

VVINSIDER

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REGISTRATION HOURS FOR SEPTEMBER

Fall registration hours are scheduled as follows:

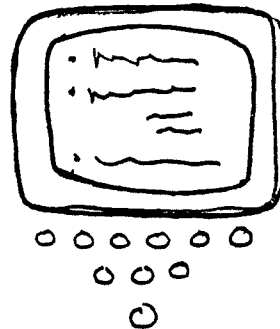
September 2 to September 4	8:00 am to 6:00 pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday
September 5, 12, 19, and 26	8:00 am to 5:00 pm Fridays
September 8 to September 25	8:00 am to 7:00 pm Monday to Thursday
September 13 and September 20	9:00 am to 3:00 pm Saturdays

LG

FROM COMPUTER SERVICES

Would any person(s) using the Word Processing (MUSE/WORDMARC) program on our Prime Computers, please contact Jim Chivas at the Langara computing centre at 324-5390!

JC



FASHION ARTS PROGRAM

Congratulations to Marva Newnes, a student in the VCC/CE Fashion Arts Program, who won both the second and fourth prize in the recent Fashion Design Contest sponsored by IKEA and Woman to Woman Magazine.

Marva has just completed the second level courses in Fashion Design, Pattern Making, and Garment Construction. Her two winning designs were selected from 475 entries in this province-wide contest.

DO

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

You can not do a kindness too soon,
for you never know how soon it will be too late!





INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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PASSION AND PEDAGOGY

We were discussing Socrates' conversation with Glaucon about qualities of a good thinker. Socrates used the word "passion" frequently—"passion for truth," "passion for the whole of reality," "one whose passions flow toward knowledge." It struck some of my students as odd that such a term as "passion" should be used in connection with academic learning. I know it struck them, because as I got more and more excited in talking about Socrates' views—my arms flailing in the air, my voice rising to a sports-fan screech level to make the point that one could not really learn without passion—there were a few quizzical smiles; and for this class of 40 freshmen studying Plato's *Republic*, that amounted to a riot of reaction.

We went on to notice that in the very next passage, Socrates discussed the importance of a good memory. He said good thinkers have good memories. Knowing Socrates well enough by now, several students were at least able to suggest that passion and a good memory must somehow be connected in Socrates' thinking. I agreed. To pursue it further, I asked why some of them could remember amazing arrays of complicated sports statistics going back several years and could not remember that it was Polemarchus rather than Glaucon who believed that justice is a matter of helping your friends and harming your enemies. It did not take us long to agree that it is much easier to remember something one gets worked up about, even easier to understand it, than to remember something unexciting like who said what about morality and justice. I suggested that it might have something to do with heartbeat, muscle tension, and rate of breathing. Those quizzical smiles quickly vanished. The bell rang, several students woke up, others stretched and yawned, a few maintained a puzzled look; I gathered my materials, took a deep breath, and accompanied my thumping heart out of there.

What does it take? It has not been until recently that I have been willing to admit that my commanding voice and marvelous explanations are just not sufficient to rouse students to a fever pitch of passion for the truth. Now I am convinced that it is *their* passion (not just mine) that is the key. I am convinced that Socrates is right—passion is often the missing ingredient in their learning and remembering.

If teaching is an art (and let us agree that it is in some respects), I believe we need the imagination of the artist as well as the knowledge of the subjects we teach to be able to meet the challenges of a student body largely without passion for learning and to be able to come up with some new approaches to teaching. For we must be able, not only to understand what interests and excites students, but to teach in a manner that does in fact interest and excite them. You may feel that it is not your job to do this. You spent the time and exerted the will to learn, your students should do the same. And if they don't think it's worth the effort, they should pay the penalty.

I would agree except for the fact that it is sometimes easy to forget how some of us came by our own sense of urgency about the things we studied. For some of us there were teachers "back there" whose passion for learning was demonstrable and contagious. They went beyond the academic "slow-game"; they inflamed the mind, so that for those few crucial moments it danced with excitement. And for us there was no going back. I say that some of us experienced that. I include myself. Others, I am sure, had no need of it. They were "blessed" early—was it a gift of nature, a gift of parents? For some reason they had a passion for knowledge, and they remembered well. These teachers, no doubt, will find it hard to sympathize with my passive, dull students. So maybe it takes one to know one.

I am not willing to write-off the drowsy, yawning, bleary-eyed freshmen in my general education classes. They sit before me like stumps on logs. They don't respond to questions. They refuse to read. They cannot write. I know that many of them will be gone in another semester or two, victims, we say, of a poor public education. But I do not believe that remediation is the entire answer. I can also criticize them and scold them, but that doesn't work. The threat and pressure of daily quizzes is another approach. I doubt that the effect is lasting. They will not remember well.

What I want before they go is a shot at their cardiovascular systems and their lungs. I want them for once to get passionate about an idea and to see what it does to their minds. I am persuaded by my own early experiences and by some recent observations that understanding and recall in students can be dramatically



improved when the heart beats rapidly and the lungs take in gobs of air. I know you can't teach passion. The contagion of passion is almost always an interpersonal event, a moment when the person-with-others experiences a dramatic change of attitude because of a strange new emotional intensity about an issue, an idea, a fact.

