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From the Executive

Kelly Pitman, CCFA President

Hello, friends. Somehow we have slipped into December, and the holidays are upon us. I hope that you spend your precious time off in whatever way is most meaningful for you. One thing is indisputable: you've earned your break.

On November 30, CCFA Executive members joined CUPE 2081 in a rally at Ida Chong's constituency office. I rode with CUPE members on one of the buses hired for the occasion, and we were a merry band of activists, though the whole chanting business didn't take off in a big way. When we arrived, windows steamed and fervor stoked, we were impressed to see how big the turn-out was. More than 200 CUPE workers attended, standing in the rain and wind, holding signs that said "Equality, Fairness, Respect" and "Colleges Are Not 2nd Class!" Ida Chong came out to speak to the crowd, expressed her respect for the college and for its workers, and promised to take CUPE's message back to the legislature. We then heard from a few other speakers, such as Jessica Van der Veen, the NDP candidate for Oak Bay Gordon Head; Ben Isitt, Victoria City Councillor; and Madeline Keller-MacLeod and Piotr Burek, representatives from the Camosun College Student Society. Tony Nelson, CUPE's acting president, did a great job as MC.



As you may know, CUPE locals and employers got back to the table the weekend after the rally and have reached a tentative agreement. The provincial bargaining landscape has been changeable, but we do know that patterns are being set, so the momentum created by unions that have moved to labour action may have real effects on our own settlement.

And in case you hear people talking about how unions threaten to ruin the economy, you may want to refer them to this: <http://www.canadianlabour.ca/action-center/union-advantage-canadian-communities/british-columbia>.

As you may know, the Camosun United Way campaign was a roaring success this year, surpassing its goal by \$5000. I know many of you donated and many others participated in the auction either as a buyer or as a volunteer vendor. I thought this was a great way to raise funds, for it demonstrated both the talents and the generosity of our community.

This Thursday, December 13, we will have our general meeting, followed by union social. We hope you are attending both, especially since we have an important motion on the floor and are eager to hear and publish all perspectives. Please encourage term faculty members also to attend the meeting as this is a way for them to meet lots of colleagues at once. I, for one, am looking forward to seeing people in real life. I seem to be tethered to my computer these days, or at least to my desk.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

CCFA GM & Social

December 13, 2012
F338 1:30 - 5pm

Call for Submissions:

If you have something you'd like included in the Confluence, please email Erin Waugh at the CCFA office. We welcome your articles, comments, questions and suggestions.

After the break, the executive will be back to work, petitioning the board, pushing for faculty involvement in the budget process, connecting with other FPSE locals, representing your interests on a variety of college committees, and handling whatever issues arise with as much energy as we can muster, which is a lot. We begin bargaining in January. In the meantime, I want to say how impressed I have been this term by the integrity, dedication, diversity, and good humor of the members of the executive. I feel lucky to work with them.

Until January, be well.

Contract Management: Know Your Rights!

Regularization

In previous weeks, we've looked at placement on scale and right of first refusal. So, this time, I thought we should talk about regularization: everyone wants it, but it seems like a mysterious process that no one knows much about.

Okay, so what exactly does it mean?

Regularization is the process through which most faculty members achieve continuing status – tenure, if you like, though it's not exactly the same thing. Some faculty are hired on a probationary contract right into a continuing appointment; this is more common in some schools (Sports and Business come to mind). The vast majority of people, though, work their way in via the process of regularization.

That's all very interesting, but I'm not clearer about how it works.

In order to qualify for regularization you have to meet two sets of criteria. The first, the retrospective requirement, is laid out in Clause 1.04d ii of the Collective Agreement, which reads

. He/she must have completed a minimum appointment in each of two (2) semesters or three (3) quarters in each of two (2) consecutive years. The minimum appointment has two required elements:

1. Employment of at least twelve (12) weeks in a semester or at least nine (9) weeks in a quarter.
2. Employment averaging at least forty percent (40%) of full-time employment in the twelve (12) or nine (9) week period.

. The resulting full-time equivalent employment over the two year period must be at least thirty (30) weeks, i.e. an average workload of at least fifty percent (50%) in a year.

In a nutshell, that means that you have to establish a pattern of work that demonstrates that you have worked in a position for close to 50% for two consecutive terms or three consecutive quarters in two consecutive years.

