Centre for Learning and Teaching

focus

on university teaching and learning

Graduate Student Edition

Formal educational experiences provide many intentional learning opportunities as well as informal and sometimes unexpected ones.

In this issue, our contributors share stories of professional, personal and academic growth as they explore the range of learning possibilities their research and teaching have opened to them.

Suzanne Le-May Sheffield, Ph.D

Director,

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
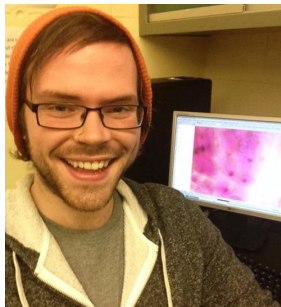
Growing Into Our Own Skin: Personal Development in Higher Education

Jacob Fletcher (MSc)
Graduate Teaching Associate,
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The journey of a graduate student is one of inevitable self-growth. We learn every day from social interactions with our peers, collaborations with colleagues, journals we read and experiments that are lost. New experiences (whether failures or successes) contribute to an individualized bank of personal development. It is within human nature that the yearning to reach the next step seems to be encrypted. Science builds upon previous knowledge, continuously pushing the boundaries of possibility. We piece together our cultural histories and origins from ancient artworks and literature. It is this desire for knowledge that pushes us forward in search of answers, both from the world around us and within ourselves. Graduate students have an insatiable thirst for this concept of knowledge and growth. It surrounds us every day and encompasses our purpose. One of the most opportune ways we, as graduate students, can engage and embrace our self-growth is through our teaching experiences.

Graduate students can strive in uncharted waters, fueled by passion for growth and the longing to share knowledge. An advantage to being an 'academic fledgling' is that we are susceptible to great amounts of growth and reflection during these new experiences. It is a period of reflection on personal values, strengths, and a sense of self. It is a time to learn effective teaching strategies from our peers and mentors: a time to be vulnerable and find out how our students want and need to learn. The experiences that contribute to our personal growth during this particularly critical point in our academic journey will be drawn from throughout our future. When students approach their challenges from a perspective that identifies them as opportunities for personal growth, they inevitably learn skills and gain an innate worldly view that will stay with them for the rest of their lives (Robitschek and Theon, 2015).

As previously mentioned, self-growth can be shaped in many forms. It can be reflected through the expanding of our knowledge, discovery of one's self, or through an appreciation for dialogue with diverse others. All of these forms of personal development can enhance our experiences as new educators. Our yearning for knowledge is reflected in our ability to share and inspire our students: we are passing them the torch, teaching them to fly, and equipping them with the tools to discover the next missing piece. We learn about ourselves: our passions and values, our strengths and weaknesses, and what we can do in order to improve our effectiveness as educators in the future. We are submerged in dynamic groups of people, each with a unique story to share. From this diversity we can embrace a new understanding and appreciation of differences.

My experiences thus far as an educator have certainly been true to this concept. My graduate path has been carved largely by my teaching experiences. I began as a teaching assistant in the second half of my undergraduate degree. At that time, I wasn't sure what awaited me on the horizon. I had just changed Majors from Theatre to Biology and was suddenly immersed in what I considered to be a different universe. Through teaching labs in the Biology Department, I was able to fully invest in my love for science, discovery, and curiosity. From this experience I discovered my specific interests which led to the pursuit of my graduate degree in plant cell biology. The more I progressed in my academic journey, the more I realized that my previous experiences were invaluable. I may have transferred between Faculties, but I hadn't really left anything behind. I realized that my three years in the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences contributed substantially to my character and applicable skillset in science, and perhaps enhanced my open-mindedness and creative thinking, which I may not have achieved on a direct path. One of the most beautiful aspects of academia is that, no matter what field we study, we share a goal of knowledge, curiosity, and expanding ourselves.

One of my most cherished platforms for self-growth as an educator has come from the opportunities to be immersed in classrooms filled with students of diversity: diversity in culture, gender, discipline, abilities, identity, and ideas. The Dalhousie community is seeing increased diversity in race, culture, and gender throughout the institution. This diversity provides incredible opportunities not only for the students, but for teaching assistants and other educators to embrace diversified communities, supporting and learning from one another. Moreover, increasing diversity means institutions and educators need to adapt and improve curriculum and teaching methods to benefit diverse student cohorts, which in turn contributes to the growth of the educator (Widiputera et al., 2017).

In this issue of *FOCUS* we explore various modes of personal development in higher education through individual experiences and reflection pieces by graduate students from a range of backgrounds. In our first article, Jennifer Searle discusses using the discovery of self identity as acts of empowerment and teaching moments. Anne Mahalik then shares a personal reflection piece on her experience and research with women's postpartum depression and her own research development. Discussing both personal and academic development, Jobin Kanjirakkat shares his journey designing and teaching a course at Dalhousie. The issue closes by addressing the challenges and future prospective of personal development as an educator, with Scarlett Kelly on how to be a life-long learner.

