

Comments from *MountainRise's* Managing Editor, John Habel

When the White Rabbit was presenting the evidence in the Knave's trial, he asked the King for directions. Gravely, the King replied: "Begin at the beginning, and go on till you come to the end; then stop."

This is excellent advice for storytellers, but it is bad counsel for teachers. Suppose you wanted to get to know a tract of country. The worst way to do it would be to jump into a car, drive straight from one end to the other, then turn your back on it and walk away. Yet that is what many teachers do with complex subjects, and that is why their students seem lost. Actually, the students are bewildered. They don't know where they are going, what they should expect to see, where the difficult hills are and on which side the best views can be found or what they will meet at the other end. All they know is that the car stops every Friday for forty-eight hours rest.

How much better would they learn the country if, before setting out, they were briefed and given maps to study; if they were rested and reoriented once or twice during the trip; and if they were shown photographs of the best spots and taken once more over the map when they reached the end of their journey?

In this passage from his classic book, *The Art of Teaching*, first published in 1950, Gilbert Highet provides sage advice to teachers who would increase the positive effects they have on their students' learning. Highet's thoughts, however, predated much of the activity in educational and cognitive psychology that has become known as the "cognitive revolution." Highet, also, could not have anticipated recent advances in instructional technology. We who teach now have access to a wealth of knowledge about the processes of teaching and learning that is provided by educational and cognitive psychologists. In addition, we are equipped with instructional technologies that permit us to engage students in ways that go far beyond showing them "photographs of the best spots" in a given subject area.

In this inaugural issue of *Mountain Rise* we present the scholarly research, reflection and writing on teaching and learning of our colleagues, who make their reflection and research about teaching and learning public and open to critique. The authors who have contributed to this issue of *Mountain Rise* act on Highet's advice; they brief their students, rest them and reorient them, not by means of maps and photographs alone, but through the use of a variety of interesting and innovative teaching approaches.

In the first article, **Bruce Henderson** explores ways of thinking about the psychological theories held by teachers and how those theories relate to what teachers actually do. In the five articles that follow our colleagues share what they have learned about a variety of teaching strategies, techniques, and resources.

Maurice Phipps and **Cynthia Phipps** describe approaches to establishing cooperative groups in our classes. **Jane Hall**, **Eliza Dean** **JoeDavid Hall**, and **Catherine Taylor** provide guidelines for teaching our students to create electronic portfolios as a means of chronicling their knowledge and experiences as student. **Lisen Roberts**, **Eliza Dean** and **Terry Nienhuis** present a review of literature on using feature film to teach in the social sciences and provide suggestions for how to use this method.

From **Valorie Nybo** we learn about the Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and On-line Teaching (MERLOT), a repository of over 8,000 peer-reviewed on-line resources identified as appropriate for use with college and university students. **James Ullmer** and **April Lewandowsky** report the findings of their study of a classroom learning community and argue that establishing a classroom learning community can be an

effective way of improving student attitudes toward learning.

The next two articles are descriptions of the authors' experience and ideas about teaching and learning. **Al Profitt** reflects on the first time he was able to connect theory (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs) to practice as an educator. **Jane Hall**, **Irene Mueller**, and **Bil Stahl** describe their experiences with the Writing Circle Project Team at WCU, a group that, for them, serves as a sympathetic, supportive, first audience to help the writer see the paper from the reader's viewpoint. Finally, **Irene Mueller** reviews Robert Boice's book of advice for new faculty members and explains how Boice's suggestions have helped her "become more efficient, more effective, and less stressed."

One of the goals of *Mountain Rise* is to stimulate dialogue about the nature, meaning, methods and goals of teaching and learning. Therefore, we invite your critical responses to any of the articles that comprise this first issue. We will include them in "Peak Responses," a section for readers' responses in the second issue of *Mountain Rise*, appearing in the fall. And we encourage WCU faculty and graduate students to engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning and to submit that scholarship to *MountainRise*.