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BYU College of Humanities

HUMANITIES





The Greatest Teaching

by J. Scott Miller, Dean

What makes university classes different from other learning experiences?

The question rarely surfaces amid the critical tide surrounding American higher education, but it is central to the debate, and its answers are many. If you have taken even a few university-level classes, you have likely sampled the broad range of pedagogical possibilities higher education offers students. Odds are, you also discovered that you were not in Kansas High School anymore.

My own first experience at BYU is a case in point. Because of an early birthday and a pending mission call, I could only take block classes offered the first half of fall semester, which limited my course options. After ruling out a senior nursing practicum and an advanced engineering seminar, I settled into four classes that would simultaneously prepare me for a mission and get me started down the path to a university education: for core science, field botany; for spiritual fiber, two religion classes; and for some physical education, canoeing.

The variety of my pedagogical experiences could not have been greater. The canoeing class quickly found me, after some land instruction, in a van with 15 other students riding to Utah Lake to paddle against foul-smelling waves. In my large religion classes I became one of many in a crowded hall, alternately entertained and soberly exhorted by remarkable lecturers. In field botany, a dozen of us enjoyed informal classroom discussion with walks around campus and the occasional excursion to local canyons to observe, feel, smell, and even taste the flora. (I still crush a smoke bush leaf near the Maeser Building from time to time just to enjoy its refreshing, lemony smell.)

The exams, likewise, covered a broad, and sometimes surprising, spectrum. My canoeing test involved both naming the equipment and successfully negotiating a floating obstacle

course. My religion exams presented the most challenging multiple-choice questions I have ever confronted. My field botany exam was a stroll around campus, the teacher silently pointing to plants whose names (both Latin and common) we wrote on the test sheet.

The variety and differences of these courses is emblematic of the university classroom experience: one size never fits all, and each is optimally designed to suit one of a spectrum of objectives. Large classes serve information mastery with economy and efficiency; small classes suit skill building and intensive, personalized learning. Field trips allow direct experience; carefully prepared lectures cover broad swaths of information and establish conceptual foundations. All may be employed by a single teacher during their career, based upon what they intend to teach.

Accordingly, perhaps one thing that makes university classes different from other learning experiences is their greater diversity of teaching methods. Some universities have staked their

“What does it mean to spiritually strengthen my students, and how can I do that best?”

identities on emphasizing one or another of these. At Cambridge and Oxford, the tutorial method is legendary: students meeting with professors solo or in small groups to be questioned deeply about selected readings. At some small colleges in the US, courses are taught one at a time, with students devoting themselves to only one class daily for several weeks, before beginning the next class. Some for-profit institutions have modernized correspondence schools of the past using exclusively remote, asynchronous online learning.

At BYU, we offer a broad variety of instructional modes, with a special focus on teaching undergraduates. But foundationally we are committed, in every class, to a singular mode rare among other universities: the combined focus on intellectual growth and spiritual strength. All new teachers coming to BYU,

regardless of background or field, have to confront the same question: What does it mean to spiritually strengthen my students, and how can I do that best? Although that question implies an attempt to measure the unmeasurable, its continued presence on student class surveys means our teachers take it seriously, and our students cannot ignore it.

I have access, as dean, to all the student survey results for courses taught in the College of Humanities. That translates, over the past nine years of my tenure, into hundreds of thousands of numeric scores and tens of thousands of narrative comments. For the past year or so, I have been trying to digest and understand those data and have come up with several preliminary conclusions:

- Despite what some uninformed critics may assert, scores and comments for faculty in the College of Humanities regarding a “spiritually strengthening” class are overwhelmingly positive (94%).
- Our teachers employ a wide variety of methods to address spiritual growth: some open with prayer, a hymn, perhaps a devotional thought; others routinely bear testimony where the topic allows; some of the most effusive comments describe teachers who model Christ in relating to their students.
- Student interpretations of the phrase “spiritually strengthening” vary widely and quite dramatically: for some it means being stirred emotionally; for others it is increased gospel knowledge; for yet others it is how often they feel inspired in class.

Overall, what I learn when I take a deep dive into the data is that students find great satisfaction when their classroom interactions happen on both intellectual and spiritual planes. That combination can make classes in the College of Humanities not only different, but different in a spiritually transformative way. There is something unique, even miraculous, about the relationships that sometimes develop when two or more people, gathered in the name of intellectual inquiry and spiritual growth, share the joy of discovering truths and together experience validation from one ineffable and unifying Truth. ■

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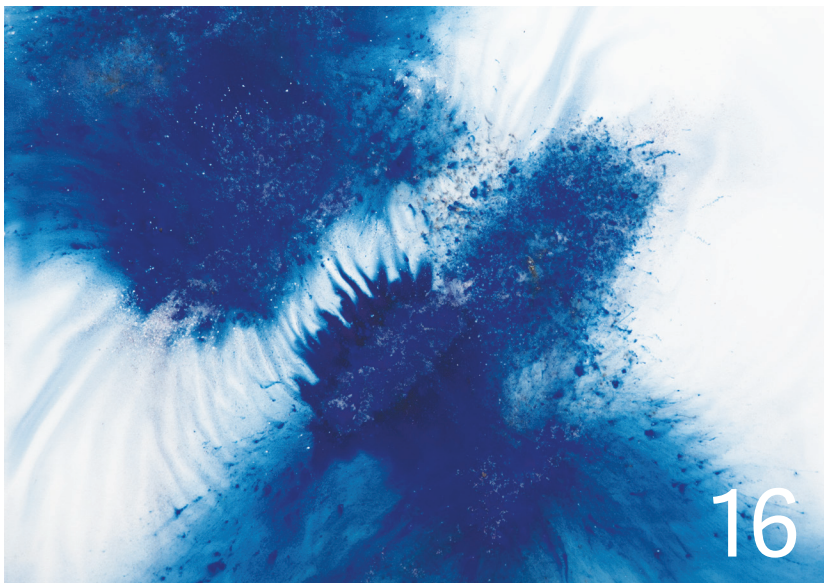


Illustration by vector_v / Adobe Stock, adapted by Caroline Bills Quispe (Graphic Design '25) (LEFT)

Photo by Jennifer Haraguchi (RIGHT)

Cai Guo-Qiang, detail from *In Search of El Greco* No. 8, 2016, gunpowder on canvas, 91.5 x 91.5 cm, photo courtesy Cai Studio. (BOTTOM)

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Hittite Cuneiform— Language and the Written Form

by Charles W. Oughton (Classical Historiography and Biography)

As humanists we know that language is a powerful tool for connecting with other people. Our ability to understand languages from the distant past, however, is often limited by our ability to decipher the writing system that records them. At times, the development of the technology for writing has its own complicated and intriguing history.

The tablet pictured here contains Hittite, an Indo-European language from Bronze-Age Anatolia, as recorded in cuneiform, the writing system developed for Sumerian and later adapted to Akkadian, a Semitic language. Cuneiform is a writing system that uses a mixture of syllabic signs (each symbol represents a syllable) and logograms (a symbol represents an entire word). The quantity of signs that are in common use thereby makes writing a specialized skill, practiced only by trained scribes.

When the Hittites conquered part of Syria, their king ordered a group of Babylonian scribes captured there to be taken back to his kingdom, where they were forced to record official documents of the Hittite court. As these scribes adapted cuneiform to the Hittite language, they used a mixture of syllabic signs to record the sounds of Hittite words and the logograms of the original Sumerian or Akkadian words to represent common concepts. Often, these logograms could be written more quickly than spelling out the Hittite word phonetically. For instance,

the Sumerogram for “god,” DINGIR (𒀭), consisted of a single sign, but to spell that out in Hittite phonetically would require four signs: *si-u-ni-is*. As a result, there are common words that the scribes only wrote using the logograms, leaving us no idea what actual Hittite words the signs describe (for example, DUMU “son” 𒀭 or MUNU “woman” 𒀭).

Several generations later, the scribes were native Hittite speakers who had no working knowledge of Sumerian or Akkadian. However, they continued to use the ideographic signs from these languages that were hardwired into the writing system. The scribes started to append Hittite word endings onto the Sumerograms (e.g., DUMU-*an*, “of the sons”), suggesting that they likely sounded out the underlying Hittite word, despite the writing system still displaying the sign for a language that was, by then, obsolete for hundreds of years.

The technology used to record ancient Hittite helps us understand not just the language of that people but also the layers of history and cultural exchanges and influences evident in the development of that writing system. As we unravel the historical context of ancient writings, we appreciate more fully the power that language systems have to represent culture, identity, and history. ■

Photos by Marista / Adobe Stock (LEFT), Lanmas / Alamy Stock Photo (RIGHT)



The Sphinx Gate at Hattusa, capital of the Hittite Empire, located in modern-day Boğazkale, Turkey (LEFT)

Cuneiform inscription (RIGHT)

WAYFARE

— A New Faith and Humanities Magazine —



BY LAUREN WALKER (COMMUNICATIONS: PUBLIC RELATIONS '25)

Finding spiritually uplifting content in a social media landscape that challenges gospel principles can be difficult. In an effort to produce more positive content, College of Humanities alumnus Zachary Davis (Interdisciplinary Humanities, International Relations '08) introduced *Wayfare*, a groundbreaking print magazine with a humanities-based approach to gospel learning.

Wayfare is not a typical gospel-related publication like the *Liahona*. The name of the magazine explains it best: our faith journeys are sometimes unexpected and meandering, but the vistas we arrive at are worth the effort. The magazine helps readers navigate these faith journeys through unique media including visual art, poetry, fiction, essays, interviews, sermons, and even art criticism.

The magazine is designed to be intellectually stimulating, with the goal of proving that faith indeed matters. Isaac Richards (English

MA '24), a contributing editor for *Wayfare*, acknowledged that the magazine seeks to be spiritually disruptive by writing about topics such as natalism, inequality, and mental health through a gospel lens. "Our lives are pretty seamless. I need something disruptive to help me have a spiritual experience, and the magazine is something out of my daily routine that slows me down," Richards says.

Through these unique approaches, *Wayfare* helps Latter-day Saints gain understanding of spiritual topics often overlooked in Church culture. Davis says, "One of the things that *Wayfare* does really well is that it looks for spiritual insight outside of our tradition and then tries to bring it into conversation with language and ideas that we already understand. Everything is designed to bring you closer to Jesus and your heavenly parents and give you strength to move forward in your personal journey."

In a world overwhelmed by digital media, Davis wanted copies of the magazine exclusively on paper. Davis says, "I personally think there is nothing like the beauty, delight, and pleasure of a magazine in your hands." He believes that combining writing, artwork, and poetry can "lift your spirits, give you new perspective, and open windows of understanding." Although some content is available online, the majority is found only in the semiannual publication.

Davis believes that the humanities are one of the best ways to build one's testimony. "Everyone should be thinking and learning about what it means to be human," he says. "If you don't have the chance to really reflect on what human life is, you can never transcend it or appreciate the joy of consciousness." ■

You can learn more about *Wayfare* and check out its submission guidelines at wayfaremagazine.org.

BETTERING LIVES ONE LANGUAGE COURSE AT A TIME

by Emma Rostrom (Editing and Publishing '24)

Sitting across from the director of *Fundación Madrina*, Carrie Sandholtz contemplated the weighty question: “Are you sure you want to do this?” Sandholtz had been teaching beginner and intermediate Spanish courses as an adjunct faculty member at BYU before temporarily relocating to Madrid, Spain. After moving across the world, she anticipated the rewarding but challenging new task of teaching Spanish to Ukrainian refugees.

TAKING ON A NEW ROLE

When Sandholtz arrived in Madrid with her husband so that he could teach at a local university for the winter 2023 semester, she started searching for a volunteer position that would fill her time and hone her language skills. She did not have to look far; members of her new ward immediately put her in

contact with *Fundación Madrina* (Godmother Foundation), an organization dedicated to serving vulnerable populations in Madrid. Given the fact that she spoke neither Spanish nor Ukrainian natively, and the previous instructor had quit after finding it difficult to connect with the refugees, Sandholtz knew she had her work cut out for her when she accepted the teaching position.

Despite the intimidating circumstances, she enthusiastically jumped into her role as language instructor to 20 Ukrainian women. She quickly discerned the difference between Spaniards, who tend to be more open and social, and her new students. During a get-to-know-you activity at the beginning of the course, many of the women described themselves by saying, “*Soy muy cerrada*” (I am very closed). But when Sandholtz considered their vastly different culture, along with the difficult situations that they came from, their closed nature was no surprise. Each student brought personal stories of suffering from their war-torn country to their new home.

