

2005

Core Curriculum Signature Essays

Center for Catholic Studies, Seton Hall University

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Core Curriculum Signature Essays

Center of Catholic Studies

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Core Curriculum Seminars



Initial Signature Course Seminar

June 6-9, 2005

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“The Signature Essays”

Richard Liddy

Peter Ahr

- Middle Ages = excellence of faculty
- Printed book = excellence of library
- Computer = skills of using information
- = development of students' mental habits
- The power of autobiography – students' personal journeys – not mechanical recipes
- The “stuff” is not important – not a crash course in Catholic theology or a substitute for religion requirement
- The Catholic tradition has always been a wide one
- Begin with “who am I?” = the dignity of the person- not “an object” = an inter-religious truth
- 2nd course: responsibility to others – context of global community
- Common readings and shared reflection
- Assessment: assignments tied to clear objectives

A. D. Amar

- The phenomenon of religious fundamentalism
- Shouldn't emphasize any one tradition
- SHU students come from all faiths and no faith
- Cannot require all students to take courses in Catholicism as the signature courses are now –
- Neither Cavadini nor Haughey have required courses in Catholicism at their universities
- Cannot be a repeat of what students learned earlier – causes boredom
- Course 1: spiritualism – the purpose of life – major religions - cf the Notre Dame model
- Course 2: philosophy = various philosophies – history – global epics and masterpieces
- Course 3: self, family and social structures – good personal habits

George Browne

- His early experiments with “solipsism” – the personal creation and cultivation of worlds
- Vs the infinite variety of individuals around us – we are wired differently and it's important to take the differences seriously
- General ed requirements should stretch the students into areas where they might not be comfortable – helping to develop skills to manage the world
- Electives = exploring nooks and crannies
- The intent of the signature courses: who am I as an indiv? What are the needs of the world to which I can contribute?

- = a perpetually tentative working philosophy of life

Martha Carpentier

- The importance of autobiography
- A Catholic “core” vs. “great books” = binary opposition to “all the rest”
- Knowing who we are is as important as knowing what we think because the former determines the latter and we might as well admit – and in that
- Find the meeting place of our histories, traditions, mindsets
- How can the Catholic tradition inform such a vision?
- “We should not be bound by the binary, linear conceptions of history and knowledge in which we were educated; rather we should make these courses primarily student-centered and we should aim to develop students from inside out, not to impose knowledge upon them.
- Course 1: The Journey of Transformation = how do we create a unique self within the constraints of community? = not chronological – cf. diversity of gender, race, ethnicity and religion – the Catholic tradition. Pedagogy of texts – use the experts among us – student-centered
- Course 2: opposed to the title: too linear – need for a “capacious Catholicism” acknowledging a polymorphic humanity – generous and inclusive – about faith and in its practice and expression – sees the value of interdisciplinary teaching
- Course 3: the Challenges of the Contemporary World: How create a just society? - the American experiment – a research project -
- Bring in the arts – visual culture

Colleen Conway

- The NEH format:
 - One does not have to be an expert to explore a text
 - One does not have to have a text “explained” or “taught” to engage in meaningful conversation on it
 - Having an expert facilitator helps the process immensely
 - Key questions
 - Some continuity in texts – the Timaeus – Genesis?

Alan Delozier

- The importance of local roots = it should be a “Seton Hall” signature experience
- With Seton Hall’s paradigmatic figures given prominence: Elizabeth Seton, Orestes Brownson, Will Durant, (John Oesterreicher?) whose influence can still be felt in various ways

Marta Deyrup

- Proficiencies = students to become as active learners as possible
- E.g. information fluencies
- As wide an interpretation of “Catholic” as possible – “big tent”

Jennifer Eichman

- The Journey of Transformation: possible readings I have found helpful:
- Phil Jackson's "Sacred Hoops" – an autobiography does not have to just be about suffering – it can be about discovery – and attitudinal shifts
- Cross-religious texts:
- Practical texts: "I Prayed Myself Slim" or "Pray Your Weight Away" = concrete implications – the relation between matter and spirit?
- "Born Again Bodies" – "Dreaming Me" – exercise?
- "Things Fall Apart," "Tibetan Diaries," "The Life and Times of a Korean Shaman"
- "In our choice of texts, the questions are important, but when the questions are too narrowly construed we do our students a disservice. In reading cross religious traditions, we are able to recognize the difference between questions that fit only within a single religious tradition and those that are entertained by a people living in a variety of geographic locations."

Nancy Enright

- The need for our students to find meaning in their journeys, and my own need to find meaning –
- Teaching some Catholic texts need not lead to a narrowly defined catechizing = not what the courses are meant to do –
- Key questions: what does it mean to be human? How should we live in order to be fully human? What meaning does death have for us as we live? What is the most important in life? What is most important to me?
- The responsibility of the Catholic university to raise these questions and to present its perspectives on these questions – while not pretending that the Church's are the only answers to these questions –
- The meaning of a student's life-work? And the meaning of servant-leadership?
- The phrase "Catholic tradition broadly defined" does not mean we can define it so ambiguously that it lacks either content or identity. Otherwise a smorgasborg of texts.
- The dialogic nature of these courses will work best when rooted in one tradition, while respectfully engaging the ideas of other traditions, all in response to questions that are universal in nature.
- Inter-religious dialogue is rooted in deeply committed believers of varying traditions reaching out to each other in mutual respect and even love.

David Foster

- Purpose: building community on campus through common readings
- The importance of "conversation"
- Faith contributes questions to "reason"
- For Catholics the dignity of the human person is rooted in the Fatherhood of God, the humility of the Incarnation and the transcendental destiny of the human family
- A key question: the possibility of arriving at truth vis a vis postmodern critiques
- The historical situation of Catholicism today = Vatican II document "Gaudium et Spes" = we are pilgrims on a journey

Greg Glazov

- The problem of trying to build a core out of “value-free” social science = a contradiction in terms
- The importance of reflecting on the philosophical foundations of our core project

Tracy Gottlieb

- Most important: remember who our students are
- In general, they don’t like to read!
- They prefer TV and video games
- Cf. important statistics on who they are
- Remember the tremendous diversity among them

Daniel Katz

- Teachers are “shaped” by their teaching and become the teachers they are through their experiences in the classroom
- How help teachers – and students – to accept the uncertainty and risk built into any genuine classroom situation?
- How foster such self-knowledge?
- Is the the goal of the core: the risk of interdisciplinary explorations?

Philip Kayal

- “Catholicity” broadly defined
- Equality, mutuality, respect
- The history of sociology – to “conflict” sociology and symbolic interactionism
- The power of subjectivist American culture to detach individuals from traditional communities – people now chose their communities - from traditional survival values to self-expression values
- = liberation theology: the church of the social order and the church of the “poor in spirit” are incompatible
- Core: committing ourselves to an atmosphere of open dialogue
- You can’t love the self when the self is defined as wrong
- The culture conflict between individual freedom and Catholic orthodoxy
- We speak and teach from our whole selves – that will enter into the core

Nathaniel Knight

- Varying positions regarding any “Catholic” content of the signature courses
- Seton Hall is a Catholic university and some “Catholic” content is appropriate
- Without excluding other traditions and without proselytizing
- What are the questions “central but not exclusive to” the Catholic intellectual tradition?

Richard Liddy

- “primal questions” arise “between” the student and teacher – making both of them

- “stretch” – we as teachers don’t totally define the questions –
- The value of “conversations” = we are “transformed” by the quality and qualities of the other
 - These conversations come out of the past – that’s why classic works are important – they call us to basic questions and transformations – that’s why they keep getting read in each generation
 - The importance of the “historical” dimension: these are the questions of 21st century students attending this university with these professors who bring these backgrounds
 - The primal questions: meaning? Value? Beauty? Death? God? Transformation even in the face of death?
 - What does Catholicism have to contribute to all this?
 - Our own stories as teachers, our common story here at Seton Hall and the question: what are we bringing to birth here?

Arline Lowe

- The new way of processing information and/or entertainment favors art and music that jumps around, has light behind it
- Who are these students and how to we keep them interested in the questions?
- The importance of music – cf. Plato
- The Taliban destruction of the Buddhist shrines
- U2, Bono, benefit concerts
- The importance of “right brain” activities in the structuring of courses

Stephen Martin

- Regarding the 2nd signature course, now called “The Catholic Intellectual Tradition:”
 - End with transition to late medieval thought to the Reformation
 - Vatican II explicitly concerned modern developments – course 3
 - Cf. the various drafts of the document on the Church “Lumen Gentium”
 - = a new self-definition of the church
 - A return to the Scriptures – cf. Luther
 - The importance of highlighting the Reformation

Jim McCartin

- Two fundamental principles : including Catholicism’s view – not denying Catholicism shortcomings
- 1) the dignity of the person – the “social encyclicals” on morality, freedom and individual rights – Vatican II documents – religious liberty – what does it mean that “we are made in the image of God?” – the responsibility of all to all – the status of minorities?
- 2) Contemplating the cross: the everyday reality of inhuman exploitation, violence, suffering: “In the crucified one, Catholics see the Godhead flayed and brutalized by humanity.” Seeing ourselves in a mirror. Expanding our community through empathy.
- Such principles can animate the core and what we do at Seton Hall

Roseanne Mirabella

- The search for community – beyond specializations
- Collaboration on campus – and off
- Research seems to show that only a genuine core has an influence on the students
- The future student may love it or hate it, but she will share it –
- From the journey of transformation to community to global concerns
- Importance of service learning – community identified needs – relation to practical concerns –

Lourdes Z. Mitchel

- Importance of the summer seminar: a rich learning -
- Why not do the same with our freshmen?
- Cf. Parker Palmer, “The Courage to Teach”
- As I teach I project the conditions of my soul onto my students – the entanglements I experience in the classroom are no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life - teaching holds a mirror to the soul
- The aim of core course: to assist the students in the development of the self as they examine the catholic tradition
- Questions to address: a clear vision of what we are doing – what is its purpose? What is “transformation?” self and self-identity? How live a meaningful life? the role of religion?
- Another: who is the learner? Check out Erikson’s and Kohlberg’s stages of development
- The importance of students writing their own “autobiographies”
- The need for faculty to connect content with context – applications to real-world situations
- 2 or 3 professors co-teaching from different angles –
- Current writings – start with children’s literature, current movies and music
- The teachers need to be “engaged”

Arthur Murtuza

- In general, would prefer another title to “transformation” – “metamorphosis?”
- Cf. T.S. Eliot’s vision
- Cf. the number who die every day from preventable causes such as unclean drinking water
- The importance of short selections of readings – “so that they learn to love to read”
- The Islamic context for understanding any readings from Aquinas:
- The need for “infusions” of other non-Christian religions
- The great omission: Fiscal/economic literacy
- The “commanding form” (the de de de dah) of Beethoven’s Fifth repeated in ever new combinations
- Course 1: take “the prayer of St. Francis” and Rumi’s poem “The Chalice” – followed by selections from Robert Frost, e.e. cummings, Wallace Stevens, Herman Melville

- Cf. Paul Gauguin's painting: "Where Do We Come From? Where Are We? Where Are We Going?"

Ines Angjeli Murzaku

- I have gone through 3 systems: communist Albania, Italian, and the Jesuit Oriental Institute – and through it all I have a deep desire to know –
- The communists opened up schools – to inculcate their own ideology: Marxist-Leninist principles according to the Soviet model – the study of materialist philosophy often led students to become religious dissidents – as in my case
- The priority of the collective over the individual – of the state over the family
- The revolutionary triad: scholarship, Productive labor, physical fitness
- A high priority on scientific achievement
- Increasing cynicism among students –
- "Catholic" in Greek means "of the whole" "pertaining to the whole" – cf. the medieval universities
- The Oriental Institute: studied both Western and Eastern spirituality – ecumenical – seeking to reconcile and unite rather than confute and dominate – a spirit of inquiry and intellectual competence
- Our core should touch on many disciplines – and students should be able to reason about their own faith
- Sensitivity to justice

John Radwan

- Need for a "capacious Catholicism"
- And "an emergent Catholicism" *a la Haughey* – heading toward wholeness
- Self-correcting – focused on questions
- The liberal arts are more important than ever today: grammar, rhetoric, logic, etc.
- A question: how to introduce the students to the proficiencies right from the first year? How and where?
- Martha Carpentier's formulation of a key question: the constitution of identity? Selfhood? Community? Freedom within constraints?
- Pedagogy: discussion: "depth over breadth"
- Assessment: how does this happen in non-directly quantifiable areas?

John Ranieri: Saint Paul or Sao Paulo?

- How about 3 signature courses about "Brazil"? we would all presume that there is a "Brazil" – even though we could not perfectly define it - we could raise so many objections that we would agnostic about "Brazil"
- How about consulting those with some expertise on "Brazil"? Should they have any input in determining the meaning of "questions central but not exclusive to the Brazilian tradition broadly understood."
- In other words, talk about cities but not Rio De Janeiro. Eliminate anything distinctively Brazilian – pruned of anything Brazilian, we would have clearly delineated the heart of the Brazilian tradition –
- Or...allow the study of Brazil to shed light on crucial elements of the human

- condition? A way of understanding all people through the study of Brazil?
- Does the height of emotion raised so far in the signature discussions have to do with the institutional dimensions of the Catholic church? If so, then we should face that.
 - Can we be “fair” in this process, just as we would be in creating courses on Brazil?

Peter Savestano

- Koans as symbols arresting discursive reasoning in order to facilitate direct insight into the Absolute
- Doesn't the Catholic tradition claim that the intellect is essential to experiencing Absolute Reality? - cf. Card. Schonborn quoting the Catholic Catechism
- The tension between the theories of the anthropological tradition and creeds, doctrines and dogmas of the Catholic intellectual tradition
- “Truth” is different in each tradition: relative vs absolute
- My “situatedness:” I am not an anthropologist or a sociologist but a religious studies person – from an anthropological point of view
- Italian origins – “folk Catholics” – magic formulas and threats of supernatural beings – the saints rather than creeds
- I was very orthodox growing up – exploring religious orders –
- Religion and culture are conflated –
- I abandoned the Catholic Church – I am a practitioner of Vajrayana, Zen Buddhism and Quakerism.
- Yet I am a Catholic by “habitus” – and am fascinated by Catholic things –
- I am reading Peter Brown's “Augustine of Hippo” because in so many of the signature discussions he has been the most important figures of the Catholic intellectual tradition
- Was he like many in our day seeking security from the insecurity of the times in a religious fundamentalism?
- As those who resist change today? Change always comes from those out of power
- The Catholic intellectual tradition and Catholicism in general has come to opposite conclusions from the anthropological intellectual tradition about the nature of reality, truth and religion.
- Cf. Benedict XVI on the “dictatorship of relativism”
- As distinct from the cultural and moral relativism of anthropology – how can one teach otherwise even at Seton Hall?
- How can I teach Catholicism itself except through anthropological lenses?
- Cf. Catholic anthropologists e.g. Mary Douglas, Victor Turner, etc....?
- I approach teaching at Seton Hall with fear and trembling...
- I want to believe that what is most central and important to the Catholic intellectual tradition and what keeps me both fascinated by and attracted to it are its willingness to entertain the paradoxes and to live with the tension between one discipline and another and its own truth claims.

Anthony Sciglitano

- “Assessment” must not be limited to a rigid short-term view: cf. Alisdair McIntyre:

- “you can tell the success of a course from what students are reading and doing 20 years from now.”
- The 2nd course: needs some account of the central Christological doctrines of Christianity
 - Should reference Clement of Alexander’s Stromateis on Christianity relation to other religions – very relevant for today

Judith Stark

- “Questions central to but not exclusive to the Catholic intellectual tradition”
- The tradition is not unanimous, univocal, fixed, final or ultimate
- The importance of our sense of place: SHU, 21st century, Vatican II principles
- A listening Catholicism, not a dogmatic one
- A more “capacious” Catholicism – a tall order for a rich vibrant tradition
- The formulation of questions: the human? Community? The divine? Values?
- Global realities?
- How pool our expertise?

Patrice Thoms-Cappello

- How do I know what I know?
- The writer writes primarily for herself – sometimes for the reader – occasionally there is “that presence” –
- That’s what I try to share with my students
- Hopkins, Donne, Edna St. Vincent Millay’s “Renascence”, Walker Percy, Iris Murdoch, Newman’s “Apologia”
- Yet my way may not be the students’ way
- Yet I can share my passion and my expertise – every semester some student picks up that spark –
- “All great works of culture are imbricated, palimpsestic, braided or quilted as each critical moment relearns and names the process anew –
- Following Haughey, we must not leave the autobiographical out of our classes
- Every student has “the” question – the “dis-ease” – even their disquiet about “me” –
- How have others negotiated this dis-ease? The fathers and mothers of the Church? – St. Augustine is the place to start, the bridge between the ancient world and the modern self – Simone Weil’s “Spiritual Autobiography” – personally responded to by believers and agnostics alike – also Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton
- Coming of age novels – Jude the Obscure and Middlemarch
- Feel the response to a work –
- How to connect Catholicity and catholicity? – a tradition itself wrapped in strands of difference
- How keep the diversity and sharing among ourselves in the classroom?
- Newman on the Madonna and child as emblematic of Catholicism –

Stan Tyvoll

- Who are “we” as a Catholic university?
- Identity implies inclusion and exclusion –
- Haughey on inclusivity and openness – homes to all cultures and faiths – what does it exclude?
- Who determines? Can we reach a consensus?
- What about epistemological skeptics and relativists?
- What about proponents of immorality?

Joyce Wright

- The importance of “reaching the world with a caring heart” – cf. nursing
- A deeper sense of self
- What does it mean to be truly human? Does “faith” fit into that?
- [cf. W.C. Smith, “The Meaning of Religion,” chap 1)
- Cf. the nursing profession’s reflection on the person – cf. health-care – especially the 3rd course
- Take into account the Christian viewpoint

Paula Zaccone

- Taking a professional educational viewpoint: how bring about the targeted results?
- 1) Objectives must be clearly identifies: “Patrons and students need to be aware of the signature objectives that distinguish Seton Hall from other institutions of higher learning
- 2) the order of learning activities needs to be incremental and progressive
- 3) the program must be characterized by integration and flexibility.
- 4) innovation: breaking out of the academic cage: “While it is important to expose learners to Catholicism, it is as important for them to identify the many virtues shared by believers of world-wide religions.”

Debbie Zenicola

- The new world context – need for adaptivity –
- Old ways of teaching no longer adequate
- Must understand “how” students learn
- “Learning as Transfer” = the importance of integrating knowledge with what is already known
- New strategies needed for transfer across contexts – e.g. use examples – “what if?” questions
- The need for lively and frequent communication
- Piaget and conceptual change: from naïve theories to know knowledge = when there is a “fit” between the information and the individual
- From conflict to new equilibrium – people have to be active builders of knowledge structures
- = the “journey of transformation” – through conflict –
- Learning as a social endeavor – what are the ideas that students bring to class?
- Cognition develops in a process that internalizes social interactions

- The excitement of discovery
- Cf. group talk strategies – 3 or 4 students – importance of reaching consensus
- = the construction of shared meanings – the rehearsal of new vocabularies
- Only select students learn through solitary reading and thinking
- Less is more – quantity precludes understanding
- Roadmap of learning: “big ideas” and essential questions as organizing frameworks for each syllabus – need hierarchical structures of meaningful wholes

Response to the Seminar on the Catholic Intellectual Tradition

Peter G. Ahr

The early universities of the Middle Ages developed in an age of manuscript writing. Their society's principal means of storing and transmitting information was the human mind. Not surprisingly, the "great" universities of that time were distinguished by the excellence of their faculty. The best physicians in Europe taught in Naples, so Naples was the place to go to learn the best of medicine. The best philosophers taught in Paris, so Paris was the place to learn philosophy.

With the development of the printed book as the principal means of storing and transmitting information, the reputations of universities came to be based on the excellence, not of their teachers, but of their book collections. If you wanted to learn the most about a field, the place to go was the library that held the finest book collection in that field. We think of Oxford, Cambridge, Berlin, Harvard, Yale, etc., as "great" universities, not because the teaching there is necessarily superior, but because their libraries are (or were) unsurpassed.

The Internet has transformed this equation. Any first-grader with a browser has access to more information in a day than the most dedicated professor at the greatest library in the world had in a year. What is the key question of education in the world we are moving into, therefore, is not access to information, either from the best teachers or from the best book collection, but the skills to understand how to access, evaluate and use the information that surrounds us in a limitless field. The great universities of the future will be distinguished, not by the knowledge of their professors or the number of their books, but by their ability to form students into effective utilizers of that information.

In the Middle Ages, the "liberal arts" were the subjects of the trivium and the quadrivium: logic, mathematics, rhetoric, etc., which formed the intellectual basis for advanced study in the professional fields. During the nineteenth century, that term came to be redefined in the English-speaking world, in contrast to the discipline-specificity of the great German universities, as a broad grounding in philosophy, literature and history that was thought to provide a humane basis for professional life past graduation. As we move into the future as defined by the information revolution, it will become clearer and clearer that truly "liberating" education will be an education that once again pays attention in a systematic way to the development of students' mental habits which they will need to lead satisfying human lives in a world of information and global interaction. In this sense, critical thinking is the most liberating of all arts; and our Core revision speaks directly to this new understanding of what "liberal education" is about.

The three “signature” courses will have as their mission to educate students in how to live humanely in this new world we are moving in to. They are not meant as a crash course in Catholic theology, but rather as a pedagogy to bring them to a fruitful understanding of themselves as responsible agents in a world of information.

In this light, one of the most powerful lessons I drew from this June’s seminar is the power of autobiography as a means of formulating understanding. Having to ask what actually worked in my experience as a teacher (and what didn’t) brought home to me the fact that personal insight is not something that can be prescribed or brought about by “the” “right” pedagogy; but that it is the product of the student’s own personal growth, to which our actions are, at best, contributory. It would be an illusion on our part to imagine that we could develop a set of syllabi that would certainly produce the kind of student we imagine we want, as certainly as a properly followed recipe will produce a delicious pound cake. At best, we can raise questions with our students and discuss possible answers with them; but the actual work of appropriating answers will remain as their own contribution, to be made when and as they are ready to do so.

What will be important, then, is not the “stuff” we want them to learn, but the ways of thinking we want them to appropriate. We can do this by raising with them questions that pertain directly to their own experience, and invite them to reflect on their experience in light of the readings we discuss, and to reflect on those writings in light of their experience. For certainly one of the characteristics we want to develop in our students is the habit of self-reflection and self-criticism. I don’t have the illusion that one course or two will by itself make them reflective; but I do believe that the very fact that we keep challenging them to reflect will get them in the habit of reflection. Habits, after all, are not bits of information to be memorized; they are ways of behaving that have become second nature by constant practice. It should be our goal in developing these three courses to develop a consistent way of questioning our students and of discussing their readings which will accustom them to look at themselves and the world with the reflective eye we hope they will develop as a key component of their university education at Seton Hall.

It seems to me that the place to start in the first course is the fundamental question of “who am I?” In the Catholic tradition, the root of the person’s identity lies in the person’s status as a unique creation of God. This status as a creation of God is the basis of the individual’s dignity as a person, and the root of the individual’s responsibility to both self and others. In a culture which regards the individual essentially as the object of manipulation of economic and political forces, it is salutary to raise with the student the possibility of seeing the self as other than an object. The value of the individual is not uniquely Catholic or Christian; virtually every great religious and philosophical tradition places a similar emphasis on the value of the person. A variety of readings on this question will bring our students to a deeper appreciation of how they can understand themselves as persons.

I think the second course should expand on that understanding of the self, and lead to the question of one's responsibility to others. If others are also unique persons, what are my obligations to them? Again both the Catholic tradition and other religious and philosophical traditions offer a wide variety of perspectives on the nature of one's responsibility to others, both as individuals and as a society. How do I understand my obligations to others? How do I treat others as subjects and not objects? What are the implications of these obligations to my personal life? To my professional life? To my political life?

With this foundation, the third course can go to the broader questions concerning our responsibility to human persons across the globe. One of the central convictions of the Catholic intellectual tradition is that one does not exist as a solitary individual only, and that one is fully human only in the context of a global community that at least potentially is open to the entire human race. In a world in which, suddenly, the historical separations of distance and cultures have virtually disappeared and it is possible to communicate with others all over the planet, our students need to explore the implications of a human solidarity that is now inescapable.

All three courses need to be based on class discussion of common readings, with shared reflections on those readings. As a practical matter, the readings should be of a length that we can reasonably expect our students to digest them before class and be prepared to discuss them intelligently. Especially in the first course, which will be among the first college courses our students will be taking, we need to be sure that they get in the habit of coming to class regularly.... and prepared. It would be well to suggest questions for the students to reflect on as they read, to get them in the habit of reading critically. The course, as it is developed, should also take advantage of the possibilities of sharing ideas that are available with our information technology. These courses should be relatively small, and will offer our students the opportunity to form real intellectual communities, especially if they are paired, as is the plan, with the first English course and with the University Life course. Many of our students come to us unprepared to be active participants in class; these courses should be designed to maximize their participation in and out of class, explicitly developing their skills at oral and written development, presentation and defense of their ideas.

The Core Curriculum Principles adopted by the Faculty Senate also provide for the regular assessment of students' developing skills and proficiencies, as the University is mandated to do by the standards of good practice adopted by the Middle States Association. Whatever assignments are made in conjunction with these "signature" courses should be clearly tied to course objectives, and should be clearly measuring students' developing abilities in critical thinking, writing and oral presentation.

Perhaps most importantly, we need to remember that, while these courses are meant to deal with “questions central to the Catholic intellectual tradition, broadly understood,” they are not meant as a substitute for courses in Catholic thought or Catholic theology. The Senate, in adopting the Core principles, was not intending these courses as some sort of substitution for a religion requirement. Rather, these courses are meant to be taught by faculty members from all over the University, and must be designed in such a way as not to require specialized theological or historical knowledge of every faculty member teaching them. The central focus of these courses is not the Catholic tradition in itself, but the fundamental questions about the nature of human experience and human values that are central to that tradition as well as to others. One of the things which the Core Curriculum Committee observed in its listening to our colleagues is that our faculty shares a common sense of the purposes of education, a sense that is clearly rooted in the Catholic tradition and which reflects the fact that we have all chosen to work in a university that honors and respects that tradition. The purpose of these courses is to give all of us an opportunity to reflect with our students on the implications of that tradition, and in so doing to deepen our own understanding of the tradition we already respect, whatever our personal backgrounds may be.

The experience of our June seminar, I think, reflects that overall consensus. The participants came from a very wide variety of academic disciplines, personal interests and religious affiliations, and some of our discussions were heated indeed. What distinguished that experience, however, was the tacit agreement among all participants that the questions we were discussing were in fact important ones, questions the discussion of which is the hallmark of us as a Catholic university. The Catholic tradition is not and never has been a simple and univocal one; it has always been marked by wide disagreement; it includes both Galileo and the Roman Inquisition, St. Thomas Aquinas and the bishop of Paris who ordered his books burned as heretical. That tradition, however, is a universe of discourse which holds that the great questions of the meaning of human life are a proper object of intellectual discussion and not separable from the rest of the intellectual life; and that answers to those questions can be arrived at by disciplined thinking, and are not merely opinions to be accepted or rejected by habit, custom, whim or authority. Many of our students come to us at the stage of intellectual and moral development in which they regard all such answers as nothing but subjective opinion; it is our task as educators to bring them to a more mature and sophisticated thinking about these issues.

We as a faculty may not agree on the answers to these questions, but we agree that these are the important questions; and it is the discussion of these questions among ourselves and with our students which can be the distinctive feature of a Seton Hall education. As we begin to develop the syllabi for these courses, our colleagues charged with this task need to keep in mind that the principal reason for them is not the content, but the thinking and discovering process which they are meant to bring ourselves and our students through. The learning community that will emerge from this process can be the stronger and richer university we all hope we can become.

A Curriculum for the Twenty-First Century: Doing the Signature Courses

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Introduction

I believe that I must confess at the outset of this report that I am not a Catholic. However, it is also very important for me to state that this fact has no bearing on my views on how should an undergraduate curriculum for the twenty-first century at a national Catholic university should be designed. There is no doubt in my mind that my view would have remained unchanged even if I were a Catholic, or were commenting on such a redesign for a university run by an organization of the faith I practice, or, for that reason, by an organization of any other religious denomination.

An important phenomenon around the world during the 1990s onwards has been the revival of religious fundamentalism. People of all faiths, to seek a sort of refuge from the problems of the time, decided to revert to their religions. That has been true for all faiths, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, and other relatively smaller religions around the globe. Many believed that religion should take a more prominent place in our lives. People sought life goals and direction for day-to-day actions in their religious tenets. Not just that, many religious zealots not only believed that their religion should guide their lives, they also believed that their religion should guide the lives of others who did not practice or believe in their religion. Several sad stories of this kind are available around the world.

Catholicism and the Signature Courses

More than once, at our meetings of the University Core Curriculum Committee (UCCC), it has been mentioned that the Board of Regents wants that Seton Hall education does not cover enough of Catholicism and that curricular revisions should be made to fill this void. This, without any doubt, comes as the clear intent of the curricular revision initiative that we are undertaking. The aim of this committee has been to make sure that every Seton Hall student, like or not, should be required to take courses on Catholicism. The new curriculum is being designed to achieve it by three required courses of three credits

¹ Written to fulfill the requirements to complete attendance of the workshop on Signature Course conducted by John Haughey of Loyola of Chicago

each on this subject. These courses, dubbed as “Signature Courses,” are currently proposed to include 3 courses: (1) “The Journey of Transformation,” (2) “The Catholic Intellectual Tradition,” and (3) “The Challenges of Contemporary World.” In whatever name they come, they all are primarily teaching either Catholicism directly or looking at other related topics from Catholic perspective.

The question in front of all of us at Seton Hall is: Are we doing this revision of our curriculum right?

We invited a few external experts, in particular John Cavadini, PhD, professor and head of religion at the University of Notre Dame, and John Haughey, S.J., professor of religion at Loyola of Chicago. In providing my following analysis here, I am making use of the advice of these experts as well.

Why Should We Do Away With Signature Courses As Proposed

As has been in the ages past, there are certain topics that a good education must cover even in the twenty-first century. And, spiritual and religious aspects of life should be one such topic. However, keeping in view the realities of our time and the target markets we serve, emphasizing on any one religion or thrusting down any religion on unwilling students is not how it should be done.

Let us look at why it should not be done this way. Seton Hall enrolls about 40 percent students who come from the faiths that are non-Catholic. Since New Jersey is the most ethnically diverse state in the Union, it is going to continue to attract more non-Catholic residents. Hence, non-Catholic students at Seton Hall will continue to grow since it draws most of its students from among the New Jersey residents. Requiring our non-Catholic, or unwilling Catholics (as there will be many such students as well) to take courses in Catholicism is neither Catholic nor prudent. If we do successfully redesign new curriculum that includes these three Catholicism courses, some students will take them grudgingly, some will fight and may be will transfer out. However, what is more likely to happen is that, over the time, word will spread around school counselors and parents that Seton Hall requires every student to take these Catholicism courses and uses its education to instill Catholic faith. The consequence will be that, in a few years, either the enrollment will go down (may be by up to 50%) or the quality of incoming classes will decline (may be SATs by up to 150 points) or both in some mix. The latter is most likely to happen. In any case, it will not be an economically prudent decision. It can potentially threaten Seton Hall’s survival.

According to another aspect of this curricular redesign, to be able to compete with other universities in recruiting students, Seton Hall undergraduate degree requirements would be reduced to only 120 credit hours from the current requirements of up to about 130

credit hours. Nonetheless, the proposed 120 credit hours will also include 9 credit hours of the three Signature Courses. This will effectively reduce the curriculum to 111 credit hours, as the Signature Courses the way they are currently designed is not really education for which students go to college. This dilution of Seton Hall education could actually backfire in recruitment.

The proposed Signature Courses the way they are currently designed will not only be disliked by non-Catholics but will fail every student, including Catholics. Signature courses are going to take time away from academic courses that impart requisite life abilities and professional capabilities and knowledge and skills essential for functioning in personal and professional lives of the twenty-first century.

The non-Catholics who are forced to take these courses will most likely develop a distaste of the essence of fine Catholic teachings because of the thrusting of these on them as required courses.

Another major flaw of this design of the Signature Courses is that their content and delivery are based on the premise that the world is still Euro-centered.

How to Do Signature Course Right

To learn from others, the UCCC arranged two informational workshops, one on *Confessions* by St. Augustine conducted by John Cavadini, PhD, professor and head of religion at the University of Notre Dame, and the other on Signature Course by John Haughey, S.J., professor of religion at Loyola of Chicago. Both speakers did not openly approve of the design of the Signature Courses. They both do not have such requirements at their schools. Several times, when some members of the participants who support current design of Signature Courses approached John Cavadini for support in their initiative, Cavadini overtly stayed clear. Citing coverage of religion in curriculum at Notre Dame, Cavadini said that Notre Dame allowed students who did not want to study Bible the option to study any other “ancient text.” Nevertheless, such an amendment was not acceptable to the designers of Seton Hall Signature Courses; apathetically, they said that all student at Seton Hall will have to study Catholicism and if they don’t like to “too bad, they should have thought of that before they came to Seton Hall” or “they should transfer out.”

John Haughey in an ironical gesture wished us a lot of luck as he did not believe that such a design was right for the time. In our discussions following the Haughey conference, proponents of the Signature Courses dismissed his arguments as that of coming from someone who belonged to a “Jesuit institute.”

The fact that the proposed curriculum if approved will likely be set for the next 20-25 years makes it very important for us to assure that it will not get out-of-tune with the time over the next quarter-century or so.

The question is how should we do it right.

To offer enough rigor and challenge in college education, it is important that there should be no repeat of what has been done at the school level or at home. It is a travesty that coming to college after 13 years of school education students are expected to repeat what they have previously learned. Repeating what is done earlier is the way to drive students out. Over and over, students have said that they come to college to learn life skills, to succeed in their work lives. We have to keep them excited, their minds working and learning during their stay at Seton Hall.

Typically, at Seton Hall, in our attempt to adjust our education to the level of the lower-half of the students, we drive to boredom those who worked hard in school, learned, and came to college for the new things. The same is also true about things they learned at home or other social institutions. This includes the teaching of religion as a way of life. Signature Courses should not do that.

Goals of the Signature Courses of our core curriculum should be the following: Understanding of spiritualism, religious philosophies, intellectual study of religion and thought, evolution and development of faiths and value systems around the world, world cultures and civilizations, problems of the mankind and how to solve them, and the study and adaptation of healthy habits.

The Proposed Three Signature Courses

The above may be achieved through the following three proposed courses:

Course 1: This course, the first one in the series, should focus on spiritualism, teaching how to develop the strength of spiritualism and how to avail of it in life. It should also cover philosophy of being, and the purpose of life. It may include introduction to the evolution and practice of major religions of the world. Following up on the model of Notre Dame, students in this course should be required to read ancient texts, limited neither to the Bible, nor to those of the West. The goal of this course should be to increase the understanding of all religious beliefs among students.

Course 2: The second course should cover philosophy. It should detail various philosophies of the world from its origin to the contemporary philosophers. It should not be biased in favor of any particular philosophy. It may include an understanding of the development of the intellect and civilizations in human kind. In a way, it should cover the history of the mankind in the world. It should cover global epics and masterpieces of world literature, art, and music. There should be a special emphasis on the East as most of our students are ignorant about the literature, philosophies, and cultures of the East.

Course 3: The third course is aimed at turning our students into healthy, responsible, individuals who fit well into their families, neighborhoods, and societies. It should focus on the understanding of the self, family and social structures and the functioning and role of the individual in society. It should aim at developing good personal habits, pertaining to life, health, family, etc. It may also cover some aspects of the survival skills. Such a course is very important as students are so ignorant about healthy and happy living and engage in hollow pursuits that not only fail them but fail all those around them.

On Solipsism and Individualism

George P. Browne

Yea those many years ago, when I was an undergraduate, I undertook to fulfill a requirement with the traditional “Introduction to Philosophy” course. I remember some, but not much, from those hours spent wrestling with the ideas and schemata presented by Dr. Vergilius Ferm and by an unloved text. I tried on for size some of the philosophical organizing principles and sought to decide which one might best explain the world around me. The one schema which stuck with me, and entertained my sophomore vanity for some days, was solipsism. The concept that the “self is the only object of real knowledge or the only thing really existent”² required that the world around me exist at my sufferance. Since this meant that I and all the reality around me existed only when I was conscious and paying attention, it also suggested that without knowing it, I had awesome powers of creation and management. The world I inhabited, the visible and palpable, and the echoes voiced on the radio, in the newspapers, and in all the books, describing worlds of distant time and immense complexity, were somehow the creation of my self, with powers heretofore never suspected by the student, neither particularly bright nor terribly imaginative, who cohabited that self. Eventually, maintaining the conceit of the solipsist—to say nothing of the responsibility for all the evil in my imperfect world—proved more than I wanted to believe and I set aside the concept for a less ego centered acceptance of reality. Yet I remembered and retained a sneaking fondness for my moments as owner of the universe.

Years later, in the southern hemisphere winter of Rio de Janeiro, I had a new encounter with solipsism, this time in fictional escapade. The short story I read late one night came from a collection of “The best science fiction of 1970 something,” in the home of friends.³ Although I read the story only once and have not since figured out how to revisit it, the core of the plot and many of the details remain bright in my memory. The protagonist was a member of an order of beings far advanced, with much leisure and a need for entertainment to fill it. The new rage was a machine which allowed the owner to create and manage a world, populate it, and oversee its development. After a couple of false starts—worlds abandoned because they were uninteresting—the protagonist found one group of the beings in his newest world climbing down from the trees, developing increasing consciousness, and a streak of unpredictability which made the “game” most exciting. Eventually, his absorption in the game led him to violate the rules, somehow melding with his creation. Three hours later, friends found him bleeding and near death on the floor of his room, rejected by his people. Rescued, and restored to health, he returned to the game captivated still by the world he created and curious as to how it would continue to develop.

² *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary; Complete Text Reproduced Micrographically* 2 vol., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), II, 403.

³ I have searched the web and sought anthologies, but have found nothing. I know neither the author nor the title of this story. I only know it’s not of my imagination.

