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an idealist’s challenge

Niamh

So many times I hear students say that they “don’t care” about a class, about their work. What do you mean you don’t care? This is your education we’re talking about here. Why is a “C” is good enough when you’re capable of an “A”? Why do you intentionally write four pages when the requirement is six? How can you be so lethargic? Blasé! I can’t take this any more, these attitudes of indifference. College is no place for apathy. What a disease it is! Apathy eating away at the mind. Apathy eating away at the soul. Apathy as a contagion. Stay away from me! I don’t want what you have. Is it your money that’s keeping you here? Is it moms? Is it dads? They’ve given everything for you. Support, generosity, unconditional love. Can you even fathom what that means, to love someone so deeply? Repay them in dedication, hard work, focus, and determination. If it is you paying these sky-high tuition costs, think about what you’re doing. You’re shredding every dollar you have and every dollar you’ll earn with your carelessness. Do you see that as your fault, or the fault of someone else? Please, do not blame those who are committed to their education, who do all their work, when you look like you haven’t done your job. You haven’t. Please admit it to yourself. Is there a competitive bone in your body? Use it! Apathy is failure, a loss. If the requirement is six, write six. If you bombed the test this time, don’t wallow in self-pity and hopelessness. Try, try again. When you are tired, when you feel like you have given everything, go one more step. Without exhaustion there would be no such word as rejuvenation. Revitalization. Renewal. Apathy, don’t afflict me. Do not dwell on our doorstep. Leave us all be. Captivation and Attentiveness, come dance with us. Guide us through all our days. Thank you, Awareness, Curiosity. Let’s stand together, all of us who care about our futures. Fight the disease of cruel and brutal apathy with me. Help me find the cure!
health, sickness and healing in africa

In the Classroom

Professor Issac Nyamongo
Fulbright Scholar in Residence

What do human beings have in common? They live in daily hope they will not fall sick, and when they do, they look forward to the process of healing, with or without ‘medication.’ But, being healthy or sick are culturally and socially defined constructs—a person can be sick in one cultural group and yet be considered perfectly healthy in another! So, human beings are faced with the same daily struggles of trying to make meaning of these sufferings. These struggles assume greater meaning for ordinary people in ordinary, less disadvantaged, environments. Drawing examples from African communities, we will explore the construction of ill health and what people do to reverse that condition. Consider a child who has malaria (or x, y, or z health problem). How does the mother know that her son or daughter has malaria? Knowing that she has to choose from among competing health systems (modern vs. traditional), what does the mother do once she has recognized the problem is malaria? How do her perceptions about causation change over time? The role of the significant other in health decision making will be featured in our discussions. I have conducted research in many settings across the continent – Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. I have first-hand experience interacting with people during my travels to countries like Ghana, Morocco, Cameroon, Zambia, and South Africa. These excursions will be used to enrich our classroom experience. The health issues of specific interest include those with a high burden (malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis) and women’s reproductive health issues (such as cervical cancer and female genital mutilation). Students will be expected to read, explore, write papers, and actively engage in exploring these topics.

from here to eternity

In the Classroom

Noah Richard
Class of 2009

Professor Cheryl Coolidge is teaching an Honors class in the spring semester called “From Here to Eternity.” Coolidge hopes this class will bring together students from many different disciplines to discuss the “big” ideas of the universe that are not typically covered in the undergraduate curriculum.

“The title is from a classic movie in 1953,” said Coolidge. “I have no idea what the movie is about, but the title was cool and seems to fit.”

The title really sets the stage for a course as deep as the one Coolidge is venturing toward. The course’s overall focus is on how the universe was formed, where it’s going, how humans came into the picture, and how they might be affecting the greater scheme of things.

“I want to bring in ideas from both science and religion that address the basic questions associated with course,” said Coolidge. “I really do want to remain flexible with the topics by also placing emphasis on topics the class finds interesting too.”

This flexibility compliments another topic that Coolidge wants to look at in the course, which originated from her reading of scientific journals. She often reads about devices like the Hadron collider, a giant particle emitter that was recently tested in Europe. The purpose of this device is to recreate the Big Bang using elementary particles, which Coolidge admits is hard to wrap one’s head around.

“I want to discuss the price of knowledge,” explained Coolidge. “We spend billions researching space and particles we can’t even see, when there are so many problems facing the world today that could be solved by a fraction of that money. So we can ask the interesting question of whether or not knowledge is worth that price. I want to bring in students who aren’t scientists—perspectives from history majors or philosophy majors would really enrich the discussions.”

Coolidge is very excited to work with honors students in the class. “I want to meet some students I would not have normally met, and it will be a lot of fun to discuss these huge questions with students ready for the challenge and who are willing to bring creative thought. I really can’t wait.”
Dear Mr. President,

Congratulations! Due to the exuberant commotion that has been displayed here, on a small campus in New London, New Hampshire, I am sure I can speak for Colby-Sawyer College when I tell you how excited we all are for our 44th president of the United States. As college students, we are becoming more independent, and we are really paying attention to what is going on in the world and what it all means for us. We no longer consider the news that boring television show that adults would rather watch than play Parcheesi.

