

Running Head: HUMANITIES PROGRAMS

Stories of Dialogue: Collaborative Reflections from Directors of Free Humanities Programs

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Abstract:

Through a collaborative reflection, Canadian program directors of Clemente-inspired Humanities courses will share with colleagues, academics and community agencies the unique and varied approaches to offering free humanities courses to people facing material and non-material barriers to education. Identifying common critical issues they experience, – from finding sustained funding to responding to academic and other pressing student needs – directors will share a year of dialogue and reflections.

Biographies:

Laurie Meredith was the director of *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* (Calgary) from 2009-2010 and is currently participating in establishing *Community Learning in the Humanities* at the Calgary Public Library. Working in the field of community-based education, her interests include critical pedagogy, early childhood education, dialogue and ethics in education, and Participatory Action Research (PAR). Currently a PhD candidate in Education at the University of Calgary, Laurie holds a BA degree in English Literature (University of Alberta) and an MA degree in French Literature (University of Calgary).

Mary Lu Roffey-Redden is director of Halifax Humanities 101. She has an MA and did doctoral studies in Philosophy of Religion at McMaster University. For 12 years, she was a lecturer in Religious Studies at the University of King's College, UWO. She has also taught business communications at Fanshawe and Mohawk Community Colleges. Being Director of Halifax Humanities 101 is her dream job, bringing together her love of studying philosophy and literature, with a concern for social justice.

Becky Cory (MA candidate, UVic) has been the program coordinator for University 101, at UVic for the past five years. What she most loves about being involved in this program is getting to build relationships with such a wide range of students, teaching assistants and faculty. Becky has also worked as an adult educator, facilitator, youth outreach worker, counselor and diversity educator. She is also a partner in a design and communications company. Becky's undergraduate work was in women's studies and political science, and she is currently completing her MA in Adult Education, studying race and racialization on the internet.

Margot Leigh Butler is the Academic Director of UBC's 12 year old Humanities 101 Community Programme which offers free education on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and Downtown South (DTES/South) and 3 free university-level courses on campus for residents who have a lust for learning and who live on very low incomes. Made infamous as a worst-case scenario of contemporary urban life, the DTES also houses, or finds homeless, many residents who counter this pummeling view in countless inspiring ways – Hum students and alumni amongst them. The courses focus on relevant interdisciplinary creative and critical thinking and practices, and are in robust dialogue with Humanities traditions. Dr. Butler is an installation artist, cultural theorist and activist, and works with art/writing collectives and on alternative education projects.

Doug West is the Director of Humanities 101 at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, ON and an Associate Professor of Political Science. The focal points for his research and teaching activities include northern and native politics, food security, contemporary political ideas, community development, and civic engagement through community service learning. Between 2006 and 2008, Doug served as the founding Co-Director of the Food Security Research and Service Exchange Network located in Thunder Bay. Through this initiative Doug has participated in research on cooperative community gardens, youth gardening and the development of school curricula, and on Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) as a new arena for civic engagement. Doug has also served in various capacities for community organizations in Ottawa, Thunder Bay and Victoria, and was a member of the Board of the Victoria Community Council in 2002-3 and 2009-10.

Anne McDonagh is a retired adult education teacher with an honours degree in English from the University of Toronto. She was head of cooperative education at an adult high school in Toronto when she retired. She also taught adults writing and business communications at George Brown College, Humber College and Dixon Hall. When she retired Anne became involved with Davenport Perth Neighborhood Centre (DPNC) and The Workers' Educational Association (WEA). The DPNC board and the WEA helped her establish University in the Community along with Woodsworth College's J. Barbara Rose. Anne markets and administers University in the Community and recruits students for the program. She is also editor of WEA's Learning Curves, a newspaper geared to adults returning to school for whatever reason, which is published and distributed throughout Toronto and the GTA five times a year. She contributes many feature articles as well.

Mark Blackell was formerly the Academic Coordinator of the Nanaimo Clemente Course in the Humanities and is currently the Chair of Liberal Studies at Vancouver Island University. He holds a PhD in Social and Political Thought from York University, has research interests in democratic civic culture, and finds more vibrant overlapping communities the longer he lives in his home of Nanaimo, British Columbia.

Joanne Muzak is the Special Projects Manager with the Community Service-Learning (CSL) Program and an instructor in CSL and Women's Studies at the University of Alberta (Edmonton). As the Special Projects Manager, she coordinates the U of A's Humanities 101 program. She started in this coordinator position as a postdoctoral fellow with CSL in 2008. Her postdoctoral project involved resuscitating Hum 101 after a four-year hiatus. She has been pleased to watch the program expand, especially this year with the help of current CSL postdoctoral fellow, Mebbie Bell, who introduced Hum 101 to a second-stage women's shelter.

Jill Zmud is the program coordinator of Discovery University in Ottawa. She started this position at the Ottawa Mission in August 2010 after spending four years as a researcher at the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. Prior to that, she taught Political and International Studies at the University of Saskatchewan. She is thrilled to be returning to the field of education and looks forward to being a part of the Discovery University team.

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Stories of Dialogue: Collaborative Reflections from Directors of Free Humanities Programs **Conference Proceedings**

Why offer free humanities courses to people living in poverty? What is it about the humanities that can draw people of varied, often non-traditional backgrounds into sustained and meaningful dialogue through humanities texts? What are people bringing to this dialogue, and what are they getting out of it? How do we define success under these circumstances? Directors, instructors, and students of Clemente-inspired humanities programs entertain these integral questions from the Canadian Pacific coast to the Atlantic coast.

In Calgary, at the *Radical Humanities: Coast to Coast Symposium* in the fall of 2008, participants recognized the Canadian trend to remain inspired by Earl Shorris' *Clemente Course in the Humanities* (www.clemente.bard.edu) while modifying program delivery to the unique needs and offerings of the local populations and environments. Yet, as varied as they may be, at the core of these programs remains a desire to communicate the liberating richness of the humanities in stark contrast to the forces of poverty.

Two years later, using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) model, directors and friends of free humanities programs collaborate to research, act and reflect on the challenges and rewards of Clemente-inspired programs in Canada. Through their own sustained dialogue, they offer stories of their experience to gain deeper understanding of dialogue, relationships, community, and the stories of the humanities.

Some information about the Canadian Clemente-inspired programs began to be revealed and shared at the 2008 national symposium as program directors, student alumni, instructors and academic supporters connected. Participants at the symposium expressed the need to continue dialogue; however, once people returned to their locations and busy lives, follow-up and

sustained dialogue fell away. Contending with time restraints, funding problems, and student and organizational crises, it should come as no surprise that, even on a superficial level, much of the details of the Canadian programs – histories, current offerings, governance structures, collaborations, etc. – are unknown to the general public and to each other.

This collaborative presentation responds to the expressed need of directors to share program information and experience with one another as well as the broader academic and national community. Each subsection below reads as the individual contributions of all nine current directors of Canadian “Clemente-inspired” programs, although not all directors were able to travel in person to St. Thomas University’s *International Conference on the Liberal Arts*. Directors from Calgary, Halifax, Victoria, Thunder Bay and Vancouver presented in person and shared information on behalf of sister programs in Nanaimo, Edmonton, Toronto, and Ottawa.

This is the first time all nine Canadian directors have participated together in a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project. Our aim was to 1) develop meaningful and sustained organisational relationships, 2) deepen our understanding of ourselves and our programs in relation to our academic communities, and 3) expand our experiences to other academics and community agencies.