Dedicating yourself to conveying knowledge is no simple task, but it does not come without reward. We pride ourselves in aiming to inspire the growth of our students during their academic journies, and, in turn, end up valuing the transformation that we too have undergone.

"You are always a student, never a master. You have to keep moving forward." – Conrad Hall

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Shifting the Burden: The Privileged Responsibility of a Queer-identified Nurse

Jennifer Searle, MSc Student, School of Nursing

Self-reflexive practice entails a commitment to becoming aware of how personal biases and assumptions influence our perceptions of self and others, particularly within social, cultural, and political contexts (Goldberg, 2015).

As a queer-identified nurse who is dedicated to advancing health equity, social justice, and advocacy within nursing and healthcare more broadly, I have an evolving understanding of the implications of self-reflexive practices. I believe they have the potential to reconstruct systems of privilege and oppression into spaces and places of inclusion, empowerment, and healing. With regards to health equity, LGBTQ+ patients often bear a burden to educate their health care providers on gaps in LGBTQ+ health knowledge (Goldberg, Aston, Burrow, & Searle, 2017). As a graduate student, my work explores how I (as a queer-identified health care provider) can politicize my practice and work to leverage my privileges in ways that might shift the burden of my oppressions.

Reflexive practice: Advancing skills and expanding capacities in challenging self-awareness

Fostering an awareness within ourselves, by reflecting on deeply held assumptions and biases, is a transformative journey that can teach us how to disrupt the taken-for-granted and challenge social practices that may perpetuate structural marginalization (Goldberg, 2015). Self-reflexive practices develop skills in applied critical thinking and bring about broader understandings of the self as a situated agent within larger social, cultural, and political contexts (Goldberg, Rosenburg, & Watson, 2017). For example, people often assume that I am heterosexual because, as an invisibly queer woman, I'm not what people expect a lesbian to look like. Often, I must come out in opposition to the assumption of heterosexuality, which can cause me to feel uncertain about my safety. I shift this burden and leverage it to encourage others to become more aware of their biases and assumptions. As a clinical educator, I have shared my lived experiences and the associated challenges so that students might gain perspective into their own experiences. My students developed self-awareness around what they took for granted and identified access to washrooms as an equity issue on campus. Based on their findings from their audit of the Dalhousie University gender neutral washroom map, the students presented recommendations to the Senate on how the University could better support persons who feel unsafe in gendered washroom spaces. In this context, therapeutic use of the self has expanded how I, and others, understand the structural constraints that are disproportionately experienced by historically marginalized communities.

Nurses can develop strategies that bring about new levels of self-awareness and create a collective sense of accountability within the profession. As a nurse, I work to use self-reflexive practice as a resource in the disruption of what is often taken for granted. For me, learning and teaching are part of the same process. If I make an assumption about someone, I need to take a look at how that bias came about and learn about how larger social systems might be working to influence my thinking.   Similarly, if someone assumes something about me, I can invite them to inspect their biases, and in so doing, we can learn from each other. If we can reflect upon the roles we play in inadvertently furthering inequities through examining personal biases and assumptions, we can advance our understanding of how we can challenge ourselves and others to question societal norms that reinforce systemic inequity.

Expanding reflexivity: Challenging the limitations of language and theory

hooks' (1984) feminist analysis of blackness in a white patriarchal supremacy offers insights into historical marginalization, and reflexivity allows me to apply her theory to gain perspective on my own identity. It is necessary to clarify that I understand that race significantly differs from the intersection of queerness. I am not attempting to compare the histories of oppression or the vastly different effects of structural marginalization. Rather than focusing on the detrimental effects of structural marginalization on communities, I look for common themes around how

differences are constructed, how they are maintained by systems of privilege and oppression, and then how I can develop strategies that might accommodate social advances and progressive change.

Crenshaw (1989) understood intersectionality as a methodology to make visible the lives of black women, insofar as blackness and womanness must not be viewed in isolation from one another. Now over 20 years old, intersectionality could be expanded in its use and application. I have been wondering as of late if intersectionality can be expanded upon theoretically by reflecting on the following: if viewing blackness and womanness in isolation erases the lives of black women, then what is erased by viewing privilege and oppression in isolation? This is not an oversimplification of identity politics, but instead, it is an attempt to be accountable for the ways in which privilege can place limitations around how oppression is understood.

I would argue that education is our most privileged responsibility. If we view systems of oppression in isolation from systems of privilege, we risk erasing the opportunities available for us to learn how to situate ourselves, leverage ourselves within our respective fields, and drive social change. We would miss the discovery of others in relation to ourselves and fail to gain revolutionary insights into how oppressive systems place limitations on the lives of individuals from historically marginalized communities. As we work to become experts within our fields, we must recognize the responsibility to develop applied skills in critical thought by turning this knowledge inward to learn about how we can leverage ourselves as situated agents within larger social, cultural, and political contexts. We can mobilize each other and engage in this process of reflexive learning, build a collective self-awareness, and shift the burden that is disproportionately experienced by historically marginalized communities.

