Statements of Teaching Philosophy
By 2016 Recipients

Robert Lee

Graziadio School of Business and Management

Doreen E. Shanahan

Graziadio School of Business and Management

John Buckingham

Graziadio School of Business and Management

Grant Nelson

School of Law

Paul Sparks

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Paul J. Contino

Seaver College

Jeffrey Schultz
Seaver College

Robert Lee

Assistant Professor of Accounting

Graziadio School of Business and Management

I am humbled and honored to receive the Howard A. White Teaching Excellence Award. My objective as an educator is to develop and stretch a student's mind so that they can apply the concepts they learn in the classroom to everyday business decisions. My advisor has taught me that a teacher is not someone who lectures and requires students to repeat information, but a teacher is someone who equips students to think for themselves. In an effort to accomplish this goal, I focus on challenging, motivating, and actively engaging students.

I challenge my students so they not only understand the core principles of accounting, but that they understand the intuition. The goal for every class I teach is that students leave with the ability to attack business issues with success and confidence. This requires me to challenge students and make sure they know why we are doing what we are doing. Many times I ask students the simple question, "why?" For example, in my managerial accounting class, we examine standard costs and operating performance measures. After learning the general model for variance analysis, I ask the students, "Why do we use the standard price for the direct materials quantity variance? Does it make sense intuitively?" I could easily just tell students to memorize the formula for the test and move on, but I want students to know why it works logically. It is rewarding for me to observe students challenge themselves to ask the deeper questions and firmly grasp the material.

In order for me to successfully motivate my students, I believe I must develop the relational aspect of teaching. I make every effort to get to know my students. I strive to provide each one with personal attention and to get to know their background and career aspirations. I believe that when students know that the instructor cares about their well-being, students will develop a certain level of trust and respect for the instructor. Trust allows me to motivate the students, pushing them to further heights and fostering accountability. This sense of trust encourages the students to willingly and actively participate. I have found that when I develop a healthy relationship with my students, they have put forth more effort, resulting in a more enriching learning environment.

Within the classroom, I try to create an environment that is conducive to learning and growth by actively engaging the students. The energy in the classroom must start with me and I believe that students will feed off of my enthusiasm. I also use different teaching techniques such as formal and informal lectures, group and interactive settings, and computer software

simulations to see the problem from multiple perspectives. I have found that students learn best when they are exposed to different teaching methods to ensure that the material is reinforced and firmly grasped. This variety ensures that no student is ignored and that each student has the opportunity to learn and to perform to his or her full potential. Additionally, I try to make the topic as relevant as possible while keep the learning principle intact. Rather than have the students memorize formulas and textbook problems, I prefer to challenge them with real-life exercises that will empower them and prepare them for their future careers. For example, when I teach relevant costs for decision making, I ask students to assume they are the managers of their company and must make business decisions for their firm based upon the firm's goals and resources. I also use software simulations where students can see the benefits and costs of their decisions, bringing the managerial role to life. The result is a more memorable experience and creates an engaging topic that opens the mind.

Lastly, I thoroughly enjoy teaching. I believe it is a privilege to be an educator and to be able to instill knowledge and power to students. I find it very rewarding to see students develop a passion about the material and a genuine desire to know more. Thank you for this great honor and award. I am blessed and thank God for giving me the opportunity to be a teacher.

Doreen E. Shanahan

Lecturer of Marketing

Graziadio School of Business and Management

I am deeply honored to receive the prestigious Howard A. White Teaching Excellence Award. As an award recipient, I have been asked to share my teaching philosophy. While there are many theorist that have shaped my approach, some mentioned in this essay, I am always interested in learning from other instructors' experiences. If you have a teaching method that you find particularly effective, I would enjoy the opportunity to learn from you: doreen.shanahan@pepperdine.edu.

My teaching philosophy has a singular aim: cultivating student self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) through orchestrating a learning process and space (Kolb & Kolb, 2005) that allows each student the opportunity to not only acquire course relevant knowledge and skills, but emerge confident in his/her capability to use that knowledge to achieve success. It is both inspiring and an honor to be a part of sharing in our students' educational journey.

> "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p.38).

