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Charles Goodnight, professor of biology and University Scholar for 2002, focuses his research on evolutionary biology. (Photo: Sally McCay)

Although Darwin's is the most widely embraced among evolutionary theories today, people have only in recent years become aware of the richness and complexity of this theory.

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[Kornblith](#) UVM dedicates itself to the creation and dissemination of knowledge. But what is knowledge anyway? In a provocative new book published by the Oxford University Press, philosopher Hilary Kornblith uses animal behavior to define a crucial aspect of the human experience.

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THE WEEK IN VIEW

Nov. 7 6:30 p.m. Career Information: For UVM students interested in biomedical technologies. Room 107, Rowell

Nov. 10 2 pm. Film: Caribbean Crucible, Fleming Museum. 656-0750

Nov. 12 3:30 p.m. Lecture: "Communities and Social Capital," Fred Schmidt, Center for Rural Studies. 301 Williams Hall. 656-0095

Nov. 12 7 p.m. Artist's Talk: *Soon Come* artist Bryan McFarlane, University of Massachusetts. Fleming Museum. 656-0750

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To the rescue: Students involved with UVM Rescue take 2,300 calls a year and work at the station at least 80 hours a month. For more on the 30-year-old organization, see the story below. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

Students to Demonstrate the Wright Stuff

Residents of Wright Hall will participate in the first annual "Wright Hall Service Day" on Nov. 9. Students will perform community service with various organizations in Burlington as part of their commitment to the mission of Wright Hall. The hall's residents are required to maintain a 3.0 GPA and also pledge to participate in community service events for the greater campus and Burlington community.

"This is an exciting opportunity for the students to work and bond not only with their fellow floor mates, but also build relationships with organizations within the community that truly need volunteers – especially with the approaching holiday season. Hopefully this will be the first step in starting a healthy tradition for the residents of Wright Hall," said Jason Johnson, Americorps*VISTA volunteer for community service.

Information: Jason Johnson, 656-2060, jhohnso2@zoo.uvm.edu or [Hearts and Hands](#)

UVM Rescue Celebrates a Generation of Care

Welcome to world of UVM Rescue student volunteers: After a full day of classes, you're finally in bed, the blanket warm and soft, and then an air horn goes off and blasts you groggily from sleep. You roll out of bed and into green jumpsuits and bulky boots, stumbling into the ambulance for a wild night ride, accompanied by sirens and flashing red and white lights.

The UVM Rescue squad, which turns 30 this year, is one of only 17 student-run certified ambulance transporting agencies in the country. The group handles approximately 2,300 calls a year – that's more than six per day – making the unit the second busiest responder in the state in most years, behind only the Burlington crew. Student volunteers spend a minimum of 80 hours a month at the station (100 or more is typical, and the figure jumps to 300 hours during months classes are in recess), and provide 24-hour-service to the campus, South Burlington and parts of the interstate.

The necessary crew of five are in the quarters every day of the week, requiring students to juggle school, work and rescue. It also requires them to jigger their finances to pay for shared on-call meals; a limited budget means the squad pitches in to pay its own way. More challengingly, providing emergency medicine to such a large population requires immense amounts of time spent training and studying. The students work to understand rescue protocol not to know the material or earn a grade. They do it apply what they learn in a situation where they can be the difference between life and death.

For these passionate students, the work is more than worth it. "I can honestly say that joining the best thing I have ever done," says junior Matt Murphy, the squad's director of operations. "I have learned more about various aspects of life in the past two years than most people have learned in their lifetimes."

A generation of care

UVM Rescue was not always certified and defined as an official Advanced Life Support transport agency, a key credential in the field. Rescue began in the spring of 1972, when several students with emergency medical technician certifications began responding with campus security to medical calls on campus.

The students, who carried kits with emergency supplies, were very effective as a first response team and the group committed themselves to their job, arranging schedules so that one member was on duty at all times, sleeping on a cot in the back room of the Wason Infirmary.

This core group returned the following fall to find increased interest and recognition of their services. They organized themselves into a squad, and purchased their first ambulance, creating a program that has served tens and thousands in need and provided hundreds of students with a unique opportunity to develop both medical and life skills.

