

# CASE STUDIES

These six case studies illustrate how transformative and spiritual elements are manifesting in higher education. Three are stories of professors who incorporate these practices into the classes they teach; three illuminate efforts to bring transformation and spirituality in at the programmatic or departmental level.

Each case study is divided into three sections – Theory, Practice, and Impact – to convey both the theoretical underpinnings and the practical applications present in each example. All text is taken directly from the interview transcripts.

At the end of each program case study, we've included supplemental information, including examples of department mission statements and curriculum requirements.

## *In the Classroom*

- Roanoke College, English Department (Michael Heller)
- Bowdoin College, Division of Art History (Susan Wegner)
- University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Transformative Learning Center (Edmund O'Sullivan)

## *In Programs and Departments*

- California State University, San Bernardino, Integrative Education (Sam Crowell)
- University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Jazz and Contemplative Studies Program (Edward Sarath)
- State University of West Georgia, Department of Psychology (Tobin Hart)

## Transformative and Spiritual Practices in the Classroom

- **Roanoke College, Salem, VA**
- **English Department**
- **Interviewee: Michael Heller, Professor of English**
- Michael is a longtime member of the Friends Association for Higher Education, a group of faculty members across the country who have together been exploring these themes in higher education.



*“For me, the essence of this is the classroom that values the inward life as a resource for encountering the world and for transformative action for social justice. I think we need more programs which nurture this motion from inward life to outward life, from contemplation to action.”*

### **THEORY**

How I understand the contemplative mind is that we have two selves, and there are various names for these two selves. There is the self and the other, the yin and the yang. Among early Quakers it was the creature and the spirit, or the earthly self and the spirit. For Quakers, “that of God in every person,” the spiritual element is not the person, so it is something other than the self. The reason for the silence is to listen for that still, small voice within...I think that when we acknowledge it, and help our students acknowledge it, it is empowering to listen to both selves, to self and other, all of it, and this listening is where wisdom comes from...

I like to tell my students that what we are about is an inward journey and an outward journey of consciousness. Most of our education is about the outward journey, but we need both. So my classes nurture both the inward and the outward journey.

### **PRACTICE**

In most of my classes we begin with a short period of journal writing, which is a time of silence and a contemplative few minutes in the beginning of class. I find that the students and I get centered by doing this. Then every few weeks I ask them to write a one or two page piece, called a “small writing,” and then share that one small statement of where they are with the group.

I require them to learn everyone’s name in the class. Names are important. We sit in a circle and everyone gets copies of everyone else’s writing, and I do the writing along with them. The circle is a symbolic enactment of democracy where every person matters. I want them to speak to the whole group and not just to me, and I want them to listen to each other. They take the pieces home and read them, and then I ask them to write notes

to each other. In the next class we talk about them and read some aloud.

There are three basic questions [for the journal]. The first question is, “What matters here?” I tell them that if they ask that question of themselves in every class, they will get better grades. This question is about taking ownership for oneself in the world, and it leads to that. And that’s why this classroom is a community, because we are taking ownership for our role in the classroom. And I think it all goes back to caring. The format of this is to encourage people to care – care about the work and care about each other. The second big question is, “Where are you now?” This question has implications about maps, the map of our lives, where are you on the map. It’s psychological and emotional. Where are you with your feelings, where are you spiritually? The third big question is “What do you know now?” This question is the question behind all traditional research papers. You’ve done the research or read the text, now tell me what you know, what you can say about it.

I want the students to think about knowing on different levels, not just the intellectual level. So I’m trying to get them to write from their experience, to value their own experience.

I think one reason the discipline of English is transforming is that it contains elements that are inherently contemplative. In my teaching, I’m now talking about teaching the contemplative essay or the lyric essay, which is teaching that encourages ownership for and understanding of the inner life as a creative resource. So it’s not that we want to deny this outward life or textual knowledge. But we want students to combine the outward life and textual knowledge with seeing their own experience inwardly as a resource. Our text is the self, the community, and the world.