Creating Learning Space
Students transform experience and thereby learn in a variety of ways based on their individual stage of development in critical reasoning, as well as cognitive preferences and learning styles. Individual situations, prior learning, cultural experiences, as well as generational differences also affect how students learn. The needs of working adults are different from those of traditional full-time students. Students differ in a myriad of ways — from each other as well as from the instructor. I believe that tailoring both the learning environment and materials in ways that maximize the opportunity for individual students to relate to them is key to fostering student self-efficacy.

I endeavor to foster critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning in my students by:
- using my enthusiasm, energy, and experience to create an enabling environment,
- setting clear learning objectives (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) and incorporating a variety of teaching and learning styles in the classroom,
- facilitating an open environment where students feel free to exchange ideas and opinions,
- using a variety of learning experiences to promote student interaction, including active learning and small group discussions,
- using class dialogues and collaborative projects to enable the development of social

capital in the classroom and prepare students for the reality of today's team-based organizations, and
- being a mentor and coach to my students, outside of class time, as they seek to apply what they are learning to advance business practice.

Experiential Learning
While various types of learning are important in business and management education, I favor experiential learning methods whereby students are able to gain applied skills as well as metacognition of its application. My passion for experiential learning is shared by many faculty at our business school who have collaborated to progress our school's client-based experiential learning program (E2B). Our E2B client-based projects enable students to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice. Given my practitioner background, I bring multiple perspectives—academic, management, and consultant—to the classroom, and use my business experience to illustrate concepts and provide tangible examples to enhance course material.

Adaptation through Assessment
Last, I use a variety of assessment techniques to address the multiple intelligences and learning styles of my students, and schedule several assessments during term so I can give my students ongoing feedback. This enables me to understand their background knowledge, comprehension of the material, and comfort with class environment and processes. This understanding allows me to make adjustments to meet student needs in a timely manner.

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John Buckingham

Practitioner Faculty of Marketing

Graziadio School of Business and Management

I am so honored to receive the 2016 Howard A. White Teaching Award for Excellence!

Pepperdine has given me the opportunity to turn my life time passion and energy for teaching into a reality.

My teaching philosophy centers upon teaching students to learn to think and communicate rather than to memorize!

It also centers upon my goal to facilitate this thinking and learning rather than inserting myself as the ultimate knowledge lecturer. No lecturing in my class!

My philosophy revolves around the concept that there is no right answer during class debate and discussion….rather a well-supported argument to articulate a point of view and then defend it in the face of disagreement or alternative points of view from student peers.

My approach and style are customer centric: I am available for all my students and former students 24/7. I remain their mentor always!

My ultimate teaching goal from improved thinking is to embolden student confidence in themselves as leaders and decision makers, which is the key to success in the business world.

Grant Nelson

William H. Rehnquist Professor of Law

School of Law

I feel both honored and humbled to receive the Howard A. White Award for Teaching Excellence. Law school teaching has been at the core of my professional existence for almost fifty years. During this time I have been privileged to have taught at six law schools. In each, success and excellence in the classroom have been my constant goal. I hope I have been at least partially successful in achieving that goal. What follows are several observations concerning law school teaching.

The Crucial Role of Preparation

To this day, during the two or three hours before class I experience both anxiety and anticipation. Indeed, fifty years of teaching have not changed those feelings. If the class is successful, I leave the classroom both euphoric and grateful that I chose the law teaching profession. If the class is disappointing, there is always the next day to rectify the situation.

Intense preparation is absolutely crucial no matter how frequently I have taught any particular material. My class notes are the starting point and, invariably, during each preparation, new insights will arise and be shared with the class. Sometimes those insights will come from students during or after class. When this occurs, I will frequently include them in my notes for future use. My strong recommendation is to block out at least two hours before class and to permit little in the way of extraneous interruptions during that period. I remember well several of my law school professors who would discourage student or administrative contact during his or her preparation time. Indeed, one of them gruffly refused to talk with me prior to class. It almost as if he had to "get into the zone" and stay that way until he walked into class. Of course I was upset at the time and believe that one should handle those interruptions in a much less arbitrary and gentler fashion. Nevertheless, he was an outstanding teacher who frequently taught the entire class session without access to his notes. Over the years my respect for his preparation and class performance has risen exponentially.

