

# CTE NOTEBOOK

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Fall 2007

## "Civility in the Classroom"

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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

Saint Louis University  
Academic Resources Center,  
Suite 224  
3840 Lindell Blvd.  
St. Louis, MO 63108



### Civility Stories

*William Tyler, Jr. Professor in the Communication Department offers examples of incivility in the classroom and shares lessons he has learned.*

#### Miss Self-Absorbed:

She was predictably ten minutes late to every class. She appeared quite impressed with herself, but seemingly oblivious to how disruptive she was to others. She was frequently absent, usually on the most important dates; difficult for other team members to work with because she could not stay focused. She was, however, a very creative thinker with surprising ideas that could be on strategy.

I dealt with her disruptive behavior by having several private discussions with her, insisting that she be at every class and on time. I pointed out that the syllabus clearly stated the ground rules, and that her grade would suffer if she did not follow the rules. Her behavior improved as a result of our talks (or because of my threats), but she still found it difficult to work with others.

The discussions revealed that her main problem was the desire to move on - to just get through the semester so she could transfer to another school and into another major (fashion design). I showed her how doing well in course work here, even though not specifically in her area of interest, would help prepare her for her next step. She seemed to get the message. She did transfer, and asked me for a reference. I told her that I could not, and had to again tell her why. Otherwise, how is she ever going to learn?

What did I learn? Try to get to the real cause of the problem. Communication is a two-way street, but sometimes you have to dig for the real story

#### Mr. Importance:

Quite disruptive in class, talked with other students during lectures, seemed to be inattentive, and was frequently absent. Showed interest in topics in class, but tended to hold his own little "sessions" with a select group of students. Initially, I tried separating them, having them change seats, but that got old because I would have to do it every class. I challenged him with questions about the subjects being discussed, but he was quite good at redirecting conversations. He had the attitude of "I really don't have to be here" as if he were doing me and the rest of the class a favor by showing up. He wasn't being confrontational, just frustrating.

*(Continued on Page 3)*



## From the Director

“Just because everything is different doesn’t mean that anything has changed.” Irene Peter

Welcome to a new academic year. In many ways, the quotation captures much of the essence of what I have to share with you in this first column of fall 2007. There have been many changes in the Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence over the summer, but the Center’s core mission and the staff’s dedication to providing services to enhance teaching at Saint Louis University have not changed. What has changed provides the Center with new opportunities and some new challenges. The changes encompass staff, physical location, and services.

In mid-August, the Center welcomed Mark Pousson as the new program director for service learning. Mark has worked as a counselor in Student Health & Counseling Services for the past seven years. He earned two master’s degrees; one in education, and the other in social work. Mark has taught as an adjunct at SLU and at Aquinas Institute for many years. He is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in higher education. Mark will work closely with Bobby Wassel in Student Development, faculty fellow Mary Domahidy, service learning intern Meredith Hoog and the service learning advisory board to promote service learning on campus and to provide resources and assistance to faculty and teaching assistants interested in integrating service into their curricula.

We are also pleased to welcome the Blackboard support team (formerly WebCT) consisting of Kim Scharringhausen and Ted Rubright to the staff of the Center for Teaching Excellence. Previously Kim and Ted were part of the Information Technology Services (ITS) staff. They will work closely as part of a team led by Sandy Gambill, our program director for learning technologies, to enable the Center to increase services currently offered supporting the integration of learning technologies into teaching. These services include instructional design assistance, determination of when and what technologies to use in teaching, building courses in Blackboard, and designing instructional websites. The team will also offer regularly scheduled Blackboard training sessions. Ted and Kim will move from DesPeres Hall to the Academic Resource Center in early September. Many Blackboard training sessions will be held in DesPeres Hall.

August was a busy time for the Center as we moved temporarily from our home of seven years in Verhaegen Hall to the second floor of the Academic Resource Center which is located between Bannister House and Crazy Bowls and Wraps on Lindell Blvd. While we no longer have our technology and learning lab, we will not let that impact the number and type programs and services that we offer. We will use spaces throughout campus for our many programs, and anticipate our staff will travel more often to your location for consultations. Our fall schedule of Effective Teaching Seminars is included in this newsletter, and you will note that the majority of these seminars will take place in the Knight’s Room of the Pius Library.

