

Friday @ the Center: September 22, 2006

Last Call for Joining a Book Circle

Why not commit to reading at least one book not on any of your syllabi this quarter? Join a faculty book circle meeting once a month to discuss a book provided by the Center. Book Circle 1 will examine *The Art of Reading Scripture*, edited by Ellen Davis and Richard Hays—this fall's Presidential Forum speaker. A collection of essays from leading Biblical scholars, *The Art of Reading Scripture* outlines ways of reading and interpreting biblical texts that provide invaluable assistance in our task to provide a biblically centered education for our students. Several book circles read this book last year and found it approachable and educational. Book Circle 2 will consider *Gender and Grace*, by Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen. The subtitle of this cogently written and well-researched book says it all: *Love, Work, and Parenting in a Changing World*. Van Leeuwen's insights will provide much fodder for reflection on our own lives as well as ways to think about working effectively with both our male and female students. If you are interested in joining either of these Circles, please send me an email with your name, the book circle, and a list of times that you would be available to meet during a typical week during fall quarter. **Enroll today, Sept. 22, by 5 p.m.**

Getting Students to Read

Last year faculty development expert Barbara Walvoord introduced many of us to the idea of “first exposure.” Too often, students first encounter the material through a classroom lecture. Other times, we want them to read the material and then engage in a class discussion, but encounter blank faces when we ask a provocative question. It's hard to have a discussion when half the class either hasn't read the material, or did read it while also watching *American Idol* and don't remember a thing about it. Better learning occurs if students have first exposure to new material through a reading assignment that they complete and comprehend BEFORE they come to class. How can we help them do this? Walvoord suggests giving students a brief (one-paragraph) writing assignment related to the reading for the day. Students must bring two copies of the paragraph to class, leaving one at your desk as they enter the room. An instructor can then do any one of a number of activities that engage students in actively interacting with the material and drawing on their paragraph: an informal poll of positions taken, pairing students up to compare their answers, calling on selected students to read their answers, lecturing briefly and then asking students to revise their paragraph based upon what you've said, etc. The assumption is that by the end of the class, students will have more complete, sophisticated, or even more accurate answers to the question. That means you do not need to grade (or even read, necessarily) the paragraphs. Instead, you merely record that the paragraph was written and turned in. You also do not need to return these papers. Of course, reading some will give you some insight into what the students are grasping and what they are missing.

Grant of the Week: Sabbatical Coming Up?

Applying for a sabbatical next year and would like to take more than one quarter? The American Philosophical Society's Sabbatical Fellowships in the Humanities and Social Sciences may be for you. Funded by the Mellon Foundation, this fellowship is designed to supplement an awarded sabbatical or research leave. It is open to mid-career faculty who have been granted a sabbatical but for whom financial support from the home institution is available for only part of the year. Although sabbaticals for next year have not yet been approved, the application only requires a letter from Vice-President Les Steele affirming your eligibility for a sabbatical and

giving the date when final approval will be forthcoming. You are eligible if your doctoral degree was conferred no later than 1999 and no earlier than 1986. There are no restrictions on where the fellow resides. Tenure is for the academic year 2007-2008 or for the calendar year 2008. In May 2008, the fellows will participate in a two-day, all-expenses-paid symposium in Philadelphia to discuss their work. Applications and letters must be received by Oct. 15 (receipt deadline, not postmark deadline). For more information see <http://www.amphilsoc.org/grants/sabbatical.htm>.

Happy first day of school on Monday!



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