The creation and cultivation of worlds suggested in this story can be viewed as another version of solipsism. The worlds were extensions of the creators. The unpredictability of the created suggests the workings of imagination beyond individual consciousness. I have puzzled over the years about the implications unexplored in the simple version of the story. The author clearly meant to suggest that our world could be imagined as the creation of a being, itself limited, but nonetheless a “god.” The theological consequences of this suggestion seem meant to feed into, or perhaps they reflect, our modern discussions and debates about the existence and nature of God, primarily within the Christian version of history. Yet as it posits the existence of a “grand solipsist” creator the author does not delve into the wills or consciousness of the created. He leaves to our imagination the profusion of wills and identities, their interactions and their individual beliefs, dreams, desires, and lifetimes.

It is in the infinite variety of individuality around us in which I find the convincing antidote to solipsism. I continue to marvel at the differences among the persons I meet. Among those with whom I have the privilege of prolonged interaction, their individuality and complexity is ever clear. Over a decade and a half in which I served as academic advisor to students puzzled and undecided about the course of study they might pursue and the linkages such course might have to professions, careers, and a fulfilling life, the importance of recognizing the workings of variety was repeatedly driven home. As we seek to craft a common experience for undergraduates at Seton Hall, the search for balance between the power of creation, which solipsism implies, and the variety of the individual, which requires our honor once we reject centeredness on self.

I believe that one part of the genius of higher education in the United States is the very messy variety of options we offer the undergraduate student. Liberal arts degrees, with twenty, thirty, or more “major” options; pre-professional training both from the liberal arts track and in specializing schools, five different ones on our campus, testify to this variety. Further, we attempt to enable a student to keep options open and choose among this variety about to the halfway point of the undergraduate career. By contrast, in much of the rest of the western world, students are channeled into tracks early in adolescence, and university programs are frequently designed as parallel and lock-step. In order to change tracks, it might well be necessary to return to the very beginning of the new program.

In our educational system, assisting the individual student in searching out and then shaping the undergraduate program which will best serve that student becomes the task of academic advising. The core principle, as I articulated it to myself, lies in honoring the strengths and interests of the individual student. Some of us find thinking in historical terms both logical and essential to understanding and living in the present. Others find only bewilderment in the complexity of the past. Some find the ordering of relationships in numeric terms almost intuitive; others throw up proverbial hands at the conjunction of numbers and symbols. I could go on, but I won't. Instead, I will reiterate what I tell

students. It is as if we are wired differently and the differences among us help to determine what we can master and manipulate effectively and where we will struggle. Aligning our academic pursuits to maximize our strengths will normally lead toward careers and lives in which we can contribute out of those strengths and will more likely feel fulfilled. This does not mean we may ignore those areas in which we struggle. Shoring up our deficiencies is also an important part of an effective education. While one may not achieve mastery, the ability to use the tools of other disciplines and to understand the results and implications of inquiry by those who are masters is important in modern society and in most career paths.

The design of the undergraduate program seeks to achieve both these goals. The “major” should assist the student in developing strengths and special skills and should be compatible to his or her interests and strengths. General education requirements should stretch the student into areas which may not be comfortable and assist in the development of understanding and skills to manage the world beyond the major and career. A last piece of the curriculum, often ignored in academic planning, is the provision for “elective” courses. At the front end of the undergraduate program, these may allow exploration into areas the student doesn’t know, and the uncovering of strengths and interests. Later in the program, they may allow a student to pursue secondary interests and to grow skills for a particular niche or career she or he may envision. Helping students nurture indecision and explore nooks or crannies can be among the most satisfying tasks in academic advising.

As the faculty of Seton Hall continues to move through the design and implementation of a new “core curriculum” the principles suggested above need to infuse the process. The “Signature Courses” we are now inventing are to be required of every undergraduate. This could mean cookie cutter determinism shaping each and every student in the same mold. To my thinking, this would be a disaster. As I understand the outlines of planning which infuse these courses, this is not the intent. Rather, the courses seek to engage the student in the exploration of options: who am I as an individual and what might I become? How can I effectively understand or apprehend the world around me? What are the opportunities and needs in this greater world to which I might apply my evolving self? If we adhere to principles which honor the individuality of each student, the “Signature” experience can become an organizing core for the development of our students. In a combination literature/history/philosophy course I took during my senior year, one of the professors suggested we might seek a perpetually tentative working philosophy of life as vehicle for managing the rest of our lives. I am still working on it.

**Essay in response to Core Curriculum Signature Course Seminar,
June 2005**

Martha C. Carpentier,
Department of English

First, I would like to thank the Core Curriculum Committee for bringing Father Haughey to work with us on the all-important matter of creating a core curriculum at Seton Hall. I must admit that I was skeptical on the first day of the seminar. His emphasis on using autobiography and motivating us to get to know each other seemed suspiciously touchy-feely to me, and I wanted to get right to the matter at hand – the content and structure of the signature courses. However, over the three days of the seminar I came to see how absolutely right his method was and to agree with him that the success of this process is “contingent on our appetite for community.” We can do no better than to follow his lead, although whether we have the courage to do so remains to be seen.

The convincing moment came for me when I realized, on the third day, that I did not share even the same definition of the word “core” as many of my colleagues. For a significant number of the attendees at the workshop, “core” by its very definition means “Catholic core,” an introduction to the history, theology, and values of the Catholic tradition. While part of this core would certainly include works from disciplines other than religious studies or philosophy, as well as from other “wisdom traditions,” those are studied only as “other” in relation to the central truths of Catholicism or, as in the case of classical texts, in regard to their contributions to the Catholic tradition. This view is justified by the fact that Seton Hall is a Catholic institution, with a Catholic mission, and a largely (although not completely) Catholic student body.

I come from a secular humanist tradition, both in my family background and my education, so that “core” for me automatically implies a “great books” introduction to the Western tradition beginning with the Greeks up through twentieth-century and contemporary European and American culture/texts. This view of a core is also justified as providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the roots of the culture they inhabit. It is not doctrinaire, but does emphasize the progressive “triumph” of Western ideals such as rationality and individuality. Both of these definitions of a core are in fact more similar than dissimilar, setting up binary systems privileging one tradition as “central” (either Catholic or Western) with everything else seen as “other.” This is why Fr. Haughey’s stress on knowing “who we are” is as important as knowing “what we think,” because the former determines the latter despite how rational or “objective” we think we are being. We might as well admit it and, in getting to know one another, find the meeting place of our individual histories, traditions, and mindsets, rather than go on asserting the truth or relative value of one vision of “core” over the other.

Of course we can't teach *everything* – every culture, every history, every tradition – in nine credits, and also I respect that the Catholic tradition should inform a core at Seton Hall in some way (and after all, we as a faculty have mandated it). I believe at this point that the only way to bridge the distance between these concepts, or to come together on a set of signature courses we can all have confidence in and teach well, is to discard *both* of these dated pre-conceptions of what a core should be. ***We should not be bound by the binary, linear conceptions of history and knowledge in which we were educated; rather we should make these courses primarily student-centered and we should aim to develop students from the inside out, not to impose knowledge upon them.*** It is in the hope of achieving these goals that my versions of the “questions” that should guide each course, and my comments, are directed.

1) The Journey of Transformation

Question: ***How do we create a unique self within the constraints of community?***

We will win or lose our students in this first course. They will turn on or turn off, and if they turn off here, it will be very hard to win them back. It is absolutely crucial, therefore, that this course should begin where the students *are*. Given the topic, this should be self-evident since first-year college students are standing exactly on this threshold, having left the relative protection of home for the wider world and confronting for the first time questions such as “what will I do with my life? Who am I? How can I fit into the larger world?”

Using autobiographical texts, and fictional *bildungsromans*, is a good idea because they will expose students to how others have struggled with and answered those questions in the past and, because everyone enjoys narrative, they will draw students in. These texts should be taken from any era/discipline/culture but not taught in a chronological manner, and the course should not begin in the past, but in the present (where students are). Because gender, race, and ethnicity play crucially into constructions of self, creators of this course should strive to be aware that texts by one sex/race/ethnicity do not predominate. Religion is also a key determinant of identity as well as community and therefore the Catholic tradition can appropriately be integrated into the course. Texts should be connected by comparing/contrasting the values, conflicts, and solutions they propose, leaving the students with a sense of participating in an ongoing human problematic of self/community, not a sense of “authentic” vs. “unauthentic” answers.

Pedagogically this should not be a lecture course. We can look to our colleagues from the School of Education as well as to those faculty who are familiar with teaching freshman students, particularly in Oral Communications and College English I, for methods to make the course “student-centered” by motivating class discussion, requiring student presentations, using journal writing and Blackboard in creative ways that increase student inquiry and participation. A final project should ask them to envision their own “journey of transformation” into an adult member of the American and/or world community in light of some of the texts read for the course and more research into the possibilities open to them.

2) The Catholic Intellectual Tradition

Question: *How do we find faith and how does it mediate the world?*

I may as well openly admit that I am opposed to this title for the second-year course, and the guiding question I propose may give some indication as to the broader focus that I would like to see the course have. It is not the word “Catholic” that I am particularly opposed to, but moreso the words “Intellectual” and “Tradition,” which again lock us into a chronological, historical, philosophical, progressivist lecture course where we, as educated authorities, provide students with knowledge of one dominant doctrine though time, rather than encouraging an intrinsic seeking on the part of students to understand the power and meaning of faith as it is experienced around the world, and particularly within Catholicism. (I think the question of whether faith *is* primarily “intellectual” to begin with is worth raising, and not assuming). To quote Father Haughey: “An educator who educates only the ‘it’ is a one-armed paperhanger. You have to educate about the operations of consciousness that brought you there.”

I would encourage the creators of this course, therefore, to keep two concepts in mind:

1) Fr. Haughey’s “capacious Catholicism” – a Catholicism that fully acknowledges its multi-cultural traditions as well as the “polymorphic” nature of human consciousness, and one that is truly generous and inclusive.

2) The necessity that these core courses be interdisciplinary in their content and their teaching. During the three-day seminar I did a “360°” turn on this issue of interdisciplinarity. At first I felt affronted that someone from the School of Nursing or the Math Dept. might be teaching the literary texts I have earned a doctorate and spent decades studying in order to qualify myself to teach. I also felt a deep doubt as to my own ability to teach texts I haven’t earned a doctorate in and spent decades studying. But I was convinced by my colleagues, first, that it will be empowering for our students to see us struggling, as they are, with some texts that are new to us, and second that we can help each other teach texts from our separate disciplines in a process that will be intellectually enriching and will bring us together as a community. I am not sure that a course entitled “The Catholic Intellectual Tradition” is, in all honesty, interdisciplinary; whereas a course that examines faith in its practice and expression is more likely to be.

3) The Challenges of the Contemporary World

Question: *How can we create a just society?*

Of all the three courses, this is the only one, in my opinion, that could be appropriately structured chronologically or historically (and with a more mature student body, such a structure has a greater possibility of being productive). Beginning with Plato's *Republic*, we can look selectively across cultures and through time at human efforts to create a just society and to do away with human suffering and inequity. Here again, the ways in which Catholicism has addressed issues of social justice are important to include, but some focus, in my opinion, ought to be spent on the ideals and the realities of the specifically American experiment in democracy and capitalism (again, returning to where students are and what is particularly relevant to them). However, the course should not stay in the past, but should focus ultimately on one or more of the *specific* problems we are facing today in the "contemporary world," which is to say, the "global" world, such as war, disease, genocide, environmental destruction, etc. Students should be expected to produce a substantial final research project that applies the lessons and examples of the past to the question of a specific "contemporary challenge" with a nuanced understanding of causes, effects, and possible solutions.

In conclusion I would like to add that these courses should strive to incorporate multi-media. This view was expressed during the seminar and it coincides with my two key points: the necessity of situating the courses primarily where students are, and the necessity for their interdisciplinarity. Those of us teaching first-year College English (and I'm sure many others) have become increasingly aware that today's students are more comfortable with, and more adept at, analyzing visual than verbal texts. In College English we try to take advantage of that by using visual texts as a bridge to verbal texts. This does not mean, for instance, showing the students an instructional video of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" that by its nature positions the verbal text as primary and the visual text as accessory, but rather showing the students a film such as Fellini's "8^{1/2}" or a painting such as Magritte's "The Human Condition" that raises comparable questions about illusion and reality to Plato's, according to the paradigms of its own medium. This brings us again to interdisciplinarity, since academics from most liberal arts disciplines have been trained to privilege verbal texts and we will need some help from our colleagues in the Communication and Art Departments to develop a truly multi-media facet in these courses. The end result will be well worth it, I believe, in enhancing the students' experiences and enriching our own.

Inexpertise, Pedagogy and a Walk in the Garden of Eden
Colleen M. Conway

“So when the woman saw that the fruit was good to eat, and a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate...” Gen 3:6

For the past three years, faculty from Seton Hall have participated in a seminar two week summer seminar funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Association for Core Texts and Courses. I took part in the first two of these and benefited so much from that experience that my reflections on our Signature courses will grow out of my involvement with this project. The goal of this seminar was to begin to “bridge the gap” between the humanities and sciences that exists not only in academic curricula but also in our own thinking. Because of this goal, the faculty members from across the United States who were involved in the project were truly interdisciplinary. Chemists, historians, biologists, philosophers, psychologists, physicists, literary critics, Bible scholars and more all gathered to read, analyze and discuss texts. I learned several things about pedagogy from this experience.

First, one does not need to be an expert in a particular field to read and discuss a text in a meaningful way with other people who have also read the text. In fact, during the course of our time together, our different perspectives and approaches to the texts brought a range of questions that might never had occurred to us if we were a group of specialists, with already clearly defined parameters through which to read the text. With respect to our signature courses, this means that we as faculty do not need to be experts in the text, nor should mastery of the text be something that we strive for with our students. Instead, we should consider ourselves both faculty and students, a learning community, coming together to focus on a particular text with certain broad themes in mind, but open to the twists and turns our reading, questions and conversations may take.

Second, I learned that one does not need to have the text “explained” or “taught” in order to engage in a meaningful conversation about it. One does need to read closely and think responsibly. That, no doubt, is what we will need to work hard on getting our students to do. But this will happen much more readily when they discover that we are not planning on telling them what the text means. It seems to me that once we engage in that practice, we will have failed in what should be our goal. (fill this in) Along this line, one can see how being an expert on the text could, in fact, get in the way of what I would hope these courses will accomplish.

Third, while one does not need to be an expert in the text, it helps the process immensely, to have a facilitator who is an expert pedagogue. From my experience with the NEH seminars, such a facilitator has planned how to begin the discussion, knows how to keep a discussing moving in promising directions, and can communicate and enthusiasm about the text and about the prospect of exploring it together.

Now, having said all that, I am fully aware that the faculty will need some degree of preparation for leading these signature courses. Ideally, this sort of preparation will take place on the same model of the NEH seminar that I have described. Faculty will come together, having closely digested the text, and discuss it in the context of the common set of questions developed for the signature courses. While I will not try to develop this set of questions here, it seems to me that ultimately the exact questions are not as decisive as *having* them as a tool for getting the students to read closely and with some focus.

Another thing that happened with the NEH seminar is that we read certain texts all three years, together with a new set of texts for each year. For example, each of the three years started with discussion of Plato's *Timaeus*. Because the focus of the seminar was different each year, the discussion of the *Timaeus* was different as well. It seems to me that some continuity of this sort would be useful in our Signature courses as well. I can imagine, for example, the Genesis garden story being an important touchstone in each of the three courses.

Let me give an example. If we work with the basic framework that was presented in the seminar we would examine the Genesis story through the lens of transformation of the self in first year, the Catholic intellectual tradition in the second year, and challenges of the contemporary world in the third year. The garden story lends itself well to each of these themes. Looking at the story for three years running would require students to examine the story from different angles, helping them to learn about the multiplicity and fluidity of the process of interpretation, about the richness of the biblical tradition, and about contemporary issues of biblical interpretation.

Given the discussion above, I want to restrain myself from letting my expertise get in the way. But I would say that there real transformation that happens in the text (and not all bad!) that we should help our students discover. Why do the characters act as they do? What changes do they undergo in the course of the narrative? What is the significance of these changes? In the second year, one could engage explicitly the Catholic intellectual tradition, reading Genesis alongside Paul and then Augustine's reading of Genesis though Paul. In the third year, the Genesis text could be read vis-à-vis the challenges of modern science. Students could explore the role of this text in debates about evolution, Darwin, and the doctrine of creation. The class could explore the challenges of reading theologically about the truths of human becoming while also embracing the scientific truths about the evolution of life on this planet. Of course, there are certainly other texts that could be read profitably across the three years of the curriculum. I offer this merely as an example.

Finally, for me the most important thing that should emerge from Seton Hall's signature courses is an enthusiasm for learning and studying in community. To that end, my hope is that these courses could replicate the experience I had in the NEH seminar--stimulating conversation about interesting questions arising from fascinating texts. If we can make this happen for our students, we will be introducing them to the life of the mind, something they can take not only to other courses at Seton Hall but to their life beyond college. If we can do this successfully, it seems to me that Seton Hall will have developed some truly signature courses.

**From The Story of Setonia to The Story of Civilization:
Institutional Identity in the Core Curriculum –
Seton, Brownson, Durant**

Alan Delozier
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The value of the core curriculum or specialized signature program found at any institution of higher learning comes in the establishment of a distinctive focus and subsequent quality of the course offerings presented. This viewpoint is subject to differing degrees of personal interpretation and popular perception. Whenever a new plan is introduced, or revisions made to an existing scheme there will always be debate concerning what should be included or excluded altogether. Usually these concerns follow the broad-based areas of one's own academic interest or major field of activity. This phenomenon has much validity and is fairly commonplace from college to college, but with thousands of schools across the land offering similar courses this often limits content creativity. Therefore, a healthy balance of traditional study and innovation can help enhance institutional identity immeasurably. This could be achieved with the introduction of a unique module, course or program which bonds somehow to the mission, founding principles, connected personalities or centered around a special collection of materials owned by a university can yield significant educational dividends as a result.

Other schools around the country have already taken this course of action in various ways. For example, St. Bonaventure University, founded in the Franciscan tradition has a multi-semester program entitled Clare College based on centuries old ideals fostered by the Friars Minor. Guilford College of North Carolina, a Society of Friends affiliated school has a concentration on the specific themes of Integrity, Simplicity, Equality, Peace and Community based on the principles of Quaker doctrine. An interdisciplinary program at Grinnell College is devoted to study of the American Prairie in relation to its geographical location in Iowa. Plus, such logical connections as the Robert E. Lee Research Program at Washington & Lee or the semester-long course on Flannery O'Connor as part of both the English and Women's Studies Departments at Georgia State University; and even such exotic offerings as a look at Alfred M. Landon's 1936 Presidential Bid as part of a Public Policy/Mathematics assignment at the University of Kansas and a recent class section featuring "Tokyo Rose" and Civil Liberties sponsored by the UCLA Asia Institute highlights interesting alumni-institution combinations in a larger academic context. With the possibility of separate classes, specialized programs or a more intensive core curriculum; the potential for Seton Hall to follow this particular path of local linkage is manifest.

Seton Hall was founded in 1856, and is the first Catholic college in New Jersey and the largest diocesan institution in the nation. These particular attributes hold much promise for the introduction of a one-of-a-kind learning experience. The evolution of Seton Hall taken in context with the development of geographic and educational history can be traced through the five major stages in school history. These include the foundation and division of college/prep divisions along with local awareness (1856-1897) leading into the attainment

of Middle States Accreditation and regional recognition growth (1898-1932) as enrollment figures more than triple and University status is attained (1933-1950) with the establishment of schools and centers and an emergent national prominence resulted (1951-1968) along with the wider growth of graduate education and furthering of global reach (1968-present) has made the school what it is today. (Seton Hall University Fact Book, 4-8) Moreover, Catholicism as the religious affiliation of Seton Hall seems to be the focal point of the current work being done in relation to crafting new signature and specialized programs. Whether the interpretation centers upon Catholicism in a theological context or a wider, non-religious circumstance as touched upon during this seminar show that knowledge and a healthy respect toward both declarations makes for a truly universal and well-rounded approach to learning. Therefore, the forces that shaped Seton Hall and how Seton Hall products have helped to shape the world make for a mutually beneficial tandem.

Breaking down course structures from an institutional perspective can also be taken further to include individual contributions of note. In retrospect, the history and lore of Seton Hall includes various alumni, administrators and faculty who have distinguished themselves in a wide-range of endeavors over the last several decades. There are three figures of consequence depending upon reader perception that come to mind in particular when evaluating their respective intellectual pronouncements. This trilogy includes Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton, Orestes Brownson and Will Durant. Each has an important story to tell which translates into a valid means of study through developed ideas, written legacy and personal example. Moreover, each has some connection to Seton Hall not only from a guiding or participatory standpoint, but also from a real life and local perspective that transcends physical and intellectual provincialism. Furthermore, these individuals do not fit into a neat curricular categorization, but rather they can be evaluated on an interdisciplinary basis through theological, educational, historical, literary, or other means depending upon particular issues and the philosophy behind social, spiritual, mental and life experiences encountered. Each has also left behind a large body of written work found in letters, journal, editorial/article, or full-length book form along with serving as the inspiration for autobiographical/biographical studies found in libraries and lyceums from South Orange to the world at-large.

Perhaps the most illustrious figure in school history is the patroness of Seton Hall, Elizabeth Ann Seton (1774-1821), the first American born Saint. She is also the mother of American parochial education who revolutionized religious rote during the early nineteenth century as founder of the Sisters of Charity, a renowned teaching order. (Kelly, 18-19) Her legacy to the school comes in the name Seton Hall, chosen by James Roosevelt Bayley, first Bishop of Newark and nephew of this deity. A contemporary of Bayley was Orestes Brownson (1803-1876), a former resident of Elizabeth, New Jersey who served on the first Board of Trustees for Seton Hall College during the 1860s, and whose name graces the school debating society. Brownson was a former minister, journalist and social commentator who also dabbled in a number of other related enterprises during his lifetime. In 1840, he founded and wrote for the *Boston Quarterly Review* which he described as an “eclectic” mix of ideas devoted to religion, philosophy, politics and general literature which eventually led to his own self-titled journal - *Brownson's Quarterly* which saw print later that century. (Sveino, 25) Another individual of note from a more contemporary viewpoint is historian and social scientist Will Durant (1885-1981). Durant grew up in northern New Jersey and attended school at St. Peter's College prior to entering graduate studies for the

priesthood at the Immaculate Conception Seminary while working in the school library during the early 1910s. (Durant - *Autobiography*, 34) He eventually left Seton Hall after professing his loss of faith to church authorities. Durant ultimately became a teacher and later a writer of detailed compilations including the *Story of Philosophy* and the multi-volume *Story of Civilization* (with his wife and partner Ariel) which earned him worldwide notice and acclaim.

Seton, Brownson and Durant also represent the parallels and paradoxes found among personal intellectual and incidental development from a local and universal perspective alike. All individuals belonged to the Catholic Church at the time of their death, but from here the similarities vary in type and degree. Each experienced a religious conversion in the course of their lifetime with Mother Seton born to Episcopal parents; Brownson was formerly a Presbyterian, Unitarian, and Universalist (“Freethinker”) and Durant the most radical became a Socialist and adhered to Darwinism for a major portion of his life. Geographically, Brownson and Durant were native New Englanders and Mother Seton was from New York, but each lived in the Mid-Atlantic region at some point in time. From a political perspective, Brownson leaned toward the Democratic Party, Durant further left and Mother Seton was apolitical for all intensive purposes. In terms of ethnicity, Durant had French-Canadian roots and his wife Ariel was Jewish while Mother Seton and Brownson were of Anglo-Saxon stock.

Beyond personality traits, the place of educational theories help to better define means for scholarly examination. In their own views on education, Mother Seton is best studied by example with her writings as a window into her mindset and mission. Durant’s own take in particular shows a fascinating transformation in the writing of two autobiographies – *Transition* from 1927 (written in semi-novel form) and a *Dual Autobiography* (straight non-fiction) fifty years later which encompasses the alpha and omega of his life. He even touches upon his brief teaching experience at Setonia in the following manner - “Would I come and teach in South (the name “Seton” is purposely changed for novelistic purposes) Hall? The remuneration would be small, but the work might prove congenial, and be a stepping-stone to higher places later on. I could have laughed aloud with joy as I read; never had I had so much reason for believing in Providence, even in a Providence prejudiced in my favor. I wrote a grateful acceptance...” (Durant – *Transition*, 108-109) He later added that his experience with educational development in general provided much personal joy and intellectual independence as a result. “While I was abandoning all notion of ever believing again in the freedom of the will, I began to hunger for...surrendered freedom of speech and thought. I envied this man who had refused a professor’s honors and a monarch’s subsidy in order to think unhindered in his attic room. What courage, and what sincerity!...” (Durant – *Transition*, 137)

Brownson also had an interesting take on the phenomenon of enlightenment as well. Writing in 1839, he noted that “Education is something more than is commonly understood by the term. Education is something more than the ability to read and write and cipher...Education is the formation of character. It is not acquired in schools only...It begins with the first impression made on the senses of the infant, and ends only with the last made on those of the man before he sinks into the grave; and it embraces the results of all the circumstances and influences we have, or which have had, the least possible bearing in making up or determining the individual character.” (McDonnell, 95) Furthermore,

Brownson found that knowledge building came in many forms from one's neighborhood to the larger world. "Although Brownson was indeed interested in schooling, his definition of education went far beyond the confines of the school-room. Besides the formal educational agencies such as schools, colleges, and universities, Brownson envisioned informal and popular agencies such as the family, Church, press, literature...One thing is certain: Brownson never considered the school, Catholic or common, as the single most important agency in the educative process. Also, Brownson viewed education as an ongoing process, for youth and adult alike." (McDonnell, iii-iv)

In summary, the introduction of Seton, Brownson, Durant and the concept of uniqueness in course, program or core development is related to the originating Seton Hall connection and universal human experience alike. The Catholicity of Seton Hall and the catholicity of education has permeated and transcended the walls of the university in various ways over the past several decades. Therefore, capturing some of the spirit and shared experience of Setonians from generation to generation helps contribute to the formation of a student's overall scholarly evolution. Adopting one or more of these individuals for closer study would only enhance an already solid educational plan found on the drawing board as our students continue to establish their place in campus history while developing and writing their own autobiographical chapter in the ongoing story of civilization.

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Infusing the Core

Marta Mestrovic Deyrup

In developing a new core curriculum for Seton Hall, we've asked ourselves the question: what do we want our students to become? It's been obvious from the passionate debates our community has had on this topic that there are two different camps: those who want the question to be narrowly defined and those who want the question to be as broadly defined as possible. I'd like to make a pitch for the second, partially because it will spark, I believe, the greatest response in our students and partially because it falls squarely into what I would call the "big tent" of Catholicism.

The core consists of two parts: four signature courses that all students will take in common and general requirement courses that have been "infused" with core proficiencies. The latter courses are less well understood by the faculty. What are "core" proficiencies? Core proficiencies are the skills that we believe are critical to functioning in a modern society: critical thinking, numeracy, information fluency, and oral fluency. Although they sound familiarly like the "reading, writing and arithmetic" students are expected to have mastered before coming to college, these proficiencies are different because they require that students be active rather than just rote learners. They encourage what is often called habits of "life-long learning." For example, by taking a course that's received an information fluency designation, an undergraduate will learn how to find, interpret, evaluate and create new information in addition to learning the subject matter at hand. The mastery of this skill set has vast implications for our students' careers. Does the junior you teach political science want to become a lawyer? Lawyers don't surf the Web to put together a law brief. They know how to locate and evaluate information. They consult all sorts of proprietary materials that are found in the information "containers" they are accustomed to using—LexisNexis and WestLaw, for example. If your student shows you that he has mastered the techniques of finding and using information in your discipline, don't you think that he will bring those strategies with him to his law career? The same holds true for your student in English 1201, who wants to be a journalist. Teaching her how to navigate electronic information in your field, to appreciate the value and the purpose of print-based culture, and to cite sources correctly, will enable that student to begin to become a good researcher. One of the cardinal rules of journalism is that in order to write, you first need to understand what the story is. You will have given her the ability to do start to do this.

One of the mistaken impressions about the core curriculum is that it is being implemented by fiat; that it is somehow a deeply cynical endeavor. Nothing could be further from the truth. Look at some of the questions that have been asked by faculty as they develop the signature courses, the central branch of the core. "What does it mean to be human?" "What does it mean to live a truly meaningful life?" Can we embrace the other without losing the self?" "How do we deal with conflict?" Wrestling with these questions makes us become compassionate and fully formed human beings. How can our students "become" anything unless they learn to question? Too often it is said that this current "Millennial" generation is more comfortable learning in a digital environment than in face-

to-face interaction and would rather access online coursework than attend classes. While technology is one of the tools we can give our students—and is, in fact, embedded in this core—to engage in a journey of discovery with a community of other learners and teachers is one of the greatest gifts that we can give our students.

Lastly, I'd like to say a few words about what I referred to earlier as the “big tent” of Catholicism. It is clear that the faculty who are involved in the core curriculum are either Catholic or embrace the Catholic mission of Seton Hall. This is why they've committed themselves to what has now been a four-year endeavor. Yet each one of us has a very different interpretation of what that mission is, and what it means to be Catholic. That became apparent during our “signature course seminar,” which was led by Father John Haughey. After listening to the broad spectrum of opinions that were presented about the core, Haughey asked how our own autobiographies had shaped our feelings about education. Although this was never directly mentioned by Haughey, the participants referenced their own experiences to their understanding of faith. But what is the Catholic faith? Is it the experience you have as a priest? Or I have as layperson? How about the woman who was raised in an Eastern Catholic rite? Or the man, who supports the Catholic mission, yet comes from a different community of faith? Are any of these experiences less “Catholic”? Because our understanding of Catholicism takes so many different forms it is incumbent upon us to not only to listen to each other with civility and respect, but to adopt as inclusive Catholic perspective as possible in defining the core.

One of the most encouraging aspects of developing a new core curriculum has been working with other faculty members to rework existing courses or design new ones that will receive an “information fluency” designation. Although you will be the ones creating the new signature courses, we already have started on reworking the general education requirements. The process has been collaborative and very rewarding. What has worked best for us has been coming to a consensus on how to develop and evaluate this particular core proficiency skill set, a great deal of discussion and critique, and an openness of mind. We, as you shortly will, are coming together as a community to help students in their process of becoming. I wish you luck and know that you will find, as we have, that this has been a process of learning for us as well as our students.

Transformation: The Game of Basketball

Jennifer Eichman

Like the game of basketball, the three proposed signature courses require a game plan. In this short thought piece, I cannot address all the questions pertaining to the formation of a new core let alone the three proposed signature courses. So, let me address my comments to the proposed first signature course: the Journey of Transformation. Our three-day seminar raised many issues about how and what to teach. I was left with the impression that most participants could name Catholic texts relevant to the question of personal transformation or transformative communities. However, almost no one seemed to be well-versed in the autobiographical and biographical texts of other religious traditions. In what follows, I will mention some possible readings that either cross religious traditions or are from non-Christian viewpoints.

In my experience teaching Religious Dimensions of Life, some Seton Hall students found it difficult to conceive of religious practice outside the most obvious venues. There are those students that can see a church, synagogue, or temple as spaces where “religion” takes place. However, they had a harder time conceiving of the practices of every day life in religious terms. For this reason, my students really appreciated Phil Jackson’s autobiography, *Sacred Hoops*. Jackson grew up Pentecostal, but expanded his religious horizons by opening himself up to the practices of the Sioux, Buddhist meditators, Sufi mystics, and other religious traditions. Jackson claims that his method of coaching and the triangle defense he so famously promoted were inspired by his participation in Buddhist ritual. Yet, Jackson did not outright reject Christianity, he also attempted to incorporate Christian beliefs and practices in his daily interactions with others. An autobiography of this sort is instructive on several fronts: (1) religion does not have to be about suffering with a capital S; (2) Some people draw from more than one religious tradition and without contradiction; (3) There are those who incorporate religious ideas in their daily practice where ever they may be.

Now, there are plenty of religious autobiographies that describe in detail the mental anguish or physical suffering that inspired someone to search hard and long for the religious answers to their prayers. However, I would also like to point out that while a figure like Phil Jackson took his religious upbringing and explorations of other religious traditions seriously, his autobiography points to the triumphs, joys, and wonder he experiences while making subtle behavioral and attitudinal shifts in both his personal and professional life. His personal behavior served as a testament to his religious beliefs and had far-ranging influence on both the players he coached and the professional game of basketball. This is, by the way, a book that draws in our young male students who are curious about such figures. Freshman males are more able and more motivated to participate in a class discussion that speaks to something they can relate to—and Seton Hall is a basketball school. This type of text is not difficult to read. Hence it makes it easier to acclimate first-year students (especially the less academically inclined) to class discussion, critical thinking, and an academic discipline, such as religious studies. I had my students demonstrate some of the

basketball moves and discuss whether they thought Jackson had implemented religious ideas in his development of strategy.

In our June conversations, a number of faculty seemed to think of religious traditions as quite distinct from each other. The second half of the twentieth century saw a rise in what the pre-eminent sociologist Robert Wuthnow calls ‘seekers,’ that is, Americans who do not “dwell” in one religious tradition but try out a number of others—in much the same way Phil Jackson has. This process may not have been the American norm and may still seem strange to those among us who are rooted in monotheistic traditions, however, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and other Asian groups have traditionally availed themselves of the resources of more than one religious tradition. There is a saying in Japan that one is born Shinto, marries Christian, and dies Buddhist. Like their other Asian counterparts, the Japanese look to different religious traditions to deal with varying aspects of the life cycle. Chinese have traditionally been able to benefit from the spiritual techniques offered by Buddhist, Daoist, Confucian, and popular religious traditions without finding themselves to be in conflict either with themselves or with the specialists of these traditions.

Thirdly, students appreciated *Sacred Hoops* because they could see how someone could take abstract religious ideas and translate them into concrete approaches to everyday situations. While female students also liked the text, it might also be worth introducing Deborah Pierce’s *I Prayed Myself Slim* or Charlie Shedd’s *Pray your Weight Away*. The first book speaks to the role religion played and continues to play in the lives of many Christian women who join Bible-inspired diet groups (Weigh Down, Slim for Him). These movements and the texts inspired by them not only present concrete ways to reduce body size, they also point to several larger questions: What is the relationship between matter and spirit? How does God expect his followers to treat their bodies? Is the body an obstacle to salvation? And further, Does God love fat people? (and you laugh, but for some Christians this is a serious question and should make for a good discussion). Again, these texts get at the intersection of a hundred some years of American fitness culture and Christian ideas about the body (Is the body the temple of God? Does this mean you had better exercise? Or fast?). *Born Again Bodies* by R. Marie Griffiths provides ample description of these relationships and the attendant Christian questions. Another text well worth considering, Jan Willis, *Dreaming Me*, tells the story of an African American woman’s journey to find spiritual sustenance in an inhospitable world ruled by anger and fear. Willis chronicles her life growing up in a small Jim Crow Alabama town to her eventual position at Wesleyan where she currently teaches Tibetan Buddhism. The text exposes students to the history of black America in a very personal way. Her story made the indignities suffered by some members of our society more real to students who were born in a different era. This text generated great class discussion and was well liked by my students. How does racial discrimination affect religious choices? What religious techniques help someone cope with fear, anger, racism, or minority status?

The study of the nexus between religious, social, and cultural practices is particularly useful when discussing the religious behaviors and ideas of many peoples. For example, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, *Tibetan Diaries* by Geoff Childs, and *The Life and Hard Times of a Korean Shaman* by Laurel Kendall all point to the myriad ways people make religious sense of their worlds. Korean shamans, such as Yongsu’s mother are not members of a congregation; they do not attend weekly religious services. Rather Yongsu’s mother purifies

ritual space (usually someone's house or hers) and performs shamanic rituals for the sake of contacting ancestors and resolving family quandaries on a need to know basis. There may be a week of many rituals or of none. Likewise, Tashi Dondrup and Okonkwo turn to the many religious techniques available to them when the need arises (death in the family, sick child, agricultural cycle). While all three of these texts, two ethnographies and one novel are not autobiographies per se, without the work of anthropologists we would not know these life stories. I am advocating here that we consider not only the texts of literate societies, but also keep an open mind toward texts that attempt to record the lives of those who cannot write for us.

In our choice of texts, the questions are important, but when the questions are too narrowly construed we do our students a disservice. In reading cross religious traditions, we do be able to recognize the difference between questions that fit only within a single religious tradition and those that are entertained by a people living in a variety of geographic locations.

The Seminar on the Signature Courses: Some Reflections
We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time. T. S. Eliot (from “Little Gidding”)

Nancy Enright

During the seminar on the “signature courses,” we covered a variety of subjects, the most memorable of which was the concept of the journey taken by all of us to come to where we exist now in our academic and spiritual lives. I especially enjoyed hearing the members of my group telling their stories, noticing how important such things were as particular historical contexts (for instance, the Viet Nam war, which figured in a couple of our stories) and individual people as influences (an eccentric but brilliant professor/mentor, for example, or our parents, mentioned by nearly everyone). Perhaps because I am an English teacher, I love narratives and find them an especially fruitful way to discover meaning.

I found myself telling the group about my own spiritual journey, starting as a young 1970s teenager, finding hope in a somewhat vague idea of revolutionary politics but searching for truth that would go beyond them. Raised in the Church, I referred to myself by the age of fifteen as “an ex-Catholic.” Although I was very critical of the Viet Nam war and U.S. involvement in it, I was honest enough to recognize the same evils that I criticized America for in my own heart, only on a smaller scale. I mis-used my own powers, small as they were, utilizing other people for my own advantage. This realization disturbed me because it drove home the fact that political transformation, in which I put a great deal of hope, would not be enough to change society, not even enough to change me. At this point in my life, invited by a friend, I attended a concert at a local Presbyterian Church. I went with her, my sister, and my boyfriend and heard a folk-rock band singing and talking about “a personal relationship with Jesus” and “inviting Christ” into our hearts. Somehow, I knew this was exactly what I wanted and needed and walked up to the front at the end of the concert where I prayed to receive Christ into my heart. Though I wasn’t sure exactly what had happened to me, my life from that point on began to change. My faith continued to deepen and to grow, and my journey took me from the Pentecostal/evangelical congregations I initially joined to a more traditional Presbyterian Church. Finally, after some graduate study in church history and ecclesiology, I came to realize that the early church, whose legacy I had thought best carried on in evangelical or at least protestant settings, was in reality both sacramental and hierarchical, and I found myself drawn back toward the Catholic Church. However, I never lost the importance of an evangelical understanding of personal faith in Christ and the Bible study and prayer that flow out of it; I realize now that these things are perfectly compatible with Catholic teachings, though the church in which I grew up did not emphasize them as much as many protestant churches did.