Carrie Sandholtz’s BYU education and language skills change lives for refugees in Spain.

Two of the women had grown up together as orphans in Ukraine, one of whom had traveled ahead of her own child to create a more secure life in Spain. Unable to bear the distance, she eventually returned to face the wartime dangers and reunite with her child. Another woman had worked as an engineer in Ukraine, but the war left her homeless, so she moved to Spain to start over completely. These stories deeply touched Sandholtz, who adds, “Every single one of my students had a son or brother or husband that was fighting.”

Most of the women desired to return to their home country at a safer point in the future. In the meantime, they worked hard to establish themselves in Spain. They expressed incredible determination to learn and improve their language proficiency so that they could obtain jobs. Sandholtz says that she had never seen such a high level of motivation in all of her experience as a teacher. The class started out just one day a week for one hour each, but after a few months, the students were so eager to learn more that the class increased to three days a week for two hours each.

The motivation was high, but the means were fairly limited. Since she did not have access to textbooks, Sandholtz developed her own teaching materials using slides from the Spanish 101 class she taught as a grad student at BYU. She created additional exercises and

Impressively, most of the students reached intermediate-low to intermediate-high proficiency by the end of the course. Sandholtz attributes her students' success to the determination and sense of community they built in the classroom, as well as her own BYU Spanish pedagogy education. The teaching methods that she carried with her from BYU to Spain prepared her to speak in the target language at all times and use interactive learning activities to engage with students.

The students had such success that *Fundación Madrina* invited the press to attend their course graduation ceremony. Various news outlets interviewed both Sandholtz and her students that day. Describing the students' interviews, Sandholtz says, "They were able to talk about their experiences in Ukraine and their sorrows and their families. And they were speaking in Spanish! It was really cool." As for Sandholtz, members of her ward watched her on the news that night, gleefully telling her afterward, "Te vi en la tele!" (I saw you on TV!)

ESTABLISHING LIFELONG CONNECTIONS

The women established a network of support amongst themselves to share information and opportunities, including a group message that Sandholtz also joined. She recounts how fun it was to see streams of messages in Ukrainian sprinkled with occasional messages in Spanish. Of all the course benefits for her students, Sandholtz emphasizes the importance of that network created in the classroom, which provides crucial support for those seeking further opportunities. For instance, one of the students discovered that their newly acquired language proficiency qualified them to take another Spanish course at a local college, and several of the women now take that course together.

Besides providing career and networking opportunities, the social aspect of learning Spanish encouraged the students to open themselves up and transform from the stoic women who had once described themselves as "very closed." Sandholtz became especially close to a young mother named Olena who came to Madrid with her autistic son.

Sandholtz has a son with Down syndrome, so the two women formed a connection as they learned about each other's families and experiences raising children with disabilities.

Since she normally only teaches students who are high school or college age, Sandholtz found it gratifying to work with students closer to her age. Her ability to relate to the women on a personal level, such as when she formed the connection with a fellow mother of a disabled child, enhanced the learning experience for both students and instructor. Sandholtz says, "To me, it was just so fun to watch them warm up.

It surprised me that we got to be such good friends. And they appreciated the work that I put in." The culmination of her growing friendship with Olena came when their sons had the chance to meet during a celebratory picnic at the end of the course.

During her six months in Madrid, Sandholtz embodied the BYU motto of "Enter to learn; go forth to serve." The pedagogical skills that she acquired through her education and work at BYU opened the door for her unique teaching experience abroad, where she truly made an impact in the lives of her students. Now back teaching at BYU, Sandholtz still keeps in touch with those Ukrainian students—her good friends—and she hopes to return to Spain someday soon to witness their continuing progress. ■

Less than 60% of Ukrainian schools are deemed safe and eligible to reopen.²

ENDNOTES

1. The UN Refugee Agency. "Operational Data Portal." bit.ly/odpukraine. Accessed April 24, 2024.
2. UNICEF. "Start of an uncertain school year for four million schoolchildren in Ukraine." <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/start-uncertain-school-year-four-million-schoolchildren-ukraine>.



Carrie Sandholtz (left) with her student Iryna, a Ukrainian refugee who crochets and sells bears to raise funds for the Ukrainian war effort

Photo courtesy of Carrie Sandholtz

The A(I)rt of Translation

by Corry Cropper (French, Associate Dean)

BYU students combine AI and human ingenuity to translate a French senator's book.

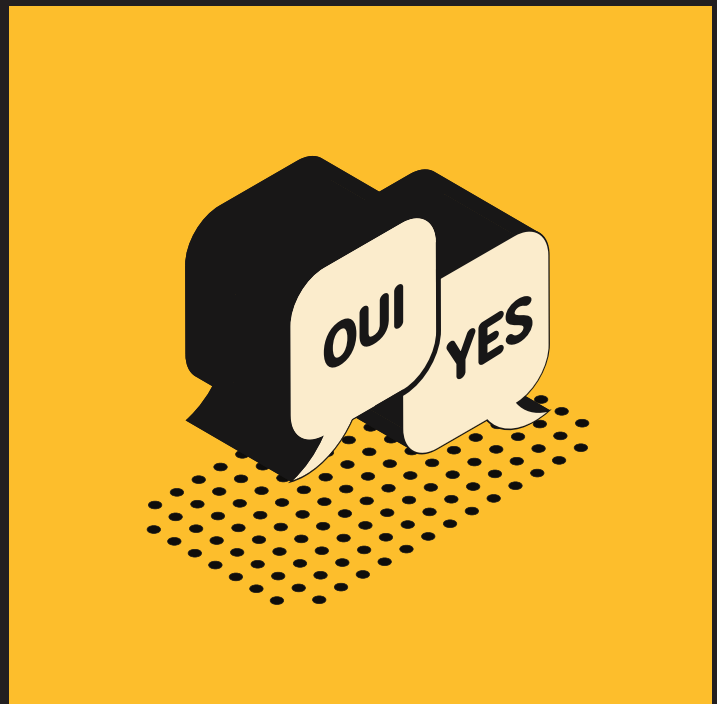
“I trust you. You're the experts!” French Senator Stéphane Demilly told our business French students while visiting campus in 2023. These students, along with students in our localization and translation course, were translating the senator's book, *L'Alchimie des singularités* (Eyrolles 2022). They had asked him about the title: should they stick with a fairly straightforward translation, *The Alchemy of Singularities*, opt for something more explicit like *Blending Personality Styles to Make More Productive Offices*, or something broader, like *Managing Effective Teams*?

The vast differences of those titles in English might seem extreme, or barely related, but such are the nuances translators face every day, and understanding how to discern between those options to choose what best communicates the author's intent is a primary objective of some language courses at BYU. Beginning in 2023, my colleague, Professor Yvon Le Bras (French Language and Culture), and I started teaching several classes of students how to translate using a combination of AI, student revisions, and faculty feedback, with the senator's book as the source—a project that would ultimately benefit both the senator and our students.

FROM MOSQUITO BITE TO TRANSLATION PROJECT

The story begins several years ago. Along with his work in public service, Senator Demilly has run a consulting firm for many years, training corporate leaders in team-building principles. During one of his consulting trips to the Ivory Coast, Senator Demilly was bitten by a mosquito and infected with cerebral malaria. He slipped into a coma for several weeks, and upon regaining consciousness, he had to relearn many things. The experience profoundly changed him and led him to study the connection between the brain and various leadership styles. His consequent book examines the functioning of the brain, personality preferences, and leadership.

Professor Le Bras and I met Senator Demilly in 2021, when he came to BYU during his state visit to Utah. He invited us, in turn, to visit him in the French Senate in Paris the next summer. When we



met with him during our subsequent trip, he asked us to consider translating his book into English. Professor Le Bras and I instantly recognized an amazing opportunity for our students and accepted on the condition that our students could be heavily involved in the process. Senator Demilly agreed without hesitation.

AN ARTIFICIAL INVASION

The rising capabilities of artificial intelligence have vastly affected every aspect of humanities inquiry, including language work. We therefore decided to lean into artificial intelligence and help our students learn to use tools like DeepL (to provide an initial translation) and ChatGPT (to help improve the translated text), both to test the quality of the AI tools and to help our students gain skills utilizing tools we knew would only gain more traction in our field. Since the senator's book is peppered with wordplay, quotes, idioms, and cultural references, beginning the process with machine translation allowed students to focus on post-editing—the work done to humanize machine translation and adjust for cultural differences.

Over the course of the 2022–23 school year, Senator Demilly met—remotely and in person—with students enrolled in our French localization and translation course and in our business French course, answering their questions and brainstorming with them as they worked on the translation project.

Our first task was to familiarize students with translation apps, helping them learn the strengths and weaknesses of the automated process. We produced a rough, AI-translated version of the senator’s book.

Students were then tasked with postediting portions of the book. We assigned students to compare the machine translated text with the original, identifying problems in wording, tone, idiom, etc. and proposing solutions. Students with the same assigned passages then met together, hashed out the best edits, and entered these revisions into a shared document.

Next, we hired a student research assistant to read the entire translation and ensure that terms were translated consistently and the text was coherent and readable in English.

Then I went through the entire book and did another edit, clarifying passages that are incomprehensible outside a French context and preparing the book for a final copyedit.

TRANSLATION IN PROCESS

Throughout the process, we encouraged students to be “courageous” translators. By this we meant that students would need to exercise faith by leaving behind literal translations in favor of language that would resonate with English readers and reflect the meaning in an English-speaking culture.

For example, in the French original, Senator Demilly discusses the pros and cons of the IQ test, playfully dissecting two popular French insults: “*Tu as le QI d’une huître!*” (you have the IQ of an oyster) and “*heureux comme une palourde*” (happy as a clam).

For those of you who know French, here is the passage in question: “*A ce stade de ma présentation, je voudrais réhabiliter l’honneur de deux mollusques marins bivalves: l’huître qui n’a jamais passé le test du QI, contrairement à ce que prétendent les mauvaises langues . . . et la palourde, dont la durée de vie peut être de 500 ans, de quoi clouer le bec aux hauts potentiels intellectuels!*”

And here is the AI translation of the passage: “At this point in my presentation, I’d like to rehabilitate the honor of two marine bivalve mollusks: the oyster, which has never passed the IQ test, contrary to what the bad tongues claim . . . and the clam, whose lifespan can be as long as 500 years, enough to put the nail in the coffin of high intellectual potential!”

Our students edited the same passage as follows: “At this stage of my presentation, I would like to reestablish the honor of two marine bivalve mollusks who are often held up as models of stupidity in French: the oyster, which has never passed the IQ test, contrary to what the naysayers claim . . . and the clam, whose lifespan can be 500 years, enough to shut up even the biggest geniuses!”

Finally, here is how we updated the passage: “At this stage of my presentation, I would like to defend the honor of two objects that are often held up as models of stupidity: the doornail, which has never taken the IQ test, contrary to what the naysayers claim, and the bag of hammers, which can prove useful for building any number of necessary items. This evidence should suffice to shut up even the most pretentious genius.”

In the context of the chapter, Senator Demilly is trying to undermine conventional thinking about intelligence. A literal translation that includes oysters and the IQ test makes no sense in English. Though we say “happy as a clam” in English, the implication in French is that the clam is happy only because it is too stupid to know better. As in the original, we took common objects that are stand-ins for low intelligence and defended their utility, or their “honor,” as the senator writes. In other words, we opted to use expressions that communicate the same meaning in English, even though they’re not literal translations.

Here is a much shorter example:

French original

“*Ceux qui se ressemblent s’assemblent.*”
—Homère (*fin du VIII^e siècle avant J.-C.*)

AI translation

“Those who are alike, come together.”
—Homer (late 8th century BC)

Student edit

“Those who resemble, assemble.”
—Homer (late eighth century BC)

Professor edit

“Birds of a feather flock together.”
—J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851)

Our students updated the AI translation by capturing the rhyme present in French. Ultimately, we opted for a well-known adage in English that communicates the same idea rather than aiming for a literal translation of Homer. As a bonus, Turner’s quip contains a nice rhyme, paralleling both the French translation of Homer and our students’ rendering of the saying.