PAR methodology lends an orientation towards creative and collaborative meaning making, employing such research methods as “dialogue, storytelling and collective action [...] to explore issues and relationships” (Kendon, Pain & Kesby, 2007, p.16), and our participation in the conference panel and these written proceedings successfully moves us towards increased dialogue, storytelling and collective action.

PAR requires the core epistemological and ethical position of treating a person as a Subject capable of expressing him or herself; for this reason, each director has written personally

of their experience in their respective program. Of salient importance is that we have identified how, in our work with marginalized people, we must actively resist a tendency for our programs to be marginalized. This is yet another reason for the directors to speak to the broader community in their own voices:

In work with marginalized or vulnerable people, one of the most important features of these types of method is their ‘hand-on’ nature, and their ability to enable people to generate information and share knowledge on their own terms using their own symbols, language or art forms (Kinson, Pain & Kesby, 2007, p.17).

As the directors have engaged in dialogue, through electronic and face-to-face encounters, we have been respectful of our different approaches to program delivery. We have also increased our understanding of the ethical concerns we bring to our positions because of the social injustices so clearly evident in our communities. Through this process we have renewed our desire to act collectively in bringing awareness to these programs that address the relevance of liberal arts and the humanities in our society.

City: Calgary, Alberta

Program: Community Learning in the Humanities: 3rd iteration

Director: Laurie Meredith, PhD Candidate in Education at the University of Calgary

Contact: CLHprogram@gmail.com

Calgary’s program was in its second iteration when I became the director of *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* (2009-2010). The first version, Storefront 101, was initially a community-based partnership that drew support from the City of Calgary, local universities and colleges, and a number of agencies dealing directly with marginalized people. Storefront 101 offered a total of 10 humanities courses between 2003 and 2008, ranging from history, philosophy, English literature, and Eastern religions. Students had the option of earning three 100-level credits from St. Mary’s University College, a small liberal arts institution in Calgary.

The second iteration of the Calgary program, *Humanities 101: An Odyssey*, was made possible from an Alberta provincial government *Innovation Fund: Access to the Future Fund*. Executive Committee members from St. Mary's University College, Ambrose University College, and the University of Calgary formed a three-way university collaboration for the program. Two interdisciplinary courses in the humanities, HUM103 and HUM105, offered students an opportunity to get three 100-level credits through St. Mary's University College (STMU) per course. Classes were held on the STMU campus twice a week, and students got books, tuition, transportation, hot meals and childcare subsidies when needed (www.humanities101.stmu.ab.ca). As many programs have experienced, the one-time funding grants created program instability and *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* lacked funding to operate in the fall of 2010.

Before I began my position as director, I had been part of the 2008 Radical Humanities Coast to Coast to Symposium as a graduate student. Fortunately for me, as soon as I started as director I was able to connect immediately to the directors who had been part of the symposium. They were instant mentors and colleagues. With a very short window to start up the *Humanities 101* program, I benefited from their honest discussions of what worked for them and what had not. Weighing in the local differences meant I had a range of options to choose to implement into the myriad of programming logistics – everything from if and how to offer childcare, when to schedule classes and how that impacts students ability to attend and remain in class to the end of the session. Our email exchanges and phone calls were incredibly supportive, and as I learned more about the position, I, too, could offer support and suggestions.

Sharing information and experiences with the other directors has underscored that this kind of programming is not a formulaic model, but it needs to include an extremely responsive

ethic of care because of the nature of community education. Many participants in the program (students, tutors, instructors, staff) do not simply “go away” at the end of the course. Formal and informal connections are often sought at the end of the course. Knowing through the other Canadian programs that study groups and alumni classes become a common second stage to program development, I knew that the lack of financial backing at the end of the 2009-2010 year of *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* did not necessarily spell the end for the participants.

A grassroots initiative immediately formed in the spring of 2010 in response to the Calgary community members’ desire to continue learning opportunities. *Community Learning in the Humanities* (CLH) was established through volunteer efforts and a welcoming partnership with the Calgary Public Library (CPL). Four-week long inter-disciplinary modules are facilitated by university-experienced lecturers on Wednesday evenings from 5:30- 8. Participants register through the CPL programming department and receive free library cards (if necessary), course materials, computer access and coffee/tea.

CLH is testament to the powerful impact that this kind of programming has on all participants involved. Former students, tutors, instructors and staff collaborated to create CLH’s program goals:

- Provide free and open access to a challenging learning environment
- Promote an inclusive community, based on collaborative learning
- Enhance critical thinking and communication skills
- Raise awareness and deepen understanding of social justice through dialogue
- Encourage informed engagement in the larger community
- Promote sense of well being

Understanding the needs of our community members, we know that financial supports are critical to sustain and grow our CLH program. We are working together to find financial means to counter the physical hunger that compromises concentration and some of the

conditional realities of the participants (funding transportation and childcare costs, for example); but, in the meantime, CLH is strengthening our commitments to each other as well as to our community.

City: Nanaimo, British Columbia

Program: Nanaimo Clemente Course in the Humanities

Directors: Dr. Mark Blackell and Andrew Scott, MA (Clemente Coordinator)

Contact: ascott17@me.com

The Nanaimo Clemente Course in the Humanities was first conceived around 2000. It took many committed people, both at Vancouver Island University and in the wider Nanaimo community to offer a course in 2008.

Partners and Funding

Faculty and administrator from VIU worked closely with the Social Development Strategy Group (SDSG) to secure and demonstrate widespread community interest and endorsement. This group is made up of representatives from various social and government organisations interested in coordinating many of their services and in supporting projects of mutual strategic interest. By April 2007, the SDSG had the supports in place needed to launch the course. Its representative agencies would also provide students. Malaspina University funded an Academic Coordinator, an administrative coordination and faculty honoraria.

The Vancouver Island Health Authority committed itself to providing classroom space close to downtown Nanaimo in a converted school functioning as a family centre, a facility with a well-equipped daycare with qualified staff. The Ministry of Families and Children committed bus-passes for their clients. Nanaimo Youth Services committed some funds and aided in fund-raising from other sources, as did the United Way and the Canadian Federation of University Women (which promised a scholarship for a female graduate to pursue further studies.) Another

agency agreed to provide lunches. Faculty unions at VIU contributed money for books. The list could go on.

And, in March 2008, Nanaimo Youth Services, in partnership with Malaspina, was successful in its application to the Vancouver Foundation for funding. The Foundation has provided almost \$62,000 over three years to support the program. In January 2008, the efforts of the SDSG and Malaspina were recognised with an “Excellence in Social Development Award” for the best collaborative project that year by the City of Nanaimo.

Structure and Logistics

The course, which follows the regulations for university credit-courses at VIU, meets twice per week for a 1.5 hour class preceded by a half hour light lunch. Books, bus tickets and child daycare are provided.

The curriculum varies somewhat depending on the availability, interest, and expertise of the instructors – all fully-appointed professors in various university departments at VIU. The course is primarily focussed on the Western intellectual tradition, with a few exceptions, and material is chosen with an eye to its ability to stimulate thought and discussion rather than with a view to be comprehensive in any of the given disciplines, a task which is impossible in the time we have. The class has attended and will continue to attend plays, dances and other cultural events in large measure thanks to ticket donations from the Port Theatre of Nanaimo.

Students may receive credit for two three-credit first year university courses at VIU with a grade of “pass” or, if they cannot or choose not to do so, may still take the course and receive a grade of “audit” on their transcripts. As VIU students, they have access to the full range of student services from the Writing Centre, counsellors, and disability services including a scribe,

as well as library and athletic facilities. Tuition is free, and student activity and union fees are waived, by agreement of VIU and the Student Union.