So, how does this journey of mine connect with the concept of “signature” courses and a core curriculum at a Catholic University? First of all, I can deeply appreciate the need for young people to find meaning and to have this need addressed in a serious and respectful

fashion. Students come to college with a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. As someone pointed out, some students are very “satisfied” with their own religious background; others – like me as a young person -- have rejected it and are looking for something else. And there is a wide continuum of perspectives in between. However, all students – all people – need to find meaning for their lives, whether that search means examining a tradition already accepted or asking questions that perhaps have not ever been considered. Does this mean that students at a Catholic University should be pushed into a Catholic perspective on these questions? No. However, what does it mean to attend a *Catholic* University? And what does this identity imply in terms of a core curriculum?

I have been involved in much of the discussion concerning the Core because of my being on the Faculty Senate. In listening to these discussions, what I often hear expressed is a fear that teaching students about Catholic texts, giving them a sense of Catholic answers to key questions, will lead to a narrowly defined catechizing. But that is *not* what properly developed signature courses will do. During the seminar, I heard several questions raised that, to me, are crucial for anyone to consider if he or she wants to live a meaningful life. For me, the following questions, most of them raised during the seminar, are most significant: what does it mean to be human? How should we live in order to be fully human? What meaning does Death have for us as we live? What is most important in life? What is most important to *me*? In response to these questions, a Catholic university has the obligation – and it is a serious one – to convey to students what the Catholic Church teaches in answer to them. Should we pretend that the Church’s answers are *the only answers* offered? Or act as if other perspectives do not exist? Of course not. But it is entirely appropriate that a Catholic university highlight in some fashion a Catholic perspective; the signature courses are the perfect avenue to do this. Doing this is not being “narrow” at all. In fact, a clearly developed sense of one’s own tradition is a help, not a hindrance, in dialoguing with those from other traditions. One cannot truly understand a person from another faith tradition if one holds back, aloof, from a genuine commitment to *any* tradition.

Though a majority of our students are from Roman Catholic backgrounds, many of them do not have a well-developed sense of that tradition. In fact, sometimes I have been shocked by what our Catholic students do not know. From basic lack of knowledge, (like not knowing the meaning of the word “Pentecost,” which I had to define in an upper-level class), to almost no awareness of Catholic social teaching, our students are often “Catholic” in terms of culture but lacking in any kind of theological understanding. Also, a large number of our students come to school without having addressed issues of meaning for their prospective life’s work. They think in terms of resumes and paychecks, not what they might do to help other people or even what they might do to find meaning in their own personal life. Such students need to be made aware of the fact that service to others (broadly defined, not necessarily meaning working in a soup kitchen, etc.) is a key component of having a meaningful life. They need to understand that Seton Hall has a mission to create “servant leaders,” and unless we admit, to our shame, that this is only rhetoric, it is up to us to help our students understand what this servant-leadership means. Non-Catholic students also need to address these issues, and certainly their own faith traditions (or lack of faith) will inform their responses to the questions raised and the texts covered. And the courses may help them to explore their own traditions in more depth.

Raised as a Catholic, I had never learned – in twelve years of Catholic education – anything about Catholic teachings on social justice. I had never heard about Dorothy Day, for example. I knew about the Berrigans in connection with Viet Nam, but I didn't know that their perspective was neither aberrational nor disconnected from key Catholic and (in general) Christian teachings. I knew of no encyclical besides “Of Human Life,” dealing with contraception. I knew nothing of a Catholic theology of work. I had read little or nothing of Augustine or other Church Fathers/Mothers. When I rejected my Catholic faith at fifteen, I did not know what I was rejecting. When I returned to it at twenty-eight or so, I was amazed at some of the spiritual wealth that I had thrown away without realizing it.

The signature courses have been designed to highlight for students the unique experience of attending Seton Hall. Part of what makes Seton Hall different from most other universities (and *all* other universities in New Jersey) is its Catholic identity. It is vital to their purpose for the signature courses to deal with questions rooted “in the Catholic intellectual tradition,” as described in the motion approved by the Senate. The phrase “broadly defined,” which was added to the motion at the Senate meeting prior to the motion's approval, does not mean that we can define “the Catholic intellectual tradition” so ambiguously that it lacks either content or identity. By its very nature, the Catholic intellectual tradition is broad, covering an enormous amount of cultural wealth, from the theological treatises of the Church fathers/mothers to the writings of modern Catholic thinkers, like Dorothy Day and Oscar Romero.

To look at these kinds of texts in connection with writings from other traditions, as planned, is certainly neither narrow nor dogmatic. The rough draft of the syllabus for the first signature course, the Journey of Transformation, seemed to me to do a good job of juxtaposing Catholic texts with other works from a variety of perspectives, all of them addressing key questions regarding meaning, life, and death. Of course, the list of texts is still in flux, but I would make a strong case for the basic structure of this course remaining the same. To change it so that a smorgasbord of ideas is examined, with Catholic texts being simply one kind out of many, would not be a “signature” reflective of a *Catholic* university, except in the very general sense that entertaining these questions at all is a “Catholic” activity. This approach (with the classic Catholic texts cut back or omitted from the syllabus altogether) sells both the concept of the signature courses and even “the Catholic intellectual tradition” short. The dialogic nature of these courses will work best when rooted in one tradition, while respectfully engaging the ideas of other traditions, all in response to questions that are universal in nature.

The key to inter-religious dialogue, as mentioned earlier in this essay, does not exist in a kind of vague “open-mindedness” that really involves no commitment to deep religious belief of any kind. On the contrary, inter-religious dialogue is rooted in deeply committed believers of varying traditions reaching out to each other in mutual respect and even love. Paradoxically, the deeper one's own faith commitment, if genuine, the more respectful one should be of other faith traditions. The greater one's knowledge of one's own faith, the easier it is to understand the faith of others. If a depth of commitment to and knowledge of one's own religion leads to narrowness and bigotry, then something is terribly wrong with either the faith or knowledge being experienced. Often, the most narrow-minded and bigoted “Catholics” are those who know almost nothing about their faith. “Ex corde

Ecclesiae,” the late Pope John Paul II said of Catholic universities, titling his famous essay about them this way. If the heart of the church is love, as Jesus taught it should be, then dialogue is at the very heart of a truly Catholic academic tradition. The signature courses offer a doorway into this dialogue.

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Faith Reason and the Core

David R. Foster

1. The substantial progress made thus far in preparing a signature core curriculum at Seton Hall is encouraging. Having such a core, grounded in the Catholic intellectual tradition, will build community, further the mission of preparing servant leaders, and enrich our academic life.

This essay will elaborate on these three points. The first two, about building community and furthering the mission, will be made succinctly since they are more readily agreed to. The third point, that Catholic faith enriches academic life needs more discussion because of the tendency to see faith in opposition to reason.

2. The signature core would build community on campus because it would be a common experience and about the great questions of life. To read any text in common builds community, but when you focus on the great questions, the experience is magnified. Imagine our students grappling with the thought of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, or Aquinas on some perennial questions and then talking about it while watching Seinfeld reruns.

The Church teaches that the richest knowledge we have is about persons and emphasizes the importance of friendship. One implication is that our search for truth, though personal, is done best in conversation. Another implication is that we have the right to seek the truth together, a right rooted in the freedom of the individual and the natural good we see in community.⁴

3. A signature core will support our mission of preparing servant leaders by putting them in touch with a tradition that both seeks the common good and understands leadership as a service. The Catholic intellectual tradition also brings to the fore the basic human questions about origin, nature, destiny, and suffering; or put in a way that is at once both personal and communal, “Who are we?”, “How can we be happy?”, “What can we hope for?”, and “Why do the innocent suffer?”. The signature core would bring students into contact with these common questions that one must ponder in order to know yourself and to know why others deserve your best self.

4. A signature core curriculum in the Catholic intellectual tradition will be academically enriched by the historically complementarity of faith and reason and by the Church’s contemporary defense of reason. A principle of the Catholic intellectual life is that faith and reason enrich one another. Another principle is that human reason has the capacity to know the truth, even if only in part. An examination of the first principle shows a rich historical record of how reason and faith have benefited one another. The second principle has become particularly important in light of the postmodern critique of knowledge.

⁴ *Fides et Ratio*, 1998 papal encyclical #21 & #32.

Faith and reason are two different ways of human knowing that complete one another. Knowledge by faith is gained through entrusting ourselves to one another. The human person needs both types of knowing just as a bird needs two wings in order to lift itself in flight.⁵ This is intellectually more fruitful than the theory that assigns faith and reason isolated spheres in human life so that they coexist by existing apart.

Why does faith need reason? First, faith presupposes reason. It is only the rational person who can make an act of faith; it is only the rational creature to whom something can be revealed. Second, faith needs reason to safeguard it from superstition. Faith, without reason, is always in danger of becoming gullibility.

More to the point of our core curriculum discussion, it is valuable to see what faith brings to reason. Reason does not presuppose faith, as faith does reason. There are great feats of reason exercised apart from faith, but faith opens up a wider horizon for reason to work in. Reason seeks to know the truth about life's fundamental questions. What is known by faith, is not taken by reason as one of its principles, but can open up an area for consideration or suggest a line reasoning that in fact reason had not considered.

An example of how faith opens up the horizons of human thought comes from the history of Greek philosophy. It is a matter of historical record that although the Greeks had develop very astute understandings of Divine Being they did not consider the possibility of a God who existed outside the universe and could create being ex nihilo. They had always considered the gods as within the given world. This is not to say that the idea of a God who creates without preexisting material is beyond the reach of reason, but rather that historically it had not been considered until the encounter with Judeo and then Christian thought. This brought with it a new perspective on the philosophy of history that allowed thinkers to break with the ideas of history moving in a cycle and conceive it as linear with a beginning and an end.⁶

An example of faith suggesting a line of reasoning would be when one considers the basis for the dignity of the human person and faith suggests: the Fatherhood of God, the humility of the Incarnation, and the transcendent destination of the human race.

5. The Catholic vision of the person as one who can know the truth, especially the truth about persons, is refreshing and will win it a hearing because it articulates a position many want to affirm. The 1998 encyclical, *Fides et Ratio*, is not a defense of the compatibility of science and religion, which is now assumed as part of a well-articulated tradition of the Church. Nor is it an argument that faith and reason are compatible, although this position is eloquently restated. The essence of this encyclical is a defense of objective truth and the ability of human reason to know that truth.

As an expression of the Catholic intellectual tradition the encyclical challenges the postmodern philosophical critique that defines truth out of existence and denies the

⁵ This is the opening metaphor of the 1998 encyclical *Fides et Ratio*.

⁶ Robert Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology*, Catholic University of America Press, 1982 and 1995: pp.12-21.

possibility of knowing the truth if it did exist. The postmodern philosophical critique of knowledge and truth has made this the fundamental question in the philosophy of the human and natural sciences. The encyclical is a vigorous defense of both the existence of truth and our ability to know it, at least in part. By its defense of truth the Church can help save higher education from being enervated by a virulent philosophy.

It may seem ironic to the prevailing academic opinion makers that at the dawn of the third millennium the Church has emerged as the most prominent defender of reason. Still, despite its less than consistent practice, the Church has affirmed for centuries the value of reason and its harmony with faith. In these times of postmodern skepticism, it is hard to overemphasize the importance of this confidence in human reason and its ability to grasp truth as a bedrock principle of education. This confidence is, nonetheless, compatible with a humility that the Church embraces when it rejects philosophical pride and affirms reason's need to always question.

6. The contemporary academy, wrongly I think, views the Church as antithetical to academic freedom. But if the Church has in the past both abridged due freedoms and hesitated to champion academic freedom, it can be better understood in view of two points. First, that those arguing for academic freedom have focused exclusively on individual academic freedom and left the Church feeling compelled to defend a communal academic freedom. Second, for good historical reasons, the Church was in the midst of moving from a largely paternal model of relating to the scholarly community to a more fraternal one.

The Church's relationship to European culture stretches back centuries to a time when the culture was young and education rare. Particularly during chaotic times, it fell to Church leaders to assume a more authoritative role for an emerging civilization. The role was not unlike that of a parent who must give explicit direction and who rightfully expects obedience from a child. But time passed and the community matured; the last several centuries compare to the awkward years of transition wherein young adults emerge from rebellious teenagers, and parents must be willing to allow the teenager greater freedom in order to exercise increased responsibility. In like manner, Church leaders have had to adjust to a society that no longer accepts Christian principles, a more educated laity that is anxious to exercise a more responsible role, and a more educated and independent clergy. It should be remembered that not so many years ago the whole society reflected a more paternal model, from our schools to our network television censors. Colleges had a policy of acting *in loco parentis*, including dress codes, parietal hours, and "lights out" time – and those were the state colleges.

That the bishops were quite consciously making this transition is one of the great stories of Vatican II. It was particularly evident in *Gaudium et Spes* that the Church wanted to speak to all mankind as brothers and sisters (fellow pilgrims) and to persuade them to examine for themselves the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Academic freedom is important both because it is in accord with the dignity of the individual person and because it is the best way to aid and safeguard the discovery of truth. Karol Wojtyla was a man who knew firsthand the severe repression of human freedom, including academic freedom. He also knew academic life, having served for many years on a University faculty and having directed his last dissertation from the Vatican.

What norms? A Key Question to remember in building a Core.

Gregory Glazov,
ICSST, 1 August 2005

1. The mission statements of many Catholic educational institutions express commitment to endowing students with an understanding of core principles of Catholic theology and social teaching so as to enable graduates to contribute more effectively to the modern world, i.e. towards the economic, political, technological, social, cultural, etc., well being of civil society. This requires constructing a core which will help students to critically face questions and challenges which the modern world poses to the mind and heart. As participants in the debate often express the fear of loading the Core with value driven courses, with ready-made and packaged theological answers to modern questions, the Core may be constructed by focussing on questions that are central to the Catholic intellectual tradition and illuminative of the problems posed by and to the modern world. The questions to be emphasized however, the methods by which they are to be selected, is also and properly so a debatable subject. Recurrently, as the core project develops, the anxiety regarding the importance of constructing a value-free framework in selecting questions or identifying texts for study is expressed. The point is often reinforced by a plea for the core to expose students to the data and perspectives of modern social sciences. The point is well taken. If the Core is to equip students to face the political, economic, technological, scientific, psychological, etc., challenges of the modern world, if components of Catholic theology and Catholic social teaching are to inform the curriculum they must do so in a way that interfaces with the social sciences. They must also interface with the sciences and humanities, but this issue is beyond the limits of the present reflection. I hope for an opportunity to comment on the value to be set on the sciences, math, and the humanities on another occasion.
2. Returning to the need for an interface between Catholic theology and the social sciences, the question arises as to whether one may coherently presuppose such an interface. If it were admitted, for example, that modern social sciences aspire to emulate the natural sciences by treating the objects of study as objects rather than as subjects, and if it were also admitted that human beings are subjects and not objects, i.e. endowed with rights and responsibilities due to free agents, then the social scientific perspectives in question would be bound to mistreat human beings by reducing them to objects, i.e., by dehumanizing them. How then could such social 'sciences', grounded upon such (a lack of, a reduction of) values, dialogue with the value-structures of Catholic theology and social teaching? Alternatively, how would anything in the Catholic intellectual tradition be of interest or relevance to the modern social sciences?
3. The dialogue between modern social sciences on the one hand (I do not say modernity for reasons to be explained below), and Catholic theology and social teaching on the other may remain valuable, but the ground and purpose of this dialogue require clarification. Without this clarification, the objectives of Catholic

University mission statements end up being too vague and the inherent confusion about the issues prevents them from being effectively fulfilled. If agreement on certain premises is unattainable, debate about these very issues can at least be made a Core study subject, an essential component of a “signature experience” in a modern Catholic University. Would all sides agree to this? As such agreement requires some premises, these premises need to be spelled out. In the end, whether or not these questions are highlighted in the Core itself, the task of constructing the Core must engage with the issues they pose.

4. The first premise on which consensus is needed is that *all social sciences involve value judgements*. No theorist of any social science can avoid giving a theoretical description and analysis of anthropological and social facts unless he/she also participates in the work of evaluation. For human actions and practices which a social theorist wishes to analyse are influenced by the ‘natural’ causes properly investigated by the natural sciences, but they can be fully understood only by understanding their point or value as conceived by their agents, all of which will vary greatly according to person, society, time, and place. The differences in description will then derive from differences of opinion, amongst the descriptive theorists, about what is *important* and *significant* in the field of data and experience with which they are all familiar. If social science is to exist, it needs a general theory of such particulars. Furthermore, however, if there is to be converse between the branches of social science, and if there is to be converse with anything outside of it, it also needs a general, non manipulative, non-political descriptive theory of what is *important* and *significant* (Cf. J. Finnis, *Natural Law...* pp. 3-4, 9).
5. The second premise is that the secular philosophical foundations of the modern social sciences are incapable of providing such a framework. One may note that a social science eschewing a philosophical foundation can not do any of the following: state the purpose for collecting its mountains of empirical data; recognize what a social problem is; provide any basis for morality (cf. Krason). The secular foundations typically given to modern social sciences fall into two classes as defined by their own proponents. These are ‘naturalism’ (Mill and Hume) and ‘anti-naturalism or interpretivism’ (Wittgenstein, Gadamer; cf. M. Martin and L. C. McIntyre, pp. xv-xxii). ‘Naturalism’, the belief that the social sciences should emulate the natural sciences and seek to discover ‘laws’ of human behaviour, fails to make increasingly specific and accurate predictions as befits the natural sciences. Those who take the alternate position by arguing that the social sciences are importantly different from the natural sciences, the ‘anti-naturalists’ or ‘interpretivists’ must propose substantive philosophical foundations. The question is “which ones?” Political zealots may proffer political commitments. Other zealots have their own ‘isms’. But all this reduces social science to politics, culture, nationalism, passion, or arbitrary preference.
6. To deliver instruction in any social science without highlighting the facts expressed in these two premises is (unless postmodernism rules) naive and uncritical. If instruction in the social sciences in the academy should fail to highlight this fact, such instruction would ultimately be incompatible with and undermine the Catholic academy’s mission statement which is sure to emphasize the dissemination of values

according with Catholic social teaching.

7. To reiterate, to ground the social sciences legitimately, a general descriptive theory of what is *important* and *significant* needs to be identified. To clear the way for identifying this framework, it is useful to i) affirm the value of the social sciences as sciences, i.e. as branches of human knowledge arrived at by the use of human free, critical intelligence; ii) note how and why this framework was and continues to be rejected by the post-Enlightenment culture which spawned the modern social sciences, and iii) identify the limitations and tragic consequences of this rejection.
8. To affirm the legitimacy of science in general requires a coherent theory of meaning, i.e. a theory that 1) human thought is truly meaningful, i.e. capable of attaining truth, 2) that the world and matter are not chaotic but knowable, i.e. that our minds can discern its physics, and 3) that its physics are not determinable a-priori by human reason but only through testable hypothesis, i.e. by experimentation. Science also presupposes 4) charity with regard to publishing the results of research rather than hogging it as esoteric knowledge. The ancient Greeks give us 1) but not 2) or 3). Premises 2 and 3, as well as condition 4 are the fruits of the Judeo-Christian doctrine of creation. For this reason, the Templeton Prize winning Stanley Jaki of Seton Hall has devoted much effort to demonstrating that western science is the fruit of Christian culture, given that its doctrine of creation allowed a) matter to be understood as good and ordered, but b) the world to be understood as distinct from and independent of, i.e. not necessarily deriving from or emanating from God. Vital in the debates regarding the construction of the Core is the question of the placement of considering the birth of science and modernity. It will be seen from this reflection that it would be a mistake to represent Catholic Christian culture as anything but the mother of western science and, to this extent, of modernity. Galileo would have been impossible with the Judeo-Christian doctrine of Creation and the Franciscans who took to studying the details of the world because, being created, they were supremely important.
9. Conversely, the meaningfulness of human thought cannot be allowed by naturalists, determinists, voluntarists, emotivists, and the like since all these reject the idea of real intelligence, i.e. intelligence that is free to infer and understand and thus, in the case of the social sciences, make possible a disciplined acquisition of accurate knowledge about human affairs (see B. Lonergan, *Insight* [interpreting Aristotle]; C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* [interpreting Plato]). Such positions cannot ground science.
10. At its origins, modern, post-enlightenment social science, modelling itself upon value-free (autonomous) impersonal natural sciences, rejected the nexus of description and evaluation characterising classical social sciences and sought to isolate value-neutral perspectives on the social. This rejection of evaluation entailed rejection of a) the perspective of the concrete individual as decisive, relegating this standpoint to *ethics* and b) *teleology and natural law* in the context of the scientific revolution and the Protestant reformation. The relegation of the perspective of the concrete individual as decisive to *ethics*, as well as of *teleology and natural law* may be / are necessary for providing a disciplined, critical account explaining how certain parts of the universe move but the same standpoint cannot be applied to the study of

- human beings who are ethical creatures, i.e. creatures whose actions are driven by intelligible ends or end (telos).
11. Post-enlightenment perspectives frequently claim the title ‘modern’. ‘Modernity’ so understood begins with the Enlightenment and with the scientific revolution. What exists prior to it is “pre-modern” and “pre-scientific”. Adopting this terminology, the ‘moderns’ would claim to be followers of reason, and label the pre-moderns as followers of faith. A third group may arise, calling themselves “post-modern” (Foucault, Baudrillard, Lyotard). These, anxious about the claims of reason and fearing that the rationalism of the Enlightenment is the first step of a slippery slope to Auschwitz, preach a deconstructivist relativism. Repeating the syllogism of the ancient relativists, they may say: “nothing is; if anything was it couldn’t be known; if anything were known, it couldn’t be communicated.” As noted by Socrates, the logic is converse to saying: “this statement is a lie.” Following the logic that the enemy of my enemy is my friend, Christian critics of the totalizing claims of modern social scientists and technocrats, frequently wish to seal a concordat with post-modernists. But this means giving up on the value of searching for the truth. We may eschew claiming to have it, but we may not betray the responsibility of seeking it. No concordat can be sealed between Christians subscribing to the Catholic tradition which insists on the compatibility of faith and reason and post-modernists. Modernity, Science, the fruit of reason, is the fruit of this Catholic synthesis of faith and reason. The error of post-enlightenment culture pertains not to believing in reason and science, but in totalizing them into rationalism and positivism. To reject rationalism and positivism one need not reject reason and science and embrace postmodernists.
 12. Pre-“modern”, in the sense of “pre-Enlightenment” classical, western, Christian morality had a three-part structure comprised of a) an understanding of as-yet-unordered human inclinations and capacities (including the passions and desires); b) human nature as it could be if human beings were fully to achieve their *telos*; and c) a set of precepts by which human beings can move from (1) to (2). Classical social theorists sought to locate this third set of precepts in natural reason and ethos (Aristotle) or natural law (natural right/*jus*; the Stoics), while Christian social theorists, developing the concepts of original sin and redemption (Augustine and Aquinas), located it in a synthesis of natural law *and* revealed grace which is the foundation of Catholic Social Teaching.
 13. While the rejection of *teleology and natural law / reason* allowed science and Protestant theology to develop, it left ethics and morality ungrounded. Ethics thus became the great casualty of the Enlightenment which launched a project to reconstruct morality, by grounding it in one of three areas:
 - a. In untutored human nature, that is, in the passions and desires on their own (Hume, Smith, Diderot). This project founders on the inability to specify the priority some passions ought to have over others (some external criterion is necessary).
 - b. In reason itself (Kant), but this founders on the inability of philosophers to adequately determine a firm basis for the conventional rules.

- c. In abstract principles of practical reason [Gewirth, Rawls], but this founders because the principles are too narrowly defined for application to concrete individuals.
14. The Enlightenment project was doomed because it is impossible to reconstruct a whole (morality) without all of its parts (a meaningful notion of the *telos*). Human nature, in the meantime, the remaining first part of the formerly three-part structure of classical natural law, has become the preserve of the behavioural, human, or social sciences, as one would wish to call them. The social sciences play an important role in justifying the social, political, and economic structures that define modern moral life since it is on the basis of their claims to be value-neutral sciences with predictive powers based on discernable general laws that modern organizations justify their own claim to power and influence. But given that (1) the social sciences are not really value-neutral and that (2) their claim to be sciences of the modern sort are fraudulent and inherently ideological, the most that they could be said to accomplish is the sort of systematic deception behind which modern bureaucratic organizations both public and private mask what is more like a Nietzschean will to power. They are therefore predicated on views about moral life and politics that are inherently opposed to both classical natural law and to Christian revelation.
15. The Catholic University / Academy cannot and should not achieve its mission by grounding any part of its educational curriculum upon such a philosophy. To have parts of the curriculum grounded upon such philosophies is ultimately to railroad other parts of the curriculum down the tracks of incoherence. As the Catholic University may be assumed to be committed to promoting Catholic social teaching and therefore to the investigation of as well as to service of the social, the definition to be ascribed to social science must not suffer from the identity crisis affecting the modern social sciences. Therefore, the social sciences need to be defined more clearly and the environments / structures in and through which they are taught reconstituted to yield results that are commensurate with their subjects - concrete human beings - and grounded upon general, non-manipulative evaluative frameworks.
16. To ground the social sciences, it is necessary to retrace the false steps by which they were divorced from legitimate evaluative frameworks and became reductive of the human. As the false steps outlined above involved i.) the rejection of the possibility for the intellect to know the truth; ii.) the rejection of the standpoint of the concrete individual and the relegation of this standpoint to ethics; and iii.) the rejection of teleology and natural law, the proper moves would be to readmit all three. These moves would involve a number of aspects:
17. **The grounding of the social sciences.** The social sciences are not to be rejected but grounded. They are to emulate the methodology of the natural sciences (observation, testing and verifying hypotheses for predictability via experimentation) but, as human affairs are their object, they cannot aspire to tell the whole story lest they reduce the human to the non-human and jettison the notion of human specific difference. As with all science, so here, a disciplined methodology presupposes keeping to modest bounds and therefore welcoming dialogue with other disciplines

and sciences.

18. **The legitimate evaluative framework.** The legitimate evaluative framework for a given social science must involve that standpoint in which the establishment of that social science is regarded as a reasonable, i.e. important and significant ideal. The question of course is “what is important, significant and ideal?” Unless this is clarified, the pronouncements of any practitioner of any modern social science stand suspect of political bias. The burden of providing a conceptual framework for descriptive social science may be born by a theory of natural law, but such an undertaking necessitates knowledge of the whole range of human possibilities and opportunities, inclinations and capacities, a knowledge that requires the assistance of descriptive and analytical social science. The evaluations are in no way deduced from the descriptions; but one whose knowledge of the facts of the human situation is very limited is unlikely to judge well in discerning the practical implications of the basic values. Equally, the descriptions are not deduced from the evaluations; but without the evaluations one cannot determine what descriptions are really illuminating and significant. There is thus a mutual though not quite symmetrical interdependence between the project of describing human affairs by way of theory (*the social sciences*) and the project of evaluating human options with a view, at least remotely, to acting reasonably and well (Finnis, pp. 18-19).
19. To the extent that this argument identifies natural law as the evaluative framework for social science, it lines up with MacIntyre’s argument for the reconstitution of an ‘Aristotelian social science’. I draw the parallel because, although Aristotle did not speak of natural law, his ethics are aimed at directing man to achieve *eudaimonia*, the happiness or blessedness that is peculiar to man as man, i.e. as a rational animal, which is also the goal of natural legal theorists.
20. Should Christians and non-Christians be happy with this identification? They might be if reason (informed by the natural and social sciences) could be trusted to develop an anthropology, and describe both humanity’s untutored state as well as the state that it could achieve were it to fulfil its potencies. But what if this is a false confidence? A distinction may be drawn to clarify why reason could not be trusted. Arguments may be false because of errors in the premises or in the inferences. Thus, confidence in rationalist anthropology could be undermined either (1) because one might suspect that rationalist premises are wrong or (2) because one might distrust reason itself.
21. Questioning rationalist conceptions of human nature, and of the state it might achieve were its capacities fully realized is in fact prompted by the Catholic doctrines of *original sin, the Incarnation, grace and redemption*. The Christian understanding that humanity’s *telos* is achieved through grace may shift considerably and quite radically the understanding of what is naturally right and good and virtuous. Take, e.g. the difference that Christian conceptions of attaining the *telos* bring to the evaluation (vis a vis, e.g. of Aristotle or the O.T.) of states and activities such as humility or asceticism or celibacy or agapic love? This alternative seems to line up with Milbank’s critique of MacIntyre’s proposal to reconstitute the social sciences on an Aristotelian basis, on the grounds that Aristotle’s ethics are too tied to an ethos of

- Hellenic warrior-virtue and with Milbank's proposal, instead, of a 'post-critical Augustinian social science' (since Augustine's standpoint, as opposed to Aristotle, was endowed with the knowledge of original sin and grace). Hence, to press on with the argument, if adjustments have to be made in the conception of the *telos*, the requisite evaluative framework would need to involve a synthesis of natural law and revealed dogma, i.e. of Aristotle and Augustine (=Aquinas) and thus of something like Catholic social teaching (which *Cent. Annus* defines as a branch of moral theology, i.e. as a synthesis of ethics [grounded in natural law] and revealed doctrine). This line of argument would reveal the coherence of the mission statements of those Catholic Universities which insist explicitly or implicitly on the need to teach the social sciences against the background of CST. It effectively means that the mission statements intend CST, rather than natural law, to be the evaluative framework for social science. If this is the case, Christian anthropological components would have to inform the curriculum in some prominent way, either through common core courses (e.g. at the level of the University, or Department or Pathway/Major) or by being injected into every course and its tools of assessment and evaluation.
22. Taking the second position, the confidence could be faulty because reason itself is fallen and/or can't be trusted. This is not just the position of hard-postmodernist relativists (Foucault, Derridas, Baudrillard) but also of Barthian Lutherans. Barth's protestant suspicions of Enlightenment rationalism also contributes to Milbank's critique of MacIntyre and Aristotle.
23. Coverage of the issues raised by these two alternate positions is necessitated in the curriculum by the frequency with which they are raised in preliminary faculty debates about it. The chief question that arises here is whether the multiplicity of standpoints regarding reason should be taken as grounds against clearly, definitively and concretely choosing either natural law or Catholic social teaching as the theoretical evaluative framework for grounding the teaching of the social sciences. Wouldn't such a choice be rather sectarian and close the door to dialogue with many groups, including atheist postmodernist relativists or Barthian protestant fundamentalists? The answer is no. As in its antique past, so now, the Christian cannot afford to abandon philosophy, reason, and therefore openness to the transcendent, for it is precisely this that preserves dialogue with all people of good will and prevents a collapse into solipsism, sectarianism, intellectual and inquisitorial manipulation.

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A Core for OUR Students

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Dean of Freshman Studies and Special Academic Programs

My daughter Annie and her cousin were having a discussion about the cinema. "I love the really old movies," she said. "Me, too," he replied. "What's your favorite one?" She thought for a moment, then said, "*Back to the Future*." It's all relative.

A telemarketer doing research on local museums called yesterday and asked me to answer a few questions, but after I admitted to being in the 45-54 age category on the very first question, she thanked me for my participation and hung up. She didn't really care what I thought. *I was too damn old.*

My biggest fear as we prepare to introduce a new core curriculum to 18-year-old students is that we in our Ivory Tower have little or no understanding of the children who were born in 1989. I get nervous when I hear us in our seminars describing our own college experience and reminiscing about how we stayed up until the wee hours having meaningful conversations about the nature of the universe.

Yes, our students stay up all night (79 percent admitted to that), but only 23 percent discussed spirituality out of class. It was much more likely they were playing video games (67 percent).

Every year, we participate in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) by administering a survey to our incoming freshman class. It is an eye-opener that gives us a chance to understand who our freshmen are and what their life experience is.

We all know we have wonderful students with many strengths. They can be inquisitive, outgoing and vocal in class. But they also have a tendency to show up late for class, hand in assignments late and lose their academic scholarships.

We brought in a freshman class last year with a 1096 average SAT and a 3.24 GPA. More than half the students said that one of the "very important" reasons they chose SHU was because of the financial aid package. And while 66.5 percent said SHU was their first choice, we were the second choice of one-quarter of our students and the third or more choice of 7.6 percent. That means that a third of our incoming freshmen wanted to be somewhere else. We need to make sure in the freshman year that they discover that Seton Hall is really a great place to be. That is the first and most important task of the new Core. Because if we can't keep them, all of our lofty educational goals will be for naught.

Our students aren't readers. Twenty-two percent never read for pleasure while on the other end of the spectrum, less than one percent (.8 percent to be exact – that's 9 students) read more than 20 hours a week. In the middle are the 54 percent who say they

read between one and five hours a week for pleasure. They do, however, play video games. Sixty seven percent play up to 20 hours a week while 20 students admitted they are in front of video and computer games for more than 20 hours a week.

While they are not reading, they do like television. Five percent say they never watch it, but 4.4 percent watch more than 20 hours a week. The bulk – 64.5 percent – are in front of the boob tube between 1 and 10 hours a week.

Here's a new population that we are starting to track – students with disabilities. Ten and a half percent of the Class of 2008 self-declared a disability. Three percent said they have a learning disability and another 1.3 percent said they had a health related disability.

We always strive to have at least 10 percent of our New Jersey population be students of our Educational Opportunity Program. These are students who most likely would not be admitted to the university through regular admittance criteria, not for lack of ability or work but because they live in historically under-achieving school districts. The program is incredibly successful in bringing in students who have the drive and desire to earn a college education. During their first few semesters it is not unusual for them to be in remedial courses to bring their work up to college level. But the EOP students have lots of company. More than 12 percent of the freshman class two years ago told us that they had to get special tutoring or remedial assistance in math, while 5 percent got that kind of help in English and another 3.5 percent in Reading.

These facts are crucial as we craft the core. The worst mistake we could make would be to craft a course of study for the students we wished we had rather than the ones who come to us. Four percent of our students are in the honors program. We can't make a core for those 45 students. In fact, our freshman class last year included 17 students who said they had no plans to graduate from college; and while 56.4 percent of our students said they came to college to find their purpose in life, 48.4 percent came because their parents wanted them to go to college and 2.5 percent admitted they had nothing better to do.

Ninety-three percent of the freshman class responded to last year's CIRP survey so we can be comfortable that it is pretty reflective of our students. It was 54 percent female and 46 percent male. Sixty-nine percent self-identified as Caucasian; 13 percent Hispanic/Latino, 12 percent Black/African-American, 8 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 1 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 6 percent other.

Most of our students come from nearby: 56 percent are fewer than 50 miles from home, 18 percent are between 51 to 100 miles from home while 26 percent are more than 100 miles away.

Sixty percent of our students were late for class as high schoolers. More of our students smoke than the national norm, more of them drink beer, more of them felt depressed and more missed school because of illness.

Fewer of our students played a musical instrument, ate a healthy diet, turned to the internet for research or used a personal computer.

More of our students (12.5 percent) have English as their second language (the national average is 9.5 percent).

Seton Hall's freshmen are traditional – a mixture of 18 and 19 year olds with a sprinkling of 17 year olds. They are, not surprising, predominantly Catholic (62.6 percent) and even more attended a religious service in the past year (87.3 percent). Even so, only 10.3 percent consider themselves “Born Again” Christians. Seventy-five percent of our students live on campus.

The survey also tells us something about our students' personal opinions. More than half the class (54.2 percent) believe abortion should be legal, 37.3 say the death penalty should be abolished and 35.6 support the legalization of marijuana. Nearly half our class (48.8 percent) agreed with the statement: “If two people like each other, it's all right for them to have sex even if they've known each other for a very short time.”

Twenty-three percent of our students support laws against homosexual relationships, but 64 percent support gay marriage. Nearly one third (31.4 percent) of our male freshmen state that the activities of married women are best confined to home and family. Of equal concern is that 16.6 percent of our female students agreed.

All these stats do is give us a framework – a framework to help us succeed at what we are trying to do. It is the responsibility of the Core Committee to bear in mind our students so that when we craft our courses we do it with OUR students in mind. It is the only way we can make sure that what we do matters to them.

Learning to Navigate the Intellectual Landscape

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To be kept firmly in mind in designing any core curriculum or signature experience is the sobering complexity of intellectual life. Full participation in this sphere requires the cultivation of an array of interests as well as methodologies for their pursuit. If this isn't daunting enough to accomplish, what makes being an intellectual inordinately challenging is that it requires that those engaged in this process can with relative comfort "migrate" from one interest to another and from one methodology to another as part of an effort to integrate their life experiences. We in whose hands the responsibility lies for educating present and future generations need to be aware of the intellectual terrain on which we are operating and be able to identify the dizzying variety of paths that human consciousness can and must avail itself of in attempting to traverse it. In preparing our students (and ourselves as part of our own personal and professional development) to travel these paths, we need to be modest in the goals that we establish. We need first to recognize that the terrain which is being crossed is a treacherous one, with many pitfalls and hairpin turns. Thus, it would be a mistake to think that we could accomplish much in a short period of time (like a four year college career). Our goal should be to provide students with the basic tools and resources that they will need on what is a life-long trek. We can hope that what we give them will be reinforced and strengthened as they proceed through the life-cycle, and that their life circumstances will provide the opportunities and support they will need for the seeds that we plant to take full root.

By looking at the intellectual life as a tortuous process involving the ongoing migration of consciousness from interest to interest, and from method to method, we are very much in tune with the postmodern temper of the time in which we live. For the educational vision being put forward here is rooted in the givenness of a fragmented subjectivity. Human consciousness is seen as multi-layered and differentiated, with its ultimate integration highly problematic. It is fractured into domains (aesthetic, moral, scientific, and technical) whose relationship to each other is strained at best. A key question is: What is our response to this fragmented condition? One answer is to simply make our peace with it, to compartmentalize the various domains, rendering them incommensurable. Another response, and the one advocated here, is to attempt to bridge the domains, to see them as part of the seamless web that is the human condition. Our existential challenge, then, is to negotiate, however awkwardly and tentatively, movement from a state of fragmented incoherence to one of holistic meaning. In the broadest sense of the term, that is what *spirituality* is all about. This is the project that Seton Hall, a Catholic university dedicated to the cultivation of the mind, heart, and spirit, needs to embrace and make a central focus of its mission. There are those who would say that fragmentation is a "construction" manufactured by postmodernists who are attempting to delegitimize all grand narratives, including those with a spiritual grounding. This may or may not be the case. However, the fact of the matter is that many of our students are either drifting in a state of profound incoherence or clinging tenaciously to a certainty that precludes any encounter with alternative forms of consciousness. Both are symptomatic of a postmodern condition.

