TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Teaching is my vocation and a constant source of intellectual and spiritual joy. Over the past nineteen years, I have made LMU my academic home, providing our students with a solid Classical education, mentorship, and personal care contributing towards the education of the whole person. The immediacy of communication with an ever-younger body of students inspires me to keep reassessing my teaching methodologies and experiment with new modes of sharing my interest in the Classical world. My teaching philosophy follows directly and organically from my scholarship, teaching, and service. In all these areas, I have worked to create and foster rigorous academic discourse that welcomes and integrates diverse theoretical and disciplinary viewpoints.

My expertise lies in the fields of Greek language and literature, the social and political history of archaic and classical Greece, and Greek ethnicity studies. My academic and professional writing focuses on the re-imaginings of classical antiquity in visual culture, modern theatrical productions and film adaptations of the ancient world, as well as on the uses of antiquity in Greek identity formation. As I claim in my first book, Converging Truths: Euripides’ Ion and the Athenian Quest for Self-Definition, “truth is the vanishing point upon which all the individual perspectives converge”; only when we lay open our “individual perspectives honestly and uninhibitedly in a genuine dialogue” might we comprehend our common human consciousness, work in solidarity, and embrace lives of integrity and broad humanity (Brill 2003: 178). My second work, Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity (Ashgate 2008), provides an interdisciplinary academic forum on the fluidity, hybridity and polyphony in the cultural formations of diachronic Hellenisms. In my research, I focus on ethnic identity, religion, and race, to establish where the sense of identity stems from and how the distinction between self and others develops. I maintain that the sense of self and joy of living is better fulfilled through the care for others, rather than through the exclusion of others. I bring these issues to my students, encouraging them to explore our common humanity and develop a sense of moral obligation, promoting and embodying the Jesuit ideal for meaningful social action.

In my academic service, while a member of the Executive committee of the LMU Faculty Senate (2009-10), I chaired the Core Revision Senate group facilitating discussions across disciplinary lines. Whereas, during my outreach in the community, especially through the Greek film festival in Los Angeles (LAGFF), I observe the tensions that occur when people are displaced, coming to a new home with different values, histories, cultures, languages, and ideals. This is the human story, not simply the Greek story. At LMU, I teach about ancient Greece and how the displacement of people affected the cultures and the people, and hold up the mirror to them to address what is happening in Greece and in the USA today with the menacing resurgence of racial and religious prejudice. I try to challenge my students in terms of their assumptions, ideas and perceptions about themselves and the world. Their initial reaction is resistance, but over the course of the semester, they show their appreciation for the challenges I put before them.

My classrooms are cooperatives of learning and group work, where students are responsible for their own learning. I teach my students how to approach the object of knowledge from multiple perspectives and bring their own insights to bear on that discovery. I demand complex, rigorous work from my students and I encourage them to join me in research, so that I mentor them as they mature into independent and critical thinkers. I am proud of my former students’ personal and intellectual growth, and humbled by their appreciation and respect evidenced in their recommendation letters. Gabriel Courey (’2009) has become a lawyer in service of others, completing his law degree at USC. I received a personal letter from the USC Provost thanking me for Gabriel’s exceptional preparation which earned him a three-year full-tuition scholarship. Anna Winget (’2006) is an outstanding young scholar who will defend her doctoral thesis in a few months; she worked as the writing instructor for my FYS course for two years (F14, F15), while she also studied with full scholarship at UC Irvine/San Diego. Chris Gipson (’2013), took six courses with me and I supervised his senior thesis; his work at LMU helped him secure a five-year scholarship for his PhD studies in Classics at the University of Illinois.
In nineteen years, I have taught over ninety courses, forty of which were new courses. I regularly implement new pedagogical methodologies and technological developments, attend teaching and instructional technology workshops and conferences, as well as work closely with assessment, education, and instructional analysts in the College and the University. I actively participated in the new core changes, the 4-unit BCLA new curriculum task force, and led the revision of the departmental curriculum to one combined major and minor in Classics & Archaeology with a capstone sequence requirement for senior thesis presentation at the LMU Undergraduate Symposium and the CLAR Symposium which I instituted and direct for the past 12 years. More recently, I developed eight new core courses with 13 flags, and, this year to validate my five-year-long work with Los Angeles Greek film festival (LAGFF), I introduced a new internship course (CLAR 4280) with LAGFF, now offered every semester.

The course on Classical Hellenism, Race & Ethnicity (CLAR 4220) with writing and information literacy flags received the 2013 LMU Transformation of Upper Division Course in the Major Grant funded by the office of the Vice-President for Intercultural Affairs, and served as the first capstone course for the revised departmental curriculum. The course on Anne Carson: Classic Iconoclast (CLAR 4250) with writing and oral communications flags received the 2013 BCLA Interdisciplinary Team-taught grant. With poet Sarah Maclay (English), we developed a team-taught interdisciplinary seminar course on Anne Carson’s work, with special emphasis on a group of works that both spring from and break from classical sources by means of both content and form. The FYS on the Ancient Greek World was developed with a CTE core development grant and became the first LMU course to implement the Reacting-to-the-Past (RTTP) pedagogy turning the classroom into a fifth-century BCE democratic Athenian Assembly and courtroom, encouraging critical thinking through immersive role-playing. The course was recorded by the CTE Director, Dorothea Herreiner (Fall 2014) for the innovative pedagogy series: https://vimeo.com/125822227. I also teach a course on the Ancient World on Film (CLAR 4230) with writing flag; Greek Cinema (CLAR 4240) with writing and oral communications flags; and an EHAP (pending) course on Ancient Greece (CLAR 2240) with approved information literacy and engaged learning flags.