A few days ago I experienced a situation that only reinforces my prior comments. My spouse had a necessary medical appointment and it was important that I accompany her. The problem was that the appointment was only an hour before I was scheduled to teach. Even though I thought I had prepared adequately the night before, I walked into my class significantly distracted. Consequently the class was less successful than I would have liked. Words and ideas came less fluently and precisely than when I spend a substantial block of preparation time immediately prior to class. It's almost as if "being zoned in" for me is a condition precedent to

successful teaching.

The Law Professor in the Classroom

Law professors of my generation were taught that the "Socratic method" of teaching law was the ideal. When a teacher called on a student (who was almost never a volunteer), he or she would be grilled by a series of questions. Such teachers only infrequently added a declarative statement about the law. Students who were unprepared were sometimes kicked out of class. This method was said to develop the analytical skills to "think like a lawyer." Often, however, students simply become disenchanted and learned the law on their own in the law library. In my case I can remember being called in one first year class and giving an unsatisfactory answer. The professor's response was "Mr. Nelson, what are you doing in law school? Needless to say I was very upset, but luckily stayed in school.

Over the years, with much experimentation, I have settled on what could be called a "semi - Socratic" teaching method. I use a series of questions, answered by volunteers. Such students can have their course grade raised modestly by high quality class participation. During this process, I also frequently lecture to summarize and to provide a bridge to new legal issues. Usually, at least 40-50% of the class take part in this process. I do not embarrass a student when his or her answer is incorrect or analytically flawed. I try at all times to eliminate fear and anxiety from the classroom. Once or twice I have heard an alumni lawyer tell me that "after being exposed to Professor X, no lawyer or judge ever instilled fear in me." I don't know how to react to such a perspective. Interestingly enough, exam quality has measurably improved in my last several decades of teaching.

Ultimately, enthusiasm for the subject is especially important and it is largely shaped by the teacher's personality. If a faculty member seems bored by certain material, undoubtedly so will the class frequently lose interest. Each day, students should sense that the class hour is the high point of the day for the professor. The professor should focus on the most difficult material – this encourages academic rigor and emphasizes the importance of the material. In short, this approach, properly used, produces students with strong analytical skills who are better prepared to confront the difficulties and demands of law practice.

The Crucial Role of Scholarship and Publication in Successful Teaching

Virtually every law faculty experiences debate and controversy about the role of scholarship in quality teaching. There are sometimes "outstanding" professors who do little scholarship and renowned legal scholars who are said to be weak teachers. While it may be true on any faculty that there a few professors who can be characterized in such a manner, this has always seemed to me to be a false dichotomy. I have found over the years, that when I teach out

of my own casebook or consider my articles in class, there is a self-confidence on my part and a class dynamic that is immeasurable and often dynamic. Students are inspired by those who have helped to shape the law through their scholarship. When courts and scholars rely on a professor's scholarship, that teacher's insights have a significant and meaningful impact on her students.

While a few teachers who eschew scholarship may be admired in the classroom, how much better teachers would they be if they had produced scholarship that had a significant role in shaping the law? Wouldn't their hard work on research and writing enhance their self-confidence and make their insights and ideas more acceptable to their students? Surely, the teacher who writes and publishes ultimately will be more effective and well- received as a professor than one who simply relies on the scholarship of others.

In the last analysis, faculty research and scholarship, of course, has another substantial justification. As legal academics we have a civic obligation to help shape and improve the law. Thus writing articles, treatises, and casebooks advance legal and social progress. Serving as reporters and advisors for Restatements and Uniform Acts also provides a practical way academics can help advance the law. Unless the mission of law schools is to change dramatically, scholarship and teaching should be inseparable for a legal academic.

Again, I will always be very grateful to Pepperdine for the Howard A. White Award. Both the law school and the university share a special place in my heart.

Paul Sparks

Professor of Learning Technologies

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

It is an honor to receive the Howard White award and I am grateful for the opportunity to share some ideas on teaching and learning. I hope my reflections inspire others.

Learning technology is an exciting field. We are witnessing a convergence of powerful new communication tools with a greater neurobiological understanding of learning and memory. At the same time new knowledge is exploding faster than we can keep pace.