Students and Course Context

The intent of the Social Development Strategy Group (SDSG) was primarily to have students referred from various social agencies in Nanaimo, rather than to advertise to the public. So far we have primarily had referrals from mental health agencies and those that aid people on recovery from addictions, although there have been other agencies also providing referrals. This has meant that the make-up of our learner-community has tended to be people with a history of mental health or with a history of mental health and addiction. Most of our students tend to be in the 30-55 age range and about 70% are female. While most are Caucasian we have had a number of First Nations students in our first two classes. The make-up of the class is not surprising given Nanaimo's demographics and socio-economic history. The Snuneymuxw First Nation is very close to the centre where we hold our class. Nanaimo has a greatly weakened resource-based economy and yet the city has become a retirement destination for many from elsewhere in Canada. At the same time it has long-standing intergenerational poverty coupled with a significant organized crime presence that leads to a ready availability of drugs.

Of the seven students who completed the pilot course with credit in 2008, five have gone on to further study at VIU (formerly Malaspina). Others who took part in the course but did not receive credit, for various reasons, are still working towards taking courses. Some are completing high school up-grading courses, others have begun first-year university courses with the help of some bridge-funding to cover tuition from the VIU Foundation. The latest publication about our

recent graduates is found on page 8 of the Fall 2010 Vancouver Island University alumni magazine (http://www.mala.ca/alumni/documents/Fall10_Web.pdf).

City: Edmonton, Alberta

Program: [Humanities 101](#)

Director: Dr. Joanne Muzak

Contact: www.csl.ualberta.ca/en/Humanities%20101.aspx

Humanities 101 is a community-based outreach program designed to ensure that community members with a love of learning have access to educational experiences. The program offers free non-credit university-level courses for people living in Edmonton's downtown and surrounding areas who are passionate about learning and knowledge, especially those whose economic situation, academic experience, financial and social well-being are compromised. Humanities 101 provides non-vocational training that aims to empower students to use critical thinking in everyday life and inspire a passion for lifelong learning.

Partnering with The Learning Centre Literacy Association at Boyle Street Community Services Centre, Hum101 currently offers courses each semester at The Learning Centre's downtown location. Past courses include: Community Mapping, Native Studies, An Introduction to the Humanities, Stories & Communities, Digital Storytelling, and Education & Society. Courses at The Learning Centre focus on the city of Edmonton, how we move through the city, how we experience the city's history and negotiate changes in the city, who lives here and why.

Increasingly, we are taking up these kinds of questions through explorations of new media and mobile technologies. Courses at The Learning Centre are largely project-based and encourage students to explore collaborative technologies and methodologies, such as community mapping, digital storytelling, and geocaching.

In Spring 2010, we began a new partnership with Wings of Providence, a second stage women's shelter to offer Hum101 courses designed specifically for women recovering from interpersonal violence. These courses focus on themes of home and community from diverse scholarly perspectives. Students' work includes guided writing, photography and 'life books' projects.

City: Toronto, Ontario

Program: [University in the Community](#)

Co-Directors: Anne McDonagh and J. Barbara Rose

Contact: www.weacanada.ca/university.asp

What are the Humanities? The Humanities try to answer the big questions of life. What is the meaning of life? How should we live our lives? What is a moral life? What is the best route to a happy life? What do I owe myself? What do I owe others? In studying the Humanities, we learn how philosophers, poets, artists and historians through the centuries have tried to answer these questions and we try to discover what we ourselves think the answers are.

www.weacanada.ca/university.asp

With the support of Mariel O'Neil-Karch, principal of Woodsworth College and Keith McNair, Executive Director of Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre, Senior Lecturer J. Barbara Rose, an English professor at Woodsworth College and Anne McDonagh, Vice President of the Workers' Educational Association started University in the Community (UiC) in the summer of 2003 as a pilot project in a disadvantaged neighbourhood in west Toronto. The project was very successful and soon was granted funding for three years by the Trillium Foundation. In 2008 the Foundation granted funding for another two years.

University in the Community is based upon the Clemente Course in the Humanities, a program begun in 1995 in the United States. Its founder Earl Shorris regards the study of the humanities as a 'practical' education. He argues that providing training without an education in the humanities is like putting up a building without a foundation. The Clemente course and

University in the Community attempt to attack the ‘culture of poverty’ by giving students a chance to step back from the desperate world they inhabit, to develop critical thinking skills and ultimately to become actively engaged in changing their lives and their society.

The students who attend University in the Community are a microcosm of multicultural Toronto. They come from Canada, Latin America, the West Indies, Africa, Pakistan, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and so on. The dynamic interaction among students and between teachers and students comes partly from the variety of experience everyone brings to the courses.

Given the current circumstances of their lives, none of the students would be taking courses in the humanities at a university. If they considered taking a course at all, the broader society would encourage them to improve their job skills. They also know that they do not get credits for the classes they take. They are learning for the sake of learning.

Until 2008 University in the Community in Toronto was run through a partnership between U of T’s Woodsworth College, the Workers’ Educational Association of Canada (WEA), and the Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre, a social service agency in west Toronto. In 2008 St. Stephen’s Community House, another social service agency in downtown Toronto, joined the partnership, and in 2010 Senior College made up of retired professors at U of T, who do not want to put their feet up yet, joined us.

Given the history and values of Woodsworth College and the Workers’ Educational Association, University in the Community is an appropriate project for these organizations to collaborate on. Woodsworth College, originally set up to deal with part time and non-traditional students, who were mostly adults, was named after J.S. Woodsworth who was an advocate for social justice, a Member of Parliament and a founder of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the forerunner of the NDP.

The WEA's espousal of liberal arts education in the community dates back to 1918 when a Canadian soldier, Drummond Wren, returned from the war determined to find a way to help ordinary workers get a liberal arts education. As a result of Wren's vision, the WEA delivered liberal arts courses to thousands of people across Canada from 1918 until the community college system began in the 1960s.

The WEA constitution shares many of the basic elements of Earl Shorris's vision focusing as it does on the humanities, and while greatly influenced by Shorris, UiC is also the grandchild of the WEA.

Finances and Logistics

For the first four years, funding from Trillium, Woodsworth College and the Morrow Foundation enabled UiC to pay instructors. Although Trillium gave UiC a second grant, in 2008 the Woodsworth money to pay instructors was withdrawn because of budget cuts across the board at the University. The money from Trillium was not enough to pay instructors, but there was enough to continue until August of 2011 if our instructors were not paid. We have enough money to provide healthy snacks every week and bus fare if the students need it. We also pay for any supplies the students need for the courses and for field trips. Woodsworth and Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre provide classroom space, reception, supplies and equipment at no cost to us. Woodsworth also pays for a year end party.

Through the School of Graduate Studies, we now participate in a program for senior PhD students to gain teaching experience. They teach a four-week course for a credit but no money. Students register for eight weeks, and most of the time they get two four-week courses. So at this time, two volunteer instructors each teach four weeks of an eight-week program. The students meet once a week for two hours. We run two eight-week programs per semester, twelve a year.

Anne McDonagh markets and recruits the students for the courses. She interviews and registers about 25 students per class per semester; about 18 – 20 actually finish the program.

J. Barbara Rose works with the senior graduate students to make sure the courses are appropriate for our student group. Because the graduate students teach a four-week course, Rose's work load coordinating the academic side of UiC has doubled since 2008. Up to 2008, one instructor taught one ten-week course.

