Vitalities of the Mind
The Gustafson Seminar on the future of liberal education

SPECIAL ISSUE GUEST EDITOR, LESLIE REAL, ASA GRIGGS CANDLER PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY

This special issue of the Academic Exchange is devoted to the work of the Gustafson Seminar in 2007-08 on the ambitious topic of “The Purpose and Future of Liberal Education.”

From 1989 to 1996, funded by the Henry Luce Foundation, Luce Professor of the Humanities and Comparative Studies James M. Gustafson led an annual cross-disciplinary faculty seminar at Emory University. The Luce Seminar brought together nine to twelve faculty members twice weekly for a semester and, freeing them of administrative and teaching responsibilities, allowed them to devote their time to examining connections among a disparate variety of disciplines, from the natural and social sciences to the humanities.

When Gustafson retired in 1998, several faculty lobbied for a continued life for the Luce Seminar in some fashion. The provost’s office renamed it the Gustafson Seminar, and with a lower budget and time commitment, faculty participants met six or seven times during the semester.

The year 2007 brought a new phase in the life of the Gustafson Seminar. A core group of faculty took on the responsibility of stimulating intellectual discussion across the broader university community on “The Purpose and Future of Liberal Education.” The topic was particularly timely, as the seminar was to discover: Emory College was at the same moment going through the process of redesigning its General Education Requirements curriculum. The new GERS go into effect in fall 2009.

The 2007-08 Gustafson Scholars spent the last academic year preparing themselves to lead a university-wide discussion of that topic. We trained ourselves, steeped ourselves in the debates, the writings, the issues, then began to sort out ways of taking our training and bringing it back to the community.

Last spring, the Gustafson Seminar hosted a public two-day workshop on “Educating the Vitalities of the Mind,” led by Catharine R. Stimpson, University Professor of English and Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Science at New York University. In addition to Stimpson’s presentations, faculty who did not participate in the Gustafson Seminar were invited to respond to the seminar’s report. Stimpson also delivered a public lecture titled “Bathing in Reeking Wounds: The Liberal Arts and War,” the text of...
The 2007-2008 Gustafson Faculty Seminar

Les Real, Asa G. Candler Professor of Biology, Co-coordinator
Maria Carrion, Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese, Co-coordinator
Stephen Bowen, Dean of Oxford College and Kenan Professor of Biology
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Victoria Hertzberg, Associate Professor of Biostatistics
Kent Linville, Dean of Academic Affairs, Chief Academic Officer, and Professor of Philosophy, Oxford College
Rosemary Magee, Vice President and Secretary of the University
Thee Smith, Associate Professor of Religion
Karen Stolley, Associate Professor and Chair of Spanish
Leslie Taylor, Associate Professor and Chair of Theater Studies

Vitalities of the Mind

- Thinking: Quantitative Reasoning, Logic & rhetoric, Metaphor & analogy, Inference, Linguistic, visual, & auditory analysis
- Feeling: Intuition & discovery, Exposure to diversity, Contemplation, Linguistic, visual, & auditory perception
- Willing: Effectiveness, Civility, Resilience, Persuasion

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- In-Common Skills: Negative Capability
- In-Common Habits: Imagination, incubation, rigor

Individual Life of the Mind

Community Life of the Mind

- Communication
- Friendship
- Collaboration
- Debate
- Proxemics
- Right, Living
- Trust
- Integrity
- Justice
- Honesty
- Altruism
- Equality
- Anchoring
- Curatorial & archival analysis
- Hermeneutics
- Context
- Continuity
- Reinterpretation
Educating the Vitalities of the Mind
The Gustafson Faculty Seminar on undergraduate education

To help guide our thinking, the Gustafson Scholars have constructed a matrix of interactions based on what Hannah Arendt characterized as “the life of the mind.” In her seminal two-volume work titled The Life of the Mind, Arendt intended to devote three separate volumes to each of three dimensions of the life of the mind: thinking, feeling, and willing. Though some critics have suggested that Arendt intended to focus her last volume on aesthetics as one dimension of action and willing, we choose to keep the intent of volume three broad since these attributes “thinking, feeling, and willing” might effectively be considered the “head, heart, and hands” of every student.

