

Undergraduate teaching award finalists named

Thad Beyle

By Adam Ford
Staff Writer and
Jennifer Dunlap
Assistant University Editor

Thad Beyle's knowledge and informal teaching style make going to his class something to look forward to.

Beyle's N.C. politics class is unique because it concentrates on day-to-day politics in the state, said Jason Kaus, a junior from Raleigh. "You don't get that in any other class," he said.

The class is offered every third semester and follows U.S. Senate races, Kaus said. Each day, changes in the races could be discussed, he said.

Holly Pierson, a senior from Greensboro, said in addition to his laid-back teaching style, Beyle has a good sense of humor and is very understanding about conflicts. "He was not a stickler for deadlines and dates; he thought it was more important that you really learned something."

Beyle said his relaxed style was not intentional but just came naturally. "It's the style I started with as a graduate student, and I've stayed with it."

Lisa Mitchell, a senior from Wilson, said Beyle encouraged class participation and the expression of opinions.



Beyle knows N.C. politics well but is not intimidating because he promotes the exchange of new ideas, Kaus said. "The greatest part was that we had to think for ourselves."

Beyle said he was not a lecturer, but sometimes he lectured. "I try to have as much student involvement as I can." He said he usually has a plan for what he wants to get accomplished each class period, but no formally written lecture.

Beyle said he hoped to match his wife's accomplishments. She was recognized as an outstanding teacher in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro school system in 1983-84. "I've got a tough road to follow," he said.

Michael Follo

By Matthew Mielke
Staff Writer

UNC geology professor Michael Follo believes his subject is best taught outdoors.

"I've found in teaching my courses that field trips are a way for students to see first-hand what we're talking about," Follo said.

Three years ago, Follo started Geology 46, a course titled "The Geology of North America." Student response to Geology 46 field trips was so great that Follo asked to move the course from the fall semester to spring so he could use Spring Break for a more extensive field trip.

Follo's class returned Sunday from the Grand Canyon. He also has taken student groups to the Smoky Mountains and Virginia.

"I think (the Grand Canyon trip) changes the whole nature of the course. I find that there is a lot more camaraderie among the students when we get back.

"It's great fun," he said. "It's not a very relaxing vacation for me."

Follo grew up in Alabama and graduated from Washington and Lee University in 1979.



Follo earned his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1986 and came to UNC that year. Freshman Stephanie Jayne took Follo's Geography 11 honors class last semester. She hadn't been thrilled with the prospect of studying rocks, but Follo made the class interesting as he guided his class through the formation of the earth over time, she said.

"He really is a lot of fun," she said. "He becomes your friend."

Follo said he wanted to share with students his own love of geology, as some of his college professors had done when he was a student.

"I had some inspiring professors in college," he said.

Marilyn Elkins

By Adam Ford
Staff Writer and
Jennifer Dunlap
Assistant University Editor

Perhaps the best way to judge the effectiveness of a teacher is to consider his or her effect on the student.

Dianna Thor, a junior from Carrboro, nominated Marilyn Elkins, her teaching assistant for an English literature class last semester. Thor said the reason she nominated Elkins was her enthusiasm and approachability.

"She had an obvious enthusiasm for the material that made it come alive, and you couldn't help but be interested," Thor said. "Especially when it came to before exams and papers, she made it clear that she was available. She repeated it during class and emphasized that she was there after office hours."

"It was there a scale of approachability she was at the top. (Since) that was true, you felt real support from her inside and out of the classroom."

Elkins said her teaching style could be called a contemporary Socratic method because she asked many questions and encouraged student involvement.



Elkins said she does not stress lecturing or the memorization of literary critics' interpretations of works, she said.

"I try to help students develop their own method of interpreting literature," Elkins said. "I really teach more as a process of discovery than by rote memorization."

Class discussion generates new ideas about the works she teaches, Elkins said. She continues to learn about the works from her students, she said.

Before returning to college to work on a Ph.D. in English, Elkins taught at a high school for academically gifted students in New Orleans for five years.

Elizabeth Gorsuch, a junior from Juneau, Alaska, said, "(Elkins) has changed my life and how I view English."

Nicole Kaplan

By Billy Stockard
Staff Writer

Nicole Kaplan, a native of Paris and a teaching assistant in the French department, said she considered her students friends.

"Last semester we had a really nice group," Kaplan said. "We are a team, and we help each other. We are not a classroom, we are just friends."

Kaplan has taught French at the University since 1987. She said she understood the problem of trying to express oneself in an unfamiliar language.

"You want to express your opinions, you want to express your feelings, and you cannot do it. It's not only very frustrating, but it's also very intimidating when you have to speak in front of 20 or 25 other people that you don't know."

Kaplan tries to help students get to know each other from the first day of class. She tells her shyest students that she wants to hear them say one sentence the next day, two the next, and so on.

Being a student gives her a special perspective, Kaplan said. "I am a student. I don't see myself as a person who is going to dominate."