During this fall semester, the Center will continue to commemorate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the graduate resource room, and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the evolution of the resource room into the Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence. Our anniversary speakers’ series is continuing and details on the first two speakers can be found in this newsletter. During the current academic year, the Center’s advisory board will use the results of visioning sessions held last spring with Center stakeholders to develop a new 5 year strategic plan for the Center.

With one exception, the phone numbers for the Center staff, including Ted and Kim have not changed. Mark Pousson can be reached at 977-4214. We have also added a dedicated extension for Blackboard support (977-2252). You can keep up to date with all our programs and services through our website, <http://cte.slu.edu>. We hope you will find that while much is different for the Center, our dedication to assisting you in your role of teachers has not changed.

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I dealt with it by not only having private discussions with him, but with members of his little "group." I found that the group members did not appreciate his behavior either, and welcomed my intercession. He was always civil and apologetic when we talked, and accepting of criticism, vowing to improve. I warned him of the consequences, but things did not change much. He failed the course. It was the only message that carried any weight with him.

Lesson learned? Confront the problem head-on, and be prepared to follow through. You aren't really helping a student by letting him get by.

### **Unregistered guests**

Usually, not a big problem, but I thought you might appreciate these little scenes. In the past, students have brought babies and pet dogs. Sometimes I'm okay with that, but not too often. One girl even brought her boyfriend to class a number of times, not a student here (her transportation). That was okay, too, as long as he showed some interest in the class. He put his head down on the desk one time, and I told the girl he was not welcome from then on.

What I learned? Give a little when it does no harm. Be human. I do not encourage uninvited guests, but I occasionally shrug it off. It seems to get students to relax, and open up. They are more open to learning when they are comfortable being taught.

### **Mr. Macho**

He probably provided me with the most difficult challenge in my fourteen years here. It was the National Student Advertising Competition class, and the "client" was Hallmark. The target audience (consumer) for this product, of course, is over 90% female. The class members, however, were evenly split - half male, half female. Greeting cards, like the female species, are all about relationships - sharing feelings and experiences. The women students openly and actively engaged in class discussions. The guys, however, found it difficult, and often would joke among themselves about the ideas and the emotions being shared. The females would get quite upset, and to their credit would often confront the males on their insensitivity - prompting every class to become a "sensitivity session." Some of this exchange was beneficial, for it made the entire project more interesting and more challenging. The relationship differences are very real, and worth exploring.

However, the real difficulty centered on one student's attitude - the posturing and bullying tactics of a big, muscular rugby player who evidently just did not "get it." He made it difficult for the other male students to "show their feminine side." He could not (or would not) understand why women are so open to one another in sharing personal feelings, and why the female students would get so uptight and upset with his views and his ways of expressing them. He felt the girls were being too fragile and thin-skinned. He was the classic male chauvinist. Absolutely.

How to deal with the problem! First, I had a string of private discussions with him, pointing out that his attitude and his approach to solutions were going to cause him considerable difficulty in the business world and, indeed, in his social life. He just couldn't see it, couldn't accept it, saying that he had been a leader throughout his high school years (quarterback on the winning football team) and felt he was respected and well liked by all. I pointed out that he was proving to be a disaster for our team, and that his insensitive behavior was unacceptable -that if things did not change, he could not remain on the team.

Things did not change, and I kicked him off the team. However, I also recognized that he was a strong independent thinker, had good ideas, and was very creative in solving many problems. I had seen this side of him in an earlier class that I had taught. I did not feel that I could jeopardize his academic standing by outright dismissal, so I got his course registration changed to an independent study, and had him create a portfolio of several advertising campaigns. Working independently, he excelled. But I continued to pressure him to realize his personality problems and deal with them, and to seek counsel. He accepted my criticism as constructive, and claimed to understand and promised to look beyond the mirror at his character. I have not heard from him since he graduated, so I don't know if he learned anything from this experience. But the Hallmark team, minus Mr. Macho, went on to win second place in district competition. And the "sensitivity sessions" held each class period were much more agreeable and productive.

What did I learn? I learned to confront the problem without being confrontational; and that once recognizing that a bad seed is *(Continued on page 7)*



Incivility in the Academy: Broken Windows in the Classroom  
Beth Hill, Ph.D., Program Director  
for Teaching Effectiveness

Are you familiar with the article entitled Broken Windows by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling (<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/prem/198203/broken-windows>) published in 1982? Wilson and Kelling explored the relationship between police and neighborhood safety. Their findings were that the presence of police walking the streets helped the local citizens feel safer in their neighborhoods whether or not the crime rate went down; and one way to keep the crime rate down is to care about the neighborhood. In essence, fix the broken windows in buildings.