Finally, here is a passage describing cold, calculating leaders in the mold of Charles de Gaulle:

Original

“*L’incompréhension nuisant au rendement du temps, ils utilisent plus la communication froide que la communication chaude, davantage les mots que les intonations . . . N’aimant pas les périphrases tout en étant parfois « rabat-joie », ils sont effectivement plus centrés sur le contenu que sur le contenant, sur la communication verbale que la non verbale. Ce laconisme et cette brièveté sont parfois perçus comme de la directivité, de l’autorité ou de la maladresse.*”

Machine translation

“Since misunderstanding is detrimental to time efficiency, they [people who think like de Gaulle] use cold communication more than warm communication, words more than intonation . . . Disliking periphrases while sometimes being a ‘killjoy,’ they are indeed more focused on content than container, on verbal communication than non-verbal. This terseness and brevity is sometimes perceived as directiveness, authority or clumsiness.”

Student edit

“Misunderstanding harming the performance of time, they use cold communication more than hot communication, more words than intonations . . . Not liking periphrases and sometimes being ‘killjoys,’ they are indeed more focused on the content than on the container, on verbal communication than non-verbal. This laconicism and brevity are sometimes perceived as directness, authority or awkwardness.”

Professor edit

“Since misunderstandings waste time, they prefer blunt communication to emotional expression, more clarity and less nuance. Uncomfortable with wordiness and sometimes seen as ‘killjoys,’ they focus on content more than delivery, on verbal communication more than the non-verbal. This curtness and brevity are sometimes perceived as bossy, authoritarian, or awkward.”

This paragraph’s original text is 71 words long. The AI reduces it to 58, and the finished product is just 50 words long. Where French frequently repeats prepositions, English does not. French also requires conjunctions that are usually dropped in English. Changing word order serves to further shorten the English passage. While AI gets some of this, humans still have a gift for concision that apps lack.

THE FINISHED PRODUCT

In the end, our students learned both how AI can be helpful and what its current limits are. They learned to be more courageous translators, to adapt—or localize—the text for a culturally and linguistically different readership. The project gave our students real-world practice as they puzzled over thorny linguistic challenges; Senator Demilly will use our translation in his trainings going forward. What’s more, our students were able to meet and collaborate with a French senator who, prior to his time in the senate, served as a mayor and as a member of France’s National Assembly. A number of them have since met with him in the Palais de Luxembourg, the home to France’s senate.

As for the final title of the senator’s book, we’re sticking with *The Alchemy of Singularities*. 📖

“The project gave our students real-world practice as they puzzled over thorny linguistic challenges.”



Proceeds from sales of the translated book will go directly into a scholarship fund for students in the Department of French & Italian.

bit.ly/alchemyofsingularities



A student playing a game of chess with French Senator Stéphane Demilly

EDUCATION THAT CHANGES YOU FOR GOOD

by Christopher Oscarson, Associate Dean of General Education

At BYU, faith and education, the sacred and the secular, feed into and strengthen one another.



A few years ago, I invited several colleagues from various universities to come to BYU for a multiday workshop in Scandinavian studies, my specialty. The work was going to be intense, so I suggested they pack good shoes so that one evening we could take a break and go for a quick hike up our unparalleled Rock Canyon.

A professor who taught at a large public university on the West Coast took advantage of this downtime to ask me questions about BYU, about the Church, and even about my personal faith and convictions. She did so somewhat sheepishly and excused herself for asking questions that, to a native Scandinavian, are deeply personal and rarely discussed except with close friends or family in a sauna. I assured her that I really didn't mind; in fact, as a returned missionary from Sweden, I found it refreshing for a Scandinavian to ask *me* questions about religion. My colleague expressed how impressed she was with the beautiful buildings on campus, the capable students, the generous support for our research project, and the clear commitment the university and the Church had to education. She confided in me that she had grown up in a devout religious home and that she recognized many things in our BYU community that reminded her of her own upbringing.

"But," she said, "there is one significant difference that I just cannot wrap my head around. When I finished *gymnasium* [the Danish equivalent of high school], I had a burning desire to continue my

formal education at a university—something my parents and faith community strictly forbade."

She continued, "I was forced to make a choice between my faith community and my education. But here at BYU, faith and learning seem to coexist. They do not just tolerate each other but seem to embrace each other."

Since that time, I have thought a lot about her comments. There are two important interrelated lessons that I have taken away from this conversation: first, how distinctive a BYU education is, and secondly, how education and learning fit into God's plans for all of us.

A Unique University in All the World

In her short time on campus, my colleague discerned one of the most distinctive qualities of this remarkable institution. Indeed, at BYU faith and education do not merely tolerate each other. They embrace each other. They catalyze and strengthen each other. The sacred and the secular feed into one another. The Lord plainly states in the Doctrine and Covenants that "all things unto me are spiritual."¹ Understanding and believing

in these truths helps us more fully to love and appreciate God, His great mercy, and His creations, and to recognize how we are connected and how we can love and serve others. This fusion of the sacred and the secular in the pursuit of truth is exactly what President Spencer W. Kimball called BYU's "double heritage." He admonished both faculty and students to embrace being "bilingual" in "the language of scholarship, and . . . literate in the language of spiritual things."² Such a bifurcated view of the world opens new possibilities and realities to us. Our lives are qualitatively richer and our capacity to see the world with gratitude and charity increases with each "language" that we learn, especially the language of the Spirit.

BYU's Double Heritage

My colleague's observation about BYU's unique pursuit of truth has also pointed me to another insight. At BYU we are not just open to revealed truth that is found, for instance, in scripture, but also to the capacity of all of God's children to receive revelation, wisdom, and understanding through study and learning. Remember, the scriptures say to "seek learning, even by study and also by faith."³ BYU, with its double heritage, is not just a university among others, nor is it just a seminary or theological school. Learning at this university may well start, and even end, with the scriptures and the prophets, but it takes seriously its bilingual obligation to engage in "secular" scholarship on its own terms, patiently but unabashedly and without fear—and not just because it might help us professionally but because education and what it takes to become educated have spiritual value in their own right.

And while grasping truth has obvious merit by itself, the *process* of seeking that truth is as important as obtaining it. The process—learning as Christ did in His mortal sojourn, "grace for grace"⁴—changes and refines us. Section 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants explicitly links learning with sanctification. At the same time that the Lord was admonishing these pioneering brethren in the School of the Prophets to learn from the best of books, He was also commanding them to "sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean."⁵ The very act of learning, with all the discipline, sacrifice, and

focus it requires, can have a sanctifying effect on us when—and this is crucial—we do it with an eye to the glory of God and to the service of others. This is precisely what you should expect from a BYU education.

The Lord established a pattern from the beginning of the Restoration: as soon as the Saints gathered, they built schools and temples. The Lord said, "I, the Lord, am well pleased that there should be a school in Zion."⁶ And while there were undoubtedly positive practical outcomes that came from these schools, neither graduation nor successful career placement was or is today the ultimate goal. The aim of a BYU education is something far more ambitious, even audacious: "The mission of Brigham Young University . . . is to assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life."⁷

This mission statement might, out of context, seem more like something one would expect of a church rather than a university. How can a university education at BYU help someone in their quest for perfection and eternal life?

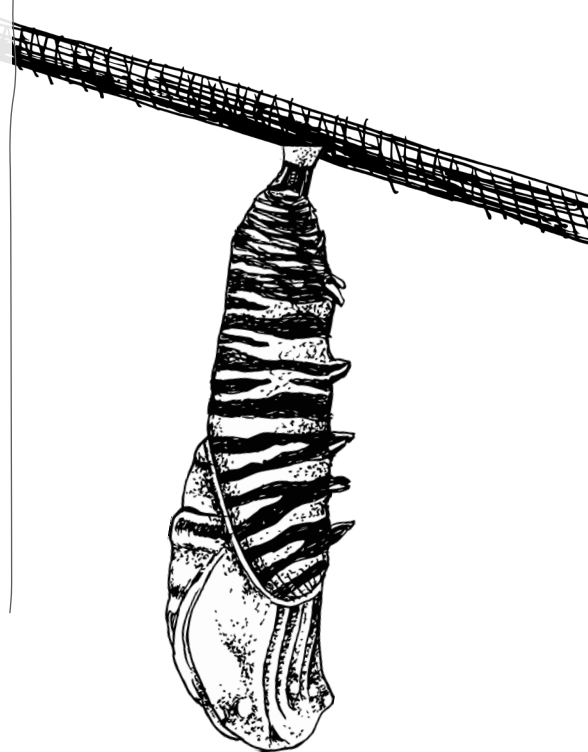
Before venturing an answer, I need to make clear that I am most definitely not saying that a university education generally—or a BYU education specifically—is in any way *necessary* in this quest. Good women and men who have not had access to formal education have indeed learned and experienced what the Lord required of them and will be denied no blessings. An education does not make anyone better than anyone else, and education is certainly not the only or even the primary resource that might help us, but it is a valuable one. It is a blessing—a "talent," in the words of the parable⁸—that can profit us when we are wise stewards. Even if we don't have the opportunity for formal education, the Lord expects us nonetheless to become lifelong learners because of how learning changes us.

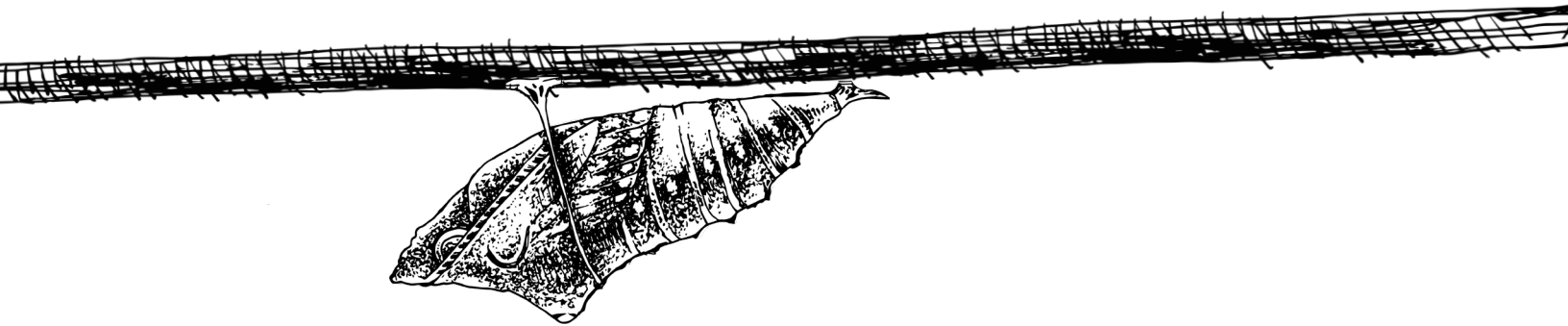
When talking about our BYU education, we tend to focus on what we need to do: complete applications, finish assignments, read books, take classes, earn grades, fulfill requirements, secure internships, receive a

“

The very act of learning, with all the discipline, sacrifice, and focus it requires, can have a sanctifying effect on us.

”





degree, and find a job. While all of these things have their place, none of them are ends unto themselves—either from an educational point of view or from an eternal perspective. The value of the experience is in how it shapes us and how it changes us. If we take another look at the BYU mission statement, notice how often it focuses not on what we are but on the process of becoming—the “quest” for perfection and eternal life, not its realization. Further down, the mission statement says BYU is intended to be “a stimulating setting where . . . the full realization of human potential is *pursued*.”⁹ The “instruction, programs, and services” should contribute to “the balanced *development* of the total person.”¹⁰

The point here is that if you finish an educational experience—whether it be reading a book or completing a degree—as essentially the same person you were when you started with the addition of a few new facts and skills, you will have missed out on the great blessing of transformation and sanctification that comes from opening yourself up to truth. This demands that we see education not as a transaction but as something that requires vulnerability, humility, and sacrifice on our part so that it might affect us.

Four Parts of a Transformative Education

In the scriptures we are given instruction on how to be transformed by our education. First, we are admonished repeatedly to seek earnestly and honestly for truth. A transformative education requires earnest and honest seeking: “Seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.”¹¹ The first step requires our agency.

A transformative education also requires humility and sacrifice. Idle curiosity that is not accompanied by a willingness to sacrifice and change is not motivated by faith. Humility and meekness signal that we desire to be impacted by an encounter with truth. But it is important in this process to stay focused on those things that are worth sacrificing for: God and His work.

