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Snow Days, Missed Classes, Online Classes, Flipped Classes - and the TLC Conference

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UpComing Sessions

Winthrop
Conference on
Teaching and
Learning 2/21

Blackboard
(various topics
and times)

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Snow Days, Missed Classes, Online Classes, Flipped Classes—and the TLC Conference

Growing up as a native Charlottean, I always loved a big snowstorm. Snow came more often to this area in the 60s and 70s, and it brought school closings, snow days, and sledding down the big hill on the stree in front of my houses. Even my exile to Rochester, NY for graduate school did not eradicate my love of snow.

I remember sitting in class in elementary school on days the local weatherman, Clyde McLean, had forecasted snow. We all squirmed in our sets, sneaking peeks outside the windows. Then the cry would come from one student: "It's snowing!" We would all jump up and run to the windows to watch, until the teacher would make us sit down. In the fifth grade, Mrs. Hathcock told us if we looked at it, the snow would stop. We buried our heads in our math books and dared not peek.

Eventually, a crackle would come over the

intercom, and we would hear the gruff voice of our principal, Mr. Pope. We moved forward in our desks in anticipation. "May I have your attention please," we would hear his disembodied voice say. "School will dis..."

That's all we heard. Cheers broke out in the classroom, and you could hear the cheers echoing up and down the halls of Montclaire. We were having a snow day!

Things change, times change, and technology changes, but human nature does not. I was in Thomson last Tuesday for lunch. I saw a student checking his phone, and then he said, "Cancelled!" Nearly simultaneously, a cheer arose from 200 or so students, cascading in ripples around the cafeteria. They all got the word at about the same time, on their individual pocket intercoms. Snow day!

I now see snow days from the perspective of my

teachers. Most of them seemed to welcome the break, but a few grumbled about the lessons missed and plans jumbled, and especially about having to make up the days and lose spring break, or have the year extended further into in June. I remember thinking, "Who cares? Take it while you can!" But now I know better about the mess three snow days can cause.

My graduate class, American Realism and Naturalism, had already missed one Wednesday for the January 29 snowstorm, and I didn't want to get any farther behind. I warned them on the Monday before that I was going to hold class on Wednesday through Blackboard if we got the snow that was predicted. When Wednesday came and class was cancelled and the snow came down hard and piled up fast, I did what fifth-grade Johnny would have done: I got my sled, Rosebud, down from its hook in the garage and headed off to the big hill behind the

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near my house and sledded with all the other kids. (They were sliding on plastic dishes and rubber mats, while I slid down the hill on my real wooden sled with steel runners, turning when I hit the greenway and sliding about a hundred yards down that, way past where they lay in a heap after their saucers crashed. They were astonished. Sometimes the old ways really are the best ways.)

But a bit before 5:00 o'clock, I sat at my kitchen table and logged into the virtual classroom in Blackboard. Eight of my 12 students eventually made it in, and we had over an hour of discussion about *The Rise of Silas Lapham*. Virtual class went better than I expected, with lively discussion about this William Dean Howells novel. It wasn't as good as "real" class, and I felt bad about the students who were excluded by the technology. But we saved a day that we needed to be saved.

After our "class," I recorded three short videos in which I talked about some issues and passages in the novel that I needed to bring up and would have if we had met physically. I uploaded these vodcasts to

Blackboard, my class flipped in this way.

I have to say that, all in all, I enjoyed the unexpected break. The sun is out now, the snow is melting, and spring break is now only a few weeks away. I could handle the disruption better than some can, with multiple sections and scheduled exams and other concerns. (I spent Valentine's Day grading papers, online, undeterred by the weather, virtually giving the papers back even while we were all snowed in.)

But the experience made me think about the viability of online and hybrid courses. My classes are somewhat hybrid, somewhat flipped, but I don't think I could go totally online with my classes, at least not with the technology we now have access to. But maybe I am just an old fogey: astonishingly to me, I turned 60 on that January 29 snow day. Hey you kids, get off my virtual lawn!

All of this rambling is prelude to a final advertisement of the First Annual Winthrop Conference on Teaching and Learning, Friday, February 21, 2:00-6:00 pm. The program is now being printed, but you can see the schedule online at

the TLC website, and you can register there too. We have over 30 presenters in 15 sessions, on a variety of topics, as well as closing remarks by Dean Gloria Jones and a wine and cheese reception. I am happy to announce that the registration fee has been waived for faithful readers of *The Weekly Reader*. Just click the button and it's free!

Seven of the 15 sessions are devoted to teaching with technology. This old dog is going to try to learn some new tricks.

As director of the Teaching and Learning Center, I am humbled by the expertise and generosity of Winthrop faculty and staff. I cannot imagine any other TLC in America that offers such rich programming with virtually no budget. This inaugural conference is like our year in miniature, compressed into one exciting afternoon, and from the looks of the program, it will rival bigger, longer-established conferences. Perhaps as early as next year, we will expand the conference to include colleagues at area colleges and universities. Come join us for this first one so you can watch the conference evolve and grow over the years. Until Friday!

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 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.

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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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 1:34pm. 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
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Conference Thanks

Finally, I must thank Gloria Jones for her support, intellectual and monetary, and Dana Bruneau for her tireless and impeccable work on organization, logistics, the program, and too much more to mention. Dana hates such public thanks, but she deserves them, richly.

--John Bird