Consider some of the emerging realities that are available to today's learners:

- Ask your smart phone any question and get an answer from an intelligent agent
- Engage in games that provide interaction and practice for many 21st century skills
- Learn directly from any professor in any university on any subject in your own home
- Experience unseen worlds in high definition 3D virtual reality simulations
- Collaborate with informal affinity groups on any subject open to billions online
- Watch socially curated quality instructional videos on virtually any skill or subject

The learning possibilities are astounding and they impact us all, not just our students. Teachers no longer control content or discourse. Our roles have necessarily changed. We are all now bound together as learners in a dynamic world where we construct understanding and meaning by interacting together in communities of practice.

The following attitudes and actions have proven most impactful during my 35 years of facilitating learning using technology.

1. Calibrate [Be realistic about what is possible and how learning works]

> *"I cannot teach anybody anything. I can only make them think."* - *Socrates*
>
> *"Education is not filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire."* - *William Butler Yeats*
>
> *"I am not a teacher, but an awakener."* - *Robert Frost*

Teaching does not guarantee learning. Traditional education assumes if something was taught, then it was certainly learned and if not the fault was with the learner. Switching ones focus instead to supporting learning, becomes at once much more achievable and more natural. My most effective and authentic contribution has been as guide or as an awakener.

My classes center around helping learning professionals incorporate new theories, new information and technologies into the work place. The learning happens in project based interaction and reflection with others. Maybe the best teacher is the person who best models the process of learning for others.

"He who learns from one who is learning, drinks from a flowing river."- Indian Proverb

As educators, we need to understand that most learning is social, situated in real life and motivated by relationships. The experience should feel more like being accepted into a professional learning network with authentic relationships to support success.

2. Care and Connect [Learning is social and requires connection]

"Students learn what they care about, from people they care about and who, they know, care about them." - Barbara Harrell Carson (1996) Thirty Years of Stories

Knowing the names of all my students and building a relationship with each of them around a common interest is a key practice. This is especially important in online environments that can often feel detached. I enjoy getting to know each student well enough to discover their interests and issues and then offer guidance and support. My practice of having an extended phone conversation with each student each semester is appreciated and creates amazing collaborative learning moments.

"Good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves." - Parker Palmer (1998)

The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life

As we are engaged in building lives of purpose, service and leadership… it is imperative to connect students with others in communities of caring and learning together. I invite alumni to volunteer as online mentors for new students. This practice helps all students stay connected in a larger learning community that encourages academic life and transcends individual classes or years.

3. Create Space [Learning requires safe spaces for social construction]

> *"The scandal of education is that every time you teach something, you deprive a*
>
> *[student] of the pleasure and benefit of discovery." - Seymor Papert*

This idea confused me when I encountered it early my career, but makes more sense to me now. We honor learning best when we support others in constructing their own knowledge. Their constructions are ultimately more meaningful and lasting.

> *"Learners have to construct their own knowledge - individually and collectively. The role of the community- other learners and teacher - is to provide the setting, pose the challenges, and offer the support that will encourage instruction." - Jean Piaget*

My responsibility is creating a safe space for students to collectively construct meaning from the events in their education and lives. This trusted community space allows for deep transformational learning that changes lives. There simply is no profession as rewarding as guiding and supporting the learning of others. Sharing transformational moments with students is a joy and a calling I do my best to honor every day.

Online tools make it even easier to create space for learning. In our graduate programs, we encourage robust student conversations in synchronous chats, discussion threads and social media that support ongoing interaction regardless of time and distance.

4. Contemplate Identity [Help students manage their professional identity}

> *Learning = Identity Management - Etienne Wenger*

To maximize learning, I help students manage their identity with a little fast forward exercise. We imagine together how shifting their identity from student to doctor changes how they think and act in the world.

> *"All learning pivots on who we think we are, and who we see ourselves a capable of becoming." - Frank Smith*

I have found that students find great value in stretching their identity in the direction of their professional goals and is key to deep transformational learning. When we set the tone for

acceptance of diversity and ideas, a safe environment is created for exploration of relationships and identity. When relationships grow so does the willingness of students to take chances and try new identities. And when they try on new identities, they transform into people they dreamed of becoming.

5. Challenge [Guide students to find their professional passion and voice]

> *"If he is indeed wise, he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind."* *- Kahil Gibran*

Finally, I am most effective when I listen and come to know students well enough to challenge them in meaningful ways. Every assignment and project then becomes a personal customized challenge more likely to match with their goals. I encourage students to tailor assignments to match their professional work and aspirations.

