



**Volume 10
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“Reflection”

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**Reinert CTE Mission
Statement**

The mission of the Paul C. Reinert, S.J. Center for Teaching Excellence is to support Saint Louis University faculty and graduate students so that they can better serve the intellectual, spiritual, and social needs of all learners.

**The Reinert Center for
Teaching Excellence**

Academic Resource Center
Suite 224
3840 Lindell Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63108
(314) 977-3944
cte@slu.edu

The Ripples of Reflection
Elizabeth Callahan, J.D.,
Director of the Honors Program; Sociology & Criminal Justice

When CTE approached me to write an article describing what tools I use as a teacher and a program director to encourage my students to reflect, I began by thinking about my class assignments including journaling, group discussion, research related to a service project, comparison of self to others, role playing, etc. Then I started wondering if these exercises really work. Then I spent some time thinking about what I am really trying to get my students to do, what I really want them to experience. Then I started thinking (perhaps even reflecting!!!) about what the heck reflection is to me. I realize that if I can't explain reflection to myself and internalize the concept, I certainly can't be of assistance to you, the reader, or even more importantly (no offense, please), my students.

What arises in my mind when I think of the word “reflection?” I see images of myself in the mirror and images of my visage bumpily staring back at me in rippling water. My reflection is my image sometimes distorted, sometimes not. To me, an initial visual quality arises at my first consideration of “reflection,” but there is more. What about my other senses? My sound, my voice, my song may be reflected in an echo, in someone

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Reflecting on History
Hal Parker, PhD., Department of History

I suppose that every academic discipline labors under its own particular set of popular misconceptions. An enduring adage that plagues historians comes from a quip by George Santayana: “those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” This notion, and all its derivations, assumes naively that history is an undisputed narrative whose lessons can simply be identified, plucked out of a context, and applied to a contemporary political, social, or economic problem. Failure to apply history's lessons properly, according to the maxim, condemns societies to repeat the past until they get it right, a bit like Phil Connors in the movie “Groundhog Day.” All too often, historical analogies—Hitler and appeasement being the most popular—are marshaled simply to promote a political or foreign

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How can I help students understand the importance of reflecting on what they are learning? How can I get students to reflect on their experiences, inside and outside the classroom, and see connections to what they are learning? These are questions that those of us in the Center for Teaching Excellence have been asked by faculty members. Faculty members recognize that in orde

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policy agenda. Such fallacious feats obscure the real value of using historical study to understand our world today.

One effective method for introducing undergraduates to the utility of historical study is an exercise we might conveniently call reflection, since that is the theme of this issue. Reflecting on history involves departing from a narrative in a course to focus on analysis and then on personal deliberation around a question that transcends temporal boundaries. For example, in a course that covers the topic of trade and commerce in the Atlantic during the period of European colonization, an instructor might pose a cluster of questions about the nature of slavery. Some that come to mind at this moment include: How was chattel slavery morally possible? How did Europeans, Africans, and Americans comprehend one another? What were the repercussions of slavery? Why did the slave trade come to an end? Questions like these jolt us out of a well worn narrative and compel us to look carefully for answers.

The reflection could take place in a variety of venues: an analytical assignment, a research paper, and/or a class discussion. Even if the reflection only occurs in a class discussion, it is important to give students a range of sources, primary and secondary, to read beforehand to inform their thinking. From my experience, few things are more frustrating in leading discussion, especially on such a weighty topic, as students sharing opinions without an adequate base of knowledge about the subject. These episodes devolve quickly into superficial moralizing, demonizing, and rationalizing. The range of sources should include different contemporary perspectives and distinct historical interpretations. In the case of the Atlantic slave trade, narratives from enslaved and enslavers, descriptions of the experience of enslavement, discussions among merchant interests, religious groups, as well as information about social relations in Africa and Europe, the burgeoning global economy, and some information about the pervasiveness of slavery across world history constitute a rather comprehensive list of sources for a class. In the interests of time, an instructor will have to make choices. To cut down on the amount of

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Congratulations to the Fall 2007 Certificate in University Teaching Skills Recipients

Graduate Certificate In University Teaching Skills*

Yu-Ping Chang, Nursing

Mentor: Dr. Joanne Schneider

Denise Leonard, Biology

Mentor: Dr. Nevin Aspinwall

Carla Lopez del Puerto, Higher Education

Mentor: Dr. Karen Myers

Matthew Schultz, English

Mentor: Dr. Ellen Crowell

Participation Certificate**

Kacey Booth, Modern and Classical Languages

Mentor: Dr. Mauricio Souza

Phil Galli, Sociology and Criminal Justice

Mentor: Dr. Marty Shockey

*The Certificate in University Teaching Skills is awarded to individuals who have completed a comprehensive program designed to facilitate the beginning of a journey toward teaching excellence. The purpose of the program is to provide participants with information to enhance their teaching, to develop a philosophy of teaching, and to document teaching competencies.