To learn more about UVM Rescue,
www.uvm.edu/~rescue.

Tanya Tersillo, the author of this story, is a first-year student and rescue volunteer.

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Junior Bekah Zietz and senior Cameron Bradley are acting in the UVM production of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. For more on the play, see story below. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

The Crucible Tackles Timeless Issues

Fear, mass hysteria and unjust retribution are among the themes Arthur Miller sought to explore in his Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *The Crucible*, to be presented by the UVM Theatre Nov. 13-24.

On one level, the play chronicles how accusations of witchcraft launched late 17th-century Salem, Mass., into hysteria, eroded all sense of justice and resulted in the execution of 20 innocent people. On another level, the play is a thinly veiled condemnation of McCarthyism, a subject Miller understood from personal experience. In 1956, at the height of his fame, he defied the House on Un-American Activities Committee by refusing to testify against friends and colleagues believed to have Communist ties. Miller was cited for contempt of Congress or for the refusal and cleared on appeal in 1957.

In a 2000 interview with *The New Yorker*, he discussed his reasons for writing the play. "The more I read into the Salem panic, the more it touched off corresponding ages of common experiences in the fifties: the old friend of a blacklisted person crossing the street to avoid being seen talking to him; the overnight conversions of former leftists into born-again patriots; and so on. Apparently, certain processes are universal. When gentiles in Hitler's Germany, for example, saw their Jewish neighbors being trucked off... the common reaction, even among those unsympathetic to Nazism or Communism, was quite naturally to turn away in fear of being identified with the condemned. The thought that the state has lost its mind and is punishing so many innocent people is intolerable." UVM's production of *The Crucible* is directed by Sarah Carleton, assistant professor of theatre, and

Van Cliburn Winner Ioudenitch at Lane Series

Stanislav Ioudenitch, co-winner of the gold medal in last June's Van Cliburn piano competition, will appear at the UVM Recital Hall on Nov. 8, at 7:30 p.m. under the auspices of the Lane Series.

Ioudenitch, an intense player with extraordinary technique, has been called "a musician of aristocratic elegance and imagination" by the *Dallas Morning News*.

A native of Uzbekistan, Ioudenitch also won the Steven De Groote Memorial Award for Best Performance of Chamber Music.

Information, tickets: 656-4455

Learning Days Build Community

Learning Days, a series of events which began Nov. 6, are promoting UVM's Common Ground philosophy by exploring issues related to diversity, classism and racism.

Opening the series on Nov. 6 were Dolores Sandoval, emerita professor of education, with a talk on "In Celebration of Diversity and Our Common Ground," and a presentation on Alternative Summer Break: Civil Rights and Service.

On Nov. 7, Building Our Community will hold a breakfast at Waterman Manor, at 7:30 a.m. Jen Mathews, of the Peace and Justice Center's Vermont Livable Wage Campaign, will speak on "Classism as a Foundation of Poverty: Who Really Benefits"? A related video, *Down and Out in America*, will be shown at noon at 104 Allen House.

At 3 p.m., on Nov. 7, Sean Collins, of the Vermont Student Assistance Corp., will speak about first-generation students in higher education, in Memorial Lounge, Waterman. At 6 p.m., Students Organizing Against Racism and BOC will present Jakob Holdt and *American Pictures*, a Danish vagabond's journey through the American underclass.

Holdt also will conduct a workshop, "Confronting Racism in American Society," at noon, Nov. 8, in Marsh Lounge, Billings Center. Information: [Common Ground](#) or Bonnie Campono, 656-7924.

features guest artist Simone Zamore, who will reprise her role of Tituba from a 1998 production in New York.

"It's even more fun this time around," Zamore says. "I'm not just learning my role, so I have an opportunity look more deeply at the character and her relationships."

The New York-based actress is the most recent participant in the UVM Theatre's Guest Artist Program, which regularly pairs designers, directors and actors working actively in the professional theatre with students hoping to build a career on the stage.

"Acting is a lot of business," Zamore says. "Many working actors have families, children and 401K plans. It is, first and foremost, a job."

"Simone treats us as equals and yet offers great guidance at the same time," says first-year student William Todisco of Nahant, Mass., who plays John Willard. "It's wonderful to experience as a young actor."

