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Nothing could be less controversial than to say that the academy should turn its spotlight more frequently on teaching. After all, those fortunate to hold university and college positions spend most of their time...teaching, and devoted teachers are valued by their students and increasingly also by their institutions. More controversial is what "teaching" constitutes, and how academics should be taught to teach. This paper touches the second issue, particularly the changing role of syllabi in the contemporary teaching of religion. We know that North American graduate programs in religion prepare students to be researchers more effectively than they prepare them to be teachers — let alone "educators" actively engaged with their society. European programs are even more research-oriented. We also know that, once hired, most teachers learn to teach the hard way, on their own, with the occasional, informal mentoring of a colleague or two. Sex education, with all its ongoing growing pains, offers us a constructive comparative model, since it too addresses root issues of mystery and power, while troubling the private/public space. It assumes that most people are sexually active and that some demythologizing of sex — what it involves and how it can be made more enjoyable — goes a long way towards promoting individual and societal health. So too, many now argue, should graduate programs introduce students more directly to the mysteries of teaching before they take up a position, and the academy should continue to address its members' pedagogical concerns throughout their careers. Teachers need practical advice on how to: construct a course and reflect it effectively in a syllabus; prepare and deliver lectures, facilitate small-group encounters, weave audio-visual and computer technologies together in the classroom; bring the larger community into the university and extend student learning outside the campus; appreciate gender, ethnicity, class, and age; put a variety of confessional and academic approaches into dialogue; cope with deadline after deadline...and the list goes on. Along with this advice need to come opportunities to explore, learn, share, and play.

In fact, some of this increased attention to teaching can already be seen in various ways. Throughout the continent and cutting across disciplines, "teaching" now plays a larger role in appointments and promotions, the number of teaching awards is growing, post-secondary institutions often use "quality teaching" to make themselves accountable to the public, and a decade of publications like *The Teaching Professor* has kept pedagogy alive for tens of thousands of professionals. In our field, the Berkeley-Chicago-Harvard Program, a five-year project (1986-1991) that explored the scope of religious studies in American undergraduate liberal arts curricula, contributed three influential volumes (published by Scholars Press in their Studies in the Humanities series): *Beyond the Classics? Essays in Religious Studies and Liberal Education*, eds. Frank E. Reynolds and Sheryl L. Burkhalter, 1990; *Teaching the Introductory Course in Religious Studies: A Sourcebook*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer, 1991; *Tracing Common Themes: Comparative Courses in the Study of Religion*, eds. John B. Carman and Steven P. Hopkins, 1991. The last two books in particular offered

concrete examples of course syllabi, coupled with approaches to teaching introductory courses. Over the last decade, Lilly funds have been used creatively (often guided by Raymond Williams, one of the editors of the current issue of
Spotlight
) to set up teaching workshops to enhance and invigorate the quality of teaching in religious studies departments and theological institutes. Hundreds of junior faculty who have experienced these workshops and those who continue to go through them are now sprinkled throughout North America. 1998 saw the appearance of the journal
Teaching Theology and Religion
, whose self-professed aim was to "sustain a new international discourse among faculty about teaching and learning in the several subdisciplines in the study of religion." This journal is published in association with the American Academy of Religion. The AAR also sponsors
Spotlight on Teaching
, a semi-annual publication — the one you are now holding — that explores the theoretical and practical dimensions of teaching in the field of religion (current editor-in-chief, Richard Freund; associate editor, Laurie Patton; founding editor Lee Humphreys, 1992-1997 issues). In addition, the AAR's standing Committee on Teaching and Learning (current chair, Tom Peterson) represents the AAR's ongoing commitment to promote and improve the teaching of religion in secondary, undergraduate, graduate and professional education.