Kaplan defined a good teacher as "someone who shares knowledge, cares about his or her students and respects them."

"I think the most important thing for me is to learn from my students. If you can give and receive at the same time, it's wonderful."

Nicole Hall, a sophomore from Greensboro, said she nominated Kaplan because she cared about her students.

"She really cares about making sure you understand what's going on in French, and she even cares about personal problems," Hall said.

"She's a very good teacher," Hall said. "She likes to know you understand."

"She's just one of those very effective teachers that'll reach you."

Paul Kropp

By Matthew Mielke
Staff Writer

Paul Kropp makes organic chemistry easy to understand and makes himself available outside the classroom, some of his students said.

Kristina Simeonsson, a junior from Hillsborough, said Kropp always took time to listen to students' questions.

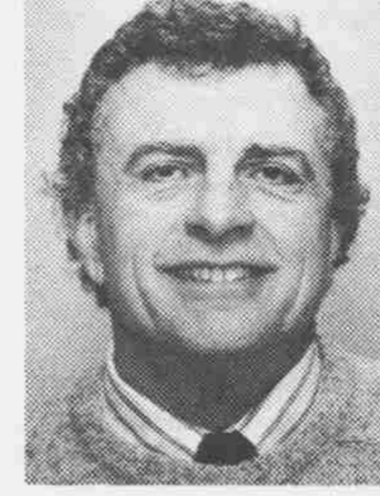
"I got to know him outside of class," she said. "He was even less intimidating in person. He always made time for me when I went."

Kropp spent his undergraduate years at Notre Dame and did his graduate work at the University of Wisconsin and Stanford University. Before becoming a teacher he worked with Procter & Gamble Co. for eight years, he said.

"One of the main reasons I made the change (to UNC) is the excitement of working with undergraduates," he said.

Kropp has been on the UNC faculty for 20 years, and is also the chairman of the applied sciences curriculum.

Scott Callicut, a junior from High Point, said Kropp took the time to talk with students outside the classroom. "He is a real personable guy."



Kropp said his teaching style depended on the class size. "If it is a large section of organic chemistry, I'll usually have lectures on Tuesdays and Thursdays," he said. "On Fridays we work problems together."

Callicut said Kropp often used a computer to explain important concepts during the Friday recitation sessions. "It is not just like a regular class. You get a pictorial idea of what is going on."

Simeonsson said as a biology major she had been apprehensive about taking a difficult organic chemistry class. But Kropp made the material interesting, she said.

"He was good about bringing us together for something that we really weren't that excited about," she said.

James Leloudis

By Billy Stockard
Staff Writer

James Leloudis, a history professor, said he taught his students by drawing them into the past.

"I suppose I tend to teach largely in a story-telling style," he said. "I try to bring a lot of different things into the class."

Leloudis, who has taught at UNC since 1989, said he used letters, photographs, paintings, films and music to make history more than just lecture notes. "It's a way of giving people a sense of what the past looked like, sounded like, and if you use your imagination, smelled like and even felt like."

Leanne Barnett, a senior from Dunwoody, Ga., said she nominated Leloudis because his enthusiasm for history came through in class. "This is the type of class you want to bring your friends to," she said.

Leloudis once started a class with a "Star Trek" episode, and took a History 90 class to a graveyard, Barnett said.

Leloudis said he also sends his students to the North Carolina Collection in Wilson Library to examine original sources. "It's a chance for people to get their hands dirty," he said.



Leloudis said a good teacher doesn't try to make his or her students think a certain way, but helps them develop a curiosity that enables them to confront everyday issues.

Barnett said Leloudis did more than other teachers to make the class interesting. "He gives 210 percent every time," she said. "He's not just coming in to teach the class. He goes about five extra miles."

Leloudis said special professors he met while attending the University in the 1970s helped him develop a love for history.

"I do feel a certain obligation to repay that debt," he said. "I'm not sure I could fill the shoes of those I'd like to model myself after, but I'd like to at least try."

Julius Nyang'oro

By Heather Phibbs
Staff Writer

"I've always liked to teach undergraduates and I'm glad some of my students felt I should be nominated," said Julius Nyang'oro, professor in African studies.

Nyang'oro said that he enjoyed his contact with students and that he learned from them. "Students make a lot of comments in class that help me to refine my own ideas."

Nyang'oro is from Tanzania, Africa, where he received his undergraduate degree at Dar es Salaam. He earned his Masters and Ph.D. in political science and international relations at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. He has been teaching at UNC off and on since 1984, he said.

Nyang'oro was a visiting professor at the University from 1984 to 1985 and worked as a post-doctoral fellow from 1985 to 1987. While continuing to teach here, he pursued a law degree at Duke University. Last year he received tenure in African-American studies, and his specialty is African studies.