These are the some of the courses we have offered in the last seven years:

- Dickens' World: Exploring "Great Expectations"
- Poetry of the World
- The Human Condition Expressed Through Art
- Women and Gender in Religion
- Medicine in Early Modern Europe
- Religion in North America
- An introduction to Philosophy
- Travel, Migrations, Encounters: Interactions across Cultures
- The Power of Personal Narrative
- The Cultural Study of Music: An Introduction
- Introduction to Canadian History
- Greek and Roman Mythology
- Introduction to Drama
- Culture and Film
- Memoir Writing - Finding your voice
- Art and Creativity in our Lives
- Journeys of the Self: The Pilgrimage
- The History of the Book

Challenges

University in the Community faces a problem that most of the Clemente programs in Canada face and that is funding. If it is to continue it must find a source of stable funding. So far it has been run by volunteers, who are getting old and tired. UiC is also looking for a new model as well as funding. We plan to hold a focus group this fall to find out what programming our students would like in the future. In the new year we will have our first advisory committee meeting to discuss these issues, especially fundraising.

Student Comments

"I gained in self-esteem, confidence and respect for my life experiences."

“I feel that in a way, I have grown intellectually because now I have another vision of art and I can appreciate literature better.”

“I learned how to read a story or a poem and analyze its contents.”

“The course made me more conscious when I am reading. It made me look for different things when I am reading. ...It helped me to have more insight into what I read.”

“I learned to see every work as a product of a human being and as a product of a time.”

“I learned to appreciate art as the result of the necessity to express oneself and as a way to share and communicate.”

City: Ottawa, Ontario

Program: [Discovery University](#)

Program Coordinator: Jill Zmud

Contact: <http://www.ottawamission.com/index.php?q=discuni.html>

Discovery University (DU) was first suggested by the Reverend Deborah Dempsey of First Baptist Church in Ottawa, after she had read the work of Earl Shorris. In 2005, led by First Baptist Church, DU was organized through a planning committee of community volunteers from community agencies, including: The Ottawa Mission, Cornerstone/Le Pilier Women’s Shelter, St. Joe’s Women’s Centre, Centre 454 – Anglican Social Services, University of Ottawa, Saint Paul University and the City of Ottawa. In 2010, DU continues to operate as a collaborative community organization but is now housed at the Ottawa Mission.

The goal of DU is to provide university education to persons in Ottawa experiencing homelessness and/or living on a low-income, in order to foster a new sense of citizenship and a commitment to learning and critical thinking that could ultimately lead to personal growth and student participation in social change. With respect to course delivery, DU offers a 10-week non-credit Humanities course in both the fall and winter terms. This includes a two-hour lecture each

Friday and a Wednesday night tutorial session with a hot meal. As with the Clemente Course, DU is offered at no cost. All supplies, including bus tickets, are provided.

Examples of DU courses that have been offered are: Discovering Fiction; Critical Thinking Skills; Shakespeare to Steinbeck: Western Literature in Times of Change; Ethics in a Global World; and Art, Portraiture and Subjectivities. Professors from the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University are provided at no charge to DU by their respective institutions.

At the time of this writing, DU partner agencies are primed for reflection on the program's first five years as well as its future growth. Current goals include strengthening the DU planning committee, investigating fundraising opportunities, raising the program's profile in the Ottawa community and looking at ways to offer more courses. Both the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University have offered one more professor each per term. As a result, DU is poised to grow.

City: Halifax, Nova Scotia

Program: [Halifax Humanities 101](#)

Director: Mary Lu Roffey-Redden, MA

Contact: learn@halifaxhumanities101.ca; www.halifaxhumanities101.ca

Our community collaborations:

Halifax Humanities 101 is governed differently from other free Humanities programs. We are a non-profit registered charity, with a board of directors. Our budget comes entirely from fund-raising efforts such as applying for Foundation grants, appeals to interested individuals and holding fund-raising events. We also receive in-kind donations from universities and are funded to some extent by the United Way.

We must of necessity partner with other community organizations and so one of our best relationships is with the Public Library system which gives us meeting space free of charge (now

at two different libraries as we are running both our initial program and a graduate program). This has great benefits both for us and for the libraries. Many of our students are regular library patrons and so are coming to class in a familiar and comfortable environment. The libraries themselves are delighted to host a program of such intense intellectual engagement and the staff feel that our presence is a quiet message to other patrons about the reality and joy of life long learning.

Unlike some of our sister programs, we don't hold classes at a university site, nor do we provide a meal before class. Our classes are held from 3:30 - 5:30 twice a week. One reason for this is that Halifax has a limited public transit system and for students to be taking buses late at night after evening classes would be quite difficult.

We don't have tutors, unlike some other programs. We have attempted to incorporate tutoring into the program, but it has not worked out.

Our relations with 6 post-secondary institutions in Halifax:

Halifax is obviously very university rich and so we have collaborations with all of them. None of the universities has taken us on as their particular project, because of cost, but while this makes for complications it is also a good thing. We are not beholden to one institution; hence we have a wonderful independence. We have teachers from all the universities and the university presidents are on record as talking about us as a wonderful example of how they can come together for a project while maintaining their separate identities. (this is crucial right now in light of the resurrection of a long-standing government recommendation to amalgamate some of them). This relation with the city universities has borne fruit in that we can now offer qualified graduates of HH101 the possibility of taking university credits with the tuition fees covered by the Presidents' Offices.

Curriculum:

We are committed to a "core text" approach, modelling our curriculum on the King's College "Foundation Year Program" approach. This means that we are studying texts that would be considered as "culture shaping" material in Western civilization. Our curriculum is chronological, focused on Philosophy and Literature and very challenging. However, it is the very fact of that challenge that is most spoken of by students who graduate and feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment. The students generally speak very happily of "finally" reading the books they've been hearing about all their lives such as Homer's *Odyssey*, Dante's *Divine Comedy* and *The Communist Manifesto*.

Non-credit courses:

Halifax Humanities does not offer a credit and has no tests or assignments. We do offer opportunities for those students who so desire, to take writing classes, but these are and "add-on" to our basic curriculum. What we are finding is that our program, because it is non-credit and also because it deals with "classic" texts, succeeds best at creating a sense of freedom for both our teachers and students. Let me explain what I mean by this:

(1) for the students: at one of our introductory sessions a few years ago, I told the students what Halifax Humanities is NOT: a support group, a therapy session, a Bible study, political indoctrination, or a book club. When I finished that introduction, one of the students came up and hugged me and said how happy she was with what I had said. When I asked why, she said: "I'm schizophrenic and everything I belong to is about being schizophrenic. I'm tired of talking about mental illness. I just want to be normal!"

I think that she hit on the nature of our freedom. Because we have no agenda of "improving" our students, as is the case with so many groups they belong to, they feel a sense of

freedom to do something, ostensibly useless and impractical, purely for themselves. Many of our students, especially those who have raised children on inadequate incomes, tell me that this is the first thing they have ever done solely for their own sense of well-being. Our program, in spite of being intellectually challenging is a form of “leisure” for students who have little true pleasurable leisure in their lives.

(2) Our curriculum, being focused on what might be understood as “culture-shaping” texts in the Western European and North American tradition, allows our students to step out of their current conditions and enter into other worlds, other lives, other places and other ways of thinking. We rarely discuss the current conditions of our students’ lives, and they themselves tend to focus their class discussion on the text at hand. However, what we find is that the texts and classroom discussion become part of students’ own reflection on their lives. As director, I come to know this when, in private conversations, students tell me how deeply they connect with a theme, character, or insight in a text. However, there is never any pressure placed on the students to reveal aspects of their lives in the public setting of the class. This respect for NOT having to tell their stories is unusual for many of the students who have spent too much time dealing with social welfare systems that demand they account for themselves in demeaning ways.