### **IMPACT**

I’ve been in lots of classes that don’t have these practices. I enjoyed the intellectual challenge in these classes, but when I tried not to do these things in my own classroom, it just didn’t work for me. It feels like a class without heart. I’ve tried to teach classes without the journal and without the small writings, and for me it feels like our whole enterprise lacks heart and community. The class loses meaning for me. And there is a fair amount of traditional stuff in my class.

I don’t think that contemplation necessarily leads to love and forgiveness. But, I think it has great potential for nurturing love and forgiveness. It has to do with nurturing individual ownership for oneself in community. And I think teachers and professors have an important role as mentors and models of a way of being, and I think that contemplative education is not divorced from content or academic disciplines. I think there is a danger in the eyes of those people who would be opposed to this, thinking that we are teaching love and forgiveness, which implies some sort of empty academic enterprise. But I think that love and forgiveness are inherent in every discipline. I picked up a book this week that has a quote that I liked by the poet Theodore Roethke, “When I say I teach out of love, I mean just that, by God.”

- **Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME**
- **Interviewee: Susan Wegner, Professor of Art History, Director of the Division of Art History**
- Susan recently received a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies and the Center for the Contemplative Mind in Society to incorporate contemplative practices into an Art History course.



*“Having an intellectual knowledge of meditation practices and past cultures is one level of understanding, but having a personal and experiential approximation of the contemplative practices of past cultures gives a deeper, richer entry into these objects.”*

#### **THEORY**

The ways that I have incorporated contemplative practices into my classes is connected to the subject matter we study. Both classes are small seminars, so they allow a lot of room for experimentation. Both classes have studied the contemplative tradition within Western Europe and the Renaissance, incorporating the visual arts.

I’m beginning to think that contemplative practice is essential for the study of devotional art from these periods. Working with visual art subjects requires time. These are texts that need to be read, and it takes time to read them, and they are also objects that need to be experienced face-to-face. You stand in front of them, hold them in your hands, look them in the eye, awed by the scale of them, or drawn in by the intimacy of their tiny-ness. If part of the historian’s job is to try to retrieve the makers and viewers of these cultural objects, then the more we can approximate their spiritual and devotional insights and practices, the more we can appreciate and understand how the objects were utilized, appreciated, valued, and how they were understood.

#### **PRACTICE**

We studied the tradition of Lectio Divina in medieval manuscripts and in representations of pious widows, and then we attempted an approximation of the practice of Lectio Divina within the group itself. This was one of my challenges, trying to teach a practice form without demanding or requiring that there be a spiritual context for it. We had a biblical text, a short one, and we read it out loud in class. Then people could meditate on it, taking the forms of journal writing, thinking or considering, or drawing. Then we read the same text again. The next stage is Oratio Prayer, which is offering a personal reply after having meditated on the text. It’s finding something [from the text] that connects to oneself, a word or an image, and then making some sort of reply, be it a vocal or silent or written prayer. Then we read the same text one more time, slowly and out loud, and followed this by silent sitting. This is the final stage of listening. Not thinking, cogitating, speaking, but being silent, open, accepting of whatever might come.

Another example that had a profound effect on students in the most recent course was that we went together as a class to a labyrinth that is available locally on the grounds of a church. We walked the labyrinth in silence in the evening, with candles around the edges and a quiet Gregorian chant playing. Students reported that it had an immense effect on them. To have the opportunity to take a half-hour for silent movement allowed for many thoughts and emotions to come up for them. When they each got to the center, they spent a quiet moment sitting there, reflecting. Then they each took a quiet moment when they got back out of the labyrinth.

We also looked at text from a variety of traditions from the Medieval and Renaissance periods, and these gave some instructions for meditation practices. For example, a Franciscan practice that encourages strong visualization of the birth of Christ, inviting people to put themselves in that moment and experience personally the sounds and sights and elements of that event.

We did some quiet sitting. We studied a tradition through a late medieval text called the "Cloud of Unknowing." Essentially, [the practice] is sitting in silence in a quiet place, quieting the mind and using a single word, such as love or God, so as the mind ruminates or rushes around, you can return to that word. The last part of this practice is sitting with an openness, a passiveness, a not doing, saying, thinking anything.