Acknowledgements

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Revisiting Postpartum Depression: Personal Reflection on my Experience Researching Women's Experience With Postpartum Depression

May 2008, pregnant with baby number two, I found myself talking to a mental health nurse, once again, about my thoughts and feelings related to being a mother. I suppose the theory was that if I began treatment earlier than I did the first time (with emphasis on medication, which I was reluctant to take while breastfeeding my first daughter), I would be better prepared and able to cope with the challenges of motherhood. During this second round of treatment I became very good at telling my therapist what I thought she wanted to hear, rather than obtaining the support I needed to feel better.

Anne Mahalik,
Clinical Coordinator,
School of Health Sciences

During my second pregnancy, I found myself wondering if other patients felt unable to cope, how Reproductive Mental Health (RMH) evaluated their services for feeling this way, and if there was a way that I could help other mothers cope by looking at my own similar experiences. With these questions in mind, I decided to pursue a master's degree. It seemed like the perfect fit to offer myself to RMH, and potentially collaborate on a project that I could complete as part of my thesis while contributing to enhancing the services they provide. Postpartum depression is something I was both passionate and curious about, which is an important consideration for a graduate student as you spend a significant amount of time immersed in your research topic. This is how a mother who struggled and overcame her own illness came to study women's experiences with treatments for postpartum depression.

Self-reflection has been recognised as an important part of personal and professional growth. Reflection also plays two important roles in the qualitative research process, one of which requires the researcher to consider the meaning of their data within the broader context of their study. Another role for self-reflection is to ensure that it is the participants' voices that emerge from the data, not the personal opinions of the researcher (Ellington, Reblin, Berry, Giese-Davis & Clayton, 2013; Lake, 2015). This is especially important when the researcher has personal experiences (and potential biases) with the topic being studied.

As the principle investigator for the study, it was my responsibility to interview participants and use my experience to put them at ease in order to probe for additional details during interviews. I was concerned that I would not be able to remain objective throughout the data analysis process, but it did not occur to me that I would need to be objective throughout my data collection. One example of this occurred during my first interview, when the participant described how her father was able to support her during the early days of motherhood. I had not considered that aspects of my own experience outside of postpartum depression might be reflected in those of my participants and how it would affect me. I was still dealing with the grief and guilt of not having had more children before my father passed away suddenly, and I became overcome with emotion as we proceeded.

Following this, and each subsequent interview, I carefully noted my reaction, documenting my thoughts on how each participant's story contributed to the overall project and what direction the analysis might take. I also made notes on how participants' responses made me feel and how it might influence data analysis, thinking this would be enough for me to remain unbiased. However, it was not until I was discussing a subsequent transcript with one of my supervisors that I truly realized the importance of remaining objective throughout data collection as well as analysis. She noted that I had asked leading questions of some participants, potentially encouraging them to identify with my own feelings, and perhaps I inadvertently sought validation of my own experience with postpartum depression. I realised it was not enough to be aware of your biases in analysing data, but to also examine how you maintain objectivity during interviews.

I reviewed each transcript, looking for sections where I may have led participants and removed that data from analysis. This gave me a new perspective as a novice

researcher about the importance of objective reflection throughout the research process, and how personal experience with a research topic can both strengthen and weaken data. I felt the pressure of completing my research, similar to any graduate student, but it was tied to the gravity of presenting the experiences of these women in a way that others, who had never experienced postpartum depression, could understand. I realised that unless I was able to extricate myself from the data, these mothers' experiences would carry less value from a research standpoint. As much as I wanted to complete my thesis for the sense of accomplishment, I needed to complete this work to honour the mothers who took part in the study.

Many people have asked me if I would have done things differently had I known how difficult it would be to write a thesis: balancing school, work, and family as a part time student; recruitment difficulties; and reliving my own experience with postpartum depression. Despite these challenges, I would do it again and encourage others to do so as well. As a graduate student and a mother who has previously experienced postpartum depression, I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to advance knowledge of women's experiences with treatment for postpartum depression in a way that another researcher may not. Although I did not expect it, through this research (and a great deal of self-reflection), I have also begun to better understand my own journey through postpartum depression in a way in which I had not been previously able.

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(Bio: After 8 long years (part-time) Anne recently completed her Master of Applied Health Services Research degree, leaving her with more time to ponder her journey through motherhood)

THE MAKING OF SUPERHEROES

Written by: Dr. Jill Marie McSweeney, PhD

I always thought my teachers were not normal like your or I,
That they were superheroes, with powers to inspire rather than fly.
I longed to hold their mastery of poise and finesse;
And to have their control of monsters called 'Self-doubt' and 'Success'.
I knew the day was coming when the costume would be mine;
And always felt I'd wear it, but would never shine.
One day a teacher shocked me as they began to confess,
"When I was a young student, I was often frozen with distress.
I would wander through my teaching armed with uncertainty,
Until a mentor shared that he was once like you and me.
One day a student will need you to help them through this time,
And all I ask is that you share the story of your climb."
I realized then that teaching wasn't having an enchanted cape,
It was looking at a student and seeing an ever-evolving shape.
The magic of a teacher is that they can always see,
What lies inside a student, and can show them what they can be.