When looking for articles on-line to learn more about civility in the classroom, I bumped into the above article. What does the broken windows theory have to do with incivility in the classroom? Consider what we now characterize as signs of incivility: surfing the web during lecture, text messaging during lecture, checking email during lecture, answering one's cell phone during lecture. What is the broken window in this scenario? Is it the laptop and the cell phone? Can we easily eliminate these two forms of modern technology from the classroom? So what else could be broken? What else might need attention? Consider that the mode of teaching, i.e. lecturing, could be the broken window that needs repair.

In an article by Meyers, Bender, Hill and Thomas (2006) entitled How Do Faculty Experience and Respond to Classroom Conflict (retrieved 7/6/2007 from <http://www.isetl.org/ijthe/>), the authors offer descriptive data showing the correlation between the professors' choice of teaching methods, their demeanor, and how they respond to challenging situations to the levels of conflict in the classroom (2006, p.180).

Using a national sample of 226 faculty members, the authors determined that "the use of lecture correlated directly with inattentive classroom conflict (2006, p. 182)." The broken window may be the disconnection between the student and faculty member. Again, from the Meyers, et al., article, "using discussion or active learning related inversely with inattentive classroom conflict (2006, p. 182)." Furthermore, "...instructors who conveyed respect, focused on stu-

dents' feelings, ensured meaningful class goals, engaged in critical self-examination, and involved students when resolving disagreements had fewer inattentive conflicts as well (2006, p. 185)."

Applying the broken windows theory to issues of classroom civility may be an issue of apples and oranges from the reader's point of view. However, consider that a broken window suggests lack of caring from a responsible owner or overseer. The owner may in fact care about his or her building and the fact that there is a broken window, but the overriding objective is to get the widget manufactured. The practice of lecturing, of getting the objectives covered for the day, may not allow instructors "the time needed to resolve or grapple with problems at hand (2006, p. 185)." Consequently, for the sake of the subject matter, the instructor may ignore problems or simply give in to the behavior (2006, p. 185). These problems do not go away and may continue to multiply, much like graffiti on a subway wall. "As Nathan Glazer has written, the proliferation of graffiti, even when not obscene, confronts the subway rider with the 'inescapable knowledge that the environment he must endure for an hour or more a day is uncontrolled and uncontrollable, and that anyone can invade it to do whatever damage and mischief the mind suggests (1982, p. 4)." Comparing apples with oranges? Consider the last time someone went to sleep in your lecture hall and you chose to ignore the behavior? How long did it take for an epidemic of heads-on-desk to begin?

Applying the theory of broken windows, how do you fix the problem of incivility in the classroom? Outlaw laptops? Check cell phones at the door? Consider instead building alliances with your students, know their names, incorporate small group learning in large lecture halls, have open discussions, give students more responsibility for their own learning, and ask yourself the question: Did the students get the information just because I covered it? Research shows that millennial students want to be plugged in. No doubt lecturing is an efficient way to cover the subject matter, but it does not demand that the students plug into the material. If you would like to learn more about how to incorporate interactive strategies into your classroom teaching methods, contact the Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence, 977-3944 or email us at <http://cte.slu.edu>.

## Principles for Saint Louis University's Learning Community\*\*

*The standards listed below were created and proposed by the Ad Hoc Civility in the Classroom subcommittee of the Undergraduate Initiatives Committee with appreciation of COPS Behavioral Standards Code*

The purpose of these principles is to create an educational climate of excellence and civility that is rooted in the principles of the Jesuit, Catholic tradition. These principles challenge all members of our learning community to strive for excellence, to become men and women for others, to integrate classroom and out-of-classroom learning, to develop their talents through discovery and reflection, and to be concerned for each person (cura personalis). All members of the university community are expected to contribute to the development and sustainability of community through word and action. Our community is characterized by respect for the dignity of others, honesty, and the pursuit of truth. These principles are created to ensure the rights and privileges of all and to preserve the integrity of our learning community.

### Scholarship and Knowledge

Contribute to an environment that promotes the creation and exchange of knowledge.

### Intellectual Inquiry and Communication

Demonstrate a commitment to learning and the personal growth of one's self and others. Take responsibility for one's own words and actions and approach any conflicts in a spirit of mutual cooperation.