### **IMPACT**

I think that walking the labyrinth was a peak experience for several members of the class. One student said how important the walk had been for him. It was his first semester here, and he'd been floundering under all the pressures of a first semester. He said that he'd been able to leave a lot of that along the pathway as he was moving toward the center. The process helped to center him. It was clear that he felt a tremendous relief, and that going through the process unburdened him in a profound way.

As a result of these practices, there is definitely is a closer connection between the students and the instructor. We developed different levels of communication, or knowing one another as individuals, in part because they were both small classes. I can also feel a new willingness to welcome silence during the class hour. Not every second has to be filled up with talking. And there is a willingness to take some more chances, to experiment with forms of teaching and learning that may turn out to be successful, or maybe not. There is a release from the tyranny of grading and judging and calculating, and all of that stuff. I would guess that in this last class, the grades that they got from it were the least of what they took away from the experience.

This has really been a remarkable experience for me. Not always easy, but I'm determined to build more of [these practices] into my classes. It's opened up some ideas about teaching that I had been hesitant to explore before. The idea that students benefit from time for reflection and silence, from an opening away from the pressures of competition or the hurrying to complete deadlines -- that [they can experience that] learning isn't some sort of a road race. This goes so counter to the usual forms that we have found ourselves falling into.

- **Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), at the University of Toronto, Ontario**
- **Interviewee: Edmund O’Sullivan, Professor and Director of the Transformative Learning Center**
- Edmund is a leading scholar/practitioner in the transformative learning movement, and is just beginning to use formal meditation and contemplative practices in the classroom.



*“Higher education institutions have become so accommodating to modern Western economic consequences that there is no spirit in these institutions. If the university does not connect itself to the larger life forces, the community life, to social movements, it loses its soul.”*

#### **THEORY**

We try to look into the historical understanding of education and into historical change. We are [living in] a dramatic period in history, and it demands us not to stay in the past or go back to old forms or even to accelerate where we are today - namely, western capitalism. We cannot continue to hold onto these processes which were once high points. The acceleration of industrial and commercial world ventures are devastating the earth processes and human communities.

We have a course called “An Introduction to Transformative Learning.” This learning takes place in a “value-full” rather than “value free” environment. We say that in order to be a learner, you have to be able to survive, critique, and create. Survival means acknowledging that we are living in a perilous period of history - this has to be coded, understood and articulated. There are reasons for this. These reasons move us toward critique. They demand a critical understanding of the dynamics of the systems of power. We are trying to move (as a vision) away from a technological, market-driven perspective of the world, to a more planetary conception - that the earth is seen as something much larger than the market. In this transition period, the market has to be seen within the larger context, and if it is not, we will continue on this destructive path.

Cognitive and rational thought are embedded in the Western worldview, and it is male-based and patriarchal. When we start to look at the trajectory of this through the major thinkers - Plato, Aristotle, Bacon, Hume, Copernicus - we see that this is male thinking and it skews the way we look at the world. It requires looking at knowledge in the context of social power - these are the dominant forms of thinking.

From a practical perspective, this male-centered view disengages values from the conceptual world. If we can just think about something we can solve it. The way we think about something also affects the way we value things. The way we value things will also affect the way we think about things. So if we think about the earth as

something to be valued only economically, rather than being valued for itself, then if it doesn't have economic value, it has no value.

When you begin to examine these issues, it puts the student in touch with the social justice positions they have. This moves them into a moral point of view. It calls out for something that is not merely cognitive.

### **PRACTICE**

In my class, as part of the critical analysis in examining modernism, progress, globalization, consumer patterns, and the power momentum of that, we watch a film called "Affluenza." A woman is diagnosed with Affluenza, and the whole development of her lifestyle and consumption patterns are depicted, along with the effect it has had on her family and community life. We reflect together on these patterns and discuss how we can live an earth-friendly lifestyle. The students can take action in their own lifestyles. Then it is suggested that there is a project we can do in OISE that comes as a result of this reflection in class. For example, in the cafeteria, having a greater attention to recycling and the types of food offered -- asking them to purchase local produce.