The former situation reflects an all too comfortable, even blasé attitude towards fragmentation, while the latter suggests premature closure as a reaction against the “collisions of consciousness” (Peter Berger’s phrase) that characterize postmodern life.

The strategy being advocated here starts with the *domains* of human consciousness. Operating in a domain means, first, having an *interest* in or *orientation* toward a particular type of knowledge or understanding. I would argue that human beings naturally seek *four* kinds of knowledge or understanding that are equally salient to them, with life circumstances, experiences, and choices having the effect of skewing them in particular directions. From the standpoint of a philosophical anthropology, human personhood is seriously distorted and deformed if the pursuit of knowledge is short-circuited in any way. Once an interest is identified, then a *method* (a set of procedures) is employed in order to acquire the knowledge or understanding sought.

The first kind of interest is a *narrative* one. (I am drawing here on Jerome Bruner’s discussion of a “narrative” form of consciousness.) Here, there is an orientation toward “subjective-particulars,” that is, toward the understanding of the personal experiences of individual human beings. The concern is with their stories, their idiosyncratic thoughts, feelings, circumstances, opportunities and dilemmas. The orientation can be inward-looking, directed at one’s own subjective and existential states, or directed toward a “subjective understanding” (to use Max Weber’s phrase) of someone else’s narrative, that is, an understanding “from the inside.”

A number of methodologies can be employed in the pursuit of narrative knowledge or understanding. One is a *literary* methodology that governs story-telling in fictional literature (with novels, plays, and poetry being the tangible products of that methodology) or non-fiction literature (with autobiographies, biographies being the tangible products of that methodology). Another is an *artistic* methodology that governs personal statements in art (paintings, sculptures being the tangible products) music (compositions being the tangible products) and dance (choreographic scores being the tangible products). One can also speak of a *cinematic* methodology that governs how stories are conveyed in the medium of film. Then, there is the *psychological* methodology that governs in-depth interviewing and the generation of life narratives.

In addition to the methodologies that are employed to “produce” stories, there are also methodologies that are employed to “consume” them, that is, interpret their meaning. Thus, knowledge is “encoded” by its producers and “decoded” by its consumers. “Decoding” requires a methodology for deciphering the intended meaning of whatever is produced, this as distinguished from the projection of a meaning that is grounded in the narrative intent of the consumer.

I am of course cognizant of the fact that the methodologies employed in each sphere are continuously being debated and redefined. In this short essay, I can only focus on literary, artistic, cinematic, and psychological methodologies as *genuses*, and cannot map out the species associated with each.

One point that I would very much like to make at this juncture is that the concern with the narrative domain cuts across disciplinary categories. Departments of English,

Comparative Literature, Art, Music, Communication, and Psychology are clearly interested in developing and employing methodologies capable of yielding narrative knowledge. So are History and Political Science (in the case of political biography) as well as Theology (in the case of spiritual narratives, such as those produced by Augustine and Kierkegaard, for example). All hold in common an interest in narrative knowledge and understanding, notwithstanding the different methodologies that are employed as well as the various “media” that are used to tell stories. Here we identify one clear basis for building interdisciplinary bridges.

The second domain of knowledge and understanding is *communicative*, propelled by an interest in and orientation toward “subjective-general” phenomena. (The term, “communicative,” is taken from Habermas’ work.) The pursuit of communicative knowledge or understanding involves the identification of shared states of consciousness, stories that groups of people hold in their collective memory, common symbolic meanings (“collective representations,” in Durkheim’s terms), and the cultural practices of human groups. These commonalities can be based on ethnicity, religion, race, gender, nationality, region, sexual orientation, age, class, occupation, or organizational affiliation. To search for communicative knowledge is to focus on the communities of attachment that human beings form and the definitions of reality sustaining that attachment.

Those pursuing communicative understanding adopt a *hermeneutical* or *interpretive* methodology in striving to identify the “symbolic universe” (Peter Berger’s term) of a social community. This falls under the umbrella term, “cultural studies.” Media studies, sociology, anthropology, organizational studies, general history, literary and aesthetic criticism, art history, religious studies, and postmodern philosophy (e.g. Rorty) have each come to embrace an increasingly parallel methodology, one designed to uncover the contextual, contingent nature of its subject matter. The methodology that is employed increasingly in these disciplines is directed toward “historical consciousness” (to draw on Lonergan), that is, how the “spirit of the age” shapes artistic production, group practices, and the relationship to the sacred and the divine.

As in the case with the narrative domain, we see here what might be seen at first glance as the presence and peaceful co-existence of strange bedfellows—art scholars, media scholars, sociologists, anthropologists, religionists—in the same intellectual space. However, the reasonableness of their co-presence comes into sharper relief when one focuses on the knowledge domain that they co-habit and the shared interest or orientation that brought them to that intellectual space. In narrative and communicative studies, the at times all too sharp divide between the “humanities” and the “social sciences,” secular and theological studies, begins to melt away. Put sharply, those with a narrative or a communicative interest have more in common with each other, even those from another discipline, than they have with scholars from their own discipline who have a different interest or orientation.

The third possible interest is in *empirical* knowledge. In this domain, knowers are oriented toward “objective-particulars.” The focus here is on the understanding of “environments,” entities that comprise the “field” of action. These entities can be persons, collectivities, organisms or matter. The scientific method, broadly defined, has played a pivotal role in guiding the pursuit of empirical knowledge in the modern world. This

method, with its emphasis on direct observation through the senses and rigorous experimentation, is designed to produce reliable knowledge about the object world. There are, of course, several “scientific” disciplines, each concerned with a different object environment: demography (human populations); ecology (the interplay of human, organic, and material environments); physics, chemistry, and astronomy (the material world); biology (the organic environment); and sociology/political science/economics (the social world). While it is certainly the case that these are very different intellectual disciplines, and that the scientific method takes on a different shape in each case, the fact of the matter is that observational and experimental procedures guide study in all of the sciences. It is by virtue of a shared commitment to the scientific method that these empirical disciplines, however different, occupy a common intellectual space.

Finally, there is an interest in *paradigmatic* knowledge or understanding. (This term is taken from Jerome Bruner.) To operate in this domain is to be oriented toward “objective-general” phenomena. By this I mean an interest in the acquisition or discovery of universal truth(s) about the human condition as well as ultimate reality. One method that has been employed to arrive at such knowledge has been *philosophical*, with its reliance on natural reason. This basic approach has taken different forms, beginning in Western philosophy with the Platonic notion of absolute forms, to the Aristotelian notion of “teleology,” to modern conceptions of human nature and natural rights (e.g. Hobbes, Ferguson, Locke). Another method employed has been *theological*, rooted in revealed truth and faith, and, in the case of the Thomistic system, linked to natural reason. In addition to these mainstream philosophical and theological traditions, paradigmatic thinking has been in evidence whenever *essentialist* assertions have been made. One can cite in this connection Marx’s notion of “*homo faber*,” Freud’s notion of erotic and death instincts, Bloom’s notion of “The Lucifer Principle,” and Berger’s assertion that human beings seek to avoid anomy. Paradigmatic thinking posits a philosophical anthropology, that is, a theory of human nature, and has ventured to consider larger cosmological questions. Once again, we have strange bedfellows—Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Locke, Freud, and Marx under the paradigmatic tent—philosophers, theologians, psychologists, and political economists alike.

What I have sketched thus far are four “*pure*” paths to knowledge and understanding: that is, a narrative method resulting in narrative knowledge; a communicative method resulting in communicative knowledge, an empirical method resulting in empirical knowledge, and a paradigmatic method resulting in paradigmatic knowledge. Clearly, this does not lead to the kind of integrated understanding that should be the goal of a liberal education. I noted how each domain incorporates a wide variety of disciplines, this having the salutary effect of breaking down the silos that have been erected, and allowing for fruitful interdisciplinary cooperation. But, the next step needs to be taken—namely, an integration of the four domains of knowledge. I will now highlight the direction that this might and, I would argue, should take.

An integrated approach to the pursuit of “narrative” knowledge would draw explicitly on communicative, empirical, and paradigmatic methodologies. Narrative understanding would clearly be heightened if the stories that people told were placed within a broader historical and cultural context. It is not possible to teach autobiography, fiction, art, music, and cinema a without doing precisely that. Narrative knowledge is distorted if grounded in a delusional understanding of the object world, and subjective consciousness

requires that one be able to see oneself as an object to oneself. Finally, narrative knowledge profits from an understanding of the human condition, writ large and the place of the individual in the cosmic order of things.

Similarly, “communicative” knowledge is fuller and richer when the other orientations and methodologies are incorporated into its pursuit. A narrative methodology can help show how “collective representations” emerge from “individual representations.” An empirical methodology can contribute an understanding of how the object world shapes the emergence of shared world-views. Finally, a paradigmatic methodology can make us aware of how core human processes and qualities limit the directions in which human communities can and do evolve.

In a similar vein, an adequate empirical understanding of the object world requires an appreciation of how subjective consciousness shapes what it is that we sense and how we sense it. That is, empirical knowledge reflects a knowing mind. We can also say with considerable confidence that empirical understanding requires an appreciation of the cultural resources that support or retard scientific progress. Finally, the scientific enterprise is rooted in a conception of human perfectibility that is clearly “paradigmatic” in nature.

Lastly, the pursuit of paradigmatic knowledge, properly conducted, requires the incorporation of narrative, communicative, and empirical methodologies. Regarding the first, a narrative orientation can help bring to light general and universal features of the human condition. Does not great literature or art expose fundamental human dilemmas? Regarding the second, a communicative understanding can help us to focus on how universal human qualities take very different historical forms. Regarding the third, an empirical orientation can lay an “inductive” basis for the generation of universal laws of nature.

To conclude, I have argued in this essay that a liberal education requires (1) the mastery of narrative, communicative, empirical, and paradigmatic methodologies and (2) the capacity to integrate these methodologies in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. In fact, that is precisely what understanding is, namely, a disciplined effort to integrate the various domains of knowledge and to explore the ways in which they reinforce and enhance each other. What I have sketched in these few pages encapsulates where I am at the moment in my own quest for knowledge, understanding, and truth. Each domain serves to *temper* the potential excesses of the others. A narrative orientation pushed to the extreme becomes solipsistic, in privileging our immediate thoughts and feelings above all else. A communicative orientation, run amok, assaults human dignity and freedom. A preoccupation with the empirical world can very easily lead to a crass empiricism, where the only things that are presumed to be real are the data that we can directly observe. Finally, a paradigmatic orientation taken to excess can result in assertions of truth made in an historical, personal, and empirical vacuum.

A successful signature experience, in my view, would prepare students to be effective intellectual navigators, to be able to operate in the four domains and traverse them in their quest for understanding. This would be absolutely indispensable in any journey of personal transformation as well as any attempt at societal reconstruction. With respect to the Catholic intellectual tradition, it is critically important to keep in mind that it has a narrative dimension (revolving around our conversion and redemption stories), a communicative

dimension (by virtue of it being a community of memory), an empirical dimension (e.g. the search for the historical Jesus), and a paradigmatic dimension (with its emphasis on natural law). To focus on any one of these at the expense of the others is to distort its nature. Through a multi-dimensional approach to the Catholic intellectual tradition, its full reality is disclosed and any attempt to caricature it is blunted.

Telling It Like It Is: The New Core, Honesty and Becoming Whole

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I must admit that I was skeptical about the purpose, if not intent, of our conference on the new core curriculum and its hallmark “signature courses.” But, alas, I found the enterprise both intellectually stimulating and challenging. Our meetings were an honest attempt at “hopefulness,” pointing us as a community towards the future or what we can become as moral individuals, whether we are scholars and teachers, or students. The dilemma was understanding the university as an on-going and interactive learning environment, perpetually in process as it adjusts to the modern world while drawing the best from its own Catholic Intellectual Tradition.

Fortunately, rather than being ideological, that is narrowly committed to Catholicism as “official or corporate truth,” the goal of the new core’s signature courses was understanding and accepting “catholicity,” broadly defined. Coming from a Melkite Greek-Catholic tradition, this resonated with me. I knew early-on that Catholic meant universal, not Roman or Western. The more I studied, as a teenager, my own tradition, the more I realized that diversity and pluralism was the natural order of things and that within Catholicism our “union” with Rome was not and could not be one of subjugation or minority status, but is and must be one of equality, mutuality, and shared responsibility. The same model is now being applied to the university via the new core.

Until I got to college I did not know that my interest in religion and ethnicity was part of the subject matter of sociology. It was liberating to major in a discipline that actually looked at my life (especially its contradictions) in a way that made sense to me experientially. Always the outsider (religiously, ethnically, socially, sexually), it was transforming to know that “it wasn’t me” that caused the dilemma, but intransigent social structures (religious and political) that were presented as absolute truths, necessary for social order, and requiring adherence even when they worked against my own self interests.

To be sure, sociology itself has not always been that liberating, at least the sociology taught at Fordham, a Jesuit school. We were indoctrinated in social order or functionalist theory that made society paramount and acceptable as is. Our duty was to adhere to it. I never learned that Karl Marx could be considered a sociologist and that there was something called “conflict theory” in sociology that asked questions like “whose interests does the social order serve?” “Obviously not mine” was my response! But the implication was there: “there are at least two ways to see the world or to understand the self. Was I deviant or just different? Did I really bless myself backwards (as the “Latins” would have me believe) or was it in fact the way it was historically done before “they” changed it from right to left)? Was sexual activity only a reproductive exercise? And so on.

So I enjoyed being a Marxist or “conflict” sociologist for years because it dealt with fundamental questions like the nature and source of knowledge, the relationship of

individuals and classes to one another, and the moral responsibility of discovering the common good.

Then I discovered “symbolic interactionism” which looks at how individuals create meaning. In this other sociological paradigm, reality is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with one another. It was a collective effort. I often warn my students that they must never say in a sociology course “that it is up to the individual,” even though that is ultimately the case. Even in good Catholic theology, the individual conscience (informed and well formed) is the ultimate test for moral decision making. Yet what is true for the individual must also be true for the community or group (and vice versa). With its emphasis on the “people of God,” Vatican II understood this, as does our new core curriculum proposal.

So here was I, the sociologist, studying society and its influences on the individual finally understanding that while social forces exist, the individual ultimately puts it all together and the final outcome might not be what it “should” be in terms of the social or religious expectations of the hegemonic social order.

The preceding discussion is a bit intellectual and devoid of affect. It does, however, point to what Seton Hall students must come to understand regarding their responsibility to themselves and the communities they come from and now live in. Sociologically, we call recognizing this link between self and society the “sociological imagination,” that is, identifying the connections between personal biography and social history or circumstances. I was born the child of loyal Byzantine rite Catholic immigrants from Syria who lived through a depression and two world wars while caught in the dilemma of assimilation. Ideally, my generation was supposed to mirror their values, traditions and goals, but unexpected things happened, not the least of which was Vatican Council II, the Vietnam War, the civil rights movements for blacks, women, and gays, the triumph of American culture (individualism, materialism) and *Gesellschaft* society (formal relations, instrumentality, bureaucracy) over ethnicity (expressivity, informality) and *Gemeinschaft* (community, group loyalty). And of course, AIDS, which made it impossible to believe in patriarchal religion and/or God. I am who I am, therefore, for a lot of sociological reasons. The same is true of my students.

Not that all this change was problematic. It was liberating to give up the script that was intended for me, to challenge the agenda and to think for oneself. Something must be said about the re-emergence of rationality, science, fact, and choice as a positive cultural modality despite Catholic resistance to their obvious benefits. On July 9th, 2005, The **NY TIMES** reported that in the view of an influential Catholic Cardinal, “the belief in evolution as accepted by science today may be incompatible with Catholic faith.” Shades of Galileo! Does faith influence reason, or reason, faith? Despite the obviousness of the latter, the conflict between faith and reason seems never to end.

The power of a subjectivist American culture to detach individuals from traditional communities is the central fact of our society. AIDS alone (but not singularly), for example, has caused a cosmic shift in loyalties. The Catholic model of traditional or inherited loyalties, continuity in locality (stable parishes), and permanent relationships simply does not exist anymore. Americans in the middle class now choose their identities, their group affiliations,

and their institutional loyalties probably because they are educated and, therefore, residentially and occupationally mobile. And they select the values they wish to live by. No longer an immigrant church just in urban centers, the American Catholic church has failed to understand this, searching for support among newer and tradition bound immigrant groups rather than its own assimilated, educated members, even while it eschews the beauty and usefulness of a "liberation theology" that favors the poor.

Religion scholar Peter Steinfels of the New York Times wrote on July 5, 2005 that there is a difficult movement throughout the world from "traditional values, like the importance of religion and respect for authority, family and nation, to what are termed secular-rational values, like personal autonomy, political independence and ethical relativism" on matters like sexuality, divorce and euthanasia. Only abortion (and perhaps evolution) remains a highly politicized and divisive issue. Benedict XVI is appalled!

Another modern shift is from "survival values, like assuring material well-being and physical safety, acceptance of hardship, political caution and wariness toward outsiders to self-expression values like political activism, personal fulfillment, intellectual and spiritual exploration, and tolerance of outsiders and cultural diversity." These changes are attributed to the decline of agrarian societies (Catholicism's comfortable base) and the rise of industrial societies. Despite the commitment of Americans to traditional value systems, the nation "outstrips all but a few other nations in shifting from survival to self-expression values." My own sentiments exactly! What am I to do? A Catholic of sorts on one hand and an American of sorts on the other.

I came to understand this conflict and dilemma through sociology, especially the sociology of religion, not through theology, save "liberation theology." Though I did read the "good Catholic stuff" as an undergraduate, it strikes me now as rhetoric. As informed Catholics know, the good news of the church and its mission is often contradicted by its own behavior and transparent political agenda. Institutions and organizations do these things, so that was understandable, it was the duplicity and hypocrisy of speaking out of both sides of the mouth that was troubling. The church of the social order and the church of the "poor of spirit" are incompatible.

Jump ahead to Seton Hall and its core curriculum proposal which is being proposed now in the above context. As I learned from the seminar, we are seriously committing ourselves to the development of the whole self through rigorous intellectual activity within the context of a continuously learning and informed community. This means creating an atmosphere of open dialogue between administrators, staff, faculty and students where we can all speak in the first person regarding our lives, research, and foci of our disciplines. The implications of this for the university, its structures and ideology, are enormous. Divergent disciplines now have to compliment, if not support, one another in the search for "truth." The delivery of services will need to be democratized as well as respect for the dignity and rights of all students (except gay and lesbian students). Yet, the university consistently contradicts itself when it comes to acting on its own mission statement as stated in various documents.

Sociologically, I cannot speak to students about community and Catholicism if, in fact, they know nothing about these phenomena experientially or intellectually or if they are

not allowed to know and love themselves and/or experience real love and acceptance here. Indeed, these are all connected. For those living on the margins, loving the self is impossible when everything about a person is defined as wrong (sinful) and the social institutions that surround them are intentionally designed to retard self-acceptance and hence limit public, political activity. Conversely, what is the message given to mainstream students when other students are singled out for discriminatory treatment. Often, because of its Irish-Catholic heritage, its institutionalized theology and diocesan status, our university fears diversity (reality) and controversy. Speakers, movies, and music are banned rather than engaged and challenged. So much for coming to insight and truth collectively via dialogue.

Our student body is diversified in many ways with dozens of boundaries between them. Social class, ethnicity, religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, and life style differences are greater now than ever before. Our superficial moments of toleration speak volumes about where the university's true institutional goals and commitments lie. While it might appear that there is no overt hostility to diversity (except where gay/lesbian issues are concerned), the structure of the school, its overriding ideologies, and its academic program indicate otherwise.

We know we create the whole by accepting the parts. People "assimilate," or join the whole, from a position of strength is a basic sociological dictum. That means that once individuals know themselves, their history, their uniqueness, they can bargain with the majority to create a new whole. This is different than toleration or ignoring difference. The whole now celebrates difference and incorporates it into its operation. Student mobilizations that come from self awareness and self adjudication are not easy even if in the long run "catholicity" will benefit.

This relationship between American culture, diversity, the process of becoming, self-acceptance (speaking in the first person), our institutional nature and commitment, and a pertinent education that prepares students for the modern world is central to our discussion of the underpinnings of new core, the 'signature' courses we are planning and their acceptance or adoption. Students now live in a civil society that offers them more freedom and rights (rationally arrived at) than their own religious traditions which often publicly stand in arrogant, self-righteous contradiction to universally agreed upon civil rights (women's equality, same sex marriage, reproductive freedom, etc.) It is not that there are no valid Catholic views on these and many more issues, but as presently articulated, these positions do not reflect modern theological exegesis or the feelings or views of most educated Catholics. But that is not the point either. It is really the culture conflict between individual freedom (as celebrated in our glorious American Protestant heritage) and Catholic orthodoxy. The point is we live as Americans and that puts us in automatic opposition to our Catholic faith, narrowly understood.

The new core then becomes the content within which I will teach and "do" my sociology. It will affect my goals and instructional methods. My unifying principle will be "respect for the dignity of each student" while expecting the same from them, not just rhetorically, but actively as well. My students "read" me daily. My values, my references in class, my examples, my "stories," and my "wholeness" (demonstrated by speaking in the first person and telling it like it is) models life for them. For me, this is what "signature courses" are supposed to do!

The new core will and should impact on each dimension of university life. Teaching sociology is one thing, using that information to discover who one is, how to live, and what faith means in the modern world is quite another. Like theology, sociology also offers a perspective regarding truth, the origin of knowledge, and the nature of human life. At Seton Hall, I present the arguments, the history, the facticities regarding discourse and let the students decide. Within this exercise are the students, each with their own stories, all with a desire to understand themselves and their relationship and responsibility to others and the world at large.

Learning is Messy and Uncertain: Fostering Needed Dispositions For Liberal Education

Daniel Katz

“Of course, you can’t teach anyone how to teach.”

This challenge was offered to me across the dining table of a Bed and Breakfast in Oaxaca, Mexico just a few weeks ago. I had not traveled over 2000 miles with the expectation of encountering this piece of folk wisdom from my field, but as is normal when meeting people on vacation, I was answering questions about my work and what I did as a university teacher educator. I was noting to a couple from London that one of the most interesting aspects of my work was how difficult it is in education to say with assurance that any given action has an undeniable influence over any given outcome. The nature of the work for both teachers and their university professors demands that we question our assumptions.

The rather blunt response challenging the utility of teaching teachers was offered by a thirty year veteran of the New York City school system. He went on to elaborate that there is no way to know how to teach until “you do it in your own classroom.” In deference to what was shaping up to be a lovely holiday, I externally maintained the pleasantries of small talk. Internally, I was composing a seminar session. My fellow guest, with the absolute assurance of three decades in the classroom, had expressed one of the most persistent and troubling conventions in education: teaching is a craft solely learned in practice and attempts to teach another how to teach are useless. University education is deemed especially useless as it is too concerned with theory and impractical ideas about teaching that do not work “in the real world.”

On the one hand, his views are persistent because there is some truth to them. As early as 1932, Willard Waller noted that teachers are “shaped” by teaching and become the teachers they are through their experiences in the classroom regardless of their prior preparation. This view was noted again by Dan Lortie (1975) in his landmark study, *Schoolteacher*, in which teachers firmly asserted that their true education began in the classroom. Many reform efforts of the past two decades have built upon this enduring viewpoint by calling upon universities to construct more and deeper experiences within practicing teachers’ classrooms so that education students can learn from experience prior to their first jobs (Holmes Group, 1986; 1995; Carnegie Forum, 1986; NCTAF, 1996; NCATE, 2000). As an applied field, there is little doubt that a teacher’s skills, knowledge and dispositions are put to the test when actually practicing and that even with outstanding university preparation, *good* teachers learn a great deal from their actual teaching throughout their careers.

On the other hand, my fellow guest’s stated views were troubling because they are indicative of two tremendous problems in my field. Namely: teachers’ collective unwillingness to give credence to many concepts and ideas as well as teacher education that fails its students. In my experience as both a teacher and as a teacher educator, I have too often found the already wide gulf between theory and practice driven wider still by theorists

offering little more than one-size-fits-all solutions and by teachers unwilling to believe that new ideas will work with “their kids”. At times, I am sure I have been on both sides of this conundrum.

The dilemma here raises an interesting question: what *can* university education offer prospective teachers beyond grounding in their various content areas? A thorough answer to the question is far beyond the scope of this essay, but I believe a few, important dispositions are related to efforts to create the signature courses and can, if conceived broadly, benefit students from across the academic spectrum. The question is not one of “fixing” our students so that they unconditionally defer to our authority, nor is the question one of cramming teacher education with every possible teaching strategy for every possible classroom scenario (if such a thing were even possible).

Rather, the question is one of helping students become more knowledgeable of themselves, and of helping students to accept uncertainty and risk. Self knowledge is crucial for teachers as they try to understand what their own students need, and acceptance of uncertainty is necessary to adapt to the changing environment of a classroom rather than to retreat to familiar, yet simplistic, responses. Both dispositions are related to important questions within a core curriculum: *Who are we and how do we respond to the unknown? Do we understand how we perceive the world enough to know how to help others decipher their own perceptions, or do we insist upon narrowness? Do we embrace the challenges and excitement of high risk and high ambiguity in pursuit of meaningful work, or do we retreat to platitudes?*

At the end of September, 1993, I had been a high school English teacher for nearly a month and was on the verge of two personal epiphanies. The first was related to my self-knowledge. I was contemplating my next steps in a unit on *The Lord of the Flies* and was grappling with the realization that some of my students read only under duress and few others read much for pleasure outside of school. At that point, I had to admit to myself that one of my motivations for becoming an English teacher was my lifelong love of literature and writing. It is no exaggeration to say that reading, writing and talking about books had always been a major part of my life and were activities I saw as the key to a wide world of experiences beyond my own. However, I recognized that not all of my students were going to become English teachers and that it was my responsibility to teach them as well. This did not mean that those children were not capable of being excellent students of English. What it did mean was that I could not count upon the interests that had motivated me in my studies to motivate all of my students. What I lacked going into my first classroom was sufficient knowledge of myself as I related to others.

Maxine Greene wrote a very eloquent essay called *“Teaching: the Question of Personal Reality”* (1991) in which she posits that teachers need self knowledge if they are to effectively teach others. Her argument is based upon the belief that we all filter our interpretations of events and that we select actions through the lenses of experience and that subtle biases effect the underlying meaning we ascribe to events. For example, someone teaching a favorite lesson to a group of seemingly disinterested students may conclude the students are lazy, but this is one of only many possible explanations. While the teacher may not comprehend how the lesson fails to grasp the attention of any interested students, the students may have many reasons, ranging from personal troubles to genuine confusion with the material, for their reactions. Greene’s message is that responsible teaching requires

Careful examination of oneself, for if a teacher does not even know why she or he responds positively to the lesson, it is not possible to determine why some students may or may not respond similarly.

My second realization was the degree to which real teaching and learning requires acceptance of ambiguity and risk. As the semester progressed, I became convinced that my ninth grade students, who had little writing experience, would benefit from a portfolio writing approach where they drafted papers, received feedback from peers and myself, redrafted as many times as they wished and then assessed their progress from beginning to end. Assessment of this type provides a dizzying array of questions and potential self doubt: How do I fairly assess improvement? How do I fairly give every student a chance to improve? What is the writing process and how do I teach it? What about students who are already strong writers? How do I teach students to carefully assess themselves and their peers? Faced with such questions, one is easily tempted to retreat to the relative comfort of far less substantial work.

Walter Doyle described quality teaching as both “high risk” and “high ambiguity” (1983), meaning that for actual learning to take place both teacher and students need to engage in activities that risk the possibility of making mistakes. Meaningful learning cannot be reduced to a rote exercise, and to retreat from it due to those uncertainties diminishes the quality of an education. Wilson and Berne (1999) further note that while the discovery of learning can be an exhilarating experience with many rewards, it is also true that such learning can be a painful process. It involves pushing oneself beyond established comfort zones, and learning often means setting aside cherished assumptions about the world in favor of previously unconsidered realities. In my case, I had to set aside what I knew about the writing process in order to place myself into the shoes of a fully novice student, a place I had not been for well over a decade at that point.

These two issues return me to my earlier question: what *can* university education offer prospective teachers beyond grounding in their various content areas? Among the myriad of teaching skills and the breadth of knowledge necessary to teach, university education can strive to endow future teachers with the dispositions needed to teach, especially willingness to understand oneself and to embrace risk and ambiguity as necessary to learning. This is no easy task. Many of our university students come to us from school environments that do not value the ambiguity of real learning and expect simple, clear instructions about what responses will be received most favorably by their teachers.

Such a task is bigger than any single department or discipline, and, in fact, may be a central purpose of a liberal education. In this sense, our core courses, taking advantage of their place as interdisciplinary explorations of major philosophical questions, can take a lead in fostering true risk taking and self exploration, both of students’ beliefs and of their sense of place in the world. The topics of the signature courses need to be accompanied by questions that have students and professors examine their understanding of themselves and that require them to explore meaning by embracing intellectual controversies and by recognizing that the learning process is not a matter of lecture, question and rote response. The signature course opportunity is to help our students on the road that embraces the complexity of learning and to increase their willingness to take personal and intellectual risks.

Pedagogically, the courses have to foster an environment where the risk taking needed for intellectual exploration is possible. If real learning is messy and if students need encouragement to see the virtue of messiness, then the signature courses need to be offered in seminar fashion, as small cohorts of students from a wide variety of backgrounds, representing the full diversity of our student body. It is my hope that the signature courses will offer all students the best possible opportunity to open themselves to a world that does not rely upon responses carefully formulated to say little, and it is my hope that such opportunities will infuse the rest of the academic community. Although no course or experience can accomplish these goals alone, creating seminar experiences in the signature courses will assist students' development and will, hopefully, foster a more adventurous learning environment in general.

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Where do we stand with the Signature Courses? An Assessment in Midstream

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The workshop in June marked the culmination of a semester of intensive work on the signature courses. Throughout the spring semester the Working Group on the Signature Courses met on a regular basis and after numerous lively discussions was able to attain a broad agreement, if not a total consensus, on the general outlines of the three courses.

I had ample occasion, during the June workshops, to present my views on what the signature courses should look like, both in written and oral form, based on the findings of the working group. Rather than reiterate these presentations here, I would like to contemplate a few of the key issues that arose during the discussions and may come to the fore in the future.

The best that can be said about what has been accomplished so far is that we have arrived at something concrete. As the discussions at the workshop revealed, there are still many questions about the specifics as well as significant differences of opinions. But at this point we can say with some degree of certainty that there will be three courses and that have a reasonably clear understanding of the general content of each one. This in itself is a major achievement.

How specific should we be about the content of the signature courses? This was an issue of considerable debate both at the workshop and during the deliberations of the working group. There seemed to be a certain level of discomfort in the idea of stipulating any specific content. To do so, it seemed, would mean to state, in effect, that one area of knowledge, one set of questions, was of greatest significance for our students and should therefore be made obligatory by means of the signature courses. It might also be taken to mean that we possess not just the questions, but the answers as well. We, the faculty, know what is best for you, the students, and will cheerfully cram it down your throats during these three courses.

These objections were overridden, it seems to me, not so much by the specific proposals presented at the workshop, but by the decision of the Faculty Senate to establish the signature courses in the first place. Once the commitment was made to run these courses, it became impossible to avoid a discussion of what they should teach. It is fine to say that there should be certain fundamental questions at the heart of the courses that can be interpreted in a variety of ways. But without concrete materials with which to explore these questions, and a conceptual structure in which to frame it all, the courses can not be taught.

Keeping this overall point in mind, some caveats are in order. First, there is still a great deal to be done to bring these courses close to completion. The working group has presented outlines of the broad questions and narratives around which the courses could be structured. The detailed realization of these outlines will be the task of the groups assigned the task of developing and piloting the syllabi over the next three years. Secondly, the objectives of the course are still very much intertwined with the process, the experience of taking the courses. But without specific content this experience can not be attained. In other words, the content of the courses is as much a means as an end in itself. Thirdly, in suggesting outlines for the three courses we do not intend to suggest that this content is more important than all other areas of knowledge. We do hope, however, that the courses are conceived with sufficient breadth to provide a useful frame of reference as students define and explore more specific academic interests.

So what should the content of the courses be? Perhaps the one issue that has evoked the most controversy and consternation so far has been the place of Catholicism. Given the present make-up of the Seton Hall community, any discussion of core courses very quickly runs up against a clash of seemingly irreconcilable viewpoints. There are those, for example, who feel that Catholicism, or any specific religious tradition for that matter, has no place at all in the signature courses. Others have appeared to suggest that, if the Catholic tradition is to be included in the courses at all, equal time should be devoted to unmasking the crimes and deviations of the Church. On the other extreme are those who feel that in light of the university's Catholic identity, it would be vastly inappropriate for the courses to focus on anything but Catholicism and that doctrinal purity should be rigorously enforced.

Both sides in this clash share a tendency to deny a middle ground and to turn alternative views into caricatures. For some, any orientation toward Catholicism in the signature courses evokes images of nuns with rulers--catechism class and the forced imposition of belief. In certain circles the opinion can be heard that the whole enterprise of the core curriculum is "stealth" project undertaken by the highest circles of the university leadership to purge Seton Hall of "relativism" and impose a rigid theocratic control. In the opposing camp, fears abound that the University's Catholic identity will fall by the wayside under the new core, which at best will give mere lip service to a kind of "Catholicism lite" taught by unqualified individuals many of whom not only do not understand but are actively hostile to Church doctrine.

Finding room for compromise in the midst of these clashing views is no easy task. Clearly there will be individuals who will remain dissatisfied with the Signature Courses regardless of how they are conceived. My hope, however, is that a critical mass of faculty can see the possibility of a middle ground based on the formulation of the Faculty Senate: "central but not exclusive to the Catholic tradition."

Given the history, identity and character of Seton Hall, it seems to me self-evident that there should be some Catholic content in the signature courses. This need not amount to proselytization--quite to the contrary. But given the extent to which Catholicism is part of the fabric of life at Seton Hall—from the crosses on the classroom walls, to the prayers at commencement—it seems perfectly reasonable to expect that students should be able to learn something about the Catholic tradition without feeling threatened or indoctrinated. Seton Hall is a Catholic University and students know this when they choose to attend. The

idea that a course which exposes students to the Catholic tradition will trigger some kind of mass exodus seems rather overwrought. On the other hand, I do not think that the courses should be focused exclusively on the Catholic tradition or that they should spend time on a detailed exposition of Catholic doctrine. Rather the goal should be to view Catholicism in its broader contexts: the overall quest for spiritual fulfillment and self-knowledge, toward which Catholicism provides one path; the balance between faith and reasons, with regard to which the Catholic tradition has developed its unique position in interaction with other cultural and spiritual traditions; major challenges facing contemporary society to which the Church and other religious communities have responded. In all of these topics, the Catholic tradition is present, but ample room remains to explore the contributions and responses of other traditions as well. Granted this compromise will not satisfy everyone, but my hope is that it can provide an adequate framework to forge ahead.

Constructing a core curriculum is a daunting task with immense repercussions for the future of the university, its faculty and students. It is very easy to feel threatened by the prospect of the impending changes. Sitting on the sidelines and waiting for the whole thing to crash and burn, as it has at so many other institutions, is a predictable strategy for many faculty members. The fact that so many colleagues at Seton Hall have stood up from the sidelines and gotten involved in the development process is very encouraging. The fact that we have come this far is a real achievement, and gives hope that we have the capacity to bring the core to fruition.

Primal Questions and the Signature Courses

Richard M. Liddy

1. *Primal Questions*

It is generally agreed that “questions” are central to the core curriculum. But the question can be asked, “Whose questions?” The students’? or the teachers’? Or is it the case that in true learning, the questions must be born somehow “in between,” in what Eric Voegelin calls, using a Greek word, the “*metaxy*,” the “in-between” of life.

For if it is only the students’ immediate questions we are interested in, then why have a school at all? Why bring them here to Seton Hall University? For market research? “What are young people asking today?” Or is it only the teacher’s questions that count? “What is the meaning of life?” “What did Aristotle have to say about civic virtue?” “Here – let me give you all the answers – memorize them for the exam.” Such is the empty bottle theory of teaching.

Or does genuine teaching and learning happen when both students and teachers personally enter into questions broached in great **conversations** that reach into our present. That would seem to be the English philosopher Michael Oakeshott:

'School' is an emancipation achieved in a continuous redirection of attention. Here, the learner is animated, not by the inclinations he brings with him, but by intimations of excellence and aspirations he has never yet dreamed of; here he may encounter, not answers to the 'loaded' questions of 'life', but questions which have never before occurred to him; here he may acquire new 'interests' and pursue them uncorrupted by the need for immediate results; here he may learn to seek satisfactions he had never yet imagined or wished for. (Oakshott, 69)

It is not enough to begin identifying the questions the student has; one must also appeal to “intimations of excellence and aspirations...never yet dreamed of,” intimations and aspirations stoked by encounters with great persons and great conversations from beyond one’s own ken. On a first level, the conversation is with the professor – who hopefully is also very interested in another conversation – one with great works. As one student said, “I never realized I had these questions until I read Augustine’s **Confessions**.”

This is the point of taking great works of literature and art as the starting points of the signature courses. As Goethe put it,

When we’re faced with the great superiority of another person, we have no means of safety but love. (Hughes, 2005)

In other words, the questions might not be our immediate ones, but if our hearts are open to meaning, we will get something very important from these works. And we will continue to get something from them as we return to them. As Friedrich Schlegel put it:

A classic is a writing that is never fully understood. But those that are educated and educate themselves must always want to learn more from it. (Lonergan, 1996, 161, quoting Gadamer, 274)

For the classics are not only beyond the student's initial horizon; they are beyond the teacher's as well.