Debbie Gascoyne, Chair Contract Management Committee



In other words, you have to show that there really has been consistent work available for you in your department over a period of time.

If you are really lucky, you may fulfill this part of the qualification in two years. For many people, though, this can take up to five or six years.

I think I've done that. So what is this other criterion you mentioned?

This is the tricky one, outlined in Clause 1.04d iii. There must be two terms (or three quarters) of work ahead in the following year. This is the prospective qualification. Oh, and you also have to have had successful evaluations.

How will I know that there is work ahead?

Well, you probably won't. However, if you think you have met the retrospective qualification, it's a good idea to have a chat with your Chair to see what the prospects are for the future. Of course, if you are already scheduled for a full load in two terms next year, that makes it easy.

You talk about going to talk to the Chair – won't someone be keeping an eye on this for me?

In an ideal world, perhaps, but Chairs are busy people. Deans are even busier. It's harder for them to keep track of your work pattern than it is for you, especially if, like many people, you have had many contracts over a series of years.

So this doesn't happen automatically?

Not at all. In fact, you have to apply, and if you don't you won't get regularized. So it's up to you to keep track of your contracts and to take the initiative when you think you have qualified. Don't forget, though, that any member of the Contract Management team can also help you to figure out if you are ready to go.

How do I apply?

The usual process is that you get your work history from HR and apply to your Dean in writing. Some schools (Arts

and Science, for example) ask you to submit a form that you can get from HR. Your application then goes to HR, back to the Dean and then to the VP Academic for (you hope) approval.

What happens if I get turned down?

It's always a huge disappointment, but it happens a lot, usually because the "work ahead" part of the application doesn't look very solid. With budgets being as tight as they are, sometimes that's a valid concern for the college. However, it's a good idea to talk to someone in Contract Management - although things are improving slightly,

Professional Development News

On Friday, November 30, after singing my heart out for the United Way celebration, I rushed off to Swartz Bay to head across the pond for the PSDC meeting in Vancouver (Professional & Scholarly Development Committee). We started on the Friday night with reports from each of the faculty associations represented by FPSE. Fascinating to hear how each of the faculty groups and their institutions responded to the CUPE job action the week before... Varying responses from sporadic through to full support from faculty and management. Interesting where the adversary is perceived to lie...

Once again, Camosun was shown to be a provincial leader, this time in faculty development. We have one of the healthiest funds and the most collegial practices. Our in-house funding activities continue to be recognized across this province (way to go, CETL!), and we set the standard for educating the institution. Reaction around the table was very positive, as the committee was again impressed at the educational opportunities we make available to our members and the college at large. Made me very proud to be a Camosunite!

Some of the issues other institutions are facing include funding short-falls, fairness in awarding funding, fairness in releasing faculty for development, and supporting faculty who have release at different times. They offered some suggestions for supporting high calibre activities and sharing feedback. I wanted to find out how to

The Union Reel

Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer
1964 Dir. Larry Roemer

If you're my age, you grew up with this television special. I have two children, now aged 32 and 17, and so I have watched *Rudolph* every year since about 1965. *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas* and *A Charlie Brown Christmas* still delight me, but I haven't much enjoyed *Rudolph* the last thirty or so years. Now I have a grand-daughter, so I'm not getting out anytime soon. Feel my pain.

Okay, the show has its charms. It manages to squeeze 45 minutes of narrative out of a teaspoon of ideas, and it's a fine example of claymation, the warm and fuzzy period of animation. As for the story, well, Rudolph, in case you've been living on Mars, is a reindeer with a peculiar nose. What the heck? It lights up! This is cause for ridicule and alarm among

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since I've been on the committee the majority of our grievances have been about regularization.

So that's regularization in a nutshell. There is, of course, more to it, and sometimes things can get quite complicated. Make yourself familiar with Clause 1.04 of the Collective Agreement and never hesitate to ask questions: your Chair is there to help, and any member of Contract Management will be happy to answer questions as well.

Kathy Lokhorst, PD Committee Chair

publicize the various conferences and workshops that faculty attend so that our colleagues can benefit. This will be discussed further at our next meeting in February, at which time I expect to be bragging about the phenomenal long-term activities our CCFA members are pursuing!