As an extension to my academic interests, I have collaborated on theatrical performances and workshops, artistic events and film projects with the Michael Cacoyannis Foundation (MCF) and Hellenic American University (HAEC) in Athens. I organized the US tour for Cacoyannis’ adaptation of *Lysistrata* in 2006, and have since served as consultant on matters of Letters and the Arts for Michael Cacoyannis Foundation in Athens. In 2012, I organized an extensive program of workshops, and seminars and performances in connection with Stanford Repertory Theater’s (SRT) adaptation of Homer’s *Odyssey* for Greek actors and theater experts, working closely with SRT director Rush Rehm. The Program was funded by the EU under the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007–2013, Improvement of Cultural Services in the Region of Attica/Operational Program of Attica–Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Hellenic Republic. In a new collaboration with Professor Rehm and SRT in the summer of 2018, I will serve as image and video consultant for *Hecuba/Helen* and deliver the keynote address on their retrospective on Michael Cacoyannis’ films.

For the past three years, I also developed a BCLA global immersion course, and have been working with MCF and HAEC to offer an invaluable immersion experience to the LMU students who visit classical sites with HAEC faculty, and work on an adaptation of a Greek tragedy in workshops with Greek actors at MCF. The course on Greek Tragedy in Performance (CLAR 2220), a core Creative Experience course, with writing and oral communications flags, deserves special mention. This active learning course received the Walsh SoTL Grant 2015-16 awarded by the Committee on Excellence in Teaching. I presented my preliminary findings at the Comparative Drama Conference in Baltimore (April 2016). The goal of this innovative teaching project which I designed with an integrative, immersive, collaborative problem-solving focus, is to explore how the genre of tragedy and team work may assist in improving individual oral and writing skills. Collaborating with members of their group, students adapt and perform an assigned Greek tragedy in a modern context of their choice, developing...
problem-solving and critical thinking skills, as well as engaging their imagination and creativity in design-thinking. In spring 2017, I used the narrative on metacognitive materials (questionnaire graphs/ reflections), as a guide for my revision in the third iteration of the course (S17); I added as writing associate a student from spring 2016, Elizabeth McLaughlin (CLAR major), who also assisted during the trip to Athens; I doubled the theatre workshop hours in Athens (from 3 to 6 hours); I revised the syllabus to address different skill-sets in writing, oral communication and metacognitive understanding of their progress, observe and measure the progression. This year, I am teaching an independent graduate course for André Enriquez [“High Impact Pedagogical Practices: Teaching Greek Tragedy Through Global Immersion”, ENGL 6999], mentoring him in evaluating student progress. André is already implementing the lessons from this course in his teaching as an English graduate fellow. Both Beth and André will receive credit for their assistance in my scholarship of learning article on this course.

Another course that combines my research interests and expertise is the interdisciplinary course on Representations of Greece: Ancient and Modern (CLAR 4270) with writing and engaged learning flags. In my capacity as Director of Education for the Los Angeles Greek Film Festival, I facilitate student internships as part of my course. In 2017, I worked with 34 students on LAGFF-related affairs and raised $22,000 (including 5 BCLA fellowships) to finance the student experience. Through an annual five-day event at the Egyptian Theater in Hollywood in mid-June, LAGFF promotes Greek cinema and cultural exchange with impressive results – films shown at LAGFF have been subsequently recognized at the Film Academy, at Cannes, Venice and Sundance film festivals. LMU is the only organization that has students interning at the festival. Students spend six months with the LAGFF team producing the Festival, including reviewing and selecting films, participating in an international film development lab, conducting interviews with directors, marketing the event through social media, and providing hospitality services during the event. Each student completes a blog, a detailed research project, and a report reflecting on skills learned. The program helps students develop concrete skills that make them more competitive for future internships and careers. As one student mentioned, “I learned how to work with films, how to talk about them effectively, and the vocabulary necessary for completing the job.” The essay André Enriquez wrote for this class will be published in the English Department’s Criterion Journal of Literary Criticism. More information on the students’ experiences can be found here: http://lmu-lagff-2016.weebly.com/student-blogs.html and https://lmu-lagff-2017.weebly.com.

The new LMU Film and TV Studies major has been approved and two of my film courses (Greek Cinema; Ancient World and Film) are now cross-listed. Following a very constructive meeting with the new Chair, we are now working on co-hosting the “Best of 2018 LAGFF at LMU” in spring 2019, as a student-run festival.

Outside of the classroom, I mentor students for their graduate studies and career goals while continuing my research and extra-curricular collaborations with students. For example, last summer when I received BCLA funding to hire the 2016 LMU Student of the Year, Claire Andreae, to shoot a short documentary I directed on the 11th-century church of Hagioi Theodoroi in southern Greece. The film looks at identity, social structures, and religious piety in a traditional village. To conclude, I am enthusiastic about implementing cutting-edge new pedagogies in the classroom, serve as a teacher-scholar engaging students in creative and critical projects, and bring new experiences to our students.