**The Participation Certificate is awarded to individuals who have participated in ten Effective Teaching Seminars, which are offered on a regular basis by the CTE.

Graduates: Denise Leonard, Kacey Booth, and Yu-Ping Chang (with her mentor Dr. Joanne Schneider)



Adam Peck

Former Associate Director of Student Life

Confucius wrote, “Knowledge without thought is labor lost.” By this standard, it is often disheartening how much effort is wasted on college campuses each year. There are a myriad of depressing statistics about how little students retain of what they hear, read or do. The value of education, like cars, appears to plummet the moment it leaves the proverbial showroom floor.

Plenty of others have bemoaned the consumerist notions of education that seem so pervasive in higher education today and that seem to conspire to relegate student learning to mere vocational training in which the diploma is the ultimate goal. As the concept of liberal education falls increasingly out of favor, it seems that students expect less and less to be transformed by their college experiences.

The “Week of Reflection” was designed to provide students with a context to understand how they are changed, and to help them benchmark these changes against the institutional learning outcomes that articulate the areas in which we expect this change to occur. Based on “The Five Dimensions of the SLU Experience” this program provides daily guided re-

This year's program will take place April 21-25, 2008.

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The Service-Learning Corner

Mark Pousson,
Program Director for Service-Learning

Are you ready for a challenge? Consider this: What did you learn today? Why throw out this challenge given how simple it sounds? Consider that students of any age look for models and guides in acquiring knowledge, particularly knowledge that will “rock their world.” Reflection is key in building knowledge that can rock one’s world.

Reflection was key for two educators: Ignatius Loyola and John Dewey. Loyola, the 16th century founder of the Jesuit Order, and Dewey, a 20th century educational theorist, shared the pedagogical model of experiential learning that introduced experiences as educative and reflection as the bridge between experience and theoretical orientation (action).

Experiences, either curricular or co-curricular, can or cannot be educative. In order for experiences to be educative, both Loyola and Dewey agree that critical reflective thought is necessary. Both men perceive reflective activity to be an active process. By engaging memory, understanding, imagination and emotion, the learner considers the value of any subject, belief or fact in its context. Consequently, the learner can explore the subject’s relationship with other “aspects of knowledge and human activity... to appreciate its implication in the ongoing search for truth and freedom” [V. Duminuco, *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000) p. 257; J. Dewey, *How We Think: a Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1933)]. Through systemic analysis, critical reflective thought creates new meanings of the experience, and can lead to personal and professional transformation and proactive behavior.

As an active process, critical reflection encourages the learner to consider the subject matter on three systemic levels: micro, mezzo and macro. Each level draws upon the former level for greater reflection, yet ends with a question about the learner’s action.

Questions to consider at the micro level:

- As I engage this subject:
 - What are my thoughts, and emotions?
 - How does this challenge my attitudes and beliefs?
 - What is my understanding of the subject matter?
 - What have I learned about myself?

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CTE Invites Nominations for the 2008 James H. Korn Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Award

Criteria for award:

- Nominees must be current full-time faculty member at Saint Louis University. Note: a team of individuals or a department may be nominated as long as at least one member of team is currently a full-time facu

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Questions to consider at the mezzo level:

- As I engage this subject:
 - What communities are involved/affected by this subject?
 - As a member of the community, how do I contribute to its communal voice?
 - How does the various communities contribute to the subject matter?
 - What can the communities do to affect change?

Questions to consider at the macro level:

- As I engage this subject:
 - What global issues are affected by the subject matter?
 - What global issues contribute to the subject matter?
 - What is my role in the global conversation about the subject matter?
 - Lastly, as a member of the global community, what is my response to the subject matter as it affects the global community?

Intrinsic to this reflective analysis is importance of a communal dialogue. Only through the synergistic dynamic of dialogue, can the potential for learning expand the academic experience to include social and moral development [James Gouinlock, ed., *The Moral Writings of John Dewey* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1994) , xxxvi.].

The challenge has been thrown. Experience, **reflect**, act.



