



## Welcome New and Returning Faculty from the Faculty Center Staff

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Faculty Center Director Tace Crouse (center) and Assistant Directors Eric Main (left) and Kevin Yee (right)

**G**reetings new and returning faculty! We welcome you to the start of the University of Central Florida's 2009-2010 academic year. The semesters ahead promise to be filled with opportunities and challenges for us all.

Your Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning provides resources for all the facets of your success at UCF. The Faculty Center's resource-packed web site <[www.fctl.ucf.edu](http://www.fctl.ucf.edu)> has a new Renaissance design to convey the idea of renewal. We encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities for professional development and innovation you will find there, including our various seminar series, teaching circles, customized workshops, and individual consultations. Advanced registration is not necessary for most of these events; all full and part-time faculty members are encouraged to attend.

Full time faculty will want to apply for both the Winter and Summer Faculty Development Conference grants. These events provide three or four days of workshops to focus on developing new teaching or assessment strategies, working with other program faculty on curricular improvements, or designing a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) project. The event announcements and schedules are listed on our web site and in our monthly *CenterPoint* newsletter, which you can have delivered electronically.

This fall we have eight faculty fellows available to work with you in specialized areas, including writing for professional publication, classroom management, teaching large classes, sustainability in the curriculum, experiential learning, internationalization, teaching with video, and assessment and SoTL. These experts will lead teaching circles where you will get to know other faculty members while exploring these topics. Also, the fellows are available for individual consultations.

One group of events we want to highlight is the First Friday Brown Bag Seminars. On September 4th, October 2nd, November 6th, and December 4th, there will be two seminars: 11:00-12:30 focusing on students and 12:30-1:30 focusing on faculty (improving your presentation skills, integrating new technologies, and relaxation methods). All faculty members are invited; we especially encourage our new faculty to participate.

The Faculty Center collaborates with several support units on campus to promote your success. Many of our recent initiatives explore the effectiveness of emerging technologies in various learning environments, and we are happy to arrange demonstrations for you. These include capturing your PowerPoint lectures as videos, using clickers in the classroom, Facebook, Twitter, Second Life, wikis, blogs, podcasts, smart phones, and Knight's E-mail (the new UCF social media and e-mail tools).

We invite you to bring any and all questions you have about the university to us; if we do not have the answers, we will find out who does. Our mission is your success, whether in teaching and learning, research or creative activities, or professional advancement. We can be reached at 407-823-3544 or at [fctl@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:fctl@mail.ucf.edu). We are located in room 207 in Classroom Building 1, and we are available from 8:00-5:00 from Monday through Friday.

The following articles are written by your faculty peers at UCF for the purpose of sharing experiences and insights. We know you will find the articles relevant and interesting.

## Teaching Medieval

Peter L. Larson



Peter L. Larson is an Assistant Professor in the History Department and the recipient of the 2009 University Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award. His field is Medieval and Renaissance Europe, particularly Britain.

When you teach courses on medieval Europe, getting students interested in the subject matter is not a challenge. After all, our culture is saturated with images and concepts from pre-modern Europe: *The DaVinci Code*, *The Tudors*, Renaissance Faires, Lego knights toys, and of course UCF's own Knightro. From their earliest years to their graduation from UCF, students are bombarded with images of the past, often conflicting ones, and herein lies the rub: what they learn in class frequently clashes with popular images and ideas of the past.

As an undergraduate, I was drawn to ancient and medieval history in part by films. While as a graduate student, I used to pull my hair out over the inaccuracies. From conversations and discussions with various colleagues, I know I'm not the only one to do so. I like employing different media (not just films) in class. While even modernized translations of old texts can be off-putting, students are willing to engage with pop culture, if not always well, because they are more familiar with it—just listen to your students discuss the latest film or episode before class! The challenge is to develop critical analysis skills while avoiding a polarization between academic history and pop culture. There's no need to ruin a fun movie or game, and more importantly, understanding the inaccuracies rather than dismissing them can lead to a greater understanding of both past and present.

I had been toying around with various assignments for the past several years, but the opportunity to participate in a FCTL Course Innovation Project allowed me to approach my problem more rigorously, and with the support of colleagues from outside history to provide different skills and viewpoints. Initially, my project was to design new course materials and assignments incorporating media, but I realized there was one problem: I didn't know what the students thought of medieval and Renaissance themes in pop culture. I feared that, because I was proceeding based on my own viewpoints and observations rather than those of the students, I might be crafting the wrong type of assignment, one that might even backfire. I needed to study student attitudes towards modern depictions of the past, through their own viewpoints (as indicated in a series of surveys) as well as their achievement in my classes.

Participants filled out an initial survey in the first week of classes, indicating their views and preferences not only for media but also scholarly historical content, from other courses to museums. A second survey asked participants to evaluate a film on a historical subject, including their reactions to the way it portrayed the past. The exit survey revisited some of the questions on the initial survey and asked students to indicate whether they thought their attitudes had changed.

The initial results suggest important avenues for development, both in designing assignments and in thinking about improving teaching in a broader sense. The participants expressed a strong preference for accuracy (whether a "true story" or historical fiction), with much less interest in more fictional games, books, and films inspired by the past (such as the *Lord of the Rings*). Also, students placed a high value on museums and historical sites. But "accuracy" is a problematic concept: does this only refer to basic facts and material culture, or to more nebulous issues like attitudes and motivations? Furthermore, how well do student attitudes about accuracy mesh with the practice of researching and writing history, especially medieval history which requires interpretation and speculation because so much evidence is lost? Altogether the data suggest that a good strategy would be to combine historical fiction (books, film) and material culture (art, archeology) while investigating the historical past in order to immerse students in the broader discussion of writing history. One possibility I am pursuing is to ask students to choose something popular in today's society (Robin Hood, for example) and research modern presentations side by side with the medieval history. Such an activity would emphasize the roles of interpretation and creativity even in academic histories, as well as the debates over how historical events should be interpreted.

