

Great Books Curriculum

Dedicated to the best that has been thought and said.

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National Endowment for the Humanities Calls Wright College Great Books Curriculum A Model Program. Says More Are Needed Nationwide.

The Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Dr. Bruce Cole, has termed the Wright College Great Books Curriculum “a model program.” The assessment was echoed by the Assistant Director for Programming for the N.E.H., Dr. Julia Bondanella, who spent a day on a special field trip to study the Great Books Curriculum.

Speaking at the most recent national meeting of the American Academy for Liberal Education, a college accreditation organization, Dr. Cole said that Great Books Curricula are especially important to the N.E.H. because such studies increase awareness among students of the political and moral values on which democracy and Western Civilization is founded.

Dr. Cole further added that Great Books Curricula also have



Dr. Bruce Cole
N. E. H. Chairman

a key part to play in increasing cultural literacy, critical thinking skills, and a knowledge of history, without which, he said, students will not be sufficiently prepared to play a full and informed role as citizens nor will they be able to partake fully and with utmost proficiency and pleasure in the humanities.

Dr. Cole pointed to the Wright College Great Books Curriculum as making an important contribution toward those goals.

This recognition was further stressed by the dispatching from Washington D.C. of N.E.H. official Dr. Julia Bondanella to see the Wright College Great Books Curriculum in action in order to learn how she might best encourage and facilitate similar programs at institutions of higher learning across the United States. (See Field Trip story on pages 2-3.)



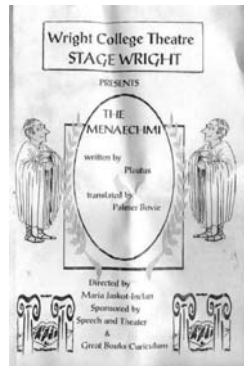
Dr. Julia Bondanella
N. E. H. Assist. Dir.
for Programming

National Endowment of the Humanities Mayor Daley's Office and Great Books Curriculum Have A Field Day

Upon her arrival at Wright College, N.E.H. Asst. Dir. For Programs Dr. Julia Bondanella attended a private screening of the Stage Wright all-student production of the ancient Roman comedy *The Brothers Menachmae* by Terence.

Speech Dept. Chairman Maria Jaskot-Inclan, a Great Books Curriculum faculty member directed the production which was sponsored by the Great Books Curriculum.

Dr. Bondanella observed that the production was especially moving and extraordinary because the actors delivered their lines in a wide multicultural range of accents which ranged from Tagalog to Polish to Spanish to Northwest Side Chicagoese, demonstrating the universal meaning of Great Books and the role it can play in forging a common and integrating culture. After viewing the play, which Dr. Bon-



Original program and student cast photo and flyer for Stage Wright's *Brother's Menachmae*

danella called charming and instructive, she attended a luncheon in the President's Conference room. There faculty and administrators involved in the Great Books Curriculum discussed with Dir. Bondanella the contributions

they felt Great Books had made to the academic growth of their students. Also discussed were some of the challenges facing the program such as the acute need for funding in order to facilitate curriculum development, student scholarships, publications and web services, fund raising and assistance to other institutions seeking help. (cont. on page 3)



Photo by Steve Dalber

From left to right: English Dept. Chair Harriet Rosenman, Prof. L.J. Komai Thompson, N.E.H. Asst. Dir. Julia Bondanella, Great Books Curriculum Chair Bruce Gans, Mayor Daley's Liaison for Education Ms. Karen Burke, Dean of Instruction Cynthia Cordes, and former Dean of Instruction and co-architect of the Great Books Curriculum Dr. Donald Barshis

N.E. H. Asst. Dir. Julia Bondanella's Field Trip (continued)

(cont. from page 2)

Dr. Bondanella then was invited to attend the annual Great Books Student Symposium. Moderated by Prof. Phillip-Virgen, students discussed the semester theme "Gods and Monsters" in the works of Jane Austen, Mary Shelly and Karl M a r x . After the symposium, Dr. Bondanella, along with Mayor Daley's Special Assistant on Education, Karen Burke, left to see Great Books pedagogy in action. They sat in on a Great Books class discussion concerning on *Frankenstein*, led and moderated by Prof. Margo Gariepy. Having watched Great Books students deliver academic papers and conduct group analysis and interpretations, Dr. Bondanella then focused on hearing what Great Books students personally felt about the GBC. After an extended chat with Great Books student Angelina Tomcik in the Social Science office, Dr. Bondanella then met with faculty from two other departments with