The cast also comprises veteran local actors who have performed with the Vermont Stage Company, Lost Nation Theater, St. Michael's Playhouse and Vermont Repertory Theatre. Co-sponsored by the UVM Print & Mail Center, *The Crucible* will run Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 13-23 and Nov. 24 at 2 p.m. Tickets range from \$10 to \$14 and may be purchased online at [UVM Theatre](#) or by calling 656-2094.

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Nov. 6 - Nov. 12, 2002

Awards and Honors

Dr. **Paula Duncan**, professor of pediatrics and health services researcher in the Vermont Child Health Improvement Program, received the Dr. J. Ward Stackpole Recognition Award from the Vermont State School Nurses' Association on Oct. 25. Dr. Stackpole is clinical professor of pediatrics. The annual award recognizes health care providers whose work significantly supports the efforts of school nurses in Vermont.

Publications and Presentations

Kathleen Liang, assistant professor of community development and applied economics, and Paul Dunn, from the University of Louisiana at Monroe, conducted a workshop for the youths in the Southeastern Vermont Career Education Center's horticultural program on Nov. 1 to plan their agricultural business project for the winter. They helped the participants analyze a new business opportunity to establish a greenhouse, develop their products and markets, develop operation and management responsibilities, assess financial feasibilities, define the long term goals and establish evaluation procedures for the business.

Bret Golann, visiting professor of business administration, submitted a paper that has been nominated for "Best Conceptual Paper" for the annual conference of the United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship. The paper is titled "Managing for Rapid Growth: Technical Process Management and Flexibility in Small Firms" and will be presented in January.

Donna Kuizenga, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and professor of romance languages, published an article on Madame de Villegieu in the recently published volume of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* devoted to 17th-century French writers and edited by Françoise Jaouën of Yale University.

Oct. 30-Nov. 5, 2002

Awards and Honors

Alison Brody, associate professor of biology, and **James Hoffmann**, associate professor of botany and agricultural biochemistry, have been named co-directors of the new cross-college Integrated Biological Sciences Program. Throughout this academic year, the co-directors and a newly formed steering committee will lead the faculty in both units in developing curriculum for this coordinated effort.

Burton Wilcke, clinical associate professor of biomedical technologies, has been appointed chair of the Department of Biomedical Technologies. Wilcke joined the UVM faculty in 1990 and served as interim chair from July through December 2001. He is looking at development of a curriculum that addresses emerging global threats.

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Evolution at the Genetic Level

By Jennifer Nachbur



Charles Goodnight, professor of biology and University Scholar for 2002, focuses his research on evolutionary biology. (Photo: Sally McCay)

Although Darwin's is the most widely embraced among evolutionary theories today, people have only in recent years become aware of the richness and complexity of this theory.

"Things have changed in the last 70 years," says biology Professor Charles Goodnight, like the genetic information revolution. Goodnight has spent years researching *Drosophila* – better known as fruit flies – and flour beetles,

examining "simple changes" – the subtle, yet very important, events like gene interaction that cause speciation, the differentiation of species. Goodnight will discuss his observations in the insect population in his University Scholar lecture titled, "Evolution and the Genetics of Structured Populations," on Nov. 13, at 4 p.m., in Memorial Lounge, Waterman.

There are two ways to study evolutionary biology, Goodnight explains. In the first, one examines what is called microevolution, which includes how things change within a species and the selection process in a short period of time. In the second, one examines change between species, looking at how many species exist and what groups of species or genera exist. The major problem in the field, observes Goodnight, who uses both approaches, is that "we don't have a link between micro and macro."

Goodnight's research raises a number of questions, but focuses primarily on one: Why are two different species unable to reproduce together? The normal definition of a species is an interbreeding population, but, according to Goodnight, a few genes can make all the difference in whether or not basic systems like reproduction work. Learning how genetic changes affect processes like reproduction helps us to better understand why species reach endangered status. This helps biologists prevent extinction, as was the case with the Speake's Gazelle in Africa, which dwindled to a small population but was brought back. Scientists describe the biological series of events that result in a species' reduction to very few individuals as a "bottleneck."

