

# CTE NOTEBOOK

**Volume 10  
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Winter 2008**

## **"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**

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## **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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## From the Director

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 order for new experiences and knowledge to be meaningful to students, the students must take time to make connections between new experiences and knowledge and prior experiences and knowledge. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, ranging from writing papers to taking part in discussions. This issue of the Notebook looks at the importance of reflecting on content, reflecting on learning and making connections. We invited two faculty members, Hal Parker, Ph.D., Department of History and Elizabeth Callahan, J.D., Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice and Director of the Honors Program, to share strategies they use in their teaching to help students reflect on learning, experiences and connections.

Last Spring, the Office of Student Development sponsored a campus week of reflection that attempted to help students make connections between what they were learning in and out of classes with the five dimensions of the SLU experience. The sessions provided an opportunity for students to listen to the reflections of other students as they made these connections. The week of reflection will occur again this April, and it provides an opportunity for faculty to encourage students to practice reflection and make connections in the context of the five dimensions. More information on the week of reflection can be found in this issue of the Notebook. We encourage you to share additional strategies for promoting student reflection by emailing them to us at [cte@slu.edu](mailto:cte@slu.edu) and we will feature them on our website (<http://cte.slu.edu>).

### For Your Calendars...

#### •Journal Club•

CTE's invites your participation in new programming for 2008: "Journal Club." The club will read academic journal articles exploring pedagogical issues such as: civility, integrative learning, and classroom management. The club will meet once in February, March and April. Refreshments provided!

*If interested contact Beth Hill at [bhill7@slu.edu](mailto:bhill7@slu.edu)*

#### Spring Mentor Event

Meet and talk with some of your SLU colleagues and learn "tips" for becoming a "Total University Citizen."

Hear early career and recently tenured faculty tell their stories of integrating teaching, research, and service.

**March 4, 2008  
3:30-5pm  
Verhaegan Hall Room 219**

**RSVP at:  
[cte@slu.edu](mailto:cte@slu.edu)**

*Sponsored by CTE's Mentoring Committee*



#### Portfolio Retreat

CTE's Annual Portfolio Retreat for Non-tenured faculty will take place Friday and Saturday April 11-12, 2008 at Manresa Center.

For more information contact your department chair or email [cte@slu.edu](mailto:cte@slu.edu).

#### Staff Notes: Congratulations!!

Congratulations to CTE's **Kim Sharringhausen**, Educational Technologist, WebCT and Blackboard Support, recently named a **SLUStar!**

The **SLUStars** program embodies the Jesuit concept of *Magis* (the Latin word for 'more') and reflects the highest ideals of Saint Louis University - men and women dedicated to the service of others. *SLUStars* recognizes SLU staff and faculty who consistently extend themselves in special ways as part of their daily work at the University.

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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)**



## *What is “The Week of Reflection?”*

*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 reflections at the clock tower area (weather permitting) that encourage students to think about what they have learned this year, the many sources from which they have learned it, and, most importantly, how it has changed them.

### *Call for Contributions: Scholarship of Teaching and Learning White Paper Series*

Faculty and Graduate Students are invited to contribute to a new White Paper Series on Teaching and Learning that the Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence plans to premier in spring 2008. Submissions should address a topic related to teaching and learning at the University level.

The **deadline is Monday, March 3, 2008**. For more information please visit our website, [cte.slu.edu](http://cte.slu.edu), or contact Dr. Eddie Clark, [clarkem@slu.edu](mailto:clarkem@slu.edu) or email [cte@slu.edu](mailto:cte@slu.edu).

## *A Look at Last Year’s “Week of Reflection”*

“A Week of Reflection” is intended to encourage students to think about they have learned this year—both inside and outside the classroom. Each day of the week focuses on the five dimensions of the SLU experience. Students are given five laminated cards with a reflection question and probing follow up questions found on the opposite side of the cards. Last year’s cards, questions, and themes, were as follows:

### Monday

Question of the Day:

What have you learned this year?