Correspondingly, it should not be forgotten that traditional forms of academic training of religious studies and seminary faculty have taught people to teach more effectively than is often appreciated. Just as good sex existed before the important work of Dr. Ruth, so too did good teaching exist before Lilly and its ground-breaking "how to" courses and seminars of the 1980s and 1990s. To train people to think, write, and conduct research with increasing degrees of sophistication, to expose them to a wide range of teachers, to offer direct opportunities for them to teach — from class resentations to assistantships to independent courses — and to have them engage material that represents human religious thought and action of the highest order, is to prepare the ground for good pedagogy. In addition, to mentor and coach graduate students and junior faculty, as has so often happened, adds to the pedagogical base. Moreover, seminary training in public speaking (how to deliver a sermon...) and interpersonal skills (how to counsel a parishioner...) continues to provide pedagogical elements often unappreciated by university graduate departments eager (some would say: not eager enough) to distance themselves from their theological roots. Modern concern for teaching, therefore, does not emerge fully-formed like Athena from the head of Zeus. University education in the liberal arts and humanities is its source. Intertwined with traditional academic training in religion is a pedagogical model of instructors as priests, in the sense that they are seen to have access to the sacred — or so students have often thought, with professors and their institutions at times reinforcing that image. In this context, to approach a teacher is to approach a transformative source. This learning model brings to mind the ancient Jewish world in which to touch the tassels of the high priest's robe was to access the sacred. This thought - world is fixed in the NT story of the hemorrhaging woman who risks social ostracism in order to seek healing by touching the hem of Jesus' cloak (Mark 5:24-34; Matthew 9:18-26; Luke 8:43-48). But times are changing. Faculty on the whole are expected to teach more students in more ways than ever

before, and students are increasingly seeing themselves as consumers deserving a quality product. Significant research in the field of critical pedagogy now exists to guide us in ways not readily available before to academics in the field of religion. The "teaching to reveal mysteries" model is currently being contested in the academy, particularly in the use of new information technologies. To be sure, to juxtapose the "old" and "new" forms of teaching in this way is to oversimplify matters, both in terms of how these forms are conceptualized and how they are actualized from classroom to classroom. I draw the comparison here only to note, first, that while traditional forms of academic teacher training have changed little over the last thirty years they are now clearly in transition, particularly regarding issues of professional development; and second, that teaching models directly influence the degree to which we consider it important to make changes in how we prepare people to teach.

One component of teaching is the preparation of course syllabi. Syllabi used to be simple, and for many they still are — a reminder of the Greek root "sillybos" (variant sittybe), a noun used sparingly in antiquity to refer to a parchment book label or tag; Julius Pollux, the second century CE scholar, applied the word to tassels. One of my colleagues, a stellar teacher, continues to offer his students the barest of syllabi: course title, his name and phone number, a brief course description, and point-form readings and assignments. One page fits all. He carries in his head a thousand tunes, in his body ten thousand hours of experience, and each encounter becomes a creative synthesis. No written score for him or for his students. Few of us, though, are virtuoso improvisational performers à la Keith Jarrett; we plan our courses with as much detail as time and energy allow, for our sake and for the sake of our students. Increasingly syllabi are reflecting with greater exactness the thought that has gone into the preparation of these courses. Some now include sections on course concerns and objectives, as well as internet links; most include a class-by-class "topic, readings and special events" breakdown. Legal requirements at times intervene: in some regions and institutions syllabi are considered contracts that bind teacher and student. Everywhere, though, it would seem that teachers are becoming more careful about what is put on their syllabi, and syllabi are becoming more detailed. As they are also made accessible to teachers around the world via print media and the internet, we are witnessing the beginning of a significant change in their creation and promotion. The AAR Syllabi Project reflects and is contributing to that change. The site offers faculty who are designing new syllabi or revising old ones access to other teachers' course syllabi, allowing them to appreciate how their colleagues have organized material, selected reading assignments, and used audio-visual aids. It also promotes an exchange of ideas about pedagogical practices, such as how course requirements reinforce goals, how pedagogical techniques enhance the learning process, and how courses develop student interest in the study of religion.

Linked to this new dialogue on the nature and use of syllabi are important discussions about our role as academics. What follows are four remarks I have heard about syllabi, accompanied by brief reflections on them. The remarks are typical of what I have encountered as a member of the AAR's Committee on Teaching and Learning and as editor of that Committee's Syllabi

Project over the last two years. They point to the complexity of issues we face on this question.