The major texts, the classics, in religion, letters, philosophy, theology, not only are beyond the initial horizon of their interpreters but also may demand an intellectual, moral, religious conversion of the interpreter over and above the broadening of his horizon. In this case the interpreter's initial knowledge of the object is just inadequate. He will come to know it only in so far as he pushes the self-correcting process of learning to a revolution in his own outlook. He can succeed in acquiring that habitual understanding of an author that spontaneously finds his wave-length and locks on to it, only after he has effected a radical change in himself. (Lonergan, 1996, 161)

Of course, the student – or we ourselves – can protect ourselves by blowing the work off with a “So what?” Or “I’m just not interested in this stuff.”

Or we can allow the work to open us up in appreciative wonder, to chasten us, to throw a new light on our lives. As Harold Bloom said of the classics, “They know us better than we know them.”

And that is why the classic works are being read again and again. For they are the Seton Hall teachers' questions as well as, hopefully more and more, the Seton Hall students' questions. Walking across the Seton Hall parking lot one day, the thought hit me: “The questions of a liberal education are ‘my’ questions! – now! - even though I am many years older than the students.”

Eric Voegelin, the historian of culture, put it this way: all authentic thinking arises from the vital demand experienced by each human person to “live in the light.” It is that “pull” towards authentic living as well as the “counter-pulls” towards unauthenticity that are at the core of human living. And this pull and the counter-pulls are at the core of all great literature.

According to Voegelin, Plato does not primarily contrast one philosophy with another; rather he points behind the logical formulations of philosophies to the human experience that engenders all philosophies. And that primary human experience is the search for the meaning of life. Plato's Socrates formulates this “Ur-question” at the end of the **Apologia**:

But now the time has come to go. I go to die, and you to live. But who goes to the better lot is unknown to anyone but God.

The tragedian, Euripides formulated this basic question when he wrote: “Who knows if to live is to be dead and to be dead to live?”

And the same question can be found in the Christian Scriptures:

What does it profit a person if he gains the whole world but suffers the loss of his own real life? (Matthew 16, 26)

In truth, in very truth, I tell you, a grain of wheat remains a solitary grain of wheat unless it falls into the ground and dies; but if it dies, it bears a rich harvest. The person who loves himself is lost, but the one who hates himself in this life will be kept safe for eternal life. (John 12, 24-25)

Such basic questions are not beyond the ken of our students. I can testify from my own teaching that their immediate interests might center on contemporary music, but even such interest can be an opening to asking these basic questions.

2. The Signature Courses

Discussion on the curriculum regularly concern simplification of an over-crowded curriculum and, concomitantly, the very mission of the university.

What's the point?
What are we doing when we're teaching “reading, writing and ‘rithmetic?”
What good is all this?
What are we aiming for?
What good is all this for our students?
 for ourselves?
 for the world?

What are we aiming at?
 Why teach this and not that?
 Why add this and drop that?

The questions naturally arise in the context of remarks on the present “fragmentation” of the curriculum, its “smorgasbord” quality, the fact that it's just “a bunch of courses without rhyme or reason for students or faculty.

This need for simplification and focus is not unconnected to the question of the mission and identity of the university. The question reaches a particular intensity at a Catholic university where, in addition to the above questions, there arise such questions as:

What's “Catholic” about all this?
What is meant by “Catholic?”

and
What is meant by “catholicity” in relation to “Catholic?”

Such questions concern the life of the Catholic university and, when broached, can be the source of much friction as well as antagonism. Not least of the neuralgic points is “Whose Catholicism?” Perhaps it’s best to “let sleeping dogs lie” and not touch these questions.

But touch them we did in a powerful seminar June 6-8, 2005. Facilitated by John Haughey, S.J., the seminar focused on “the wholes” being birthed through our particular work in our particular disciplines. The question was:

What is “the whole” being birthed in our work in our respective disciplines?
How does our research relate to “being?”

The seminar was powerful indeed for it sought to connect with the primal question or drive that has sparked in us a life-long quest – the quest for meaning in our own work and discipline. Each of us was asked to recall and share our own “research autobiography,” that is, the search for the meaningful, the true, the good and the beautiful in our disciplinary quest.

In this light Thomas Aquinas was quoted: “God is implicitly known in everything we know...” It is what he called the *ascensio mentis per intelligibile et verum ad ens*. “*the ascent of the mind through the intelligible and the true to being*.” Bernard Lonergan formulates the same reality by focusing on the act of insight, of understanding, of “catching on” – the aha! experience so dramatically captured in the story of Helen Keller.

Our subject has been the act of insight or understanding, and God is the unrestricted act of understanding, the eternal rapture glimpsed in every Archimedean cry of ‘Eureka!’

So our sometimes passionate drive for meaning is a drive for being – that is, the meaningful, the true, the beautiful and, for religious people, the loving and the Source of loving. And so in these terms we told each other our research autobiographies and “the whole” we sought to bring to birth through our particular research.

How did this “question of being” dawn upon one? What happened? Was it a teacher? A book? A happenstance? A conjunction of circumstances? A road not taken that made all the difference? That led to a life of literature or science or management? sociology? philosophy?

And so we told our story of bringing to birth one particular whole within being – the true, the valuable, the good, the beautiful – the realm Catholics, and others, call the divine.

The problem of Catholic universities in recent years is that we do not plumb these depths enough – we do not share our stories – we do not enter into (or let enter into us) “the great conversation” that has gone on before us and that we are invited to enter into.

In the realm of religious experience Olivier Rabut has asked whether there exists any unassailable fact. He found such a fact in the existence of love. It is as though a room were filled with music though one can have no sure knowledge of its source. There is in the world, as it were, a charged field of love and meaning; here and there it reaches a notable intensity; but it is ever unobtrusive, hidden, inviting each of us to join. And join we must if we are to perceive it, for our perceiving is through our own loving. (Rabut, 168, quoted in Lonergan, 1996, 290.)

There are some things, then, it seems to me, that we need to do if we are to become a truly “catholic” Catholic university;

- 1) We have to love one another; that is...
- 2) We have to listen acceptantly to one another’s stories;
- 3) Giving, as Ignatius of Loyola insisted, the best possible construal to each other’s words;
- 4) connecting our stories with “the great conversation” that has gone on in the great works of literature and art before us;
- 5) And inviting our students into this conversation – inviting them to bring their stories into “the great conversation.”

As far as the signature courses go, it seems to me that these should be focused opportunities for entering into these primal questions and this great conversation – no matter where we are coming from.

Since I was part of the Signature Committee, I would like to leave the course outlines as they presently are and allow those who will be teaching these courses to finalize the syllabi and to decide how to teach them as effectively as possible.

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The Signature Courses and the Role of Art and Music

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ART AND MUSIC AND THE SIGNATURE COURSES

In exploring ways that art and music can play a role in the Signature Courses being developed at Seton Hall, what immediately comes to mind is how present and ubiquitous artistic imagery and music of all kinds are so closely connected to the young. Indeed it seems that they are uniquely “wired” for sight and sound. For many young people, their involvement with music and art is sometimes a twenty-four hour engagement. When I inquired about this recently from an incoming freshman, he said that for him, listening to music was like breathing. Music is accessible at all times through modern technology. New ways of sending, receiving and processing information and entertainment continues its blind acceleration into the future.

This new way of processing information and/or entertainment favors art and music that jumps around, has light behind it. Film and video feature highly as preferred vehicle of communication. This is observable everywhere. After 9/11 an arts agency in Manhattan invited the public to send them artwork they created (including photography) that related to their experiences regarding the lower Manhattan tragedy. An arts foundation mounted all these 8 1/2 x 11” paper works on the walls of the gallery for the public to see. Most of the people who saw the exhibit were drawn more to a video monitor mounted on the ceiling with cascading images of the artwork on walls, than to the actual original works right in the same room. This is telling! We’ve all seen people at museums looking at computer monitors showing the exhibition’s content instead of viewing the actual artwork in the next room. This is of course, dispiriting to me as an artist, but today somehow the shimmering electronic images on video monitors draw more attention, that’s the reality. So given that there is a universal saturation of imagery and sound that permeates our daily lives to degrees unforeseen even a decade ago, we need to ask how can any of this be channeled, or directed toward our specific ends in educating our students, particularly in the Signature Courses? As was so aptly emphasized in our seminar, it’s the questions we choose to address that are important. And this first question can be “who are these students from diverse backgrounds, what has been their individual and shared experiences and not only how do we reach them for the present, but keep our students interested and engaged in the inquiries Signature Courses proposes for them over time?”

POWERFUL ROLE ART AND MUSIC PLAYS

Plato said that in order to take the temperature of an individual or a society, one must “mark the music.”(Bloom, 1987). The same can be said about all the arts. Understanding that this is a new way of perceiving and listening and digesting information, it seems only logical that as educators we tap into this given source and look at ways that these artistic expressions can be infused with these courses as tools of engagement for our students. These relationships as manifested in images, words, music, film, performance and theatre apply across all disciplines and need to become integral to all. The arts differ from these other curricular disciplines in that it is through the practice of creative self expression

gendered by the art experience that allows the exploration of altered states of being. This, and none other, could be the justification for inclusion of art and music in the the Signature Courses.

EDUCATIONAL, HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Most of what we know about past and present civilizations is known through what has survived—its art, architecture, sculpture and music. In looking at the past we can see the connections between the major themes in all civilizations (life, death, transfiguration, transformation, all the major and minor ritual markers and historical events) and the role that art and music played in defining, memorializing and sanctifying these major markers in developing cultures. In understanding the historical context of art, its uniqueness is imbedded within the tradition in which it was created, its meaning and significance is unique to its time. An ancient statue of Venus stood in an entirely different context with Greeks who venerated it than with te clerics in the Middle-Ages who viewed it as an ominous idol. Both however were confronted with its uniqueness, its aura (Benjamin, 1987). The magnificent stone Buddha statuary in Bamiyan from the 3rd century BC not only marked the most western reach of the Buddhist influence, but also its most sacred and venerated presence. Yet Taliban fundamentalists at the turn of this century saw them as idols, as blasphemous and destroyed them, horrifying the art world. Sometimes art and music is so powerful and so feared by political leaders for its transformative powers that it is hidden from public. Censorship is alive and well today in many parts of the world, including our own.

Music and art across all times and cultures have identified, elaborated, codified customs and beliefs and could motivate toward lofty and base ends. Music can drive men to battle and then honor their deaths with dirges, it defines and enriches sacred rituals and immerses sound with meaning. Today music drives political agendas as well as commercial ones, while on a lighter plane it entertains and enhances romantic passions. Art has served the same sacred and profane ends with monuments that inspire, architecture that elevates the human spirit, and visual art that deifies as well documents significant events in time. At the same time it also serves mundane or commercial interests.

TRANSFORMATIVE, SPIRITUAL NATURE IN THE ARTS

Science and Philosophy are expected to be accountable, to instruct, inform, teach us how to live. They're expected to deliver information, give opinions and advice. Art is not accountable in this way. Art as personal expression hopefully communicates something outside of this domain, something magical, filled with wonder or novelty, not unlike a spiritual belief which is accepted as a truth without the need of a proving argument. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). Some of this work will be taken away for commerce, some will be hidden from view (as in censorship) some will be prohibited performance-wise, but much gets to reach audiences, even if only virtual ones. Most of these expressions are interpretations or reflections on what is seen or heard by the artists, his or her own window of visual or auditory observation, then processed by its creators. It needn't be linked to a system of learning Mathematics or Language or Science; it stands apart for simply for being. These works and the stories of artists and musicians, the times in which they were created can be enormously transforming and inspiring for people, particularly the young. Today in popular culture musical groups and individual artists exert an enormous influence on today's young people and have large and diverse following. These groups and artists have a huge potential for leadership and inspiration for the young, especially as they immerse themselves with worthy causes and charitable works. The Live Aids concerts and the pro-bono work of the musical group U2, for example, and the startling works of political satirists and their anti-war posters are examples of the kinds of transformative power that the visual arts and music

can attain. There are also films and plays that are so powerful that the audiences are changed forever in the ways they think about life, partly because they are so “real”.

Art

Art is Truth setting itself to work (Heidigger, 1975). The Eyes as in “artistic vision” have often been called the windows of the soul. There is the notion of a “Third Eye” in which the eye is an instrument that moves itself, a means which invents its own end. It is that which has been moved by some impact of the world which it then restores to the visible through the artist’s hand. There is an exchange, an absorption of “out there and in here”. Paul Klee said that often as he was painting trees in a landscape, he often felt the trees were looking back at him. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). In the creation of religious Hindu sculpture the opening of the eyes is one of the very last steps in its making. A priest will ritually scrape the eye with a golden needle, or add an extra flick of paint, and the stone or bronze figure becomes something else: a divinity who returns our gaze. The sculptures’ divine purpose was to instruct, to encourage moral accountability and aspiration to the karmic ideal. This mutual transferrance is a kind of metaphysical experience akin to a spiritual one. Art mixes up all of our categories —essence and existence, imaginary and real, visible, invisible in its ordering of a personal universe.

Works of art or their instances perform one or more among certain referential functions: description, exemplification, expression. The use of symbols in art aid in the understanding and manipulation of knowledge and expression. For man, being a socially communicative animal, it is a requisite for social intercourse and symbols are the media of communication. This symbol making in art sends messages, conveys facts, thoughts and feelings and helps to sustain society. Symbology in metaphor is a tool of understanding and it abounds in art. With metaphor similar ideas can be more readily understood and connected rather than worked through analytically; ideas can be grasped as wholes rather than examined point by point. (Duncan, 2005). The kinds of surrealistic imagery which abounds in popular media is of this kind and serves as a short cut to understanding, even while our own sense of reality is constantly challenged and suspended.

Music

Music is more universal than any one artistic tradition. If the eye is the window to the soul, one might say that music is the soul’s primary speech. Our interest in music arises from its intimate relation to the all important life of feeling and perhaps the expression of it; and furthermore, not the symptomatic expression feeling that concerns the composer but a symbolic expression of the forms of sentience as he understands them. It reveals the imagination of feelings rather than personal emotional states, and expresses what he knows about the so-called “inner life.” The power of music is in its ability to give insight into what may be called the life of feeling, or subjective unity of experience. Music conveys the complete range of human emotions. It is a tonal analog of emotive life. (Langer, 1953).

For Plato and Nietzsche the history of music is a series of attempts to give form and beauty to the dark, chaotic, premonitory forces in the soul—to make them serve a higher purpose, an ideal to give man’s duties a fullness. Bach’s religious intentions and Beethoven’s revolutionary and humane ones are clear examples. In *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche contrasts the the ancient Greek figures of Apollo and Dionysis, and the duality and polarized symbols they represent. Apollo can be associated or identified with sculpture, frozen in marble detached from the visceral, while Dionysis is associated with the most primal, transfigurative form of music expression and closeness to nature.(Bloom, 1987) A work easily identified with this structure is Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*.

CONCLUSION

Today there are many new forms of artistic expression—Installations and performance art as well as video, digital animation and musical composition, including the sister arts, theatre, film and dance. These new forms can be woven into the content of the Signature Courses and made more exciting and accessible to our students. These studies and their incorporation into these courses is a vital component in the liberal education of our students. Besides its role as creative tool of engagement for our students' interest in other disciplines, it is enriching on its own terms. All well educated students should have a solid footing in education in the arts for it not only informs all the other disciplines, it brings joy and balance to their everyday experience. But aesthetics aside, today there is an even greater reason to study the arts. The creative areas of the brain in which art and music and the creative fields are active reside in the “right brain”, as opposed to the “left brain” in which logic, linear problem solving, analytical thought reigns. In contrast, the “right brain” is identified as that part of the brain where insight, intuition, creative, non-linear activity occurs. Today, given the global realities of world cultures and economies and of our role in them, it has never been more important to be able to think conceptually through a well exercised “right brain” and design our lives around larger pictures, and less on narrow compartmentalized specialized fields. This is vital to understand and grasp because most of the “left brain” work in many professions are being outsourced to Asian countries or else usurped by faster, user friendly software.

The Information Age in which knowledge gathering, harvesting and programming were paramount is behind us, according to Daniel Pink in his article “Revenge of the Right Brain”, (Wired magazine, June, 2005). According to Pink, this new age requires people who can conceive of things or ideas that are novel and maybe even not yet known to us in order for us to maintain our holistic and economic balance. He calls this the Conceptual Age, an age in which it will not serve us to be skilled in one narrow discipline, but to be able to immerse ourselves in looking at problems and ideas in fresh, uncharted ways. In this age of material consumption and abundance (for westerners, mostly), there is a need for something else, not just the thing, the product, but one that is somehow enriched by good design, pleasing aesthetics, and infused with some nobler purpose, at least planet-friendly and not destructive. Students with educational backgrounds that explore “right brain” activities that require creative, conceptual thinking and who have an ethical and moral compass to guide them will be in a good position to be leaders in the future. They will be well served and well prepared by the Signature Courses infused with the study of Art and Music. On another note, It will be very important as the infusions take place across all the Signature Courses from all disciplines that they are balanced with non-western content. There has never been a more important time for our students to learn about and respect other cultures and ideas, secular and non-secular. This kind of well rounded and inclusive education reflects the true meaning of catholicity.

July, 2005

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Martin Luther's Legacy to the Contemporary Roman Catholic Church: Why We Can't Go Directly from Aquinas to Vatican II in the Signature Courses

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Religious Studies

As now planned, the sophomore-level Signature course, 'The Catholic Intellectual Tradition' (CIT) is followed by 'The Challenges of the Contemporary World' (CCW), a junior course. Though I take well the point that the Signature Course Subcommittee representatives made this summer that the actual content is still-to-be determined, the draft outlines of the Signature courses offered reveal at least one crucial aspect that I believe needs to be addressed as work on developing the courses= actual frameworks and syllabi goes forward.

The CCW outline begins as well as anywhere else, with Vatican II's 'Church and the Modern World.' CIT, the course that leads up to CCW, offers these five possibilities for the last two weeks of the course, weeks 13-14, with the previous two weeks being spent on Thomas Aquinas:

1. Do not go beyond Aquinas, and simply devote more time to the [proposed] readings
2. Do not go beyond Aquinas, but add to the current list of readings
3. End with the scientific revolution
4. End with developments in medieval thought e.g., Ockham and theological voluntarism
5. End with the transition from late medieval thought to the Reformation, including texts from Martin Luther

My argument here is that the fifth option should be one implemented, and for possibly more than two weeks if the scientific revolution is also included as it should be. This essay is meant to be a contribution and not a critique, as again it was made clear that these were draft documents offered to stimulate comments like these as to where the final syllabi will lay.

At Vatican II (1961-5) the Church for the first time reflected extensively upon itself as church, and did so both implicitly and explicitly in terms of the developments in the modern world it had basically shunned as the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution had worked together to undermine the authority and influence of the Church in the world. In the interests of insinuating the Church into liberationist movements in the world through greater dialogue and involvement, Pope John XXIII, who had called for the council, wished for *aggiornamento*—renewing/reforming and updating the church=s understanding of itself, the world, non-Catholic Christians, non-Christians and even atheism. It is instructive to analyze Vatican II=s reformulation of the nature of the Roman Catholic Church for it is here that we can notice the influence of the great Reformer himself, Martin Luther (1483-1546).

The quickest and possibly clearest way to do this is to look at the chapter headings and the order they fall in of the key Council document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (LG; Light

of the Peoples), comparing those of the first draft (1962), the second (1963) and finally those of final version (1964). The first draft is an exemplary demonstration of the pre-Vatican II approach (and some would say still predominant). Provided by the Vatican Curia (essentially the College of Cardinals) in an attempt to manage the results of Vatican II (it had originally ignored John XXIII's first call to organize a new council), its highly traditional, even Aarchaic and stern language can be seen in its chapter headings. Its emphases can be seen in the order of the headings:

First Draft

- 1)The nature of the church militant.
 - 2)The members of the church and the necessity for of the church for salvation
 - 3)The episcopate [the bishopric] as the highest grade of the sacrament of orders; the priesthood.
 - 4)Residential bishops.
 - 5)The states of evangelical perfection [re: members of religious orders who follow the Aevangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience].
 - 6)The laity.
 - 7)The teaching office [magaesterium] of the church.
 - 8) Authority and obedience in the church.
 - 9)Relationship between church and state and religious tolerance.
 - 10)The necessity of proclaiming the gospel to all peoples and in the whole world.
 - 11)Ecumenism
- Appendix: AVirgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of Men

This schema echoed the centuries-old view that Athere was no salvation outside the Roman Catholic Church; the Tridentine (post-Council of Trent [1545-1563]) pyramid-like image of the church with the pope on top, cardinals on the next layer, followed subsequently by bishops, priests, members of religious orders and lastly the laity; the emphasis on the church's teaching office with the concurrent stress on authority and obedience; and lastly ecumenism. Overall, it continued the view of the Church as being the sole possessor of religious truth, identified as late as 1943 as the Akingdom of God on Earth (Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corpori*). As the bishops deliberated further, receiving feedback from their churchgoers when they went back home in between the first and second sessions, as Dennis Doyle writes, a Anew draft was called for that stressed more the call to holiness throughout all the people of the church, the mystery of the church in the plan of salvation and the need for the church to tread the path of reform and renewal. The correlate of this is to recognize a crucial distinction between the Church and the kingdom of God. This second draft sought to integrate these themes into the first draft and satisfy both traditional and progressive views:

Second Draft:

Section 1:

- I. The Mystery of the Church.
- II. The Hierarchical constitution of the church and the episcopate in particular.

Section 2:

- III. The people of God and the laity in particular.
- IV. The call to holiness in the church.

This revision accomplished at least two important changes: 1) By lumping together the more institutional concerns of chapters 3, 4, 7, and 8 into one part (II. The Hierarchical Constitution), it de-emphasized these aspects, including the clericalism and juridicism implicit in stressing the hierarchical aspects of the Church; and 2) highlighting the church as *Mystery* served to undermine the triumphalism of the first draft and paved the way for the more sweeping changes of the final draft that moved the Church closer to reform and renewal envisioned by John XXIII.

Final Version

The Mystery of the Church.

The People of God.

The Hierarchical Structure of the Church, with Special Reference to the Episcopate.

The Laity.

The Call of the Whole Church to Holiness.

Religious.

The Eschatological Nature of the Pilgrim Church and Her Union with the Heavenly Church.

The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church.

It is clear from the final chapter headings how far the Council and the Church moved away from the pre-Vatican II image of the Church. For example, the chapter on the Church as *People of God* was moved ahead of the one on hierarchical structure. Second, finally the whole church is explicitly called to holiness. Third, in Chapter 7, the militant and triumphant church of the first draft has become a *Pilgrim* church, a church *on the way*, receiving perfection and the whole truth only in heaven. In this final version, a new ecclesiology, a new self-definition of the Church as a more inclusive *People of God* (which can be imaged as a circle encompassing all the baptized, with a triangle in the center representing the hierarchy *-serving rather than dominating the people*),ⁱⁱⁱ replaced the old ecclesiology and image of the church as pyramid, with the role of the laity to “pay, pray and obey.”

While it is possible to caricature the Tridentine model, its image and practice of Church is what the Council Fathers sought to reform in order to reinvigorate the influence of the laity, since they are the ones most active in the world that Jesus sought to instantiate the reign of God. Although it can be argued that sociologically-speaking at least some of the teachings of Vatican II sociological point-of-view may not seem to be that crucial to the Catholic church today, this is the heritage of Seton Hall and the best face the Church has chosen to turn to the world.

So what is the by then 400+ years-old dead Martin Luther's role in all this? The main reason in my mind is that like Luther and the Reformation, Vatican II in its emphasis on a more biblical approach engaged in *ressourcement*—a “return to the sources,” and from there to

a more pluralistic view of the church. Regarding the latter, Luther taught that the church is not the kingdom of God but its herald. As Cardinal Avery Dulles has pointed out, the church as institution is only one possible model of the church,^{iv} having eclipsed in the Catholic Church other viable and important modes. Further, LG, especially in Chapter 2, reaches from a Catholic viewpoint several key ideas associated with Luther.^v For example, both reach back to St. Paul's notion of the church as community—the image of people of God representing Paul's metaphor of the church as *Body of Christ*.^{vi} Vatican II, although not going as far as Luther's *sola scriptura*, Vatican II called for a more biblical approach to understanding doctrine. Second, while the Roman Catholic church continuing stress on the need for hierarchy and mediation of grace through sacraments and structures differs from Protestant views of hierarch and unmediated grace, Luther's view of the *A Priesthood of all the faithful*,^{vii} each baptized person as prophet, priest and king to each other, found its way directly into Vatican II as outlined above. Third, in the broadest sense, by acknowledging the truth found in Protestant and other non-Catholic Christians, it inaugurated an official and broad-ranging ecumenism.

Despite the many interesting and controversial historical, doctrinal and ecclesiological issues these points may bring up, my interest though here is not to discuss the immense implications of Luther's influence nor to evaluate the contributions of Vatican II in light of those who argue that Vatican II didn't really introduce much different to the Church (Dulles' present position) or conversely that it went too far. My aim is much more modest. It is that we cannot talk about the Roman Catholic Church's (and thus Seton Hall's) role in the contemporary world without analyzing and acknowledging the role of Luther and the Protestant Reformation in the Church's way of functioning in the world as developed at Vatican II. It may be saying too much that Vatican II represents the Church finally catching up to Protestants (while maintaining continuity in the Catholic tradition, it is true enough to ensure that the Reformation be included as students go from Aquinas to Vatican II).

Reflections on Town Meetings, Neighborhood Meetings, and Signature Course Seminar

Provide a *common educational* experience that all Seton Hall students participate in rooted in *the unique spiritual, intellectual, and cultural traditions of Seton Hall* that includes an *interdisciplinary* analysis of and reflection on issues *relevant* to the life and times of the students.

Provide a challenge and opportunity to question the purpose and meaning of life and the individual's role in it.

These goals (my wording) expressed in the first committee meetings survived three years of analysis, challenges, and endless discussions in University wide forums, departmental meetings, and informal gatherings. They clearly provide an acceptable starting point as expressed in the three proposed course titles.

It is my understanding that the papers written by the participants in the Signature Course Seminar are intended to provide input for the creators of the three courses. Although the seminar focused primarily on content, over the last three years and at the seminar consideration was also given to process and products. The following are some thoughts on process.

- Community building, learning communities, and a cohort model were briefly talked about at the outset. This discussion stemmed from the initial reason for creating a common core – to provide an essentially Seton Hall signature experience that all students shared. The cohort model quickly proved to be impractical and was dropped along with learning communities, but it would be worth while to reconsider ways in which the common core curriculum could contribute to community building.
- The idea of a capstone project received considerable attention at one time, but was dropped because some colleges and majors had capstone experiences in place (e.g., student teaching in the College of Education and Human Services). However, it would be worthwhile to consider a culminating project as a product of the third course. The products could be shared in e-publications and/or the Petersheim exhibition.
- Both of the strategies above could be advanced by cooperative, collaborative learning with projects produced by the class as a team/community.
- The application of an interdisciplinary approach has been the most pervasive process related topic. It was presented as one of the primary differences between the proposed common core and the separate program core curricula and one of the reasons for having a common core.
- Invite juniors taking the final course to formulate goals, content, and process for the next sequence of courses. Include students in brainstorming for the first series of classes.

Comments on the Courses

1. The Journey of Transformation

We were requested to propose questions appropriate for this course. Questions proposed clearly shape the intent of the course: Who am I? Where do I come from? Why am I? What do I think? Why do I think it? What do I believe? How should I behave? Because we can should we? How do my responses to these questions affect my transformation?

This course may make the most innovative contribution to the core. Although courses were available that addressed all or some of these questions, I suspect many students graduated without being invited to engage in systematic reflection on potentially transforming questions such as these. In designing the course another set of questions may be kept in mind: Who are the students? What cultural, intellectual, social, spiritual background do they come from? How does their background shape their attitude towards personal transformation? What issues are they facing in their daily lives?

2. The Catholic Intellectual Tradition, broadly understood

In terms of content this course has motivated the most debate. Since her founding as a Catholic Diocesan University 150 years ago, Seton Hall has attracted faculty, staff, students, and administrators from numerous religious/spiritual beliefs, practices, and traditions, all of whom contributed to the SHU spiritual, intellectual, and cultural traditions. Along these lines it was said that this may be “a course that evolves around questions central to but not exclusive to the Catholic intellectual tradition”. There was talk of “widening the tent poles.”

In discussion on this topic it was pointed out that everyone who joins the Seton Hall community selects a Catholic institution. If they do not pick SHU because it is a Catholic institution, they do so knowing it is a Catholic institution.

How do you make 2,000 year old texts interesting? This question raises another question which is how relevant are the ancient texts to contemporary life. Ancient myths, philosophies, theologies, and literature convey timeless wisdom that provide insight into dealing with contemporary issues; however, the students entering our classes and their children need maps to navigate worlds beyond those the minds and imaginations of the past could conjure up. We regularly read in popular magazines and newspapers about advancements in DNA technology that enable scientists to tinker with the reproductive and evolutionary processes of living organisms, including humans. These and other modern issues may not be answerable with the catholic tradition as we received it. Tradition is a work in progress and we are being faced with decisions that challenge us to make our contribution.

3. The Challenges of the Contemporary World

The three courses are intertwined. Who we are is partially defined by our responses to the challenges of the contemporary world. As stated above, one of the responsibilities facing modern religions is to respond compassionately, effectively, and in the spirit of their religious beliefs to current challenges: unemployment, starvation, illiteracy, over population, health care, war, prejudice, environmental issues, etc.

Student centered and student directed models seem appropriate for all three courses, but especially the third one. As was pointed out during the seminar, “course 3 differs from 2 in that we are currently living it: facing the challenges of the modern world.” We and our students may be part of the problems as well as the solutions as we carry out our many roles as citizens, parents, consumers, and professionals. We are all living some challenges of the contemporary world. By the junior year students will have the skills and knowledge acquired through two years of liberal arts and professional training which will have included self reflection and consideration of religious thought. This academic background along with research skills will prepare them to function with considerable independence in the third course.

In conclusion

As indicated in the title “Reflections on ..” much of what is contained in these pages was previously expressed in different core curriculum gatherings where the real work was done. My purpose in this paper has been to highlight ideas I felt were worthy of consideration by the teams that design the three courses.

Likewise with suggestions regarding process: I have attended TLTC events where impressive examples of differentiated, student-centered learning motivated by a keen awareness of student needs were demonstrated. Faculty involved with the Honors Program have been teaching interdisciplinary courses for many years. The good news is Seton Hall has been preparing for the challenges presented by these three courses for a long, long time. We are ready.

Two Themes for a Model Catholic Core Curriculum

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We teachers and administrators at Seton Hall should make our Core Curriculum a model for Catholic higher education even as it serves the needs of our students and of the world. In doing so, I suggest that we consider two basic themes drawn from Catholic theological reflection. These themes hardly exhaust the issues around which a core curriculum can be constructed; nor are they a comprehensive vision statement for a *Catholic* core. But we can greatly enhance our Core project by examining together how to bring these themes to the fore in Core Signature Courses and the range of other Core course offerings.

Above all, Seton Hall's Core Curriculum should aim to accomplish this: to equip students to confront the problems of their world. And in preparing students to meet contemporary and future challenges, we faculty and administrators should continually mine the broad Catholic intellectual tradition for reliable tools with which to analyze problems and weigh potential solutions.

Certainly, no model core curriculum, at a Catholic university or otherwise, should become an instrument to promote a uniform orthodoxy, religious or otherwise. Within neither the Catholic nor the secular traditions, the greatest value of the university has never been in serving as a clearinghouse for orthodoxy. Instead, the university at its best, whether Catholic or secular, has served humanity by addressing the issues of most burning concern to the human community, shedding the fresh light of new perspective on the challenges of each uncharted, unfamiliar age.

In generating fresh light, there must be a real expansiveness to our engagement with Catholic thought. The Catholic intellectual tradition, while not preached in a doctrinaire and coercive fashion, should above all be presented authentically, never denying its weaknesses or its silences, never slighting its subtlety or its potential riches in an academic debate. In the process, ecclesiastical scandals—especially recent ones—should not be studiously avoided or tactfully elided. On the contrary, in engaging the Catholic intellectual tradition, consideration of current ecclesiastical problems will inevitably and justly enter in. It is only in engaging this tradition in its full context, in its relationship to the entire scope of contemporary concerns, that it will properly serve our students: only in working to understand the potential value and evaluate the possible shortcomings of the Catholic intellectual tradition within the context of our real problems will we offer a Core that can be a model for Catholic higher education and a boon to our students.

What follows, then, are two basic themes that I hope will advance our common conversation about the place of the Catholic intellectual tradition in Seton Hall's Core Curriculum.

Theme I: The Dignity of the Human Person

Arguably, nothing should be considered more central in a core curriculum at a Catholic university than a sustained treatment of the dignity of the human person. Though there is room for future development in the Catholic engagement with the question of fundamental human dignity, its place in recent Catholic intellectual life suggests that it would add to our Core a perspective of extraordinary value and advance critical thinking among our students. At Seton Hall, we should find ample room for considering Catholic thinkers' treatment of the dignity of the human person in the whole range of our Core courses.

Particularly during the last century, the human person became an increasingly central issue—often even the starting point—in Catholic theological reflection. New articulations of the significance of human dignity came in the form of the popes' "social encyclicals" of 1891 and 1931, both of which most vigorously insisted upon the dignity and rights of the poor and working masses in the industrialized world. Over time, these papal documents helped to open space for many talented mid-century theologians—men like Bernard Häring, C.Ss.R., Karl Rahner, S.J., and John Courtney Murray, S.J.—to expand the conversation about the dignity of the human person in their writings on morality, freedom, and individual rights. By the 1960s, the strident and powerful affirmation of human rights in the documents of the Second Vatican Council made the church a central actor in the arena of human rights, especially in the realm of religious liberty and political democracy (both of which church leaders had earlier struggled against). In the decades since Vatican II, a host of Catholic thinkers—including John Paul II—have consistently affirmed the fundamental dignity of the human person, making this theme the centerpiece of Catholic engagement with the range of contemporary issues.

As a consequence of this recent focus, the Catholic intellectual tradition's engagement with the question of the dignity of the human person offers a valuable position from which students can engage questions of enduring significance. If we highlight the theme of the dignity of the human person in our Core courses, students will be made to ponder the question of meaning in their own lives as individuals, and they will be compelled to engage the thorny challenges that arise as a consequence of living in the human family.

For our purposes here, two claims affirmed in these recent treatments of the dignity of the human person are particularly noteworthy. First, that because each human being is created in God's likeness and image—because we are, in some fundamental sense, like God—each of us as individuals possesses a profound, invincible, and sacred dignity. Second, because we each individually possess this dignity—regardless of our gender, race, class, or whatever else may make us distinct from another—it is necessary for us to create communities that properly respect and protect each and every individual.

If we seek to construct a model core curriculum for a Catholic university, we must help our students grapple with the perspective recently and powerfully affirmed in such claims: *With the dignity of each individual person comes the responsibility of all to all, the need to affirm the dignity of all, regardless of how we might differ from them.*

Such an assertion will undoubtedly animate and complicate the range of academic discussions in our Core classrooms, from debates about the status of racial and sexual minorities to questions about the justice of modern warfare to deliberations on the political rights of the weak and powerless.

In these discussions, many conflicting claims about the human person and the nature of human community will obviously arise, claims that will often diverge from the two basic claims about human dignity cited above. Certainly, these alternatives should be considered in conversation with Catholic treatments of human dignity. No perspective should be precluded merely because it conflicts with a Catholic perspective. In fact, weighing a range of other perspectives alongside of Catholic perspectives, our students will practice applying differing theoretical positions to real problems with the aim of arriving at complex, considered judgments.

Even if, in the end, they should choose to reject Catholic considerations of the dignity of the human person and adopt some other, conflicting perspective to which they were exposed in classroom debate, our students would do well to wrestle consistently with Catholic treatments in their Core courses. If nothing else, this will push them to consider the worth of all members of the human community in a world marked by global terror, war and massacre, an HIV epidemic, despairing poverty—a world in dire need of such consideration.

Theme II: Contemplating the Cross

A model core curriculum at a Catholic university should also take the cross as one of its central points of reference. In contemplating the cross and the crucified Jesus, we come face to face with one of the world's ageless mysteries: the everyday reality of inhuman exploitation, violence, and suffering. In the crucified one, Catholics see the Godhead flayed and brutalized by humanity. But in a broader sense, when we contemplate the crucified Jesus, we humans also gaze upon a human being flayed and brutalized by fellow human beings. In contemplating the crucified one, we are invited, then, to see ourselves, as if in a mirror: in facing the cross, we come to recognize our own capacity to foster exploitation and violence, our own capacity to induce and prolong human suffering, frequently for our own benefit.

The cross should be central to a model Catholic core curriculum, and particularly to ours at Seton Hall, because it reveals a powerful truth about who we are: the cross draws us in and asks us to consider and interrogate our own destructive capacities, whether already known or yet to be discovered, whether as individuals or as an academic community or as a nation or as a church—the countless ways in which we perpetuate the reality of the cross in our contemporary world.

Put differently, contemplating the cross—plumbing the depths of human suffering—should be central to our Core at Seton Hall because it can help to advance within our University community two essential moral projects. First, such contemplation can help us in the ongoing project of expanding within our community the capacity for empathy, our ability to see and love the suffering other. The act of examining both the crucified Jesus and the crucified world around us can become, in the process, a humanizing act; it has the

capacity to become a powerful exercise in learning to love. Second, when the cross becomes a central point of reference in an academic context, it can foster sustained intellectual confrontation with our frequent tendency to evade the good and opt for the divisive, the exploitative, the destructive—what believers frequently call “sin.” Within an academic context, this sort of contemplation invites us to muster the fullness of our intellect in the service of understanding and challenging our darker capacities, both as individuals and as members of multiple communities.

Of course, those who practice the intellectual exercise of confronting our darker capacities will likely soon recognize that they face a mystery. It is quite possible that human intellect may never fully grasp the endless subtlety and nuance of sin. Yet, though we may never reach a final victory over sin through contemplating the cross, such contemplation, I would argue, is bound to animate us at Seton Hall in some demonstratively positive ways—leaving us, in the end, more empathetic, more loving, more humane.

