



## Friday @ the Center: September 29, 2006

### Book Circle Openings

This quarter's faculty book circles meeting each still have a few openings for participants. Book Circle 1, considering *The Art of Reading Scripture*, will meet on Thursday, Oct. 19, Nov. 9, and 30, from 12-1 p.m. Book Circle 2, discussing *Gender and Grace*, will meet on Monday, Oct. 16, 30, Nov. 13, and 27, from 1-2 p.m. If you are interested in receiving a free copy of either book and joining in the discussion, please contact me as soon as possible.

### Race and Pedagogy Brown Bag Lunch

What does race have to do with pedagogy? Several SPU faculty and staff attended the recent national conference at UPS called "Race and Pedagogy." Among the keynote speakers were Cornel West and Beverley Tatum. Bring your lunch to the Library Seminar Room on Oct. 10, from 12 to 1, to hear a panel discuss the insights they gained at this conference. Coffee and tea will be provided. Sponsored by the Diversity Committee and the Center for Scholarship and Faculty Development.

### Improvising Discussions

"Let's talk about [fill in the blank]," you say cheerfully one morning in class. The students look at you blankly. "What did you think about what the textbook had to say about it?" Vacancy still greets you, except for Mr. Eager Beaver, whose hand, as always, shoots straight up in the air and waves about frantically. You wait 30 seconds, counting silently to yourself, but no one else volunteers an answer, and you know Mr. Beaver will have something to say, so you turn to him.

Class discussions can be effective strategies for facilitating learning, or they can be the bane of your existence. Here's a few ideas for improving discussions from Kansas State University's Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development: 1) Define the topic clearly, preferably in advance so students can think about this issues before coming to class, 2) Be prepared. It actually takes more work to prepare for a good discussion than it does to prepare a lecture, as you must be ready for a number of different directions that the discussion might take. To prepare, list specific questions, brainstorm issues that students might bring up, and outline possible answers or responses. 3) Center the discussion on a common experience. For lower-division students, try to use something from their own lives. A film clip, a reading, a lab experiment can also provide the common experience. 4) Your primary role is to facilitate—not to add more content or to expound on your own opinion. Listen, observe, let there be silence, post (on the board) what students are saying, request examples from other students, test consensus, and provide a conclusion or summary at the end of the discussion. 5) Clearly and often state the expectation and requirement for participation, including the impact participation has on grading. Next week: strategies to control Mr. Beaver.

## Grant of the Week: NEH Collaborative Research Grant

The National Endowment for the Humanities' Collaborative Research Grants support original research undertaken by a team of two or more scholars; or research coordinated by an individual scholar that, because of its scope or complexity, requires additional staff and resources beyond the individual's salary. Eligible projects include research that adds to knowledge and understanding in the humanities; conferences on topics of major importance in the humanities that will benefit ongoing research; translations into English of works that provide insight into the history, literature, philosophy, and artistic achievements of other cultures; and research that uses the knowledge, methods, and perspectives of the humanities to enhance understanding of science, technology, and medicine. These grants support full-time or part-time activities for periods of one to three years. Support is available for various combinations of scholars, consultants, and research assistants; project-related travel; field work; applications of information technology; and technical support and services. Awards range from \$25,000 to \$100,000 a year. **Deadline: Nov. 1**, for projects beginning July 2007. See <http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/collaborative.html>.

Enjoying the fall weather,



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