In the field of liberal learning, according to a 2007 American Association of Colleges and Universities report on “College Learning for a New Global Century,” it is commonplace to evaluate courses and curricula by their contribution to the development of a student’s skills, knowledge, values, and habits. These two sets (thinking, feeling, willing) and (skills, knowledge, values, habits) form the dimensions for facilitating the life of the mind (see chart page 2). For each entry in the matrix we asked, “What are the skills/values/types of knowledge/habits of mind that are essential for developing effective thinking/feeling/willing?”

We also divided the “knowledge” category into two different questions. First, what kinds of knowledge are available to foster effective thinking/feeling/willing, and are there pedagogies that are especially effective in promoting such knowledge? Second, what kinds of knowledge emanate from particular aspects of the Life of the Mind? The first column of entries—under

A Vitalities of the Mind Glossary

Affect Theory: A branch of psychoanalysis that attempts to organize affects into discrete categories and connect each one with its typical response. (For example, the affect of joy is observed through the reaction of smiling.)

Analogy: Similarity or likeness between two objects/subjects that are perceived to be unlike each other.

Anchoring: The capacity to situate oneself within specific historical and temporal contexts.

Contemplation: Derived from the Latin root templum (which, in turn, comes from the Greek temnein—temnein, to divide or cut), it means a process of separation of a subject from his/her environment, enclosing him/herself in a place (physical, literal, or figurative, imagined). In a religious context it can signal a manner or place of prayer or meditation.

Epistemology: Theory of knowledge; the study of the nature and scope of knowledge.

Hermeneutics: Refers to the different study or interpretation (or “tens”) of religious, literary, historical, and cultural texts or experience.

Inference: Process, or act, of reaching a conclusion believed to be true by virtue of its derivation from a proposition, a statement, or a judgment that one already knows and also believes to be true.

Metaphor: Figure of speech constructed with non-logical language, not meant to be read literally. Without explicitly establishing a comparison between two or more objects otherwise different or unrelated, a metaphor compares them by means of identification or substitution of one for the other.

Motivation Theory: A psychological approach to understanding the motives underlying the generation of courses of action.

Negative Capability: Theory of the poet John Keats that describes the human ability to accept uncertainty, that not everything can be resolved and understood.

Parsimony: General principle applied in science, philosophy, and other related fields to arrive at a course of action or hypothesis exercising economy, thrift, caution, or frugality.

Praxis: Derived from the Ancient Greek root praxis—praxis, used to refer to the activities in which free men engaged, it is the process by means of which subjects learn, practice, apply, or enact a lesson, skill, or theory.

Proxemics: The study of how human beings use space and how various differences in that use can make us feel more relaxed or anxious.

Right Living: From the Buddhist Eight-Fold Path corresponding to modes of livelihood that generate from enlightened actions.
People who understand liberal arts education argue that it’s the ultimate practical education.

—STEPHEN BOWEN, DEAN OF OXFORD COLLEGE, KENAN PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY

Academic Exchange: What drew you to the Gustafson Seminar?
Stephen Bowen: I was attracted to the seminar because it provided an opportunity to discuss liberal arts education, which I think is the component of the undergraduate educational experience most important for the future of American society. Liberal arts education is sometimes referred to as general education, but no one likes that term because it’s ambiguous. Liberal arts education has incredible potential, and in most institutions that potential is nowhere near to being realized.