Educating Students (and Ourselves) for Community

Roseanne M. Mirabella

Some years ago, a student on our campus longed for a connection with others. In every class she took, each conversation she had, each group she joined, she searched for the community that eluded her. She did not find it in her philosophy class, nor was the link found in religious studies. She attempted to join various groups, but found the group labeling on campus hard to overcome—commuters and residents, athletes and scholars, Greeks and non-Greeks. Her searching continued for several years, at which point she found her community as a major in the political science department. However, the longing to be part of a larger Seton Hall community was not realized until many years later, when her journey continued as a member of the Seton Hall faculty. Together with others on campus, she began to explore the common purposes and goals that had been somewhat hidden by our specialized and esoteric approaches to issues of the day. The journey had brought her all this way and was finally reaping the tangible results she longed for as a young woman. I know this journey well, for I was the traveler.

As we develop the curriculum for the three Signature Courses, I would encourage us to embrace an approach that links faculty, students, administrators, staff, *and our neighbors* together as a community. I am calling for nothing less than significant institutional change, an approach that will transform our research, teaching and learning as a university community. There are several significant outcomes that will result from a community-oriented approach to the core:

- Interdisciplinary approaches by faculty to their research and teaching will enhance knowledge development and dissemination on our campus
- Satisfaction among students will increase with a concomitant positive impact on student leadership abilities
- Students will experience the strain of and discover creative solutions to resolving the tension between individual and community interests
- By working collaboratively as a university community—faculty, students, administrators and staff—we will decrease segmentation and enhance integration of the many component parts of our individual selves – teacher, researcher, committee member, colleague, associate, and friend
- Neighboring communities will be the recipient of our transformed university through the application of university-based knowledge to contemporary issues and problems

Over the past hundred years, disciplines and departments have become the center of work on campus. The effects of this “are visible throughout the knowledge system, from the organization of research and curriculum to criteria of excellence in the decisions of editorial boards, funding agencies, and tenure and promotion committees (Klein, p. 6).” Yet contemporary research issues require scholars to cross over disciplinary boundaries to fully understand their subject. For example, we cannot explain increases in gang behavior without examining sociological, political, economic, and

psychological frames of understanding. The proposed interdisciplinary approach to curriculum development will foster collaboration and understanding among faculty from various research perspectives.

My students have often expressed the opinion that our general education requirements were developed as a way to increase income to the university. They do not see the benefit of the distribution menu in our current core curriculum. The development of a common set of interdisciplinary courses will help them understand how the pieces of the puzzle fit together. In his work “What Matters in College?,” Astin found that the development of a common core curriculum seems to have a positive effect on student development.

[The] form of the institution’s general education curriculum has little direct impact on student development. This finding may well reflect the lack of diversity in approaches to general education: better than 90 percent of American colleges and universities use some kind of “distributional” system for implementing the general education curriculum. Only a true-core curriculum (one that requires all students to take exactly the same courses) seems to have distinctive effects on student development: high satisfaction, and positive effects on leadership in particular (p. 364).

Through this process, we will develop a curriculum that all future Seton Hall students will have in common. She may love it, and he may hate it, but, nevertheless, they will share it. Years later, graduates will meet and reminisce about the *curriculum* at Seton Hall, not the food or the basketball team. They will make connections and find community beyond this campus through a shared experience called the core.

The three courses we have proposed will bring students on a journey through self-awareness and community appreciation to action as a global citizen. Through their journey, our students will be introduced to various conceptualizations of individual and social life. They will confront the tensions between acting in one’s own self-interest and acting in the interest of community. Discussion of larger social issues like poverty, homelessness, and global warming will challenge students to think beyond now, beyond concerns of their today. At the very least, they will make more informed choices as they learn to appreciate the tensions between self and community. One way to expose them to these issues is through community service. I would strongly advocate an approach that embraces service as an experiential learning tool to further students’ understanding. I have seen the benefits given to my students by their service learning experiences in courses I have taught through the years. Many come back to visit and remark that these experiences are the ones that have had the most lasting effect on them.

The collaborative development of the new core curriculum and its component parts will assist in breaking down barriers on campus between disciplines, but it will also result in integration between various units on campus that are not accustomed to working together. We have already seen this happen on the core committee, as we work side by side with students, administrators and staff. This has been a wonderful “side effect” of our involvement with revising the core. As more and more members of our campus community become engaged in this process, that impact will multiply.

Finally, the collaborative and integrative environment on campus will result in increased attention to social problems in our neighboring communities. Coupled with an enhanced appreciation of one another, an interdisciplinary approach involving the breaking down of barriers between administrative units and enhanced interaction with students will encourage us to turn our attention outwards from the university to our neighboring communities. As we seek to redefine ourselves, Boyer suggests we embrace scholarship in all of its forms, including the scholarship of engagement.

We should recognize that scholarship means the discovery of knowledge through research but also we should recognize that scholarship means integrating knowledge, and let us also recognize the scholarship of applying knowledge, finding ways to relate information to contemporary problems, and above all let us recognize the scholarship of presenting knowledge through advising, counseling and teaching. (Boyer as quoted by Glassick, 1999, p. 21)

This new definition of research will link research and teaching with community-identified needs, using current knowledge and approaches to address these needs. “The scholarship of engagement suggests an interactive university, one that collaborates, partners, and identifies with the communities in its region. This ‘metropolitan university’ recognizes its responsibility to the community, contributes to the development and vitality of its environs, and applies scholarly theory and experience to develop creative solutions to community problems (Mirabella and Renz, 2001).”

With eager anticipation, I look forward to the development of a core curriculum and the resulting academic environment where collaboration, integration, and community flourish.

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Teaching Who We Are

Lourdes Z. Mitchel

The summer seminar was a wonderful way to experience the essence of what it means to be a “Catholic”. Although the readings and presentations were excellent the deeper understandings, at least for me, resulted from our dialogue and reflections. The sharing of ideas, cultural experiences, discipline perspectives and opportunity to examine our thinking provided the context for the rich learning that took place. I strongly suggest that a similar model be employed with the freshman as they begin to take this very complex and meaningful journey. This essay is my attempt to provide an educator’s insight on how the first course can be designed to best meet the needs of today’s freshman.

In 1998, Parker J. Palmer published **The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life**. This summer I reconnected with this book after attending the “Signature Course” seminar experience. The seminar reminded me of what Palmer alludes to when he repeatedly ask us to recognize that our capacity to do good work begins with the self. I believe that the overall mission of this course is to assist students in the development of the self as they examine catholic tradition using an intellectual framework. So crucial to this experience are those who accept the challenging role of teaching. Palmer says, “Teaching like any truly human activity, emerges from one’s inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror, and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge- and knowing my-self is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject”

(p. 2) . After this summer experience I realized that if these courses are going to be meaningful and relevant to the students then it must begin with the selection of faculty. In this passage Palmer is stressing the role of the teacher. I agree with Parker that we must select faculty that are truly rooted in who they are and what they stand for. If the faculty is grounded then the work of providing a Journey of Transformation for our students becomes not only more meaningful but easier.

Questions course should address:

The challenges confronting us in designing a distinctive undergraduate experience that results in growth and development for our young adolescent population is complex since it not only requires a special, caring teacher but also a clear vision of what it is we are trying to create, how we are going to get there and how will we know we have arrived. The summer signature experience with its emphasis on the “Catholic Tradition” was a good indicator of the challenges ahead. There was so much diversity in our interpretation of what the core means, why we need a core and what questions need to be addressed. So the first question we need to address is what is the purpose of the course? In order to answer that question I suggest that we begin with the end in mind. What is it that we want students to know and be able to do as a result of these 3 courses?

I believe we need to begin with a vision of where we are going and why. Our students often don't see the end in mind and a good curriculum can't be designed without a clear destination. The purpose of the first signature course, at least from what I gleaned from the experience, has to do with "Transformation". When I looked the word up I found that transformation means to change. So the first question becomes to change from what to what? Theories on late adolescent suggest that this age group is searching for a self identity. The course could focus on the self and answer some key questions, such as, who am I and what purpose does my life have as an individual and as a member of the larger community, and community we call the human race. Other questions central in answering this question include: How can I live a meaningful and purposeful life? How can I take advantage of these next four years to grow and develop? In what ways can the catholic traditions assist me in becoming a better person? If I am not catholic in what ways can my own religion or experiences assist me in becoming a better person? When we define the main purposes, we create the main engine for the curriculum. Answering these questions will provide the structure for the content that is to be included.

In designing a course about the "self" we need to ask the questions: What is the nature of the learner? Who is today's adolescent? Adolescence is a critical transition period and requires that we understand that no two individuals develop exactly the same way. Students differ in their intellectual capacity, interests, social, emotional, and physical maturity as well as home and community cultures. These factors become critical when designing a course that is about the "self". As educators we need to see the world as the students themselves might see or experience it, there is a need to connect the experience to the life of the learner not to how we see the world. Knowledge of learners could help us decide the best time to teach a particular concept and the best way to sequence and organize instruction. Those designing courses might want to take a look at the work of Erikson's Developmental Stages of Psychosocial Development and Lawrence Kohlberg's Moral Development Stages. Erikson's theory is important because it helps us understand the identity and role confusion confronting this age group. Erikson suggests that the road to identity has to lead to a definable sense of who one is and what one does for society. Kohlberg believed that movement through the stages of development was affected by dissonance, or in this case, by an understanding of one's dissatisfaction with how a moral dilemma is handled. So many young people today question the moral decisions made by our society and struggle accepting what and how we teach. I suggest that we not only use these theories to inform our own practice but also use them as content in the class so that students can get a better understanding of the self as an 18-19 year old. I recommend that students write autobiographies and develop a philosophy of life as part of the course requirements.

If the faculty's role in the learning process is to be more than a conduit of bits and bytes of information what should that role be? The faculty member has a significant role in the prepackaged, scripted and externally dictated content but the content has to be put into context for the student, if any, significant meaningful learning is going to occur. There is a need to connect content with context. Once the goal is clear, the course should be designed within a conceptual framework. This means that the course relates subject matter content to real world situations and motivates students to make connections between knowledge and its

application to their lives as family members, citizens, and workers. The courses should be co-taught by 2 or 3 professors, since the various disciplines allow for varied perspectives.

The course should include such strategies as problem solving, self-directed learning, learning from peers, learning in real situations, and authentic assessments. The course should bring together a variety of contemporary and traditional teaching strategies and readings. The primary tool for learning should be the self and the text should be secondary and should be used to connect students to the self, to serve as a self exploration, rather than another text to be read. This summer we struggled with what text to use, Christian texts such as a gospel, Augustine's, Confessions or contemporary texts such as Merton's, Seven Story Mountain. I think many of these texts or their teachings are already in the university curriculum in the academic program and suggests that we bring in more relevant texts and provide opportunities for chose. Although, I believe that the traditional texts and literature have much to offer I don't believe this is the most appropriate place to introduce them. I believe young people are searching for more authentic readings and experiences and we should try to identify with more current literature especially in the first course.

Recently, I was given a children's book based on a story by Leo Tolstoy. "The Three Questions" written and illustrated by Jon J. Muth. Muth combines his love of Tolstoy to create a book about compassion and living in the moment. In this book young Nikolai seeks counsel from Leo, the wise old turtle who lives in the mountains, he is sure Leo will know the answers to his three questions:

- ❖ When is the best time to do things?
- ❖ Who is the most important one?
- ❖ What is the right thing to do?

The book reminds me of what the first experience should look like. We need to capture student's interest right from the onset. There are numerous books available that can be used to spark the human conversation about self and its relationship to others and the meaning of God in our lives. I recommend that we start with children's literature, current movies and videos, and music to begin the experience and select one text, chosen by the students, to examine how literature or the classics play a role in answering the human questions.

Lastly, good teaching comes in myriad forms, but good teachers share one trait: they are truly present in the classroom, deeply engaged with their students and their subjects. As Palmer so clearly explains, good teachers are "able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students, so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves. The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts- the place were intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self"(Palmer,1998 p. flap)

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 *D'ou venons-nous? Que Sommes-nous? Ou allons-nous?*^{vi}
My Take On Core Curriculum And Signature Courses

Athar Murtuza

At the outset I want to thank John Haughey, S. J. for having enriched me personally and for his moderation of the workshop in a way that made it resemble a festive variation of communion.

(At my point of life, I am starting to think that when it comes to tempting politicians, preachers, and professors, Satan's wmd's of choice must be **verbosity**; which breaks out among the professors, preachers and politicians every which way given a semblance of opportunity. In my own defense, I would like to note that seeming digressions and diversions are to underscore the world which surrounds Seton Hall University and a number of them have been moved to less obtrusive footnotes!)

The questions used by Paul Gauguin as the title of his painting could be an apt way to focus Seton Hall University's Core Curriculum and the painting itself can be a great background for its home-page. Gauguin's title provides a good way to label my take on the "Core Experience" which includes, in my view, the three "Signature Courses." (My personal preference would have been for the term "metamorphosis" to define what we are seeking for our students instead of all too prosaic words like "core," and "signature.")

The questions underscored by Gauguin's painting to a significant extent subsume the questions the three signature courses seek to raise. The first of the three courses which seek to deal with the journey(s) of transformation fits snugly within the space raised by the Gauguin's painting, while the remaining two go beyond the specific, denotative questions it raises. All three courses will use the Christian/Catholic views to illuminate their respective content while not turning them into discourses on Christianity per se, as I envision them. The second course, I think, will talk about the Christian/Catholic Tradition and its evolution in greater depth than the other two.

Even though we are primarily focused on the first course at this time, but I would like to say that the question that should define the content of the third course would best be related to one brute fact: between 20,000 to 24,000 human beings, 7 to 8 times the number of deaths from 9/11, die every day from what are very preventable causes: lack of food, clean drinking water, and basic healthcare. What can be done to minimize or even outright prevent such horrendous and needless loss of God's children ought to be the question that defines the third of the signature courses!

At the very core of the metamorphosis we seek at SHU are questions central to not only the Catholics but also Homo sapiens of all skin tints, beliefs, and accents. Answers provided by each group are presumed to be different, and one must not minimize those differences, nonetheless the questions concomitant with the human existence have been asked myriads of times in all seasons and in all regions, in my view.^{vii} Similar questions were

in the mind of none other than J. Alfred of the Prufrockian Order who wanted **his** journey of transformation to take him to “an overwhelming question” through “**streets** that follow like a tedious argument of insidious intent.”^{viii} Alfred was seemingly too deferential, vocationally passive, and rather than verbalize his **question or let alone act on them**, he only hemmed and hawed about wanting to “visit!”

The ever so human need to pose the **questions** keeps arising because the changes brought on by the inexorable passage of time demands that the human understanding of “eternal truth” must continuously evolve necessitating the need to find newer justifications for old beliefs and updated answers for the old questions. An important reason which underscores why the overwhelming questions must be posed again and again was brought out in Dorothy’s remark after nature had disrupted her world: "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore" as well as in Bob Dylan’s song, “ the times they are a-changin!” Change, as dinosaurs would vouch for if they could, is the only earthly constant. Even the big ditch better known, as the Grand Canyon is a testimonial to the permanent constancy of change!

Clearly Mumbai and Manhattan have their differences, even though it was the lure of the very land of which Mumbai is an appendage that allowed old Christopher to raise venture capital from his patrons, flushed with the rush of Iberian Reconquista. Indeed, the Gotham of 1963 is very different than the Big Apple of 2005: for one, the South Asians had not yet taken over the New York’s taxi cabs in the early 1960’s; JFK airport, known by another name at that time, was the hub to now defunct, Pan American Airlines; IBM, a major New York presence had not given any thoughts to the implication of laying off 14,000 jobs in the United States even as it plans to create that many new jobs in India.

We mortals cannot make the sun stand still, but we must strive to carpe whatever diems we can when we can! And in asking questions and seeking answers, we seek to avoid the fate of dinosaurs. Upsala College, like dinosaurs of another era, as well as Mughals of India, Safavids of Persia, and Ottomans of what is now Turkey, did neither pose the right questions nor obtained the correct answers! Them who owned horse-drawn carriages disappeared when Henry Ford’s production mushroomed, but the evolutionaries with intelligently designed cognition involved with public transportation simply switched to owning yellow cabs and life went on!

Pedagogy assumes that students should also be asking and finding answers to the overwhelming question(s), and such assumptions lead us to design a curriculum, which would facilitate such quests. I too assume the assumption and by attending the dialog of the faculty involved in designing the core curriculum, I hope to do what I can to make it possible. What follows is my take on issues pertaining to the Signature Courses and the Core Curriculum.

1. SIGNATURE COURSES OR SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE

We must not treat the three signature courses as if they are the be-all and end-all of what we would like students to experience. The three courses are only a part, albeit a very important portion of what we seek to accomplish. We will be better serving the students if we seek their intellectual enrichment not just through the three courses but also by bringing a greater focus to their entire experience. The 4 years of it or less for those enterprising

enough to take just one extra course each semester! Indeed, one marketing talking point for new curriculum could be the possibility of coming out with not just a bachelor's but a master's degree as well after 8 semesters of 18 hours and one summer session of 6!

The original proposal put forth by the Core Curriculum Committee seemed aimed at such broader intent given its concern for literacies, infusions, fluencies etc! A 3-credit course, or for that matter three 3 credit courses, have a tendency to turn into stones to step over for students instead of being a stepping stone to a better educated consciousness and conscience. Beethoven's Fifth symphony is a musical miracle but its catchy opening phrase made up of three short notes and a long one (de de de dah) happens to be a very small part of the total symphonic transcendence. What makes the Fifth a miracle is how those notes are echoed, repeated, and reverberated throughout the symphonic transcendence made possible by Ludwig's genius. Those musical notes are not stones to step over but the stepping-stones, a veritable staircase, leading listeners to climb higher and higher. The way the musical phrase is repeated reverberates and echoed is a lesson for those who seek a better experience for their students.

We would optimize the impact of the educational experience for our students if we create conditions that would facilitate a synthesis of consciousness and conscience rather than simply requiring students to take three courses, howsoever well-designed by well-intentioned committee.

The signature courses are important and are likely to be important stepping-stones provided the lessons of those courses are linked and integrated with the rest of students' university interlude. The SHU's curriculums—whether designed for nurses, teachers, journalists, lawyers, diplomats, priests, professors, or even accountants will be better served if they echo the questions asked of the students in the three signature courses. At the same time the various curriculums are more likely to do so if the signature courses in turn are devoted to teaching issues pertaining to living as human beings in 21st century.

2. LIMITATIONS OF A 3 CREDIT COURSE!

A 3-credit course or for that matter three 3-credit courses cannot cover the sum-total of material on a given topic. The second of the three proposed courses is aimed at studying the answers provided for the eternal questions by the Christianity/Catholicism over the most recent, two thousand years of known history. It would not be intellectually or historically correct to study Christianity in isolation of the human history. Similarly one is being xenophobic in claiming that Western Civilization sprung forth in 16th century like did Athena fully ovulating from Zeus' brain. But any extended coverage of other religious traditions as well as the impact of Islamic, Jewish, and the pre-Christian pagan European traditions on Christianity in the Middle Ages is likely to be far too much to squeeze in the confines of the second, let alone all the three signature courses being envisaged. Yet studying the impact of Ibn Siena, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Rushd and others like them on Aquinas is needed if only to better understand St. Thomas Aquinas.

One cannot simply jump from Augustine to Aquinas—a lot occurred between those two icons of Christianity. A lot of what occurred in that period involves Islam and its interaction with Christian scholars and saints, among them St. Francis of Assisi and St.

Thomas Aquinas. But anything more than a brief mention of impacts other traditions have had on Christianity or how other religious traditions have dealt with the eternal questions can easily do for the course regarding the Catholic tradition what kudzu is doing to the vegetation in American South. A course cannot teach everything, hence a possible solution would be arranging for **infusions** pertaining to Islam and other non-Christian traditions in the curriculum, which could be made available to SHU community.

3. INFUSIONS PERTAINING TO OTHER TRADITIONS

As of now courses dealing with Islam and Muslims or for that matter Hindus and Buddhists are virtually non-existent in the list of courses available to SHU students. Hence, to better accomplish the goals associated with new core curriculum which must include greater understanding of the diversity of the planet we share with others, one must commission new courses, both regular and on-line, as well as provide other resources currently unavailable at SHU, such as those that make more optimum uses of information technology. A web page that informs its users about Islamic resources comes to mind, which could be used to refer students in the Signature courses to resources that are important to better understand the development of Catholicism and Western Civilization. It would be less costly than waiting (Godot-like) for new faculty who in turn would develop new courses. Looking beyond traditional academics turfs might help SHU develop such infusions faster! Such infusions could help attract new groups of students to SHU.

In addition to Islam, there is the virtual absence of coverage pertaining to India and Hinduism as well as its offshoots such as Jainism and Sikhism. There is virtually no course that touches upon writers such as Tagore or more contemporary South Asian writers. No course that devotes itself to Hafiz, Rumi, Ghalib, Iqbal and Faiz, not just in Farsi and Urdu but also in English translations!

4. WHAT TO TEACH

In the discussion during the June workshop it became apparent that faculty members have their respective preferences about what they would like to assign as readings to their students. Some would like to use the Confessions of St. Augustine and there are those who would rather use the Adventures of Augie March to delve into the journeys of transformation and pursuits of overwhelming questions. I suggest we use sections from both rather than having works like them be read in their entirety. Anthologies have long been a staple in courses, and we could use the underlying principle behind anthologies to select material assigned for signature courses.

Using anthologies is justifiable from another perspective—namely the reading skills of our students. While I cannot speak for the abilities of students in the Honors' Program, I can talk about the reading skills of business students. Frankly, a large number of them can barely make sense of single sentences, let alone paragraphs; a dense essay or classics like those by Augustine or Aquinas are impossible dreams! Expecting 18-year-old students, whose reading skills are sub-literate to make sense of either Augustine or Augie March, seems overly optimistic. Certainly the students can be taught but it would be easier to get a better harvest if we were not making them read those classics in their dense entirety in the first hour of the first week of their first year of college. We ought to rely on shorter works, stories, poems; essay and selected sections of major classics

rather than having them read dense works in their entirety. By using sections of major works, we will also be able to broaden the students' exposure and use a greater diversity of material.

The idea of a required reading list I suggest in the next item will insure that students do read the Christian/Catholic classics in their entirety before they leave the confines of their schooling. At the same time such a reading list will insure that the first signature course is not burdened with tasks likely to be counterproductive given the PROBABLE level of students' ability to read and comprehend.

5. A LIST OF REQUIRED READINGS

If we agree that students learning experience is to be spread over all the work they will undertake in four years of college and not just confined to the three signature courses, then a useful tool for infusing depth to students' experience would be a list of required reading. Reading six to eight books for each of their college years is not an unfair burden to place on students. By having student read classics as something done outside of their regular courses would take the pressure away for covering them in the entirety in a course such as the second signature course! One could assign parts of a work like St. Augustine's "Confession" in either the first or second signature course and not cover the entire work. Doing so in either of the first two signature courses will free up time to cover other works that may be of relevance as well, while knowing students will have read the classic in its entirety before they pick up their diplomas, in ritualistic gowns that echo the universities of the Middle Ages—both Islamic and Christian.

Students could be assigned mentors who would assist their advisees in making greater sense of these classic works. This would make advisors into something more substantial than signatory to a form each semester. It would also make us realize that given the technology available, the class lecture need not be the major means of transporting wisdom to students.

6. THE GREAT OMISSION: FISCAL/ECONOMIC LITERACY

While there is a captive audience, let me repeat yet again that in an age like ours civil society cannot continue without citizens having the ability to make sense of financial discourse as it impacts personal finance, corporate governance, and public policy-making. Given this the omission of such literacy from the proposed core-curriculum is disconcerting. Without it the third signature courses may be less than optimally served.

7. WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO TEACH!

The content of the first course are yet to be made tangible, however, if I was teaching the first Signature course, I would devote the first two or three weeks teaching students how to "read." I would like to start by using two great works: the well known prayers of St. Francis ("Make me an Instrument...") and Rumi's poem "The Chalice,"--both works are seeking transformation of their beings even though seemingly from different traditions. The two provide an apt introduction to what journeys of transformation can aspire to reach. Following that I would like lead students through close textual readings of Robert Frost's "Departmental", e. e cummings's "anyone lived in anyhow town," Robert

Browning's "My Last Duchess," Wallace Stevens' "Anecdote of a Jar" and Herman Melville's *Bartleby*. These works deal with individuals' relationship with their environments and have a lot to say about transformation or at least the desire for transformation. In addition to impressing upon students the concept of transformation and journeys, these works are also be used to demonstrate the truth that life is best approached with interdisciplinary perspectives. I hope to do so by taking a class period and devoting it to show how accounting gobbledygook can be made more sensible if it is approached as a discourse! Such a practical lesson in their first year of college will hopefully make students less likely to compartmentalize their professional education from their general education. I have seen too many business students for whom general studies and liberal arts were stones to step over and forgotten in their rush to bean-count!

My Educational Quest: From a Rigorous Albanian-Soviet-Communist Higher Education to a Pontifical-Catholic-Jesuit One

Ines Angjeli Murzaku

Introduction

In my life, I have navigated through three contrasting educational systems. I completed my first undergraduate university education in the communist Albania; I earned a master's degree from the University of Calabria in Italy; and I earned a licentiate and doctorate in historical eastern theology from the Pontifical Jesuit Oriental Institute (*Orinetale*), part of the Pontifical Gregorian University consortium. At first appearance, it might seem an inconceivable path for an individual to have pursued. While different, these disparate systems provided ample exposure to major and conflicting areas of knowledge and, in an accurate and persuasive fashion, this divergence of approaches inculcated in me a perennial desire to quest and discover.

While my Jesuit education followed the typical Anselmian motto, *fides quaerens intellectum* ("faith seeking understanding"), the communist system followed its own set of moral, philosophical, and ideological tenets, which were handed, sometimes by force, to the whole population but particularly to university students, the most praised, feared, and vibrant force of a communist society. What better way to influence students than to substitute faith in God with faith in communist ideals! After all, communism proved to be a religion, a system of beliefs, with its own prophets, martyrs, and creed – its own universality.

Studying and experiencing both ends of the spectrum have made an impact on me as an individual, scholar, and researcher. The purpose of my essay is to explore the incongruity among these educational systems and give some related thoughts on what makes a great Catholic university, including a signature core curriculum experience.

The Albanian-Soviet-Communist Higher Education System

The years of communism brought about imperious education to Albanian citizens, instituted a system of proficient higher education, established a state university, eradicated illiteracy among its people, and expanded the country's school system so that one out of every four citizens was engaged in some form of educational pursuit.^{ix} High priority was given to the education of women. In 1989, compared to 1964, the number of women with a college degree had increased to 47%.^x

Upon taking power in 1944, the Albanian communist regime gave very high precedence to opening of schools and masterminding the educational system to resonate communist ideology. There were three main goals of the new revolutionary educational system: eradicate illiteracy; struggle against the perpetuation of the bourgeoisie in the country's culture; disseminate to Albanian youth the principles of communism following the

party line; and educate children of all social classes based on these principles -although the children of dissidents were effectively disqualified from education. In 1946, Education Reform Law provided specifically that Marxist-Leninist principles would infuse all school text and curricula and would be studied as primary text sources. In 1950, the Albanian school system of education was given an exclusively Soviet orientation. Institutes of higher education were all patterned on Soviet paradigms. In fact, teams of Soviet educators laid the structural, curricular, and ideological foundations of the University of Tiranë, from which I graduated.

The University curriculum clearly targeted the education of the whole human person. Marxist-Leninist philosophy (which included dialectic and historic materialism and atheism, studied as the opposite of idealism and religion), military science, productive labor, and foreign languages were part of the core curriculum across all specialties. In the humanities, philosophy, domestic and world history, national and world literature, and the grammar and history of language were given high priority in the core curriculum requirements and were initially taught by highly qualified Soviet instructors. The core curriculum gave students a broad and deep acquaintance with the main study areas. In fact, the exposure was so effective that it often made dissidents out of indoctrinated young minds, as in my case. Originally trained in philosophy, dialectical materialism and atheism, I would make my life's vocation the study of theology, with special focus on historical theology.

Additionally, the tenets of communist education stressed the primacy of the collective over the interests of the individual. In the socialist society, the individual human being did not belong to himself, but to society, to the whole human race. Consequently, society refused to entrust the education of children to their parents. The future of education belonged uniquely to social education.^{xi} So, private institutions or schools funded or sponsored by charitable or religious institutions were nonexistent in Albania until 1992. All higher education was carried out by agencies of the government or the Party, which guaranteed ideological purity within the school.

A distinctive feature of the socialist school system was that the curricula and teaching methods were integrated with other aspects of the society, such as politics, culture, and the economy. Thus, the focus of education was that every educated citizen became acquainted with the elements of all crafts during his university training so that the most brilliant man of science would also be skilled in manual labor. As a result, undergraduates at the Albanian higher education system spent one month in productive labor and one month in military training each academic year. Both components were part and parcel of the curriculum and fulfilled the requirements of the revolutionary triangle: scholarship, productive labor, and physical fitness.

Although the Soviet system was inefficient by economic standards, it managed to raise the country's educational level to among the world's highest. Soviet elementary and secondary schools, despite their relatively guarded style, remained an outstanding example of egalitarianism, social accessibility, and high achievement. In the 1970s, the common situation was that an American or German university student would fail to meet the standards of a Soviet secondary school physics program.

However, the worst features of the Soviet-Communist-Albanian style education, which affected all countries of the Eastern block, were its totalitarianism and inflexibility. In the last years before the fall of communism, young Albanians became increasingly cynical about the Marxist-Leninist philosophy they had been forced to absorb.

Pontifical-Catholic-Jesuit Higher Education

George Bernard Shaw thought that a Catholic university is a contradiction in terms. So did Indro Montanelli, the renowned Italian journalist and historian, who applied the same terminology: An Italian University is a contradiction in terms. At the heart of the argument is the meaning of "Catholic" and "university." Shaw viewed the church as a closed society^{xii} and possessor of dogmatic beliefs and the university as an open, vibrant society representative of intellectual freedom and speculation. As a consequence, according to Shaw, an educated person can not be religious and an intellectual simultaneously, as these, too, are in eternal contradiction. The confusion between "Catholic" and "university" is worsened by the prevalent enthusiasm for diversity and multiculturalism in American higher education. However, the words Catholic and university have the same root meaning,^{xiii} *catholicus* from Latin meaning general, universal and university *universitas*, from *universus*, all together and literally turned into one. Additionally, Catholic Christianity founded universities and fostered them out of its deepest beliefs.^{xiv} Such was the case of the University of Bologna. Thus it was Catholic Medieval Italy that welcomed the first university of the western world.

What is my perception of the Jesuit University I attended? What was distinctive of *Oriente* that differentiates it from the Universities of Tiranë and Calabria? *Oriente* is a truly Catholic institution established in conformity with the apostolic constitution *Sapientia Christiana*, an institution which represented not just one aspect but the fullness of Catholic tradition, i.e., both the Western tradition and the Eastern tradition as well. It is an institution of higher learning where Eastern theology was studied from within, with sympathy, reverence, and love, indeed an institution that invented the Eastern Spirituality as an academic discipline as well.^{xv} It is an intellectual place where faith and scholarship fraternize, where ecumenical scholarship is explored as a new and specifically Christian way of studying Christian tradition, in order to reconcile and unite, rather than to confute and dominate.^{xvi} Certainly, *Oriente* is faithful to the *magisterium*, but is not the *magisterium*. What struck me was how my Jesuit professors understood Catholicity in the deepest meaning of the word. It was a place of scholarly inquiry, seeking relevance of the Christian message to contemporary problems the Catholic Church was facing. The Jesuit faculty was dedicated to the spirit of inquiry and intellectual competence. Old answers could not satisfy the new religious situation in which the Catholic Church found itself after the fall of communism and the regained freedom of religion in Eastern block countries. That was the critical situation that needed a new way of theological thinking. Wasn't that a perfect example of *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding in the university community an expression of belief that would be relevant to the modern questions? As Cardinal Newman explicates it, the university "educates the intellect to reason well in all matters, to reach out towards truth and to grasp it."^{xvii}

Seton Hall Signature Core

The chief object of a liberal education is building a well-conceived core curriculum that gives students a vocabulary of textual references and that, in turn, facilitates access to the literary canon and instigates analytical thinking aptitudes. The core should give the opportunity for Seton Hall students to reason about their own faith at a sophisticated level before being exposed to facts and theories about other religions. Seton Hall undergraduates need learning in those disciplines that have proved their merit over centuries such as logic and the arts of reasoning, epistemology, and metaphysics; the study of theology and Scripture; prose and poetry; ethics and moral theology; the history of civilization and of the faith community; and the literature that celebrates the universality of human experience. To have encountered these disciplines, to have wrestled with the problems that they treat, is one of the signature marks of the Catholic intellectual tradition. And to provide exposure to this valued intellectual heritage, indeed to witness such an encounter, is a distinctive function of a great Catholic university.

What peculiar qualities would I hope to find in a graduate of Seton Hall University? A Catholic vision; sensitivity to justice; eagerness for knowledge; competence in spoken and written word; broad-mindedness; critical capacity; an ability to listen; and the zeal to serve.

Signature Courses: Principles, Questions, Pedagogy, and Outcomes

Jon Radwan

Our process of developing a new Core Curriculum is one of the most exciting projects I have been involved with since I arrived here at Seton Hall in 2001. I have been to every Core town meeting and several lectures, helped develop and implement a faculty training program for the Speaking proficiency, and I am now happy to be part of the Signature Course process. This essay is a great opportunity to pull together and synthesize all that I've been learning about the Core into one coherent whole, and I hope that the rest of the Signature Course development team will find it useful.

Father John Haughey uses a beautiful birthing metaphor to describe our central question and basic task – “what is the pregnancy you are trying to bring to term, the whole you are trying to birth so as to contribute to your discipline, the school and the common good?” (22) The whole that I am trying to birth is a program of study and performance that enables students to grow into thoughtful, curious, sensitive, cooperative, confident, and expressive people who care about their fellow human beings. To support this answer to Father Haughey’s question, I’ve organized this essay into four parts – Core Principles, Questions, Pedagogy, and Outcomes.

Core Principles

These Core Principles are foundational ideas that I hope we will keep in mind throughout the Signature Course development process. The first and most important is “capacious Catholicism.” Catholicism is a worldwide religion and is “institutionally unparalleled in being able to host a degree of pluralism within its ever expanding cultural umbrella; in particular other faiths as *Nostra Aetate* showed” (Haughey 21). *Nostra Aetate* is an inspiring declaration of hospitality toward non-Christian religions that was proclaimed at Vatican II. In it, Pope Paul VI explicitly calls for Catholics to respect, engage, and learn from people who follow other faiths.

The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men. (2)

Today’s global society requires appreciation and understanding, *not mere tolerance*, of people from all faiths. Seton Hall’s signature courses can promote the Church’s mission of love and understanding by making non-Christian texts, artwork, ideas, and values a prominent part of each syllabus.

The second core principle is “emergent catholicity.” Here catholicity has a lower case c because it is referring to wholeness and universality. When we see that the whole is

emerging, not static or settled, we understand that we can never be satisfied with our current state of knowledge. Because our universe is growing and changing, there is always more to be learned and new things to discover. When we appreciate emergent catholicity, we see that it is not the educator's job to merely pass on traditional wisdom. Instead, educators are charged with helping students develop attitudes and skills that enable lifelong learning and perpetual self-transcendence.

Third, Catholicism is a "Self-Correcting tradition." Father Haughey reminded us that historically the Church has "had to revise its teachings in light of ongoing evidence of their limitations" (21). Understanding this tradition of revision promotes an attitude of both wisdom and humility that is essential for genuine education. The Core Committee's decision to build our signature courses around questions, not answers, is a fantastic way to operationalize this idea of self-correction and revision. It is not our job to tell students what is what, it is our job to help them ask why, how, and what if. What have others said in response to these questions? What are the traditional answers? How have those answers waxed and waned in their acceptance? What is your personal answer to question X? What would it take to have you change your mind? Changing one's mind is not a sign of weakness or "flip-flopping" on issues, it is the hallmark of a rational person who is truly engaging our vast and varied world.

The final core principle is the value of a Liberal Education. At the Provost's Distinguished Lecture Series, Presidential Teaching Professor Gary Glenn gave an excellent speech on how liberal education functions in an "Age of Dissolution." In the past, there were stable widely accepted bodies of knowledge and truth that were passed from generation to generation. Now, in our post-modern era, general acceptance of ideas is seen as a social construction that is tenuous and fleeting and the nature of Truth itself is questioned. This "dissolution" does not mean that the liberal arts have become irrelevant, it means that they are more important than ever. The seven liberal arts, and in particular the trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and logic, are precisely the skills that are required when knowledge is not received but is rather created, maintained, and opposed. Our signature courses should encourage our students to rise to the challenge of living as a free citizen in a democracy by providing a strong foundation in coherent expression, persuasive engagement, and critical reflection.

This liberal art/skill orientation would seem to be accounted for in the Proficiency portion of our Core model, but the "infusion" approach currently in place does not go far enough. The Core proposal that the faculty voted on states that the proficiencies (writing, speaking, critical thinking, information literacy, and the recently added numeracy) "are to be *introduced* in coursework in the first year" (6, italics added). Introduction is not the same as infusion; you cannot reinforce a skill that is not already in place. The two semesters of Freshman English take care of the writing proficiency, but each of the other proficiencies still requires a formal introduction in the first year of coursework. To reach the freshmen and make these all important introductions happen, either ENGL 1201 and 1202 need substantial revision to become PROF[iciencies] 1201 and 1202, or the freshman Signature Course "Journey of Transformation" needs to explicitly address each proficiency – there are no other courses where the Core has access to all freshmen (aside from University Life, which at only one credit would not have time to address proficiencies with the depth they deserve).

Questions

As noted above, building each Signature Course around a set of questions is an excellent strategy because it puts the focus on the process of discovery, not any particular knowledge product. However, which specific questions to ask has been a contentious topic at many of our meetings. For the Freshman Signature course “Journey of Transformation,” I really appreciated Martha Carpentier’s suggestion -- “How does the individual construct a unique self or identity within the [necessary and unnecessary] constraints of community?” (2) The key concepts within this question – identity, constructed self-hood, community, freedom and constraints, social creation of self and other – seem especially well suited to our freshman students who are just beginning adulthood.