We watched a film called "The Color of Fear." It raised issues for the students of color. People got defensive. It revealed the -isms we carry around with us. We acknowledged that this too is part of our learning process. A few of the people of color didn't feel that they could go forward with the discussion because the white people wouldn't want to hear it. So we did a spot check. We did a meditation for four or five minutes and asked that folks sit and get composed and centered. Then, without cross-talk, we invited people to go around and speak. People felt like they could be authentic and speak from where they were - they got their piece out. People brought out that dealing with race issues is very difficult. These things have to be discussed and worked through. We don't have to push away controversy to have peace. An energy developed out of this that allowed people to see what others actually think, rather than what they think they think.

We invite the formation of communities of understanding to counteract these forces. In a communal context, we can involve ourselves in social movements. We went to the World Trade demonstrations in Quebec - one of the G7 meetings. Some went to the World Social Forum on social justice and ecological awareness. We get involved in actually engaging in and changing these processes. It's history in the making.

### **IMPACT**

There is a wide range of things that people want to engage in as learners. When I look at their issue papers, people make some really interesting shifts in their own consciousness. One student, who is an artist, felt that her art was just personal to her. As a result of going through the course, she began to see her art in a wider participatory way - she saw herself as a planetary being - that she was connected and has an appreciative responsibility for the earth. Now she's teaching artful inquiry in outdoor education.

In my course, when we reflect on quality of life, we ask Mary Oliver's question, "What are you going to do with this one wild and precious life?" This is what shakes people up. This is an essential part of transformative learning, and mindfulness is an absolutely essential dimension of transformative learning.

## Transformation and Spirituality at the Program/Department Level

- **California State University, San Bernardino**
- **Integrative Studies**
- **Interviewee: Sam Crowell, Professor of Education**
- Sam founded the Masters Degree Program in Integrative Education in 1994. With Bob London, he also co-founded the Network of Spirituality and Education.



*“Authentic spiritual practice leads to compassionate service in the world. It provides a way for universities to redefine what service really means. Spiritual practice leads us to the natural wisdom within us.”*

### **THEORY**

For us, the notion of integration had at its core a deep implication for wholeness, relationship (materially as well as emotionally), context, dynamic processes, teleos, interconnectedness, self-organization and emergence, as well as non-linear processes and creative disequilibrium. We also believed that at its core, integration was spiritual, and that any program in integration needed also to consider deeply transformative processes that assist us in personal integration.

Several of us also were deeply sympathetic to critical theory and social transformation - to the idea of engaged service and commitment in the world. For us, the program was a cultural project—one that allowed us to explore how these ideas can be lived, developed, and institutionalized in a higher education setting.

This sense of the spiritual/transformative/contemplative fits nicely into teaching if we start with the premise that “We teach who we are.” This leads to a genuine investigation into ourselves as part of the process of teaching authentically. It also invites us to investigate our own assumptions, mental models, experiences, and philosophies. We follow Jacob Needleman’s notion of philosophy as “living within the question” and we approach our program as an effort to embrace that ideal and stand in front of ourselves with honesty, introspection, reflectiveness, and contemplation. When we respond to knowing with our whole being, it not only changes us and our circumstances, but it also transforms the nature of what is known.



## **PRACTICE**

We organized the core program to be taught on five Saturdays during the quarter. We called [these Saturday sessions] “Odysseys.” We conceived of the term “odyssey” to represent an open exploration of ideas which permitted meandering processes that might lead to a variety of new questions, other disciplines or, drawing from the experience and interests of our students, might take us in directions we did not initially conceive.

The structure would be thematic, [with themes] to be explored in depth by several different disciplines. The six courses were 1) World Views and Paradigms, 2) The Nature of Meaning: Personal, Disciplinary, Cultural, 3) Using the Arts to Create Meaning, 4) Technology as an artistic medium, 5) Creating an Integrative Curriculum, and, 6) Questions of Integrative Research. Each of these original themes has evolved over the years and we have modified them according to our own interests and understandings as well as the needs of the students.