Perhaps the main lessons I have taken out of the project so far are the importance of student perceptions and the need for nuanced development. In terms of improvement, what is needed are small enhancements rather than a major overhaul. It's easy to get over-enthusiastic about a new tool or approach, but that is not necessarily what is needed. The system works; most students indicated that previous classes (presumably Western Civ style surveys) had sparked an interest in medieval history. Given the wide range of instructors and instructional styles, this emphasizes both that the material itself is inherently interesting and that there is no one correct approach to teaching the past. Also, student responses underscore the dangers of fads and marketing and the need for a representative sampling of student opinions; the broad preference for traditional books and film could indicate that using gaming would not appeal to many students and might, in fact, turn some of them off.

More is at stake than simple achievement; while new methods will help certain students, others will do well no matter what

the assignment is. In the long term, the grade on a particular assignment won't matter; what matters is what the student retains, both in skills and in interest. While a few students may become interested in pursuing postgraduate work in medieval history, most will go on to something else; but all of them will continue to read books, watch films, and play games based on the past, and if I'm successful through these assignments, they will do so with a greater appreciation for the history, too. Sustaining and increasing interest in a subject is important, not only to increase motivation and thus achievement, but also to improve satisfaction and enjoyment by students and the instructor, in class and beyond. We all have choices, and all other things being even, why not do something that's fun?

### ***Using Adobe Connect to Bring a Web-Based Graduate Class to Life***

**Melody Bowdon**



Melody Bowdon is Associate Professor of English and has been at the University of Central Florida since 1999. Her research focuses on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, with emphases on technical communication and assessment of experiential education. She is Senior Research Fellow for Florida Campus Compact, an alternate member of

UCF's Institutional Review Board, newly elected Chair of the FCTL Advisory Board, and Coordinator of UCF's Graduate Certificate in Professional Writing.

Due to economic pressures in and out of the university, programs across campus are facing growing demand for graduate courses and shrinking budgets for staffing them. With this context in mind, this summer I taught a class designed to address the interests of as many students as possible from the programs my department serves, including our own diverse literature, creative writing, technical and professional communication, and Texts and Technology students, as well as the folks from Interdisciplinary Studies and various programs in education who want and need English courses. The class, called *Careers in Professional Writing*, allowed students to explore writing opportunities from academic publishing to freelance journalism, grant writing and technical communications. In order to bring the class to life and fill in the gaps in my own expertise as a professional writer, I enlisted eight writers to share their insights with the students. I knew that I wanted my students to engage as actively as possible with this generous and gifted group of people, but I wasn't initially sure how to make that happen effectively. Webcourses chat has generally proved to be an adequate option for office hours in the past, but it's not uniquely engaging, and it's also a bit tricky to make available for guests. Commercial chat programs are fine, but, again, they don't offer the level

of engagement I wanted to see. The people I invited to work with my students are lively and energetic and quick—I wanted to find a technology that would allow those aspects of them to come through for the students. When I asked for advice, Assistant VP for Distributed Learning, Tom Cavanagh (a Texts and Technology grad), and OIR Assistant Director, Don Merritt (also a student in the Texts and Technology PhD program) pointed me toward Adobe Connect, a relatively new product that supports webconferencing. I attended a workshop on the tool at the Faculty Summer Conference and was quickly sold. I used this webconferencing tool for the sessions with my students and guest writers. What's so great about webconferencing? It allows you and your students to broadcast audio and video simultaneously via the internet. Students don't have to download anything—they just click on a URL that you generate using the program and *voila*. Picture the opening credits of "The Brady Bunch" only with you and your students and any guests you invite talking with each other. Everybody who wants to broadcast needs a webcam, a headset, and a microphone. Those who only want to listen/observe only need a computer with internet access and speakers.

What I loved:

- The students and the guests were excited about this tool. Some of the presenters had trepidations about being on camera at first, but they all pushed past them. Though it feels artificial at first, before long, a lively presenter and engaged participants make the online interface disappear. I was struck by how present each of these guests seemed—I felt like I was right there with them, and the students reported feeling the same way.
- My guests presented from homes and offices in Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Fort Pierce, Casselberry, Orlando, and so on. They interacted with my students from the comfort of their own spaces, and the students loved being invited into the places where these writers write. We saw and heard the occasional pet, spouse, child, co-worker, tea kettle, etc., projected from the presenter's environment, but that only served to enrich the experience. Watching Tammy the blogger's cats traverse her keyboard, hearing Peter the novelist's daughters laughing in the next room, and observing the warm but professional vibe of Kelli the technical communicator's office at her company brought home the diversity of experiences of writers and the realness of the writer's life. It made the experience intimate and immediate.
- I'm a semi-early adopter, and I had a blast seeing this semi-new technology bringing my web class to life. While I don't love seeing or hearing myself on camera/microphone, I did enjoy being a real person for my online students in this new way. During office hours before the guests arrived, students could project their images and voices into the sessions, and I was able to see and hear several of them as we chatted. This made for almost instant community in a way that

neither face-to-face on-campus classrooms nor text-based interactions usually do, in my experience.