(3) Halifax Humanities offers a sense of freedom to the many university professors who teach for us. Because we offer no credit, we have no “disengaged” students who are taking the program for reasons other than clear personal desire to be there. To be able to offer teachers a class of 100% engagement is a real gift in the current university environments. As well, the lack of tests and assignments means that the professors will never hear the “teacher-deflating” question: “Is this going to be on the test?”

We don't pay our teachers and their commitment is very short term, usually only 2 or 3 classes on a particular text. Therefore, teaching in Halifax Humanities is for them, also a freely chosen activity done for the sheer pleasure of engaging with an interesting and diverse group of adult learners.

Many of our teachers have told me that they experience freedom in teaching for us. The lack of credit requirements allows for a great deal of freedom in what happens in the classroom. For instance, we had an interesting occasion with a class on Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. Having just studied both Kant and Nietzsche, one of the students was deeply offended at the thought of reading a novel she considered to be "Fluffy chick lit". This comment was made right at the start of class and so the teacher just put aside all of his prepared notes and the class began with the question: Is Jane Austen "fluff and romance"? What developed, interestingly, is that all of the main ideas the professor had hoped would emerge did from that unexpected starting point. We have had many such moments in class. The students, not worrying about credit issues, are very honest in their opinions about texts, characters and themes. And many of our teachers come to love this very lively exchange and I have been told by a number, that they now teach in their regular classes differently, because of our classes.

We have a core of deeply committed teachers who very willingly teach in both our basic Halifax Humanities program and now in our follow up program.

City: Victoria, British Columbia**Program:** [University 101](#) at the University of Victoria**Program Coordinator:** Becky Cory, MA**Contact:** <http://web.uvic.ca/uni101/> ; uni101@uvic.ca**Context matters**

University 101 is a program located at the University of Victoria. We offer two non-credit introductory university classes in the humanities and social sciences. We also offer a series of month long courses - 11 months of the year - for graduates of the introductory courses.

Working in a non-credit classroom where there are no grades means that we have a kind of freedom to create our own learning environment and students have the space to set their own learning goals.

University 101 is a learning environment where everyone brings what they have in abundance. The instructors bring their expertise about their area of teaching, the teaching assistants bring their listening and facilitation skills, and the students bring their passion for learning and life experiences.

Critical thinking

Critical thinking is a central part of post-secondary education. It is also a central part of University 101. In the course, students learn with each other and the TAs how to more clearly analyze and articulate their experiences and name the knowledge that they already have.

It can sometimes be challenging to find language to describe the learning environment of University 101. It is not a book club, a philosopher's café or a place to get your 'knowledge fix.' In each of these spaces, critical thinking may be possible, but it is not necessarily at the centre of the learning. In University 101, critical thinking is at the centre of our approach to learning, and we work to create the conditions where students can engage in meaningful discussion and creative thinking. Students engage with the material in many ways, sometimes taking a more

analytical approach and other times bringing their experience to bear on the material that is studied in class.

Our approach to knowledge

In University 101 we view knowledge as created relationally rather than being owned or possessed. We also believe that there is no single truth, and that knowledge is multiple, not singular or authoritarian. We put these ideas into practice in a variety of ways in the course so that the structure of the course reflects our approach to knowledge.

We try to make these ideas part of both the explicit and implicit curriculum. As a class (students, TAs and coordinator), we discuss what kind of learning environment we want to create, making that conversation an explicit and negotiated part of each course. Less visibly, TAs and instructors are coached to recognize the value in the different ways that students contribute to the class. TAs and instructors are encouraged to see themselves as learners in the classroom.

We strive to achieve a multiple view of truth through an interdisciplinary approach to the course content. There is a different instructor each week, teaching about a different topic. This diversity challenges traditional ideas about truth and knowledge by showing that there are many kinds of knowledge. Critical thinking provides the link through the different content that is covered each week.

In each class of University 101, the first half of the class is a lecture by that week's instructor and the second half of each class is small group discussion, facilitated by volunteer teaching assistants. In these discussions, the goal is for students to create knowledge through analysis and synthesis of their ideas and experiences. In this context, knowledge is created through dialogue.

Conceptual traps

The goal of University 101 is to provide courses for people who have faced barriers to post-secondary education. This means that the students in University 101 have been marginalized in many ways in relation to the dominant culture. In our attempt to avoid reproducing the dominant power relations that have created the barriers students have faced, there are a number of conceptual frameworks or beliefs that we avoid.

1. Students do not already think or think critically when they enter the classroom
2. Students are empty vessels
3. People who live in poverty cannot think critically and will not benefit from being able to think more critically

Many of the students who enter the University 101 classroom have survived poverty, violence, unstable housing or homelessness, mental illness, and negative experiences of education. We believe that these lived experiences are produced by social, political and economic structures. However, these experiences are often attributed to the personal failings or incapacities of the people living them. In University 101, we work to name and recognize the social, political and economic structures that shape people's lives through the course material as well as in the small group discussions. Every term we have a full class of students who come into the classroom with astute analyses of the ways their own experiences have been shaped by these structures, but who have not always had those analyses taken seriously or shared by others. In University 101, we create the conditions where students are able to express their ideas and deepen their analysis of the world around them.

4. There is no point in learning if it isn't for credit or moving people towards a degree

A common question that we get asked about the program is "why would people bother to take a course that isn't for credit?" In an increasingly corporate university environment, where

learning is becoming an economic investment with the hope of economic returns, it is surprising to many that the students in University 101 attend the course because they are interested in learning. The program does not have a set of specific outcomes for students. We know that each student is there because they want to be and because they see some way that they will benefit. We hear from the students about the many benefits that they experience, some of which even they did not foresee. Students tell us about the increased confidence they feel after taking the course, that they feel more connected to their communities.

5. That 'we' in the program are helping 'them'
6. That students in the program need 'our' charity

At University 101 we see ourselves as creating the conditions where it is possible for people to make changes in their lives. If students make changes in their lives or the ways that they think about the world, it is because they are making those changes. University 101 is often an important part of the context wherein students are able to make changes. However, it is not because 'we' at the program are helping 'them'. This would imply that University 101 and its organizers were taking credit for the hard work that students are doing to help themselves, in all of the various ways that they do so. Rather, the organizers of University 101 work hard to create a context where it is possible for people to make connections with others, learn from each other and learn from the course material.

We base our program on the belief that students are entitled to education. We work to challenge the oversimplification of the dichotomy between 'us', the service providers, and 'them', the students. We think it is an oversimplification because everyone in the program, including students, TAs, instructors and organizers, are learning and benefitting from each other. This is

not to disregard the real differences in the lives of students, TAs, instructors and organizers, nor the different roles that everyone plays in the classroom.

Classroom dynamics that cultivate critical thinking

Community is built into the centre of the course in many ways. The program fosters a communal environment through tactics like: eating together, taking care of the material costs (i.e. childcare) that enables students to attend class, and working with each student to get their needs met in class. We also provide tutorials, space for students to meet with the teaching assistants to discuss readings and assignments. Finally, small group discussions are an integral part of the development of community in the classroom for both students and teaching assistants.

We strive to create space for critical thinking by challenging assumptions and exploring implications. TAs and students spend time discussing how to avoid more traditional teacher/student roles (i.e. teacher as ‘knower’ and student as ‘learner’) and move towards a more collaborative approach to learning where control and knowledge are shared. TAs spend additional time outside of class in training that we facilitate to deepen their understanding and practices of sharing control and knowledge.