Excerpt from: *Teaching as a Human Experience: An Anthology of Contemporary Poems.* Reprinted with permission. Edited by Karen J. Head, Patrick Blessinger.

In Head, K. J., & In Blessinger, P. (2015). Teaching as a human experience: An anthology of contemporary poems. Cambridge Scholars Publishing: UK.

Fall 2017 Professional Development Opportunities

The Centre for Learning and Teaching regularly offers professional development sessions that address topics on teaching and learning in higher education.   We collaborate with faculty, graduate students, departments, and resource units across campus to tailor sessions specific to Dalhousie needs. The CLT encourages faculty, staff, graduate students, or anyone who is interested in enhancing their teaching practices to attend.

Effective Leadership: What Does It Look Like Today?

Thursday, September 28, 2017 - 02:00 to 3:30 PM

This workshop will help you to identify your leadership styles, and will discuss effective traits and methods of leadership in the classroom, while comparing these traits with those prevalent among other leadership roles in society. We will also evaluate leadership tendencies of the past and present, and discuss the future of leadership in higher education by reflecting on our own successes and challenges.

Identifying and Applying Strengths: Our Students and Ourselves

Wednesday, October 25, 2017 - 12:30 to 2:00 PM

This session will explore the notion of identifying and capitalizing on the strengths of both ourselves as educators, and our students, with the purpose of enriching the educational environment. We will engage in interactive activities to help guide the process of identifying our strengths, leading into a discussion revolving around the benefits and application of these individualized traits in our classrooms.

Exploring one's Identity as an Educator: How Does Who we are Affect What we do in our Classrooms?

Wednesday, November 15, 2017 - 1:30 to 3:00 PM

This workshop will explore how our personal and teaching identities interacts with each other, our teaching, and student learning.

Developing Your Teaching Philosophy

Wednesday, November 29, 2017 - 12:30 to 2:00 PM

This session will delve into the process of creating your own teaching philosophy, including a step-by-step "how-to" guide to help turn your unique experiences and individual past into a tangible document for your future!

All sessions will take place in the Killam Library, Room B400 and
will be offered via video-conference at the Truro campus.

For more information on these sessions and to register, visit learningandteaching.dal.ca.

The Centre for Learning and Teaching offers two programs for Dalhousie Graduate Students to help develop teaching skills and competencies required to be successful in teaching assistantships and/or teaching in higher education.

Certificate in University Teaching and Learning

The Certificate in University Teaching and Learning (CUTL) is open to graduate students and post-doctoral fellows at Dalhousie University. The Certificate provides a flexible framework for integrating and recognizing a comprehensive range of teaching development programing.

Certificate Requirements

Theory: Students have two options to participate in the scholarship of teaching and learning by reviewing and discussing selected literature in the field. 1 – Non-Credit Course; or 2 – Teaching & Learning Project.

Practice: This component provides students with an opportunity to put into practice newly acquired teaching concepts and techniques, receive peer feedback, and reflect upon and revise their teaching practice.

Professional Development: This open-choice component is designed to nurture the habit of continuing professional development by requiring students to assess their own learning needs and to document their participation in a minimum of 20 hours of professional development workshops.

Teaching Dossier: Students will create an 8-10 page teaching dossier that will provide documentation of their teaching knowledge and experience for the job search process and career advancement.

Teaching Assistant Enrichment Program

The Teaching Assistant Enrichment Program (TAEP) is a one-year (September to May) flexible teaching development program created specifically for TA's. TAEP includes workshops, teaching exercises, reflection on teaching and learning, and recognition of a student's work towards the development of teaching. The Program offers students experience, knowledge, concepts and skills that they can apply to their current teaching assistantships.

Required Components

Professional Development: Students will be required to complete 4 online modules and an additional 6 professional development credits. The purpose of these modules is to provide participants with the experience of navigating and participating in online learning environments and to ensure that fundamental topics associated with TAing are covered.

Microteaching: This component will offer students the opportunity to apply the knowledge, concepts and skills acquired through their professional development sessions; engage in peer evaluation; receive both peer and formal assessment of their teaching; and participate in critical reflection practices centered around their teaching.

Teaching Observation: Students of the TAEP are required to seek out an undergraduate lecture within their discipline to observe and critically reflect upon.

Deadline to register for the TAEP is September 19, 2017!

Congratulations to the 2017 CUTL and TAEP Graduates!

CUTL Graduates (Left to Right): Tanya Bilsbury, Tara Imlay, Bassemah Alhulaimi, and Abdulhadi Alqarni.