Theme: Scholarship and Knowledge

About Today’s Theme:

A Saint Louis University education develops students in the area of Scholarship and Knowledge by providing a well-rounded educational foundation which incorporates learning through experience and guides students to become scholars in their chosen fields—prepared for advance study, for their careers, and for lifelong learning.

### Tuesday

Question of the Day:

How are you applying what you have learned about this year?

Theme: Intellectual Inquiry and Communication

About Today’s Theme:

A Saint Louis University education prepares students to develop in the areas of Intellectual Inquiry and Communication by creating learning opportunities for students to express ideas and concepts clearly and apply their knowledge to new situations they encounter.

## Wednesday

Question of the Day: What have you learned about yourself and others this year?

Theme: Community Building

About Today's Theme:

A Saint Louis University education prepares students to develop in the area of Community Building by encouraging students to welcome and work with others, without regard to race, ethnicity, religion, or gender. In so doing, students build an inclusive community which leads to respect and compassion for human life and dignity for each person.

## Thursday

Question of the Day: How did you make a difference with what you have learned?

Theme: Leadership and Service

About Today's Theme:

A Saint Louis University education prepares students to develop in the areas of Leadership and Service by encouraging students to serve others. By promoting social justice, students become "men and women for others" and lead by their examples.

## Friday

Question of the Day: How has what you've learned this year changed you?

Theme: Spirituality and Values

About Today's Theme:

A Saint Louis University education prepares students in the area of Spirituality and Values by developing their spirituality, values, and openness to the transcendent. Students are encouraged to determine principles to guide their actions and their relationships with others.

## ***What's New for the "Week of Reflection" 2008***

This year's program will take place April 21-25, 2008. The 2008 program will include the "Senior Legacy Symposium," Thursday, April 24, in the Busch Student Center. This symposium will be a celebration of outstanding work across the University that represents the Five Dimensions of the SLU Experience, affording seniors an opportunity to reflect on the Five Dimensions during their career at SLU and how they will carry that forward into their careers and future studies. This event will allow the entire University community to see the academic possibilities and contributions including faculty, administration, staff, students and alumni. The Senior Legacy Symposium stems from, among other organizations across campus, CTE's "Conversations" Committee which discussed the Senior Capstone experience.

*For more information on SLU's "Week of Reflection" or to become involved, contact Donna Bess, Associate Director of Student Life, at 977-2805.*

else's harmony. Touch? My caress may be reflected in the loving touch of another. Smell and taste? The scent and flavor of black walnuts stir reflections of time with my grandmother. Sights, smells, sounds, tastes and touch can all evoke memories, emotions, and perhaps most importantly connection to other people, other times, other thoughts and experiences. So perhaps each of our human senses may be a tool for reflection.

What does it mean **to reflect**? Considering the verb, the action "to reflect" brings something different to me than the noun "reflection." What do I *do* when I reflect? I remember, analyze, place in context, consider, and try to understand, try to find the connections. I ask myself, do I see a glimmer of myself in someone else? What part of the outside, the exterior, the other, the separate exists in me? What links me? What is the commonality? What is our shared history, present, or future? What greater meaning awaits my discovery and understanding?

After reflecting upon the above definitions, I decided to look them up in the dictionary. Here is what I discovered with the help of <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/reflect>:

Reflect is a verb. This means you have to actually do something. The word *reflect* is derived from a Latin word that means "to bend" or "to turn away from a course." To me this hints that we had better be flexible, be open to reconfiguring our conclusions, to try another approach. "Reflect" means to give back as an image, likeness, to mirror (see above-I was on the right track!). "Reflect" means "to realize, consider.....to think quietly and calmly." To reflect is "to express a thought or opinion resulting from **reflection**." Finally, the dictionary tells us that the synonym for "to reflect" is "to think."

This is a relief! We can think! Our students can think!

But how can we help them find their mirrors? How can we help them bend? How can we help them reconfigure their conclusions? How we help them find their connections to other people, places, and ideas?

reading material, an instructor could assign different sources to different groups of students.