Our students, who are primarily teachers from K-12 schools or community colleges, enroll only once a year, in the fall, and that enrollment constitutes a cohort of students who commit to going through the two-year integrative core together. We have found that this allows us the opportunity to develop a very powerful learning community where each cohort comes to have its own unique personality, identity, concerns, and dispositions.

We try to concentrate more on integrative cognitive processes rather than integrative content. Last fall I co-taught a section of the [core integrative] program with a visual artist and Zen monk. We tried to do two things—to use the arts to increase our sense of intuition and meaning, and to begin to explore the way we think through different art modalities...We created a labyrinth as an example of ancient participation in a collective and individual consciousness, tracing its historical linkages to many cultures and times. We walked the labyrinth in isolation, as if on a journey to our own center. In discussions, our students noted the sacred qualities of the experience, art as a communal activity, the need for quiet, for a slower mode of experiencing and of processing how meaning develops within our experience and how that meaning can transcend disciplinary boundaries.

We try to provide some exposure to various practices from spiritual traditions and invite students to engage in their choice of contemplative practice during the course. We also offer a secularized contemplative practice known as “heartmath,” based on new developments in the field of neuro-cardiology.

## **IMPACT**

Contemplative approaches connect us with feelings of awe and wonder and the consideration of great mystery. I can’t think of any discipline that isn’t truly enriched when it connects students with questions of mystery, imagination, and awe - the wonder of it all, the wonder of ourselves, the wonder of our relationship with all creation.

Awareness is at the crux of all learning. Contemplative and spiritual approaches enhance what this means and promote a process of “unlearning” that is so essential to real

transformation and substantive change. Expansiveness is an attribute of spiritual practice that opens us to larger realities and a compassionate acceptance of one another. This is so needed in our institutions.

Two central questions should guide all curricula: Helping each student explore sincerely 1) What kind of person do you want to become? And, 2) What kind of world do you want to live in? All our disciplines and all our knowledge can make room contextually for the development of these questions. I would hope that among the highest consideration of conclusions is building our capacity for love and forgiveness.

### **Department Information**

California State University, San Bernardino  
University Parkway  
San Bernardino, CA 92407  
<http://soe.csusb.edu/>

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Department of Language, Literacy, and Culture is to provide for the education of candidates in the College of Education's programs through the support of the professional development of department faculty members.

### **Belief Statements:**

- We believe that education is a transformational teaching/learning process and that it is dynamic, ongoing, and developmental for people at any age.
- We believe a focus on the meaning constructed by the learner is central to the teaching- learning process.
- We believe that human development and learning are significantly shaped by the social context of the teaching/learning process.
- We believe that recognizing diversity is central to the teaching/learning process. Furthermore, quality education requires a valuing of human diversity and is tied to the struggle for social justice. As such, socio-political consciousness and critique are both part of the education process and a desired outcome of education.

### **Composition of Department**

Organized around the above belief statements, the department is composed of an interdisciplinary faculty who focus on the theoretical and social contexts of education that shape development, learning, and literacy in all its forms. The "theoretical contexts" of education include the ideas, philosophies, and orientations that shape the nature and goals of schooling. The "social contexts" of learning and literacy include the social, cultural, political, linguistic, and semiotic structures and practices of schools as well as the communal, societal, and international settings in which classrooms and schools exist. Faculty within this interdisciplinary department teach in virtually all College of Education programs. Faculty expertise is varied and includes psychological foundations of education; philosophical, social, and cultural foundations of education; curriculum; language acquisition; reading; math education; music education, bilingual education; multicultural education; international education; and special education.

- **University of Michigan, Ann Arbor**
- **Interviewee: Edward Sarath, Professor of Music and Chair of the Department of Jazz and Contemporary Improvisation**
- Within the past few years, Ed has created the Jazz and Contemplative Studies Program within the music department; the first academic program in the country devoted to exploring how contemplative practices can inform a field of study.