- Using a feature in Adobe Connect, I recorded the sessions for students who couldn't attend them in real time. I could also edit the recordings to cut out technical delays, etc. Now I have an archive of sessions to share with future students, and my guests can access those recordings, which can be saved as a file or viewed from an Adobe Connect-generated URL.
- Students showed up for synchronous activities in a web-based class. I teach web-based grad classes every year to support our Graduate Certificate in Professional Writing, and I've offered office hours at just about every conceivable time, day and night, in an effort to get students to connect with me and each other. I can usually count on seeing about two or three students a week for short periods of non-overlapping time in these office hours sessions. This class ultimately settled at an enrollment of 19 and I consistently had at least 13 students in these sessions. Many of them showed up for every session or all but one. I took a vote on times and days for the sessions during the first couple of days of class. The times that were convenient for them weren't great for me, but it was absolutely worth it because of the energy they brought to the sessions and the invaluable learning that came out of them.
- Adobe Connect offers useful discussion tool features to supplement your webconference. There's text-based chat which is useful for visits with guests. There's also a poll generator that allows hosts and presenters to create simple polls and post them on the conversation dashboard. Session participants can take the polls and results can be anonymously posted in real time. This was useful in our sessions when presenters wanted to get a sense of students' backgrounds, interests, etc. There's also a tool (these tools are called "pods" in AdobeSpeak) for discussion notes. When one of the presenters reeled off the name of a book or a concept or a website, I typed it in the discussion notes so students could refer back to it later. It's also possible to share your desktop with participants. If you want to project a PowerPoint or show a Word doc, this could be handy. I didn't have a lot of use for this feature in these sessions and found that it seemed to throw off audio and video broadcasting when we played around with it. But I'm sure the kinks can be worked out if that tool fits your needs.

What was difficult:

- Students' and presenters' internet connections and computers vary, and some of them with shakier connections experienced frustrating problems with audio that went in and out. For the most part, logging out and back in usually helped with the problem, but we certainly don't want to create a new form of digital divide by using tools like this.
- There is a learning curve, and if that annoys you or if you're

a perfectionist about technology, this product probably won't live up to your standards just yet. The video and audio quality are fine, but they're not professional grade at this point, especially since participants have wildly varied input and output devices. If you're one of those people who need an explanation when something goes wrong, again, maybe this isn't for you. As far as I can tell, there's an occasional inexplicable glitch that can sometimes be cured by holding your mouth right or rebooting or waiting for a full moon, but that sometimes can't. If that kind of situation is outside your comfort zone, hold off on trying this for a while.

- It's a little tricky to get an account. UCF has an agreement with Adobe to sell licenses for the product to individual faculty members. This means that each instructor must have her or his own separate account that runs around \$250 annually. Alice Hansen, Associate Director of University Computer Services, is the campus contact person for this product and will need at least a couple of days to set up your account. It must be paid for through the campus computer store and involves some registration steps that only the computer store can complete.
- One tricky issue for using this tool with web-based classes is the task of scheduling synchronous sessions with students who aren't technically required to attend them because they're in online classes. I let the students choose days and times as a group, and I only required them to attend three of the eight offered sessions. This requirement was part of their class participation grade, so if any of them had failed to attend three sessions (that didn't happen), they could have still passed the class. This was my compromise—every instructor would have to figure out what works in her or his situation.
- In English our writing-intensive classes are relatively small. A "big" graduate class is one with more than 20 students, and that's rare. Adobe Connect does limit participation to 100 people, so if you have a class with more than 100 students, it might be tricky to manage. The recording option mentioned above might help to address that.
- There is a delay in the audio/video delivery of VOIP technology, so it's hard to make conversation among several people seem natural on Adobe Connect. It requires everyone to be patient. You can also try saying "roger that" and "over" before and after every sentence, but trust me, though fun at first, that gets tedious. That's why we opted not to have multiple people speaking at once in our guest sessions.

*When I start loving a technological innovation, I use it for everything. (I'm drafting this article on Google Docs, for example, where I store almost all of my drafts for safekeeping and multiple computer use.) Since I got excited about Adobe Connect, I've used it for a dissertation defense (it worked but didn't add much beyond the value of a speaker phone except for at the beginning when the candidate was running through a PowerPoint presentation and our committee member in*

*Michigan was able to experience that along with those of us physically present) and for several meetings (it's great for a group of fellows around the state I'm working with who generally haven't met face-to-face and are trying to build community). During the fall, some GTAs from a range of disciplines I'm working with on a small grant will work with me to help their undergraduate service-learning students to use Adobe Connect to provide instructional content (synchronously and asynchronously) for students at a local high school. I think that has great potential.*

If you want to learn more about this tool, contact the folks at the Faculty Center, Don Merritt at OIR, Alice Hansen from the Computer Store, or me.

### **To Click or Not to Click**

**Tammie J. Kaufman**



Tammie Kaufman is an Associate Professor in the Department of Foodservice and Lodging Management in the Rosen College of Hospitality Management. She has been a professor at UCF since 2003. She earned her Ph.D. in Hospitality Management at Virginia Tech. She teaches classes and researches in Timeshare Resort Management while pursuing research in SoTL and Heritage Tourism.

As usual, when I am introduced to a new gadget at the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, my inner techno geek is awakened. I enjoy trying out new innovations that can engage students while fascinating me about how they actually work. The Classroom Performance System (CPS) for PowerPoint engaged me as soon as it was presented to the Rosen faculty. There is nothing like having a remote control (clicker) to voice your opinion anonymously. I think they would be fun for every faculty meeting.