Our department now stages debates each semester. They are deliberate attempts at "art" in the service of pedagogy. We sat down last year and fought frustration with imagination. "How can we turn our students on to philosophical ideas? Let's do something that combines philosophical thinking with drama, or if not drama at a high level, at least a raucous atmosphere." We decided to choose three positions on a topic—say "Is There Life After Death?"—put on our academic robes, march into the Clark Room, and (following a structured debate format, stating our initial positions from prepared manuscripts, followed by rebuttals) proceed to yell at each other, insult each other, get the crowd to laugh at our opponents, boo and hiss them, and cheer when one of us makes a good point.

At the first debate, the audience (our PHI 110 students are required to attend) got a chance at the end to ask questions or make comments. The atmosphere was still charged. I was consigned to hell twice and once roundly booed when I said one of my opponents didn't mind getting thrown out of the Garden of Eden, because it was obvious he had eaten a lot more than just fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

What have the rowdiness, the flying ad hominem and the humorous remarks got to do with thinking clearly? I'm sure some of you react negatively. "Knowledge is supposed to be its own excitement. Gentleness of tone reflects a genteel spirit." It seems to me that some case can be made for the association of good manners and clear thinking, but it is not a case I should like to make for my general education students. They have too long associated cleverness with quietness, deep-thinking with dull tones. I should like them to experience those exciting moments when a flesh and bone human being "slam dunks" an idea right over the outstretched objections of an opponent—and, if necessary, rakes him across the face going down. I want the heart to race and a yell to go up for that.

Our debates are intended to stimulate passion, or at least to *associate* it with vital thinking. We prepare the students for the debate by telling them it is expected that they will demonstrate their feelings about what is being said. For that to happen, the debaters themselves must be willing to "sacrifice" their proud egos to taunts, to ridicule, to (somewhat) undeserved hostility. But it works. It works, at least, for that event. We don't want it to stop there, however, for the purpose of the debate is to give us talking-points for our classes and, perhaps even more important, to take the atmosphere of the debate back into the classroom.

I cannot speak for the others, but what I have found is that students do get involved—they discuss the issue with considerable clarity, and they remember well. The carry-over effect of the debate is there for the using in the classroom. But, alas, after a few days of referring to it, I leave the topic and settle back into the assignments. This is disturbing because my fondest hope for the debates is that they will provide a basis for changing both my approach to teaching and the student's approach to listening and speaking.

So it's back to booming voice and marvelous explanations. And the students go back to confusing emotion with ideas. Yes, for the irony is that when one cannot get excited about ideas, one runs a very great risk of not being able to separate emotion from thought. In the confusion, one says, "Well, I'm not excited about this. It must not be important."

On the other hand, if there is passion for the ideas, one can more clearly see when extraneous matters intrude on the ideas. It is clear to me from our debate experiences that when one of us attacks another's person (ad hominem) and not his ideas, the audience reacts correctly. They laugh and boo, but they separate the man wounded from his position. Passion does that. It clarifies the ideas to the point of their having to be separated from feeling.

So the irony of the debate, one that I am trying to sustain in the classroom, is that the more raucous the atmosphere and the more intense people become, the less chance there is of confusing lack of feeling with lack of meaning or of confusing pleasing looks with pleasing reasoning.

To separate passion from thought, one must be passionate.

Bob Miller
Eastern Kentucky University

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

. . . oops . . . The closing date for the position of DIVISION CHAIRMAN, Industrial/Technical Division at VVI was erroneously printed as July 25, 1986 in a recent edition of the VVInsider. Actually there was another month before the position closed for applications thus please note that this position will remain open for application until August 25, 1986!

Capilano College requires a DEAN OF INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES. The commencement date is January 1987 and applications will be accepted until 4:00 pm on September 5, 1986. Apply to the Personnel Department, Capilano College, 2055 Purcell Way, North Vancouver, B.C., V7J 3H5. Please be sure to quote Competition number 86-124-A.

VCC/Continuing Education requires a WORK EXPERIENCE COUNSELLOR in the Career Awareness Program located at VVI. The start date is immediately and this is a term appointment.

VCC/Continuing Education requires PART-TIME COMMERCIAL ART INSTRUCTORS. The closing date is August 8, 1986.

NEW AUDIO/VISUAL IN THE LIBRARY

Stalking the Silent Thief - Osteoporosis
CAD/CAM Technology - 6 FS/6 Cassettes

UPCOMING COLLEGE BOARD MEETINGS

College Board Meetings in the Central Administration offices have been scheduled for August as follows:

Education and Student Services Committee, Wednesday, August 13 at 4:30 pm

Administration Committee, Tuesday, August 19 at 4:00 pm

College Board, Wednesday, August 27 at 7:00 pm

All the meetings are public, and employees and students are encouraged to attend.

HWR