"Abstain from too much class preparation. The dissertation is what's important. Later, publications will get you hired and promoted." That comment was directed by a senior faculty member to a doctoral student who had just successfully defended his dissertation proposal, was about to embark on his first independent course, and asked for advice on designing a course and accompanying syllabus. The comment was well-intentioned, and in some ways quite sound. The professor recognized that a completed doctorate is usually a person's best road to professional employment, and he probably knew from experience that the interpersonal energy generated by teaching often threatens to eat up every possible moment, at exactly the time when completing that dissertation looks more and more daunting. Two other committee members agreed with him (I was the fourth member), and raised other issues. Small universities might value good, independent teaching, they noted, but large research universities valued researchers. In the process, several examples were given of former students who had succeeded in the academy by consciously making teaching a second string on their bow. By this time my head was spinning with issues — e.g., given the fact that most universities in North America are "small" universities, were they implying that smaller universities suffer from Girard's mimetic urge and also seek to hire the world's best researchers? I knew the uncomfortable truth of that observation. Why draw a distinction between teaching and research — were these not flip sides of scholarship? Yes, but research in isolation still drew the accolades, leaves, and research funds. In the end, the question that nagged at me the most was comparative in nature. The department in question had done a great deal to ensure the highest quality traditional research from that student: insisting on course work to provide the budding researcher with the breadth and depth of knowledge with which to handle his dissertation; setting up committees to oversee language examinations, general examinations, and the dissertation proposal. His advisor had added to that: encouragement to join learned societies and participate in the regional conferences, and suggestions on journals to approach to write book reviews. All of this was commendable. But...where was the equivalent for teaching, and if the equivalent had existed, how could it have been incorporated into the program? For this budding patristics scholar, would one replace a medieval philosophy course with a course on teaching? Surely one did not want to extend his program when pressure these days came from several places to shorten it, but could pedagogy, for instance, not be made at least optional as a required course? If so, what would one include in such a course?

"Look, I am not eager to share my course syllabi with others; I've noticed the emergence of too many instant experts who simply take over other people's syllabi." That remark came from a colleague when asked whether she would consider placing one of her syllabi on the AAR website. "No problem," I said, understanding the reticence to share one's syllabus. Then I thought: Isn't it curious that this person has published several books and dozens of articles, in the hope that she might be read and that her ideas might help form her field, and here she is, uncomfortable about others basing their courses on hers. Isn't it even stranger that her syllabi, including mine, never get peer reviewed, and are accessible to others only with some difficulty?

Students see our syllabi, and our colleagues sometimes see them too (some departments post them, a practice increasingly seen on departmental websites), but people at large and colleagues across the continent do not have access to them. Yet in some ways my colleague's reticence is not strange. Online syllabi are not treated the same as published articles. The creator of an article gets "credit" for it on their c.v. and expects those who use it to say so in a note. The creator of a syllabus and course expects neither. The difference is clear. So, should syllabi be treated like papers? If they are, what should the protocol be?

"Oh yes, I have designed my syllabi mainly from classes I took years ago, and I'm uncomfortable posting them for all to see, as though they were mine." The committee has heard variations of this comment from several people. At first it took us by surprise. Then it raised questions — e.g., How do people construct their syllabi? To what extent do previous courses determine the nature of syllabi? What are the implications on the field if doctoral students design their own courses from their teachers' courses in graduate school — who has the power here and how can it be changed? Do we want it to change? With several dozen syllabi now available on the AAR site — with many more coming soon and an SBL syllabi project soon to be launched — it is now possible to construct syllabi by discussing them with authors of related syllabi, observing how others have integrated audio-visual elements, exploring colleagues' book lists to get a sense of what people are using and why (especially in the pedagogical reflections that are often included), and thus "sampling" others' work. It may not be as dramatic as the 1990's publication of the remaining fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls or the James Robinson-led initiative in the 1970s to gather and publish all the Nag Hammadi texts, but syllabi are now "out there" for all to see, for all to use. Genealogies are quickly emerging, especially with the web courses, where people are learning from one another, although they rarely openly acknowledge that dependence. And pedagogical conversations are occurring across continents ("Hi, I'm from South Africa. I just saw your syllabus listed...") that five years ago would have been unthinkable. How this will change the nature of the field remains to be seen, particularly when it comes to ownership of ideas. Who owns the course and the syllabus, and how do we acknowledge our dependence on the work of others?