When a species goes through a bottleneck, normal genetic variations decrease because fewer individuals are breeding. To solve the problem, Goodnight is looking at gene interactions seeking to understand what the bottlenecks are doing.

"I want to know what's going on when you have gene interactions in small populations," Goodnight says. "The reason why I'm doing this research is that I have found that gene interaction changes the way evolution works."

Fruit flies offer an excellent Mendelian example of why the appearance of an organism cannot be predicted from the individual effects of genes and why Goodnight is so interested in gene interaction. If you start with a fruit fly with

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[INTERview: Kornblith](#)

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brick-colored eyes, and mate it with another brick-eyed fruit fly, you can get a scarlet-eyed mutation, a brown-eyed mutation, or a cinnabar brown mutation. But if you mate a cinnabar brown-eyed fruit fly with a brown-eyed fruit fly, you get white eyes – the product of gene interaction that can cause a different species to develop.

To illustrate this phenomenon for those of us who have trouble envisioning different species of fruit flies, and explaining why gene interaction is undesirable, Goodnight shares a mammalian version of the story: One species of antelope mates with another species of antelope that has a different breeding season, and babies – born during the winter – freeze to death. Eventually, the entire population dies off.

Goodnight joined the UVM faculty in 1988. He was recently named a 2002-2003 University Scholar in honor of his sustained excellence in research and scholarly activities. Recipients of the award, which annually recognizes four distinguished, graduate faculty members, are selected by a panel of distinguished faculty based on nominations submitted by UVM colleagues. Each recipient presents a lecture on his or her scholarship for the university community and general public, sponsored by the Graduate College.

Charles Goodnight, professor of biology, will present his 2002-2003 University Scholar lecture, "Evolution and the Genetics of Structured Populations," Nov. 13, at 4 p.m., in Memorial Lounge, Waterman.

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INTERview: Hilary Kornblith

By Kevin Foley



Knowledge theorist Hilary Kornblith is *certain* of the fact he is sitting in his office on a red chair, a position perhaps contrary to some in his field. (Photo: Sally McCay)

UVM dedicates itself to the creation and dissemination of knowledge. But what is knowledge anyway?

In a provocative new book published in September by the Oxford University Press, philosophy Professor Hilary Kornblith takes on skeptics and argues that knowledge is a true thing, not a possibly unreliable concept. Even more heretically – at least to traditional philosophic arguments,

which focus on analyzing concepts and terms apart from the real world – Kornblith bases his argument in part on the work of experts in animal cognition. the view sat down with Kornblith to explore his take on epistemology – and why he believes advances in psychology and the cognitive studies are driving philosophers to seek interdisciplinary approaches to their discipline's eternal questions.

the view: Let's start by sketching the broad contours of the argument in *Knowledge and its Place in Nature* – what were you trying to do with the book?

HILARY KORNBLITH: For thousands of years, philosophers have been interested in what knowledge is all about. What is it that makes a belief a case of knowledge? The traditional approach to this is to say, well, we all use the term knowledge all the time, we must have something in mind when we use that word, and by focusing on what we mean, we can figure out what knowledge is.

This technique is called conceptual analysis. You find people from Plato to Descartes to contemporary philosophers all trying to say what their concept of knowledge comes to. One of the interesting things about this is when people reflect on what they mean by knowledge, they come up with these perfectly sensible sounding ideas of what standards you have to meet in order to have knowledge, and yet, more often than not, their account of what knowledge is sets such extraordinarily high standards for having it, that almost no one, or at times, no one, ever meets it. So you end up with these accounts that lead to total skepticism.

Not very helpful...

No. My idea was to do something quite different, to see knowledge as a phenomena out there to be studied. Rather than examine what my own concept of what knowledge might happen to be, I decided to look at what knowledge *is*. I looked at the literature in cognitive ethology to do this for the following reason: People who study animal behavior attribute to animals all sorts of mental states like beliefs and desires to explain their actions... The reason we need to attribute beliefs to them to explain their behavior is that in many cases, animals of all sorts, including birds, dogs, pets, but not just

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domestic animals, have an extraordinarily sophisticated range of behavior and problem-solving skills, and it looks like beliefs provide the only way to explain how they do that, it's not just triggered reflexes. They have sophisticated beliefs about their environment. So you find these people talking about animals having various beliefs and describing their cognitive structure.

