

**9th Annual Learning Communities Institute
May 7, 2007
“Common Reading Program for Uncommon Learning”**

Presenters: Kevin Saunders, Andrea Dinkelman, Jenny Aune, Noreen Siddiqui, Pat Walsh, Jill Wyckoff

Common Reading Participants – Fall 2006

LC Name: **Multicultural Learning Community (MLC)**
LC Coordinators: Lynn Lundy Evans (llundy@iastate.edu) and Noreen Siddiqui (siddiqui@iastate.edu)
Common Reading: *The Pact: Three Young Men Make a Promise and Fulfill a Dream* by George Jenkins, Sampson Davis, Rameck Hunt
Course: Race and Ethnicity in America
Goals: The book connected with the service learning aspect of the MLC course so students would build moral character, understand the importance of giving back to their communities, and become engaged citizens.
Activities: Students were separated into discussion groups of four, which met four times in the spring semester. A faculty or staff member was paired with each group to help facilitate the discussion. Students were assigned chapters to discuss for each meeting. Before each meeting, one student had a discussion starter assignment. This student posted a response to the assigned chapters on WebCT.
Tips: If your common reading is tied to a class, have students write about the chapters they need to read before the meeting to discuss the book. This can be done on WebCT through a discussion or just by having students turn in written assignments.

LC Name: **Women in Science and Engineering (WiSE)**
LC Coordinators: Lora Leigh Chrystal (lchrysta@iastate.edu) and Jill Wyckoff (jewyckof@iastate.edu)
Common Readings: *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
Napoleon's Buttons: How 17 Molecules Changed History by Penny Le Couteur and Jay Burreson
Course: No affiliation
Goals: Our goal was for students to draw connections between what they were reading, what they are learning in class, what they know, what the media tells them, and how they see the world. With *The Kite Runner*, we also wanted students to learn about a different culture. With *Napoleon's Buttons*, there was a much greater emphasis on how some of the molecules related to things they were talking about in their chemistry class.

Activities: Dinner, guest speakers, student-selected newspaper and magazine articles, and floor presentations where the students “reported” to the group about the chapter they had chosen to read that week. We hoped to visit the Islamic Center in Ames but were unable to schedule a visit.

Tips: Incorporate guest speakers. Let yourself be surprised by the students, what they can contribute to the group, and how they can cultivate the nature of the group. When the group first started, we had an agenda for meetings and tried to be very structured, but the group took it right out of my hands!

LC Name: Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS)

LC Coordinators: Pat Walsh (pwalsh@iastate.edu) and Corly Brooke (cbrooke@iastate.edu)

Common Reading: *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom
Course: HDFS 110

Goals: 1) For students to share experiences around a common book, 2) to connect the book to content areas covered in HDFS 102, 3) to expose students to the notion of reading for leisure.

Activities: Reading the book, answering reflection questions, discussion, and viewing the videotaped interview of Morrie Schultz.

Tips: Assist students to make connections between the reading, the course content, and their own experiences. Having points assigned to the three sets of discussion questions helped students understand the value we placed on the assignment and the expectations.

LC Name: Food Science and Human Nutrition (FSHN) and Horticulture

LC Coordinators: Anne Oldham (aoldham@iastate.edu) and Suzanne Hendrich (shendric@iastate.edu) (FSHN)

Gail Nonnecke (nonnecke@iastate.edu) and Barb Osborn (baosborn@iastate.edu) (Horticulture)

Jenny Aune (jeaune@iastate.edu) (English)
Common Reading: *Nickel and Dimed: On (not) getting by in America* by Barbara Ehrenreich

Courses: Horticulture 110, Food Science and Human Nutrition 110

Goals: We wanted the students to get a better understanding of the plight of the working poor through careful thought and written reflections.

Activities: Reflection assignments, lectures and group activities with another learning community of students they would normally not have the chance to meet and interact with.

Tips: If the work is not part of the students' assignments, with an associated value placed on it, such as completed, or a grade, they will prioritize the material last. The homework and discussions should be well-focused and purposeful to their education.

Common Reading Participants Fall 2007

Agricultural Business, Coordinator: Ebby Luvaga, luvaga@iastate.edu

- *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner

Agricultural Engineering, Coordinator: Steve Mickelson, estaben@iastate.edu

- *Agricultural Engineering Century: Iowa State University* by Howard P. Johnson
- *Who Moved my Cheese?: An Amazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and in Your Life* by Spencer Johnson. This book will be utilized by peer mentors.

Food Science and Human Nutrition and Horticulture

- *Nickel and Dimed: On (not) getting by in America* by Barbara Ehrenreich

Human Development and Family Studies

- *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom

Multicultural Learning Community

- *The Pact: Three Young Men Make a Promise and Fulfill a Dream.*
- Plan to add *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* by Sherman Alexie. Students will choose which book they want to read.

Newspaper Physics, Coordinators: John Hauptman, hauptman@iastate.edu and Jennifer Lowery, jenthor@iastate.edu

- *What Do You Care What Other People Think?* By Richard Feynman

Secret of Life Learning Community, Coordinator: Jennifer Toy, jjtoy@iastate.edu

- *Genome: Autobiography of a Species in 23 Chapters* by Matt Ridley

Women in Science and Engineering (WiSE)

- *The Kite Runner* and *Napoleon's Buttons.*
 - Plan to utilize *The Mercury 13: The True Story of Thirteen Women and the Dream of Space Flight* by Martha Ackmann with WiSE Sophomore Success.
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Tips

Be sure to check the Learning Communities website for more information about common reading programs!

Common Reading Programs http://www.lc.iastate.edu/reading_programs.html

Consider incorporating a speaker from the ISU Lecture Series into your common reading activities.

ISU Lecture Series <http://www.lectures.iastate.edu/>

Consult your subject librarian to identify additional resources (e.g. additional readings, DVDs, etc.)