

HMU: Dialogues

Harrison Middleton University

5/15/2017

Edition 4, Volume 1

Letter from the Editor:

Today's newsletter celebrates our student and staff achievements. We are also looking forward to the summer when we will all be busy with events and much anticipated reading. See a little bit about Great Books Chicago 2017 as one example.

Do you participate in a local book club? Would you be willing to discuss your book club experiences? Alissa Simon is interested in learning more about what pleasure you receive from book discussions and also understand what it is you seek when discussing literature. Email asimon@hmu.edu if you are interested in sharing.

Are you looking for something you haven't found?

Try our Quarterly Discussions! Harrison Middleton University develops conversations about great ideas, and we are always grateful to students, staff and friends who join.

Be sure to check out hmu.edu for event updates, conference opportunities, continuing education opportunities or just read the weekly blog.

Please email asimon@hmu.edu with suggestions, achievements, and updates. We would love to hear from you! Thank you for your support and for being a part of the conversation!

Happy Spring! *Alissa*

"That is happiness:
to be dissolved in something complete and great."

~ Willa Cather

Reviews and More:

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Thanks to HMU Tutor, Alissa Simon, for the following book review.

Plutarch. The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Roman;, The Dryden Translation.

Throughout *the Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans*, Plutarch surprised me with his repeated generosity and devotion to virtue. I choose the word generosity deliberately. In his writings, Plutarch enables the reader to meet a variety of great characters, but he also expresses information and emotion regarding the virtues of their interaction with others. Each narrative builds a world around the main individual and describes them in the fullest context available. He discusses ancestry, birth, heritage, expectations, culture, education, friendships, travel and, of course, warfare. This is all in an attempt to better understand virtue.

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Let's Celebrate:

Congratulations to **Colette McClain** who successfully completed the Associate of Arts in Humanities program at Harrison Middleton University. **Ms. McClain** was also inducted into the Delta Epsilon Tau Honor Society, the premier national society for accredited distance learning institutions.

Congratulations to **Dr. Edgar Daniels** on completing the Continuing Education Diploma Program. **Dr. Daniels**, who is also a graduate of HMU's Doctor of Arts program, completed thirty continuing education units. **Dr. Daniels** created a diverse and challenging set of courses including Shakespeare's *Henriad* and First Tetralogy, readings on anarchy and civil disobedience, readings by Camus, the Q'uran, and many others. Many of **Dr. Daniels'** courses incorporated both text and film.

To be ignorant of the lives of the most celebrated men of antiquity is to continue in a state of childhood all our days.

~ Plutarch

Upcoming and Ongoing Events:



HMU Events:

Our next Quarterly Discussion will be held in July 2017 on Plutarch. Contact **asimon@hmu.edu** for more information or check hmu.edu for upcoming events.

Also, be on the lookout for film discussions beginning in fall 2017. Email **rfisher@hmu.edu** with questions about film discussions or continuing education opportunities.



Toronto Pursuits:

HMU Tutors, Gary Schoepfel and Rebecca Fisher, will be leading seminars at Toronto Pursuits this summer, July 16-21, 2017. The theme this year is "What can we know?" For more information visit the Classical Pursuits website at <http://www.classicalpursuits.com/toronto-pursuits/>.



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“Try not to
become a
man of success,
but rather
try to become
a man of
value.”

~ Albert Einstein

HMU Outstanding Graduate:

Congratulations to **Dr. Phillip Perry** upon recognition as the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) 2017 Outstanding Graduate (pictured).

During his career, journalist **Phillip M. Perry** has written extensively about business management, workplace psychology and employment law. Longing to expand his writing into the field of humanities, and unable to travel beyond New York City, he applied for the Doctor of Arts distance education program at Harrison Middleton University.

Dr. Perry incorporated the knowledge gained from the university’s Great Books program into his capstone project, a novel which explores the creative process by expanding on the writings of such diverse authors as Honoré de Balzac, John Locke, and Virginia Woolf. **Phillip** credits the critical thinking skills gained from his Harrison Middleton studies for the success of this novel, which is scheduled for publication in the fall of 2017 under the author’s pen name of Walter Idlewild. **Dr. Perry** is also active in several literary organizations, including the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics and Writers. The rigorous Harrison Middleton program, from which **Phillip** graduated with a 4.0 grade point average, also helped him hone his journalistic and business writing skills. The American Bar Association honored him with two “Value to the Reader Awards” for his published work. His syndicated business management column appears in scores of trade magazines. **Dr. Perry** is an elected member of the Delta Epsilon Tau Honor Society.

Great Books Southwest:



Mark your calendar for **February 16-18, 2018** at the Desert Botanical Gardens in Phoenix, AZ. This Great Books weekend will include discussions and presentations on music, film and television. We will be working with readings included in the Great Books Foundation upcoming publication - a trio of anthologies on popular culture titled: *Big Ideas in Popular Culture*. The individual book titles are: *Sound Bites: Big Ideas in Popular Music*, *Double Features: Big Ideas in Film*, and *Tube Talk: Big Ideas in Television*. This event will be sponsored by the Great Books Foundation and co-sponsored by the Alliance for Liberal Learning, Harrison Middleton University, Great Hearts Academies and Humanities and Sciences Ltd. More information coming soon or contact information@hmu.edu!