I was not quick to adopt the system. Computers tend to hate me, and I thought, no matter how much I was trained, there could be some issues. However, after seeing a documentary about higher education where a professor used the system with a great deal of success, I decided to take the plunge. I first used CPS in my classroom in Fall 2008 with the help of my computer staff at Rosen; I got set up with no problems. The best part for me, as an instructor, was to figure out how to incorporate questions and anonymous polls into the lecture utilizing CPS. This actually helped me to revamp parts of my lecture because it made me take a harder look at what I had been teaching. I had been told that students do not like to pay for the clickers to then only use them for attendance, so I wanted to make certain that they were used as much as possible throughout the lecture to make certain that they got their money's worth. I also gave them a week to purchase

their clicker from the bookstore and get registered before I began using them in class.

I teach courses in Timeshare Management, and, yes, (to answer your question) there are classes in that at UCF. Orlando is the timeshare capital of the world, and so most hospitality students take classes in this to familiarize themselves with specific aspects of this segment of the hospitality industry. This is a wonderful medium in which to use the CPS system because students have such strong opinions about the industry. When I asked if anyone had ever been on a timeshare tour, many more students clicked "yes" than raised their hands in my previous classes. I found that many students had a favorable view of the industry that had not surfaced to this extent before. Growing up on vacations with their families, they were positive about the experiences that they had at the timeshare resorts. The students that had negative experiences could voice their opinions without stifling the views of others. What I have found in my teaching is the same students always talk and always have opinions. The clickers placed everyone on an equal playing field. They also loved the non-academic questions, such as "if money were no object where would you have a vacation home." It helped the students know more about each other, and they often surprised me.

The most important use of the CPS in the classroom for me is the questions that I ask immediately following a major point that I am conveying. Until the CPS, I believed that I emphasized a point to such great detail that the students had to comprehend the point. I have never been more wrong. Invariably, a quarter of the class missed the question. They were either having a mental siesta, or I was not communicating effectively. It really blew me away.

I am not using CPS in the classroom this summer because I want to refine how I use it in class. Will the questions be for class credit or not? Also, in these economic times, because not as many fellow professors use them in class, I wanted to save the students some money. I teach mixed mode classes, and since the students are not in class half of the time, they may not see it as cost effective. But, I have noticed there are times in my lecture that I really want the feedback that I am not now getting and I miss the clickers. My goal is to have a workshop for our college from A to Z in how to use the clickers effectively at Rosen and hope, with more buy-in, the students will begin using them during their freshman year and incorporate the clickers in the classroom throughout their education.

## ***Just Like the Real Thing: A Graduate History Conference at UCF***

**John M. Sacher**



John Sacher is an Assistant Professor and the Associate Chair of the History Department. His teaching and research interests include the United States South, the Jacksonian era, and the period of Civil War and Reconstruction. Along with Drs. Amelia Lyons and Peter Larson, he

won a 2009 Innovative Teaching and Learning Grant for the project described here.

Traditionally, history graduate students have taken spring research seminars. In Spring 2008, Drs. Peter L. Larson, Amelia H. Lyons, and I decided that our students would get a better professional experience if we held a joint conference at the end of the semester. This innovative conference, which replicated a “real” history conference as accurately as possible, provided our students with a practical learning experience that went beyond the classroom and enhanced both their learning and our teaching.

After each being assigned a graduate seminar, and reflecting on our own experiences as graduate students, we chose to add professional elements to supplement the traditional course requirement of an article-length piece of original research. While graduate coursework guides students through historical research, the writing of grant applications and the development and presentation of conference papers receives little organized attention; students instead work through the processes themselves by trial and error. We believed that introducing assignments designed to cover the professional aspects of history not only would better prepare our students for what would be expected of them beyond class but also would enhance performance on the seminar paper itself.

To this end, we crafted several assignments to replicate as closely as possible the real-life experiences of preparing a grant application and presenting a paper at a conference, while maintaining the safe environment of a course. While the vagaries of individual schedules and course content required some flexibility, we coordinated our efforts to provide similar experiences for all three classes. In addition to the core requirement of an article-length piece of individual research, we devised and implemented a conference experience.

Each student submitted a 250-word abstract and a professional curriculum vitae as if they were submitting a paper to a history conference. Prior to the submission, students examined sample abstracts and discussed the requirements and challenges of crafting a successful proposal at the beginning of research, in particular the need to express a complex project succinctly and coherently. The assignment required students to conceptualize their projects formally and concisely for at least the second

time (the first time being in consultation with the instructor several weeks prior) and further define the key questions and the significance of the project while still conducting initial research. For many students, this assignment was their first CV; some had never heard the term or realized how it differed from a résumé. Class time was devoted to discussing the elements appropriate to a historian’s CV and students benefitted from examining professors’ CVs and comparing their own CVs with those of their peers.

In addition to in-class presentations of his or her work, each student made a ten minute, conference-style presentation of the research (most history conferences allow 15-20 minutes, but given the number of students and the time allowed, we had to set a lower limit). We used their abstracts and CVs to divide the papers into panels based on content, mixing papers from different classes as much as possible; the students provided drafts of their papers to the panel chair before the conference. The conference itself was held April 14, 15, and 16, 2008, with the students attending every evening, even if they were not presenting, in order to gain the most benefit. Twenty-four students presented thirty-one papers, organized into eleven panels. Eight other faculty members from the History Department generously gave up an evening to chair a panel and provide comments.

