

**Piedmont Project, 2008**  
**Participant Outcomes and Pedagogical Applications (including sample syllabus)**

Participant: Peter W. Wakefield

Department: Graduate Institute of Liberal Arts (ILA)

Disciplinary Background: Ph.D. in philosophy

Date: August 1, 2008

Course described in attached syllabus: IDS 200 Foundations toward Interdisciplinary Study

My experiences in the Piedmont Project (PP) in 2008 will have a lasting impact on my teaching, both conceptually and practically. I discuss first the conceptual insights gained, then present three pedagogical innovations I will make in the coming academic year, including a syllabus for IDS 200 for fall 2008 that includes units formulated in response to ideas gained through the two-day PP workshop in May.

**Conceptual Insights Gained from Piedmont Project**

The most important concept I take away from PP involves understanding Emory University as a *place*. The place that is Emory is situated geographically, ecologically, socially, and communally in specific ways that should be shared with students and made transparent through pedagogy. To understand Emory under the concept of place is to reject the reduction of the university to the role of a service-provider. Students are not clients and the process of education is not a commodity deliverable simply upon payment of tuition. Emory is more than a business, an employer, or a validation on student degrees. Emory's sense of place touches historically on the South, on segregation and racial discrimination, and on the city of Atlanta—its architecture, its cultural attraction, its politics, and its traffic patterns.

Emory's students should understand the ramifications they participate in as members of a broader institution. Such awareness begins with elemental physical and natural observations. Climate must be acknowledged beyond the air-conditioned class and dormitory room. Terrain, land use, water availability, and the conscious organization of physical space should be interrogated as a regular feature of classes. Who cleans the classroom? Who built the walls that permit the class to function? How does Emory's physical environment not only organize (limit? enable?) student behavior, but also make each student and professor responsible to a larger society for environmental choices made? Such questions, raised as co-curricular reflections, occasionally supplemented with an excursion into the brush and surrounding forests of the Druid Hills campus, put students in the presence of ignored others and the otherwise featureless contexts of their daily studies, anxieties, and cell phone conversations. No single definition of Emory as place will emerge for all students. The conceptual goal, rather, is to bring each student to notice, even, eventually, to love, some aspect of Emory's place.

More, students must accept their agency in defining Emory as place. The Piedmont Project's active, planning dimension—through the Office of Sustainability—sets a model that students can shape and participate in. One of various factors of leadership that I hope

to integrate as a co-curricular learning outcome of my classes, the sense of responsibility for the form of Emory—its daily visual appearance, its social role in the city, state, and nation, and its environmental footprint—is something that each student can come to understand through resources already provided by PP. Where do students drive? Have they ever taken public transportation? Do they know who takes the bus in Atlanta? Where does their water come from, and go, as it passes through the sinks? What does Emory do with its old computers? What have students *done* to facilitate the responsible stances that Emory might take in response to any of these questions?

Finally, PP opened my eyes to the effectiveness of sustainability as a paradigm of interdisciplinarity. A question posed on one topic, or from a particular disciplinary perspective, pushed just a step further opens other fields and forms of inquiry that are necessarily germane: How efficient is Emory in its use of energy, for example? We begin to think of light bulbs and the mileage ratings of campus vehicles. But what about those who work here? Perhaps we shouldn't dictate what sort of vehicles employees drive, but is Emory as an institution responsible for urban sprawl, housing patterns that push workers who make the least to live farther from campus, and thus to drive distances that substantially contribute to air pollution? Could conscious attention to housing choices improve Emory's energy efficiency? Could it also improve Emory's employee productivity? Its intellectual and cultural life? Could it advance social justice? What constitutes a satisfying, or a sustainable form of life? We begin to consider social spaces, interpersonal relations—the way we might foster these through programs or physical spaces conducive to social interactions. The PP May workshop pressed such questions and courageously assessed Emory's current efforts to integrate the many dimensions of sustainability. Such a model of inquiry is integral to my teaching, and I will adopt the example specifically in my courses to illustrate the interdisciplinary approach that is the mark of my department, the Institute of Liberal Arts (ILA).