Actually, it has been somewhat discouraging. Since my college companions and I are trying to build a strong foundation, the economic issues are jolting some of us hard. I have seen more money go in and out of my bank account than ever before because of college expenses. We have worked so hard to get here, and we still have so much ahead of us. Your plans to make college tuition affordable and easier to apply for financial aid are reassuring; we understand how important this is as we experience the stress of paying for our educations. Since the American Opportunity Tax Credit of $4,000 would provide two-thirds the cost of tuition of the average public college, and almost cover community college costs, in exchange for community service, more students would be granted the opportunity of higher education. Scholarships were the best part of my tuition bill, and if students were given the chance to gain some financial help like this through community service, I think it would give them all a sense of accomplishment. They would feel more capable of dealing with all the pieces that come with college.

It looks like our country is headed toward a memorable four years, best of luck as our guide.

Sincerely,
A Fellow American, College Student, and Supporter

Amanda Gibbons
Class of 2012

“we are becoming more independent, and we are paying attention to what is going on in the world and what it all means for us”

The Honors Contract

Megan Ruggiero '10

There is one class that defined my freshman year at Colby-Sawyer College. It was the one class that I looked forward to no matter how much snow was blocking my path and no matter how late I had stayed up the night before goofing off with friends. World Literature with Professor Tom Kealy. That class opened my mind to new, fresh ideas that had never even crossed my mind in the somewhat superficial literature courses I had taken in high school. World Literature is the class that made me want to become an English major. I decided that I had to pay homage to the course in some way, and that is how I came up with the idea to serve as a Teaching Assistant.

Of course, being an honors student, I had to take the whole “TA business” an extra step and write an honors contract for the course. Since Professor Kealy’s sections of the course did not fit into my schedule, I got in contact with Professor Ewa Chrusciel, whom was happy to have me serve as her Teaching Assistant and was excited to help me draw up my contract. Since all honors courses must be interdisciplinary in nature, I decided that I would approach the course from a pedagogical perspective (i.e. think like a teacher, act like a teacher, and be like a teacher).

Now that my Teaching Assistantship is coming to an end, let me just recap some of the responsibilities I have taken part in during my time spent with Professor Chrusciel. I created a full lesson and some mini-lessons on various texts, including “The Odyssey,” “The Epic of Gilgamesh, “and Dante’s “Inferno.” I facilitated class discussions, actively involving my students in their learning. I kept a journal detailing my experiences, perceptions, and reactions to Professor Chrusciel’s teaching methods. I incorporated performing arts into the class’s curriculum. I had my own real “office hour” (pretty cool, huh?), and I served as a full-fledged teacher on two separate occasions.

I have found my Teaching Assistantship to be both rewarding and self-enlightening. I am in debt to the Wesson Honors Program for this opportunity, and I strongly advise all honors students to use the honors contract proposal to their fullest advantage.

Megan Ruggiero
Travel Log

Aubrey Thomas  
Class of 2009  
Copy Editor

While studying abroad in Perth, Western Australia last semester, I was fortunate enough to have the chance to take a ten-day trip up the coast and then into the Outback with 40 other study abroad students. After seeing some of the most beautiful scenery in the world, what surprised me in the end was that I found out a little more about myself from my little adventures along the way.

One of the places that the trip took us was Coral Bay, which gave us access to Ningaloo Reef, Australia’s largest fringing coral reef. I decided to take a ride on a glass-bottom boat where I could snorkel off the boat for a bit. Little did I know, the fish loved the glass-bottom boat because it fed them. We could see them swimming right next to the glass. Now, I’m a little scared of fish sometimes. I’ve gone fishing before, but I tend to avoid touching them, and I no longer have fish as pets because seeing them float to the surface makes me traumatized for weeks. I also hate their gaping mouths when they look at you, and I view them all as semi-piranhas, out to eat me.

I was the first to get my snorkel and flippers on, so I ran to the end of the boat at break-neck speed. Just as I was about to push off, I saw a massacre of fish the size of plates right at my feet, mouths gaping open. I squealed, but then remembered that people were waiting for me to get off the boat, so I plunged in, panicking as I frantically tried to get away from the mass of fish. I felt several of them touch me with their slimy scales, and I think I accidentally elbowed one. I made a noise that one can only make with a snorkel in their mouth and kicked as hard as I could far away from the frightening creatures. I remained on the outskirts of the boat so I didn’t have to deal with the fish. Granted, I didn’t see as much, but it just wasn’t worth it to me. When our snorkeling time was up, the fish were not as congested, so I was only marginally scared of getting near the boat again.

What did I learn from this icky experience? That it’s best to face your fears because you won’t want to regret not doing something that you would have really enjoyed. I’m glad that I went snorkeling despite the fact that I thought some fish were going to eat me because, first of all, I wasn’t eaten, and second of all, I would have missed out on a great opportunity that often only comes once in a lifetime.

Photo courtesy of Aubrey Thomas ’09

an update on journeys in the land down-under

capital and its theme will be “Honors in the Global City.” It is my fervent hope that students from the Wesson Honors Program will accompany me and present a panel! Save the date: October 28 – November 1, 2009!

by Professor Ann Page Stecker

I had the great pleasure of attending the annual convention of the National Collegiate Honors Council in San Antonio, Texas at the end of last month. There in the company of 1, 960 faculty, administrative, and student colleagues, who value the world of honors teaching and learning, I refreshed my own sense of what we can accomplish and have accomplished in our Wesson Honors Program. The conference’s theme, “crossing frontiers,” stimulated fascinating panels, and discussions, reinforced every time I stepped out the conference hotel and imbibed the frontiers of a bi-lingual city, closer to Mexico City than Washington, DC, our capital. Next year’s conference will be in our nation’s

Nanosecond
Poised & Peripatetic: Crossing Frontiers

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