"Careful...are you sure you want to do this?" That remark was mine and it was self-directed, in December 1997, as I considered putting a couple of my own syllabi on the AAR site I had just set up with my son, Adrien. My reaction took me by surprise. Like most academics I prefer the anonymity of an office to the glare of public space. Still, I have been in the business long enough to realize that we have a responsibility to share our work with others. But syllabi are something else, or so it seemed. Had I not been directly involved in this project, I would likely not have "let go" of these syllabi. They were "mine" in ways that an article on heretics in the second century or a presentation at an academic conference were not. I considered my syllabi both too personal and too imperfectly formed. The incentive is now there for me to think through my courses more imaginatively. I might add that the unease at "going public" with some of my syllabi has not disappeared.

Informing these four remarks is the private nature of teaching, which is in turn grounded in issues of power. The doctoral student in the first example had just gone through a public discussion of his dissertation proposal; months earlier he had gone through a public defense of his general exams; before that in several of his courses he had gone through seminar presentations; and months from now he will go through a public defense of his dissertation. Where was the public discussion of his upcoming course (before, during or after)? In the three other examples, what we were willing to do with our research (publish the results, noting secondary sources, recognizing that we were contributing to building discussion) we did not feel comfortable doing with course syllabi. Course development, including the preparation of syllabi, is usually an individual concern, whereas the writing of a paper often emerges with the help of others, who are there to critique oral drafts, comment as friends and mentors on written drafts, or comment as referees to journal submissions. Books usually get feedback from an even wider range of people; for instance, I have seen sows' ears come to our university press that were transformed into silk purses by the unsung copy editor. But who is there to give regular, constructive feedback on course syllabi, the delivery of lectures, the organization of group discussions? How often does one hear of someone throwing a "course party" at the completion of a successful course, or series of courses? Even the course evaluations are usually private — but book reviews are in the public domain. It is indeed ironic that teaching, the most public of our responsibilities as academics, is such a gut-wrenchingly private act (for more on this, see my "Like a Cook in a Cafe," *Studies in Religion* 27 [1998]: 69-78).

No amount of change will alter the private nature of teaching. Like sex — and religion, I might add — teaching necessarily remains partly shrouded in mystery, with students still expecting (sometimes, alas, expected) to touch the tassels of their instructors' robes, while professors tap into whatever founts of inspiration they have in order to offer students transformative learning experiences. But change is on the way, whether we like it or not. Increasing demands on everyone — university administrators who are responsible to boards of governors and to the public at large, senior faculty who often teach more students in a wider range of classes, junior faculty who are usually expected to teach extensively outside their area of specialization and to publish prolifically, adjunct faculty ("roads scholars") who cobble together whatever they can from their patrons, graduate students who want to get at least one independent teaching experience under their belt before applying for a permanent position, undergraduate students who expect to be factored into the teaching equation — raise the need for more direct teacher training. Graduate students in particular want to learn how to teach effectively. I recently had the good fortune of visiting faculty and students at twenty-two religion departments in Canada between October 1998 and March 1999. Some of the most frequently asked questions, from Vancouver to St. John's, Newfoundland, were: "Which departments offer teacher training?"; "I have to teach an introductory course on xxx next Fall: how do I go about preparing for it?" In Canada no doctoral program in religious studies has a compulsory pedagogical component built into it yet. The University of Calgary is moving the fastest in this direction. Raymond Williams (http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu) has consulted with the few American programs who pay the most attention to training teacher

scholars. In conjunction with the Committee on Teaching and Learning he will co-chair (with Kathleen Talvacchia) an AAR Special Topics Forum on this issue at the upcoming annual meeting. The momentum seems irreversible: the introduction of teacher training in graduate schools of religion is emerging, for good reasons. The availability of high-quality course syllabi — the non-priestly tassels of the profession — and the new culture that is developing around their use, will contribute significantly to this process. Our options, it would seem, are to join the process and help shape it, or stand by and watch it pass us by.

Click here to access the AAR Syllabi Project.