## **Pedagogical Innovations Responsive to Piedmont Project**

### 1. FAME Group Field Trips

I will serve as a FAME faculty advisor, beginning August 2008, and will thus guide a group of 18 incoming Emory undergraduate students for the first two years of their academic career at Emory. As part of broader living/learning activities that are part of the FAME relationship, I intend to draw on PP insights as I plan activities that will introduce the students to the broader Emory community and to its place in Atlanta.

Specifically, I will introduce students to Emory's Office of Sustainability (OS)—through the website and possibly a meeting with OS director Ciannat Howard, whom I met through PP. Students will visit the new “green” dorms that will first be occupied in 2008, and have guided tours of some of Emory's LEED-certified buildings. Rain-water management, Emory's forest and water resources, and alternative transportation plans will be discussed critically. I will also try to organize an outing on public transportation to areas, often of difficult access, that are home to many of Emory's staff. Such outings

will be combined with a discussion of the history of neighborhoods and racial segregation in Atlanta.

## 2. Woods Walks in All Classes

One of the elements of Emory's sustainability plan, inspired by PP, that most lingers with me is the goal to eliminate invasive species from Emory's forests and natural surroundings. I remember distinctly the rainy day when we were led to a point in the forest where the infestation of English ivy gave way to native brush—the clear demarcation and greater flourishing of the native forest was striking. I hereby make a commitment to bring all of my classes out of the classroom at least once per semester, to experience something of the altered priorities, the sensory opening, the more spontaneous insights that a few steps into a forest can make. I have often in the past introduced co-curricular elements into the learning community of my classroom—such as movement of students around the classroom for brief guided meditations or choral poetry readings. Such activities acknowledge the natural and social space in which university classes subsist. Thus, each semester I will design unique ways to integrate the forest experience into curricular discussions or into the community-building elements of my courses.

## 3. Unit on Nature in IDS 200: Analogy to Student's Campus Environment

The following syllabus describes a class to be offered for the first time in fall 2008: IDS 200: Foundations toward Interdisciplinary Study. The two team-teachers, Professor Glazov-Corrigan and myself, have both participated in PP. The course hopes to serve as a gateway to the IDS major—a self-designed interdisciplinary major for innovative and exceptional students—and as a foundational course of broad appeal to undergraduates as they situate themselves intellectually and academically at Emory. It is therefore an ideal venue to introduce notions of sustainability gleaned from PP.

The syllabus below contains a paragraph specifically introducing the PP component of the course (see p. 3, [in blue](#)). Special notes on the calendar (see p. 5, [in blue](#)) outline specific pedagogical approaches to be taken to sustainability themes in relation to PP.

**Working Syllabus**  
**IDS 200 Foundations toward Interdisciplinary Study**  
**Fall 2008**  
**Emory University**  
**MWF 10:40-11:30, WH 102**

**Instructors**

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**Overview**

This course examines the origins and development of distinct disciplines in contemporary universities through the lens of *what counts as evidence* in different fields of human knowledge. Through regular visits and lectures by guest faculty, you will encounter exciting current research of a range of scholars from the ILA and across Emory University, who will speak from their expertise in response to our unifying question about evidence.

What terms, metaphors, and methods do we use to explain and understand human experience? The fabric of human life is complex not only in its variety, but in the level at which we analyze and question. A nation's leader declares war. But could the leader's thinking, speech patterns, and motivations be described as manifestations of genetic dispositions, analyzed in terms of neural mechanisms, attributed to mental disease? Are some human moments captured only by poetry? To what extent do political and economic considerations determine the sort of genetic knowledge and therapies researchers can discover? Can religious faith heal the body? Why do we tell stories?

All such questions highlight the problematic nature of evidence and explanation. What unifies the underlying principles of knowledge, science, or expertise? Evidence in one form of inquiry often baffles those trained to pose different sorts of questions. A historical investigation of medical diagnoses, for example, or anthropological questions posed to philosophical or historical texts, often lead to new and fundamental challenges to the accepted facts.

Jared Diamond's Guns, Germs and Steel will provide an organizing intellectual "site," to which other readings, discussions, and lectures will periodically return and refer. Diamond's main thesis is that human experience on earth is best understood, not through classical historical or cultural models that emphasize human action and thought, rather through analysis of fundamental environmental and geological events, such as climate, soil fertility, and terrain. The validity of such a radical shift of analytical framework will introduce and provide a backdrop to the course's other readings and discussions.