City: Thunder Bay, Ontario

Program: [Humanities 101](#) at Lakehead University

Director: Dr. Doug West

Contact: <http://humanities101.lakeheadu.ca/>

My introduction to Humanities 101 at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario came in the form of being a last minute replacement lecturer for the programme in 2004. I remember coming to the class prepared to lecture, armed with my powerpoint slides safely stored on a memory stick. When I arrived, I suddenly realized that the classroom was equipped “only” with chalk and a real blackboard. I panicked at first, but soon the class itself helped me to

understand the intention of their programme. “Just share what you know” I was advised, and my journey in Humanities 101 began. Our classroom is a place for sharing what you know, life experiences and challenges. It is also a public space for learning how to be a community.

For the past 6 years I have had the challenge and pleasure of teaching in Humanities 101 at Lakehead University and in University 101 at the University of Victoria. Both programs offer students an opportunity to share a meal, participate in a lecture and then engage in group discussion. In both cases I decided to offer more than a participatory lecture – my wife and I prepared food for the students, and in the last class of each session we had a pot-luck. As a lecturer, I connected with the students through my ideas, and as a citizen I connected with them by sharing my food.

I would say the most rewarding experience of all is the sense of belonging to a community of life-long learners. By this I mean that the students in the class are as much teachers as they are learners, and it reminds me of why university life was so appealing to me. I, too, am a life-long learner and I am presented with challenges and opportunities to participate in learning every day. As a lecturer in both the Lakehead and UVIC programmes I was encouraged to engage as much as possible to challenge the students to explore their own sense of community, their biases and to use their voices to express their sense of community space and place.

At Lakehead we offer a session called Pathways where we invite students to meet with representatives from the Registrar’s office, Student Advising, Financial Aid, the Adult Education Learning Centre, the Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre, and Confederation College – the idea is to offer students an idea of how to make a transition to part-time or full-time educational opportunities. I quote here a testimonial from one of our graduates:

What I found most helpful was the Pathways Workshop. This workshop was set up to assist graduates in identifying educational pathways.....I was introduced to an academic counsellor who showed me what I needed to do to gain entry into Lakehead University, and she made it sound so easy! I was helped every step of the way to fulfill my dreams, and it all began with Humanities 101.

Serena Dykstra 2007

The goal of our program, however, is not really to provide access to students to seek full or part-time educational opportunities. This we consider a side-effect of the programme. The real goal and vision for Humanities 101 is to provide a safe and empowering environment for life-long learning.

This year I have taken on the responsibility for directing the Humanities 101 program at Lakehead – I am the third director in 6 years – all of us have been full-time, tenured Faculty members. We run our program for one semester and we have developed new features every year. The Pathways session was added four years ago, a Book Club was added last year, along with a guided tour of the Thunder Bay Art Gallery. This year, we have added an urban farm tour, attendance at a play- The Laramie Project (a play about the homophobic murder of Matthew Shepherd in Colorado), a concert performed by the Thunder Bay Symphony and a Lakehead University Thunderwolves hockey game - all tickets for all participants were donated. We are also helping our current students to start an Alumni Association.

As a newly minted Director I have been able to more appreciate the planning that is a necessary part of Humanities 101. Without the help and institutional memory of Nadine Seeton, a graduate of the first year of the programme who now works for us, I would be lost. Also, the administrative support of various administrative assistants, food workers, technicians and faculty has been invaluable – it really takes a community effort to make things run. We have plans to

expand to a full year with the help of our Development Office and the enthusiastic support of a new university President.

We run our programme through the direction of an Advisory Council, made up of former students, community partners and Faculty, which meets twice during the semester to discuss issues and plans. We have plans to begin talking with the local Speakers School, an initiative from the Thunder Bay Injured Workers group to help people living on low-income to become better public speakers, about working together as we believe our programmes are complimentary. We also have plans for a spring community conference focused on where to take Humanities 101 in the future.

Humanities 101 is about community engagement – it is about providing a safe place that encourages connections between people and between people and public spaces. It is essential to learning that people understand their sense of public participation and ownership of public spaces and that their voices matter in the development of these spaces. Humanities 101 is also about working hard to learn about hard facts and hard fought policy change for the betterment of our community.

The liberal arts are under attack from the increasingly corporatized university “crowding out” their role as the essential centre of post-secondary education. Writing is being replaced by statistics, reading is being replaced by media, and the whole university is underfunded; something has to go. Why not the impractically focussed liberal arts? It is argued that the calculation of grades and the setting of scheduled courses and the demand for learner outcomes has caused the liberal arts to look more and more like a commodified product. Also, Faculty are less likely to see themselves as scholars than as employees of an increasingly corporatized institution.

The university has drifted away from its purpose as a place for free-thinking. It has been re-placed by an ethic of bottom-line accounting and “usable” education. As Dorothy Smith advised, by “thinking it through” we can recover the university’s commitment to acting as a social conscience and we can teach our students to become visible and vocal members of their society. The defence of the liberal arts is not new; people have decried their disappearance from the post-secondary landscape for the past 100 years. Why is there in our time a sense of urgency about their future when they have easily survived the onslaught of commerce, engineering and professional programming? Is it because they lie at the periphery of the institution rather than at the center? Does the lack of focus on the liberal arts belie a capitulation to the corporate mind-set of profit and loss? Session after session of the conference was devoted to formulating answers to these and other questions. It is a funding issue, it is the fault of the illiterate social media, it is the fault of Faculty themselves, unable or unwilling to defend the liberal arts through their Senates. In the end, do the liberal arts really matter anymore?

The session that I participated in was a panel discussion among five Directors of “Clemente-style” programs in Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax and here in Thunder Bay. Each programme offers students who have been living somewhat compromised lives outside the institutions of higher learning a glimpse at what University and College has to offer as a way into being engaged in society. That way is focussed on the Liberal arts, on having students read and write, discuss and debate, and share a sense of community through dining together prior to each session. The “Clemente-Style” Humanities and Liberal Arts programs have been in existence in North America since 1995, when Earl Shorris published *Riches for the Poor* in 1997. His idea was to bring the disenfranchised to liberal arts, to offer a free place within the public space of the University. There are many ways to do this, and here at Lakehead we offer Humanities 101

(<http://humanities101.lakeheadu.ca/>). Our program consists of different Faculty volunteering three hours once a week for twelve weeks and engaging our students in debates and discussions about academic and community issues. All the panellists agreed that our programs privilege the centrality of the Liberal Arts at the university and answer the question – do the Liberal arts still matter?

City: Vancouver, British Columbia

Program: [Humanities 101](#) Community Programme at the University of British Columbia and on the Downtown Eastside/South

Academic Director: Dr. Margot Leigh Butler

Contact: <http://humanities101.arts.ubc.ca/> ; [hum101\(at\)interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:hum101@interchange.ubc.ca)

Currently, the Liberal Arts and Humanities are being asked to prove their relevance. Our Programmes do so, with a difference: with a different student body whose lives, experiences and knowledge inform what's studied, and who approach the Liberal Arts and Humanities from specific perspectives in capitalisms' deep end. As has already been discussed, each of the Canadian Programmes differ, and agree to differ – how Canadian! - despite the American-based founder of the Clemente Course hoping that we'll join his franchised model. The Canadian Programmes succeed by being responsive to the situations of our students, alumni, universities, locations and 'climates' – not from following a model. Each is specific, and this matters.