AE: Why is that?
SB: A large segment of our society thinks that a liberal arts education is like finishing school—learning languages and literature—things that are largely erudite but not particularly useful. The reason that is fundamentally wrong is because the real focus of liberal arts education is development of skills in clear, effective, articulate communication; critical thinking; problem solving across a broad range of disciplines; and understanding the different perspectives of different academic disciplines and how each one has its own assumptions and techniques. People who understand liberal arts education argue that it’s the ultimate practical education, because it offers ways to solve problems from a variety of perspectives and goes far beyond the resources of the single perspective of one discipline.

For example, the first half of my academic career was spent in a university of science and engineering. Some of the engineering faculty thought that people in other disciplines were well intended but took a wrong turn somewhere in their education. If you wanted to be a person whose education allowed you to do something, then you needed to be an engineer. But other engineering faculty appreciated that engineering was just one approach to problem solving, and as a single perspective it was subject to considerable limitation. A brilliant technical solution is of little help if the society for which it is designed rejects it.

AE: What is the role of education in reducing violence?
SB: The answer is not as clear-cut as we might like. One thing that motivates people to be violent

Civility and contemplation and ethics and compassion and courage—all these things are great. But we need Apollo and Dionysus.

—LESLIE TAYLOR, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND CHAIR OF THEATER STUDIES

Academic Exchange: What were your overall impressions of the Gustafson Seminar?
Leslie Taylor: One of the big values of the seminar is, irrespective of the topic, the opportunity to get together once a month with faculty from a broad range of the university. The seminar meetings were characterized by spirited disagreement and real goodwill, in terms of trying to understand someone else’s point of view. There was skepticism, but there was no ill will. It was emblematic of what academic discourse can be. We disagree but we don’t get personal or nasty.

In terms of the topic, “The Future of Liberal Arts Education,” what struck us was that just after periods of war, when morals and mores had been shaken up, universities with the stature and reputation of Harvard re-examined their core curricula in the liberal arts. It happened right after World War I, when Harvard questioned how they should be educating young men who are going to be the movers and shakers of the world. It also happened after World War II and Vietnam, as well, and they are just now finishing up another review, in the midst of the Iraq War. I don’t think it is just Harvard. Chicago and other places followed the same general time frame in re-examining their curriculum.

In Emory College, we were already discussing changes to the general education requirements (GERs). That conversation wasn’t so much about the content of a liberal arts education as how you facilitate it. In the Gustafson Seminar, we were trying to ask what is a liberal arts education? There were a lot of divergent points of view about how much you should regulate it and how much you should just put out all of these great options and
is a sense of hopelessness. They feel trapped and violence is their only way to respond. People from backgrounds that don’t offer them encouragement or opportunities to get a significant education must feel totally lost, and that the only way to defend their personal interest is through force. Historically, power derived from physical strength and the threat of violence. It’s still true today to some limited extent, but not in most segments of American society. Wealth and influence with their links to education are primary sources of power. Education champions rationality, and I also think that there is general sense that violence is an irrational act. Individuals and societies that are well educated will look for an alternative to violence. But there are counter examples. People point to Nazi Germany as an example of a highly educated and literate society. Clearly, education alone is not sufficient to prevent violence.

**AE:** How do you balance the grand ideas of higher education with practical vocational demands?

**SB:** The way to do it is to create in students the habits of mind that motivate them to continue learning indefinitely. Their education should lead them to become people who read and think and get involved with others and continue their learning, so that they’re not limited by a narrowly defined or bordered education. If all they ever know is what they learned in college, then they’re stuck.

The capacity to be a self-motivated learner and to learn from a broad range of sources is the ultimate practical education. There was a time when people would say students need a good general education so that they will be effective in using the specialized knowledge that they get in their major. So general education supports the major, and the major supports the graduate’s role in society. But I think the tables are turned now. Instead of needing a general education so you can get a good job in your major, you now need a major to get an entry point into the work force, but it’s your general education that will make it possible for you to grow and evolve in that dynamic work world.