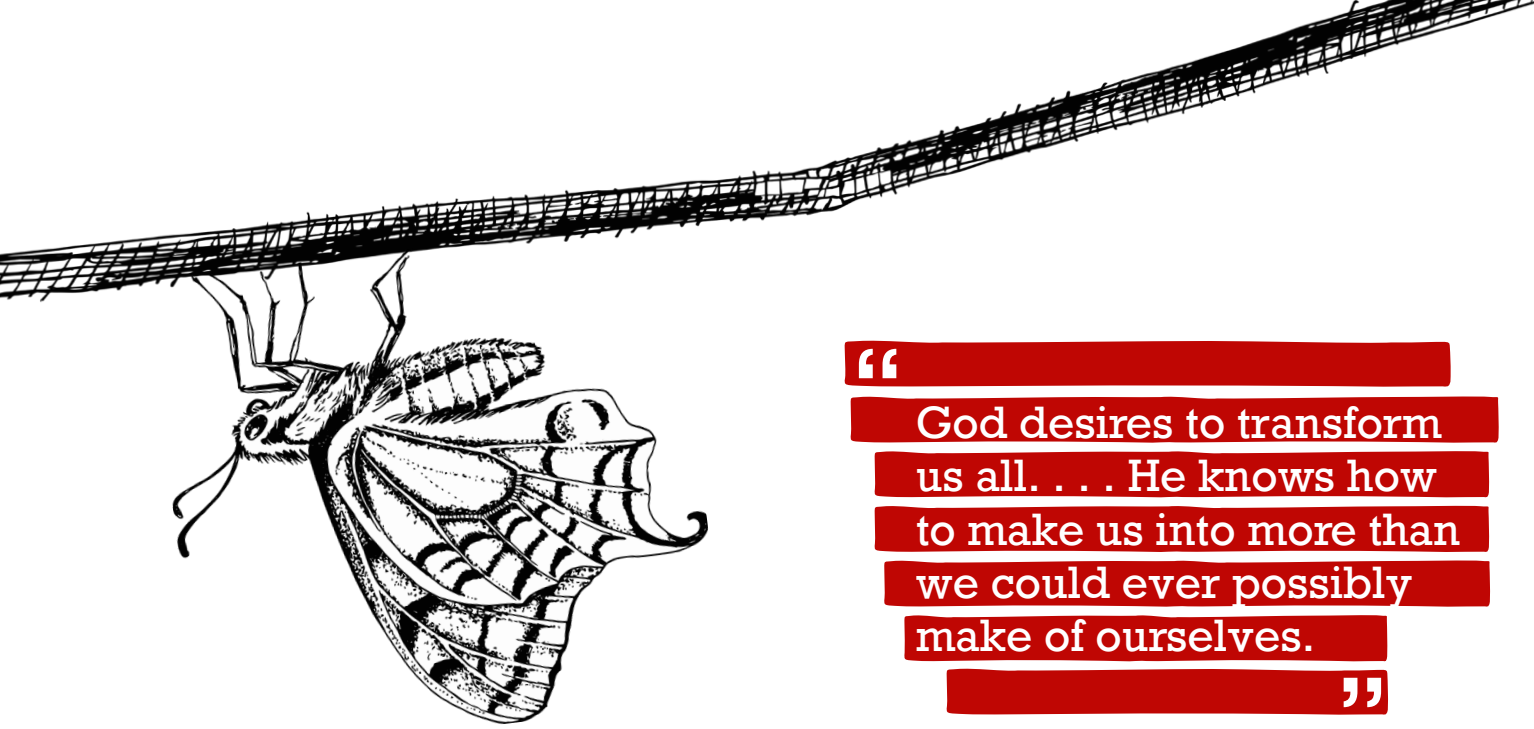
A third attribute of someone who can be transformed by education is patience and the ability to withhold rash judgment. When we are learning, it is not uncommon to come across new ideas that challenge what we think we already know. Sometimes we feel challenged because the new information is simply not true. But just because something is difficult does not make it necessarily false. We run a great risk when we dismiss true concepts too quickly simply because we lack the imagination to see how they might fit together with what we think we already know.

“

A transformative
education requires
earnest and
honest seeking.

”





“
God desires to transform
us all. . . . He knows how
to make us into more than
we could ever possibly
make of ourselves.
”

There is a danger in simplistic binary thinking in which, when confronted by two competing ideas, one automatically assumes that one idea is completely right and the other completely false. This is a trap that can cause us to make serious missteps, to demonize others, and to even turn away from truth itself. The teachings of the prophets, the scriptures, and the values inspired by our faith in Christ are crucial components of this education and of what you have to offer to the world.

And the Lord has given us an additional gift to guide us and help us distinguish between truth and error: the Holy Ghost. The fourth important requirement of a transformative education is to make the Holy Ghost a constant companion in learning. This requires virtue in our lives and the careful cultivation of spiritual sensitivity.

The companionship of the Spirit is as important in our study of secular and scholarly pursuits as it is in our study of overtly spiritual topics. Moroni stated boldly that “by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of *all* things.”¹² All things—not just the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon or the veracity of God’s love for you, but all things. I have felt the power of the Spirit guiding me both when I have prepared to teach a lesson for my ward’s priest quorum and when I have prepared for my courses in Scandinavian literature and film. I have been guided with strokes of inspiration in my research in the environmental humanities and have heard colleagues remark how the Spirit has led them, sometimes in dramatic ways, to new insights, techniques, and knowledge that have, in some cases, shaped the course of research in their fields.

Preparation Through Education

The Lord uses both the process and product of our education to refine us, to change us, and to prepare us for work in our homes, in our communities, in the Church, and in the world in ways and places that we often cannot foresee. Our own dispositions—how we embrace the process of learning—makes the difference between understanding that is bounded in its impact and an experience that transforms how we understand who we are and our place in the world. God desires to transform us all. Transformation and repentance are at the heart of Christ’s Atonement because He knows how to make us into more than we could ever possibly make of ourselves. □

Adapted from a BYU devotional given June 2023

ENDNOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 29:34.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Second Century of Brigham Young University,” BYU devotional address, 10 October 1975.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 88:118.
4. John 1:16; Doctrine and Covenants 93:12, 20.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 88:74.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 97:3.
7. Mission of BYU.
8. See Matthew 25:14–30.
9. Mission of BYU; emphasis added.
10. Mission of BYU; emphasis added.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 88:118.
12. Moroni 10:5; emphasis added.



FIRE WORK

by Kimberly Johnson (English, Poetry)

From *Fatal: Poems*, published by Persea Books



Kimberly Johnson, BYU English professor and poet

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Section 1's 灾 is a calligraphic character that means “disaster”; the pictogram from which it derives signifies a fire in a house. Section 2 begins with two characters that come together to mean “to silence someone”: 滅口; the term's first character contains the water radical and means “to extinguish or put out,” and the second character means “mouth or speech.” The characters that begin the poem's third section, 花火, mean “flower” and “fire,” respectively; together, they signify “fireworks.” I am grateful to M. Alexander Turner for his generous help with Chinese vocabulary and characters. The calligrapher is the father of firework artist Cai Guo-Qiang,

and the story of his perilous love for his manuscripts is related in the profile “Meet the Artist Who Blows Things Up for a Living,” by Ron Rosenbaum, in the April 2013 issue of *Smithsonian*. —Kimberly Johnson

INSPIRATION FOR THE ART

Many people will remember Cai Guo-Qiang as the artist who created the firework sculptures that kicked off the 2008 Olympics. Fewer people will know the inspiration behind this unusual artform.

Cai's childhood in Quanzhou, China, was shaped by the Cultural Revolution in the mid-'60s under Mao Zedong. During this time, anyone considered

1. 灾

Radical for house. Radical for fire.
After a last practiced
Stroke the calligrapher

Into the metal pan passes
His last scrap of paper.
Quiet the fall of paraffin

Light on the library wall,
The calligrapher's library
Burns itself down: every scroll

Unscrolls its sallow to the yellow flame,
The heat unstitches
Each spine to a spill of pages,

All the loose slips blister into black
Lace, until that last
Paper smokes, sizzles its wet ink,

And collapses. The metrical boottaps
Of the state
Pass by in the dark street.

Hush here this beautiful catastrophe:
In the basin's brass
A bouquet of ash.

2. 滅口

Radical for water, radical for talk.
The ardent
Lexicons of the revolution

Blaze on beyond the monastery gate,
But abandoned, remote,
Its corridors and dormitories

Murmur the calligrapher's strange exile.
He keeps the lamps
Unlit. He keeps himself quiet,

Ghosting the ruined rooms, perusing
The bare bookshelves
While on his soundless lips move

Poems no longer bound there. Out on the grounds
After every rain
The calligrapher wanders,

With a stick extinguishing each word,
Stroke by beloved
Stroke, into the puddles.

3. 花火

At a quick strike on the steel-scratch, the match
Flares, the fuse catches
And crawls in a slow sparkle

To the powderbox propped at the canvas.
The calligrapher's son
Knows his explosives—the blow-

Force of saltpeter, the scatter patterns,
The weights and burn-rates
Of his elements and their velocities,

The hues of their various char against cloth:
Blueburning copper,
Salt red. What is characterized there

In the linen weave is the mind burning
The thing it loves best
To sear its afterimage against

Its forgetting. This is his inheritance,
This the farewell letter
His father never left: radical

For fire and flower together.

an “intellectual” came under scrutiny, often facing jail time, beatings, or murder. Cai’s father, a collector of rare books and manuscripts, was forced to secretly burn his collection in the basement by night. Even after he had destroyed his books, he felt unsafe in his home, so he fled to an almost abandoned Buddhist nunnery where the only remaining member gave him refuge. There, he would write calligraphy in puddles on the ground with sticks—it was the only way he could continue his practice without leaving any evidence behind.

Inspired by his father’s story and the violence he often saw growing up in China, Cai uses gunpowder, a lethal weapon, to create beautiful and healing art.¹

—Emma Campbell (Editorial Supervisor)

1. All information is taken from “Meet the Artist Who Blows Things Up for a Living” by Ron Rosenbaum. April 2013, *Smithsonian*. bit.ly/magmeetheartist



Cai Guo-Qiang, artist

STATE OF THE DISCIPLINE:
PHILOSOPHY

FAITH & THE ETHIC of a Philosopher

BY EMMA FARNSWORTH (Editing and Publishing '23) and
JOSHUA J. PERKEY (Manager of Digital Media and Communications)

The BYU Department of Philosophy breaks the mold set at other universities: they are young, collaborative, gospel oriented, and focused on preparing students to face today's challenging questions.

Remember *The Princess Bride*?¹ As no ordinary children's story, it provides a fascinating look at overcoming adversity by using one's wits. In order to rescue Princess Buttercup, Westley faces a number of distinct, daunting foes.

In the first, Westley duels the talented Inigo Montoya in one of the greatest fencing matches in cinematic history. To defeat Inigo, Westley mirrors his opponent's fighting style, fighting left-handed at first, then switching after Inigo does to gain the advantage. Later, when fighting the giant of incredible strength, Fezzik, Westley quickly forgoes a head-to-head fight and climbs on the giant's back to knock him unconscious. To defeat the arrogant yet brilliant Vizzini (who called Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle "morons"), Westley uses Vizzini's arrogance against him by duping Vizzini into accepting an intellectual battle Westley could not lose.

Westley's use of logic and argument continue to avail him throughout the film (coming up with the plan to storm the castle without a fight, and later bluffing his way to causing Prince Humperdinck to yield), allowing him to achieve victory by using sound reasoning to evaluate the weaknesses in each opponent's metaphorical armor. In short, Westley is an excellent philosopher.

The study of logic, reasoning, argumentation, creative problem solving, and analytical thinking are key elements in the discipline of philosophy. It stands as the parent discipline for nearly every area of

human inquiry. Linguistics, literary theory, political science, law, psychology, sociology, all of the hard sciences (once collectively known as natural philosophy), and even computer science all began as branches of the philosophy tree. Philosophy today encompasses a wide range of subjects and ideas, with nearly as many schools of thought as there are philosophers. However, philosophers unite in their dedication to thinking about thinking and asking honest questions about fundamental ideas and principles. The study of philosophy entails a systematic search for truth using the tools of reason and logic. In the face of increasingly difficult questions and controversial issues in our society, studying philosophy at BYU equips students with the ability to stand by their convictions and effectively evaluate the weaknesses in opposing arguments, using logical and persuasive thinking with open-minded compassion to come to spiritually and logically based conclusions.

A YOUNG YET DIVERSE DEPARTMENT

Compared to when many universities established their philosophy programs, the Department of Philosophy at BYU is relatively new. Philosophy classes had been taught on and off through various departments over the years from BYU's inception; however, BYU did not introduce its first philosophy degree program until 1950,² when it was a secondary major degree offered through the Department of Theology and Religious Philosophy. In 1979, the Department of Philosophy moved to the College of Humanities, with David H. Yarn (Philosophy and Theology), serving as the acting department chair.³ Yarn previously served as the first dean of the College of Religious Instruction and was one of the major contributors to the early philosophy program. In 1985, BYU approved philosophy as a primary major option, and in 1991 the program added its first minors.