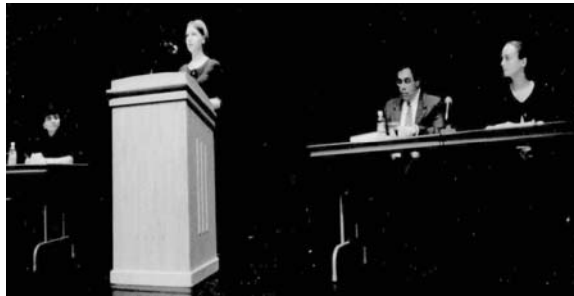


Photo by Steve Dalber

Student Anna Polakowska delivers paper on *Pride and Prejudice* at the fifth annual Great Books Curriculum Student Symposium



Photo by Steve Dalber

N.E.H. Asst. Dir Julian Bondanella meets with group of Great Books Curriculum students.



Photo by Steve Dalber

Prof. Trish Connolly and Prof. Joo Lee in conference with Dr. Bondanella



Photo by Steve Dalber

Dr. Bondanella meets with student Angelina Tomcik.

whom she had not yet consulted—Social Science Prof. Trish Connolly and Humanities Prof. Joo Lee. Both Prof. Connolly, who served as chief sponsor of a Great Books student discussion group, and Prof. Lee, who has served on the editorial board of the Great Books student journal *Symposium* emphasized the vital importance of students being exposed to the origin, growth and influence of great ideas through epochs and the benefits students accrue in newly germinated intellectual self-confidence and excitement from mastering Great Books texts.

Finally, Dr. Bondanella attended a reception in her honor where she was able to talk informally with Great Books students, faculty and important figures in Great Books studies such as Don Whitfield of the Great Books Foundation, Chicago Humanities Festival Chairman Eileen Mackevich and Cynthia Rutz of the U of Chicago Graham School.

Six Distinguished Faculty From Biology, English and Humanities Join Great Books Curriculum

The Great Books Curriculum is extremely fortunate to have newly attracted to its staff six full time faculty. Reflecting intellectual diversity in its highest sense, they bring a wide range of special expertise in Great Books scholarship to their classrooms and a deep love of seminal works to share with students. Here and on the following page we would like to introduce them to you though a brief introduction to their academic backgrounds, the range of Great Books courses they will offer students and the Great Books authors that have meant the most to them. They also talk about their teaching philosophy—what they hope students will gain from studying the Great Books and why they care about them.



Professor Vincent Bruckert began teaching at Wright College in the Spring of 2002. He holds a Masters Degree in English from Marquette and did further graduate work at Loyola University. He is also actively pursuing a career as a playwright. He currently teaches an English 102 Great Books course with a special emphasis on Fitzgerald, Keats and Shelley. Professor Bruckert says he became attracted to Great Books because “I have a great love of literature that re-describes our political and social world with imagination, humor and inspirational insights.”



Professor Sonia Cszaszar received her M.A. in Romance Languages from the University of Chicago. She began teaching as an adjunct at Wright in 1991 and now teaches full time in the Humanities Department. In explaining why Great Books study is useful for students, Prof. Cszaszar says she wants “students to learn how art explains and relates to history. From this we can learn to be more open-minded, receptive to new ideas, less prejudiced, in other words, learn to be a better person.” Prof. Cszaszar said she first became interested in Great Books as a child growing up in her native Chile. Required to read 20 books a year in school, Prof. Cszaszar became fascinated with Greek mythology.



Professor Paul Janus began his career teaching Biology at Wright College nine years ago and has been teaching full time here for the past seven years. Prof. Janus holds a M.S. Degree from Western Illinois University and is currently teaching Biology 114 as a Great Books course where students study original work by Darwin and Mendel among others. Having on his own initiative revised his Biology 114 class to be able to offer it for the first time as a Great Books course, Professor Janus explains, “I enjoy the history of science. I thought it would be interesting to show the relationship between science and the Great Books authors because in both areas there is a common thread—the pursuit of knowledge in a highly organized manner.”