**AE:** Is Oxford considering revisiting its curriculum?

**SB:** It is. I believe that in the future it will be more focused. At present it looks like a plain vanilla, garden-variety college curriculum. In the past we thought we were limited in developing an innovative curriculum because we needed to parallel Emory College’s program. We’ve made lot of progress in becoming more intentional about our liberal arts-intensive emphasis, but that’s been principally through pedagogy. We want now to get our arms around curricular opportunities that will help us to become more liberal arts-intensive. It’s part of our project to become more distinctive, more intentional, and more focused in what we do.

possibilities and let students choose and shape their own curricula. And it seems to me in the history of liberal arts education that the pendulum has swung between the highly organized and planned core curriculum and the wide-open range of choices. It was a fascinating conversation.

**AE:** What are your thoughts on the seminar’s “Vitalities of the Mind” matrix?

**LT:** I think right now the matrix incorporates many interesting ideas; I think it’s way too complicated. There were so many good intentions that it was hard to narrow anything down. When you start to consider what liberal arts education could be, you want to be in a sense corrective of what you see as currently wrong, hence the ideas of community and compassion. It went back to our wanting to inculcate some of these things that we view as good. The problem is that there are so many forces out there shaping who one turns out to be that you can’t rely on any one of them. I think it’s appropriate to question how you can include these values in a liberal arts education. I am less convinced that you can mandate them so that everyone has the same experience. There is a lot of serendipity and synchronicity in life.

Further, civility and contemplation and ethics and compassion and courage—all these things are great. But we need Apollo and Dionysus. I worry about devising a curriculum or set of standards that rule out risk, vision, dissent, and passion—a curriculum that is so mannered and orderly and compassionate and caring and collaborative that there’s no place for creative chaos.

I think the value of the document is in its beginning to re-examine what a liberal arts education is, what it does. It doesn’t definitively answer those questions, but I hope it will stimulate ongoing conversations with the faculty: what do we want our students to learn? How are we educating them and what are we educating them for? I think that’s the conversation we as a faculty haven’t had yet.

**AE:** What precipitated the GER revision in Emory College?

**LT:** Emory’s GERs were more complicated than any other college’s we looked at. There have been various reports over the past couple of years about how unsatisfied faculty and students have been with the general education requirements—that they were labyrinthine and took up too many course hours, that they hindered students and faculty and made advising difficult. They were not easy to navigate. So I think part of the decision was to make them more streamlined, open them up to more student choice. You still have to do two from column A and two from column B, etc., but the contents of the columns are exponentially bigger and the number of requirements across the columns is lower.
Continued from page 6

“thinking”—were easy to establish. Who can deny the efficacy of quantitative reasoning or logic for critical thinking or for establishing a habit of skepticism in evaluating evidence? But we struggled with the rest of our tripartite Life of the Mind. What skills or dispositions increase a student’s capacity for sympathy and action? Even identifying the appropriate words to map out these important dimensions of student/faculty development was daunting.

The attention to the individual Life of the Mind, however, left certain clearly important dimensions undeveloped even at the individual level—for example, the importance of friendship and collaboration. For even if the attributes and relationships cited in our matrix are accepted as virtues a liberal arts education ought to promote, there will remain a wide range of opinion about the importance of the curriculum—both in general and with regard to the particular courses and learning activities that should comprise it.

On the importance of the curriculum in general, two polar positions are widely discussed. On one end, there’s the “minimalist” position advanced by Harvard President Emeritus Derek Bok: “the residue of knowledge and the habits of mind students take away from college are likely to be determined that result when all students must have access to specific courses. Pedagogies that support outcomes in our matrix abound. Service learning and international travel can do much to enhance empathy (cum compassion) and prepare the foundation for the development of civic engagement. Problem-based (or case-based) learning can be structured to promote critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative learning (the latter promoting skills required in team work).

Developing programs with high academic standards that integrate writing, speaking (both in class dialogue and presentations), and critical thinking promote the capacities cited in the “thinking” section of our matrix. These, of course, are but a few examples of creative pedagogies that promote the development of the desired qualities of a liberally educated person. Other outcomes in our matrix can be actively addressed by extra-curricular means.