Additional graduates: Sarah Aboushawareb, Amal Alhaddad, Abdulhadi Alqarni, Janice Allen, Kathryn Birnie, Carolyn Wilson, Julia Kontak, Chelsea Quinlan, and Shadi Shehadeh

TAEP Graduates (Left to Right): Sarah Greening, Jeff Simmons, Tiffany Gordon, Hyeyoung Kang, Badir Alsaeed, and Joelle Dionne.

Additional graduates: Mohammed Shiblee, Alexander McKenny, Mengyu Li, Devon Harlen, Wheejae Kim, Elias Elhaimer, and Buky Abebambo

An Experience in Cross-cultural Pedagogy

Dr. Jobin M. Kanjirakkat, PhD, University of King's College

In this article, I would like to reflect on an experience that I believe has helped me grow as a teacher. As an international postdoctoral fellow from India, it was a special experience for me to design and teach a course at Dalhousie. The richness of the experience consisted of a variety of factors, such as cultural and linguistic differences in the classroom; the theme, content and learning outcomes of the course; and the students' reception of taking a cultural-centric course from an international instructor. The experience confirmed what I read in preparation for the course, which was a powerful book on language and pedagogy by David Bleich (1988) called *The Double Perspective: Language, Literacy and Social Relations*. A key insight from the book is that when we critically engage with power dynamics in the classroom — by working with the premise that students' perspectives are as important as the instructor's — everyone stands to gain significantly from the experience. By giving personal examples and interacting with philosophical literature on the nature of language, Bleich builds on the idea that knowledge is fundamentally intersubjective and constructed by mutual interactions between students and the instructor(s). In my course, there was an interesting twist to the problem of the power dynamics, as I am an instructor who is a non-native English speaking immigrant and come from a postcolonial society with a rich and complex history.

The title of the course was "Totalitarianism and Science," and was listed under the programme "History of Science and Technology" and cross-listed with "Contemporary Studies and History." The content, until I reworked it, dealt with how science functioned under twentieth century societies that were typically considered "totalitarian," such as Germany under the fascist forces and the Soviet regime, especially under Stalin. The perspective of the redesigned content turned the focus on certain tendencies in contemporary liberal democracies, which could be construed as totalitarian. The course analysed fictitious pieces, theoretical readings, historical events and documentaries. We started with Orwell's

Nineteen Eighty-Four, in order for students to begin to imagine a totalitarian structure and tune our minds to totalitarian tendencies, such as control of media and massive surveillance. This was followed by an outline of a theoretical framework for understanding totalitarian tendencies in contemporary times. To do this, I used the work from the political theorist Sheldon Wolin, who analysed emerging patterns in political power, called "inverted totalitarianism" (Wolin, 2008). This was followed by a discussion on the historical and political questions of current issues such as climate change. This topic was important to discuss for two reasons: (1) global politics are influenced by questions of the distribution of natural resources such as petroleum, the utilization of which is largely related to climate change, and (2) it was part of setting up a context for the topic of food production, the first of the three issues that explored an understanding of totalitarian tendencies in democracies. The other topics were medicine/healthcare, industry and media. In order to provide a solid conceptual grounding on this topic, I arranged guest lectures from scholars with expertise in these fields, but largely relied on discussion from students on their own experiences and my own background with the topics.

One of the most challenging issues I experienced as an international instructor was teaching to a class of Canadian students, of predominantly white ethnicity, on topics that addressed disciplinary themes that I was unfamiliar with in a Canadian context. The traditional disciplines encompassing the topics discussed were history, political science, and sociology areas that I had learned on my own or in response to certain issues that permeate people's daily lives in India. For example, the component of food production dealt with the Indian experience of the Green Revolution, which was an attempt launched by the national government, in collaboration with international agencies in the 1950's, to attain self-sufficiency with respect to food. Some of the failures of this massive effort opened up possibilities for critical reflections on the implementations of state policies within students' own Canadian context.

By looking at domains such as food production, healthcare, and media in light of critical issues that hover over our daily lives (e.g., climate change), the course examined if democracies remained truly

representative. The syllabus, unlike many other courses taught on such a topic, included authors from various locations around the world — quite unexpectedly, there was a considerable presence of South Asian scholars. To provide global perspectives to students, I felt it was important to read a diverse set of authors from different geographical regions. In the last few decades, educators in the humanities and social sciences have been pointing out the need to incorporate non-mainstream perspectives and voices, such as non-white, female, and ethnic minorities. Perspectives from postcolonial societies in Asia and Africa are strikingly less prominent in these disciplines. Moreover, the approach of welcoming knowledge produced from different regions is in line with the move towards internationalization of curricula and in accordance with the multicultural values of Canada.