Twenty Per Cent of Full Time Wright College Faculty Staff Now Engaged in Great Books Curriculum Programming



Professor Kim Knutson joined the Wright College English Department in January 2002. Prof. Knutson holds Masters Degrees in Applied Linguistics from the University of Illinois and another in Philosophy from the University of Southern California. She also earned a B.A. in psychology from Harvard. Prof. Knutson previously taught at USC and UIC and in the Czech Republic. Her Great Books interests include the moral philosophies of Kant, Hume, and Mill and the literature of Tolstoy, Ibsen and Chekhov. Prof. Knutson “believes in the value [of] ...the pursuit of reason and its role in improving the human condition. Reading what the finest minds have thought” she adds “can only advance a student’s critical thinking and in turn ...her reason.”



Professor Jane Wagoner has been teaching in the City Colleges since 1973 and at Wright since 1992 in the English Department. Prof. Wagoner is a Distinguished Service Professor, the highest honor awarded faculty. She will be offering her Great Books courses through an innovative program she designed which enables students to do half their class work on campus and half through the Internet at home or work. Prof. Wagoner observes, “when I taught *King Lear* to my students on this small island [in the Philippines] they related to the plot immediately [because]...there is a tremendous respect for a family’s older members [and] they could feel Lear’s pain when his plans were foiled. ...Great Books offer the opportunity to investigate worlds that, while distant, ...share the same challenges and rewards.”



Professor Arlene Weaver began her teaching career at Wright in 1979 in the Office Information Systems program and obtained in 1994 a second Masters Degree in English from Governor’s States University. Prof. Weaver will be making her Great Books debut in the upcoming spring semester when she offers for the first time an African-American Literature course. Prof. Weaver says, “I am excited about discovering and rediscovering the literary genius of African-American [Great Books] authors such as Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison and Toni Morrison.”

Great Books Curriculum Student Graduates Awarded Program Completion Certification on Transcripts.

Academically ambitious students have been drawn to the Great Books Curriculum since its inception not only because it offers highly challenging and gratifying materials. Students who complete four Great Books Curriculum courses with a grade point average of “C” or better earn a special certification on their transcripts upon graduation.

This certification has become particularly prized by Wright students because it serves to indicate to a college admissions office that this particular applicant has attained a serious grounding in cultural literacy, critical thinking and a willingness to seek out and



gain proficiency in the use of high-level intellectual materials that is the customary workload at a four-year institution. This proof of a student’s having sought out the most challenging courses and achieved academic excellence can be especially important in overcoming some of the un-

fair stereotypes students at community colleges face. Below, the Great Books Curriculum proudly lists its most recent program completion graduates. The list includes not only a high percentage of students who graduated with honors but also one, Heidi Hernandez who was pictured in a front page *New York Times* story in the Great Books Curriculum.

It is very important though that students who qualify for program completion certification apply for it at the Counseling Office. The Wright College computer system is not set up to award this important benefit automatically.

High Honors

Sahib B. Abdullah
Stephanie Lynn Clark
Michael Alexander Dubinin
Sandra Kumorowski
Artur Michalowicz
Katherine Jennifer Szankowski
Petia Todorova Tontcheva
Angel Trujillo
Victoria Velez

Honors

Michael Carmen Busa
Kataizyna Cychowska
Alberto Espinosa
Maryann Land
Ofelia Macedo
Lyndsi K. Macharg

Craig Evan Neukirch
Monica Yudid Perez
Monica J. Ulanicki
Kimberly Katina Wright
Patricia Zullo

Certificates

Alia A. Askar
Leticia Justine Claudio
Mellisa Marie De Leon
Gina A. Del Marto
Juan B. Diaz
Laura Galeno
Noemi Gaud
Heidi Hernandez
Lydia Yolanda Lindsey

Joseph Eric Mack
Patricia V. Mans
Maureen C. McMahon
Steven M. McNichols
Suami C. Mendez
Felicia Lucia Monelle
Tiffany Unique Morrison
Romani Torres Oduio
Anna Panico
Norma Salgado
Sandy Soto
Richard A. Stader-Shaw
Shannon Michelle Watson
Felecia Williams
Carlos Zambrano

Projects and Accomplishments

City Colleges Chancellor Wayne Watson has invited the Great Books Curriculum to organize and co-produce a two-hour television show on WYCC Channel 20 on Great Books. Scheduled for next fall, the television show (as of this writing) is expected to focus on the theme “Being Loved, Being Unloved,” and center around the works of Plato’s *Symposium*, Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew* and Henry

Media



Chancellor Watson

James’ *Washington Square*. The show is intended to be part of a newly created

CCC series called Town Meetings and features extended in-depth discussions of important questions by CCC faculty and students. Past shows focused on the current Iraq conflict and employment issues. Great Books Curriculum Chairman Professor Bruce Gans was asked to be co-producer after Chancellor Watson became aware that the Great Books Curriculum had been organizing student symposia since the Great Books Curriculum was founded.