As for our recent PD approvals, I am pleased to announce the plethora of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction activities with LynneMustard that In-House funding will be providing in the upcoming year. And wait until you hear who is coming to Conversations Day as our keynote speaker!!! Your CCFA PD has decided to support college-wide teaching and learning by helping to bring in an amazing story-teller, who I hope will inspire you as much as he has inspired others through his "Changing the World One Story at a Time"... celebrated author Richard Wagamese! Check him out at www.richardwagamese.com...

So, make sure you plan your marking and class prep next term to free you up for Conversations Day 2013 -- you won't want to miss this keynote!

See you later this week, at the CCFA general meeting...

By Kelly Pitman



the folks at the North Pole. Of course (spoiler alert!), it all ends well, when it turns out that Rudolph's nose, deemed a sign of freakdom by the shockingly narrow-minded Christmas craft community, turns out to be the super-power that saves the boys and girls of the world from the horror that is no Christmas (and by that, of course, we mean no presents). The underdeer makes good.

But maybe there's more to it than that. Maybe I can find new meaning in this story. Maybe it's all about fairness, equality, and respect.

Now, what's up with Santa's workshop? Frankly, this is approaching a poisonous work environment. The supervisor is set permanently to holler. The work is piling up faster than the little elf fingers can do it. The big boss, St. Nick, is far from jolly. He's a bit of a tyrant really, with a petty tyrant or two under him to keep the peace. He and his wife live in the only castle around, while the deer live in icy caves, and the elves, well, it appears they actually sleep in the factory, the better to be worked nearly to death by a frantic quota system that makes few allowances for error.

Santa seems to have a short fuse, most evident when he storms out of a less than ideal musical number the elves perform for his pleasure. I mean, dissing a bunch of musical elves? That's harsh, dude. And this intolerance goes deeper. There's a horror of difference here. Not only must Rudolph hide his ruby schnozz to save his parents from shame, but also a lonely elf named Hermie, who sucks at painting wooden trucks but has an unmitigated passion for dentistry, is repeatedly threatened and insulted by everyone around him with the full participation of the leaders in this organization. It's the disincentive approach, and it's not working well.

Now, I get that Rudolph might be distracting his co-workers, and maybe Hermie is not meeting his performance objectives. But Rudolph is the best darn flyer around, and the services Hermie is offering are worthwhile, necessary even, and worth exploring. For all their potential value, though, the two can find no succor in the community and set out to seek belonging.

It turns out that the world outside is a vale of tears. Those who don't fit into the system are flotsam on the ice floe of life. Witness the Island of Misfit Toys, a sort of magical penal colony in which polka dot elephants (horrors!) and swimming birds (disgusting!) languish, looking for love in all the wrong places. Sure, some loners, like Yukon Cornelius, the maniacally cheerful prospector, or the Bumble, a terrifying abominable snowman (okay, with "abominable," we probably don't need "terrifying"), will be alright, for the world loves the strong. Still, don't they suffer in their way, condemned ever to wander, howling in outrage across barren plains? Indeed, the Bumble's furious stumbling through the wilderness, which frightened me no end when I was a kid, reminds me of Mary Shelley's monster, steeped in pain and with no benefit plan to speak of.

Now, if this was a decent world where the rights of the workers were respected, the elves would be getting proper breaks and overtime pay. Rudolph's talents would be recognized, and Hermie would have the right to a proper appraisal process, to progressive discipline if necessary, and even to professional development funds to help him achieve his performance goals. The moment the line manager started shrieking, there'd be an elfin steward there to call him on his attitude. And Santa's clear favoritism, his flagrant nepotism, and his psychological abuse of those who don't tinsel the tree the way he likes would land that red-suited despot right in the arbitrator's office.



But Christmas movies are all about hope and that is why we love them. They feed our belief that transformation is possible, no matter how cranky we are. In *Rudolph*, diversity turns out to be not just something to put up with but the salt in the stew. Take out the Bumble's bad tooth and bring him into the fold, and we'll never have to use a stepladder again. And we need dentists, we really do—Hermie in his difference is as essential as Santa himself. And, of course, Rudolph turns out to be the hope and glory of the team, and he gets both the girl and his father's respect. Santa finds they're going to meet their quota after all and his reputation is sound, so he stops worrying himself thin and gains the girth he needs for true jolliness.