*“The interest is strong and the time is right in the education world for these explorations to take off. Yes, higher education is so grounded in such narrow values that it will take a bit of effort, but once the floodgates open, they are going to open really wide.”*

## **THEORY**

Education needs to be more complete. Conventional education can cover part of the spectrum, but not all of it. There is a transpersonal or spiritual domain, and it is a neglected area in education... I’m excited about reconstructing education from the ground level so that the transpersonal and spiritual are integrated right at the core.

We have no choice. Humanity is a point where change has to take place. And it has to take place in education because education shapes society more than any other realm. Public school teachers are trained at colleges and universities, and it is here where the paradigm is either perpetuated or transformed. This is why I am so committed to working for change at the level of higher education. The irony of this is that in some ways the greatest resistance will come from the higher education community.

Transformation on the level of consciousness can occur through many different methodologies...Transformation involves a continuum of experience that extends from the pure silence that we can access through meditation practice, through a whole range of other things that are more active and that can help us carry the connection with that core [of silence] into other realms of our lives. Some of these [more action-oriented] things include community service, creative expression, which can be arts, sports, human interaction, as well as normal sorts of every day activities that are intellectual or work-related. Any sort of job or thing that we do can be informed by other parts of the continuum. For me, the silence is the core because it is the anchor; a kind of anchor that takes us beyond the complexities of the field of action in which it is very easy to get caught up, like the politics of a situation, or our personal attachments in the realm of change. If we can ground transformation in that silence, in pure consciousness, then this

enables the more active manifestations of change to be directed by a more powerful source that is more inclusive of, and progressive for, the world at large.

### **PRACTICE**

Over the years, I've designed a contemplative, or transpersonal, approach to improvisation. Many times I would have students meditate before a performance or before or during a course. I do these things called "Silence Studies," where we use silence as part of the music itself. Often the discussion turns to the creative process and improvisation in relationship to spirituality.

I designed a course called "Creativity in Consciousness Studies," and then a second one called "Contemplative Practice Seminar." These are the two core courses in the BFA in Jazz and Contemplative Studies. Students first take the "Creativity in Consciousness" class, then they take four terms of the "Contemplative Practice Seminar" over the course of four semesters. There are at least five terms in the curriculum where they are expected to maintain a contemplative practice.

My courses for students from different departments on campus [beyond the music department] begin with 15 -20 minutes of group meditation. Everyone chooses her/his own practice for the period of silence. Then we have some discussion about experiences that they are having during their practice, and questions arise. Then we get into theoretical questions and discussion. We talk about psychological and philosophical models of consciousness. I am interested in exposing them to different theories about the nature of consciousness.

Then there creative projects or exercises that we also do, depending on the class. I have these rhythmic exercises that can be very meditative in an active sort of way. Then of course in the music improvisation classes, the students will have instruments. These classes usually focus on musical issues, but if we do practice meditation, we'll talk about it, and the theoretical and spiritual aspects of it.

### **IMPACT**

Students are reporting a lot of different things. One of the most common is less anxiety in their lives and their studies. They also report a greater sense of meaning in their studies, as the study is connected to something very important to human existence. They also note a greater sense of interconnectedness between topics. Some students are reporting what you might call a greater flow in their work.

I gain a lot of inspiration from the students, and from seeing that this current generation of students is really thirsty for this kind of knowledge...In one sense, it would be easier on a day-to-day level to not have my hands so full with the political and other struggles that are inherent in trying to bring contemplative studies into the academy. On the other hand, the more I think about it, the more I realize that it's not really a choice, it's the natural course of evolution.

All along I had the notion that it would be great to have a whole curriculum oriented in this direction. When the Contemplative Mind Fellows Program came into being in 1999 I was thrilled. It gave credibility to these desires, and I felt that if I got the fellowship it would empower my personal initiative. And it did.