> *"Listening is Teaching. Talking is Learning"* *- Deborah Meier*

The traditional framework of education assumes that teachers deliver knowledge. When we talk, they understand. In my experience, learning happens more successfully when we care and connect with students, create space for them to explore new information and then challenge them to engage in co-creating the future.

> *"To educate is to guide students on an inner journey toward more truthful ways of seeing and being in the world."* *- Parker Palmer*

Paul J. Contino

Professor of Great Books

Seaver College

I am deeply honored and humbled in receiving the Howard A. Award for Excellence in Teaching – both in 2006 as an untenured professor, and, now ten years later as a tenured one. The fifteen years that I have been at Pepperdine University have proved to be a great blessing to my family and me. I have taught and discussed wonderful works with many unforgettable students and a number of outstanding colleagues. Upon receiving the award in 2006, I wrote an earlier version of this essay on teaching, and I am happy to return to that essay here, adding a few revisions and additions.

I continue to believe that teaching begins with and is animated by love. Love for one's subject and for one's students are vital to good teaching. For as long as I can remember, I have loved to read and to encounter new ideas. This love has helped me to bring what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "loving attentiveness" to my subject, the "great books" that I am blessed to teach. I agree with Parker Palmer that the subject is "the great thing" that stands at the center of any class's attention. In my own case, the subject is almost always a "classic" work of literature or philosophy. Classic works often attain their status by virtue of their wisdom or their formal, pleasing beauty, but always by their capacity to raise timeless, complex questions, vital to an understanding of our human condition. The works I teach are ever-fresh in their potential to raise such questions upon each reading, and in each conversation they inspire.

For example, a two-hour conversation in Great Books might focus upon a question and a work such as these: What does war do to the warrior, to those he conquers, and to their families (Homer, <u>Iliad</u>)? Should the wisest rule the rest of us (Plato, <u>Republic</u>)? Why is friendship necessary for happiness (Aristotle, <u>Nicomachean Ethics</u>)? What does it mean to be a creature made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis)? Are people naturally good or evil (Mencius / Hsun Tzu)? Why does a concern for results paralyze the human will (<u>Bhagavad-Gita</u> / Chuang Tzu)? Need passion cripple the quest to be virtuous (Euripides, <u>Hippolytus</u>)? Where does a person find God (St. Augustine, <u>Confessions</u>)? How might human penitence conform to God's will? What is heaven like (Dante, <u>Commedia</u>)? Can love be quantified or earned? Can radical suffering teach humility (Shakespeare, <u>King Lear</u>)? Must an effective ruler be a good person (Machiavelli, <u>The Prince</u>)? Does human free will cooperate with grace (Luther / Erasmus)? What might the story of Adam and Eve teach us about marriage (Milton, <u>Paradise Lost</u>)? What happens when body and soul are divided (Descartes, <u>Meditations</u>)? What role do the heart, the mind, the will play in the life of faith (Pascal, <u>Penseés</u>)? Is there a universal moral law? Is lying ever permissible? Is autonomy a sufficient human goal? (Kant, <u>Grounding</u>)? Does learning have limits (Goethe, <u>Faust</u>)? Does propriety nourish society (Austen, <u>Mansfield Park</u>)? Does society corrupt individuals (Rousseau, <u>Emile</u>)? Does evolutionary theory obliterate the conception of person as <u>imago Dei</u> (Darwin, <u>Origin of Species</u> and <u>Descent of Man</u>)? In the name of religion,

can ethical laws be suspended (Kierkegaard, <u>Fear and Trembling</u>)? How might doubt deepen faith (Dickinson)? Has Christianity blighted <u>eros</u> (Nietzsche, <u>Genealogy of Morals</u>)? Does sublimation nourish civilization (Freud, <u>Civilization and its Discontents</u>)? Why do some kinds of labor result in the reification of the human person (Marx)? Why do innocent children suffer? Is Christ-like love possible for human beings (Dostoevsky, <u>The Brothers Karamazov</u>)? How can the human person, situated in community, be distinguished from the individual (Maritain, <u>The Person and the Common Good</u>)? When might our Christian vocation call us to transgress the law of the state (Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail")?