When they get back from their big trip, it will be time to negotiate a collective agreement. I think the troubles they've been through make them all just a little bit less likely to dismiss each other's interests. Personally, I vote for Mrs. Claus as chief negotiator. She's fair and loving. Don't we all need just a little bit more of that?



I am feeling sorry for myself right now. I have three stacks of marking sitting on the floor by my desk. Occasionally I rearrange them – alphabetically, or perhaps by best to worst, or from worst to best. Or I try

to mix it up a little and stagger the papers: first a lousy paper, then a good one, then a lousy one ... you get the picture. Every so often I get up and clean the refrigerator out (and a good thing too—who knows what that slightly wilted iceberg lettuce would have done if left to its own devices?) or reorganize the clothes in my closet by color ... or brush my cat.

I felt especially sorry for myself early this morning. For one thing, it was cold, but mostly it was because I had had stressful dreams – all relating to marking. And then I woke up: to marking. The cat had made a nest for himself out of a pile of unmarked student papers. There was another pile, half finished on my bedside table, and I knew I had to go collect another stack at work.

I didn't bike, which made me feel all flubby, flobbering my flub all over the place. Flob, flub, flob.

So I was peevis.

However, Jian Ghomeshi was on the radio, which made me feel better because I, like every other middle-aged, red-blooded Canadian woman, have a GIANT crush on Jian (we're on a first name basis, at least in my own head).

His first interview was with Ingrid Betancourt, the former Colombian presidential candidate who spent six years as a captive of FARC guerrillas deep in the jungle before being rescued in 2008.

Ms. Betancourt spoke eloquently about her time as a captive – about waking up every morning, (having spent the night wildly scratching at all the insects that continuously, ravenously chewed on her), wondering whether this was the day she would be shot in the head and her body buried in the middle of the jungle in an un-marked grave.

(She never once mentioned how she sometimes feels fat or that people who can't differentiate its and it's really really annoy her...)

I would love to say that my day turned around at this point. However, an about-face like that takes real maturity: something which, at this point in the year, I

don't have. Nope. Instead, I felt sort of irritated with this heroic woman for getting in the way of my Major League Pout Fest.

Consequently, as I sit here, surrounded by piles of marking (remember how I mentioned those?), feeling flubby and grumpy and peevis, I feel moved to try and make a "Festive, You Are Not In An Insect Infested Jungle, Waiting To See If This Will Be Your Last Day On Earth, So Damn It, Cheer Up Already" list:

- 1) I am not in an insect-infested jungle!
- 2) The people who want to shoot me luckily do not have the right to own guns!
- 3) My job does not require me to wear a visor!
- 4) Or a hair-net!
- 5) I know how to use a semicolon!
- 6) My cat's digestive issues seem to have sorted themselves out!
- 7) This vacation I will learn how to brine a turkey!
- 8) I actually do really love Christmas carols! (just not "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" – stupid, fascist song; or, actually, "Frosty the Snowman"; or, come to think of it, "Jingle Bells")
- 9) Soon it will be okay to have sausage rolls and shortbread for breakfast! (flubbitty, flub, flub)
- 10) I will never have to teach, or hopefully even see, "Jasper" again!!!!
- 11) Except, of course, when he wants to come and complain about his final mark. Rats.

So, really, in the words of Clarence the Angel, "You see George, you really have had a Wonderful Life."

Except my name isn't George, so get your names right, Clarence!

Still ... I do have a pretty terrific life. I am awfully grateful.

Except for all that marking. I hate that.

Happy Holidays.

Teaching Watchmen

I admit it: I'm a geek, through and through. I have been a geek all my life, before geekiness achieved the trendy cred that it enjoys now. I've always loved fantasy and science fiction. I watched *The Prisoner* (the original) in its first run; indeed, Patrick McGooohan was my first celebrity crush, and I tried to emulate his one raised eyebrow. I used to run home from school to watch *Dark Shadows* (Barnabas Collins was my second celebrity crush), and I loved *Dr. Who* long long long before its current popularity. So, when I incorporate elements of popular culture into my teaching, it's not just because I think the students might like it, it's because I love it, it's who I am, and students appreciate that I am an authentic geek, not just someone trying to be trendy.