Establishing a racially, culturally, and religiously diverse student body and promoting interaction through housing, common dining facilities, engagement in student government, and campus organizations promotes intercultural awareness and decreases the tendency to see such differences as embodiments of the “other.”

This is a brief summary, but perhaps it is sufficient to stimulate discussion and debate about the primacy of teaching practices, programs, and institutional structures in achieving the aims of liberal arts education.

We in the Gustafson Seminar think that discussion about the nature of education and the objective of reducing violence and hate in the world is or should be a core component of our mission.
Comments on the Liberal Arts
Response to the Gustafson Faculty Seminar

CATHARINE R. STIMPSON, UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCE AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

I very much admire the ambition and seriousness of the Gustafson Faculty Seminar. It is asking what the liberal arts ought to do and what sort of human character the liberal arts ought to nurture. The seminar has chosen well in using Hannah Arendt as a guide to its construction of the “Vitalities of the Mind.”

I have one general comment on the seminar’s matrix and several particular ones. A matrix is stable. That is its nature. Its function is to place a fixed net over swarming, wriggling, changing phenomena. In important ways, however, the liberal arts are about change. What we teach changes. How we teach changes. We hope that our teaching changes both our students and us. I would hope that the seminar would revisit its matrix consistently and ask if its fixities have hardened into rigidities.

As for my particular comments, I would stress history more in the column about “feeling.” Exploring and applying object relations theory takes us into the domain of self and other. Only when we enter fully into this domain can we see ourselves as others see us and as we see ourselves with others; can we begin to empathize with the situation of others; and can we begin to feel the stirrings of compassion for them. Perhaps as important as feeling compassion is feeling compassion’s antithesis: a selective revulsion at cruel and destructive actions.

I would as well be wary about overly sentimentalizing the values and competencies listed in the column labeled “belonging.” I endorse these values, but I fear that in our rush to communicate and collaborate, we may forget the virtues and discoveries of the soul in solitude. Moreover, we may also underestimate the creativity and contributions of the brilliant creep or the cognitively original lout or the disagreeable iconoclast. The best think is not always group think or, to put it more politely, a “community life of the mind.”

To my regret, I have become increasingly cautious about affirming too boldly that the liberal arts can inculcate goodness in our students.

I would as well be wary about what can happen because of the liberal arts in the years between welcoming a freshman and bidding farewell to the senior.

Given this conviction, it may seem counterintuitive that I have become an advocate of required community service courses in our more elite and affluent institutions of higher education. Of course, community service courses must expunge themselves of any do-gooder or missionary attitudes. Students must work in a community in a spirit of mutual respect. And they must work, and be prepared to do it—be the work construction, or tutoring, or nursing, or any other act that will benefit a community as a community defines it. But done appropriately, community service courses can provide a vital track in the passageway of the liberal arts. This track can lead to learning about the self and others, to some empathy, to some compassion, to some selective revulsion. This track is not guaranteed to reach these goods, but surely it is wiser to step on it than to avoid it.
Having accepted an invitation to respond to the work of the 2007-08 Gustafson Faculty Seminar, I received a summary statement of its goals and aspirations. The document introduced the question of the liberal arts at Emory by noting the historic correlation, in American universities, of curriculum reform and the circumstances of war. Addressing themselves to the present, the authors suggest that even if educators cannot offer solutions to human conflict and aggression “discussion about the nature of education” in the context of war “is or should be a core component of our mission.”

It was hard to know where to begin a response, and not only because of the scope of the challenge. I have no direct personal experience of the violence of war, yet an answer called me to consider the extent and nature of my own involvement—institutional, social, and personal—with war. As I confronted those issues it seemed that any words I could offer would be inadequate.