### Community Building

Show openness, compassion, and respect for others in order to promote the common good.

### Leadership and Service

Assume an active role in sustaining the learning community.

### Spirituality and Values

Value the whole person (yourself and others) by practicing integrity in your work and relationships.

\*\*Principles are pending final review by the University and SGA

### **The CTE Welcomes New Staff!**

**Mark Poussan**

**Ted Rubright**

**Kim Scharringhausen**

### *Introducing New Graduate Assistants at the CTE*

*Cathryn Blue is a master's candidate in the Psychology Department. Her concentration is in social experimental psychology.*

*Lauren Qualy is a doctoral student in the Counseling and Family Therapy Department.*



## ENHANCING CIVILITY THROUGH THE SYLLABUS CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

*Below is an excerpt from a CTE Conversation on Classroom Civility, March 2007*

We affirm faculty's right to set their own policies with regard to the below issues. The purpose of the below suggestions are not to define the policy, but rather to eliminate conflicting meanings about classroom behavior that decrease instructors' and students' ability to work and learn together.

### **To reduce the propensity for incivility, consider having on your syllabus:**

- Office hours, response time, contact information
- Course objectives and connection to the 5 dimensions.
- Text and reading materials
- Policies
  - Academic Integrity
  - Disability Services
  - University Code of Civility (TBD)
  - Issues below as deemed appropriate.
- Brief description of assignments
- (Tentative) Course schedule

### **What Do You Expect?**

- I. Statement of University Code of Civility
  - A. Students should feel free to invoke the code if their education is affected.
  - B. Faculty have the right to set their own policies with regards to the below areas.
- II. Mobile Communication Devices (e.g., cell phones, PDA's, blackberries, Ipods, Bluetooth, laptops)
  - A. Clearly identify appropriate pedagogical use of mobile technology.
  - B. Identify range of approved use in class (none, emergency, continuous)
  - C. Identify how technology may be used. For example, if expecting emergency phone call, notify professor at beginning of class. Please step outside.

- III. Expectations for verbal and nonverbal communication between classmates and professor.
  - A. Define disrespectful communication with faculty and students, including aggressively challenging faculty.
  - B. Define dominating conversations.
  - C. Delineate consequences of above actions.
- IV. Presence in Classroom
  - A. Clearly state the attendance policy, consequences, and any extenuating circumstances.
  - B. State that the instructor's record is the official record. Student should notify the instructor if they arrive late.
  - C. Define what is tardy vs. absent (e.g., 5 minutes).
  - D. Define appropriate situations for leaving and returning to the classroom.
  - E. Request students refrain from leave taking behaviors (putting papers away, etc.) until class is dismissed.
  - F. Request that students sustain focus upon the course (e.g., avoid sleeping, reading materials unrelated to course content or classroom activities).
  - G. Define consequences of the above actions.
- V. Response Time
  - A. Define when students can expect assignments and exams to be returned to them.
  - B. Define when students can expect a response to emails/phone calls.
- VI. Grading and Exams
  - A. Include grading scale and due dates.
  - B. Provide percentage breakdown for final grading scale
  - C. Define or provide examples of A, etc. work
  - D. Clearly articulate a policy for late work.
  - E. State your policy for make-up exams or moving exams.
  - F. Define what time exams will start and end (so students don't show up 1 hour

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into a 2 hour final).

- G. Define when and how you will discuss questions about an exam or other work (e.g., wait 24 hours, written responses via email, student needs to provide evidence of inappropriate grading, date by which students must see you to discuss the work).

- VII. Assistance - List the resources available to help the student succeed (e.g., writing center, office hours, student educational service, counseling).

(Continued from page 3)

going to sprout and spread its poison, the best thing to do is to remove it. The analogy may be a bit over the top, but sometimes circumstances call for action that seems a bit drastic, as well. Be sensitive to a problem and be willing to act for the benefit of the team. Above all - listen, learn, and communicate. Also, it is extremely important to make sure students know your rules at the beginning of every semester. If it is in the syllabus, and they have registered for the class, you have a binding contract with each student.