Last year, I decided to experiment with incorporating a graphic novel – *Watchmen*, by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons – into my English composition class. I wanted to give students something long-form to read, and I wanted to move the “research” paper beyond the endless, deadly boring tracts on anorexia or steroids in sports into something more interesting to me and something less easy to plagiarize. I chose *Watchmen*, despite some reservations about its violence and rather bleak world-view, because it is widely recognized as a classic of the medium; it is difficult and dense, but its themes are ones that students would relate to and recognize.

I spent about the last six weeks of the course working on it. Students were required to do a detailed critical bibliography on articles about the novel (having established to my own satisfaction that a goodly number of scholarly articles indeed existed). I asked each student to find five, then compiled them all into a master list (they found, eventually, between them, more than twenty reputable and approved sources), which I posted in our D2L site. They were then required to use works from the approved list with which to write their research papers on topics relating to the novel. I also had them create little Wikipedia-like articles on certain prominent topics – vigilantism, nihilism, existentialism, the cold war, the Manhattan project (you see? This may be a comic book, but it's not Mickey Mouse!), that they posted in their blogs and I then linked from the D2L site for everybody to refer to. Students had been reading the novel all term, and we spent the last three weeks of the term talking about it. Working on it pulled together all the elements I'd been teaching them throughout the course on close reading and critical study of a text.

Overall, the student response was very positive. They were excited about reading it, although they found it much more difficult than they had expected. The themes and issues that arise out of it were stimulating and again interesting to them. The essays they wrote were on the whole much more interesting and of much higher quality than the usual 1st year composition research paper.



So what, you might ask, is the advantage of using a graphic novel over a conventional novel? I could argue that it's a more effective way to reinforce concepts of close reading than having students read a more conventional long-form work, at least at this level. I think it gives them a fantastic basis on which to move into more complicated readings of literature that they might try in 2nd year. Students have difficulty identifying images and symbols for themselves, and because they can't always “see” them in the text, are often suspicious when we point them out. They have trouble trusting their own reading skills and in finding

supporting evidence in a text to support their own ideas about a text.

Having pictures as well as text makes the reading experience in some ways more complex, but also really helps the students to find recurring images or symbols. For example, there is a smiley face with a drop of blood on it that comes up over and over again but with subtle differences. Students immediately notice that, and start asking what it means and what the differences are about. They started looking for things and asking all the right questions about what they were finding – instead of simply relying on me to give them the answers, they learned to discover things for themselves because they could see they were there. They notice things like the way colours are used, or how each panel is laid out on the page. When their attention is drawn to something like the notion of symmetry in one chapter, they start to notice the symmetries apparent in the work as a whole.

One warning for anyone who might like to try this for him or herself: I actually underestimated the difficulty of this text! I should have done a bit more reading myself on some of the deeper philosophical ideas in the text, and I also needed to do quite a bit of preliminary background reading on the conventions of comic-book writing (I wish our colleagues Ken and Joan Steacy had been on staff last year as resources!).

But on the whole, I would say it was a hugely successful experiment. I would do it again, and would recommend that others try it. And you don't have to be an English teacher. I could imagine using Art Spiegelman's *Maus* to teach about the Holocaust, or Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* for life in Iran under the Ayatollah. *Watchmen* could be used to teach philosophy – indeed, there's a whole collection of essays on that subject. Other graphic novels that I think would teach well are Craig Thompson's *Blankets* or Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*. Or there's Alan Moore's other famous work, *V for Vendetta*. Not to mention that all of these are just really good, thought provoking, challenging reads. So try it! Who knows, perhaps you, too, can start on the road to being a geek.

Happy reading.

My Travels in Mozambique

by Kathy Lokhorst

I wrote the following notes on Sunday, June 3, 2012. Marcelino Biza is the Vice Principal of the technical institute with whom we were working on the project. Marcelino has come to Canada a couple of times, and I recently heard he might be coming again early in 2013. I hope to see him then...

At the Xai Xai Beach hotel, to my surprise, there was no internet, erratic electricity and no TV, which was a little odd, but I wasn't really interested in TV anyway. Well, there was one in the best guest suite that we could use if the suite wasn't occupied, but, of course, it was occupied. As for the internet access, at first I thought it'd be fine, as I could always use the computer at a local cafe. I soon discovered there were none. The best I could do would be to acquire a local SIM card for my modem and connect to home via Skype. So, I texted my family to let them know I arrived safely, and arranged a Skype call on Monday. I plugged in my computer to charge it up and heard a startling click...

