



Staff photos by Duffy Coffman

'Terror and Triumph' teacher eyes future

Thomas A. Rhodes
Of the Print

Joe Uris is a 41-year-old sociology instructor on campus. He received his Ph. D. in sociology last summer from Portland State University and has also attended Reed and Columbia University in New York.

Uris teaches the Introduction to Sociology and U. S. History courses on campus. But what lured us to his doorstep for an interview was his self-defined pop culture class, "Future: Terror or Triumph."

Uris granted PRINT reporters Duffy Coffman and Thomas A. Rhodes an interview concerning the future, education and the future of education. The following is an edited excerpt from the interview.

PRINT: You're known throughout campus as an instructor of rather off-beat classes such as "The Future: Terror or Triumph."

URIS: I simply disguise common place material under an off-beat title. The popular culture sequence, if it were allowable, would be an interdisciplinary course and it's a euphemism for what most people are concerned with in their lives. For example, popular music, social history, stuff like that.

PRINT: Many instructors seem to be trying to popularize standard courses such as history and the humanities because the requirements aren't as strict as they used to be. In order to gain interest in their specific department, they seem to try to lower subject requirements and approaches to fit everyone's taste.

URIS: Is there a question there?

PRINT: I guess there is, will the college have to try to popularize course such as history or chemistry in order to fill enrollment quotas?

URIS: First of all, I don't think anyone is lowering standards or bringing things down on any level. Many schools use popular culture artifacts such as movies, records, or whatever to try to make the students understand the relevance of their course of study. Unfortunately, being an intellectual in America is considered an unworthy activity. More so, being an intellectual in Clackamas County is considered very suspect.

For those reasons, many of us here try various approaches to social science or science issues. But, I don't think we're lowering anything. If students were adequately presented with the choice between hard work and real discovery, and wading through a lot of fluff, they'd choose hard work. Unfortunately, that choice doesn't exist. At community colleges, students and teachers suffer somewhat from an inferiority complex, which is not warranted.

We have some of the best facilities—that I've encountered anyway—and I think we have some very good students. But, because of this complex, which is a self-inflicted prophecy, they (faculty and students) end up doing what is expected of them rather than their full potential. But when a student or faculty member decides to

work to their full potential, we get work that rivals all other institutions.

I've had students here who could move over to Reed College comfortably. As to what's happening at PSU, I just think that education isn't 'in' anymore.

PRINT: What brought this about? Is it that many people feel that the liberals and intellectuals caused inflation with their social programs?

URIS: Well, everyone causes inflation. It's an economic question, not an intellectual one. We've had war-time economic program since World War II and we've attempted to keep both guns and butter. Comparing social programs to military equipment, the social programs are cheap and generate economic growth. But, everyone is angry, and in America, we tend to blame the victim.

PRINT: Do you think the college will cut the extra services such as the Focus on Women program in order to save more classes?

URIS: I hope not, it seems unlikely.

PRINT: Are you in favor of stricter requirements in classes?

URIS: I'm all in favor of stricter requirements in and for classes. We need to increase our academic standards. One of the biggest mistakes made in the 60's was to equate easiness with virtue. We should be academically tough. I'm not in the pop culture courses, largely because I'm trying to get the students to understand and appreciate their own culture and the objective is not so much an academic one but a cultural one.

If I ran the zoo—which I don't—I would create an honor college within the college. It would be a very rigorous part of the institution. The pop culture courses would involve more serious work.

PRINT: Speaking of history, have you taught any other history courses other than U.S. History?

URIS: I've taught U.S. History, some pop history courses. I haven't taught Western Civilization, nor have I taught any specialized history courses such as the history of the Bohemian culture.

PRINT: Would you like to have a chance to teach a course in Western Civilization?

URIS: Yes, but in order to do that, I would have to prepare for many months. I wouldn't mind doing it, though.

PRINT: Any way you'd approach it differently than the way it's currently being approached?

URIS: I took a course of Western Civilization at Reed College and the course was seven hours a week (Three lectures and four conferences). The reading was incredibly intensive. We began by writing 500-700 page papers a week, then 1,500-word papers once every two weeks. It was a very powerful experience. If I were to redesign a curriculum, I would try some of that material.

PRINT: I remember flipping through the 1980 voter's pamphlet and I noticed that Ronald Reagan had the least amount of college education. A fellow journalist told me that just because you have a college education doesn't mean that you know doody squat.

URIS: I agree with your friend. To evaluate people on the basis of their formal education is silly. I've known some Ph.D.'s who were absolute clowns, and I've known some really brilliant people who've never had a formal education. But, people who read a lot and comprehend what they're reading are worthy of being paid attention to on some level.

PRINT: How tough are your courses grade-wise?

URIS: Well, it's pretty easy to get a C from me, but I don't give a lot of A's.

PRINT: The G.P.A. at the college is 3.1. Why?

URIS: A lot of the students are getting B's. It's either that or students are taking a lot of easy courses. I don't think grades should be used to punish students. Teachers have a gate-keeper function, but it isn't important in the first two years. We, as teachers, have more power to punish students than reward. That's why I wanted an honor's college, where students can really earn a grade by working hard.

CCOSAC holds first meeting

Community Colleges of Oregon Student Association and Commissions met at Mt. Hood Community College Oct. 17 and 18 to discuss the Summer President Workshop, approve the budget, evaluate CCOSAC constitution and by-laws, and elect a CCOSAC representative to the state legislature.

Because of a budget carry-over from last year, the membership costs for each college was dropped down to

\$63.53 from \$263.53. The money is divided into two sections: "housekeeping" (operation costs of CCOSAC) and decision-making, traveling and accommodation expenses. The total CCOSAC budget of \$1,870 for housekeeping and \$1,816 for operations is divided equally among the 13 member colleges.

The major goals of each school were discussed at the meeting. CCC's main goal is to facilitate better student involvement on campus.

"I encourage people to attend ASG meetings", ASG President Sam Crosby said, "I ask that if people come with a problem, they have a reasonable solution for it." The ASG meets every Thursday at noon.

CCOSAC hires a lobbyist, paid out of college funds, to take ideas to the state legislators. Any money granted from the state government is allotted for different programs on the community college campuses.