We strove to make the experience as authentic as possible, from running the conference, organizing panels, and finding commentators to printing programs and hosting a reception. Creating our own conference had advantages over requiring the students to submit to various other professional conferences. Having all the students present at a single conference allowed for a single, simple timeline and for the instructors to observe the presentations, and the students were able to observe their peers and provide feedback. Other graduate and undergraduate students attended, some to observe what professional history looked like, and others to support their fellow students.

The addition of professional elements increased both motivation and interest in our courses. Rather than a paper to be read only by the professor, they were creating a product that would be shared with their peers at UCF and even beyond. Furthermore, the conference increased confidence in their abilities as budding historians. In our experience, many students are shy regarding their work and do not think it good enough for a conference, let alone publication; now, they know that these are realistic, reachable goals. Preparing and discussing the CV made them realize how little they had on their CVs and what they would need to do in order to develop them further, while the presentation itself gave them something to add to their CV, so the students received more than a grade for their hard work. Most students suggested that the assignments and conference should be a regular element in History Department seminars, and offered useful suggestions for improving the conference.

The assignments and conference fostered creativity because to complete the course, students had to look at their work from

multiple angles and present it in different ways, encouraging critical analysis and a layered approach (full detail, select detail, presentation-level detail). The conference format gave students the opportunity to see what their peers in all the classes were doing, broadening their learning and exposing them to different schools of thought and methods of analysis. Overall, the resultant papers were not only stronger, but more original.

## **Applying Stanley Fish to Religion Courses at UCF**

**Doug Evans**



Doug Evans is an Instructor in the Philosophy Department. He received his M.A. in Religion ('89) and Ph.D. in Humanities ('93) from FSU. He has taught religion and humanities courses at FSU, USF and UCF over the last 18 years. He is currently the Humanities adviser for the Philosophy Department.

Back in spring 2009, I attended a Faculty Center seminar by Stanley Fish out of curiosity for comparing his ideas with my own on objectives in religion courses I teach at UCF (and earlier at USF and FSU). His book, *Save the World on Your Own Time* sounded quite poignant to the issues I faced when teaching morally and doctrinally loaded material for World Religion courses and courses in individual religions, like "History of Christian Thought and Culture" that I developed for UCF a decade ago. Having experienced both seminary (where we WERE taught to "save the world") and university education, I am well acquainted with the different methods and objectives of each program and was interested in how Fish's ideas might revise or reinforce my teaching methods. After attending his presentation and reviewing his book, I have spent the last months reflecting on how Fish's proposal might be (or already is) implemented in religion courses I teach and offer these musings for others with similar concerns about morally charged content in university courses.

Fish proposes that academic education operate with a specific purpose, to be a "this" not a "that." In other words, what we do in university courses should be distinct from objectives and methods in a vocational school, and I would add a seminary. Fish's "this" principal is to keep the objectives informational and analytical, protecting the teacher and student from "that," the moralizing pitfalls which create unnecessary and disruptive quagmires of affection over ideas. He is particularly critical of teachers and departments that use the classroom as platforms to engage in battles over some preferred culture by faculty or student. For Fish, culture wars are inappropriate for academic pursuits. In contradiction of education for multiculturalism/pluralism, Fish proposes that "moral capacities (or their absence) have no relationship whatsoever to the reading of

novels, or the running of statistical programs, or the execution of laboratory procedures." This disclaimer is similar to my introduction of every religion course I teach.

Many students raise concerns over how I will "teach" them religious material. Will I "convert" them to some religious perspective? Will some confessional litmus test be used on their tests and papers? I have a scripted disclaimer for all my religion courses, in which I emphasize to all, from Agnostic to Fundamentalist, that I have only 3rd person objectives in mind. They will be expected to read, research and analyze the material I present in a diachronic format, but no 1st person, ad populum, statements of confession will be relevant, whether mine or theirs. I allow them to include personal statements in their papers if they feel that will "protect" their *a priori* beliefs, but that I only grade their analysis in understanding historical context for the art and rituals of religions, what they meant to believers in distinct periods, then determine what changed and why. Such phenomenology in academia satisfies my students and Fish's mandate.

In contrast, my seminary training was filled with 1st person, transformational objectives, which I had signed up for. So, for example, I was given assignments to read the Bible and keep journal entries on how it or God was "transforming" me. These were then graded by instructors to check on my "progress." If Chopp's oft cited vision is correct, that the highest purpose of higher education is "transforming" students, then the seminary method would seem applicable to academia. But I agree with Fish that academia should not be "that" as a directing force for students. To interpret their informative interest in my classes as also desiring some personal transformation by that material, is an invalid assumption to me.

Allowing that some instructors envision academia as transformative by design, what would a 1st person objective and measures statement look like in a syllabus for one of my religion classes? I experimented with different key words and came up with examples like this: You will experience a Christian text, indicate any (none?) personal transformation by it, as described in a journal, through the use of sympathetic or unsympathetic statements to that religion. I can't imagine how this would not bring down charges of violating the 1st Amendment, or at least alarm students, who (if not dropping the class) would next try to figure out what I was looking for as "correct" to put in their papers. But how is this genuine? Such an imposition seems inappropriate, if not unethical, to our role in academia, at least in religion courses. It's a breach of trust they have put in us not to use their interest in our majors as Trojan Horses, turned back on them to inspect (as voyeurs?) some desired outcome, other than academic. In Fish's terms, such an expectation is not "professional" to academia, which should be about thinking skills, not orthodoxy; about what goes on in their head, not their heart.