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Focus on Teaching and Technology:  
A Regional Conference  
Learning: Impact and Evidence

November 1-2, 2007 on the University of Missouri - St. Louis Campus

Categories for presentations:

- Research
- Instruction
- Assessment
- Administration
- Community Engagement

Sample Topics

- Using technology to collect and share assessment outcomes
- Creating a supportive environment for a diverse student body
- Integrating web-based resources
- Social networking to enhance student learning

Proposals due September 21, 2007

View prior conference topics and submit proposals at [www.umsl.edu/ctl](http://www.umsl.edu/ctl)

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The Teaching Professor Conference

May 16-18, 2008

Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center  
Kissimmee, FL

The goal of the conference is to produce substantive work upon which teaching professors can act as change agents for building legitimacy, scholarship, and respect for their roles on campuses and in society

For more information go to:

<http://www.teachingprofessor.com/conference/proposals.html>

Interested in finding out what civility is like in your classroom?

Check out *A Question of Civility: Expectations for Classroom Behavior*

In *The ToolBox*, Volume IV, Issue 6  
November-December 2006

Back issues of *The ToolBox* can be found at [www.indwes.edu/TheToolBox](http://www.indwes.edu/TheToolBox)

## Effective Teaching Seminar Fall 2007 Schedule

September 4 @ 1:00p.m. September 7 @ 1:00p.m. ARC Lower Level 017	Orientation to CTE for New Certificate Participants
September 4 @ 1:30p.m. September 7 @ 1:30p.m. ARC Lower Level 017	Teaching Difficult Topics Jonathan Smith, American Studies
October 2 @ 1:30 p.m. October 5 @ 1:30 p.m. Knight's Room, Pius Library	Universal Instructional Design Karen Myers, Leadership & Higher Ed
October 16 @ 1:30 p.m. October 19 @ 1:30 p.m. Knight's Room, Pius Library	Integrative Learning Beth Hill, Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence
October 30 @ 1:30 p.m. Knight's Room, Pius Library	Learning Styles Elizabeth Zeibig, School of Allied Health
November 6 @ 1:30 p.m. & November 9 @ 1:30 p.m. Knight's Room, Pius Library	Interactive Lecturing Paaige Turner, Communication <b>Teaching Portfolio Open Lab Session</b> ( <i>immediately preceding the session. approx. 12:00—1:30 pm</i> )
November 16	<b>Deadline for completion of Portfolios for the December Certificate</b>
November 27 @ 1:30 p.m. November 30 @ 1:30 p.m. Knight's Room, Pius Library	Total University Citizen Bill Siler, Physical Therapy

## Fall Speakers Series\*

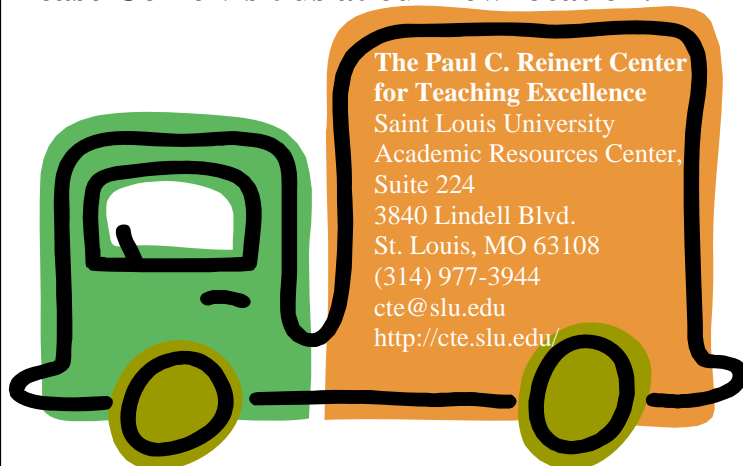
"The Terms of Engagement:  
Service Learning"  
Robert Bringle, Ph.D.,  
Director, Center for Service  
and Learning; Chancellor's  
Professor of Psychology and  
Philanthropic Studies  
Indiana University-Purdue  
University, Indianapolis  
September 14  
2:00 – 3:30 p.m.  
Location: Cook Hall  
Auditorium

"Conducting and Applying the  
Scholarship of Teaching and  
Learning (SoTL): Informing  
our Practice as Teachers"  
Kathleen McKinney, Ph.D.,  
Cross Endowed Chair in the  
Scholarship of Teaching and  
Learning (SoTL),  
Professor of Sociology, Illinois  
State University  
September 28:  
9:00 – 11:00 a.m.  
Location: Knight's Room  
Pius Library

\*Counts as an effective teaching  
seminar

## We've Moved!

Please Come visit us at our new location!



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