But more than that, they talk about these animals *knowing* lots of things. This idea within the animal-behavior literature, this concept of knowledge, seems to be doing a certain amount of explanatory work within these theories... So I was interested in the concept of knowledge that they're working with in these theories, a concept that seems to be motivated by the richness of the behavioral repertoire of animals. Part of the book just looks at the animal behavior literature and tries to say, what is it about animal behavior that has led them to introduce some concept of knowledge? Then I argue that this concept of knowledge is just what knowledge *is*, and that philosophical alternatives really don't offer a viable concept of knowledge, typically because they end up leading up to total skepticism. On the contrary, there is a legitimate notion of knowledge that can be worked with to distinguish cases where people know things and where they do not.

The notion that knowledge is a true thing that we can get at, rather than a social construction or shared delusion or imposition of power, is surprisingly controversial. And it wouldn't shock me if you get criticism from the animal cognition people as well..

Some of the standard philosophical approaches like conceptual analysis see method in philosophy as distinct from method in the empirical sciences. The idea is that philosophy, like mathematics, is a priori, it's independent of any experience. We know two and two is four just by thinking about the number, we know the nature of the good and the right and beauty and knowledge just by thinking about our concepts.

Obviously, the tradition in philosophy I work in is quite different. What I do is very interdisciplinary, working with a bunch of stuff in cognitive science and seeing what its implications are for traditional philosophical issues.

But you're right, there's stuff in various social approaches to questions about knowledge that tries to tie knowledge to power and social structure. It says that knowledge is just the beliefs that your community approves of, the ones the people in power bless with this honorific. I actually talk about that view a bit in the book. It seems to me that people that talk about knowledge in that way are right about something, namely that within a community the things that are called knowledge tend to be approved of by people in power, and so on. But the suggestion that all there is to knowledge is playing that social role seems to me to be wrong. It seems to me that the reason that knowledge is capable of playing that social role is that there's something deeper about it that allows it to do that. For one thing, something isn't knowledge unless it's true. So a belief doesn't count as knowledge unless it's actually right. And all the people in power may think that things are true, but sometimes they are wrong. The social role that knowledge plays is not its deepest feature. Rather, the reason that is capable of playing the important role it is is that when beliefs are true and produced in a certain sort of way, you've got a good bead on what's going around you, and it's that that allows you to have a certain amount of power over things around you. It's not the power itself that's the essential feature.

That's an interesting notion, can you elaborate on it?

Think of someone trying to give a social analysis of what makes something gold. Here's kind of a crude idea: What makes something gold is that people in certain kinds of positions of power, whether they are jewelers or chemists, call it gold and stamp it 14K. Well, yeah, to a first approximation that's how I recognize things as gold. But it's not as if being a jeweler or chemist is just a social club and you can make up the rules as you go along. There's a certain feature of the world, something with a particular chemical structure, which they're recognizing. If the things that they call gold didn't have certain chemical features in common, it wouldn't be able to play the role that it in fact does... There's a certain kind of a social role that calling something gold plays, but it's social role is not what makes it gold, what makes it gold is that it has a certain chemical composition.

Similarly, calling something knowledge confers a certain kind of social status, but if it didn't have certain deeper features, in particular true belief produced in a certain kind of way, it wouldn't be able to play the social role that it does. So ... social analysis of what knowledge is all about is looking at one of its less central features, in the same way that looking at a social analysis of what gold is wouldn't really tell you about what makes something gold, though it may tell you something very interesting about society and how it interacts with that chemical substance.

How does your argument – that knowledge is something true and out there and independent of our sense of what it is, and that animals have knowledge – what does that mean for in our relations to the world and other living things?

I'm not sure that this has much in the way of implications for how to treat animals. There are lots of other features of them that are open to moral questions, many in more direct ways, like their ability to feel pain.