In circumspection, personal "transformations" take place often in academic studies, but not as directed by me. The course content provides ample material for their personal reflection,

which may cause one to embrace some aspect of a religion, but independent from any “design” on my part. I have even received requests by students for further reading that will enhance their faith, but done “on their own time.” Thus I have protected myself from moral activism, my students from insult, and my department from accusation of indoctrination, because I have acted as a professor not a prophet; a professional rather than professing faith.

### ***It Takes All Kinds*** **Waltraud Q. Morales**



A full professor in the Department of Political Science, Waltraud Q. Morales (Trudi) teaches international relations and comparative politics. With an M.A. and Ph.D. from the Josef Korbel School of International Studies of the University of Denver, and a B.A. from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., her publications have explored foreign policy, development in Latin

America and the Third World, and Bolivian politics. She has been the recipient of NEH and Fulbright grants.

I began my teaching career appropriately nervous and insecure. But I took to heart the straight-forward advice of my graduate school adviser. Thirty-one teaching years later, Professor John F. McCamant’s simple observation has proven to be as reliable and reassuring as it did that day in his office at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies of the University of Denver. “It takes all kinds,” he said.

These words remind me that there is no infallible orthodoxy in teaching. There are superstars and plodders, formal and informal styles, and impassioned and studiously neutral presentations. There are many combinations and permutations to the teaching task and different roads to the destination. And everyone has an agenda, a point of view, and even a bias. It is because of this perspective that Stanley Fish’s *Save the World on Your Own Time* left me irritated and energized at the same time.

The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning provided the opportunity to read the award-winning teacher and essayist’s latest book. Intrigued by the book’s title, and ever-ready for a free book, a public lecture, and a “free lunch” with a renowned author, I signed up for the Faculty Center’s Book Club and attended the series of small-group discussions last February on Fish’s latest thought-provoker. Provocation it did deliver—just as was promised on the book jacket. The “new manifesto” Richard A. Epstein enthused in his endorsement, “calls for a major revolution in public education. Many will disagree with this provocative book. None will be wise to ignore its impact.” *Touché!*

The public lecture basically presented the highlights of the book, but it did provide an opportunity for Q&A and contestation—not always satisfactorily, as is often the case with contestation. Fish’s recipe for more effective learning and teaching also reminded me of my first research seminar in graduate school—to my mind at the time, an exercise in both the obvious and the impossible. Without knowing anything about the topic or subject to be investigated, we were to fashion a solid research design. Completely frustrated, instead of doing the assignment, I argued with the professor about the impossibility of the assignment for a real research project rather than a hypothetical one. I learned an important lesson through the assignment, however, but it wasn’t how to do research or write a research design.

I found myself in the same mode of stubborn resistance as I read *Save the World*. Not that I have ever actually aspired to “save the world” or to use teaching as a platform for social engineering. Nevertheless, Fish appeared to be hopelessly naïve to assume that education—whether higher or not or whether intended or not—did not serve a crucial socialization and even politicization role. “Civil society” is the key buzzword these days for democratic enlargement just as decades ago it was “civic culture.” How does education not impinge on these eminently political and politicized concepts?

For example, Fish asserts: “Civic capacities . . . the capacities that go along with responsible citizenship—won’t be acquired simply because you have learned about the basic structures of American government. . . .” No, but this structural knowledge provides an essential foundation for responsible citizenship and voter empowerment. Moreover, as many of us know, the typical class in American government does more than study basic structures. Even if the teacher is studiously neutral, are not civic responsibilities and values implied (even asserted) in the structure, in the history, in the founding principles, personalities, and documents of our government? In the discipline of international relations and foreign policy, the tension and spill-over between Fish’s pseudo impartiality and objectivity on the one hand, and policy making and analysis are even more pronounced, and inevitable. True, as Fish writes, the university professor has the primary task of pursuing and imparting scholarship, specifically presenting a body of knowledge and inquiry, and developing analytical and research skills. In the process, however, are not judgments made and values imparted, particularly in certain disciplines?

Let’s consider a specific dilemma when teaching U. S. foreign policy toward Latin America. Overall the historical record indicates that U.S. policy in the region has been hegemonic and imperialistic. As a teacher, do I not have an obligation to call a spade a spade? Won’t my conclusions, indeed any conclusions, involve value judgments and have policy implications? More specifically in the case of Chile in 1973, U.S. policy was complicit in regime change and a military coup against a democratically elected president, according to the U.S. Senate’s Church Commission. Does the fact that President Salvador Allende was a Marxist justify U.S.



policy and the coup against him? Does the fact that, General Augusto Pinochet, Allende's successor and president for the next eighteen years, introduced free market reforms and grew the Chilean economy, excuse his dictatorship and human rights abuses?

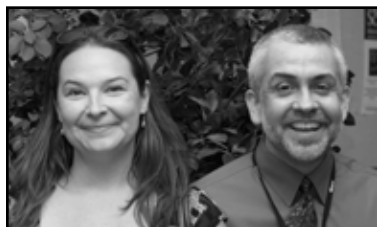
How is it possible to study the history of U.S.-Latin American relations without asking difficult questions? And how can (or should) one avoid answers that involve value judgments and critical policy assessments? In short, my argument with Fish's bedrock thesis remains this: "saving the world" or not depends on the discipline at hand—it is directly relative to the specific subject and the teacher's style and methodology. "It takes all kinds!" And what works for Stanley Fish might not work for you or me, or for all students.