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Faculty Highlights:



~ Deborah Deacon

- ❖ presented her paper “Art as Conscience: Women’s Anti-War Art” and served as a discussant for the roundtable panel “Arts and War” at the Southwest Popular/American Culture Conference. <http://southwestpca.org/conference>
- ❖ In April, she was interviewed by Mark Brodie, Host/Producer at KJZZ 91.5 FM, for a piece on the recent film *Ghost in the Shell* and the reception of anime in America.

~ Alissa Simon

- ❖ presented a paper titled “Refracting Wheat: How Gluten Free Breads Translate Wheat” at the 2017 Southwest/American Popular Culture Conference in February. <http://southwestpca.org/conference>
- ❖ published three poems in *Crosswinds Poetry Journal*, May 2017. “Cherry Blossoms” received Honorable Mention. <http://www.crosswindspoetry.com/>

~ Philip Stewart

- ❖ became the editor of the peer-reviewed journal *Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio* in October 2016.
- ❖ published "Eschatological Verification as a Response to the Problem of Evil" (Fall 2016) and "Seelsorge, Trauma, and Moral Injury - Toward a Lutheran Understanding" (Spring 2017) in: *Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio* (Fall 2016) <http://mlisem.org/journal.html>
- ❖ attended professional development, "Moral Warriors, Moral Wounds: The Ministry of the Christian Ethic & Implications for Parish Ministry" with the Rev. Dr. Wollom Jenson, STS CAPT CHC USN (Ret) in March 2017 at the STS Florida Chapter retreat
- ❖ was commissioned as a Chaplain, 1st LT in the USAF Reserve in March
- ❖ In addition to HMU duties, beginning June 1, Philip Stewart will be the Associate Pastor of the Faith/Barley Evangelical Lutheran Parish in Duncansville/Hollidaysburg/New Enterprise, PA

~ **David Curd, Rebecca Fisher, and Lauren Guthrie** attended the 91st Annual Conference of the Distance Education Accrediting Commission in San Antonio, Texas. (April 23-25, 2017)

~ **Sue Durkin, Marge Metcalf, and Andy Tafoya** attended the Great Books Council of San Francisco’s Asilomar Great Books Weekend in California. (March 31 - April 2, 2017). Sue and Andy participated as discussion leaders.

~ **David Curd** attended the Association for Core Texts and Courses 23rd Annual conference in Dallas, TX in April 20-23, 2017.

~ **Michael Curd** attended the Society of International Business Fellows conference in Washington D.C. in May 6-9, 2017.

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Book Review Continued:

He also includes information about the women closest to them. He endeavors with great effort to learn about and write about the entire environment of the times while simultaneously excluding his own prejudices (which he admits is partially unavoidable).

Plutarch's *Lives* do not move chronologically. Instead, he chooses parallel leaders of similar virtues, explaining the history of each, first Greek and then Roman. He then writes a short comparison which includes his analysis of the leader, the times and the leader's reaction to the times. At the beginning of his section on Alexander, he writes, "My design is not to write histories, but lives." The distinction is important. Plutarch never intends to tell a chronological story. He never intends to map a geography. His proposal, and I believe, his great success, is to recreate a story of a real man who became larger than life and had to wrestle with extraordinary circumstances in his pursuit of excellence. In each section, the man outgrows his life, many of them with heartbreaking results. For example, Cato the Younger takes his own life after many long years of arguing that Julius Caesar's path would be ruinous to Rome. In other words, Cato, who self-identified as a stoic, took his own life when he realized that he was an anomaly according to contemporary society. He saw none of his own values reflected back to him from the society which had chosen Caesar. It is unclear whether the people chose, or whether the many factors involved became too complex a web to change. Either way, Cato, feeling sadness and defeat, removes himself. From this example, the reader better understands the complexity of the pursuit of virtue.

In another example, Tiberius Gracchus and his defenders are brutally butchered by senators wielding benches and the paraphernalia from the senate room. Plutarch notes, "[O]f the rest there fell above three hundred killed by clubs and staves only, none by an iron weapon." He also notes that this was the first seditious act experienced in Rome. Though Tiberius was a prized soldier, which is most often to be prized, it seems even more incongruous and painful for such a man to fall in an enclosed room of angry and jealous senators who disliked his austerity and friendship with the poorer class. Plutarch paints a brutal portrait of greed, jealousy and fear. In the comparison, then, it is not surprising to find that Plutarch prizes Tiberius' lack of aggression. In a life led by reason, logic and temperance, Plutarch is understandably outraged by a lack of compassion and civility, but can in no way support fighting one's own countrymen.