As for as for what implications it has for us and how we ought to live our lives, it's not irrelevant. ... Philosophers have been interested in what we should do in order to form accurate beliefs because they worry, understandably, is that if you are not doing it in a careful, reflective way, then you may do it in ways that are terrifically inaccurate. Your beliefs may be overly hasty, or they may be informed by prejudice or wishful thinking. [So they] have given people various kinds of concrete advice as to what they ought to do in forming beliefs in a responsible way, in a way that's most likely to get things right. The interesting thing about this is that over the course of the history of philosophy, the advice that has been given is entirely independent of any kind of empirical evidence about first, how people actually form beliefs, and second, what kind of influence we're actually capable of having on the mechanisms that influence our beliefs. That seems to me a very bad thing. After all, you think that when you want to give someone advice in order to improve their performance, the first thing that you want to do is look at where they most need help, whether it's in forming beliefs or hitting a baseball.

There's a very large body of psychological literature documenting the kind of processes that influence peoples' beliefs, the kinds of inferences that human beings are particularly inclined to make, and there are huge commonalities... [We process sensory data accurately for the most part. But] in many cases, the ways in which we routinely form beliefs are tremendously inaccurate, and what you want to do there is highlight these areas so people are more sensitive to the areas in which they would actually make mistakes. The idea that philosophers should be giving people advice as to how to form accurate beliefs I think is fine so long as the philosopher are empirically informed about the psychological literature about where human beings need help and what kinds of techniques of intervention might be most useful...

As you were thinking about this and constructing the book, were there particular areas that were highly troublesome for you?

One of the areas that I spent a great deal of time on was this idea of reflecting on our beliefs. There's an idea in both the philosophical tradition, and in common sense, is that if you want to form beliefs carefully what you want to do is form them reflectively, think about your evidence, weigh whether you have a good reason to believe something or not. There's a large body of psychological literature on what happens when people try to reflect on the quality of their evidence and the extent to which it helps them form accurate beliefs or not. This is directly relevant to the question on whether you want to be advising people to reflect, or, better, on what occasions you want to advise them reflect. Here's an example of the sort of literature I'm talking about: There's this phenomena called belief perseverance. Once people form a belief on a subject they tend to go on believing it, largely independent of the new evidence coming in. ... Reflection is not as productive as you might think in getting people to more accurately form their opinions. But the upshot of this is not that people should never reflect and they should go with their gut instinct, god forbid. ...

Does using psychological literature, which is so plastic, to take on these essential questions pose problems for you?

There's no question that when you start doing this new studies come out. My own reaction to that is that is that far from that counting against this way of

approaching things, imagine someone in chemistry saying, "Well, if I did experiments, then I'd be held hostage to how they come out, so I'm just going to skip the experiments and think through what my conception of the world is and write it down."

That's already what some physical sciences people think people in the humanities do...

Exactly. I don't really see it so much as being held hostage by the data as being forced to be responsive to the facts and when one writes something in a field like this, what that means that one's conclusions are inevitably tentative, and when new data comes in, you'd better take account of it, and it might force you to change some of your conclusions. But it's not as if the large philosophical conclusions turn on tiny features of the data.

In the conclusion of the book you talk about the disciplinary challenges that this approach raises.

There are some philosophers who have a conception of philosophy where having any kind of empirical input to it somehow taints the field and that this is not what philosophers ought to be doing. They think we should leave empirical issues to others, and philosophy can be done without any admixture of empirical evidence. So they are not terribly sympathetic to this approach.

Sure, a lot of us have a conception of philosophy that involves this giant brain that sits in a glass tank and figures out the world from there. So this notion of interdisciplinary philosophy is quite provocative. Is that a direction that a lot of other people are taking?

Oh, yes. This naturalistic movement is picking up steam in recent decades. Think about philosophy of mind – think of Descartes's conception that the body is divided between physical stuff, and there's this non-physical mind that's the seat of your sensations, emotions... Now clearly, empirical work about the how the mind works is relevant whether he is right or not... [Other empirical work] clearly bears on questions about knowledge – how we get it, what we need to do to do a better job of getting accurate belief.

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Faculty Find Service Boosts Lessons

By Jeff Wakefield



Nancy Welch, associate professor of English, found that a course on service-learning helped her bring clarity as well as involvement to the students in her literacy politics course. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

their already full plates: promoting civic engagement among students through academic service learning.