In recent years, many of the original faculty members who laid the groundwork when the department was first established have retired.



The study of philosophy entails a systematic search for truth using the tools of reason and logic.

Most of the current faculty in the department are early in their careers, an unusual circumstance at BYU. Between 2016 and 2022, two faculty members from other departments served as visiting department chairs—Joseph Parry (Interdisciplinary Humanities) and David Laraway (Spanish and Philosophy). This service allowed the newer faculty members to focus on scholarship and teaching to help them prepare to achieve continuing faculty status (BYU’s version of tenure). In 2022, Associate Professor David Jensen (Kant, Ethics), a member of the department, became the new chair.

According to Associate Professor Katie Paxman (Hume, Philosophy of the Mind), “The picture of the philosopher is a person alone in their room reading books and writing things and thinking their deepest thoughts.” Counter to this common perception, enthusiastic faculty at BYU have brought a spirit of collaboration and cooperation. Several professors, including Paxman, have co-written publications with colleagues in and out of the department, and often with students. In summer of 2023, Assistant Professor Nathan Rockwood (Locke, Descartes, Philosophy of Religion) spearheaded a regular “work in progress” workshop where faculty members could receive feedback from colleagues about their ongoing projects.

BYU’s philosophers engage with a staggeringly broad range of research topics, each specializing in different—sometimes almost completely unrelated—areas of study. Current research specialties not only include studying historical philosophers like Kant, Locke, Descartes, Hume, Kierkegaard, and many others, they also encompass everything from contemporary ethics to the philosophies of emotion, perception, art, and religion.

For example, Associate Professor Travis Anderson studies the philosophy of art as well as phenomenology and contemporary ethics. Paxman’s work on the philosophy of the mind and the works of David Hume delves into questions of human nature, empathy, and emotion. Assistant Professor Mike Hansen also works on philosophy of the mind, but with a focus on the nature of perception, as well as studying topics in rationalism and epistemology (the study of knowledge). Assistant Professors Taylor-Grey Miller and Derek Haderlie both research metaphysics and philosophy of religion and have collaborated on a paper about divine hiddenness—the question of why many find it difficult to know if God exists.

Recently, philosophy of religion in particular has gained a greater focus at BYU. Beginning in 2021, members of the department developed the Latter-day Saint Philosophy Project, which Paxman describes as “a formalized effort to get Latter-day Saint thought into philosophy of religion discourse.” The project hosts an annual workshop to help researchers—from BYU as well as other universities—develop their ideas for publication in professional and academic journals focused on the philosophy of religion. The emphasis on publishing and scholarship in the department means that more Latter-day Saint voices are represented in the philosophy world, not only in the realm of religious philosophy but also in other research areas like ethics and moral philosophy.

WHY STUDY PHILOSOPHY AT BYU?

Today’s philosophy degree programs include the primary philosophy major and minors in philosophy, logic, and theoretical and applied ethics. The department also offers a wide range of general education electives. In fact, students find BYU philosophy classes so valuable and interesting that word has spread across campus, and many classes garner waitlists of hundreds of students each semester. Jensen has had many students who say they enjoyed a philosophy GE class so much that if they had taken the class sooner, they would have added a minor or even switched majors. The department offers enough GE classes, says Laraway, that

“if you’re strategic in how you plan out your GE courses, you can get a philosophy minor at the same time.”

Like many students in the humanities, philosophy majors often get asked what kinds of career opportunities they can find with their degree. Paxman says, “Philosophy students develop a skill set that can be applied in pretty much any sphere. There is a ton of empirical data highlighting how philosophy students do really well in a huge variety of careers.” Much of this data comes from the American Philosophical Association (APA). For example, by mid-career, philosophy majors typically earn more than any other humanities majors. According to the APA, 77% of those with bachelor’s degrees in philosophy find employment or are accepted to graduate programs within six months of graduating.⁴ Philosophy majors also tend to receive excellent scores on graduate school exams such as the LSATs and GREs. The APA reported that among GRE test takers between 2019 and 2022, philosophy majors had the highest average scores of any major on the Verbal Reasoning and Analytical Writing sections of the GRE.⁵

To help students along their desired career paths, the department requires them to participate in experiential learning opportunities, such as internships and study abroad programs, to further develop the competencies philosophy students have learned through their course

work. Students are also encouraged to participate in research and publish their work, either with their faculty mentors in professional journals or in the department’s student journal, *Aporia*.

The department has recently added a number of new courses, which have been shepherded along by younger faculty. For example, Associate Professor Gordy Mower (Korean and Chinese Philosophy) has helped introduce a course

PHILOSOPHY MAJORS



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77%

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BYU philosophy students will be less easily persuaded by arguments that superficially sound reasonable and will also be more capable of expressing their faith and defending their positions.

focused on non-Western philosophy with sections covering topics like Buddhism, Hindu philosophy, and Confucius. Assistant Professor Angela Wentz Faulconer (Moral and Political Philosophy, Medical Ethics) teaches a new course on medical ethics, which is especially relevant right now because, in her words, “A lot of the more controversial topics in medical ethics are on the ballot. As members of the Church, we have a responsibility to be good citizens, and that means to be informed and to vote on these issues.”

SPIRITUALLY & INTELLECTUALLY STRENGTHENING STUDENTS

Of course, there are other, more intrinsic reasons to study philosophy at BYU. As previously mentioned, philosophy students gain excellent skills in reasoning and logic, textual analysis, argumentation, persuasive writing, and cultural navigation. They understand the value of asking smart questions and learn how to deal with the complicated issues that come from living in a global society. Jensen explains, “We live in a diverse world now. Everyone says, ‘oh, diversity is good.’ Well, it is good, but it’s complicated. We have more opinions that are in tension with each other, because we have a lot more points of view. And philosophy helps you navigate, organize, think about, appreciate, but also be thoughtful of all this diversity that we encounter.”

In an increasingly secular world, such training continues to become ever more important. Some might wonder why BYU, a school focused on learning by study and also by faith, would invest resources in a department such as philosophy where one would expect the emphasis to be logic and reason at the expense of spiritual matters. However, BYU faculty see no need for conflict. In fact, faculty and students alike find that a study of logic and reason *combined* with spiritual matters not only strengthens faith and testimony, but also provides the skills and training to see through the many logical fallacies others use to weaken or harm faith. Faulconer says, “Our faith is really important to us, and the faith of our students is really important to us. We see our stewardship as critically valuable as we try to model how to have questions and respond in faith.”

Even as faculty teach students the principles and skills of logic and rhetorical analysis, they also teach them how to use these skills in conjunction with the Spirit to evaluate logical fallacies in controversial topics and arguments. By dealing with controversial ideas and hard questions this way, students gain the ability to defend their convictions using both reason and the Spirit as their guides while

also understanding why opposing arguments carry weight with so many people.

One example comes from Faulconer’s course on medical ethics, where students engage in analyzing the arguments on issues like abortion. In this example, part of the curriculum includes discussion about the arguments both against and in favor of allowing the practice. Doing so arms students, she says, “so that after they graduate from BYU, and they’re with their fellow employees and a topic comes up, they’re ready to explain why they believe what they do, why their position is what it is.” Rather than being spiritually harmed by such arguments, or using their logic and rhetoric to fight against gospel teachings, BYU philosophy students will be less easily persuaded by arguments that superficially sound reasonable and will also be more capable of expressing their faith and defending their positions.

Studying philosophy also helps students gain additional tools to employ in their search for truth because it engages with the same kinds of questions they encounter as they study the gospel. Jensen says, “Philosophy engages the fundamental questions of life: What is truth? What is beauty? What is knowledge? What is reality? What is morality? How should I live my life? Those are gospel questions. We ask questions about how you can know The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true. Well, we know through the Spirit. So, that’s a new way of knowing that’s different than other ways of knowing.”

AN ETHICAL VISION

BYU’s philosophers remain committed to researching and deepening their own understanding while teaching students how to think, analyze, and use reason in their search for truth in conjunction with the guidance of the Spirit. As Paxman says, “The ethic of the philosopher and the ethic that we’re taught as seekers of truth in the gospel, especially in the restored gospel, are consistent with each other.” ■

ENDNOTES

1. *The Princess Bride*, directed by Rob Reiner, written by William Goldman (1987; 20th Century Fox).
2. “Philosophy Department Timeline,” Brigham Young University, Accessed November 14, 2023, bit.ly/depttimeline.
3. Brent R. Nordgren, “Teaching Legacy: David H. Yarn Jr.” Brigham Young University, Accessed November 14, 2023, bit.ly/davidyarn.
4. “Data and Information on the Field of Philosophy,” American Philosophical Association, Accessed November 16, 2023, www.apaonline.org/page/data.
5. *Philosophy Student Performance on the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE)* (American Philosophical Association, 2023). https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.apaonline.org/resource/resmgr/data_on_profession/Philosophy_GRE_Stats_2023.pdf

What's your second language?

The 2023–24 theme for the College of Humanities explores the diverse and often unrecognized languages that shape our connections with others.

by Emma Farnsworth (Editing and Publishing '23)

Until recently, if someone had asked me what my second language was, I probably would have said that I do not have one. I have a smattering of vocabulary words in several, including Spanish, German, and Japanese, but I am not fluent enough in any of those to say I speak the language. Today, however, I might say that my second language is editing and publishing or possibly science-fiction-and-fantasy-geek depending on the circumstances. This year's theme for the College of Humanities, "What's Your Second Language?," explains that everyone has a second language—even if they do not realize it—when we define *language* as any style of communication that strengthens identity and creates meaningful connections with others.

The theme takes its inspiration in part from President Spencer W. Kimball's speech at BYU's centennial celebration in 1975. He said, "Your double heritage and dual concerns with the secular and the spiritual require you to be 'bilingual.' As scholars you must speak with authority and excellence to your professional colleagues in the language of scholarship, and you must also be literate in the language of spiritual things."¹

The College of Humanities emphasizes the study of language in various forms

as a fundamental aspect of the humanities. Even programs that might not claim language as a central focus, such as philosophy or art history, teach their own kinds of language. In the Department of Philosophy, they teach the language of formalized logic and regularly engage with the nuances of language as they study philosophical texts. Art history teaches the vocabulary for analyzing art, and students must learn to accurately translate a visual medium into spoken and written words. Along with traditional languages taught in the College, our theme recognizes that mediums like art, poetry, dance, technology, mathematics, and even the Spirit constitute metaphorical second languages.

You have probably echoed this sentiment at some point in your own life. Have you ever had a conversation with a doctor who only used complicated technical terms to explain your illness? You may have wanted to tell them, "Could you say that in plain English?" (and you may have even done it). This experience happens every day, in many different scenarios. For instance, as a teenager, you may have had conversations with your friends that your parents did not understand because you were using slang.





And maybe, you have overheard a couple of people talking about a fantasy book you have not read and felt completely lost because they were using words specific to that book.

In this issue, we have looked at how learning a second world language, such as Spanish, can be transformational. My fellow writer in the Digital Media and Communications office, Lydia Hall (Interdisciplinary Humanities '23), has studied both Spanish and French. She shares how that experience changed her: "Learning a language humbles you. It teaches you patience and endurance, because it's hard. But it's a beautiful thing, too, to try and connect with people in their own language."

Learning metaphorical languages, such as dance or philosophy, can also create opportunities to connect with people. For example, when you hear a stranger using vocabulary related to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, like *Relief Society* or *General Conference*, it can create an opening to introduce yourself as a fellow member of the Church (especially if you are in an area where members are a small minority). You might become fast friends with someone new if you can have a conversation about your favorite singer's deep tracks, or if you can commiserate about the fact that the latest installment in your favorite franchise did not meet your expectations. In this way, language allows us to find commonality through shared interests and opens the door to building stronger relationships with others.

