

Circumambulating Ross Hall

Environmental Literature applies Experiential Education

By Mary Lewe
Editor in Chief

On Thursday, Sept. 5, Brevard College English professor John Padgett's Environmental Literature course participated in an experiential learning activity which involved the oldest and perhaps most mysterious building on Brevard's campus: Ross Hall.

Built in the early 1900's, Ross Hall was originally a private residence and tourist destination before eventually being purchased by the Brevard Institute, at which point it was converted into a men's dorm.

Although the building has been condemned due to the presence of asbestos as well as a lack of structural integrity, Padgett was able to acquire special permission for the class to

"circumambulate" the building.

Circumambulation, as the word suggests, means to walk around an object in a circle. A very sacred act, with ties to tradition in many religions and cultures, many writers in the past have essayed on the topic of circumambulation with regard to sacred places such as mountain tops, temples and statues of deities.

As for the Environmental Literature students, they too would write their own reflections on the experience of wandering around the eerie building during a class period. Guided by Padgett, the students were also provided with a list of ten key passes, with opportunities for immediate reflection aloud as well as quiet observation.

At each stop, including the former site of Taylor Hall, Kings Creek, Lambo Creek and of course several approaches of Ross Hall, Padgett lead the class in thoughtful discussion.

To begin the circumambulation, the class stopped by the Bell Tower.

"The point of circumambulation is to walk around sacred objects or places," Padgett said at the start of the journey. "For lack of a better word, that's sort of what the bell tower is." Padgett urged students to contemplate the significance of "place," or in literature, setting.

As the class made their way to Kings Creek, Padgett reminded students of the significance of the small stream. "It's amazing to me the distance this water will travel, all the way to the Gulf of Mexico," he said.

Teaching assistant and English major Carmen Boone assisted in preparing materials for the circumambulation, and will eventually teach a few class periods based on her own lesson plans. "I took it [Environmental Literature] my sophomore year and it was one of the most interesting English classes I've taken,"

Boone said.

Other topics for discussion along the route involved the history of the landscape surrounding Ross Hall, including a huge growth of kudzu, not at all uncommon to this region of the United States.

"Kudzu was originally introduced in the South to control erosion," Padgett said. "It worked."

In fact, kudzu was very effective, but unfortunately thrived a bit too well and became an invasive species, choking out native flora in many areas.

For years Ross Hall served as the Wilderness Leadership and Experiential Education building, with classrooms and areas for activities relevant to the study. Although a date has not been set, there are plans for the asbestos to be removed and for the building to be destroyed in a controlled burn, according to campus officials.

"I think it's a shame such a big piece of the campus's history will be lost," one student said at the end of the circumambulation. Although the building may never be restored, its history was appreciated thoroughly for perhaps a final time by Padgett's class.



Padgett and members of his class share their thoughts during a discussion outside of Ross Hall at the end of their journey.

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BC security report

The most recent security reports for Brevard College have been released as of Monday, Sept. 16, 12:34 p.m., according to Brevard College Campus Security.

Students are reminded that smoking and vaping are only allowed in designated areas.

Please be advised of the recent information that vaping can cause serious lung damage as well as life long debilitation and death.

There was recently a fight in Myers Dining Hall. Administration is aware of the situation and is conducting a thorough investigation.

A fire extinguisher was recently discharged in a residence hall and required a response

from the Brevard Fire Department.

Please be advised that this practice is illegal and anyone identified of activating the extinguisher will be subject to severe administrative action and possible arrest by municipal authorities.

These devices are placed for the protection of all and improper use of them cannot be tolerated.

Everyone is requested to contact Campus Security at (828)-577-9590 if wrongful or suspicious activity is observed on campus.

— Zach Dickerson