Unlike the home cities of our other Canadian sister Programmes, in Vancouver there is a core area where lots of people live on very low incomes. It's called the Downtown Eastside, and many of our students live there, and in a neighbouring area called Downtown South (around the area of Granville and Helmcken Streets). Twice a year, in August and November, Humanities 101 posters these areas widely and does information and application sessions for our courses at local community centres, agencies and services (Carnegie Centre, the Downtown Eastside

Women's Centre, Sheway/Crabtree Corner Daycare, Aboriginal Front Door, The Gathering Place, Dr. Peter AIDS Centre, Directions Youth Resources Centre, Vancouver Recovery Club....). We go to so many places because residents support and love and use them; our alumni who volunteer at these centres help at intake – they bring people who might be interested, speak about their own experiences with Hum, and encourage applicants. Another reason why we go to so many places is so that we'll meet people who are being displaced from the community they want to live in by gentrification, but still come here to volunteer and do activist work, access the many often hard-won community supports, get free food and clothing, see friends and family, stay involved with education.

Vancouver's Humanities 101 Community Programme – we call it 'Hum' – runs three free university-level courses at the UBC campus for people who live on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and Downtown South (DTES/South) who have a lust for learning and who live with material poverty - 70% of DTES residents live on low, and often extremely low, incomes; welfare is a bare \$610 per month, including rent. On the DTES/South, Hum offers free education programmes - study groups, documentary film series, workshops – which are open to everyone.

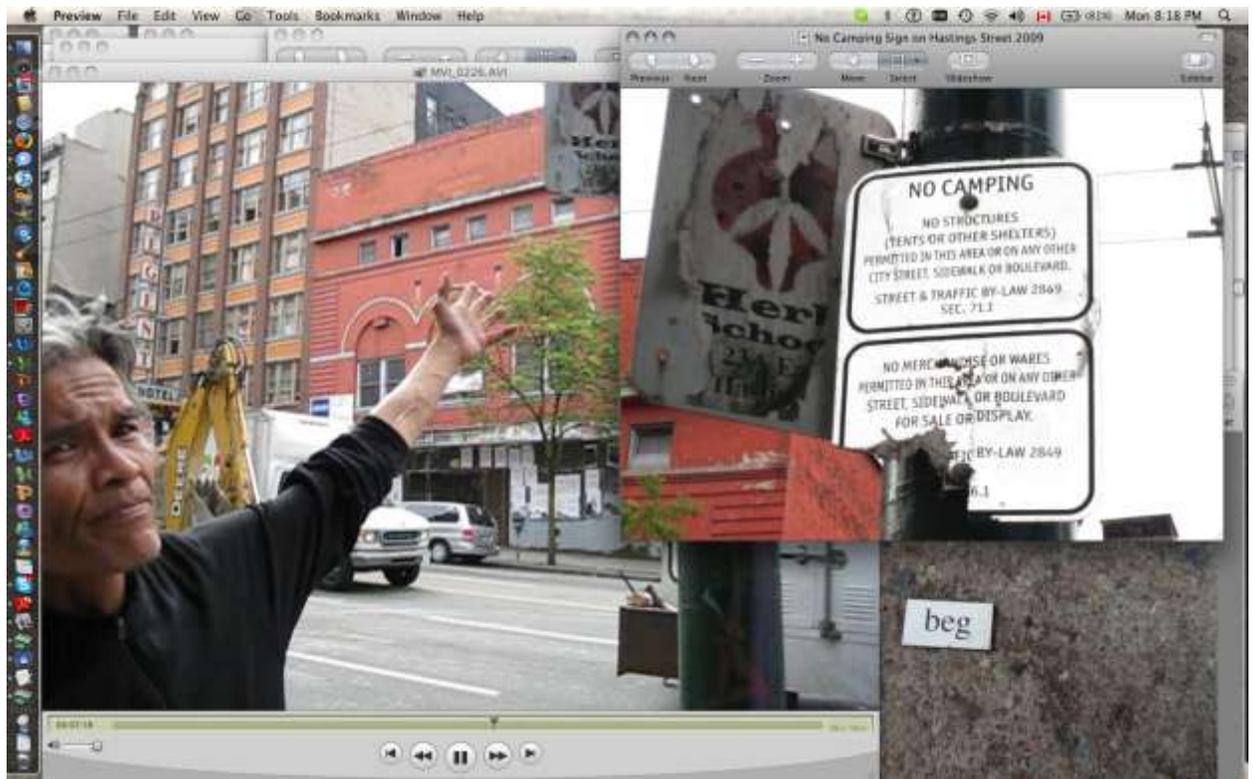
I'd like to start this presentation of Hum on the DTES, where the majority of our students and alumni live, and then focus on three of our practices. In this written form of my presentation, I've included many references that may be useful if readers would like to learn more about the DTES/South and Humanities 101, and also about the structures and practices of Canadian poverty today (<http://ccapvancouver.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/poverty-facts-web.pdf>).

The Downtown Eastside

The Downtown Eastside is a dynamic, resilient neighbourhood known affectionately as “the Heart of the City.” It is part of unceded Coast Salish territory, and has a history and

presence as a hub of cultural life for Aboriginal, Chinese, Japanese, Latin American, Black, queer, working class and low-income peoples. The parameters of the neighbourhood are roughly from Burrard Inlet to Cambie Street to Clark Street to Terminal Avenue, including Victory Square, Gastown, Chinatown, Thornton Park, Oppenheimer District, Strathcona and the industrial area near the water (Lemay, 2010).

Though this is a large and diverse area, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is most often represented a worst-case scenario for contemporary western urbanized life (see The Province newspaper's recent year-long series "Operation Phoenix" <http://www.theprovince.com/news/operation-phoenix/index.html>; Butler, 2004). About 700 people live homeless in this area, 5000 live in Social Housing (and another 5000 units are needed), many others live in SROs – single room occupancy hotels - which are of 'abandonment quality' (Quigley & Raphael, 2001). The City of Vancouver elects not to uphold its own health and safety bylaws on the DTES and landlords are not held responsible (for more info, see <http://ccapvancouver.files.wordpress.com/2010/01/dtes-fact-sheet-nt.pdf>); this is supporting gentrification which is causing displacement of residents: gentrification is the transformation of working class and poor spaces in the city to serve the needs of the middle and upper classes (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2007; Lees, 2008) and new university campuses are implicated along with developers and the City (Pell, 2008). The Vancouver Police are known to aggressively ticket residents who sell bits and bobs – shoes, books, CDs, clothes - on the street or commit minor offences such as riding bikes on the sidewalk or jaywalking; I've heard that there are 9 ways to be ticketed for jaywalking, and they're practiced on the DTES. Without the money to pay the tickets, residents 'choose' to leave the area rather than be jailed. This is a practice of displacement (Bula, 2009).



This photo is from a video interview with DTES resident Clyde Wright about his experience being ticketed for jaywalking on Hastings Street – a segment from this interview was shown at my St. Thomas University conference presentation. He also talks about losing his room in an SRO when he allowed a journalist from The Province newspaper’s series “Operation Phoenix” into his room (<http://www.theprovince.com/news/operation-phoenix/index.html>) and is, in this photo, pointing toward No Camping and No Vending by-law signs on Hastings Street. He is active with CCAP (Carnegie Community Action Project), VANDU (Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users) and lots of other community groups and projects, including “Hope in the Shadows,” a book and yearly photo calendar by Downtown Eastsiders. I made this video in the summer of 2009, just down the street from Carnegie Community Centre at the corner of

Hastings and Main, and about a block from the future Olympic Tent Village which was held for the 2 weeks of the Olympics, largely by local people living without homes.

