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# Rambling, Random Thoughts on Rushing Toward the End

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Teaching and Learning Center

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# The Weekly Reader

Teaching and Learning Center, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC

## UpComing Sessions

Blackboard Training :  
Preparing Your Courses for the New Semester (various)

Writing  
Proposals for Research Council Grants  
1/14

Changing Students in the Classroom  
1/24

Register at:  
<http://www2.winthrop.edu/login/tl/default.asp>

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Winthrop University

## Rambling, Random Thoughts on Rushing Toward the End

Just random thoughts today, as we near the end. But perhaps a theme will emerge from the randomness...

### It's Over—Already?

How did this happen? This week is the last full week of classes, and we haven't even had Turkey Day yet. What a strange curve ball the calendar threw us. And so begins the mad rush to the end. The students are busy with final projects and papers, and faculty are preparing for the onslaught. As I have written before, we will all make it, somehow.

And again, a reminder: Winthrop academic policy calls for final exams or a culminating activity in all classes, *during the assigned exam period*. How disheartening it is to walk down academic halls to administer your final exam, walking past classrooms adjacent to yours, classrooms that have been full of eager students all semester, but classrooms that are now dark and empty. I have been in Owens in past

semesters and found only one other classroom occupied by students taking exams, while on regular days every classroom had been taken. Final exams (or appropriate culminating activities) are important pedagogical and assessment tools, and their omission (or substitute at another time) shortchanges our students and our courses. Long long ago, Winthrop had no final exam period, but we carved out those days from the regular semester in order to administer exams in a structured fashion. I have heard of students taking "final" exams on the last day of class or on Study Day. Some people are able to turn in "final" grades for their classes on Study Day. Tsk tsk. Faculty responsibilities. Just sayin'...

### One Semester Down for Our New President

If this semester seemed fast to most of us, I wonder what it felt like to President Comstock.

What a whirl it must have been. She has been everywhere, it seems: meeting with all academic units, touring all buildings and departments, holding town halls and focus groups, meeting students and student groups, and those are just the activities I am aware of. I even saw her eating lunch in Thompson! What has impressed me the most is that she has spent the majority of this time listening: listening to faculty and staff and students. Winthrop is at a crossroads, and it is certainly going to be interesting (and exciting) to see where she will lead us, once she processes all she has heard. Here is to that future, and to her leadership and openness.

### Memories of a President

But in this third full week of November, my thoughts have been with a past president. This Friday marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the assassination of President Kennedy. Like Pearl Harbor Day and the moon landing and 9/11,

*“But the recipient I was most happy about was Dean Smith. I am a Tar Heel born and a Tar Heel bred, so this award meant the most to me. Besides being the one of the greatest coaches ever, in any sport, Dean Smith was always a teacher. His skills at motivation, instruction, and innovation are as much a part of his legacy as his many wins and his two national championships.”*



## Continued from page 1

November 22, 1963 is one of those days those of us who witnessed them will never forget, will never forget where we were when we heard. I was in the fourth grade, in Miss Swertz's class, nine years old, nearly ten, aware of politics for the first time, and President Kennedy was my hero. I had read *PT-109* and *Profiles in Courage*, and I idolized the man. I remember reading about the fact that he had crow's feet, and once I understood what those were, I used to stand in the bathroom holding the corners of my eyes for as long as I could, hoping to develop crow's feet of my own. (I have since succeeded, but by other, more traditional methods.) For some reason on that Friday afternoon, I was staying late. Vickie Redd's mother came in and told the few of us who were there that President Kennedy had been shot and that he was dead. I walked home, numb, in disbelief, to find my mother and Susie, our maid, hugging and crying at the back door. "They killed our man, Miss Pat, they killed our man," Susie was saying. So much has happened since then, and my innocent idolatry of my hero has been tarnished some, but that moment marked me, as it marked all of us who were alive

then, as it marked our country. I took it very seriously when President Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." Those words are one of the main reasons I am a teacher, I realize now. A postscript, and a bit of perspective: our incoming freshmen this year were probably six years old on 9/11. What will their memories be fifty years hence?

### Honored by a President

This week also marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, begun by President Kennedy in 1963. President Obama gave out 16 awards, to notables including President Clinton, Oprah Winfrey, Gloria Steinem, Ernie Banks ("Let's play two!"), Loretta Lynn, and Sally Ride. But the recipient I was most happy about was Dean Smith. I am a Tar Heel born and a Tar Heel bred, so this award meant the most to me. Besides being the one of the greatest coaches ever, in any sport, Dean Smith was always a teacher. His skills at motivation, instruction, and innovation are as much a part of his legacy as his many wins and his two national championships (should have been more, and

1977 still leaves a bitter, lingering memory). I wrote a short letter to him about ten years ago, thanking him for what he taught me about being a teacher, and he wrote a short note of thanks. "Play hard, play smart, play together." Those are wise words, and they are a central part of my approach to teaching. And pointing to the person who passed you the ball. Coach Smith was unable to attend that ceremony this week. Sadly, his once-brilliant mind is fading into oblivion. His legacy will not suffer the same fate. Thank you, Coach Smith, for all you taught me. Pointing at you!

