



# enarratio

exposition ♦ recounting ♦ conversation

THE CENTER FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE BULLETIN

SPRING 2013

## Beginning the Conversation ...

By Erick Kelemen, Director, Center for Teaching Excellence

SECOND ANNUAL DISTINGUISHED  
GUEST LECTURE IN JESUIT PEDAGOGY

### IGNATIAN PEDAGOGY AS ACCOMPANIMENT

by M. Shawn Copeland, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Theology  
at Boston College

Tuesday, February 12, 2013 | 6 – 8 p.m.

E. Gerald Corrigan Conference Center  
12th-floor Lounge | Lincoln Center Campus

RECEPTION TO FOLLOW

The lecture will sketch some  
dimensions of accompaniment in  
teaching and service learning.

RSVP: [www.fordham.edu/ctelecture](http://www.fordham.edu/ctelecture)



We have several announcements that we do not want you to miss.

Our second annual distinguished guest lecture on Jesuit Pedagogy will be Tuesday, February 12, 6 – 8 p.m., with a reception to follow the lecture. The lecturer, M. Shawn Copeland, associate professor of theology at Boston College, will be speaking on “Ignatian Pedagogy as Accompaniment.” Professor Copeland sees taking up a position alongside the student as he or she learns to be the same as the position that the student takes up in service learning.

We hope you’ll consider attending.

RSVP by Friday, February 1, to [www.fordham.edu/ctelecture](http://www.fordham.edu/ctelecture).

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Terry Doyle, a professor of reading at Ferris State University in Michigan, author of *Learner Centered Teaching* (2011) and *Helping Students Learn in a Learner-Centered Environment* (2008), will be coming to speak on April 29. In advance of his lecture, the CTE began a “pass-it-along” book club in the fall, using learner-centered teaching, which we will gather to discuss on Thursday, April 11, at 1 p.m. If you’d like to read the book (we’ll provide you a copy) and perhaps join in the conversation then, please e-mail us to let us know.

Finally, we want to announce again that the CTE has three kinds of grants for which faculty can apply. The first is to provide start-up money (up to \$5,000) for individual faculty or groups of faculty who wish to develop interdisciplinary courses. The second is to provide Fordham teachers up to \$5,000 to plan and carry out a pedagogical program that will in some way benefit other Fordham teachers. We have funded workshops and lecture series, and we are willing to consider other kinds of programming. Applicants need to submit a memo detailing the need to be addressed, the plan to address the need, a budget, and an assessment plan. Finally, Fordham teachers can apply for assistance to travel to conferences on college teaching, such as the Lilly Conferences (<http://lillyconferences.com>), or other teaching conferences that are field-specific. On completion of any grant, the grantee needs to deliver to the CTE a short report about the results, something suitable for sharing in these pages.

If you have questions, please contact us! We know how hard each of you works, and we are proud to support your efforts. Drop us a line to let us know how it’s going and how we might help!

# Experiencing Byzantium with the Jesuits

by Jonathan Stanfill, Theology

As I prepared to teach Byzantine Christianity for the first time, I recognized that I faced several new challenges. First, how could I help my students overcome the foreignness of Byzantium? Second, how could I push beyond my comfort zone of my preference for textual analysis papers? While I certainly value this type of writing assignment, I wanted to expand the ways in which my students develop their writing. And third, how could I incorporate the rich material culture of Byzantine Christianity, but in such a way that was not merely showing more pictures in class?

My breakthrough came when I had the opportunity to spend a month exploring Byzantine Greece, including the churches in Thessaloniki, the spectacular Hosios Loukas, and the Byzantine imperial town of Mystras. This experience brought Byzantium to life for me in a way that merely reading their texts had not. So as I prepared for my class, I tried to think about ways in which I could utilize a sense of experiential encounter as the bridge between my students at Fordham University in New York and Byzantium.

My journey toward making this Byzantine Experience Project come alive was not, however, made alone. I had the wonderful support of the Jesuit Pedagogy Seminar led by Professors Michael Baur (Philosophy), Moshe Gold (English), and Christine Firer Hinze (Theology). At numerous points, as I conceived this project, I benefited from valuable insights and advice from our faculty, my colleagues in the seminar, and our readings from the Jesuit pedagogical tradition. I found my hopes for this project particularly validated when I read the words of Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Jesuits, who stated in a 2005 address that “Jesuit education strives to give learners ongoing development of their imagination, feelings, conscience, and intellect, and to encourage and help them recognize new experiences as opportunities to further growth.”

The first component of the Byzantine Experience Project sought to combine their encounter with Byzantine material culture with a creative writing exercise that was actually practiced by Byzantine students. After we had read about Byzantine churches, the orthodox liturgy, and devotional activities such as pilgrimage, I arranged a



private tour for the class at the Byzantine art exhibit at the Onassis Cultural Center in the city. They were asked to provide a sketch and write an ekphrasis, or poetic description of an artifact that caught their interest. For their guide, I had given them several ancient descriptions of how to compose an ekphrasis from the Greek *Progymnasmata*. But even with these brief and to-the-point descriptions, many of my students chafed at the foreignness of the exercise and the lack of examples to mimic. Yet they produced some of the best writing I have ever received! One crafted such a rich and emotive description of a sixth-century marble sculpture that it could bring tears to your eyes. Another poignantly captured a key feature of ekphrasis, wherein the style of the vocabulary reflects the object. She juxtaposed the tenderness of the original pagan sculptor with the abrasiveness of the later Christian defacer.