Moreover, teaching and scholarship cannot be so easily sanitized and divorced from moral values, judgments and responsibilities. In the end, perhaps Professor Fish may not really disagree. His view that any subject or issue can be subject to "academicization," that is to "academic interrogation and analysis" rather than to further a political agenda is on the face of it, obvious and easier said than done. To judge by the reactions of my students, "academicizing" does not fool them at all. Critical probing and examination of policies as objects of analysis and comparison does not have to cross the line into advocacy to suggest an agenda—whether there is one or not. So what I do with the content of my teaching does not prevent them from arriving at political conclusions about my views and their own.

To my mind, Fish's key argument that teaching is only about "a sustained inquiry into the truth of a matter," is simply a straw man. His assertion that in "an academicized classroom—a classroom where political and moral agendas are analyzed, not embraced—would be value-free and relativistic" seems very obvious but impossible, (although a worthy ideal) when theory collides with reality. The task of transmitting knowledge and conferring academic skills, especially in some subject areas and disciplines, involves and may even further political agendas. Like it or not.

## ***Creating Opportunities for Knights to Study Abroad***

**Angel Cardec and Dede Wilson Mosley**



Dede Wilson Mosley (left) is a Coordinator in the Office of International Studies. Angel Cardec (right) is the Director of the Office of International Studies and the Director

of Florida-Eastern Europe and Florida-Canada Linkage Institutes.

***"Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness."***

Mark Twain (*The Innocents Abroad* 1869)

Travel for the pursuit of knowledge and enlightenment has been a recurring theme throughout history, from visiting scholars to the libraries and academies of Egypt, Greece and Rome, to eager Americans looking for cultural edification in their junior year abroad. According to the Institute for International Education (IIE) Open Doors Survey, the number of US students going abroad increased from 154,168 (2000-2001) to 241,791 (2006-2007). At UCF, participation has increased from 248 in 2000-2001 to 391 in 2008-2009 (this does not include a substantial number of UCF students who attend programs at other institutions). While the numbers of participants have increased significantly, these totals are disproportionately small for an institution this size.

Under the supervision of Dr. Alejandro Sepulveda in 2008, a team of industrial engineering students prepared an analysis of study abroad at UCF, as part of their Senior Design Project. The study included a process analysis and a survey of students and faculty. It provided substantial information and recommendations for improvements to programs and processes. The study revealed the need for better communication of policies, processes and program details. This recommendation led to changes in the application and payment processes, the development of a Study Abroad Student Handbook (<http://www.studyabroad.ucf.edu/documents/Student-Handbook.pdf>), and the implementation of a series of "Cultural Orientations." The cultural orientations are intended to engage prospective study abroad participants in conversations concerning student expectations, awareness of stereotyping and skills for adapting to unfamiliar environments. All of these changes are expected to improve the participant's experience.

A crucial finding of the study was that, while 91% of the 780 student respondents had "heard" of UCF study abroad, the existing program offerings did not correlate with student interests or academic programs. Students prefer programs that "count" toward their particular program of study. Moreover, as more community members and non-traditional students participate, the diversity of interest increases and changes. We must develop new programs that safeguard academic integrity, are safe, interesting – and financially feasible.

Programs are classified as short-term study abroad, reciprocal student exchanges (RSE), and learning tours. Short-term programs are for-credit programs that deliver coursework, or involve experiential-learning (internships, service-learning). Short-term programs require defined learning outcomes, documenting assessment of student achievement, and consistency with UCF academic standards and policies. RSE are set-up through agreements with other institutions whose curriculum and conditions have been carefully evaluated. These courses are further evaluated to determine how they will be incorporated in the student's program of study. RSE participants register at their home institutions while taking

courses at a host institution. Learning tours are programs that may not require course registration but have a clear educational focus.

There are many opportunities for faculty to become involved in providing study abroad options to our students. Faculty may develop or revise a course (or courses) in order to lead a short-term program. Keep in mind that participants will be paying a premium to attend the program; therefore, there should be clear academic value added to their experience at a particular site. Program logistics, such as budgets, fees and vendor payments, are the responsibility of the Office of International Studies (OIS), which is responsible to ensure consistency with UCF administrative policies. Faculty involvement in RSE include identifying potential courses for UCF students, becoming an instructor of record, and ensuring that the assessment provided by the partner institution follows UCF standards. Learning-tour leaders must be excited about their topic and comfortable with very diverse groups.

Faculty, in partnership with OIS, can assist students who are eager to study abroad but who have not found a program that matches their interest and/or academic requirements. If you are interested in learning more about the programs and finding out ways that you can become involved, please contact us at <http://international.ucf.edu>.

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## ***Sustainability at UCF***

**Alaina Bernard**



Alaina Bernard is the Assistant Director for the UCF Environmental Initiative & Arboretum. She pursued a Graduate Degree in Biology at UCF with her thesis focusing on metapopulation connectivity and the importance of corridor networks in ecological systems. As a grad student, she was tasked with creating a prescribed fire program for the campus, and after completing both the degree and the fire program, was offered a full time position as the Land Manager. Currently, she focuses on an array of endeavors including reducing campus emissions through alternative land-use, green roofs, sustainable land management, partnerships, student involvement, and community service.

As one of the largest Universities in the nation, the University of Central Florida continues to showcase “green” programming through research, education, and operational initiatives. As the Assistant Director of the UCF Environmental Initiative & Arboretum, I have been honored to participate in several of these initiatives on campus, and continue to strive to support faculty in incorporating environmental topics into their curriculum, research, and

service programs. Over the past few years, we have had many successes in showcasing the intellectual creativity of our faculty, students, and staff in developing and supporting green programs on campus.