One of the things I did when the contemplative curriculum was approved was I formed the Faculty Network for Creativity and Consciousness Studies at the University of Michigan. The group has about 50 members. To get things going, I sent out an email and a description of what this network might do. I was very encouraged by the diversity and, somewhat, by the volume of the responses I got. Faculty in psychology, aerospace, business and music joined the network. The group meets about once a month and we discuss topics related to contemplative and spiritual issues. One of our current projects is to develop a campus-wide minor in Creativity and Consciousness Studies, a sort of parallel to the Contemplative Jazz Studies Program. In the last couple of months I also started [a campus-wide initiative called] STATE, Students, Teachers and Administrators for Transpersonal Education.

The thing I'm realizing is that I have a very clear thing that I want to do and it's huge. Michigan is a state university, so to do this here would be quite something. If some of the things we have talked about in this interview would happen, it could establish a kind of prototype for other schools. It seems to me that the most important thing now is for one school to really achieve a breakthrough.

### **Department Information**

University of Michigan  
School of Music  
1100 Baits Dr  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-2085  
Phone: (734) 764-0593  
[www.music.umich.edu/departments/jazz/degree.lasso](http://www.music.umich.edu/departments/jazz/degree.lasso)

### **Bachelor of Fine Arts in Jazz and Contemplative Studies: Degree requirements**

This highly interdisciplinary program combines a solid grounding in jazz and improvised music study with courses which involve meditative practices and other areas related to creative development.

#### *Music Requirements:*

- \* One year of piano or the equivalent by examination
- \* Twenty-four hours of private performance instruction in the student's principal instrument (or voice) or the equivalent by proficiency examination
- \* Eight terms of ensemble including large and small jazz ensembles, and Creative Arts Orchestra (an eclectic improvisation ensemble)
- \* Four terms of Contemplative Practice Seminar
- \* Four terms of music theory including the study of the structure of primarily tonal music

through ear-training and sight-singing, written work in construction and composition, and musical analysis

- \* Two terms of Musicology exploring European and American music history, as well as the sounds and concepts of many world music traditions

- \* Five terms of Jazz and Improvisation

- \* One term each of Jazz Composition, Creativity and Consciousness, Music in Culture, and Music of Asia

- \* Electives in music to total ninety hours

*Non-music courses:*

A minimum of thirty hours including the University's two semester English writing requirement. The remainder of non-music courses are to be selected from among courses in Art History (e.g., Art and Spirituality), Judaic Studies (e.g., Models of Jewish Renewal), Psychology (e.g., Psychology and Spirituality Development), the Residential College (e.g., Consciousness and the Brain), Religion (e.g., Islamic Mysticism, Jewish Mysticism, or the History of Christian Thought), and Asian Studies (e.g., Buddhist Studies)

- **State University of West Georgia, Carrollton, Georgia**
- **Department of Psychology**
- **Interviewee: Tobin Hart, Associate Professor of Psychology**
- The Psychology Department, grounded in the traditions of humanistic and transpersonal psychology, offers a BA and MA in psychology. There are about 100 masters level students and about 400 undergraduates. The university has about 9,500 students.



*“We gather around the fire of information, but that information is only relevant as it becomes integral in our lives. When we open deeply enough, we have the capacity to see information in new ways, and it has the capacity to simultaneously transform us.”*

#### **THEORY**

At the heart, [education] is about using information, but not getting seduced by facts and factoids. It’s about realizing that we develop knowledge and intelligence and understanding and wisdom, and finally go all the way to the bone of transformation.

There are three eyes of knowing -- rational, sensory, and contemplative (St. Bonaventure said this). And while we have focused on the rational and the sensory (rational empiricism), we have left the contemplative behind. If the goals of education become as much about entertaining the notion of wisdom as about the download of information, then we need to include the contemplative and the transformative and the ethical...

So what we are arguing for here is a less detached empiricism. What these other ways of knowing do is open the possibility for creative problem solving, creative discovery, for synthesis, pattern recognition, for epiphany. All these things are outcomes, but it begins with something very simple -- the notion of beholding. Rather than controlling or predicting or manipulating, if we begin with simple appreciation, that childlike wonder that Einstein had, we begin to see things in less rigid categories, and so the possibility for the unexpected can increase.

