

Mark A. Williams
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Room 120 – Seniors

The Literary Media and Communications Department's (LMC) goal is singular, to train its student in the different strands of communication (written, verbal and new media), considering how this translates to the marketplace. This department necessitates interdisciplinarity, including, but not limited to LMC, Theater, Museum Studies, Visual Arts, and TDP (recording studio). Our aim is to dismantle the sometimes self-indulgent and strictly cathartic workshop model of writing and leave in its place a department that imparts to its students the notion that they are writing to work, rather than just writing to write.

SENIOR PROJECT

This class is a student-designed senior project that utilizes aspects of writing and theater to create a piece of art that moves outside of primary discipline and considers how disciplinarity is the antithesis of innovative and accessible art. The course will employ the Triangle Method of teaching and will be team taught by Literary Media, Theater, and outside faculty/artists. The final product by each student will be presented at the end of the year in an outside, local venue. Grade for this course will be solely determined by the students in self-assessments and critique under the supervision of faculty.

Standards

- Discussion
- Questioning, Listening, and Contributing
- Oral Presentation
- Vocabulary Development
- Text – Expository, Document and Procedural Text, Argument and Persuasive Text
- Connections
- Genre, Theme
- Fiction, Literary Nonfiction
- Poetry
- Drama
- Style and Literature
- Traditional Narrative
- Imaginative/Narrative Writing
- Revision

Requirements:

- Students must have a current e-mail address, which will be put on list serve for the class
- Students are expected to commit a number of hours to the editorial processes of this class as it pertains to both their own work, and the work of their fellow students
- Access to a computer outside Duke Ellington to dialogue with instructor regarding revision of work, and access to a printer to bring in copies of text for instructor and fellow students
- Respect for the work of others and the ability to give and receive critique

The Triangle Method

Mark A. Williams

The world we live in is a difficult one. This is nothing new, as human history has always been the collection of stories which document those challenges to the survival, development, and prospering of human beings. Poverty, war, famine, disease, racism, sexism, classism, xenophobia are in no way recent news items, nor are they relegated to a particular geographic region, or particular group of people. It seems that as human beings we destroy one another with the same vigor that we create one another. Perhaps, then, what differentiates the world we live in, now, in the 21st century are how those mechanisms for destruction and creation have become that much more sophisticated, technologically advanced, unerringly accurate, and meticulously polarizing.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the subsequent, unilateral, global dominance of a country, little more than 200 years old, and the challenge to that dominance from an economically unified Europe, along with the pervasiveness of globalization and the reign of power from multilateral lending institutions that has constituted a new colonialism, the gap between the “haves and have nots” has grown exponentially. Statistics range in this country, that 3 to 5% of its population controls 90 to 95% of the wealth and means of production. Global statistics are on par with these statistics, and those countries labeled third world countries have become dramatically poorer, with significant portions of their populations immigrating to more developed countries to find work and attempt to elevate their standard of living. These third world countries are almost being recolonized by western powers and attendant multi-lateral lending institutions that determine how the countries will and can develop. That gap exists, within the United States itself, where regions of our country could very easily be labeled, “third world”, but for the fact that the country that these areas are housed in is the most powerful military and economic country on the face of the planet.

Where then does education fit within the above, as a vehicle for understanding these global discrepancies, as a supplier of the equipment for affecting change in the world we live in, as a means to celebrate and disseminate the extraordinary ways that human beings create life, support life, protect life, and live life amidst such meticulously

premeditated destruction. It is our contention that education, within the United States context does a good job of educating our children about “what”, and a poor job in teaching them about “why”, and “how”, and as a result our children from a very early age are inculcated in the notion that they and the country they live in are the center and most important part of the world, setting up a very particular binary opposition of who and what is superior and who and what is inferior, and paradoxically and sadly enough, who that structure applies to within the United States itself. The American educational system teaches and reinforces privilege, notions of margin and center, entitlement, and lays the groundwork for the discrepancy between the “haves and have nots” both nationally and internationally.

The “Triangle Method” is rooted in the triangle as a shape, in that all **sides of a triangle** are equal and equidistant. Our methodology is rooted in this because it is our contention that we need to produce students who understand that knowledge, language, and information are not privileged and that all learning can be equal if its arrival point is the whole, the equal whole and not one part. Apparatus’ and language within our educational structure, like disciplines and disciplinarity, academics and the academy, core courses and electives all are examples of privileging a part of the development of the student which amounts to students understanding knowledge in parts as opposed to learning as a process of constructing a whole. The three fundamental tenets of the “Triangle Method” are,

- 1) Context – Through the consideration, examination, research on and about, political, social, historical, and economic context, the student begins to consider a world outside their own. The mechanism within this is the study of character through the prism of acting and writing where the student does not consider them as separate disciplines, but rather part of a method of learning about people who may or not resemble themselves.
- 2) **Compassion** – Within the examination of character, the student begins to examine possible and real connections to other characters, other people, other human beings outside the prism of the neighborhood, city, state, nation that the student is from, and considers within these connections how he/she is constructed him/herself and the implications as far as learning within.
- 3) Citizen – The student begins to consider how they through the work within the methodology are participants in learning about who they are and the world they live in, rather than observers in an educational structure that teaches them margins and center, and in so doing the student begins to examine the word community not only in its regional, state, country, definition, but rather an identity and attendant responsibilities as a global citizen, whose roots are in the service and servicing of their fellow human.

The idea, within the “Triangle Method” is that the student makes no decision about which tenet is more important than the other and in so doing understand that all

learning is a process, an ongoing process that is lifelong which is never isolated from the examination of human relationships are their inherent complexity. In this way the method also has its roots in the examination of another triangle, the triangle slave trade which was very much about destruction, the destruction of humanity, of context, of compassion, of [global citizenship](#), of privileging capital, manifest destiny, growth, and the development of nations, which was a glaring example of brutal morality and constructions of superiority and inferiority, and rigid definitions of margin and center. The “Triangle Method” uses the Triangle Slave Trade as a referent, as well as a reminder of why teaching and learning are so urgent in the world we live in.