The national trend, which gathered steam and attracted controversy in the '90s, is much in evidence at UVM. In the past three years, 23 UVM faculty have participated in the John Dewey Project's Faculty Fellowship for Service Learning program, funded by a Fund for the Improvement of Secondary Education grant, with applications for 12 more faculty currently being accepted for the spring.

The program is organized around the adult educational model of the learning circle, says Chris Koliba, research assistant professor in the College of Education and Social Services and director of the John Dewey Project.

"We rely on telling stories and vignettes from people's personal experience, tied to a series of texts we read," Koliba says. "The emphasis is on collegiality, with faculty from a variety of disciplines talking about teaching." Faculty, who receive a small grant for participating, leave the seminar with a syllabus for a service learning course they've developed, which has been critiqued by the class.

"It opened my eyes to service learning as more than a glamorized internship," says Al McIntosh, professor of natural resources. He's planning a year-long course, to begin next fall, in which students will develop a plan in partnership with elected and appointed officials to help the city of Burlington reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

"There is a reflective element, in which students talk about what they learned from the community they're serving that leads to intellectual and social growth," he says.

Literacy politics, before and after

Reflection would appear to be in abundant supply in Nancy Welch's service-learning class, English 111, U.S. Literacy Politics.

If the past is any guide, statistics will show later this week that fewer than 12 percent of 18-24 year olds voted in yesterday's election, with only about 8.5 percent of 18- and 19-year olds visiting the polls.

Numbers like these, along with studies that point to declining participation in community organizations among young people, have led many college faculty to add a new educational objective to

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[Evolution at the Genetic Level](#)

Although Darwin's is the most widely embraced among evolutionary theories today, people have only in recent years become aware of the richness and complexity of this theory.

[INTERview: Kornblith](#)

UVM dedicates itself to the creation and dissemination of knowledge. But what is knowledge anyway? In a provocative new book published by the Oxford University Press, philosopher Hilary Kornblith uses animal behavior to define a crucial aspect of the human experience.

Students are huddled around computer terminals either meditating silently on the screens, which display essays, poems and stories created by children and teens at Burlington's King Street Youth Center, or conferring quietly with a partner. Welch has asked them to consider whether the authors have used the writing to "better fit in with dominant cultural ideas and norms" – to create "a sheltered, safe space apart from the problems s/he faces" – or to "express differences and dissent." In addition to class time, the students spend two-and-a-half hours a week at King Street working with children and teens on their writing, art and computer animations, including posting the work on their section of the center's Web site, [Kids Corner](#).

Welch's class is designed to undercut myths about literacy – fingering socioeconomic hurdles and stereotypes, for instance, not an inability to read or write well, as the real barrier to advancement for young people like those at King Street.

Welch's class was not always the center of concentrated energy that it is today. When she first began teaching the course several years ago, it did not have a service component.

"It was horrible," she says. "For half the students, the course taught them the inevitability of a system that replicates social class divisions. For the other half, it was completely mysterious. They couldn't figure out why we were sitting up here on the hill reading about problems that didn't reach them."

Welch participated in the Service Learning Fellowship program and said the experience helped her – especially in seeing the importance of forming a strong relationship with a community partner. "Many faculty think service learning takes away content from a course, for instance. But in a class where you want students to engage in research, or see how a setting complicates the solutions you're reading about, it makes perfect sense."

Faculty also may fear that the university will mandate service learning without providing additional resources, Welch says. "Normally my class would have 25 students, but it's capped at 18, which makes it more manageable. That takes a commitment from the university." Things work best if the service component dovetails with a faculty member's service and research agenda. "It does take more time," Welch says. "If the class isn't in sync with what you're already doing, it can feel like you're being asked to do more for less."

Acknowledging the debate that swirls around the issue, Koliba says that service learning has place in the academy, but it's not for everyone. "There are structural and content limitations. You're not going to master quantum physics in a service learning setting."

At the very least, Koliba says, the service learning debate "gives us an excuse to talk about what matters in teaching, to raise those philosophical questions and to get lots of different answers."

For senior English major Ryan Dougherty, a student in Welch's class, the answers are clear. The class is "really great," he says, "because everything has to do with real life. ...It forces you to actively think about what we're reading and talking about. It has a lot to do with the teacher – Nancy is a great teacher – but it also has a lot to do with the way the class is set up."

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