#### **PRACTICE**

In practice, we have an integrative approach to psychology. What that means is that we ask two questions: Who am I? And, who are you? It’s about self-knowledge, knowledge of others, and knowledge of the discipline. The integral approach is also an action approach. It’s not merely theoretical, but also about how you apply this as an approach to psychotherapy, teaching, consulting, and social change, and even business. Part of what makes it unique is that we maintain a real diversity of approaches. Among the faculty, we have psychoanalysts, developmental psychologists, cognitive psychologists, and

transpersonal psychologists. What we have in common is an openness to pushing the edges, and doing it in ways that keep ethicality and personal growth, as well as intellectual development, in view.

And we [the faculty] are challenged to walk our talk. This requires our being honest and forthright and open with each other, and I think it's like in any relationship, a marriage or whatever, you grow or you die. The challenge is not so much to recreate ourselves, but to renew ourselves all the time. And the faculty here is right in the middle of this process. We are looking at how our meetings are working for us, and talking about how we define ourselves, and talking about how we can work less in the typical higher education model of isolation; how can we work together with a balance of autonomy and collaboration.

### **IMPACT**

The master's students here are the ones most deeply entrenched in this kind of learning, so they are the canaries in the coal mine, so to speak. Many tell us that they are absolutely transformed by this experience. They come out different people, or maybe more deeply authentic. I just came out of four oral examinations and everybody who spoke, cried. They feel like they have come home in a very deep way, come home to themselves. They have pushed their own edges and have found tools for self-expression and language and personal power, and most of them say that their hearts are open on a new level.

And people here are excited and passionate. There really is a remarkable vibrancy here. I can't tell you the number of students who say, "I thought I was crazy, and now I've found the mother ship. I thought I was an alien, and that no one else was thinking in these ways and challenging these things, but then I found this program."

[Some of the barriers to teaching this way:] Inertia. Fear. Scientism. Utilitarianism. I do think that this is about changing culture, and it includes what we take to be truth and knowledge. It's about epistemology. The epistemic bias has been toward what you can see and what you can calculate. The contemplative and transformative often come through the eye of the heart, or an integration of heart and head. These other knowings, these softer knowings, are difficult to measure, therefore have been more easily dismissed.

So many of the wisdom traditions talk about the most important knowing as coming not from the head, but from the heart. Contemplative and transformative practices often engage the heart. And, an approach that seeks wisdom instead of information naturally seeks the living current of love and compassion, forgiveness, and inspiration. What this does is actually develop a transformative epistemology in some ways. Rather than seeing the world through an "I/it" relationship, it opens to an "I/thou" relationship, as Martin Buber talked about. And this particular way of knowing, called empathy, is arguably the heart of moral development. So love and forgiveness are naturally a consequence of not just what we know, but of how we know.



### **Department Information**

West Georgia State University  
Department of Psychology  
Carrollton, Ga. 30118  
770-836-6510  
<http://www.westga.edu/~psydept/>

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Department of Psychology at the undergraduate and graduate levels is to approach the subject matter of psychology in ways that facilitate the understanding of oneself and others

- as foundational to personal growth and development,
- as critical to a deeper understanding of the nature of psychology itself, and
- as central to professional development.

This long-standing emphasis of the Department is consistent with the University's goal: to foster educational excellence in a personal environment.

Secondly, the Department seeks to provide an educational environment in which students and faculty can address social and personal issues in a specifically psychological manner. This emphasis requires knowledge of humanistic and alternative approaches to psychology as well as acquaintance with the discipline's traditional topics and self-definition as a social science. Such a broad scope of concerns accords well with the University's emphasis on critical scholarly inquiry and creativity.

From across the nation and around the world, the Department has attracted faculty and students who appreciate the value of the humanistic/transpersonal legacy, recognize the interconnections of the physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human existence, and are committed to fostering the continued evolution of these understandings in the psychology of the future. The Department has achieved national and international prominence for its humanistic/transpersonal programs and has frequently hosted national and international conferences on its campus.