Senior political science major Stephanie Buff said, "His African Studies 60 and 65 classes are different



from any I've ever taken. He talks to each student individually and doesn't exclude anyone. He engages the students in discussion about current issues."

Nyang'oro said he had a tendency to lecture excessively when he began teaching, but now puts a great deal of emphasis on class discussion.

"I've created a balance between lecture and discussion, and my classes now consist of about 40 percent discussion," he said. "The more students are involved in discussion, the more they get interested in class material."

Buff said Nyang'oro helps give his students direction after graduation.

"He's good at challenging what you're thinking. He's also very helpful at finding things for his students to do after graduation."

Susan Ross

By Billy Stockard
Staff Writer

Susan Ross, a visiting lecturer in the School of Journalism, said she considered herself an actress in the classroom.

"Essentially, I do think teaching is, on a very personal level, drama. You've got to keep your students awake. I just react to my students as people."

But Ross is more than a performer to her students. To them, she's an adviser, friend and critic.

Julie Gammill, a senior from Cary, said Ross' honesty was necessary.

"When it comes to Susan Ross, forget anything Southern and genteel," Gammill said. "She is brash and Yankee and to the point." But Gammill said that helped her become a better reporter.

"I didn't feel like a journalist before I was her student," Gammill said. "She made me a reporter."

Ross said she believed her comments on papers were more important than the grades. "I think it's fair to say that students very rarely wonder what I like and what I don't," she said.

Ross said the experience of running a newspaper before beginning teaching at UNC in 1986 helped her.

"Many of Ross' students are women, and she hopes to serve as a role model



for them. But she said she also worked well with her male students.

Gammill said she valued Ross' perspective. "She's gone through the system," Gammill said. "I respect and appreciate her advice. I trust her. And she's straight with me."

Ross said, "I think that I demand a lot, and I think that I may be less flexible in my demands than other instructors." Gammill said she and other students felt so strongly about Ross they collaborated to nominate her for the award.

"She's not afraid to rock the boat," Gammill said. "She will battle anybody. She is an advocate for her students."

Ross said she wasn't sure what the credentials for winning the award were.

"If winning means you know the secret to teaching, I don't," she said. "But I go out there and guess every day, and I hope I'm guessing right."

Sonja Stone

By Heather Phibbs
Staff Writer

Several of Sonja Stone's students said she helped motivate their lives.

Stone is an associate professor of African-American studies and has taught at the University for 15 years.

"I teach because I feel very strongly that I have a mission to bridge the gap between the University and African Americans," Stone said. "I really love African-American culture and philosophy."

In 1989 she encouraged four students, including Donee Thomas, to form Kawaia, the African-American Studies Club, which sponsors Kwanzaa.

Thomas, a senior from Wilingboro, N.J., said Stone was a hard-working adviser to the organization.

"Teaching occurs not only in the classroom, but also in extra-curricular activities," Stone said. "I see helping with the club as part of my duties."

She received a bachelor's degree from Sarah Lawrence College and a master's degree in social work from Atlanta University. She also earned a second master's degree in philosophy at the University of Illinois and a Ph.D. in the history and philosophy of education from Northwestern.



Thomas said Stone always acted professionally. "She is a really classy lady who really knows her information."

She also devotes time to her students, Thomas said. "Her door is always open."

Angela Ards, a senior from Dallas, Texas, said she nominated Stone because of her professional talents and her personal characteristics. "Dr. Stone is a very personable, down-to-earth person."

Stone encourages discussion and the exchange of diverse ideas during classes, Ards said. She has been in classes Stone teaches ranging in size from six to 60 students, Ards said. "In both settings she was a really effective teacher."

Stone said, "Teaching is losing a number of recruits, and I'm trying to impress upon my students the importance of teaching and to recruit more students to our ranks."

Winners of Students' Undergraduate Teaching Awards will receive \$5,000

Students asked to help by completing forms

The Students' Undergraduate Teaching Awards Selection Committee has announced the nine finalists for the awards.

Four of the nine finalists will be selected to receive \$5,000 each. The winners will be announced at the Chancellor's Awards Day on April 9.

Tracy Lawson, chairwoman of the selection committee, said the committee received about 220 nominations from students.

Professors, guest lecturers and teaching assistants were nominated for the awards.

The selection committee is asking students to help them find out more about the nominees by completing the form at the right. The forms are due in Suite C of the Student Union by 5 p.m. March 22.

There are nine finalists this year instead of the usual eight because of a tie between two nominees.

Instructor's Name: _____

Your Name: _____

Course(s) taken under this instructor and approximate class size: _____

Are you now taking any course(s) from this instructor? _____

If yes, which one(s)? _____

Your major: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Why should (shouldn't) this instructor receive a Students' Undergraduate Teaching Award? (Attach sheet if necessary) _____

EDUCATION JOB FAIR

Carmichael Auditorium • Tuesday, March 19 • 9:30 am - 4:00 pm
Pre-Fair Panel 010 Peabody Today 4:30 pm