In Xai Xai Beach

I am sad today because my computer power brick has failed and I won't get to talk to my family. Marcelino Biza is coming with a modem and it's just not going to work. So, maybe I should take this as a sign that I'm just not supposed to use my computer here! :) Trying to be hopeful but really feeling plain old sad.

We had a good day yesterday: arrived at Xai Xai beach at around noon (4 hour drive, twice as long as I expected -- I guess none of the others really cared?). Checked in, settled in, went for a walk around the motel to see the ocean. Not much here; quite rustic. Had hoped for internet somewhere in the beach area, but apparently not.

Had lunch at Hotel Touristico Halley -- grilled chicken and rice and chips and salad. It was excellent! Talked about work, families, and the work ahead of us.

Biza came by to meet with us and to take us to the store. We drove into town and these two young women on the beach road waved us down. We kind of drove by but then stopped to see if they were okay (they looked like they

really wanted us to stop). Well, turns out they are Peace Corps volunteers in MZ, one year into their two year commitments. They had come down to the beach as a treat because it was one of the girls' birthday. They hitchhike regularly or take the bus, which has a sporadic schedule in the winter months. We talked in the truck as Biza drove to the ShopRite. Jim and I picked up a few staples for our fridge (the milk turned out to be opened, so I'm dumping it!) and for breakfasts. We'll eat lunch and dinner out.

We met the superintendent of schools while in town. Met another principal, too. Biza has pretty good English, so it was an informative though short tour. We came back to the motel and met up with a couple of the boys who sell tourist stuff on the beach. Gabriel and Stephen (brothers) laid out their wares in the motel gazebo and we picked out a few items for consideration. I'm thinking \$20 for the painting, \$12 for the box, \$4 for each necklace. That's \$40 total, which will equate to around 1200 Me.

Worked on my computer for a couple hours going through photos and checking out videos before the battery got too low. I am still hopeful that the brick will work at the college tomorrow.

It is stormy today. Still very warm; quite muggy. Boy, I'm sure glad I brought my iPad keyboard! Looked at pictures on the iPad. I miss my family and don't like being without any of them...

Well, I was lucky: Biza also has an HP laptop and the power ratings on his brick matched with my dead one. Each day, he would charge his computer and then loan me his brick at night. For some reason, his brick worked fine on the electricity at the hotel -- maybe because it didn't require the plug converter?

Another lucky break was that one of the local internet providers was trying to insinuate itself into the Institute by giving faculty free modems for home use and free wireless in the school plus free wired access in the labs. For me this meant I was able to freely connect with my family each night via Skype for as long as I needed. I felt like it stopped raining at Camp Granada. Every thing was much better...

Your Turn

A Trip to Uganda Together?

Some of you probably heard about the story that we (Francis A and Francis Y) were being asked whether we were partners by our billeting host when we attended a meeting on Salt Spring Island last year. Sorry we would not tell our answer in public!

What we can tell you is that we will be on a trip to Uganda together again!

In partnership with VIDEA – a non-profit BC based International Development and Education Association, the African Awareness Committee plans to organize a Study Tour of Uganda in May 2013 for both students and educators. Highlights of the program included experiential learning on grassroots women's empowerment, sustainable community-based ecotourism, innovative slum rehabilitation, African Indigenous knowledge, and fair trade. Some of the sites that we plan to visit include: five unique Ugandan organizations, the dynamic capital city Kampala, the source of the Nile River, Bushara Island Camp, Entebbe's Wildlife Education Centre, and village stays.



This is a unique opportunity to visit Uganda, often referred as the Pearl of Africa. While we are not going to stay in luxury hotels, we will be taken good care of by one of the staff members from VIDEA, Rohan Stritch, who is already in Uganda doing the planning and organizing of the tour. The tour is based on a cost-recovery model and we will be able to get humanitarian rate (significant discount off regular airfare) from British Airway. If you plan to collect indigenous arts or any other items home, you can carry up to 3 pieces of luggage with no extra charges.

You can go to the African Awareness Committee Uganda Study Tour web site to get more details. <http://faculty.camosun.ca/africa/uganda-study-tour/> or contact either of us (we might tell you our answer to the billeting host if you are interested).

