

Friday @ the Center: March 31, 2006



Welcome to Spring Quarter!

The cherry trees are blooming, soon students will appear wearing an amazing assortment of spring attire, and will those letters to the editor in the *Falcon* be far behind? Frisbees will proliferate while the “keep off the grass” signs are blithely ignored. Daylight Savings time dawns this Sunday. Don’t you love spring in Seattle? Why not make a spring quarter resolution to take part in at least one faculty development event this quarter? There **are** lots of opportunities for you to gather with your colleagues to share wisdom, resources, and inspiration.



Upcoming Events--Mark Your Calendars:

- **April 4:** There are few spots remaining for dinner and discussion of “Do Men and Women Really Learn Differently? Implications for Higher Education,” from 6 to 9 p.m., in Upper Gwinn, with Dr. John Medina. Contact Becky Crook at bcrook@spu.edu by 9 a.m. Monday.
- **Ongoing:** Book Circle 6, reading *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*, by Beverley Tatum, will be meeting every other Monday from 1 to 2 p.m. Contact me immediately if you’d like to join this group.
- **April 20:** Weter Lecture, with Dr. Margaret Diddams on “Martin Buber’s I and Thou.” 7:30 p.m.
- **May 16:** “Beginning in the Scholarship of Teaching,” faculty lunch and presentation by Dr. Bud Bouma, Professor of Biology, Calvin College. Noon.
- **May 18:** “Balancing the Personal and the Professional,” faculty women’s lunch and presentation by Dr. Debra Rienstra, Associate Professor of English, Calvin College. Noon.
- **June 12:** Final Mentor Dinner. Guest speaker: Dr. Les Steele. 7 p.m.
- **June 19-21:** Faculty Theology Mini-Courses. Watch for more information!
- **June 22-25:** Newer Faculty Retreat. Fort Casey Inn.



SPU 2006 Meyer Prize Nominee

The Lilly Fellows Network representatives, Dr. Les Steele and yours truly, are pleased to announce that Roger Feldman, Professor of Art, has been selected to be SPU nominee for the 2006 Arlin G. Meyer Prize, for his site-specific sculpture called “*Warheitstisch*” (Truth Table). The Meyer Prize is awarded annually to a fulltime faculty member from a college or university in the Lilly Fellows Program National Network for a work that highly exemplifies the practice of the Christian artistic vocation. This year’s prize will be given for the practice of the vocation of visual art. Each LFN school can nominate one artist for the national competition, and the award will be announced at the fall LFN annual conference. Roger’s sculpture was constructed this past summer in the grounds of a castle in Austria.



Teaching Tips: Leading Discussions

Nothing can get your class off to a better start during the first week than a lively discussion that engages the full class. Student learning is enhanced by a well-run discussion because it prompts students to become actively involved and interested in the material. But you can’t just show up

and vaguely announce, "Let's have a discussion." Students need guidance in participating—both as speakers and active listeners. Here are a few tips for leading effective discussions:

- Start with a clearly defined and provocative question that necessitates synthesizing a lot of information and opinions. Let the students think about the issue in silence for a few minutes, or have them students write for three minutes on the question so that they all have an initial point of view and something to say.
- Keep your eyes on the entire class and encourage participation from those at opposite locations within the classroom. Occasionally break eye contact with the student who is talking and look at other students.
- Avoid calling on those whose body language communicates they are clearly not engaged - it will only stifle their later participation. Instead talk with them individually after class, assess, and encourage.
- Don't respond to everything that is said. Instead, encourage other students to reflect and respond to what has been said.
- If one student talks too long, or goes off the topic, get another student involved and steer the discussion back in the right direction.
- Always keep moving around the room; it's best not to stand in the front-center.
- If a student asks a question during the discussion, redirect the question back to the class. Don't stop and lecture in response.
- Don't directly criticize an "incorrect" student response, or provide the "best" answer. Instead clarify in a non-threatening way, and perhaps ask if someone else "sees it another way."
- As the class generates ideas and points of view, record key points on the blackboard.
- Occasionally stop and summarize where the discussion is at and what still needs to be covered.
- Close a discussion by providing a summary of the key issues and by connecting the outcome of the discussion to the course objectives and the next assignment or topic.

Adapted from *The Professor in the Classroom* and "Tip of the Week," from Faculty Development Associates. See <http://www.developfaculty.com/tips.html> for more advice on leading lectures.

Happy Teaching!

Susan

Susan VanZanten Gallagher
Professor of English
Director, Center for Scholarship and Faculty Development