For the second component, I thought about how to help my students grasp the central importance of the cult of the saints for Byzantine society. So I decided to have my students create their own cult of the saints by utilizing the very processes that were critical in Byzantium—iconography and hagiography. This adventure began with each student selecting someone whom they thought was saintly (real or fictional). Then they had to justify their selection by writing a Byzantine-styled hagiography. To help them with this, we read a number of hagiographies, including St. Daniel the Stylite, St. Elizabeth the Wonderworker, and St. Mary/Marinos, and discussed how various tropes conveyed the “saintliness” of an individual. They also created an icon of their saint, using whatever artistic medium they wanted. The overarching question that they had to grapple with was,

*continued on page 9*

the research on the importance of the social and emotional environment in the classroom on student learning. I think Sylwester (1995) has it right: “Emotion drives attention, attention drives memory, and memory drives learning.” If students perceive my classroom as welcoming and also perceive me as caring about students and what I teach, then that is the best I can do over and beyond my competence in the subject and ability to teach.

As an example of the impact such an open approach can have on students, I would like to end with a quote from the final self-evaluation paper of a very bright and articulate student:

*“Reading over my journal in its entirety forces me to acknowledge the incredible growth I have experienced this semester as a result of Perennial Quest (course title). As the journal indicates, and as my memory confirms, I began the course reluctant, or more appropriately, unable to share openly in the class discussions, or even to honestly express myself in the journal. This closed-ness made itself more apparent to me through the psychosomatic pain I experienced for the first half of the course. However, I decided to take a risk and allow myself to speak and write freely, as well as to listen and read closely. My journey of the semester presented itself in the journal. The end*

*result is that right now I feel a tremendous sense of peace. In fact, the stomach pain, which has tormented me for years, has not been active in these last few weeks. I see this in itself as a clear sign of my personal growth.*

*I want to thank you for inviting me to make this journey and for these many gifts. I am so grateful that I could partake in this growth process and attain the delicious sense of peace. Thank you most especially for your openness, your nonjudgmental approach to your students, and for your love. Not only will I carry with me the lessons I have been granted during this semester, but I will also always remember you as a role model of healthy living, sincere interest in your work and your students, and the expression of genuine caring. Your living out of the words you impart to others, “Jai Bhagwan,” (I honor the divine within you.) has inspired me to embrace the radical transformation that has begun within me in order to be able to, as I see you do, breathe the divine with such peace and such profound joy.”*

## NOTES

Gladwell, M. (2005). *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. New York, NY. Little Brown & Co.

Sylwester, R. (1995). *A Celebration of Neurons: An Educators Guide to the Human Brain*. Alexandria, VA. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

“what makes a saint?” For instead of enforcing strict parameters on who they could select or mandating the specific number of tropes that had to be in their hagiography, I opted for the same fuzzy boundaries that existed for Byzantine Christians. As a result, we had very lively and exciting discussions about this ambiguity. In order for their new cult of the saints to emerge, I wanted to capture the competitive nature of the Byzantine process. Here, in particular, Jesuit pedagogy’s notion of friendly competition was very useful and, as a result, I incorporated both a peer-review component and a voting process. They read rough drafts and challenged each other on the persuasiveness of their hagiography. This whole process culminated with posting all of their icons and hagiographies on Blackboard and each student voting for their three favorite saints. The results were quite intriguing and the saint who received substantially more votes than any other was a Fordham freshman depicted as a Byzantine holy man and captured in a brilliantly crafted hagiography entitled *the Life of Holy Johnny the Freshman Roommate*.

In the end, I think this project was very successful. My students’ encounter with Byzantine Christianity was enriched through contact with their material culture, immersion in the important Byzantine genres through mimesis, and role-playing their own cult of the saints. This project also confirmed for me the payoff of incorporating a creativity-driven pedagogy. Not only was I surprised by the quality of the writing, but also I was amazed at my students’ appreciation, especially my science and business majors, for the opportunity to flex their creative muscles. It seems as though, in the end, I was indeed able to provide a bridge for my students here at Fordham to experience Byzantium. And for that, I am grateful to the Jesuit Pedagogy seminar for providing the impetus and support to pursue this project.

## Closing Question

### We know that students must be motivated in order to learn. But how?

Psychologists tell us that we each respond to extrinsic and intrinsic motivators. Extrinsic motivators for students include such things as grades, parents’ approval or censure, or some other reward. Intrinsic motivators begin with the student, his or her desires and goals, and his or her desire for autonomy. School is awash with extrinsic motivators. The hard part for teachers is to discover and activate the intrinsic motivators for each student.

Competitions often use extrinsic motivators—prizes—to inspire students to get in touch with their intrinsic motivators, such as the desire to improve or to develop mastery.

#### What do you do to motivate your students?

Write to us at [cte@fordham.edu](mailto:cte@fordham.edu) and let us know!