Submitted by Francis and Francis.

Dear Bronwen,

I must say, I am glad to find out that someone else actually takes both parts in the classroom. And from all I've heard about your teaching, if they don't respond to you, they won't respond to anyone.

Like you, I have on occasion had a group who seemed immune to inspiration, and like you, I have sometimes ended up putting on a sort of pantomime. "How about you, Kelly, would you care to contribute? [pause] Yes, I have a few thoughts on that topic." Then I try for winsome wit, as I turn to the dead sea of faces and exclaim, "I am ACING this class!" And then, "What an annoying keener!" It's all rather tiring.

And have you ever had a truly hostile group? The first class I taught at Camosun College was dominated by a gang of smirking young lads who all seemed to take up two desks

a piece and actively mocked my lectures, the readings, the way I stapled documents together, and so on. I struggled to maintain some kind of order amidst the eye-rolls and sarcastic comments. I found myself thinking, "I've heard they have a Criminal Justice program. Perhaps they also have a Criminal program. Like, for criminals?" There were a few committed students, but by week three, they had retreated to the edges of the room, thinking, perhaps, that if they kept to the perimeter they would at least have their backs to the wall. I was getting desperate. At night, I had fantasies of channelling Sidney Poitier in *To Sir, With Love*. Sidney would turn those boys around.

But I wasn't Sidney. I had to find my own way. On a particularly trying afternoon, the worst of these louts heckled me yet again, and I stopped the lecture and asked him to step outside. He said no. I almost backed down,

but then the rest of them began to snicker. I walked to the board and wrote a list of names on it. I was panicking inside—could they hear the chalk vibrating against the board? “I would like all of you to join me in the hallway,” I said. No one moved. A few laughed. “Or I will contact security and have them remove you from the room,” I proclaimed.

Now, I had been at Camosun three weeks. I didn’t even know my voicemail code or how much I was getting paid. I certainly didn’t know if I had the power to call security, or even where security was. I was totally bluffing.

They all trooped out and gathered in the hallway. I realized they weren’t that many, eight or so, as I recall. They circled me in a rather intimidating ring, and I had to crane my neck to talk to them, but I was into my bluff and had to carry on. I told them they were interfering in other people’s learning. I told them they had paid for the course and were not forced to attend. I said some other stuff too, probably inarticulately, because I was working hard to stay calm. I returned to the classroom, and lo and behold, they followed me back in.

After that, most of the bad behaviour stopped. Sadly, I was pleased to face only sullenness. Disengagement seemed the best I could hope for. But of course, what happened was that the other students, the fringe-dwellers, began to fill the space left by the louts. The conversation picked up. Things weren’t perfect, but they got better.

I’d deal with this differently today, more smoothly, I hope, but at the time it was the best I could do. Anyway, I’ve never been in quite this situation again. I wonder where those boys are now. I hope that at least one of them became a teacher.

Kelly Pitman, English.

Hi Bronwen

I just read your posting in the cfa newsletter. It sounds very familiar to classes I have had over the years. I’ve tried something recently that works fairly well. In my Art 280 critique class I have THEM formulate five questions from the readings in each chapter of the text. Then when the discussions start you can fit your questions into the discussion. my class is small, full-time visarts students, so we actually sit in a circle so they can’t hide behind their desks.

Funny how I’m figuring out something like this just before I retire.

Good Luck
Ralph Stanbridge, Visual Arts

Bronwen,

I just read your article in the Confluence, and after I picked myself up from falling over from laughing so hard, I decided to write you back to tell you NO you are not the only teacher who is as dull as dishwater. I too fall into that category, or at least I seem to when I walk into my Engl 151 class full of sports management students. They’re sneaky, because catch them one on one, and they’re friendly. They make eye contact. They smile. They ask questions about my weekend. But put them in a classroom and they morph into dull eyed creatures, much like newts, you know, those four legged reptiles that shine when in water, but fade into the stones when on land. This is how I have come to think of these students.

Is it me? Is it them? I don’t know. But clearly I lack your sense of humour and inventiveness, because my response to silence in the room has been to stop asking questions. Clearly what I should be doing is practicing my balance and devising monologues. You’ve inspired me to last out the final two weeks. (And apologies to all my truly lovely students who fill most of my classes).

Kari Jones, English

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