Each time I teach these works, I want students to see such questions as vital, and to feel that something is at stake when they respond.

Before I walk into class, the questions must feel alive for me. I prepare by re-reading the work we will be discussing, recollecting and reviewing past notes, preparing new ones, and reading essays on or related to the work. All of this preparation assists me in asking the right questions, in the right order, at the right time – an anticipation of the "rhythm" of the class. It enables me to walk into class with the confidence that these are questions that *matter* – a sense of the "music" of the class.

I require students to post a paragraph on Sakai forum two hours before each class, focused upon the text we are discussing. (I tell students that the practice is analogous to doing layups before a basketball game. It's a warm up that they've come to appreciate.) Before class, I read their forum posts, and am thus able to get a sense of where each student in the class "is at". Because I've had this chance imaginatively enter into and attend to each student's ideas, questions, and concerns, I can anticipate and be more alert to these during class discussion.

A Great Books class depends upon collaborative inquiry. Our conversation requires that we attend to the work and to each other. At its best, our conversation will take an unanticipated direction. That's why preparation is imperative: If I'm to be alert and receptive to those surprising turns – and the emergence of truth – in our conversation, I must bring loving attentiveness to both the work and to each student in the class. I must strive to model what I expect from my students. This allows the class to keep our common text at the center of our conversation, even as our conversation tacks between order and improvisation, necessity and freedom, the outline and the unexpected turn.

In reading, teaching, and writing on Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Josef Pieper, I've come to increasingly appreciate the vital role of prudence (<u>phronesis</u>) in the life and work of a teacher. Certainly, teaching employs art, craft, or technique (<u>techne</u>); it studiously seeks the truth of matters (<u>theoria</u>). But teaching also requires the virtue of prudence: the receptivity to reality that allows one to perceive and respond to the particular situation before the teacher. Sometimes it's best to push one's students; sometimes it's best to let be. Each mix of students is different; each *day* in class is different – and a teacher must be alert and responsive to these differences.

As both Aristotle and Aquinas emphasize, prudence develops through experience. One of the things I most value about the vocation of teaching is that each semester – each day – provides a new chance to grow in experience: to learn and love more about my subject, but also to learn

more about *how* to teach my students with love, and how to help them to turn toward, see, and respond to the good, the true, and the beautiful.

Through experience, I've learned that if I am serving at my best I will, before class, pause, take a moment away from the work I'm preparing. During this pause, I will imaginatively call up the name and face of each student in the class, and silently pray for her or his well-being. I will take a moment to gaze upon the images that hang on the wall of my office: Christ Pantocrator from Mt. Sinai, Christ the Teacher from Chartres Cathedral. Then I'll walk upstairs to class.

When I arrive, I try to look at each student's face, greet the class as a whole with a smile, and, in some form, ask, "How are you?" It's helpful to know "where the students are at": Are they excited? Weary? Distracted? Struggling? Puzzled? Since the learning in each class is collaborative and interpersonal, it is crucial that I attend to the students with whom I will be teaching – and largely by asking questions and integrating points – and *from* whom I will be learning. We begin class with a prayer or a minute of silence, and then begin our conversation.

Why pray for and with students? To answer this, I need to ask: What is the goal, the end, the telos of my teaching? Certainly I want students to achieve all that I state explicitly on my syllabus as goals: to read thoughtfully classic works of various traditions; to listen attentively to each other; to articulate questions, insights, and arguments with clarity and cogency, be it in speech or prose.

But my ultimate goal, or my deepest hope, is that my students will in some way be transformed: that each will turn toward and decisively respond to the truth as it emerges in the class. A limited truth emerges in reading and interpreting the work at hand: What does the work *say*? What does it *mean*? But a third, more encompassing truth emerges when a student asks of a work: "Is it *true*?" Does the work reflect the reality of the way things are? Does it make an ethical claim upon its reader? Such questions demand an existential response, one that has implications for the way in which both students and teacher will live beyond the classroom, throughout their pilgrimages through this life and toward eternity.