My position could not be more different from that of the German Jewish scholar Erwin Panofsky when, having fled to the United States from Nazi Germany, he penned one of the most compelling essays in my field of study, “The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline.” Panofsky recognized that for better and worse, scholars and educators inevitably participate “in the process of shaping reality.” As he noted to illustrate, “The man who is run over by a car is run over by mathematics, physics, and chemistry.” Following this logic of culpability without volition, I have to admit that the institutions that shelter me and make my contemplative and educational endeavors possible are intertwined with a complex economic and political order that also makes war.

The last point was driven home a few years ago, when I had the privilege of attending the annual Jefferson Lecture sponsored by National Endowment for the Humanities. The speaker was Helen Vendler. Her lecture, in which she adopted the poetic voice of Wallace Stephens, presented a plea for the study of the creative arts as a central part of a university curriculum. Even as I sympathized with her argument, I found the event itself profoundly disturbing. My discomfort was partly a result of the lecture’s framing with an elaborate and distinctly militaristic display of flag waving. The display included a trouping of the President’s (fully armed) color guard. In my mind, the atmosphere in the room was inseparable from the mood of fierce pride, fear, and aggression that gripped this country after the violent destruction of the World Trade Center.

The pairing of Professor Vendler’s soft lyrical voice and its aggressive military context was striking. An argument that might have seemed important in...
The example I found was knitting, and the story began with my career as a Brownie (a very young Girl Scout). In hope of earning one of the badges that decorated the Girl Scout. In hope of earning one of the badges that decorated the uniforms of diligent Brownies, I asked my mother to teach me how to knit. She surprised me by pointing to my father as the more skilled knitter and the better source of instruction. When I went to my father with the same request I also asked him why he knew how to knit. He explained that when his two older brothers were oversees fighting in the Second World War, he and his mother spent their moments away from the work of the family farm in the Canadian prairies knitting socks and bandages to care for the troops. He also taught me how to knit.

Even then it was clear that knitting, for my father, was no mere skill. My educated self might say it had an elegiac function with which I could identify. While I could not share my father’s memories, let alone the war experiences of my uncles, the mimetic and emotionally charged process of learning how to knit brought me a little closer to understanding. Putting fragments of information together with this understanding, I came to see the evidence of war in a new light. That evidence included my uncle’s immobile left hand, which I had been told was the result of shrapnel. His hand, which I had once viewed with detachment, as a natural wonder, particularly when he used it to lift the milk pail and pour its contents into the cream separator, became meaningful. It was both a wound of a war the effects of which I could not otherwise comprehend, and undeniable evidence of survival. The details of the story I have put together for myself over the years matter less than the recognition of the elegiac and re-creative activities that are bound up in my imagination with knitting. Knitting, like scholarship, is a place I go to sort out and cope with the disturbances that come from unfathomable things. I am not suggesting that knitting is the answer to the serious questions posed by the Gustafson Seminar. I am rather proposing that something like it is needed to gain perspective and overcome the urge to identify scholarly endeavor too closely with prescribed educational outcomes. The recent actions of the Emory College faculty are encouraging in this regard. In backing a curriculum that puts more responsibility for education in the hands of individual professors and students, the faculty resisted the urge to guard borders jealously and legislate the life out of university education. Instead of insisting on an airtight curriculum, one that responded at every turn to the possibility of its circumvention, the college faculty opted to entrust themselves and their students with the substance of education.

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university lecture halls seemed beside the point here. Its aesthetic attractions were all too easily attached to the matter of nationalism and military display. The use of a scholar’s voice as bait in the game of promoting war was disturbing not only in itself, but also because it reflected the conditions of my own livelihood. The effect, similar to the one I felt in considering the charge of the Gustafson Seminar, was momentarily paralyzing.