In the history itself, Plutarch discusses possible motivations and often comments on abuses, but he reserves final judgement until he places that person in contrast with another person. This is remarkable for two reasons. First, Plutarch himself struggles with the cultural ties that bind his own perspective. In order to better understand the intricate strings woven into culture, he identifies these great, heroic, brave and revered men, and places them one against another. This instructive device formalizes a sort of compassion that is difficult to demonstrate, especially in historical writings. This compassion, however, is a foundational piece of Plutarch.

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Presentation and Publication Highlights:

~ Doctor of Arts graduate **Dr. Michael Caba** has recently published some articles on biblical archaeology at bibleplaces.com. His latest post, Luke & Acts: Historical Reliability #4, is available at this link: <http://blog.bibleplaces.com/>.

~ **Dr. Ed Daniels**, graduate of HMU's Doctor of Arts program and currently enrolled in HMU's Diploma Program, presented at the 36th Annual New York State Middle School Association Conference in Watkins Glen, New York on October 21, 2016. The title of the presentation was *Use Cooperative Learning to Reduce Bullying in The Classroom*. **Dr. Daniels** wrote an accompanying article, *Bullying, Imbalance of Power, and Cooperative Learning*, that was published in the Fall edition of the NYS Middle School Association Journal, IN Transition. The article may be accessed at: <http://www.nysmsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Fall-2016-Bullying-for-Web.pdf>. **Dr. Daniels** also made a presentation to the Levittown Historical Society on November 21, 2016 about a booklet he wrote called *Mass Producing the American Dream*. The presentation was about how the creation of Levittown, New York by Levitt and Sons allowed the American Dream of home ownership to come true for thousands who would never be able to own their own homes given traditional home building methods.



HMU friends and staff take a short break at Great Books Chicago 2017. From left to right: Sean Forrester, Rebecca Fisher (HMU Tutor), Gary Schoepfel (HMU Tutor), John Riley (Great Books Foundation board member and HMU adjunct-faculty), and Joseph Coulson (Great Books Foundation President and HMU adjunct-faculty).

Great Books Chicago 2017

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This year's theme of Great Books Chicago was "Who We Are and Who We Desire to Be." Discussions centered on *Her Own Accord: American Women on Identity, Culture, and Community*, the Great Books Foundation's exciting new anthology that explores issues of identity, family, relationships, work, and politics. We also discussed Willa Cather's most famous novel, *My Ántonia*.

Other highlights included a presentation by artist, Sean Forrester titled "Workers, Thinkers, Artists, Mothers, Lovers and Friends." Sean's presentation was paired with a visit to the Art Institute of Chicago to see the pieces he discussed. We were also privileged to hear Dr. Christine Hooker present about "the Science of Gender Bias and the Gender Bias in Science."

We are all looking forward to Great Books Chicago 2018!

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Book Review Continued:

He genuinely felt the importance of each scene that he describes, and most definitely understood the intricate web of events and backstory. Secondly, Plutarch's reluctance to judge based upon immediate evidence leads to a broader discussion and development of virtue. At times, he finds the cultural hero to be of lower virtue than previously imagined. Myth often breeds inaccuracies. Plutarch attempts to enlighten us by removing the heroic figure from the man in discussion of the path from man to cultural hero. Therefore, his writings instruct future generations on a vast conglomeration of past actions. The importance of this cannot be underscored enough.

My main frustration with Plutarch's text is that a few of his comparisons are missing, most notably, Caesar and Alexander. I wonder what he actually said when comparing these two great leaders and warriors. Plutarch often scolds others for an over-abundance of ambition, which is undoubtedly true in the case of these great warriors. But, is it possible that Plutarch noted a greater good extending from the leadership and actions of these two who undoubtedly caused greatness to be mixed with much ruin and destruction? The reader is meant to ponder, and so, as is always the case with a great work, one is left with more questions than answers.

Plutarch values love, but does not condemn the men whose marriages are without love. Plutarch values compassion, but does not condemn the actions that seem to lack compassion. Plutarch values action, but does not immediately revere a man of action. Instead, the magic of this text is that Plutarch describes life, in all its complexity. He honestly recreates the lives of famous individuals and then offers judgement based upon all of the gathered information, including cultural restrictions. I strongly feel that this invaluable text should still be studied and discussed because it deals with the idea of virtue from the very beginnings of human history. It grants a sweeping view of history, but also reinforces the fact that we experience the same emotions, desires and needs as our ancestors. This history is not so ancient as to be irrelevant, but quite the reverse. Plutarch's exhaustive research and careful reason are still worthy of attention. I do not intend to say that one must agree with Plutarch's definition of virtue, but rather how fruitful it is to see history through someone else's eyes.

“And the most glorious exploits do not always furnish us with the clearest discoveries of virtue or vice in men; sometimes a matter of less moment, an expression or a jest, informs us better of their characters and inclinations, than the most famous sieges, the greatest armaments, or the bloodiest battles.”

~ Plutarch, “Alexander”