Before undertaking the reflection, the instructor should also make students aware of the scope—possibilities and limitations—of historical study. A historical approach attempts to identify factors in a cause-effect relationship within a specific temporal cultural context. Though historians learn and borrow extensively from other fields, we must leave some questions to philosophers, theologians, literary scholars, and social scientists.

After posing the question, preparing the students with sources, and clarifying the boundaries of historical inquiry, the next step is to help the students engage in analysis. If the format of the reflection will occur in some type of writing assignment, the instructor should discuss all relevant issues with the student as she or he begins to formulate central ideas, a general direction, and narrow a thesis. A conversation or email exchange at this juncture can help students make sure they have considered a wide assortment of perspectives, employed sufficient evidence, and given extended thought to the guiding questions. If the venue of the reflection is in a class discussion, providing students an atmosphere that fosters the free exchange of ideas, yet in a respectful manner, is crucial to rigorous analysis and reflection. Phrasing questions beforehand that build on one another gives a discussion direction and purpose. One might begin with an analysis of certain texts, then proceed to relating these texts to their broader contexts, and then move to identifying and evaluating historical factors. Finally, after having done all the analysis and contextual work, either in a paper or a discussion, it is useful to press students with more personal thought reflection questions. What does the slave trade tell us about the history of race relations, about slavery today, about forms of oppression, about the evolution of moral precepts, about the ways human societies interact?

Reflecting on history can help our students gain a fuller understanding of problems, past and present, as well as move us closer to fulfilling our Jesuit mission to care for the whole person.

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And how can we help them safely express their reflections?

I try to create a safe, open, respectful classroom environment with lots of discussion. I find that including questions like “What do you think about that?... How does that make you feel?... Do you agree with that?... What’s the argument on the other side of that issue?” helps the students to reach beyond their own opinions and pre-conceived notions which lead to more meaningful reflections. I find that encouraging students to compare their life experiences to what we are studying helps them to discover new contexts to explore.

An open environment allows students “to bend.” In class we find what we share in common so that we may be comfortable sharing our differences without fear that we will be labeled. I like to ask my students how they are similar to a person with whom they interact or read about who appears to be very different. I ask my student- a Caucasian, upper-middle class, Jesuit educated, young woman from a traditional family what she has in common with a twelve year old African American middle school student raised by his grandmother because his father is in prison and his mother is sick. Has she ever been afraid of a bully? Has she ever doubted God? Has she ever wondered if she will fit in? The answer is yes. Our student is connected to that adolescent boy. Help her talk about it, help her write about it, help her face her prejudices. Help her see her image in him. Let that reflection ripple out and touch others. Let her reflection touch you. Learn from her. That is reflection.

This is reflection.

## 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 16<sup>th</sup> century founder of the Jesuit Order, and Dewey, a 20<sup>th</sup> 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: 400<sup>th</sup> 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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Reinert Center for  
Teaching Excellence  
Founded 1997

**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 faculty member at SLU.
- Nominees have conducted research on teaching and student learning. Examples of SoTL research are given above.
- Results of research were disseminated to peers through means such as publication, conference presentation or poster session, invited presentation, departmental or school symposium.
- Nominee has not previously received this award.
- Nominee is willing to present the research results at the CTE SoTL symposium to be held in Fall 2008.

*Self-nominations are acceptable. Nominees selected as finalists will be asked to submit more detail on the SoTL project to the selection committee. To nominate, please email or mail the following information to Mary Stephen Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence, ARC 224, [stephen@slu.edu](mailto:stephen@slu.edu) by **April 1**.*

1. Name(s) and contact information of person(s) nominated for the award. Please include email address and academic department.
2. Briefly describe the scholarly work in which the nominee has been involved. Provide sufficient detail to allow selection committee to determine whether or not to include nominee(s) in the group of finalists for the award. Finalists will be asked to provide additional detailed information on the project.
3. Name and contact information of person making nomination.

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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.

**CTE NOTEBOOK**