Perhaps overcoming paralysis is a necessary first step in a discussion of the sort proposed by the Gustafson Seminar. It was surely no accident that the respondents chose not to address the overt invitation to consider the shape of the curriculum. Instead, many of us appealed to autobiography and accounts of intimate family relations as a means to invest war with meaning. My example was one of several. Lacking any firsthand knowledge of the devastating effects of war, I could only search through childhood memories for evidence of its repercussions in my habits.

The example I found was knitting, and the story began with my career as a Brownie (a very young Girl Scout). In hope of earning one of the badges that decorated the uniforms of diligent Brownies, I asked my mother to teach me how to knit. She surprised me by pointing to my father as the more skilled knitter and the better source of instruction. When I went to my father with the same request I also asked him why he knew how to knit. He explained that when his two older brothers were oversees
Can the Liberal Arts Reduce the Likelihood of War?

An important but limited resource

MICHAEL M. MCQUAIDE, PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY, OXFORD COLLEGE

The 2007-2008 Gustafson seminar hosted Catharine Stimpson this spring to highlight the conclusion of a yearlong conversation concerning liberal arts and war. I was asked to respond to her presentation at the concluding session of the seminar. Although Dr. Stimpson’s remarks ranged over a number of questions, I took up her query concerning the extent to which liberal arts education can reduce the likelihood of war (see page 7).

I argued that education in general and the liberal arts in particular could only marginally make war a less frequent feature of social history. My argument has two dimensions. The first and more simple of the two is that some wars are just. What morally plausible approach is available when confronted with the evil of the Third Reich or the Pol Pot regime? Liberally educated individuals may well arrive at the conclusion that a given war is a fair and just response to an overwhelmingly unfair but intentionally created human catastrophe. Even the Dalai Lama finds room for righteous indignation at unjust circumstances.

The second reason education may not hold the potential to reduce war reflects a deeply seated attraction to war on the psychological level. Many have reflected on this atavistic tendency towards the destruction of one’s fellows. Clausewitz, Freud, Ambrose, Crane, Fusell, and others write about the primal magnetism of war in general and mortal combat in particular. Is Freud correct in his claims that humans are burdened with thanatos, a psychological desire to destroy, which society must curtail in order for the species to survive? If this claim is true, then we must be ever more vigilant in our efforts to limit this destructive drive, given current weapons technology.

Soldiers from wars fought by literate armies often speak to the beauty of war, the romantic, nearly erotic attraction of inflicting death on others. My father’s experience as a combat infantry soldier in the European theater of the World War II serves to illustrate this idea. (Biographical detail is relevant in our search for insights into the origins of human behavior. Sometimes we need to be reminded that behind the macro-level statistical analysis of social behavior stand the real, lived experiences of individuals. Biography is occasionally dismissed as unscientifically dependent on a sample of one person, but I am certain that my father’s experiences in Italy between 1942 and 1945 reflect the experiences of hundreds of thousands of young American men.)

I never knew my father before his draft notice arrived in 1942 since I was born in 1951. My mother, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and family friends, however, did know him before he went to war, and they shared their impressions with me over the years of the way Dad’s combat experience had changed him. The universal consensus was that my father was a happy-go-lucky and light hearted teenager from a rural community in western Pennsylvania. Cocky, always ready to laugh, and a wonderful storyteller, my father was popular with his peers, given his generous spirit and quick wit. Dale McQuaide, everyone’s favorite, left for war a nineteen-year-old boy and returned in the summer of 1945 a much changed person. Although different people described the change in various ways, the general agreement was that Dad had been diminished by his time in war. A more somber, less humorous, less emotionally available man returned from fighting in Italy.
Like many of his generation, Dad almost never spoke of his experiences in the Army. It was only on one accidental occasion that my father let his guard down and reminisced about the horrors of his wartime experiences. We lived in a relatively small town on the shore of Lake Erie, where Ohio and Pennsylvania join. Dad worked as a carpenter after the war, and we lived in a town where WASPs such as our family were the demographic minority. Ethnic Italians, Poles, Hungarians, and other eastern European families made up the majority of our working-class town. This culture meant lots of live music and terrific food at weddings around town. At one wedding in particular that our family attended, the reception featured tin tubs of celery sticks immersed in crushed ice and V8 juice. We had never seen anything like that before, and Dad thought that was just about the coolest thing ever. I have no idea how many celery sticks Dad ate, but it was quite a number. Only well after the fact did we learn that the celery was standing in Bloody Mary’s rather than mere tomato juice. By then Dad had a big buzz, and we helped him to the car and on home.

