning outcomes. Daniel P. Resnick and Lauren B. Resnick also explore the social dimensions of learning, but they focus specifically on the renewal of text study in hevrutah (pairs) in both traditional and liberal settings. Similarly, Baruch Schwarz explores some dimensions of traditional orthodox hevrutah learning that encourage attention to dialogism, collaboration, and dialecticity. The rise of student-driven learning, which centers text (not the instructor), will encourage instructors of religious and theological studies to adjust their teaching practices in order to focus more sharply on student-centered learning.

In the last section of the book, historian Sam Wineburg explores how and why Jews ought to study Jewish history in ways that both maintain intellectual integrity and also retain the power of the stories to instill values. Faculty who teach scripture in Christian seminaries will find this essay especially useful for better understanding how Jews and Christians read biblical texts in such radically different ways.

The final essay, an imaginative discussion between two fictional characters – one a proponent of subject specific education and the other a supporter of broader Jewish developmental goals – clearly highlights one of the reasons that Jewish education remains ambiguous on learning outcomes. In this final essay, the editors of the volume lay out one great debate in Jewish education: should Jewish educators focus on the mastery of Jewish subjects or on the building blocks of Jewish identity?

Most of the essays are informative, but as a collection, they do not achieve what the editors of the book hoped for: developing more professional articulations and assessments for learning outcomes in Jewish education. This shortcoming simply reifies one of the greatest challenges within Jewish education: the category "Jewish education" is so broad and expansive that it is near impossible to set standards that can be used across denominations and ages, let alone ethnicities and race. Liberal and traditional-orthodox Judaisms differ vastly on why Jews should learn, what Jews should learn, which Jews should learn, and how Jews should learn. Articulating learning outcomes necessarily entails coming to terms with the disparities of Jewish identities; and coming to terms with difference is often challenging. The editors are to be commended for their recognition of the problem and for their efforts.

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BOOK REVIEW

Teaching Mindful Writers

Brian Jackson

Louisville, CO: Utah State University Press, 2020 (290 pages, ISBN 978-1-60732-936-7, $34.95)

Reviewed By

Andrea Janelle Dickens

Arizona State University, Tempe

One of the many goals of a college education is to foster skills that allow our students to become self-learners, capable of continuing to improve and grow even after their college experience is finished. In his book *Teaching Mindful Writers*, Brian Jackson provides strategies of planning, practicing and applying, revising and reflecting to create self-sufficient writers. The book provides details on how faculty can design and implement meaningful assignments and exercises that focus on creating a culture of self-direction and reflection in our students.

Jackson draws upon a wealth of research in both learning styles and writing theory to show how the entire class design can be leveraged to create this type of learning outcome. Techniques such as daily writing are introduced. Jackson also spends time discussing how assignment design, class discussions, and feedback on work can further reinforce goals of self-direction among students. The book covers the process from beginning to design the course to the completion of teaching it.

The sections of the book are structured to guide us through the process students engage in while writing in the classroom, from brainstorming and choosing a topic to reflecting on the process after a project is completed. His method includes a model of: design, plan, practice, revise, and reflect. Within the book's sections, Jackson focuses on all aspects of course design and teaching; the work really starts before students enter the classroom, as he begins at the level of considering course outcomes. This book is thorough in its commitment to engaging students through multiple channels in the work of mindfulness, including all aspects of the course such as the homework the student completes, and discussions within class. The book makes an excellent read over the summer while considering how to structure a course for the fall semester.

While this book is aimed at the composition writing process, it has a wide application beyond first-year composition classes. Many of us teach courses that include service learning, or teach students in internship settings or other settings in which students are encouraged to use reflective practices in writing about their experiences. Others teach students to write a capstone project that demonstrates their accumulation and application of learning in a particular project or activity. In reality, any class that involves a process, such as a class teaching students to write a full-semester term paper, will find Jackson's guidance helpful. Those teaching in seminary contexts will find that Jackson's instructions are easily adapted to help students be formed by their writing process and coursework, helping students apply varieties of learning into their particular contexts.

Jackson begins with an overview of what it means to teach writing; this overview explains the field of writing for composition scholars, but is expansive enough to encompass many of our fields in which we ask students to write. The strategies shared in this book are meant to make the course design, content, assignments, and exercises reinforce a sense of student self-direction and growth. This book particularly shines in its commitment to the use of writing in pursuit of student self-sufficiency.