In all of these cases, our second languages become modes of self-expression that resonate with others and allow us to communicate on a deeper level. Largely thanks to the Church's missionary program, over 60% of BYU students speak at least one additional language,² and the College of Humanities

Art, poetry, dance, technology, mathematics, and even the Spirit constitute metaphorical second languages.

regularly offers classes in 82 languages. As for the programs that do not specialize in a foreign language (such as English and philosophy), their instruction in other forms of communication certainly helps students develop a multitude of metaphorical second languages. While each department and program teaches languages unique to their field of study, every class in the BYU College of Humanities presents an opportunity to practice using the language of the Spirit as students prepare to go forth and serve. ☐

ENDNOTES

1. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Second Century of Brigham Young University," *BYU Speeches* (October 10, 1975), bit.ly/secondcenturybyu.
2. "Facts & Figures," Brigham Young University, accessed December 4, 2023, www.byu.edu/facts-figures.



FOUND IN TRANSLATION

by Lydia Hall (Interdisciplinary Humanities '23)

The untold story of Eleonora Montalvo's pioneering role in girls' education

In 2007, Associate Professor Jennifer Haraguchi (French and Italian, Global Women's Studies, European Studies) arrived at a beautiful villa north of Florence, Italy, ready to spend a year studying the educational and creative writings of Eleonora Ramirez di Montalvo (1602–59). Montalvo was an educator, poet, playwright, and theologian who opened the first lay schools (schools not entirely administered by the Catholic Church) for girls in Florence. Though well-known in her day, Montalvo's writing has remained untranslated and her influence on women's education largely unknown outside of a group of nuns in Italy. Haraguchi has spent the last 16 years translating, researching, and contextualizing in an effort to change that. In 2025, Haraguchi will publish the first translation of Montalvo's writing.

Haraguchi says, "When I was in graduate school, the professor that I was working with had a bunch of projects that she had started and would never have the time to finish. One of them was Eleonora Montalvo." Haraguchi took over the project and made a preliminary trip to Italy to see what documents and information on Montalvo still existed. She was pleasantly surprised to find a great deal available. Montalvo soon became the focus of Haraguchi's doctoral dissertation.

With her professor's help, Haraguchi applied for and received a Fulbright scholarship and subsequently spent a full year in Italy studying at the villa where Montalvo held her school for girls and searching out information in other archives in Florence. Haraguchi's research shed light on the details of Montalvo's personal life and professional accomplishments. She says, "I really liked the idea of bringing her out of obscurity and highlighting someone who's gone unnoticed."

POET, PLAYWRIGHT, EDUCATOR

From a young age, Montalvo expressed a desire to be an educator. She was born in 1602 to a wealthy family in Genoa, Italy. Like most girls in her social class, she attended school in a convent, where she learned from nuns. Though Montalvo expressed a desire to become a nun herself and educate other girls, her mother found a match for her, and Montalvo married Orazio Landi. However, Montalvo later separated from her husband, which very rarely happened in that time period. Haraguchi says, "They were friends up until he died. I think he realized that she wanted to be an educator."



Illustration of Eleonora Montalvo
Artwork from Biblioteca Storica Antica
delle Scuole Pie Fiorentine

Soon after she left her husband, Montalvo began educating girls in her brother's home. Haraguchi says, "As she gained a reputation for being a good educator, other people started sending their girls to her school." When her class size outgrew her brother's home, Montalvo moved her school for underprivileged girls, now called *Il Conventino*, to a location near the Church of San Lorenzo. Montalvo eventually opened a second school, *La Quiete*, in a villa outside of Florence proper, which originally served wealthier girls. Later, Montalvo combined the two schools so both wealthier and poorer students learned in the same class. "That was also unique for her time period," Haraguchi explains. "It wasn't very often that you mixed social classes."

Regardless of their status, the girls at Montalvo's schools received religious, moral, and cultural instruction. They were taught to read, memorize, sing, play the spinet (a historical instrument similar to a harpsichord), and perform religious plays, written by Montalvo herself.

Haraguchi says, "The fascinating thing to me is that she initially didn't want them to perform plays; she thought it was kind of frivolous. But then later on she changed her mind. She wanted to do something that was both entertaining and instructive for the girls."

Montalvo wrote poetry and plays that taught about the lives of saints and the virtues her students should exemplify, in addition to extensive instructions for teachers. These creative and administrative works appealed to Haraguchi because of her own interest in education and form the bulk of her translation project. "I'm interested in the practical day to day," Haraguchi says. "How did she administer these students and the schools and the teachers? What kind of curriculum was she

trying to use? We have very little to go on, except these plays and administrative manuals."

PRESERVING HER LEGACY

After Montalvo died in 1659, many efforts were made to preserve her work and legacy. Montalvo herself never published any of her writing and only distributed it within the schools she founded and administered. Haraguchi says, "She wrote on scraps of paper, and then later, a priest transcribed all her writings in a nice book." Her lay school, *La Quiete*, continued to educate students even after it was converted into a convent in 1939. The nuns there, called "Montalve," see Montalvo as their founder and still recite one of the prayers that she wrote. The nuns continued the process of compiling Montalvo's writing and eventually sent a copy to the Vatican as a case for her beatification within the Catholic Church, a process that would bring more attention to Montalvo's educational and religious work.

While Haraguchi studied at *La Quiete*, she learned that one of the manuscripts

containing some of Montalvo's creative works might still reside at the Vatican, since Montalvo's beatification proceedings, beginning in 1925, were never completed (her case only reached the first step in the process, with the designation of "venerable"). With a request from the nuns that Montalvo's work be returned, Haraguchi set off toward the Vatican archives in Rome.

She says, "I asked the archivist if he had anything left from that process, and he showed me a card catalog, saying that it was unlikely we would find anything. While we looked through the cards, he's like, 'Oh, there actually is a box.'" Haraguchi followed the archivist down to a basement full of huge shelves and stacks of documents. In the box containing Montalvo's writings, they found a beautifully scribed manuscript edition of Montalvo's creative works; the nuns had sent the best to the Vatican.

Haraguchi recalls, "I said, 'I can take it back to the nuns in Florence,' and he just hands the book to me! This book is a 17th-century manuscript; a similar copy of Montalvo's work is found in the rare books library at the University of Pennsylvania. You're supposed to have gloves to look at it, and I only had a pizza bag from lunch to put this in to protect it from the rain."

Upon returning to Florence, Haraguchi delivered the manuscript to the nuns, who joked that Haraguchi's book may just be the very miracle that will raise Montalvo to sainthood. She then began the long process of transcribing hundreds of pages of Italian from photos she took of Montalvo's work, standardizing punctuation as she went. Only then

Photo by Jennifer Haraguchi



La Quiete school, Florence, Italy





Suor Vincenza Bardelli, Nun from *La Quiete*

could the translation into English begin. Of the translation process, Haraguchi says, “I’ve had to make choices about how many syllables, if I should rhyme or not. I’ve chosen to write in 10-syllable lines because that’s the closest in English that would mimic an 11-syllable line in Italian. I’m trying to keep a similar cadence to what Montalvo had.”

MONTALVO IN THE MODERN DAY

Haraguchi submitted her book proposal to *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*, a series of books in translation that seeks to publish the works of lesser-known writers, especially women writers, in English. The *Other Voice*’s website states: “In early modern Europe (about 1400 to about 1700), women began to write and sometimes publish in their native languages, and their writing established the presence of female voices for the first time in world history.” Though many of these authors, like Montalvo, enjoyed recognition in their day, they have since fallen into obscurity. Of the over 150 titles in the series, many are first translations and first publications. Haraguchi says, “For a lot of these authors, we would never have known they existed otherwise.”

Highlighting this piece of the history of women’s education has been Haraguchi’s project for almost two decades. After many years of work compiling, transcribing, and translating, Montalvo’s life’s work will finally be published and available for a wider audience of both English and Italian speakers. Haraguchi hopes to have her students perform Montalvo’s work just as it might have been performed in *La Quiete* several centuries ago. She says, “I hope to use her writing in my class, so when I teach [a class on] Italian women writers, we can do a reader’s theater of her plays.” Montalvo’s legacy of teaching continues through Haraguchi’s translation, which will allow students to interact with Montalvo’s work for the first time in centuries.

Haraguchi’s book, *Eleonora Ramirez di Montalvo: Educating Women through Dramatic Performance in Seventeenth-Century Florence*, will be published in 2025. 📖

LIFE OF SAINT MARGARET

Composed by the most illustrious lady Eleonora Montalvo for her daughters at La Quiete

Margaret am I, of illustrious blood,
 Aedesius’ child, born in Antioch.
 I grew up in the barren marsh, and yet
 my nursemaid watched over me carefully
 and trained me to work most diligently.
 Because I so desired to be baptized,
 she taught me about the Christian faith and
 made me an heir to its virtues and ways.

I heard frequently the alarming news
 of massacres, suffering, and torments
 the Christian flock had to endure at the
 hands of those terribly savage rulers
 who, with malicious hearts and unsound minds,
 plotted to destroy all the believers
 who followed the just judgment of the Lord
 and set aside the desires of their hearts.

I was, by nature, full of compassion,
 and overhearing such things recounted,
 I wept bitterly and for the reason
 that such persons, of unparalleled virtue,
 should endure tremendous persecution;
 and it did give me some consolation
 to hear they were of steadfast heart as they
 fearlessly and constantly suffered death.

I prayed to Jesus Christ, my Lord, pleading
 with him to count me among his dear friends
 and also to grant me grace and courage
 to endure excruciating torture;
 this fervor expanded inside of me
 and I thought about how happy they were,
 those who, with humble and fervent desire,
 offered up their lives for the love of God.

Translated by Jennifer Haraguchi



Jennifer Haraguchi with nuns from *La Quiete*

Photos courtesy of Jennifer Haraguchi



2023 Honored Alumni Lecture: Barry Slaughter Olsen

by Emma Rostrom (Editing and Publishing '24)

Successful careers evolve through a conglomerate of experiences and hard work, as exhibited by the decades-long interpreting career of Barry Slaughter Olsen (Spanish Translation and Russian '95). During the annual Honored Alumni lecture on October 19, 2023, Olsen shared stories from his experience working as a translator for national and international business and government leaders.

Olsen explained that interpreting and other language-related fields require flexibility and pragmatism, especially in a changing world of technology. He then shared specific experiences from his career that exemplify these traits.

For instance, he recounted a time when adaptability and persistence enabled him to successfully hold an interpreting conference in Mexico City just two weeks after a formidable earthquake hit. Facing many unknowns, Olsen and his team moved forward with the conference and created a great event that provided training and networking opportunities for interpreters of indigenous languages in Mexico. Helping attendees learn skills and make connections became one of the most satisfying moments of his career.

Above all, Olsen stressed the importance of interpretation work and other language-related fields, saying, "I have a deep belief that when people can truly understand one another, then they can live in peace with greater ease." He encouraged BYU faculty and students to always put in effort, seek guidance from the Lord, and be ready to make mistakes and accept course correction when necessary.

Each college at BYU selects an alum to honor for their life of service and accomplishment during the annual BYU Homecoming week. To watch this lecture, go to bit.ly/honoredalumni2023.



2023 James L. Barker Lecture: Jennifer Bown

by Emma Farnsworth (Editing and Publishing '23)

Chair of the department of German & Russian, Professor Jennifer Bown (Russian Language Pedagogy and Linguistics) received the 2023 Barker Lectureship. She presented to the College on October 26, 2023, describing how the relationship between language and identity can lead either to discrimination or to connection.

Bown shared some of her own experiences seeing the interactions between language, identity, and power, including some from her mission to the Baltic states shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union. She saw the dynamics between those who spoke Russian natively and those who had experienced oppression from the Soviet Union and wanted to know how language can be used to foster belonging or create exclusion.

Her research seeks to understand how ethnic affiliation affects language use amongst the Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltics, which has become increasingly relevant since the start of the war in Ukraine.

Bown implored her listeners to "consider how immigrants to this country might feel and what barriers they might face because they don't speak English . . . Use language as a tool for belonging, not as a tool for exclusion."

The annual Barker lecture honors faculty who have shown research excellence in the fields of linguistics, language studies, or translation. To watch this lecture, go to bit.ly/barkerlecture2023.



2023 Todd A. Britsch Lecture on Citizenship: Marie Orton

by Rylin Green
(Editing and Publishing '24)

As Professor Marie Orton (Italian Language and Culture) shared, even our best attempts to serve do not always work out. She recounted a story of bringing bread to a sick coworker, only to discover that he had Celiac disease. On November 16, 2023, Orton shared experiences like this one that have taught her about how service enriches our lives and helps us understand grace.