### First Annual Winthrop Conference on Teaching and Learning

Save this date: Friday, February 21, 2014, 2:00 pm-6:00 pm, for our inaugural conference on teaching and learning. Eventually, we want to expand this to a multi-day conference, as well as to include other area institutions. But this first one will be ours alone. The deadline for proposals is January 15, 2014. Email me, [birdj@winthrop.edu](mailto:birdj@winthrop.edu), with proposals for individual presentations, papers, joint presentations, sessions, and so on. This will be a great chance for us to share our ideas.

## XXITE 2.0 ----- The Virtual Gathering Place for WU (The Reboot!)

Jo Koster and I invite you to join XXITE (Twenty-first Century Teaching Excellence)—or if you have already joined, to check it out again as it grows and develops. Maybe you have not been there in a long time—if not, you will see many changes in look and content. For example, XXITE now has groups dedicated to HMXP and CRTW, with

those of us who teach those courses sharing ideas and materials. Talk to Jo about setting up your own interest group. Jo is particularly interested in recruiting a few people to blog regularly about their teaching.

Jo set up this interactive site to give Winthrop faculty a virtual gathering space to share ideas about teaching and

technology. You'll find blogs and discussion forums on various topics—and we urge you to add your own ideas. Visit again at <http://wuxxite.ning.com/> Or email Jo Koster for an invitation to join: [kosterj@winthrop.edu](mailto:kosterj@winthrop.edu) The TLC website also has links to navigate your way there or to join: <http://www2.winthrop.edu/tlc/>

## A New Service From the TLC: Teaching Consultation

The Teaching and Learning Center is offering a new service: teaching consultation. At the instructor's request, I (or another agreed-upon person) will visit your class to observe and consult with you afterwards about your successes and challenges. This consultation has nothing to do with the tenure and

promotion process, and no reports will be made to department chairs or deans (unless you so request). The invitation to the consultant can only come from the instructor, not from a dean or chair or any other person. All conversations will be private and confidential. If you don't want me to visit your class and observe your teaching, we could

just meet and talk about your teaching. If I am not available to visit your class because of my schedule, I will find a qualified person to do the consulting. So please let me know if you would like to invite me into your class or for a consultation. Call or email me at (803) 323-3679 or [birdj@winthrop.edu](mailto:birdj@winthrop.edu).

## Go2Knowledge—Learning On Demand!

Go2Knowledge is a website that offers a variety of video presentations on faculty and staff professional development. You will find presentations by nationally-known experts in seven categories: At-Risk Populations, Campus Safety, Organizational Development, Student Success, Teaching and Learning, Technology,

and Open Educational Resources. Within each category, you will find a number of excellent and informative videos. The Office of Academic Affairs has provided us a one-year subscription to this service.

People often tell the TLC that they would like to go to sessions, but they don't have the time or they can't

at the times sessions are offered. With Go2Knowledge, you can attend sessions on demand, anywhere, 24/7. The TLC will also have frequent Go2Knowledge Groups, where we meet to discuss a presentation. Log in here: <http://www.go2knowledge.org/winthrop> See you there!

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### Winthrop XXITE: Passionate Teaching

WINTHROP'S INITIATIVE FOR 21ST CENTURY TEACHING EXCELLENCE

A friendly place where Winthrop faculty & friends can share information and experiences with using social networking for teaching & research.

**BLOG POSTS**

- NEW POSTS ON THE RENOVATIONS**  
Posted by [Mark Y. Herring](#) on June 22, 2012 at 2:05pm
- CORE VALUES**  
Posted by [Mark Y. Herring](#) on June 5, 2012 at 9:41am
- PLAYING TO TYPE**  
Posted by [Blaiz C. Harding](#) on May 25, 2012 at 10:22am
- TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING IN THE CLASSROOM**  
Posted by [Amanda Hiler](#) on March 15, 2012 at 12:31pm — 1 Comment
- GONE WITH THE WIND...**  
Posted by [Jo Koster](#) on March 6, 2012 at 10:33am — 2 Comments

+ Add a Blog Post

**NOTES**

- DO COLLEGE PROFESSORS WORK HARD ENOUGH?**  
Created by [Jo Koster](#) Mar 25, 2012 at 11:34pm. Last updated by [Jo Koster](#)
- WHO OWNS YOUR COURSE?**  
Created by [Jo Koster](#) Mar 19, 2012 at 12:07pm. Last updated by [Jo Koster](#)
- STUDENT OWNERSHIP OF TABLETS INCREASES PREFERENCE FOR GROWING**  
Created by [Jo Koster](#) Mar 14, 2012 at 11:24am. Last updated by [Jo Koster](#)

Join XXITE 2.0 or  
Register for a TLC  
Session

At

[www.winthrop.edu/tlc](http://www.winthrop.edu/tlc)

Thought  
for  
The Week

"I do believe in praising  
that which deserves to be  
praised."  
--Dean Smith