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THE WABASH CENTER JOURNAL ON TEACHING

BOOK REVIEW

Classroom Talk for Social Change: Critical Conversations in English Language Arts

Melissa Schieble, Amy Vetter, and Kahdeidra Monét Martin

New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2020 (160 pages, ISBN 978-0-8077-6348-3, $34.95)

Reviewed By

Rachel Moquin

Union University

Critical conversations in the classroom can create space for processing complex societal issues and disparities that students will encounter in their lives. In *Classroom Talk for Social Change: Critical Conversations in English Language Arts,* Melissa Schieble, Amy Vetter, and Kahdeidra Monét Martin posit that these conversations aid students in developing their voice, increase student learning, and empower students to drive social change. In contrast to teacher-led discourse structures, like the monologic teaching method or Freire's banking model of education, fostering critical conversations empowers students as leaders and contributors in a shared classroom space. Through an analysis of six ELA classrooms across three years, readers experience firsthand practices, successes, failures, transcripts, and reflections from these classrooms. Each author brings a distinct viewpoint and background to the text, resulting in a thoughtful, sincere how-to manual for any teacher wishing to foster critical conversations with her students.

Highly readable, *Classroom Talk* has a clear organizational structure that aids in implementing this strategy in a classroom. The authors unpack what critical conversations are and how to confront dominant societal narratives regarding power and privilege. They then explain how to adopt a critical learner stance and create safe space for critical conversations, and discuss how to increase student learning and impact by providing tools for supporting meaning making during these discussions and sustaining dialogue through talk moves. The book ends with an example of how their focus teachers reflected on the critical conversations that took place in their classrooms via transcript analysis in inquiry groups.

One of the most powerful elements of this text is the clear breakdown of how to facilitate these conversations with students, paired with examples from classroom teachers. The authors include reader-friendly charts, graphics, and resources throughout. Classroom teachers will find the compiled list of literary works that lend themselves well to critical conversations extremely useful as they attempt to break from within the traditional literary canon to provide space for rich discussion. Additional useful tools include sample discussion question frames, guiding questions for critical self-reflection, characteristics of critical conversations, a breakdown of critical talk moves, and a list of specific practices for supporting meaning making during discussion.

The intended audience for this text is K–12 ELA classroom teachers, but it also has direct applicability to those faculty charged with training future ELA teachers or any faculty interested in engaging their students in critical conversations. This text lays out the why and how of engaging students in these critical conversations, which would be of value to nearly any discussion-based course in any field. The authors also showcase the power of inquiry groups as a tool to study one's own practice and reflect with others in a collaborative setting.

By doing what the authors ask in "reflecting on knowing what you don't know" (122) and following the processes they have laid out for approaching critical conversations, reflecting on them via transcript analysis with colleagues, and seeking additional resources, faculty and educators can approach this powerful learning tool with greater confidence.

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BOOK REVIEW

Multidimensional Curriculum Enhancing Future Thinking Literacy: Teaching Learners to Take Control of Their Future

Hava E. Vidergor

Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Sense, 2018 (vii + 317 pages, ISBN 978-90-04-37518-5, $119.00)

Reviewed By

Alicia Brienza
Stonehill College

Hava E. Vidergor proposes the Multidimensional Curriculum Model (MdCM) as an essential framework for all educators in diverse disciplines from Common Core subjects to the development of interpersonal skills like global citizenship and leadership. Vidergor's work is positioned within a global context and, while the Israeli education system is the prime example, all educators gain valuable unit plans and individualized lessons that are focused, creative, and engaging for all learners. Specifically, Vidergor's inclusion of modifications for gifted/able students, English language learners, and students with disabilities highlights MdCM's adaptability. By the conclusion, readers find that MdCM is both exciting and fun for educators considering the future of education.

Vidergor illustrates future thinking literacy as a dynamic and innovative approach to essential skills-building, drawing from the Israeli Ministry of Education's definition of "meaningful learning" as "a process that results in a significant and lasting change in individuals' behavior and function" (1). MdCM combines critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, cross-cultural understanding, computing, and communication, and Vidergor sets her work apart by intentionally laying out each of these components in the subsequent chapters. Indeed, Vidergor's rich interweaving of the liberal arts in a lesson on genetics and integration of consumerism with percentages will excite educators who feel that crossover between disciplines is lacking or that resources are not sufficiently clear. Vidergor's intuitive layout is a platform for educators who want to utilize cross-disciplinary topics creatively but are unsure where to start.