Pedagogy

At virtually every Core meeting I attended, there was widespread agreement that the Signature Courses should be limited to a size that enables conversation and peer interaction – fifteen to twenty students. In terms of pedagogy, this means that the teacher needs to avoid lecturing and become a discussion facilitator. For many faculty members discussion management is a real challenge because “professor monologue” has been higher education’s default mode for centuries. For most disciplines, the Ph.D. degree is a research degree, not a teaching degree, and most professors are experts in their fields but have never been taught how to encourage and manage classroom discussions. For our signature course teaching method, I strongly recommend the discussion model developed by C. Roland Christensen in his excellent book Education for Judgment: The Artistry of Discussion Leadership (1991). His basic idea is that genuine education happens when there is a “vital reciprocity” between teacher and students – each learns from the other and all work together to explore course issues. There is too much in the book to summarize in this essay, but here are a few key principles.

- Discussion can feel chaotic in contrast to lecture. This chaos *is* productive.
- It is the teacher’s job to create a class culture where it is safe for students to take a risk and share their real thoughts.
- Depth over breadth. The discussion method is not suited to a survey course. Conversations take time to develop and grow. The teacher and the students should work together to explore a few significant questions in depth rather than stifling engagement in the interest of moving everyone on to the next topic.

Christensen has many more excellent recommendations, I hope we can allocate faculty development time and funds to help us get out of lecture mode.

Outcomes

Outcomes assessment governs higher education today. We are not only asked to state our goals and develop courses designed to meet those goals, we are also asked to continually *evaluate* our progress toward those goals by gathering assessment data and coding it in terms of explicitly stated outcomes. With a skill based class, the assessment process is

relatively simple. For instance, with the Speaking Proficiency one Freshman level outcome is a speech with a clear thesis. The data is the speech performance itself and if the students have theses the goal has been met. If they do not, the thesis lesson is redesigned and the process is repeated. With a conceptual course like “Journey of Transformation,” outcomes assessment is much more difficult. How does one assess a transformation? If we accept the emergent catholicity principle, the outcome is never reached because the whole point is the journey of the learning process, not the destination. One strategy is to tie all assessment to the question(s) governing the course, have student answers (essays, speeches, etc.) be the data, but to avoid specifying any content for those answers. That is, instead of taking a content approach to the answer (X is right, Y and Z are wrong; or, students will be able to summarize author Q’s answer to question R), we could specify *qualities* of a good answer as our outcome, i.e. “Students will cite multiple course authors in their answer” or “Students will express provisional answers demonstrating openness to new information and potential change.”

When I ask my students why they are attending college, the invariable answer is “to get a good job.” I certainly wish them well in their career pursuits, and do my best to help the majors in my department prepare for work in the Communication field, but the Core Curriculum is about educating more than a worker. It is about enabling a whole person, someone who is thoughtful, curious, sensitive, cooperative, confident, expressive, and caring. The strategies and principles outlined here – qualitative outcomes, discussion teaching, a stress on questions over answers, liberal education, emergent catholicity, and a self-correcting and capacious Catholicism – can all help birth a curriculum that fulfills Bishop Bayley’s vision of Seton Hall as a “home for the mind, the heart, and the spirit.”

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Saint Paul or Sao Paulo?

John Ranieri

Just suppose that the Faculty Senate had voted to approve the creation of three signature courses dealing with Brazil. I wonder if the process would unfold any differently than it has so far in our attempts to design three courses involving the Catholic intellectual tradition. At the start of the process there would be an extended period of consultation, dialogue, town meetings, and seeking input from members of the university community. Implicit in these deliberations would be the judgment that it is intelligible to speak of Brazil. We might also assume that, at least in the judgment of the Senate, there is value in having students learn about Brazil. Of course it is conceivable that some in our community would refuse to take part in the discussion until “Brazil” is clearly defined. How can we possibly proceed (they might argue) when there are so many varying, if not downright contradictory perspectives on Brazil? If in response it is suggested that we begin by agreeing that Brazil is the largest country in South America, it may be objected that we need to be precise about what exactly a “country” is, and that claims about “largeness” are often nothing more than veiled claims of superiority (For example, as a child growing up in New Jersey I was always taught that New Jersey is the largest state). As for situating Brazil in South America, the question might very well be raised, “South in relation to whom?” Faced with these difficulties those involved in the project might decide to give up, in which case Seton Hall would have the distinction of being the only known university whose faculty is agnostic on the question of Brazil.

Assuming we get past these thorny issues, the relevant committees and faculty would then be charged with the task of developing these courses. It seems reasonable to assume that those with expertise on Brazil would be part of this process, and that their expertise would be respected. This does not mean that everything they suggest would be accepted uncritically. It does mean that when deciding what ought to be included in courses on Brazil it is important to involve our resident experts on Brazil. Intellectual integrity requires that, in an academic context, knowledge of the subject, rather than intensity of feeling about it, is the criterion.

It may be important to keep in mind that once the decision to create these courses has been made, the relevant set of questions changes. It is no longer a question of *whether* we should create courses on Brazil, but whether the courses we create *are* good courses on Brazil. There may be those who question the wisdom of the Senate in calling for courses on Brazil. Brazil may evoke passionate reactions from some, indifference in others. Seton Hall Brazilians may believe their moment of vindication has arrived, while non-Brazilians may suspect ulterior motives. However, when the relevant bodies have, after taking into consideration the concerns of members of the community, identified the task at hand, the issue becomes one of creation and implementation, rather than an endless revisiting of the question of whether the task itself is worthwhile. The issue now becomes one of deciding how best to reach our designated goal. This is quite different from the first stage, where the debate revolved around whether developing these courses was a good idea. The stage we are

at now has its own set of evaluative criteria which flow from the nature of the task – to design three signature courses on Brazil.

Let us assume then that we are the stage when we have to begin to design these courses. The language of the Senate's resolution tells us that we must develop three courses that focus on "questions central but not exclusive to the Brazilian tradition, broadly understood." How are we to understand this somewhat cryptic phrase? One way would be to focus on "not exclusive to," and to insist that in designing our courses, nothing exclusively Brazilian is allowed to enter in. Only those question-raising features of Brazilian life that Brazilians share with other human beings would be permitted. What might this look like in practice? We could talk about the fact that some Brazilians live in cities, but we would be careful not to mention Rio De Janeiro. We could acknowledge that, like others, Brazilians require fluids to stay alive, but we would not be authorized to say that they make excellent caipirinhas. To the extent that we were able to eliminate all traces of anything distinctively Brazilian from our courses on Brazil, we would be able to consider our efforts successful. Pruned of any recognizably Brazilian features, we would have clearly delineated the questions at the heart of the Brazilian tradition.

Another way to approach the "central but not exclusive to" task would be to engage in a serious study of Brazil with an eye toward allowing the story of Brazilians to shed light on crucial aspects of the human condition. The reality of Brazil would be the prism through which we consider the most important questions. Through analysis, comparison, and clarification by contrast, the experience of Brazilians would help to illuminate the issues confronted by all people who strive to make sense of the world in which they find themselves. The assumption here would be that, in fact, we never come across generic "human beings," and that to consider the fundamental questions of human life we must start from the concrete rather than the abstract. We have to begin somewhere, and in this case it has been decided based on a lengthy process of consultation and discussion that it would be good to make use of the Brazilian experience as our entry way into the broader discussion of what being human is all about.

What can we say about the criterion that the Brazilian tradition be "broadly understood" when going about our task? Again one possible line of approach would be to say that since enslaved peoples brought their African traditions with them to Brazil, then by studying African culture we are actually studying Brazil "broadly understood." Likewise, the courses should cover the history of Portugal, the Roman Catholic church, the history of European philosophy (after all, Brazilians were influenced by these ideas), the ecology of the rainforest, etc. Quite a burden for three signature courses! Yet we need not find ourselves in such a difficult predicament if we bear in mind that just as the study of sparrows is no substitute for the study of penguins "broadly understood," so the study of Colombia is not encompassed within the notion of Brazil "broadly understood." The study of penguins "broadly understood" would mean not limiting our focus to one species or habitat. Likewise, to broadly understand Brazil means gaining an appreciation for the country as a whole in all its richness, rather than focusing on one particular region or people. It would also mean attempting to be both fair and comprehensive in our study of Brazil as an intelligible entity. For example we would not only treat the country in terms of its European heritage, but we would learn about the indigenous peoples. We would be attentive to the complexity of the reality we are studying, while trying to grasp the important and the essential. To some degree

comparison with other traditions would be helpful, but the focus of our efforts would be on trying to understand *Brazil*, and by understanding Brazil to open ourselves to any and all further relevant questions that might be prompted by our study. In practice this might very well result in a wide variety of reactions. Students and faculty of Brazilian descent may come away from their study with a renewed sense of admiration for their culture; some may find themselves confronting realities there that are cause for shame; and for many the experience may be a combination of both these reactions. In similar fashion, non-Brazilians, after taking these courses, may find their own horizons broadened. Having come to understand something about Brazil they may find things to be praised as well as things to be avoided. They may very well emerge from their study of Brazil with a renewed pride in their own traditions.

No doubt this will do little to put to rest the criticisms of those who say: “Why is there nothing in these proposed courses about Austria?” and “The fact that you have chosen Brazil means that you are deliberately excluding Ghana,” and “What makes you think Brazil is superior to Thailand?”, and so on. At the risk of being tedious and of belaboring the obvious, it may be helpful to remind ourselves that at this stage in the process a choice has been made to create courses that deal with *Brazil*. Further, it is simply impossible to do justice to the richness of other traditions within three courses focused on Brazil. To attempt to do so would be to succumb to a tokenism of the most superficial kind. As someone who believes that “concern for the Other” is a value central to the Gospel (and hence integral to the mission of Seton Hall), I strongly support efforts in this direction. I am of an equally strong conviction, however, that, in order to do this, we need to incorporate such courses into the core as a whole, and not to try to prove our inclusiveness by having every possible concern reflected in three signature courses. When I was an undergrad at Columbia, the university dealt with the Eurocentric orientation of the core courses, by requiring students to take courses in Asian, African, or Latin American civilizations. If we are serious about providing students with a genuine appreciation of “the Other” this, to my mind, is the better way to go.

I would also point out in this context that, in creating three signature courses on Brazil, there is no intention of engaging in apologetics. If Brazilians maltreated indigenous peoples, if they participated in a shameful slave trade, and if they are guilty of other less than noble acts, this should be confronted and dealt with honestly. But intellectual honesty also compels us to design courses that would be more than litanies of Brazilian sins. Little would be achieved by focusing exclusively on Brazilian failings other than a cheap and false sense of moral superiority with regard to a people who are neither better nor worse than us.

It may well be the case that my extended example is misleading, if not irrelevant. Perhaps some will say that the possible questions and issues I have raised along the way are overstated and that no sensible person would ever come to a project like this with such silly criticisms. I am quite willing to bet, though, that transcripts of Senate, core curriculum and working group meetings having to do with this process would belie such claims. Actually, I have heard *exactly* these criticisms at the many meetings I have attended devoted to the creation of signature courses. It may further be objected that creating three courses on Brazil would never generate the intensity of reaction resulting from the attempt to design courses dealing with the Catholic intellectual tradition. But if this is true (and I believe it is), then we must ask ourselves why this is the case. I suspect that it has much to do with our attitudes

toward Catholicism, especially toward the institutional dimensions of the church. Regardless of where any of us happen to be in our relationship with Catholicism, many of us have been affected by this religious tradition, for good or for ill. There is a level of feeling that often accompanies our reactions to Catholicism that would probably not be present if we were arguing over designing courses on Brazil. This depth of feeling shows itself in various ways. Some want to circle the wagons and defend Catholicism against the perceived evils of the modern world. Others have been hurt by the church and are wary of any efforts they view as propaganda on behalf of Catholicism. Nor are strong reactions to Catholicism limited to those who are (or were raised) Catholic. Everyone has an opinion about the relationship between Catholic Christianity and the academic community that is Seton Hall, and these opinions are usually deeply held and felt. Few are detached or indifferent on these matters. Whether we love it, loathe it, or find ourselves somewhere in between, Catholicism gets to us.

It turns out then that my Brazil example may have been misleading, but if so, it was deliberately misleading. If there is a discrepancy between our affective reaction to the proposed creation of three courses concerned with the Catholic intellectual tradition and what we imagine might be our reaction to a proposal for three signature courses on Brazil, then we may need to ask ourselves what this means. If I believe I am capable of taking part in a process of designing courses on Brazil without feeling the need to man the ramparts or otherwise stake out and defend a position, am I capable of doing the same when the matter at hand involves the Catholic intellectual tradition? This question is addressed to both defenders and critics of our present task. If I can never completely separate my feelings about Catholicism from this project (and there is no reason why I should), can I at least try to be as fair as I can in evaluating the proposed courses *as courses*, just as I would were they three courses on Brazil?

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition, Anthropology, And Me!

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“How will you step forward from the top of a hundred-foot pole?”

Zen koan (Yamada 1979[1990]: 216)

As with most Zen koans, the one quoted above depicts a difficult proposition. There is no one specific answer that can be given to the conundrum of how to step forward from a hundred-foot pole. Whatever way one steps, one falls, unless, of course, one finds a prop to grasp onto or a support of some kind. Whether or not one finds that prop or support, one must step off, at least that’s what the commentary on the koan suggests in the *Gateless Gate*, the collection of koans from which it is derived.

Since from the anthropological perspective all human experience is symbolically mediated, one could say that this koan is a metaphor of sorts for the idea that without language or some symbolic system, there is simply no way to understand or to communicate mundane or profound truths, be they political, economic, scientific, spiritual, religious or otherwise. Without symbols and language there is no way to step from the hundred-foot pole, or to make sense of that which is “really real” either at the relative or absolute level!

Apropos to language, yet paradoxically, in the Zen tradition, the koan is designed to arrest discursive reasoning in the student in order to facilitate a direct insight into the nature of the Absolute, an experience that cannot be fathomed by using one’s powers of ratiocination, including language.

Already there is tension between the Zen Buddhist approach to how one might have an experience of “Absolute Reality”, as there is also with the anthropological approach, and that of the Catholic intellectual tradition. For does not the Catholic intellectual tradition claim just the opposite, i.e., that the intellect is essential to experiencing Absolute Reality, or “God,” as Catholics and other monotheists might refer to it? “Naturally the authoritative Catechism of the Catholic Church agrees: ‘Human Intelligence is already capable of finding a response to the questions of origins. The existence of God the creator can be known with certainty through his works, by the lights of human reason.’” So writes the Cardinal Archbishop of Vienna Christoph Schonborn in his Op-Ed piece of July 7, 2005 in *The New York Times*.

Thus, I begin this essay with a koan, with a paradox in order to make a point: when it comes to putting the Catholic intellectual tradition in dialogue with the anthropological intellectual tradition there is tension there is paradox. Each tradition provides a prop or a support for stepping from the hundred-foot pole, metaphorically speaking. In the case of the Catholic intellectual tradition it is its creed, doctrines, or dogmas. In the case of the

anthropological intellectual tradition it is its theories, methodologies and its empirical findings.

To plumb the depths for “Truth” is a central concern of both the Catholic intellectual tradition and the anthropological intellectual tradition, though I know by experience that what constitutes “Truth” in the discipline of anthropology is vastly different from what constitutes “Truth” in Catholicism. For the Catholic intellectual tradition “Truth” is absolute, for the anthropological intellectual tradition, it is relative. Some anthropologists might concede that there is absolute truth, but human beings cannot perceive it absolutely being subject to the constraints of time, place, and cultural conditions. But, I race ahead of myself here in my ponderings of “Truth” as conceived by one intellectual discipline or the other. For I have failed to do what most anthropologists have been trained to do: to “locate” or “situate” themselves in relation to their subject matter. For one of the most important findings of anthropology is that all knowledge is situated, historically contingent, and therefore relative. Another is that there cannot be an object without a subject, an idea that I think anthropology shares with some of the most recent findings of contemporary physics. Therefore I must consciously make as transparent as I possibly can my “situatedness” so that my readers will be aware of the role my own subjectivity plays, both consciously and unconsciously, in the writing of this essay and in my meditations upon the Catholic intellectual tradition as viewed through the lens of anthropology.

As such, I am presented here with an opportunity to come out of the closet, so to speak, in terms of my intellectual discipline. Most of my colleagues at Seton Hall assume that since I hold a faculty appointment in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, I am either a sociologist or an anthropologist. I am neither. All of the degrees I hold, from my BA on up to my Ph.D., are in either Religious Studies or Religion and Society. My faculty appointment in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology is due to the fact that my methodology, the means by which I conduct my research and the lens through which I view the study of religion, is that of the social sciences and, in particular, anthropology.

Second, I am from a Roman Catholic family who emigrated from small towns in both Campania and in Calabria in southern Italy to Newark, N.J., via Brooklyn and Chicago, somewhere around 1910. My family was not then, and is not now very orthodox or observant in its practice of Catholicism. We are more aptly described as “folk Catholics.” As such, I grew up in a religious world that was characterized by the relationship dynamics of reciprocity between human beings and the supernatural beings that populate the Catholic Church’s celestial hierarchy. Mine was a world of magic formulas, vows, promises and threats on the part of both human and supernatural beings rather than obedient prayers and churchly obligations. It was a sacred world filled more with the Madonna and the saints rather than with Jesus, the Trinity, the Sacraments, regular attendance at Mass or an appreciation for and understanding of the creeds, doctrines and dogmas of the Church.

Third, for reasons I will never understand, and despite my family’s folk Catholicism, as a child and well into my early adult life, I was extremely pious and a devout Catholic. Even when my parents did not go to Mass or care about creeds, doctrines, and dogmas, I did. I was eager to learn about them. As a young man I occupied much of my time with reading about various doctrines and dogmas of the Church as well the hagiographies of many of the Church’s saints. As a young boy I tormented my mother to make certain that I

received all of the sacraments for which I was eligible. And I demanded to be enrolled in the local Catholic elementary school. It took many years of repeated effort on my part before I was finally enrolled in a Catholic school. After graduating from a Catholic elementary school I went on to Catholic high school. Later in life, I tried my hand at being a religious three times: once as a Trappist monk (I lasted about one week); once as a Franciscan Friar (after two years of a pre-formation program, I lasted about 90 days); and once as a Little Brother of the Gospel (after a year of pre-formation, I lasted about 6 months). Obviously, I was a miserable failure each time.

Fourth, as anthropology teaches, it is very difficult to separate out culture from religion. They are mutually dependent on each other. Some anthropologists would not even make such a facile distinction between religion and culture. It might even be better to say they are conflated. Fifth, southern Italian culture and Roman Catholicism are inextricably bound up with my identity. As anthropology also teaches about the operations of religion and culture in the lives of human beings both individually and collectively, this is so in very unconscious and, therefore, all the more powerful ways.

Sixth, for many good reasons, I abandoned the Catholic Church and its teachings many years ago. I am a practitioner of Vajrayana and Zen Buddhism and Quakerism, religious traditions with much in common, and with which I have been involved for a very long time. I have taken vows and am an ordained *ngakpa* (tantric yogi) in the Tibetan (Vajrayana) Buddhist tradition.

Yet, despite the fact that I am no longer a Roman Catholic, others often tell me that I am more Catholic than I care to admit; that I think like a Catholic and that I perceive the world through a Catholic lens. On some level they are right. I am Catholic by default or hardwiring. To borrow a concept aptly defined by anthropologists Marcel Mauss and Pierre Bourdieu, respectively, I am Catholic by *habitus*.

Even as a Buddhist and a Quaker, I continue to be fascinated by all things Catholic. I am affected emotionally and spiritually by Catholic symbols, rituals, sacred narratives (especially hagiography), mystical theology, and by Catholic devotional practices, most especially by the cult of the Madonna and the saints. I am happily addicted to the writings of Walter Hilton, Meister Eckhart, Teresa of Avila, and John of the Cross, Dom Bede Griffiths, Pierre Teilhard De Chardin, Thomas Merton and, most recently, the writings of the contemporary Catholic mystic Bernadette Roberts. I am fascinated by the ideas of Joachim of Fiore and I regularly read the sermons and treatises of Aelred of Rievaulx and the Beguine and Rhineland Mystics.

As a way of easing myself into the writing of this essay, I have been reading, once again, Peter Brown's biography of St. Augustine, *Augustine of Hippo* (1969). I decided to do this because in so many of the discussions of the Signature Course Working Group, in which I have participated, Augustine was presented as one of the most important, if not the most important, central figure of the Catholic intellectual tradition. Therefore, I wanted to try and understand better and more deeply exactly how Augustine thought and what he was about above and beyond the romanticized and hagiographic image of him gleaned from his *Confessions*. I figured that in understanding Augustine, I might perhaps gain a better understanding of what still remains very blurred and vague to me—what exactly is the

Catholic intellectual tradition. I am no stranger to St. Augustine, as I am also no stranger to Catholic theology, the history and development of Christian asceticism and monasticism, and the rise of the Catholic Church in Late Antiquity. I spent quite a few semesters in graduate school studying these subjects.

Brown gives his readers a sense of Augustine that reveals him as not only a profound philosophical and religious thinker—a neo-Platonist to be precise—but also a shrewd politician who was inherently conservative by nature and highly suspicious of humanity’s capacity for good over evil. Augustine was also a man who was very much fearful of and in reaction to the great uncertainty and instability of his age, both of which he sought refuge from in the Catholic Church which seemed to offer him some certainty. In this latter instance, Augustine is not unlike many in our own age who, in reaction to the uncertainty and instability of our own time, have sought to reinstate authoritarian religious hegemony, either in the form of one religious fundamentalism or another, or in some kind of revisionism of a tradition in order to create a sense of stability and safety from what Buddhism, in the First Noble Truth, refers to as impermanence or the unsatisfactory nature of life (*dukkha*)—the idea that life is in constant flux, that the only permanent or constant element of life that we can count on is “change,” and the quicker we human beings adjust to the constant movement of things, the better off we will be in dealing with it in a spiritual and grounded way.

Both anthropology and sociology, particularly in their study of social change, have taught me that human beings resist change for many complex and justifiable reasons. In parsing this out, each of these two disciplines has also taught me that those in power hardly ever bring about change. On the contrary, they resist it. Change must be brought about by those who find themselves outside the circle of those in power, and even then it is a process that can take many years with all sorts of setbacks and obstacles. The Women’s Rights, Civil Rights, and the Lesbian and Gay Liberation Movements are perfect examples of how change comes about in fits and starts. The current and so-called “Culture Wars” and the backlash against the Women’s and Lesbian and Gay Liberation Movements by political, cultural, and religious conservatives is a good example of a society and culture dragging its feet in order to slow down the winds of change.

To get down to crux of the matter, as I understand it, my charge in this brief essay is to map out how I understand the relationship between the Catholic intellectual tradition—even if broadly defined—in relation to the anthropological intellectual tradition and to do so in as personal a way as possible. In the preceding paragraphs I think I have addressed the personal dimensions of this essay.

The second charge, however, is especially potent since I teach at a Catholic university with a Catholic Mission Statement. Plain and simple, as I see it, the Catholic intellectual tradition (and certainly Catholicism in general and its claim to be the unique custodian of the Truth) has come to opposite conclusions from that of the anthropological intellectual tradition about the nature of reality, truth, and religion.

The newly elected Pope Benedict XVI has recently decried what he refers to as the “dictatorship of relativism.” This relativism is apparently the great danger responsible for the erosion of the cohesion of the world according to the Catholic view of things. The

“dictatorship of relativism,” as I understand the meaning behind this much repeated mantra, is yet another way of talking about what has been defined by some scholars as the “postmodern condition” and by others as late, late modernism. Either way, what this “condition” boils down to is this: because of the process of globalization the world has become an increasingly small place. Subsequently, there are now competing “master narratives.” Ironically, the end result being that all such master narratives as we have known them historically and culturally up to this point fail to make sense of the world and of life as we now know them. This does not mean that a new master narrative will not emerge in the future. Quoting Martin Heidegger, Joanna Macy describes our current condition well in her wonderful memoir *Widening Circles*. “We are in a time of a double lack and a double Not, the No-more of the gods that have fled and the Not-yet of the god that is coming” (quoted in Macy 2000:132).

Recently, I overheard a fellow Seton Hall faculty member state that postmodernists claim that there is no reality. This was news to me and is not at all what postmodernists claim, at least not as I read them. Like anthropologists, postmodernists understand perceptions of truth or reality as conditioned by historical circumstances, language, culture, collective and personal conditioning and a host of other factors. Neither postmodernism nor anthropology claims that there is no Truth or no ultimate or absolute reality, just that whatever view of them we may have is partial.

Given that cultural and moral relativism are central to the discipline of anthropology’s worldview (Monaghan and Just 2000:49-52), a worldview based on over 100 years of empirical research I might add, how can one teach otherwise even in a Catholic university such as Seton Hall? Fascinating, appealing and comforting as the Catholic claim to absolute truth may be, as one who teaches courses in anthropology, and specifically the anthropological study of religion, how can I not teach or view Catholicism itself, and its truth claims, but through the lens of cultural and moral relativism which is so pivotal to the anthropological intellectual tradition?

This is the challenge. This is the paradox. “How will you step forward from the top of a hundred foot pole?” This is the spirit in which I step into the classroom to teach, as though I am about to step forward from the top of a hundred foot pole not always sure exactly how I am going to do it.

I remain mindful that I have been charged to teach anthropology at Seton Hall. I have not been charged to teach Catholic theology or dogma, or creed. It is my responsibility to teach students to understand the central role that cultural and moral relativism play in the anthropological intellectual tradition. I am not obligated to guarantee their unquestioning acceptance of these concepts so central to the discipline of anthropology, but rather to nurture critical thinking on the part of students.

Lest it be misconstrued, it must also be said that just because cultural and moral relativism are empirically based truths for anthropology it does not necessarily follow that all anthropologists are themselves cultural or moral relativists. After all, anthropologists are as much the products of their culture as anyone else; therefore they are not immune from its constraints despite their knowledge of its constructedness. One only has to read E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Mary Douglas, or even Victor and Edith Turner, all Catholic

anthropologists, to know that they had Catholic values and saw the world through Catholic eyes.

For me, the tension and the paradox of teaching anthropology and its truths in a university that has a specific theological and religious truth as the central theme of its mission, is exciting, a challenge, and something I approach with awe and even a measure of fear and trembling. I want to believe that what is most central and important to the Catholic intellectual tradition and what keeps me both fascinated by and attracted to it are its willingness to entertain the paradoxes and to live with the tension between one discipline and another and its own truth claims.

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Signature Course Seminar

Anthony Sciglitano

There is a conception of Christian doctrine as grammar, mainly coming from the pen of George Lindbeck, gaining popularity in theological circles since the 1980s when Lindbeck published a book called *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*.^{xviii} When doctrines are conceived as rules for Christian speech, Lindbeck says, they are considered not the substance of Christian faith and experience, but rather rules that help Christians avoid rather egregious errors. For instance, the Christian doctrine of “creation from nothing” is meant to avoid any philosophical system that would deny the freedom of divine creation (and therefore, the inexplicable love and gratuity of it) or any philosophical system that would view creation as evil or fundamentally rebellious. That same doctrine, however, does not tell us how we are to construct a theology or philosophy of creation, only that whatever a theologian says, she should not oppose the fundamental goodness of creation. A doctrinal grammar can entertain many different theological styles, vocabularies, emphases, ideas, but exists to maintain some unity among the variety, some melody line throughout a changing symphony played across temporal and spatial lines. Of course, one might want to extol Babel or cacophony; but then Babel is an etiology of war. Christianity has chosen instead for the image afforded in the Pentecost story of the Acts of the Apostles, where a unity among many different languages and peoples represents the gifts of the Spirit, the peace that overcomes war.

The “syllabi” that were handed out during the three-day seminar certainly contained readings that make explicit the basics of Christian grammar, and do so in a way that is personal, experiential, and related to themes that will continue to be important for the foreseeable future. In the Journey of Transformation syllabus, the committee indicated that they would like students to develop a degree of familiarity with non-Christian texts which might spur conversation regarding similarities and differences regarding the journey of transformation. Some of the questions that arise for me here are practical, and others more theoretical. My questions on a practical level reduce to whether the conditions for a successful core (i.e., small class sizes, faculty development, release time) will be consistently applied, especially given that some of the texts will be unfamiliar to faculty members. The committee and the Provost have assured us that these conditions will be in place. I choose to begin with a hermeneutic of trust.

Other questions are more theoretical and rooted in the texts. Given the title “Journey of Transformation,” I guess that the different readings each assume that human beings may and ought to develop over time. While I share this general conviction, it might be interesting to notice how different authors or traditions conceive the starting point and the need for transformation, to what they attribute this need, and to what they attribute the desire for transformation, and of course how they might describe the goal of transformation. As colleagues of mine would undoubtedly also note, it is important to ask what ideological, political, and cultural structures support the particular kind of transformation undertaken. There is a great line in a book by Stanley Hauerwas where he notes that “be an individual” is precisely what IBM wants. For they need workers who are not tied to any particular

location, tradition, or people so that they can move their labor force around at will (a kind of mobile feudalism). Not quite what Thoreau had in mind! Of course, this does not suggest that all “individualism” is bad in and of itself, but that some people might have their own motives for promoting what sounds so good on its face. Questions regarding how a text might be culturally appropriated for good or ill might be of importance.

I do have questions regarding student outcomes as well. A philosopher named Alisdair MacIntyre once said that you know if a student has gotten a good education by what they are reading twenty years after they graduate. We might add, “what they are doing in twenty years.” Generally speaking, however, our times are not friendly to this answer because various institutional realities press for a more prompt and quantifiable response. But I wonder if some attention to MacIntyre’s answer might make Seton Hall truly stand out. Perhaps in terms of cultural contrast, it is the school willing to take risks on the future (one is tempted to speak of faith and hope here), on the mystery that lies at the heart of a professor’s interaction with a group of young people and the mystery that lies at the heart of a person’s encounter with the mind of another, who by virtue of their chronology transcends the present, that makes for a unique signature.

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition “syllabus” bears the marks of a committee struggling with an impossible enterprise: distilling a two thousand year tradition to its most important texts and issues. It is difficult to quibble with the choices made, though I would want to add the prologue to John’s Gospel and Philippians 2:5-11 to the New Testament portion of the syllabus. These are crucial passages in the tradition. Excerpts from Clement of Alexandria’s *Stromateis* might be helpful in showing early Christian reflection on Christianity’s relation to other religions. Would it make sense to substitute readings from Anselm for “the idea of a university” section in week 10? Anselm has the virtue of being the thinker who coins the phrase “faith seeking understanding” and of being from the Benedictine monastic tradition which is not represented in the current list of readings; theology, after this point, has far more recourse to Aristotle than previously and moves from the monastery to the university. The “idea of the university” might then be discussed with reference to the development of mendicant orders and to the thought of Aquinas and Bonaventure. Is it possible to get Luther on the reading list somewhere? I know that this is a Catholic syllabus, but Catholic debates with Luther are crucial for so much of Catholicism’s own self-understanding both at Trent and at Vatican II. The omission of Luther strikes me as an omission of significant debates regarding the importance of human freedom and grace, the nature of the Church, and the relation of scripture to tradition and sacrament. Luther also provides insight into the variety of ways in which the earlier tradition, especially Augustine and scripture, might be appropriated. Of course, Theresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, and Julian of Norwich all come to mind as important forces in the tradition, Julian enjoying a kind of renaissance today. It might be helpful to introduce students to her thought so that they have a context for the public discussion of her work.

One practical concern does arise for me after reading this syllabus. The syllabus itself does not contain any reference to Christological doctrines from the Apostle’s Creed, Nicea and Chalcedon, etc. This does not strike me as problematic, so long as students will encounter these fundamental doctrines somewhere during their education at Seton Hall. Now, it would be nearly impossible to teach *Gaudium et Spes* without some acknowledgment of these doctrines, so perhaps the committee assumes that the basic doctrines will be at least

touched upon. My concern is that the existence of these courses will be used to argue that the religious studies requirement that is presently part of the core will no longer be necessary and the basic doctrines will not be taught anywhere. I would be grateful for some clarification of this issue in the future.

Speaking of gratitude, a thank you to the committee seems in order here. They have truly taken on a Sisyphean task. Following Camus, I would like to imagine them happy; but I would also like to see their task move toward a genuine end.

**Bed, Bath, and Beyond:
Being Open to the Moment**

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At the opening of the seminar on the core signature courses in early June 2005, Msgr. Richard Liddy spoke movingly of the times and circumstances of his own personal “Aha” moments in his life. After long periods of intellectual work, grappling with questions and struggling to wrest understanding from confusion and uncertainties, he remarked that there may come those moments when, in a blinding flash, things finally come together in bright and vivid understanding. Undoubtedly, each of us has had a few of these moments after which the insight and understanding (even wisdom, perhaps) that we have gleaned then become fixed stars in the galaxy of our lives. Msgr. Liddy remarked that such “Aha” moments do not always (in fact, seldom) come about when we are directly working on some intellectual problems. Rather, they typically occur, he observed, when we are lying in bed, taking a bath or riding the bus. This anecdote provided the inspiration for this essay, “Bed, Bath, and Beyond,” because it led me to ask: when the “Aha” moments do come to us, what do we do with the insights given and where do these new insights take us?

Our own intellectual journeys provide the matrix within which we conduct research, teach our students, and perform service to the university and other communities. Seminars, like the one we just had in June, give us participants the invaluable opportunity to come together, think, reflect and share ideas about how we conduct our professional lives at Seton Hall. This seminar, in particular, provided the material and the “space” to be self-reflective, share these reflections and, as a faculty, to think through our ideas about the signature courses for the new university core. It was extraordinarily helpful and enriching to have participated in the very open, honest and, at times, contentious conversations during the three-day seminar. Those conversations enabled me to reflect upon the enticements and excitements of my own intellectual journey and its connections to the ways in which I introduce students to their life-journeys. They, too, may come to their own “Aha” moments and, in my teaching, I hope to be able to prepare them to be receptive and mindful of them when they happen.

As we know, the mandate that we faculty have given ourselves through the Faculty Senate is to develop a core curriculum for undergraduates that engages the “questions that are central, but not exclusive, to the Catholic intellectual tradition, broadly understood.” Several implications follow from this mandate and I think it is worth drawing these out and commenting on them.

First, through the processes of seminars, faculty committees, and workshops, some working consensus about the nature of these central, but not exclusive, questions will

emerge. At the outset, it is easier to state what this consensus is **not**: it is not unanimous, univocal, fixed or final. If it were any of these, it would not be true to the Catholic intellectual tradition itself which from, at least the time of Augustine of Hippo has been seen as a tradition or a teaching for a community on a journey (the pilgrim community, as on a *peregrinatio*). In the first great philosophy/theology of history written for western Christianity, *The City of God*, Augustine was very clear about a number of central points that are worth citing for our core discussion: 1.) the distinction between the city of God and the earthly city is one based on the direction of one's love. Those who love God and neighbor belong to the city of God while those who love themselves alone belong to the earthly city. In developing the distinction in this way, Augustine does not neatly line up the city of God exclusively with the church since membership in the two cities is intermingled until the final sorting takes place before God. 2.) Augustine clearly rejected the institutional triumphalism espoused by Eusebius at the time of Constantine that claimed special divine status for the state in its relationship to the Christian church. 3.) Augustine rejected any claim of special divine destiny or ultimacy by any human institution on earth, especially in his criticisms of the Roman state's self-aggrandizement and exercise of power for its own sake that it then papered over by claiming a divine destiny from the ancient gods. 4.) Augustine very much understood the church to be the pilgrim community attempting to be faithful to Jesus of Nazareth and constantly living out the challenge of *faith seeking understanding* in its journey to the fullness of the kingdom of God. Any set of claims that purports to be the fixed, final and ultimate version of this revelation must be rejected as spurious and a form of idolatry.

The second implication of this self-imposed faculty mandate is that the process of developing the core curriculum is just as important and valuable as the courses that will emerge as the product. I believe that at the heart of this process is trust—each in himself, each in one another, and in the process itself and in our hopes for the shared (as yet unknown) outcomes. In choosing to engage in this process of developing the new core, with undoubtedly a wide variety of reasons for so doing, we are opening ourselves to each other in ways that do not often happen in deliberate and organized ways at Seton Hall. We are all taking risks in getting on board with this project—the risks entailed in re-examining our own assumptions, being challenged by our peers, and being open to changing our own (at times, cherished) views about matters we may hold very dear. And what might very well emerge for us are new understandings and insights about these ideas and about the ways we conduct our professional lives here at Seton Hall. Can we participate in this core project with integrity, intellectual honesty and the confidence in and respect for each other that such a process requires? I believe that we can if we have the courage and the capacity for self-reflection that such a fundamental process requires.

The third implication of our task to create a new core curriculum relates back to the first and to the working consensus that we are attempting to create here at Seton Hall. Our sense of place is the essential element here, that is, what does it mean to create a new university core curriculum here at Seton Hall, a Catholic university at the outset of the 21st century? The June seminar with Fr. John Haughey was particularly helpful in thinking through some answers to this question. In sum, he challenged us faculty to work from the best of what we are and can be as a Catholic university, living out the mature Vatican II principles of the Catholic Church's relationships with the contemporary world.

In doing this, Fr. Haughey developed a set of eight criteria that characterize the many dimensions of Catholicism. These criteria should be made available to the faculty who are developing the signature courses, both as discussion points for their deliberations and as markers for their task. Our work as a Catholic university should be conducted in openness, with the use of dialogue and with respect for other religious traditions. It needs to avoid and reject fear, reprisals, and our own temptations to fundamentalism and narrow sectarianism that repress intellectual inquiry rather than embrace and foster it. Fr. Haughey contrasted what he called a “listening Catholicism to a dogmatic one” and challenged us to “move toward a capacious Catholicism” that is open to asking the hard questions and tackling tough issues without pretense and foreclosure. This is a tall order for a university that is affiliated with an institution not known for its candor and transparency. But if indeed a Catholic university is the place “where the Church thinks,” we will fail in our serious responsibility as a university that embodies a rich, vibrant Catholic tradition if we do not take up this challenge.

If the university is the place “where the Church thinks,” what are we to think about? No doubt there will and should be considerable debate about the “questions central, but not exclusive, to the Catholic intellectual tradition,” but it seems to me that in the most general terms, they could be articulated as the following:

- What does it mean to be human and how do we humans as individuals and as communities discover, achieve, celebrate and live out this meaning?
- How do we humans create communities, sustain ourselves and deal with conflicts (internal and external to the community)?
- How do human communities understand and live in relationship to claims made by the divine (notions of the ultimate, transcendent, etc.) and human obligations to these claims?
- How do we humans articulate notions of value in human behavior, in ethical and legal systems, and in fabricating and in aesthetic engagement with the material environment? How do we understand and work out our manifold relationships with nature and the natural world of which we are a part?