Although I am proficient in English, dealing with large amounts of academic readings on issues I am not traditionally familiar with was difficult. Additionally, the class largely used in-class discussion, and sometimes navigating new concepts in a foreign context was difficult for all of us. Some students were uncomfortable with these new and diverse themes discussed in class. An example that comes to mind is how strongly students reacted against the view held by some philosophers that science itself can at times be ideological. But disagreement and debate, when performed respectfully, leads to learning for the instructor as well as the students. Treating everyone with dignity, even those in countries far away, was meant to be a key takeaway of the course. Ensuring the representation of everybody is key to democracy, and the content we were covering, as we understand it to be the opposite of totalitarianism.
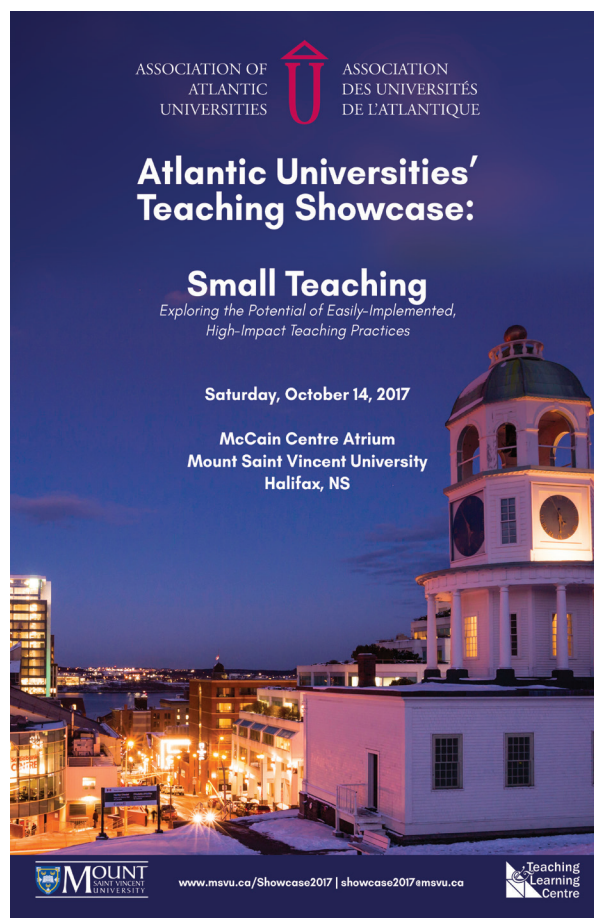
The course ended on the note of representation, applicable to governing systems that can mirror the classroom. If the implementation of a prevalent or dominant ideology, even one that is informed by rationality and scientific thinking, leads to violence against groups of people (their habitats, cultures and languages), then we should inquire into what has gone wrong. The experience of teaching a course which was structured in a way that mirrored the core content, left me with a few lingering questions: Why is it that the voices of certain groups or people do not get heard? Is it because they are not brought to the table to be discussed? Or is it because their voices are drowned out the by louder and more dominant ones? Are patterns in the content that we teach similar to those of the students we typically hear in our classrooms? To what extent can a humanities classroom be a space to represent the content of what we are teaching? And how does what we teach, and who teaches it, represent the core ideologies in our disciplines?

The process of developing and teaching such a global course provided a learning experience for me, and offered me the opportunity to interact with Canadian students in a way I had not experienced. The students' responses to the readings and the mid-term exam gave me fresh perspectives on the topics we had been discussing and that I had been studying in my own context. This is a topic I hope to write more about in the future.

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ASSOCIATION OF ATLANTIC UNIVERSITIES — ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITÉS DE L'ATLANTIQUE

Atlantic Universities' Teaching Showcase:

Small Teaching
Exploring the Potential of Easily-Implemented, High-Impact Teaching Practices

Saturday, October 14, 2017

**McCain Centre Atrium
Mount Saint Vincent University
Halifax, NS**

www.msvu.ca/Showcase2017 | showcase2017@msvu.ca

President's Graduate Student Teaching Award

Graduate student instructors, including the critical role of teaching assistants, make an indispensable contribution to university education: teaching in the classroom, leading seminars and tutorials, demonstrating in the laboratory, coaching, providing feedback on student work, and supporting students' success in numerous ways.

The Dalhousie President's Graduate Student Teaching Awards are open to all qualified graduate student instructors (currently registered Master's and Ph.D. candidates), including previous nominees (but not previous recipients).

Both applicants and nominators should consider the following list of criteria. A successful nominee will:

- Provide exceptional student learning experiences that are reflected through effective teaching practices.
- Demonstrate a commitment to their own professional development in teaching.

Awards Available: up to 3 awards will be presented

Award Value: each winner will receive $500

Award for Excellence in Graduate Supervision

Both applicants and nominators should consider the following list of criteria. Nominees should provide evidence of outstanding graduate supervision, which can include but is not limited to:

- Encouraging students' development as scholars through the stimulation and development of both key (inter)disciplinary research skills as well as general graduate professional skills.
- Mentoring students to become independent scholars in their field and ensuring that students receive support and guidance throughout their program.
- Acting as a role model in the discipline and sharing experiences that will inform students' graduate experience and future careers.
- Providing on-going constructive feedback on thesis progress to students and facilitating both the timely completion of students' programs and high completion rates for students.
- Demonstrating excellence in career development support for graduate students, both within and beyond the academy as appropriate to the discipline.