What followed that evening was the only time I saw my father drunk and the only time I ever saw him weep. The alcohol must have unlocked the chamber where he kept those demonic memories stored. Story after story emerged, each more dramatically riveting and horrible than the last. I will recount one to illustrate the tenor of these memories. Dad was a first lieutenant leading an American convoy as the German army retreated north. As the first American truck carrying GIs entered the central plaza of an Italian town, a German sniper shot the driver dead. This stopped the entire convoy and threw the Americans off their schedule. Dad called for two volunteers to work their way into the church steeple to eliminate the sniper. The three of them agreed that this would take about fifteen minutes. Ten minutes into the wait, a colonel drove up and demanded an explanation from my father concerning the delay. Dad told his superior officer that his two best men were about five minutes from taking out the German sniper and then the convoy could continue. The colonel overruled my father and ordered Howitzers to destroy the steeple with my dad’s two best friends inside. My father’s two best GI buddies were killed that day by American arms. All that was needed to save their lives was another five minutes in a war that lasted over five years.

Years later, when my father was gravely ill in the 1980s, I asked him whether he would relive his World War II experiences. I thought that all the death, terrible destruction of persons and property, and personal loss that he had experienced would turn him away from such circumstances forever. “I’d do it all again in a heartbeat,” was what he told me. I stood by his bed, staring incredulously into space.

Until we better understand experiences and attitudes such as my father’s, we are at a loss to use education as an exclusive tool to diminish war and the attractiveness of war. Somehow, the thrill, the camaraderie, the nearness of death, and the good fortune to survive the war had become the emotionally organizing experience of my father’s life. Given those powerful forces, it seems that education is an important but limited resource in reducing one’s readiness to make war.
Seeking Emory Faculty Books Published in 2008
On the afternoon of Tuesday, December 9, the Academic Exchange and Druid Hills Bookstore will host a celebration in the Druid Hills Bookstore of Emory faculty authors (or editors) of books published in 2008. We know, however, that our list of such books remains incomplete.

If you published a book this year, please let us know by emailing Allison Adams, editor of The Academic Exchange, at aadam02@emory.edu. We’d like to include you on our list of honorees, which will be presented at the reception and published on the Academic Exchange website.

Likewise, if you know of a colleague who published a book this year, again, please let us know. And look for more information to come about the December event. We look forward to celebrating this year’s scholarly achievements with you.

Waiting for Creativity
One of my boys came into my study the other day, and he looked around for a few minutes and he said, “This is it, is it? This is your life, isn’t it?” He said it with some contempt. I said, “Yes, it is. It’s how I support you.” He said, “Sometimes when I set off from the house I can see you looking out the window. And when you’re not looking out the window you’re lying on the sofa, aren’t you?” I said, “Yes, that’s what writers do, they look out the window and then they lie on the sofa.” One of the things about being creative is that there’s not much happening a lot of the time. If you’re being creative you have to sit around a lot and wait for it to happen. The most uncreative people are always the busy ones, aren’t they? You know they’re really not doing anything at all. In a way they’re keeping busy in order not to be creative.

—Hanif Kureishi, author of the novels The Buddha of Suburbia and Intimacy and screenwriter of such films as My Beautiful Laundrette and Venus, speaking as part of the Provost Office Luminaries in the Arts and Humanities Series, co-sponsored by the Creativity & Arts Strategic Initiative and Emory College Center for Creativity & Arts, September 8, 2008