Perhaps, these questions sound too general and sweeping to be of much use, but they could provide a starting point that would lead to greater specificity. Another approach entails a simple and honest appraisal of the big picture of current global realities. I will only name three and they are inter-related: violence, environmental degradation and poverty. If vast numbers of the world’s people live in hopeless poverty, denied the most basic requirements of food, shelter, and health care, then through a series of connections, environmental degradation will continue and violence will be used more and more, both by those whose poverty makes them hopeless and by those of who will use any means available to maintain our privileged way of life and our access to the world’s resources. These issues need careful and thoughtful scrutiny and where can we expect the tough questions to be asked and answered about these issues if not at a university that claims Christianity as its source and *raison d’être*?

I began this essay by espousing the importance of “Aha” moments that can take us and our students beyond the bed and the bath and that challenge us to deal with uncomfortable and disturbing realities in this brave, new world in which we now live. In its best times in the past, Christianity has provided powerful critiques of the dominant culture and its ways. If we can bring ourselves to engage these threatening and difficult issues of

sustaining the very earth that supports all living things and asking the tough questions about egregiously unjust distributions of wealth and resources and the glorification of violence in all its forms, we may very well help bring about new ways of teaching, learning, and living through the work we do at a university that calls itself Catholic, humane and compassionate. It only remains to be seen whether or not we can and will do this great work that lies before us. I, for one, am at least committed to try.

Patrice Thoms-Cappello

July 25, 2005

North Rustico, PEI, CA

After much contemplation and several false starts in my own understanding of what should be included in the signature courses, I find that I must follow Fr. Haughey's prescription of coming to grips with how I know what I know. The exercise demonstrates for me and my reader that my grasp of the problem is limited and that, if I do see some part of the way to proceed, it is still a narrow perspective restricted by the place from which I stand.

HOW I KNOW WHAT I KNOW

I study the Renaissance in England, but I teach writing and, of course, I see the world most clearly from the windows of these rooms where I work. In large measure, I view life much as a seventeenth century Christian neoStoic would with language and the material world as economy and trope for some unifying force, the Divine glimpsed or felt fleetingly when presence is real. As instructor and reader, I have learned from all the writers-on-writing I teach that the writer writes for herself, to find an answer, solve a riddle, stop the buzzing in the brain. The reader, if thought of, is always secondary even when the reader's goals are the same. Once in a great while these two really meet and a writer's words in a certain order lead to that presence, that apprehension of the Divine for me, the reader.

It is those moments, those texts, those interstices of self and other, soul and God that I try to share with my students. So then, in retrospect, it is not surprising, to me at least, that as a young girl I fell in love with the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins and John Donne, both straining through language to recreate and hence break through to the real beyond, or that in high school I read Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Renascence" and eschewed the teacher's attempt to explain what was, for me, itself the explanation. Whether it is the aureate enterprise of linguistic and dramatic mimesis in poetry and drama in the Renaissance or the conscious attempts at figuring transcendent moments in the contemporary novels of Walker Percy and Iris Murdoch or the self-conscious moments of Newman's *Apologia*, the works I study are those that make permeable the barrier between.

Still, I must recognize that this is my journey, my way, and although it gives me a certain expertise to share with my students, I am cognizant that my way may not be their way to the truth and light of how to live. What I can share with them is my real passion and expertise, and it is that which connects me to everyone who came and argued, prayed and collaborated at the signature course seminar. We all have our own way of seeing the world, and our enthusiasm for that way is sometimes the spark for our students. Each semester someone in my class finds Thomas Hardy doubting his own doubt in a poem, or the ebb and flow of Hisaye Yamamoto's absence and presence of desire in a text, or the simple unraveling of why a text seems a looking glass or window. And students are changed and better writers for relating in their own words what they have found.

However, I am not able to say that all students leave my class better thinkers. Neither I nor my texts hold Causabon's key to all mythologies. Students need many guides to the touchstones available to them here during university study. All great works of culture are imbricated, palimpsestic, braided or quilted as each critical moment relearns and names the process anew. Whether a painting, music score, words on a page, the view at the end of a microscope or the answer to a long calculation, all ways lead to the world outside of ourselves. If students leave my class unenlightened, unchanged, I pray someone else they meet at Seton Hall sparks the light that shows a different way toward the real.

This is why we must not leave the personal, as Fr Haughey would have it, the autobiographical, out of our classes. Our personal response to the material and our understanding-- developed as it is not just from our expertise but from our very perspectivity-- makes us better teachers and honest brokers in academe.

TEACHING IN THE SIGNATURE COURSES

I believe that all seminar speakers are correct in reminding us that we must attend to the questions and let the answers develop. But the questions as we know go from the simple to the complex or from the personal to the universal. The young men and women I teach while all different share similar concerns. Each is eager to find the one thing, the one truth that will make the muddy clear--Why am I here at SHU? What will I do when I get out of here? What could I do for my whole life? What does this major have to do with finding a job? Those who are sure of their academic pursuits in September by December or later often wonder why they no longer enjoy the subject that was fun in high school, or can no longer shoulder the burden of a career chosen to make it up to their parents for all the money this degree is costing. In these times, Newman's idea of a university is at some remove from my little classrooms.

Still, while students may arrive with no vocabulary to articulate this dis-ease, it is the very disquiet that signals for me each student's ability to question, to wonder and to be curious, the singular ingredient necessary for the successful student and worthwhile adult. The student's disquiet about ME is the place to actually begin this preparation to what we rightly call servant leadership. It is our task to better equip our students for this fuller life, spiritual and material

By recognizing the quest each of us has to live our lives as we were meant, our task becomes how to show the universality of this very individual feeling students bring with them about navigating the world. In at least the first signature course we can help them to see through study how others have wondered what to do with the yearning for knowing how to spend one's life and what they have written about this struggle. We show them how these people have found their way both within and outside of the Catholic Church. What have the Church fathers and mothers said in times of change or crisis, how has the church led or followed in the fulfillment of the Sermon on the Mount and what lies between the Word Incarnate and, as Simone Weil would term it, "*anathema sit?*"

The movement, as with most educational matrices is one of increasing distance and perspective, beginning as many who have worked on these courses already have said with the personal, the narrative in the first year. Certainly St. Augustine is a place to start, perhaps the bridge himself of the ancient world and the modern self, the beginning for all autobiography scholars of what George Olney calls the “metaphor of self.” Simone Weil’s epistolary “Spiritual Autobiography” written steadfastly outside the surety Baptism in the shadow of the Third Reich is another text most of my students receive personally and respond to both as believers and agnostics, Christian or not. Each text answers the question of why I am what I am, Catholic or catholic. Each is compelled to relate the story in second person and thus each compels our witness. Such testamentary accounts from any period inside and outside of the Church, some of which, as with Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton are on the list in the sample provided would be good choices and surely may be the province of the first group of faculty teaching this course.

Secular accounts, too, such as the coming of age novels or world changing life narratives suggested in our meetings are certainly appropriate and may be chosen from lists provided by interested participants. It is worth remembering that the nineteenth century was changed by two of the best novels depicting the struggle to know how to spend one’s life. In *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy’s title character’s failed and brutal attempts to find the way without guidance led to the night school movement in England and George Eliot’s famous deconversion and self-realization is, in large measure, reworked in *Middlemarch*. Neither of these now ponderous texts is suitable for our purposes, but the last two centuries have provided thousands of fictive selves and novels from which to choose. Literature can’t save the world, but as the Stoics would remind us, the good or ill is not in the thing but in its use.

We have an opportunity to commit to developing a list that the first group feels strongly about, even in some places strongly against, for the faculty’s response to the ways in which these texts can or have melded with or opposed our own view of the world is valuable to our students. In our department we teach our students to feel the response to a work, to analyze what it is in that work in its form, technique and content that calls forth that response, and to share this understanding with us in writing.

The questions of how to spend one’s life become more complicated as we learn more ways and negotiate more places where answers are not easy and so, I believe it is more difficult to see the shape of the second and third year courses. But even if the answers are not easy, the questions remain the same: “How should we live?” becomes “What does our religion teach us about how we should live?” and we ask how that compares to what others and other religions and belief systems have taught, how others have lived. Again, here the fear, I believe, among some at the seminar was that the emphasis, necessary certainly, on the Catholic tradition, would drown out the very catholicity of the courses. However, helping students toward an understanding of how the Catholic faith and her faithful grew within and alongside empire in the medieval and modern world can not but lead to a better understanding that the unifying core beliefs are carried by a structure of tradition that itself is wrapped in strands of difference across time and culture.

PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES

When Fr. Haughey expressed his regret that the videotape was not rolling on one of our seminar days it was because our very lively discussion and disagreement was emblematic of something important about the whole endeavor. In some way, I would like if we could find a way to keep that same aspect of catholicity not only in the process of developing the courses, but in the teaching of them too. Whether it is through team teaching or small seminars co-mingling at intervals, I believe that it is as important for our students to see that even when we agree, we do so differently and come to the same place along different paths. For me, Newman's idea that the chiaroscuro of the cross on Calvary and the Bible as emblematic of the Protestant mindset and in contrast with the Roman Church's depiction of the Madonna and Child is a useful metaphor for framing our endeavor. Catholic life and teaching is always about the more, the myriad and sundry ways toward certitude and can not be reduced to the easier black and white explanation of the old and new dispensations. What is important is that we retain an appreciation of that and continue to share it with our students as we teach.

Reflections on the Identity of a Catholic University

Stan R. Tyvoll

During the Signature Course Seminar, John Haughey, S.J., the Seminar facilitator, emphasized the importance of reflecting on the identity (nature, essence) of a Catholic university as a preliminary step in formulating the Signature Courses. The reason we must first reflect on identity is clear: if the Signature Courses are to be what they are intended to be, then they must be an expression of Seton Hall's identity as a Catholic university; we can't give detailed and justifiable answers to questions about the Signature Courses—what the contents of the courses should be, what the students should read and think about in the courses, or what the outcomes of the courses should be—unless we are aware of what “WE” are, what our identity is, as a Catholic university. What, then, constitutes the nature or identity of a Catholic university?

I do not intend to answer that question here. Instead, I offer a few reflections on Fr. Haughey's (at least partial) answer to that question. The point I particularly emphasize is that identity, whether that of a Catholic university or that of an acorn, by its very nature both includes and excludes certain things.

In the preliminary readings, lectures, and dialogues, Fr. Haughey maintained that an essential feature, if not *the* essential feature, of a Catholic university, is *openness* and *inclusiveness*. “Inclusivity,” he writes, “is intrinsic to a university that claims to be Catholic...” (“Emergent Catholicity and the Mission of Catholic Universities” 3). Catholic universities should move from “Catholicism” toward “catholicity,” from dogmatism toward wholeness and universality. They should be homes to all the cultures and all the faiths, deliberately and genuinely pluralistic, and able to host a degree of pluralism within their ever expanding trans-cultural tent. He writes: “Catholicism is sufficiently dynamic and universal to continue to learn from all the cultures, disciplines, events, religions. It is also old enough, universal enough and flexible enough to both host these and affect them” (“Emergent Catholicity” 3). By no means should a Catholic university give any reason for seeming to be “a tradition requiring uniformity.”

I think we can make a good case for Fr. Haughey's point that a Catholic university should be inclusive and open to diversity. For one thing, diversity is fertile soil for intellectual and moral growth. Diversity provides us with a healthy testing ground in which our views can be challenged by opposing views; it affords us with opportunities to learn to respect people as people, regardless of their gender, race, beliefs and creeds. Also, diversity sets a Catholic university apart from other religious colleges and universities that demand uniformity, and that stress conversion and agreement in dogma. However, while I applaud Fr. Haughey for stressing the open and diverse nature of a Catholic university, I must admit that, given his answer to the question of Catholic identity, I'm still in a fog as to what the identity of a Catholic university is. Yes, Catholic universities should be as open and inclusive as they can be. But is there absolutely no limit to what belongs in a Catholic university? Is it supposed to be open to anything and everything? Doesn't having an identity mean that, at some point, something is excluded?

Indeed, it does. The law of non-contradiction, as it applies to being, tells us that anything having a given quality, in other words everything that exists, cannot have the negative of that quality. From the simple fact that something—a tree, or a raspberry, or a human—*is* something, having some nature, essence, or identity, it follows that it is not something. In other words, it is of the very nature of identity both to include and exclude. What would an entity be, that included everything and excluded nothing? Well, it would be nothing at all, for it would contain mutually exclusive qualities, and that is a metaphysical impossibility. Having an identity, then, means that something is in and something is out; identity cannot incorporate opposites.

The law of non-contradiction, applied metaphysically, even holds for God (from whose nature, I believe, the law is derived). According to Aquinas, whom Fr. Haughey (as far as I can tell) and I would agree with on the question of God's nature, God's *essentia* is *esse*; God is Being and Perfection, and Goodness *per se*. But insofar as God has this sort of nature or identity, as great and inclusive as it is, there are some things that even God can neither be nor do while remaining God. His identity excludes as well as includes. To state the obvious, if God is being itself, then his identity excludes any form of non-being, such as the mere potentiality for being. Furthermore, God cannot cause the existence of that which for which being is impossible, such as a square circle. Also, since God is absolute perfection, his nature cannot include any imperfection. Again, since God is good in every way, God cannot think, will, nor perform that which is evil or immoral. Of course, someone could reject this Thomistic view of God's identity. But notice that by rejecting it, one must then maintain that God's identity is something other than the way Aquinas describes it, and thus that God's identity excludes something; it excludes at least some of what Aquinas says it includes.

Like any other identity or nature, the identity of a Catholic university must exclude something in some sense or another. We may say that the Catholic university tent poles should extend far and wide; that they should encompass a great diversity of races, cultures, religions, beliefs, and ways of life; but there is a limit to how far those poles may reach. I surmise that if I knew more about what that limit is, my understanding of what the identity of a Catholic university is would come into sharper focus.

It is not my place to say what is excluded from of the identity of Catholic university. But I can at least ask a few questions, random though they may be. For one thing, who determines what our identity includes or excludes? Does the Church decide, or the administrators, or the faculty, or the Woodstock Theological Center? Is the determination based on a consensus of all who are associated with Catholic universities? Given the diversity of the Seton Hall population, is it possible to arrive at a consensus about anything, much less about what we are supposed to be and not be? Perhaps our identity is located in a particular point of view or goal that excludes other points of view and other goals. Fr. Haughey suggested that, as part of Catholicism, Catholic universities are inherently teleological and in pursuit of the whole truth rather than partial truth; he suggested that there is an ending to knowledge, and that learning is going somewhere. But what if some of us do not believe that there is any truth to pursue? Should we, or our views, be excluded? Should epistemological skeptics and relativists, and/or their views, be excluded? Does the identity of a Catholic university require of its population a commitment to a particular set of moral values, such as the values commonly associated with Judaism and Christianity? Is it inconsistent with the identity of a Catholic university to permit someone who denies the

sacredness of human life and who adamantly advocates active euthanasia and abortion to be a faculty member of such a university? What about those who promote terrorism and racism? What about neo-Nazis and the KKK? Do they, and their perspectives, have a place here? Or should they be excluded? What about those who disagree with Fr. Haughey and the Woodstock Theological Center, those who have no desire to see more inclusivism and diversity at Catholic universities, and those who, like Pope John Paul II, think that Catholic institutions should be “instruments of the evangelizing mission of the Roman Catholic Church” (“Emergent Catholicity” 1). Is their point of view inconsistent with the identity of a Catholic university?

None of what I am saying is meant as a criticism of Fr. Haughey’s vision of what a Catholic university should be. I think he is right in maintaining that Catholic universities should be as inclusive as they can be. My point is that for all its inclusiveness, there must be some sort of exclusion if the phrase “identity of a Catholic university” is to have any intelligent meaning. The questions I raise above are simply a way to generate thinking about what the limits of that identity might be. Perhaps, if I know more about what is excluded from that identity, I’ll have a better grasp of what that identity is. And, in turn, I might have more insight into what the contents, structure, and goals of the Signature Courses should be.

Persons for Others—Nursing and the Core Curriculum

Joyce Wright

As a participant of the core curriculum over the past few months, I have reflected on the three Signature Courses. These courses will improve the overall education of the Seton Hall University undergraduate students. The Signature Courses will serve to attract high caliber students and enhance their educational and personal philosophical growth at the University. Courses on faith and worldview will only improve higher education in general and Nursing Education in particular. It states in the Gospel of St. Matthew that, “Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.”^{xxix} Healing, teaching and interacting go hand in hand in reaching our communities and the world with a Christian heart.

The core curriculum will strengthen the philosophical tenets at the center of the Nursing profession, and the courses will serve to fortify and articulate the essence of profession, that is, caring for those in need. It serves to open many questions through dialog with students from nursing, other respective disciplines and cultures. The core curriculum will assist the student to find a deeper sense of self, and a more rounded view of the world through spiritually-minded courses.

Prior to caring for others, it is important to know one’s self. “More simply stated, to enter into effective discourse, one must know who he or she is, must be comfortable in what one professes to be the truth, and must be able to project that faith and reality in dealing with others.”^{xxx} Nursing must branch out to the other colleges at Seton Hall; this will promote deeper self-awareness as students discover their selves and the world. This curriculum will move young adults to think beyond themselves, becoming more directed to the needs of others. The amount of time that students spend in self-awareness and world awareness will benefit them in the professional world. “People harvest only what they plant.”^{xxxi}

At some point of the students’ higher education, one must ask, “What does it mean to be truly human?” A Consensus Nursing Statement was developed by 150 nurses at Boston College in 1998. I, as a participant of this conference, sought to define the ontology of the person, and to more deeply consider humans in the complexity of healthcare. Among the conclusions, the consensus statement yielded the following reflections on person: a person is viewed as characterized by wholeness, complexity and consciousness; this person hood can be considered on individual, family and community levels; and the person is interdependent and lives in reciprocity, connection, affiliation and relationship.^{xxii} Through dialog and exchange, together with self-reflection, the person achieves meaning. Through such meaning, the person understands self and other persons particularly within family and community as well as the larger world.

Respect for the human person is fundamental to Catholic teaching.^{xxiii} Nurses have a passion for respect and caring. I believe this passion to be inherent to the profession, and is

a God given talent. “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.”^{xxiv} Nursing is practiced for the glory of God, and well-being of humankind. We are privileged to engage persons in a time of need. This engagement or mutual encounter takes place by a true presence, a reverence with another human. The soul or spirit of the nurse interfaces with the soul or spirit of the patient. This is a mutual process that benefits both humans. The human to human encounter is sacred and involves the elements of intimacy, trust and authenticity. The engagement is mutual, an iterative process that includes giving, receiving and being humble.^{xxv} Nurses are present as we enter this world in birth, and usually as we leave this world in death. Nursing provides care to the poor and the under privileged regardless of their income or social status. Health in any or all of its dimensions is ever present and integral at every stage of life, assisting patients in health care as they experience God’s gift of life. I believe most nurses have a God given talent, and are privileged to be part of a human’s life during the healthcare experience.

Our own Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, now the Arch-Bishop of Washington DC, states the mission in higher education is to educate men and women to be reflective lifelong learners, to be responsible and active participants in civic life and to live generously in service to others.^{xxvi} We will operationalize the Seton Hall education through the Signature Course, “The Challenges of the Contemporary World” so that students learn to interact with diverse persons and communities. Education will move outside of the classroom walls and into our communities.

It is a hope that the students will bear the fruit of a Catholic education as Seton Hall provides the core curriculum. A final quote that captures the essence of the core; “remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”^{xxvii} The Core will embody and reach out to the community and world the traditions that characterize our Mission statement at Seton Hall University; to prepare students to be servant leaders who will make a difference in the world.

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Breaking Out of the Academic Cage

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The premise of this writing is that there is a commitment to providing Seton Hall University students with a set of common learning opportunities that will allow them to understand and apply the principles and virtues of Catholicity. With guidance from principles and scriptures, students are to be able *to examine, to know, to do and to be*. While this mission appears to be commonly accepted by the Seton Hall community of scholars who gathered in early June, 2005, the debate continues regarding the structure, content, and essence of the proposed arrangement. Extracted from the interactions of the June experience are commonly expressed interests for students of all faiths to discover answers to questions not limited to: *What is Catholicity? What is spirituality? How do knowing and spirituality influence behavior?*

For the core curriculum of studies to further the University's mission, a number of functional questions need to be answered. How will the arrangement of nine credit hours of studies bring about the targeted results? What form should the studies take to assure that there will be a theoretical application and simultaneous appeal to students of diverse backgrounds, interests, faiths, cultures, and values? What curricular arrangement will result in meaningfulness for students and enhance students' perceptions of its purpose and value? Other questions to be answered are: Where will the nine credit hours be homed? How will the outcomes be measured with regard to its operation, impact on students and outcomes for grading? The challenges to organization, content, and implementation, and evaluation are numerous and intricate, especially since there is no perfect model for reference. What follows are some reflections and considerations that address the aforementioned challenges. For brevity, a short rationale accompanies each statement.

1. **Objectives** of the program must be clearly identified. At this point, a mandate from the University Senate has been clarified as its main purpose. Clearly defined expectations of the nine-credit signature arrangement are yet to be identified. Course materials, format, and academic, and other relevant decisions will follow the clarification of the program objectives. Patrons and students need to be aware of the signature objectives that distinguish Seton Hall from other institutions of higher learning.

2. The **order of learning activities** needs to be incremental and progressive. Students need to engage in learning activities go beyond gathering information. Opportunities for clarifying values, thinking critically, making decisions, and solving problems would allow students to transfer signature learning into life experiences. Hopefully the development of these life skills would evolve from and further identify the objectives of the program.

3. **Integration and Flexibility** are characteristics that must be in a program that aims to meet the diversity of the learners' cultures, interests and goals, and values. While the

program must conform to a common set of University goals (the signature), the mode of operation should accommodate varieties of expression that include oral, written, electronic, practical, cooperative, experiential, etc. Especially if the learning experiences are to be meaningful and enduring for students, there needs to be options for students to expand in both theory and practice. Unlike departmentalized courses of study, the integrated approach allows issues to be addressed from multiple perspectives. The combination of talents from a variety of academic departments would allow for global attention to the influences on behavior: social, behavioral, and physical sciences, spirituality, religion, politics, economics, education, human services, etc.

4. Innovation: This gets to the title: ***Breaking Out of the Academic Cage***. No existing single department or field of study would appropriately claim ownership of the signature courses. It appears that a multi-disciplinary team would best manage the proposed program. For the courses to be signature in nature, they must be inclusive academically. For the needs to meet a wide variety of academic needs and appetites to be taken seriously, academic constructionists need to think toward innovation. No single arrangement can do all things for all learners. While it is important to expose learners to Catholicism, it is as important for them to identify the many virtues shared by believers of world-wide religions. Only in the initial stage of the *signature experience* should readings be prescribed. At the second stage, students apply theories and design a project to be implemented beyond the confines of their usual circles. Readings in this stage are selected as they relate to the design of an intended project. The action plan for the project is to include a rationale based upon a philosophy. In the third stage of the signature program, projects that conform to student-identified philosophies are to be implemented. The suggested format takes for granted that among the aims of the signature program is to enable all Seton Hall students to serve as a contributor toward a common good. This design leads students to progress in their abilities *to examine, to know, to do and to be*. By the guidance students receive during their discovery and application of theory and practice, their development of life skills and character is promoted. For this Seton Hall University would be unique among institutions of higher learning.

5. *Breaking out of the academic cage* requires that educators consider beyond what is traditional literature, assignments, course requirements and grading procedures. History and tradition needs to be a bridge with current-day issues. For a meaningful and enduring experience students must be given the opportunity to put ideas into practice and be guided toward impacting on ideals. Projects aimed at making a better world may be enacted beyond the confines of the University walls. Students must be guided by learned mentors from a variety of fields who can inspire and recognize the potential of applying theories beyond the confines of classrooms and laboratories. Signature courses are opportunities to preserve and promote what is good, while not necessarily giving students more of the same

July, 2005

Signature Courses: A Focus on Process

Debra Zinicola

“Learning should not only take us somewhere; it should allow us later to go further more easily.” Jerome Bruner¹

It is becoming increasingly evident that a higher education, delivered in a traditional sense, can no longer serve the needs of a diverse, democratic and technologically advanced society. New millennium society demands that students possess skills that will enable them to live and work productively in a global community imbued with advanced communications, technological innovations, scientific discoveries and controversies, cultural diversity, rapid change, and complex issues. Citizens must think as well as do, solve problems as well as just know about them, and be flexibly adaptive to learning new skills over their lifespan while working collaboratively with diversity groups of others to achieve goals. Unfortunately, classrooms that offer rigid structures of time and place, routine tasks, a text-directed knowledge base with teacher as knower and provider of knowledge and students as passive recipients of such knowledge are still pervasive. "To observe classrooms now is to observe them 50 years ago: a teacher standing and talking, students sitting and daydreaming."²

Conceptualizing a new university core is an opportunity for the faculty to reflect on change - to generate a repertoire of new courses, revisit content, implement a variety of teaching methods and experiment with assignments and assessments. As we craft three new signature courses for all students at the university, some faculty members may wish to focus their attention on the essential knowledge and skills that all students at Seton Hall should possess. Others may wish to select the texts and materials that students must read and learn. I believe that all of these endeavors are essential, yet, the consideration of *how* individuals learn is also of primary importance.

To make the three signature courses engaging, compelling, and relevant for today's students, essential processes and strategies must complement the selection of course materials. Therefore, from my discipline of education and my training as a teacher, I will discuss how signature course faculty can foster student learning and create learning communities by attending to the process of education.

Learning as Transfer

John Dewey, philosopher, teacher, and school innovator, asks a question about teaching that is relevant in current times. “Why is it, in spite of the fact that teaching by pouring in, learning by passive absorption, are universally condemned, that they are still entrenched in practice?”³ The misconception is that if we teach it, students learn it; if we tell them, they will know. However, it is now known that teaching by telling, which can be effective in some instances, does not typically foster understanding or application of ideas learned. Learning is much more than the memorization of facts, concepts, and ideas. It is the integration and transferal of knowledge to novel conditions, authentic situations, and

multiple contexts.⁴ Transfer is important since all new learning depends on it. Transfer includes previously held knowledge and experiences being integrated with new learning, and new knowledge being translated to novel instances.

Research tells us that transfer across contexts does not naturally occur when content is taught in a single context; however, several strategies that faculty can implement will help students extend new knowledge beyond a text or topic to offer more flexible and adaptive learning:

- Include several relevant examples and features of new concepts.
- Encourage students to elaborate on the examples or offer their own.
- Have students solve a problem or discuss an issue, and then present them with a parallel or similar instance.
- Have students learn in a particular context and then generate “what-if” questions asking them to change a piece of the situation.⁵
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To facilitate the process of transfer that fosters the application of knowledge across time and place, faculty members need to make student thinking visible to extend knowledge beyond the context in which the learning has occurred. In essence, lively and frequent communication between faculty member and students, and between and among students themselves is a vital component of these signature courses.

Piaget and Conceptual Change

Jean Piaget, a prolific researcher into children’s thinking and reasoning, determined that individuals do not learn in ways that people had come to expect, but that “learning outcomes depend not only on the learning environment but on what the learner already knows.”⁶ Connecting new knowledge with students’ existing schemas and helping them construct and reconstruct naïve theories into more coherent theories are vital to the learning process. Knowledge building is advanced when there is a *fit*, or agreed upon meanings, between the individual and the information to be learned.⁷ So, to understand what one has written or said means that one’s conceptual structures have been rendered compatible with what the communicator had in mind. When such a *fit* does not occur, learners cannot link new knowledge to old. This often happens when a student lacks background or experiences with the subject matter and cannot link incoming facts and concepts to existing mental frames. In such an instance, the new information is simply rendered incomprehensible, is dismissed, or is ignored.

When there is not a *fit* between what is being taught and the students’ experiences and beliefs, something else may occur. The student may actually work through the discrepancy to embrace new ideas. Educators call this phenomenon *conceptual change*, which is likened to Piaget’s *accommodation* whereby students’ preconceptions are identified, cognitive conflict (perturbation) is experienced, and they are able to reconstruct their conceptions to establish a new *equilibrium*.⁸ Simply stated, people are not simply passive recorders of information but active builders of knowledge structures facilitated through experiences.⁹

Learning experiences that provide a level of discomfort with one's existing ideas are actually useful since they can serve to promote conceptual change. This means that an individual can change his or her mind as a result of cognitive conflict opening the door to new possibilities never before imagined. Promoting conceptual change, facilitated by interaction with others, reduces the possibility that one will leave a given classroom with unchallenged beliefs and naïve conceptions related to the course content. The process of conceptual change actually parallels the title suggested for the first signature course, *The Journey of Transformation*, whereby many of us in the Signature Course Seminar expressed hopes that students would be exposed to ideas and be engaged in learning experiences unlike those presented in their high schools classrooms.

Learning as a Social Endeavor

As freshmen come together for their first signature course, some may have difficulty connecting with the selected content of the course, yet, faculty members can help students achieve their potential. There is a good deal of evidence that learning is enhanced when faculty pay attention to the ideas and beliefs that students bring to class, create links by using these conceptions as a starting point for new instruction, and work with students' changing conceptions as instruction proceeds. The difficulty of integrating course topics with students' present background knowledge and experiences is alleviated through the deliberate integration of teaching strategies that allow more content-related social interaction.

Thought is social in nature. As verbal interactions with others are internalized, the foundation of cognition itself is formed. Otherwise stated, cognition develops in a process that internalizes social interactions.¹⁰ Communication in the classroom, among all members, will identify student understandings and highlight areas that need further clarification. Content can be rendered more accessible to more individuals when all participants are generating multiple examples, presenting diverse perspectives, and demonstrating relevance. Mindfully creating those links to students' lives and ideas while gently leading them on a path of discovery will help them integrate new material into their mental frameworks.

The assumption here is that effective teaching requires much more than the mere presentation of ideas by a faculty member or a select group of readings. One essential ingredient that hooks students into the learning process is generating "a sense of excitement about discovery – discovery of regularities of previously unrecognized relations and similarities between ideas, with a resulting sense of self-confidence in one's abilities. It is possible to present the fundamental structure of a discipline in such a way as to preserve some of the exciting sequences that lead a student to discover for himself."¹¹ One strategy that helps students experience a sense of discovery is the creation of talk groups within the classroom.

Group Talk Strategies

Talk groups can consist of, ideally, 3 or 4 students. Groups are given the task of answering a key question related to their readings, and most importantly, they must reach consensus on the answer. Not asking for consensus frequently results in each group member saying what he or she thinks resulting in a quick end to the discussion. Consensus is the key. Even if a group cannot achieve convergence in their thinking, the directive itself promotes

lively discussion and interest in the topic as group members try to justify their responses and change the minds of others. Since individuals come to a task or problem with their own subjective, sense-making strategies, it is through discussion of their differing viewpoints that a shared understanding may be attained.

One outcome of implementing group talk strategies is the construction of shared meanings among students. Agreed upon meanings among group members facilitate the development of subsequent conversations, the rehearsal of new vocabulary and concepts, and the integration of meaningful learning experiences. As students strive for consensus, they demonstrate, confirm, clarify and revise responses.¹² Having talk groups then share their mutually agreed upon responses before the larger group allows this process of generating understandings to further unfold as the variety of consensual responses can be argued and reconstructed by the whole class. Student ideas, presented in this fashion, provide the faculty member with a springboard to present perspectives from his or her area of expertise, and the likelihood that students are listening is greater. Finally, students involved in this larger discussion are more apt to be enthusiastic participants since they have already made the investment of shaping their ideas in the safety of a smaller group.

Members of a small talk group will often risk hesitation and confusion, change their minds, and reject or promote certain ideas because the price of embarrassment or failure is lower than if they were participating in front of the entire class. Risk taking is especially difficult for young adults, many of whom are uncomfortable speaking freely before a large audience. The flexibility of exploratory talk in small groups allows students to be more comfortable and open to reshaping and refining ideas that lead to understanding of course material.¹³

For some exceptionally self-motivated students, solitary reading and thinking are enough. But for many students, talk is the most important way of working through understandings. What is likely to happen in the classroom that encourages group work in response to questions related to readings is a) the identification of students' prior knowledge, 2) comprehension of new material previously held in a fragile or ill-defined way, 3) integration of new material with prior ideas that Piaget defines as assimilation and accommodation, 4) integration of new material with ideas of others (multiple perspectives), 5) increased understanding and application of ideas in multiple contexts through generating various examples of a concept from the perspectives of many individuals, and 6) the likelihood that new information will be accessible in long term memory.

Less is More

In addition to encouraging more classroom interaction related to course material, another concern I have is about the quantity of course material to be selected for the signature courses. If young adults are going to learn and understand ideas that will transform their thinking and inspire them to be independent seekers of truth, then they must not be overwhelmed with a large quantity of pre-selected material. Educational research reminds us that the amount of content knowledge that faculty members typically cover in a given course precludes teaching for understanding. Most of the content that is presented to students can only be addressed on a superficial level, one that does not integrate any particular topic with

a deep sense of knowing. The phrase *less is more* means that it is better to understand a few essential things well than to have a trivialized knowledge of many things.¹⁴

Roadmap of Learning

When faculty works so hard to develop new exciting new courses, it is important that the results of their labors bear fruit. I further urge course developers to consider big ideas and essential questions as organizing frameworks for each syllabus. A basic fact about human memory is that unless facts to be learned have relevance for an individual, significant meaning in a larger context, or are arranged in a structured pattern, they remain in short term memory only to be rapidly forgotten. Organizing information into meaningful wholes with hierarchical structures and big ideas reduces the likelihood of quick memory loss. Continuously assessing student understanding of course material and providing prompt feedback will help students and the faculty members reflect on the progress being made along a path that leads somewhere.

Conclusion

It is important that developers and instructors of the signature courses are aware of how they can help our students learn more effectively. In closing, I encourage them to a) select course materials with concern for the organization of subject matter so that students see how selected materials fit together, why they were selected, and that they are relevant and purposeful, b) select materials that contain themes that can be linked to the lives, concerns, and musings of young adults, c) use collaborative teaching strategies, d) use assessments that highlight the development of student thinking over time and to show how they are grappling with the course material, e) select strategies that promote deep understanding and meaningful integration of course content into the lives of students so they will be inspired to continue reading, learning, and discussing beyond the confines of a given course .

Furthermore, I applaud the efforts of all who have conceptualized signature course material thus far. The process requires a great deal of work, participation, and collaboration. I encourage all who take up the task of developing a syllabus for the first signature course to model the ideals discussed in this essay: establishing shared goals, shared meanings, and the goal of consensus for the sake of the students we hope to inspire.

“To the extent that a teacher is an artist, and according to Plato there should be no distinction, his inner eye has the native power, unatrophied, to hold the work he means to do. And in the places where he can’t see, he has a trust in himself that he will see it, either in time for the occasion or eventually.” Sylvia Ashton-Warner¹⁵

Notes

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- 6 Rosalind Driver and B. Bell, 1985, "Students' Thinking and the Learning of Science: A Constructivist View." *The School Science Review*, 67.240 (1984): 443-456.
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1. Asserted at possibly its most extreme by Pope Boniface VIII in *Unam Sanctum* (1302) "We declare, say, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff."

ii. Dennis M. Doyle, *The Church Emerging from Vatican II: A Popular Approach to Contemporary Catholicism* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, Revised and Updated, 2002 [original 1992), 21. I am following generally Doyle for the substance of the comparison of these three drafts.

iii. Joseph F. Eagan, *Restoration and Renewal: The Church in the Third Millennium* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 29.

^{iv}. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, Expanded edition 1987 [original 1974]). The other models Dulles examines are church as Mystical communion, Sacrament, Lutheran Herald, and Servant.

^v. Doyle, 57. For more on Luther's influence on Vatican II, see the joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic statement, Martin Luther's Legacy, *Origins* 13 (9 June 1983): 65-69.

^{vi} "Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?" is the title of a painting, considered a masterpiece, by Paul Gauguin, a European artist who made Tahiti more famous. It seems appropriate as a title for my take on the Core Curriculum and Signature Courses.

^{vii} Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was talking no doubt an universal aspect of human quest when he wrote:

"How strange that in every special case
One praises one's own way!
If Islam means 'surrender into God's will'
It's in Islam that we live and die.

The verses are from Goethe's *Noten und Abhandlungen zum West-Ostlichen Divan* (1818) used by Annemarie Schimmel as the epigraph for her *Islam: an Introduction* (1992), which in turn is the English translation of her *Der Islam*.

^{viii} (Or should it be through NJ Turnpike filled with paraplegic cars parked 12 across bumper to bumper belching up yellow fog, whose insatiable thirst for hydrocarbons remains the principle fig-leaf for what I personally would label "the CON-game Crusade of the 21st Century" being carried out by petro-pimps, oil-sluts, neo-cons, and the likes of Pat Robertson and Franklin Graham, *bubba Christians for whom: Jesus is blond, blue-eyed, red-necked, and speaks with Southern drawl; and who after mouthing pieties about Fatherhood on Sundays, devote the rest of the week denying the human brother- and sisterhood*. The Christianity practiced by such is also personified in General Boykin, at present in-charge of implementing Donald Rumsfeld's *strategic vision*, who reduced the entire message of Christ to nothing more than a super-sized hot-dog (footlong!) when he told a Somali warlord that His (Boykin's) God was bigger than the god of Somali warlord!

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^{xv} Taft, Robert, "Eastern Catholic Theology – Is there any such Thing? Reflections of a Practitioner," *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 1998, p. 39.

^{xvi} *Ibid.*, p. 51.

^{xvii} Newman, John Henry Cardinal, *The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated* (Loyola University Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1927), p. 146.

^{xviii} George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984). See also Lindbeck's recent article, "Messiahship and Incarnation: Particularity

and Universality are Reconciled” in *Who Do You Say that I Am? Confessing the Mystery of Christ*, ed. By John C. Cavadini and Lara Holt (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004).

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^{xix} Matthew 4:23 The Holy Bible New International Version.

^{xx} Lay-Jesuit collaboration higher education

^{xxi} Galatians 6:7 [The Message](#) (MSG) Copyright 2002 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

^{xxii} Consensus statement

^{xxiii} Lay-Jesuit collaboration

^{xxiv} 1 Peter 4:10 **New International Version** (NIV)

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^{xxv} Consensus statement

^{xxvi} archbishop

^{xxvii} John 15:4 NIV