The effects of poverty and of colonization are visible on the DTES where there are many survivors of personal and systemic violence, exclusion and alienation, residential schools; people living with mental and physical health challenges, people who use substances, women who do ‘survival sex’ to pay for substances they need – women living on the DTES were murdered by Robert Pickton – and despite efforts, there are too few detox beds and recovery facilities, and too much violence against women (Skelton, 2010)

At the same time, the sense of community, support and awareness of each other is very high – this is a strong and activist community that has fought hard for everything it has and is continuing to fight to stay home. People are accepted without judgment in this area which is a sanctuary for people who aren’t welcome in other places, there is a strong commitment to justice and human rights, and there are plans for an enduring future on the DTES. Many residents spend lots of their time volunteering and working for much needed community services like the INSITE supervised safe injection site (<http://supervisedinjection.vch.ca/>) and groups that work for rights and justice for this community. A few months ago, the Carnegie Community Action Project - a group which is part of the Carnegie Community Centre, the area’s ‘living room’ which is used by about 2000 people daily - released a report after two years of input from 1200 residents. In it, residents have said clearly what they want and now this needs to be implemented. This report “Assets to Action: Community Vision for Change” lists 12 key needed actions: 1) Build social housing for low-income people 2) Tackle systemic poverty 3) Stop gentrification 4) Improve safety 5) Improve health services 6) Support and fund DTES arts and culture 7) Develop an economy that serves and employs local residents 8) Ensure public spaces are public,

not gated, sufficient, safe, and welcoming 9) Keep towers out and retain heritage buildings 10) Involve DTES residents in neighbourhood decisions 11) Attract more children 12) Create a DTES image that honours and respects low-income residents (Pederson & Swanson, 2010).

Amongst these DTES residents are Hum students and alumni, people who are passionate about learning and knowledge and wouldn't otherwise have a chance to go to university. Hum hinges the DTES and UBC, two very different places, and is an active hinge – for instance, our students' first writing assignment involves noticing the many 'cultures of learning' both in their home neighbourhoods and at UBC.

Three Hum Practices

As an educational and activist project, Hum hinges significantly different places, and is uneasy about being positioned as just an 'anomaly' which doesn't get at the importance of specificity and difference, or worse, positions it as a kind of living contradiction. Hum is instead committed to being aware and creative with 'how we do what we do': these are our practices, and they are responsive to what's happening in all aspects of the Programme and peoples' situations, they are flexible and changeable. I'll now talk about three Hum practices concerning 'students,' 'pedagogy and curriculum,' and 'responsiveness' which complement other practices discussed by my colleagues in their presentations.

1) Students

To live on a very low income in Canada today means dealing with institutions that may be disrespectful. At Hum, we're always listening for and creating practices which don't take up the methods of the institutions and hierarchies which people living on very low incomes have loads of knowledge and expertise in, yet can overpower them, which are so often indifferent and unaccountable, to put it mildly. For our last yearbook, Hum alumna Pat Haram wrote a visionary

essay on homelessness, based in her own experiences, and her understanding of government and institutions. She concluded: “I do not have the answers to all the homeless situations, but I do believe that solutions are out there if only government policy is put into place that does not distrust the individual in need.” (Hum 101 Yearbook, 2010, p. 39).

Hum students and alumni have lots of practices for making strong communities which work together. Their knowledge and perspectives from their positions in neo-liberalism are very important – like many people around the world, they know how to survive in the deep end of globalization. This is ‘situated authority’ and their knowledge matters – and it’s wonderful when it’s recognized. A few years ago, one of our teachers, Peter Seixas in Education, brought his “Social Studies Methods” students to our class so that they could ask for feedback from Hum students on their DTES ‘field trip’ plans for their own students. It was a wonderful and memorable experience, and exemplified what can happen.

2) Pedagogy and Course Content

Over the years, we’ve developed some pedagogical practices which support students’ enjoyment, participation and contributions to Hum courses, and have moved toward a curriculum which focuses on relevant, critical and creative, interdisciplinary studies; it has a Cultural Studies/Post-Structuralist methodology which approaches the Humanities as implicated, works from there, and values students’ situated knowledges (Haraway, 1991).

Our core courses are 8 months long, meeting twice a week for two and a half hours, and each week we study a different discipline and subject with a different teacher, starting with studenting skills refreshers, learning and discussion styles, and thinking practices. I teach two classes in the first month: one which establishes that “Culture is Ordinary” based in Raymond Williams’ germinal essay from 1958 (Williams, 1989), and introduce the disciplines and

interdisciplines through the nodes of People, Knowledge and Power (asking in turn ‘What counts as people, power and knowledge in First Nations’ Studies, geography, sociology, anthropology, law, architecture, art, music, Women’s and Gender Studies, economics, etc.); and the other class is on periodization – we take an evening stroll through the Enlightenment and right up to globalization. In this way we have a shared ‘platform’ of understanding to start our year-long interdisciplinary conversations. These are not intro or survey courses, but jump into relevant critical and creative studies - relevant – which to me, in this context, means that studying what will help us to be further informed and articulate, to access education – as Raymond Williams says ‘we have the world to draw on’ – and to be more powerful: we build agency together.

Our students become accomplished at reading the teachers – in one year they may have as many teachers as in an undergraduate degree – and at making connections between diverse content (more hinges!). They arrive with lots of knowledge and a thirst for more; they do the readings and go to a Homework Club before class and are super engaged (many students and alumni also initiate and attend Hum Study Groups on the DTES/South on week-ends on subjects including Shakespeare, rhetoric, freedom, gentrification, cyberculture, and nature, society and science). Hum students create an experience for teachers which is unusual – they are generally older than most undergraduate students, and raise informed, insightful and often unconventional questions and points - they’re not ‘trained’ into disciplinary thinking practices, and are enjoyed as candid, independent thinkers.

In the classroom, everyone wears a name tag, and everyone sits together – students, returning alumni mentors, volunteer discussion facilitators (university students from UBC and neighbouring Simon Fraser University), staff and faculty – and takes notes and asks questions

and mops spills and helps out. In the classroom, we can become more like a collective. Our students and alumni keep remaking Hum by hand, as do the staff and faculty.

Lately I've been thinking a lot about the structures and supports which I've used for years, reluctantly, in my other classrooms – those itemized in Foucault's "Means of Correct Training" (Foucault, 1977): hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, the examination – and what it feels like to be part of this 'no carrots, no sticks' intrinsic education. University students volunteer to help with the classes, and often say that these are some of the best lectures they've been to. I wonder if this might be a radical future for the Liberal Arts and Humanities?

3) Responsiveness: on Hum's Steering Committee, and being responsible and responsive to students, alumni and situations on the DTES/South and at UBC

There is an international movement called 'Community Service Learning' which is gaining strength. Up to 2000 UBC students each year offered the chance to broaden their experiences and are placed in 'their community,' which often means the DTES whether or not they're residents. This is about 'othering,' and it's fascinating and problematic. One of the ways that Hum distinguishes itself from this practice is through our Steering Committee.

Every 6-8 weeks at Carnegie Centre, we have a meeting of our Steering Committee which is made up of students and alumni and guides all aspects of the Programme – this keeps the Programme responsive to what matters to residents about what's happening on the DTES/South. Everyone who has ever taken a Hum course, for whom we have a current email address, is invited to each meeting. Everyone there experiences the difficulties of living on extremely low incomes, and knows that it is not all we are.

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