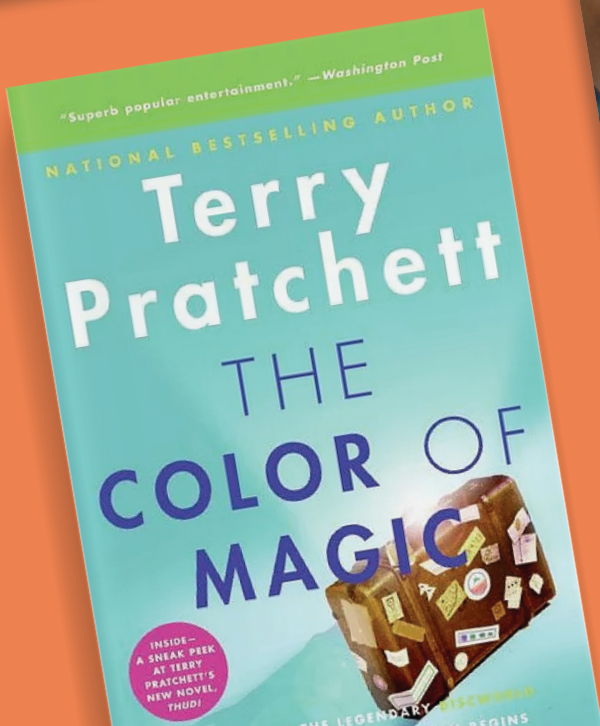
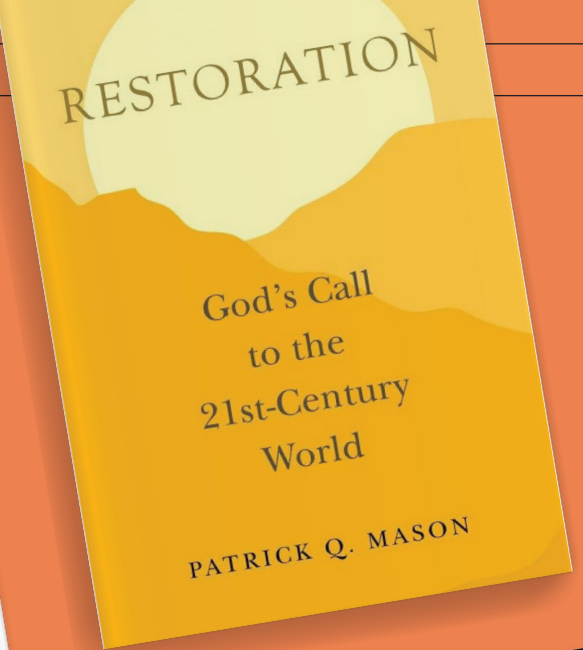
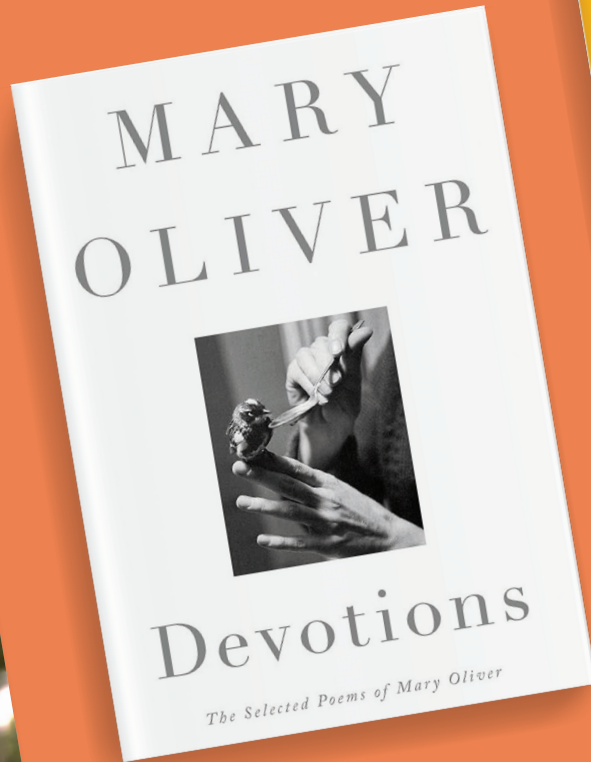
Orton emphasized that service facilitates change and transforms us as much as it transforms the person we serve. When Orton taught a class of junior high students, she received a letter from one student's parent, thanking her for her hard work. Orton had previously believed that the student did not care about the class, so this expression of gratitude changed her perspective on the value of her efforts.

As King Benjamin taught, we serve not to thank others for serving us, but to be more like God and to show gratitude for the gift of the Atonement, for which we can never repay (see Mosiah 2).

Orton concluded that one of the aims of a BYU education is forging a dedication to lifelong learning and service. Orton said, "I'm convinced that our value as a university is dependent upon our capacity to live together in charity." ❏

The College awards this lecture to faculty who exemplify the legacy of service and citizenship that humanities professor Todd A. Britsch left. To watch this lecture, go to bit.ly/britsch2023.

Faculty Favorites



Restoration: God's Call to the 21st-Century World by Patrick Q. Mason

A Latter-day Saint scholar's reflection on what it means to participate in the ongoing Restoration.
"I love this book for the paradigm shifts that Patrick Mason caused in my understanding of my covenant role as a Latter-day Saint and disciple of Christ. He has an expansive view of what it means to be part of this work and is honest about not knowing answers to many of the trigger issues we face today. Every time I read this book, I have a renewed energy to be part of God's work in a modern, holistic context."

Bobbe May (Humanities Center Program Administrator)

Devotions by Mary Oliver

A carefully curated collection of Mary Oliver's poetry, spanning 1963 to 2015.
"Celebrated for their perspicacious and conversational style, Oliver's poems impart an earthy wisdom rooted in direct observations

of suffering and renewal in nature. For Oliver, the steps of devotion are simple and accessible: 'Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it.' This highly readable volume, curated by Oliver herself and published just two years before her death in 2019, serves as a brilliant introduction to the enduring legacy of one of America's most beloved poets."

Shannon Stimpson (Rhetoric and Writing Studies, Pedagogy)

Torto Arado by Itamar Vieira Junior

A contemporary novel that draws on Brazilian literary traditions to depict Brazil's current socio-political landscape.

"The story is about two sisters who live in a rural village that is a legacy of the country's slavery era. It is fascinating how the novel alternates narrative perspectives and explores lingering issues from the colonial past to the present day, such as the exploitation of rural workers, religious syncretism, and gender- and class-based violence, among other relevant topics for reflecting on Brazil

today. For English speakers, the book was recently translated and published by Verso Books with the title *Crooked Plow*."

Patricia Baialuna de Andrade (Portuguese Literature)

The Discworld Series by Terry Pratchett

A comic, fantasy book series set on a flat planet resting on the backs of four elephants.

"The Discworld books are my favorite series in any genre. Terry Pratchett combines familiar fantasy tropes with genuinely funny characters, insights into human nature, and satiric social commentary. It is hard to nail down a specific book, but if forced to choose, I would point to *Going Postal* (about a Han Solo-like free agent who combats big-city corruption alongside a golem), *The Color of Magic* (about Rincewind, an inept warlock), and *The Wee Free Men* (about a young girl who learns to use magic with integrity while mentoring a band of cartoonishly violent faeries)."

Kerry Soper (Popular Culture and Comedy)

FILMS

Past Lives

A touching modern romance that wrestles with the choices we make in life.
"Childhood friends Nora and Hae Sung are split apart after Nora's family emigrates from South Korea to America. Twenty years later, they reunite online and later in person. Will their friendship turn into a love affair? Or have the two changed too much during the time they were apart? Though characterized as a romance, *Past Lives* goes beyond genre expectations to touch on the fracturing of identity and history that is part of the immigrant experience."

Marc Yamada (East Asian Film and Literature)

The Quiet Girl

A historical fiction film set in rural Ireland that contemplates the true meaning of family.

"Set in 1981 Ireland, a neglected girl is sent away from her family to live with foster parents on a farm for the summer, where she is nurtured and truly loved for the first time. This beautifully arresting, quiet film, largely

voiced in Gaelic, becomes a meditation on chosen family. We loved how this stunning, underseen film portrays the transformative importance of parental love in a young person's life."

Marie-Laure Oscarson (Assistant Director, International Cinema)

Certified Copy

A dramatic romance film about a middle-aged British writer who spends an afternoon with a French woman while promoting his book.

"This is a film I have taught annually since I first saw it in theaters in Paris in 2010. Set in Tuscany with French and British leads, it is directed by the late, great Iranian New Wave auteur Abbas Kiarostami. The film includes three spoken languages and raises questions by evoking language. A matronly Italian café owner asks Juliette Binoche's character, 'Why doesn't your husband speak your language?' and here the film's meaning begins to unravel. Are the two leads married? Were they formerly? Did they just meet, and he recognized her need to work through issues? *Certified Copy* explores the traditional cinematic couple by offering us a garden of forking paths to understanding."

Bob Hudson (French Literature, Film, and Cuisine)

Humanities News



From left to right: Alex Bills, Caleb Dewey, Dr. Ahmad Karout, Joseph Yanchar, and Jonah Phillips at the fourth annual U.S. Universities Arabic Debating Championship

AWARD-WINNING FACULTY BOOK

The John Whitmer Historical Association, a scholarly society dedicated to encouraging interest in Latter Day Saint history, presented a prestigious award to Assistant Professor Christopher Blythe (Folklore, Latter-day Saint Literature). He won the Best Anthology Award for his book *Open Canon: Scriptures of the Latter Day Saint Tradition*. Blythe co-authored the book with archivist Jay Burton, and their work explores the scriptural canons of different Latter Day Saint denominations.

GO COUGS! VIVA COUGS! 加油 COUGS!

Beginning in 2021, BYU Alumni Services has sponsored tailgate events at away football games to connect with BYU alumni and fans outside of Utah Valley. During the fall 2023 football season, for the first time, representatives from the College of Humanities participated in the tailgate events, meeting fans and alumni and taking part in the service projects sponsored by Alumni Services at the events. College reps attended the BYU vs. Kansas game on September 23, 2023, and the BYU vs. Texas game on October 28, 2023. The events allowed the College to interact with approximately 500 and 800 fans, respectively. Josh Perkey, manager of the Digital Media and Communications team for the College, says, “We were pleasantly surprised at how many fans came to see us and how excited they were by how we taught them to say ‘Go Cougs!’ in foreign languages. They were very enthusiastic.” The service projects (a book drive in Lawrence, Kansas, and a holiday toy drive in Austin, Texas) helped the College and university create a positive impact in these communities.

ARABIC DEBATING CHAMPIONS

On October 13–15, 2023, a team of four students represented BYU at the fourth annual U.S. Universities Arabic Debating Championship, held at the University of Utah. Caleb Dewey (Middle East Studies/Arabic '25), Jonah Phillips (International Relations, Arabic Language '23), Alex Bills (Russian, Middle East Studies/Arabic '24), and Joseph Yanchar (Microbiology, Arabic Language '25) competed in several rounds of debates, speaking exclusively in Arabic as they presented arguments about various political and cultural issues. The BYU team qualified for the semifinal round, and they won the award for best non-native speaking team. Jonah Phillips won fifth place overall in the open category of both native and non-native speakers, and Caleb Dewey won third place in the category of non-native speakers. Experiential learning opportunities provided by the College of Humanities made much of this possible.



The “Go Cougs” lanyard made for the tailgate events

HUMANITIES CENTER HOSTS NATIONAL YOUTH STORYTELLING FESTIVAL

The BYU Humanities Center hosted the National Youth Storytelling Festival on September 5 and 6, 2023. The National Youth Storytelling organization has a unique mission to “strengthen storytelling by promoting and teaching the art of story among young tellers.” To that end, the organization annually selects several children, elementary through high school age, to learn about the art of storytelling and perform at the National Youth Storytelling Festival. In 2023, nine “tellers” performed memorized short stories at BYU, incorporating gestures, voice inflection, and even musical instruments into their performances. Following the showcase, the audience at BYU engaged in a conversation about the importance of stories as a form of human connection. National Youth Storytelling showcase guru Ginger Parkinson put it simply: “Storytelling is the best part of the humanities.”



NEW COLLEGE AND DEPARTMENT LEADERSHIP

In July 2023, Professor Deborah Dean (English Education) became the new chair of the Department of English, replacing outgoing chair Professor Lance Larsen (Poetry, American Literature). Additionally, Professor Scott Alvord (Spanish Linguistics and Phonology) became chair of the Department of Spanish & Portuguese, replacing Professor Jeffrey Turley (Hispanic Linguistics, Medieval Literature). Earlier in the year, in May 2023, the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies welcomed College of Humanities Professor Rob McFarland (European Reception of America) as the new faculty coordinator of the European Studies program, replacing Professor Heather Belnap (Franco-American Transatlanticism). In September 2023, the College established a Language Sciences Laboratory, which serves as the principal site for language sciences research at BYU, and named Associate Professor Troy Cox (Language Learning and Assessment) as its coordinator.