Most importantly, Vidergor's lesson plans are consistent and intentional, and readers become immersed in the practice of asking students to envision themselves in a larger, global context. Vidergor explains that teaching future thinking literacy is comprised of four strategies: (1) Predictions, (2) Scenarios, (3) Global perspective, and (4) Wild Cards, whereby students have full creative license to imagine illogical circumstances and concoct far-reaching solutions (11). These four strategies spur innovation while building executive function skills; in turn, students are engaged and feel connected to their learning as creative agents with a broader conceptual awareness of course content. With terms like *creative output* and the use of diverse media, Vidergor's future thinking literacy is reflected in a more modern vocabulary and format. Particularly illuminating is the sense that students today are more interconnected, global, and aware of diverse perspectives due to advancing technology. In order to be effective, educators are tasked with keeping pace and positioning the current generation's context at the forefront. While challenging to continuously adapt, Vidergor's work is a blueprint for educators to finally approach the larger, future-oriented issues that matter most to students like climate change, global inequality, international women's rights, and energy conservation. Finally, educators will feel that fundamental questions about our society's future are imminently necessary.

For Catholic educators, Vidergor's work is precisely the foundation we need to further emphasize the Global Church with a forward-thinking, progress-oriented attention to our curriculum. Vidergor's connection across disciplines inspires Catholic educators to integrate Church teachings, mission, history, comparative religious studies, and practices as seamlessly whether in a theology or calculus course. As a higher education administrator in a Catholic institution, I incorporated MdCM and future thinking literacy in a training for tutors connecting Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Emile: On Education* and the reciprocal relationship between tutors and students. Inspired by Vidergor, the tutors scripted and roleplayed a tutoring session in the year 2060. The naturalness, creativity, and depth in their responses affirmed that Vidergor's work is a timely response to students who are already thinking about their presence in the future.

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BOOK REVIEW

Making Learning-Centered Teaching Work: Practical Strategies for Implementation (2nd Edition)

Phyllis Blumberg

Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2019 (vii + 280 pages, ISBN 978-1-62036-895-4, $37.50)

Reviewed By

Mary Ann Zimmer

Marywood University

Phyllis Blumberg is an independent consultant who spent ten years as the director of the Teaching and Learning Center at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia among other faculty development roles. She draws from all that experience in this workbook of learning-centered teaching, an extremely rich serving of both wisdom and strategy. Blumberg makes the complex practice of learning-centered teaching clear through careful analysis of its parts, numerous examples, and abundant guidance for assessment.

She has her audience in mind and includes numerous examples from a range of disciplines, numerous opportunities for detailed self-reflection, and recommendations for a variety of ways a time-pressed instructor might choose to use this material. While providing plentiful detail, Blumberg herself recommends that faculty might begin by identifying the areas that are most important to them—whether individual, study group, or program. She even provides a chart in the preface for a range of disciplines and teaching concerns that are likely to be of particular interest so that instructors can easily locate the discussion that addresses their immediate concerns. In this way she provides relief for those instructors who might be reluctant to wrestle with such a dense volume.

Blumberg divides the book into two sections with three appendices. In the first section she describes learning-centered teaching and unpacks the five elements that make up her model: the role of instructor, student responsibility for learning, function of content, student assessment, and the balance of power. A process of self-analysis is embedded in each of the many ways she describes these five elements. Four levels of self-examination of one's practice are interwoven with all five of the elements of the model distinguishing whether the instructor would identify their practice as instructor-centered or minimally, mostly, or extensively learning-centered. This section ends with guidance for the instructor to gradually implement learning-centered teaching and deal with barriers to that implementation.

The second section consists of three chapters that cover assessing learning-centered teaching through the use of rubrics. These rubrics offer detailed guidance for assessing oneself, a course, or a program. The author provides direction for choosing actions to assess and analyzing and reporting the data. Charts for self-assessment on each element include directions for describing one's current practice and next steps to further implementation of the model. Blumberg points out ways that these processes of assessment provide opportunities for faculty development, documentation of faculty progress in implementing learning-centered teaching, and possibilities for scholarship of teaching.

This volume is more useful for the religion and theology instructor than many methods texts because it focuses on discrete but clearly defined practices that are broadly applicable. One can benefit greatly from this bountiful book without reading every chart or needing to explore every practice.