As pilgrims, we live in imperfection. After every class, I usually yearn for something more -- words that haven't been uttered, potential connections left disjoined. I recall Kant's saw, "From the crooked timber of humanity nothing straight can ever be built." Our class is a community of crooked creatures. But we live in hope. As Paul Claudel said, "God writes straight with crooked lines." As pilgrims we are "on the way" to eternal life with God. Along the way, God remains "the hidden ground of love" (Thomas Merton), in whom "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). God calls us, holds us in His love, and makes His grace ever available on the way of our pilgrim's path. That grace is available in our studies and in our classrooms, in solitude and community, whenever we employ our God-given gift of reason with heartfelt humility. Receptively attuned to God's grace, reason is enriched.

An encounter with classic works, in focused dialogue with a group of studious friends, can influence the quality of a person's pilgrimage to God: It can influence the road taken or refused, the vigor of one's perseverance on that chosen road, and the depth of one's love – toward God and others – lived along the way. Collaborative encounters with classic works can be graced.

Of the three things that last – faith, hope, and love – love is the greatest (1 Corinthians 13:13). This was recognized and applied to the intellectual life by the 12th century monastic reformer St. Bernard of Clairvaux: "There are many who seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge: that is curiosity. There are others who desire to know in order that they themselves might be known: that is vanity. But there are those some who seek knowledge in order to serve and edify others: that is love [caritas]." When a student comes away from a class loving the work we've read and discussed, I am grateful. And even more so when, perhaps in response to the work and the way we've discussed it, the student longs to live a better life through service, through love.

Jeffrey Schultz

Assistant Professor of Creative Writing

Seaver College

Peter Kropotkin's 1902 study, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution,* outlines, in the context of evolutionary biology and in response to the so-called social Darwinism that had become in vogue at the time, the central position cooperative efforts and cooperative impulses take in the successful development of communities and the individuals who compose them. While the horrors of the 20th century have certainly diminished the number of self-identifying social Darwinists, this diminishment has been counter-balanced by the near-total triumph of the notion that an unbridled competitiveness lies, and, indeed, must lie, at the heart of all pursuits. Our culture regularly–almost exclusively–frames the totality of our interactions, from friendships and romantic relationships (see, for instance, all television) to the production of art (see, for instance, Bloom's pseudo-psychological theory of "influence" or the general obsession with "schools" and movements) as primarily and necessarily competitive. The penetration of market-based thinking, which, in the end, makes the same assumptions social Darwinists did, only somewhat less forthrightly, into every stratum of society and culture is near-complete: we readily affirm the truth that unbridled competition is both inherently good and necessary, that it drives innovation, that we would be nowhere without it.

As a stand against the universalization of competitiveness, I seek to create a classroom that functions according to something like Kropotkin's principle of mutual aid. Cooperation, approached in this way, does not exclude the moment of competitiveness; rather, it contextualizes it in relation to its own purpose: cooperation provides the end to competitiveness's means. In the mutual aid model of the classroom, competitiveness functions in service of the betterment of the entire group, rather than the individual student or the instructor. There are a number of approaches I take in order to foster this sense of a cooperative project in my classroom. On the first day of my classes, we begin to undertake the project of a far reaching critique, not just of whatever the material for the particular course will be, but also of the context of the course, the structure of the university, as well as the university's relation to the whole educational system and to the society and all of its historical determinants at large. This begins as soon as we review the syllabus. Rather than passing passively over the section of "Learning Outcomes," I begin a conversation circling around the etymology of the term "boilerplate," a conversation that circles outward to contextualize accreditation agencies, the standardization of the classroom experience, and the standardization of contemporary human experience generally. I do this not to be funny or daunting or profound, but to situate myself as a participant in a process that the students themselves are also immersed in, a process which seeks to bind all of us to certain ways of understanding the world and behaving in it. I believe there is

inherent value in revealing the contours of any such process, but so far as the community of the classroom is concerned, I work to show the students that I too am merely an individual trying to get right what I can get right in the midst of a number of interlocking systems over which I have little or no direct control. By de-identifying with these structures, by consciously not taking up the full weight of the authority they offer me in the limited realm of the classroom, my classes seek to become plausibly antiauthoritarian. If I ask my students to respect me it is as one of them, one of them who has probably been around longer, who has maybe learned more, who has read and thought more, but one of them nonetheless. I find that when my students understand that we are all inside the educational project together, a sense of community forms that is genuinely critical, cooperative, and creative.