BYU JOINS THE MLA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP NETWORK

The College recently accepted an invitation from the Modern Language Association to join their new Strategic Partnership Network, demonstrating BYU’s respected status and impressive commitment to the humanities. Membership in the MLA Strategic Partnership Network provides College faculty with access to useful databases and directories and other valuable benefits. This new partnership fulfills one of BYU’s strategic objectives, which aims to enhance the university’s position as a leader in languages and other areas that are central to the Church’s purposes. Humanities Center Director Rex Nielson says, “This partnership with the MLA both symbolizes BYU’s established excellence in the study of language and literature while providing our faculty and students with new resources to continue to their work.”

PROFESSORS ATTEND NATIONAL HUMANITIES CENTER SUMMER FELLOWSHIP

In June of 2023, for the first time ever, BYU faculty members attended the month-long Residential Fellowship Program at the National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. BYU is an institutional sponsor of the National Humanities Center, which, according to its website, “provides scholars with an environment and resources conducive to generating new knowledge and furthering understanding of the human experience.” The attending professors were Associate Professors Sara Phenix (19th-Century French Literature and History), Jacob Rawlins (Applied Rhetoric, History of Publishing), and Dawan Coombs (Adolescent Literacy and Struggling Readers). They spent their fellowship time working on individual research projects and networking with other humanities scholars. The College of Humanities hopes to continue sending scholars in the future.

ACROSS
1. Alp, 4. Glib, 8. Sap, 11. Foo, 12. Year, 13. Tse,
14. Look Ma No Hans, 17. Asian, 18. Tenet, 19. Tesla,
20. Hydro, 21. Same, 24. OSU, 27. Thor, 28. QBS,
31. Je ne sais quoi, 34. Slot, 35. Ueys, 36. Escargot,
41. CPU, 43. Acne, 44. Amo, 47. Oaf, 48. Blam, 49. Lax
DOWN
1. A flat, 2. Loose, 3. Pools, 4. Gymnasts, 5. Lea, 6. Jan,
7. Brothers, 8. Stand, 9. Asner, 10. Pesto, 15. Kal, 16.
Hey, 22. Aha, 23. Moi, 24. OJs, 25. Sel, 26. Un Oenf,
28. Que tal, 29. Boy, 30. Sis, 32. ETS, 33. Quo, 37. Cab,
38. ACL, 39. RNA, 40. Gem, 41. CO, 42. Pa, 45. Ma,
46. OX

CROSSWORD ANSWER KEY

The Gold Plates

by Thomas B. Griffith (Humanities '78)



Thomas B. Griffith is a BYU College of Humanities graduate and former judge on the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit. He served as BYU general counsel and as the nonpartisan legal counsel to the US Senate. Currently, he serves as a fellow at the Wheatley Institute.

I'm haunted by Kazuo Ishiguro's novel, *The Remains of the Day*. The protagonist, who is the perfect butler, had no way of knowing while confined to the small world of the manor he served so diligently that what he thought was the great contribution he was making to his beloved England through his diligent service to the lord of the manor was built on a lie. It was only when he ventured beyond the manor that he was able to learn the truth. I never want my thinking to be confined to the manor. I don't want to be fooled.

Which brings me to Richard Bushman's latest book, *Joseph Smith's Gold Plates: A Cultural History*, which aims to understand "[h]ow people of all persuasions [have] accounted for the plates."¹ Bushman points out that a belief that the plates were what Joseph Smith claimed "makes a big difference in one's outlook on the world. With the plates comes an angel and divine intervention in ordinary human lives. The plates imply a world where God is an active agent in human affairs in opposition to the skepticism that has eroded religion for the past 200 years."²

In this sense, the gold plates serve much the same role for Latter-day Saint Christians as the bodily resurrection of Jesus plays for all Christians. The authors of the New Testament asserted that, with the bodily resurrection of Jesus, "history has been invaded by God in Christ in such a way that nothing can stay as it was. All terms of human community and conduct have been altered at the deepest levels."³ The claim that the New Testament story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is a historical reality is both the strength of the Christian witness and its greatest vulnerability. As Ross Douthat observes, "[T]he Christian story . . . recounts a series of events that, *if real*, tell us something profound about the nature of God and His relationship to His creatures."⁴ "If real." There's the rub. Was the story of the bodily resurrection of Jesus real? Or was it, in the words of 2 Peter 1:16 (NRSV), a "cleverly devised myth"?

The same tension exists with respect to the claim of Latter-day Saints that recent history has been "invaded by God in Christ," this time through the Restoration of His gospel beginning in 19th-century America. This updated version of the Christian story also "recounts a series of events that, *if real*, tell us something profound about the

nature of God and His relationship to His creatures." But are *those events* real?

Eyewitness accounts of the bodily resurrection of Jesus fueled the faith of the earliest Christians. People they trusted claimed that they saw, heard, touched, and even shared a meal with the Risen Christ. So, too, with the story of the Latter-day Saints. At the heart of their story is the claim of a miracle: an angel gave to Joseph Smith the gold plates from which this unlettered man miraculously produced the Book of Mormon. The book is an account of an ancient peoples' encounter with the Risen Christ that is intended to bolster the New Testament witness of Christ in a secular age. As with the first Christians, eyewitnesses claim that this modern miracle is a historical reality. Those gold plates were seen, touched, hefted, and examined by many who then believed that history had once again "been invaded by God in Christ" in a way that changed everything. And while we know little about the ancient New Testament eyewitnesses, we know much about the more recent eyewitnesses to the gold plates who left abundant records of their lives, and we have the text of the Book of Mormon to study and analyze.

I do not come to faith easily. Skepticism has served me well. On the strength of the eyewitness descriptions of the gold plates, I'm persuaded that they were real. That's the easy part. The more intriguing and important issue is raised by the possibility that the gold plates and the complex and profound text that emerged from their translation were part of a modern miracle. If so, they are a marker that there may be more to reality than what I can see, touch, feel, and measure. The gold plates prod the skeptic to allow for the possibility that reality includes God and Christ and angels and moral laws that shape and mold us into different types of beings than we might otherwise be, and that God in Christ has undertaken a major project for all the world in our time. When I choose to accept that reality, my life is different and better. And when my vision of that reality becomes blurry, when I worry that perhaps I am like the misguided butler in *The Remains of the Day*, I recall the gold plates, the eyewitnesses to their historical reality, the text they contained, and the miracle they present to a skeptical world and a skeptical me. ■

1. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith's Gold Plates: A Cultural History*, xi (Oxford 2023).

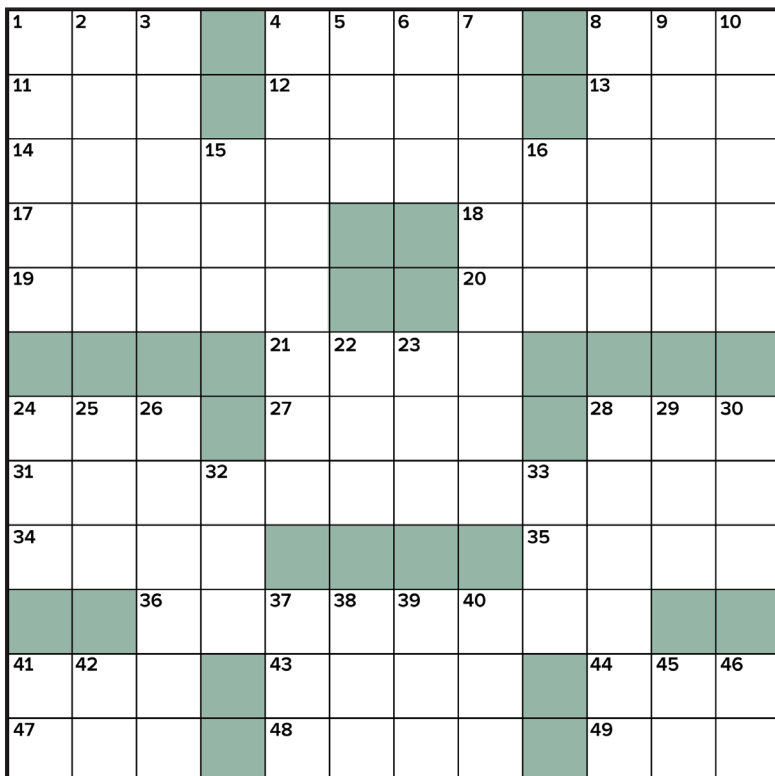
2. *Ibid.*, ix.

3. David Bentley Hart, *The New Testament: A Translation*, xxiii-xxiv (Yale 2017).

4. Ross Douthat, "The Implications of Christmas," *The Atlantic*, [bit.ly/archivechristmas](https://www.theatlantic.com/archive/christmas/) (December 25, 2008).

Sprechen Sie Pun?

by Corry Cropper (French, Associate Dean)



ACROSS

1. Yodeler's perch
4. Insincerely eloquent
8. Maple syrup source
11. Rock's ___ Fighters
12. Año in English
13. Mao ___-tung
14. What the young German cyclist yelled to his *Mutter*: " ___!"
17. Narnia lion
18. Basic belief
19. Musk's motor company
20. Water power, for short
21. "Ditto"
24. Buckeye's sch.
27. ___'s favorite singer?
MC Hammer
28. Young and Detmer: Abbr.
31. I sense it's French, but I can't quite put my finger on this answer . . . ?
34. Pay phone opening
35. 180-degree turns, for short

36. A French snail and F1 driver has the letter *s* painted on his livery so that fans will shout, "Look at the ___!"
41. iMac "brain"
43. Teen trouble
44. "¡Te ___ *mi amor!*"
47. Buffoon
48. Comics' explosion sound
49. Not rigid

DOWN

1. Key of Elgar's First Symphony
2. Not taut
3. "These ___ that, though in forests, still reflect / The total sky almost without defect . . ." (Robert Frost)
4. Simone Biles and Mary Lou Retton, for example
5. Meadow
6. Actor McKellen or author Fleming
7. Jacob and Esau or Moses and Aaron, e.g.

8. Rise from a chair
9. Ed who played Santa in *Elf*
10. Green pasta sauce
15. Penn of *House*
16. "Yo!"
22. "Now I get it!"
23. "*Excusez-___!*"
24. Breakfast drinks, briefly
25. Salt in Saint-Étienne
26. Q: Why do the French only have one egg for breakfast? A: Because one egg is ___!
28. Spanish instructor: ¿___? Spanish 101 student: Uh, about 5'9"
29. Q: How many ___ scouts does it take to change a lightbulb? A: One. But it takes a few days because he only gives it one good turn daily.
30. Bro's sib
32. Alf and Groot, e.g.
33. I'll tell you what quid pro ___ means . . . But you have to give me something first.
37. Taxi
38. Knee MRI target
39. Genetic letters
40. Idaho, The ___ State
41. The Centennial State: Abbr.
42. Charles Ingalls, to Laura
45. 42D's partner
46. Paul Bunyan's blue companion

Check your answers on page 31.

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CREATIVE THINKING. INSPIRATION. LOGIC AND INTERPRETATION. INQUIRY.

Each of these concepts represents a facet of the study of philosophy. But how does one capture all of those ideas in a single visual image?

That question led us to the images on the cover and page 19 of this issue, which invite the reader to ponder not just what it means to be a philosopher, but also what role the core principles of philosophy play in one's life as a seeker of truth. That requires effort, critical thinking and analysis, a recognition of personal and external bias, an open mind, and reason and logic combined with Spirit-led inspiration.

The cover of this issue (including the inset image here) was created using generative AI. But the process was not a simple, one-and-done effort. Rather, the designer, Kim Frost, provided an AI platform with the image on page 19. Then, after much trial and error, the AI finally generated two images based on concepts and objects she told it to use—creative thinking, inspiration, education, a pencil, a lightbulb, and colorful paper. The final AI image still needed human adaptations (the folded paper, addition of print and script text), and color modification.

In many ways, we are all like this designer: philosophers seeking truth by asking questions, refining conjectures, revising assumptions, and reframing our questions, all while using the tools available to us. This issue of *Humanities* explores a number of ways our college engages that pursuit, from applying machine translation to evaluating how we combine the sacred and secular in our education.