Goals of the course:

- to give an overall sense of the emergence of different disciplines and analytical perspectives over the course of history, especially as these have come to define the contemporary university and liberal arts education
- to provide students with foundational skills in critical thinking and reading, historical contextualization, and scholarly writing
- to introduce students to the ILA as an interdisciplinary institute, to the IDS major, and to the collaborative possibilities with disciplinary majors
- to present students with an experience and embodiment of interdisciplinarity in the classroom as part of the team-teaching process and faculty-graduate student collaboration

The course will involve team-taught lecture and discussion. Topical guest discussions between invited faculty (mostly from the ILA) will every couple of weeks and will be followed by small-group discussion in class on a subsequent day.

### Required Texts

Texts: Visiting speakers will enter into conversation over inescapable texts such as: Sophocles, Antigone; Plato, Republic; Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy; Chaucer, Wife of Bath; Shakespeare, As You Like It; Shelley, Frankenstein; Dickens, Hard Times; Rushdie, Midnight's Children. Other class sessions will be devoted to understanding of these and other texts (including Jared Diamond's Guns, Germs and Steel), and to critical analysis of visiting speakers' interventions.

### Assignments (details below)

1. Short response papers (weekly for first part of course)	20%
2. Mid-term essay proposal	20%
3. Final research paper (15-page minimum)	40%
4. Participation and Attendance	<u>20%</u>
Total	100%

In other words, 80% of the grade will be based on writing, as a vehicle for learning, and as a tool for expression and intellectual engagement. Specific time in class will be devoted to discussion of the writing process—generating ideas, formulating a thesis/statement of purpose, organizing arguments and evidence to support them, composing a draft, revising and editing. Where class discussions favor certain students and may exclude others, written assignments compel each student to take an active intellectual role.

### Evaluation of Course Effectiveness

- Both instructors will keep independent weekly teaching journals that will be shared for comment with students through Blackboard site
- Initial intake assessment via questions posed to students orally regarding specific substantive points of intellectual history, disciplinary distinctions, and the

- justifications of the contemporary university--to be noted, circulated, then revisited at the end of the semester
- Formal mid-term, written, anonymous course evaluations (to be designed by the instructors)
  - At least one individualized meeting with each student to solicit feedback on structure and substance of course

### **Emory University's Piedmont Project**

Themes of nature, sensation, human knowledge and relationship to the natural world will run throughout this course. Both instructors have participated in an innovative project unique to Emory University called the Piedmont Project, which attempts to interrogate the concept of sustainability across the curriculum. Students are challenged to take responsibility for their own role in defining Emory as a place—a place with environmental, social, historical, and aesthetic dimensions. On at least one day, students will meet outside of the classroom in the forests or other natural spaces that are part of the Emory campus. Such experiences in nature will be discussed critically in relation to themes, such as idealism or romanticism, that occur in our readings. As part of their final projects, students are encouraged to propose and integrate a service-learning component focused on sustainability; such projects can be designed in consultation with the instructors and possibly facilitated through Emory's Office of Sustainability.

### **Teamwork vs. Your Own Work (plagiarism)**

This class encourages team work and discussion in occasional small group activities, as well as in preparation for weekly and longer-term writing projects. When turning in written work as your own, the work should reflect your own understanding of the material and should represent your own thoughts and be expressed in your own words.

Copying another person's answers without discussing and understanding them and presenting the answers or insights as your own is cheating and plagiarism. Using another person's exact wording and presenting it as your own, or paraphrasing another person's words or structure of thought without giving credit is cheating and plagiarism.

Arguing about an assignment with someone else; having that person show you an answer you had not thought of before; having that person convince that her answer is correct; writing down in *your own* words the newfound answer based on the new understanding and conviction your classmate has given you—all of that is team work: it is encouraged.

Emory has some web-based guidelines on plagiarism, listed on a page with many other useful writing resources: <http://www.writingcenter.emory.edu/table.html>

Evidence of plagiarism will be forwarded to the College and the honor council. (The council's penalties range from failure of the course to a long-term mark on your record, suspension, or expulsion.)