In 2007, in an effort to develop, support, and communicate, sustainability programs at the university, the staff, faculty and students created “Sustainability Alliances.” The mission of each Alliance is to explore the social, environmental, and economic benefits of green initiatives at UCF. The Faculty Sustainability Alliance focuses on:

1. Promoting UCF’s mission of offering high-quality undergraduate and graduate education through creative activities and to provide services that enhance the intellectual, cultural, environmental, and economic development of the metropolitan region;
2. Promoting interdisciplinary-based recommendations on environmental, economic, and social stewardship;
3. Supporting the interconnectivity of faculty, students, and staff focused on sustainability initiatives; and
4. Using campus resources for research and education.

The faculty has also implemented sustainability into classroom curricula via the unifying theme: “Global Climate Change and the Environment”. Visit [www.unifyingtheme.ucf.edu](http://www.unifyingtheme.ucf.edu) to learn more.

Through the Alliance networks, the Environmental Initiative & Arboretum has been able to support service-learning activities, create more volunteer opportunities, conduct and host research on campus, and facilitate creative learning opportunities outside the classroom. The UCF Environmental Initiative & Arboretum has a mission of providing UCF students, faculty, staff, and the greater community of Central Florida a comprehensive environmental and outdoor living laboratory for education, research, recreation, and human interaction with ecosystem functions. If you are interested in learning more about this program, I invite you to visit our website, [www.green.ucf.edu](http://www.green.ucf.edu). I also welcome any feedback or suggestions on how we can better support you through research opportunities, curriculum development, tours, or service-learning programs. With around 500 acres of conservation lands on campus, themed demonstration landscapes within the campus interior, and a plethora of sustainability programs, there are many opportunities to partner on research and education programs at UCF. For questions about the Faculty Sustainability Alliance, please contact the Faculty Center.

I thank all the faculty who have been involved in these and other initiatives on campus, and look forward to meeting new, interested faculty in the fall.

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Please tear this page out along the perforation and keep for quick reference.

### ***Campus Quick References***

**Who is my first contact for any faculty-related questions?**

Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning  
www.ftcl.ucf.edu  
407-823-3544

**How can I find my way around the UCF campus?**

Campus Map  
campusmap.ucf.edu

**How do I know when the semester starts? Ends? When do I give my final exams?**

Academic Calendar  
www.registrar.sdes.ucf.edu/calendar/academic  
www.registrar.sdes.ucf.edu/calendar/exam

**What is the difference between my PID and my NID?**

Your PID is used at my.ucf.edu  
Your NID is used for e-mail.

**Where do I get my UCF ID card?**

UCF Card Office  
www.ucfcard.ucf.edu  
407-823-2100

**How do I get a parking decal?**

Parking Services  
parking.ucf.edu  
407-823-5813

**What do I do regarding seriously disruptive students or emergencies?**

Police Department  
police.ucf.edu  
407-823-5555

**What is the Faculty Union?**  
United Faculty of Florida-UCF Chapter  
www.uflucf.org

**Where do I go for help with digital imaging, photography, teleconferences or video production?**

Office of Instructional Resources  
www.oir.ucf.edu  
407-823-2571

**Where do I go to develop online materials for a course, or to learn how to use Webcourses?**

Course Development and Web Services  
teach.ucf.edu  
407-823-3718

**How do I place books on reserve for my class?**

Library  
library.ucf.edu  
Books: 407-823-5209; Media: 407-823-4322

**Whom can I call for help with dial-up Internet, wireless Internet, on-campus Internet, e-mail?**

Computer Help Desk  
helpdesk.ucf.edu  
407-823-5117

**How can I access my GroupWise e-mail from any computer with an Internet connection?**

Login at mail.ucf.edu with your GroupWise login and password.

**How do I make sure the bookstore carries my textbook?**

UCF Bookstore  
www.bookstore.ucf.edu  
407-823-2665

**Does UCF have a gym for faculty to use?**

Wellness Research Center  
pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~wrcenter  
407-823-3509

**How do I buy tickets for UCF athletic events?**  
Athletic Ticket Office  
407-823-4653

**How do I open a UCF Credit Union account?**  
UCF Credit Union  
407-823-3176

**Where can I send my students when they need help with their writing for my course?**

University Writing Center  
www.uwc.ucf.edu  
407-823-2197

**Where can my students go for tutoring or supplemental instruction?**

Student Academic Resource Center  
www.sarc.sdes.ucf.edu  
407-823-5130

**Where can students go to find a job after graduation?**

Career Services  
www.career.ucf.edu  
407-823-2361

**Whom do I work with to help accommodate students with disabilities?**

Student Disability Services  
www.sds.sdes.ucf.edu/default.htm  
407-823-2371

**Where can I refer a student who is having emotional difficulties for counseling?**

Counseling & Testing Center  
www.counseling.sdes.ucf.edu  
407-823-2811

**Where can I refer a student who needs medical care?**

Student Health Center  
www.hs.sdes.ucf.edu  
407-823-2701

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## ***Submissions***

The *Faculty Focus* is a publication for all instructors at the University of Central Florida. This includes full-time and part-time faculty and teaching assistants at all UCF campuses. Its purpose is to provide an exchange of ideas on teaching and learning for the university's community of teachers and scholars. It is envisioned that this publication will inspire more dialogue among faculty whether in hallway discussions, departmental meetings, or in written articles. This represents an opportunity for faculty members to reach their peers throughout the growing UCF community. The *Faculty Focus* invites you to contribute your ideas on teaching and learning in a short essay.

See the guidelines for submission online at <<http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/Publications/FacultyFocus/submission.php>>. Please send your submissions to [fctl@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:fctl@mail.ucf.edu).

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