Awards Available: up to 1 award will be presented annually

Award Value: $1000 for the professional development of the recipient
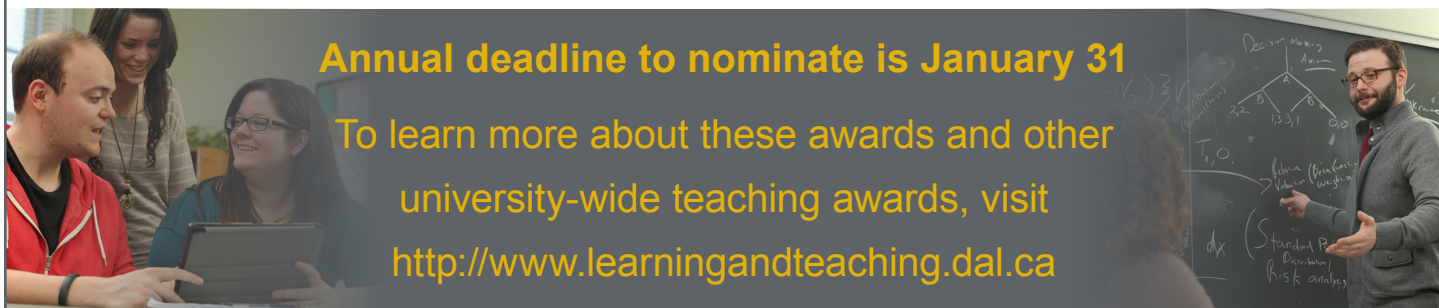
Annual deadline to nominate is January 31

To learn more about these awards and other

university-wide teaching awards, visit

http://www.learningandteaching.dal.ca

President's Graduate Student Teaching Award

David Beitelman
(Department of Political Science)

Sarah Greening
(Department of Chemistry)

"PhD candidates David Beitelman and Sarah Greening are each receiving the university's award for graduate student teaching. Beitelman, from the Department of Political Science, impressed the selection committee with how his students have benefitted from his unique ideas, entertaining professional lectures, pedagogical innovation and great efforts to support students expressing their individual views. Greening, from the Department of Chemistry, was cited for her innovative lab teaching efforts for students of diverse backgrounds, as well as her exemplary leadership and role as a volunteer in the community."

McNutt, R., Reeder, M. (June 15, 2017). Meet this year's Dalhousie teaching award winners. DalNews. https://www.dal.ca/news/2017/06/15/meet-this-year-s-dalhousie-teaching-award-winners.html

Award for Excellence in Graduate Supervision

Sherry Stewart
(Department of Psychiatry)

"Sherry Stewart, professor in the Department of Psychiatry with cross-appointments in Psychology & Neuroscience and Community Health & Epidemiology, is being celebrated for her sustained and energetic commitment to graduate supervision. A faculty member at Dalhousie for nearly 25 years, Dr. Stewart takes to her role as mentor and role model to her students with great pride; more than one letter of support in her nomination package used the phrase "best supervisor ever." Her students told the selection committee that she makes research fun, is always approachable and giving of her time, and showcases a great love and enthusiasm for her work."

McNutt, R., Reeder, M. (June 15, 2017). Meet this year's Dalhousie teaching award winners. DalNews. https://www.dal.ca/news/2017/06/15/meet-this-year-s-dalhousie-teaching-award-winners.html

Motivating Students to Become Lifelong Learners

Scarlett Kelly
Faculty of Management
MPA & MLIS Candidate 2018

The internet has changed higher education forever because it provides more channels for learning, while eliminating demographic, geographic, and temporal restraints. For example, YouTube provides various music lessons that meet the needs of beginning musicians through those who are established, who are seeking inspiration from masterclass artists. In this way, students no longer need to rely solely on the expensive Conservatory lessons and university music education. Instead, musicians can pursue other careers while continuing to enrich their music knowledge through online platforms. Traditional classroom-based subjects, such as biology and economics also have online classes and tutorials that help students learn outside the classroom and achieve lifelong learning skills. In this sense, the knowledge monopoly of the university has shattered because learners have more channels to achieve personal development and continuous learning throughout their lives. More importantly, unlike universities, the internet provides a platform that is open to everyone, despite people's previous education, knowledge level, or student loan status. Such an internet platform is not restrained by time, which enables convenient lifelong learning. Lifelong learning can be defined as a person's lasting active learning habit that is not restrained by schooling, location, age, socioeconomic status, and disciplines. In an era when knowledge is rapidly renewed, lifelong learning becomes crucial for a person to be competitive in the job market or for personal enrichment. In this sense, higher education has the responsibility to promote lifelong learning on the internet platform. Therefore, the internet has changed the role of higher education from simply providing knowledge to generating motivation and skills for lifelong learning in the internet age.