### **Emory's Honor System**

The learning community of our class both supports, and is supported by Emory's Honor System of which you are a part and to which we, as your professors, do hereby subscribe. As stated in the Emory College Catalog, "The responsibility for maintaining in the life of Emory a standard of unimpeachable honor in all academic work falls upon every individual who is a part of Emory University. Every student who chooses to attend Emory College agrees, as a condition of attendance, to abide by all provisions of the Honor Code so long as he or she remains a student in the college."

More information about the honor system is available at:

[http://www.college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor\\_code.html](http://www.college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor_code.html)

### **The Learning Community**

We come together from different backgrounds to develop our minds and to try to better ourselves and the world around us. As part of this broad goal, let it be understood that by remaining in this class you implicitly commit yourself to the following principles:

- Discussion of ideas (beliefs, claims, arguments, theories, etc.) not of persons, including the personal physical or mental traits of persons (size, shape, color, age, motivation, etc.).
- Respect for the right of every individual in the learning community responsibly to state, defend, criticize, and explore ideas of any sort. Exploration of an idea is different from endorsement of an idea. Separate yourself from dislike of the other person.
- No violence or deception. Strive for compassion, for we are all searching, all imperfect.
- Learning does not preclude fun

**(See calendar, next page)**

## Calendar

### **August 29, Sept. 3 & 5: Seeing, explaining, evidence**

Jared Diamond's Guns, Germs and Steel

Arthur Conan Doyle, Study in Scarlet

Possible guest discussant: Sander Gilman (date, tba)

*Piedmont Project Note: Students will be introduced to the concept of sustainability as an example of interdisciplinary treatment of evidence.*

### **Sept. 8, 10 & 12: Self, society, god**

Sophocles, Antigone

### **Sept. 15, 17 & 19: Psyche, love, the unseen**

Sophocles, Antigone

Plato, Lysis

### **Sept. 22, 24 & 26: Ground and criticism**

Plato, Republic

Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy

Possible guest discussants: David Pacini & Steve Strange (date, tba)

### **Sept. 29, Oct. 1, 3, 6, 8 & 10: Gender and value**

Petrarch, Sonnet 190 ("Una candida cerva sopra l'erba" / "A pure-white doe in an emerald glade")

Sir Thomas Wyatt, "Who so list to hunt"

Chaucer, "Knight's Tale," "The Pardoner's Tale," and the "Wife of Bath Tale"

Possible guest discussants: Gretchen Schulz & Walt Reed (date, tba)

*Piedmont Project Note: Students will be taken into Emory's natural environment and asked to represent their experiences through a visual or poetic medium; their experiences will then be compared to themes in romanticism.*

### **Oct. 15, 17, 20, 22 & 24: Creation, responsibility, science**

Shelley, Frankenstein

Galileo, Starry Messenger & Letter to Duchess Christina

Darwin, Origin of Species (selections)

Possible guest discussants: Arri Eisen & Angelika Bammer (date, tba)

### **Oct. 27, 29 & 31: Industry, society, law**

Dickens, Hard Times

Martha Nussbaum, Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life

### **Nov. 3, 5 & 6: Politics of neurosis**

Pushkin, The Queen of Spades

Tolstoy, "Father Serge"

Dostoyevsky, Crime and Punishment

Possible guest discussant: Howard Kushner (date, tba)

### **Nov. 10, 12 & 14: Colonialism, nations, history**

Rushdie, Midnight's Children

Mehta Suketu, Maximum City: Bombay lost and found

### **Nov. 17, 19, 21, 24 & 26: Challenges of Modernity**

F. Scott Fitzgerald, Great Gatsby

Modern poetry (selections)

Possible guest discussants: Elizabeth Goodstein & Michael Moon (date, tba)

### **Dec. 1, 3, 5 & 9: Our place**

Ntozake Shange, "About Atlanta"

William Christenberry (photographs)

Possible guest discussant: Allen Tullos (date, tba)

*Piedmont Project Note: Students will read analyses of Atlanta's urban environment, including its physical traces of racial segregation, and its challenges in the face of population growth and sprawl; Emory's possible responsibilities to such problems will be discussed.*