Media



The Great Books Curriculum was featured twice prominently in recent months. The first story appeared on the Minneapolis Star-Tribune editorial page and compared the “liberating” qualities of reading Great Books among non-traditional and minority Wright College students to a movement among 18th and 19th-century British laborers who spontaneously began to organize discussion groups around Great Books texts. A second article focusing on the Wright College Great Books Curriculum appeared in a 19-page story in the nationally distributed *American Experiment Quarterly* and stated, “The premiere example of a successful Great Books program for non-traditional students is ...at Wright College [for it] illustrates how a well-planned humanities program can revitalize intellectual life...where low academic expectations” are often associated with the underprepared. The article can be read on the web at <http://www.amexp.org/aeqpdf/AEQv5/aeqv5n2/>

Academic



Over the past year Great Books Curriculum Coordinator Professor Bruce Gans has given a series of papers on Great Books scholarship at major community college academic associations and elsewhere. These included The League for Innovation, Two-Year Community College Assn. and NISOD., the Assn. of Literary Scholars and Critics and the American Academy for Liberal Education. Professor Gans also hopes to introduce a Great Books English 101 course in the fall.

Projects and Accomplishments

Academic



Prof. Paul Janus has created a new Great Books course which he hopes to introduce in the Fall.



Professor Maria Jaskot-Inclan, head of the Wright College drama program, has successfully produced a student production of Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*. Prof. Jaskot-Inclan is also chief faculty liaison with the Wright College resident repertoire company Shaw Chicago which recently presented a successful stage reading of *Pygmalion*.



Professor Kim Knutson organized the first Great Books Curriculum-Chicago Humanities Festival field trip this fall arranging for students to meet with Prof. Jonathan Rose, author of a book on the British laboring class's involvement with Great Books.



Professor Michael Petersen read a paper on Shakespeare's Sonnets at the Great Books Faculty Symposium this past November. Prof. Petersen also attended the Chicago Humanities Festival Colloquium on Shakespeare's Sonnets where world famous Shakespeare scholar David Bevington spoke. Prof. Petersen is presently pursuing a doctorate in English from Northern Illinois University with a concentration in Shakespeare.



What Is The Great Books Curriculum?



Great Books courses are offered in Astronomy, Biology, English, Humanities, Philosophy, Social Science and Theater. A Great Books course is every bit as transferable and fulfills all the graduation requirements as the equivalent class with the same course number. The difference, for example, between a regular English 102 and a Great Books 102 class, is that in the Great Books course at least half the reading will be by authors listed in practically every case by the *Encyclopedia Britannica* as the world's most important. To enjoy the benefits, just look for the classes you would normally take and enroll in the one with a special "9" Great Books designation behind the course number in the course schedule. That's all there is to it!

What Do You Get Out of It? Upon earning 12 Great Books credit hours, you will receive on graduation a special *Great Books Track* certification on your college transcript. When you apply to a four-year institution this evidence of your academic achievement and seriousness as a student can help impress admissions officers. Work at a four-year college is based on the books in the Great Books Curriculum, so Wright's courses should increase your reading, analytical and cultural literacy skills. The Great Books Curriculum can make you much better prepared and more confident that you will succeed. Papers you write in Great Books Curriculum courses qualify for inclusion in our scholarly publication *Symposium* and for nomination for an outstanding scholarship award presented to you at the annual student awards banquet. You also qualify for other activities such as field trips to classical drama productions, personal involvement in a growing Great Books Curriculum theater program as well as participation in school-wide symposia. Enrollment gives you an opportunity to meet professors and students who share your interest in the Great Books and introduce you to other people who enjoy the life of the mind like you do! Most importantly, the Great Books Curriculum will have you reading and thinking about the same books that people like Shakespeare and Einstein did when they were in your position. You will be shaped by these books just as they were. And you will be amazed at how your life will be expanded and enriched because you have entered into "conversations" with Great Books authors. For more information, contact Great Books Curriculum Coordinator Professor Bruce Gans at (773) 481-8014. or bgans@ccc.edu