For higher education that aims to enhance lifelong learning through curriculum, the key to motivating lifelong learners is to make people feel that they are progressing at their own pace, because such a feeling makes them want to continue learning (Mayhew, Wolniak, & Pascarella, 2007). For example, a quantitative study of 405 undergraduate students, conducted to find which cognitive aspects can motivate lifelong learning, revealed that activities with clear purposes and expectations can increase students' orientations toward this skill, despite students' gender or race (Mayhew et al., 2007). Traditional classroom teaching needs to be more flexible and student-oriented. For educators, teaching skills that enable learning becomes more important than teaching knowledge. For students, the feeling that they can choose what knowledge to learn with the skills they've acquired from class can potentially make them feel empowered and generate interest in continuous exploration of new knowledge. From personal experience, I find that learning about how to conduct research, how to identify credible information online, and how to generate knowledge from a vast amount of information online are more beneficial than studying a small range of topics in class. Therefore, as a teaching assistant, I tend to provide tools to my students, such as how to identify useful databases and websites, instead of only the knowledge from textbooks.

However, increasing motivation comes with its own challenges. A controversy of lifelong learning in the age of the internet, is that even though universities and colleges no longer hold monopolies in knowledge, we still exist in a culture where diplomas and transcripts are the most valuable proof of education, knowledge, and experience. In other words, a person can self-study an art history course through open lectures, tutorials, textbooks, museum visits, other cultural events, and online discussion boards, but this person will not earn a degree in Art History. Because of this, the person will not be able to seek employment in the field, or pursue graduate level education in this discipline. This poses an interesting question: how can higher education create motivation for lifelong learning through the use of the internet, and what are ways we can acknowledge this form of learning?

Moreover, broader social challenges exist in the internet age of knowledge that go beyond the scope of higher education. First, access to the internet is not a right but a privilege, which is the central argument in the "digital divide" (Hoffmann, Lutz, & Meckel, 2014). For example, if people living in remote areas have difficulties accessing the internet, they will

not have the same opportunities to conduct lifelong learning as people living in urban areas. Older generations may not have the same skills of using the internet, or the same knowledge of finding resources as younger generations. Therefore, motivations are difficult to generate when the tools of lifelong learning (e.g., the internet) are not beneficial to all. Second, the class of origin theory indicates that a person's social background affects lifelong learning (Bukodi, 2017). For example, people coming from a professional or middle social class are more likely to gain further academic qualifications than people from lower social classes. Class mobility plays a crucial role in lifelong learning, as it has the potential to promote intergenerational class mobility, and enables learners from less-advantaged social backgrounds to benefit the most from lifelong learning. For example, people starting with a relatively low class position can increase their chances of attaining academic qualifications and moving into a higher professional class by engaging in lifelong learning habits (Bukodi, 2017). However, this theory also faces difficulties in its application in higher education, as it is neither valid nor is ethical for universities to promote lifelong learning by promising the advancement of social class through career advancement, as this depends on a range of additional variables. Moreover, the internet's role in lifelong learning with a purpose of social class mobility is vague.

All of the drawbacks and the limitations of the internet indicate that the functions of higher education must change in order to create motivations for lifelong learning. However, curriculum and activity design within higher education is not enough to solve the broader social problems that the internet brings. Therefore, educational institutions and policy makers need to work together in order to consider the demographic and age factors in lifelong learning, so that the internet can truly narrow the gap for education instead of enlarging digital divide. For example, two-tiered program design (teaching with and without the help of the internet) can potentially take people with limited internet access and digital skills into consideration. Ongoing interdisciplinary research in the areas of technology, sociology, and education is required to make recommendations on how to change the operations of higher education. Other challenges are large, including: the current funding models and eligibilities do not fit the needs for the increasing

interdisciplinary research and related joint degree programs (which usually take longer than single degree programs) and the conflicts between the traditional decision-making and the students' demand of evidence-based and transparent decision-making. These challenges require immediate changes in higher education in order to fit into the internet age, which features rapid information flow and open knowledge. To conclude, the internet provides a rich resource of knowledge and enables personal growth in the form of lifelong learning. Along with convenient access to knowledge, continuous personal growth becomes crucial in preparing students to enter the job market and be competitive. This calls for change in higher education; only when higher education continues to modify its functions and operations, will it realize the opportunities and meet the challenges that the internet age brings.

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Respect Week

September 25 - 29, 2017

Respect Week is a campus-wide initiative that aims to build on the university's annual Pink Day. Throughout the week (September 25-29, 2017), a series of events will be held on campus, providing an opportunity for people to discuss how we can further develop a respectful campus environment and reduce harassment, intimidation and bullying.

Dalhousie is a community where everyone has a shared responsibility for establishing and maintaining a culture of respect. It is our hope the Dalhousie community will be inspired to think critically and act with intent to create a safe, inclusive environment that we can all be proud of.

Interested in hosting an event or volunteering with us during Respect Week?
Email Shakira.Weatherdon@dal.ca to find out how you can get involved.

#DalRespect

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