

"Love, Death" promotes independent thought

MIKE GARCIA
Copy Editor

And you thought variety shows never came back for a second season.

The PSU inquiry program's latest installment, "Love, Death and the Arts," promises to be even better than last year's critically acclaimed debut, according to Math Instructor James Dickinson, English Instructor David Mount and Music Instructor Gary Nelson.

HUM 210/SSC 210 is a six-credit class and carries the weight of a full block-transfer sequence. Class sessions are Tuesday and Thursday for an hour and a half—no more than a normal three-credit class. Don't be fooled into thinking this is an easy way to meet those block requirements, though.

"Our class is about being here at Clackamas," said Mount. "It's to give people experience in independent thinking and research, and presentation skills, such as writing, speaking and working with electronic tools."

There will be an hour-long lab session on Tuesdays, and most notably, students will be required to spend two hours a week attending arts events such as plays and poetry readings, as well as exhibits at local galleries.

The main question asked here is: "What are the arts good for?" This is a fairly broad question for anyone who puts much thought into it—which is just what the inquiry instructors want students to do. This is a thinking class in every sense of the word.

Students will fill out a survey of themselves on the first day of class, Dickinson said, to show how well versed they are in particular areas of the arts. Students will find what they are good at, and proceed to ignore it as much as possible. This class isn't about what you know; it's about what you don't know and what you're willing to make an inquiry about.

"It's about filling in the gaps in your profile," Dickinson said. "I'm not going to just go see what I like because I want to be entertained."

This in-depth examination will involve several "fringe" art events, Dickinson said. For instance, some students might choose to see the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* or a local poetry slam, or to look at someone's junk collection and find out who thinks it's art.

Mount predicted that there might be a few times when the object of attention is "stuff," rather than art. "Maybe that's

a more useful term, anyway."

The best part about the class is that all these excursions could end up being fun, Nelson said. It's not every day that you're required to go out on the town with a significant student discount.

"It's a whole different experience watching musicians perform, as opposed to listening to a record or watching them on TV," Dickinson said.

By the way, the instructors plan to contribute, too. Mount will use his English background to introduce poems and Surrealist word games. Dickinson's math know-how will come in handy when surveying the economics of art and how it affects performances.

Does art suffer when there's not a big enough budget to do it "right?" Nelson asked. Also, are arts supporters more

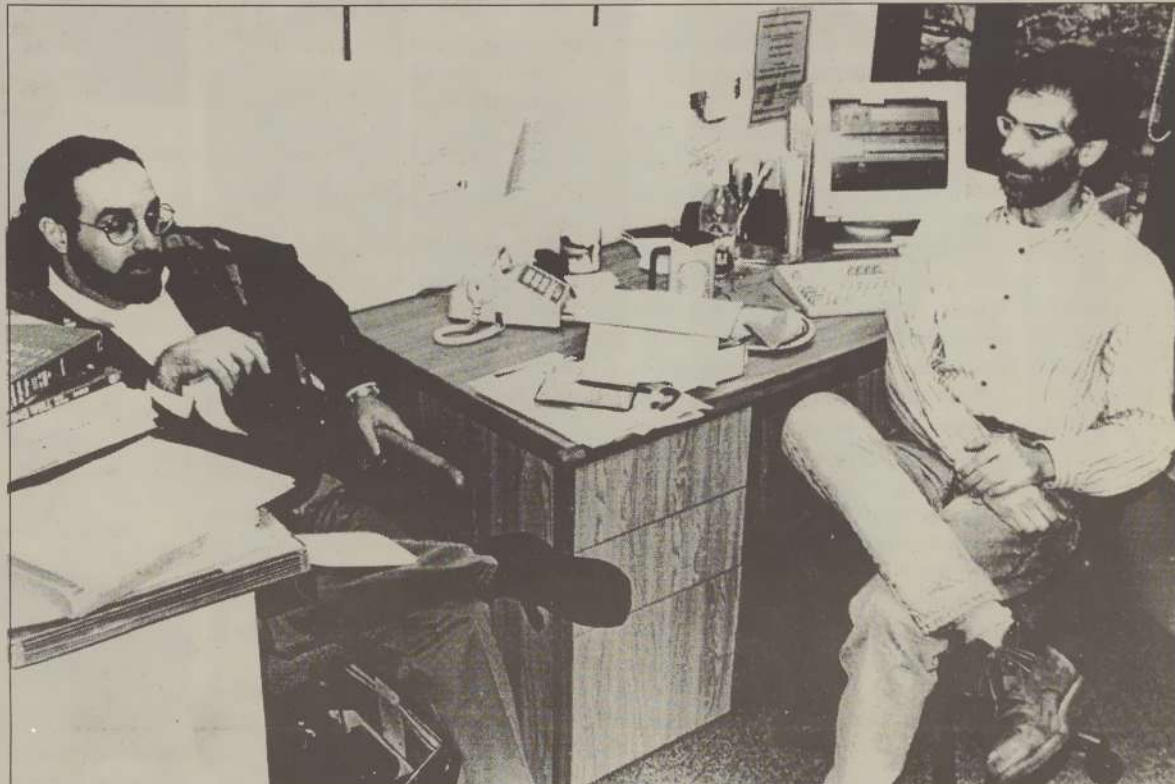
likely to subsidize an opera or theater if it's already running at 90% capacity, as opposed to 60%?

"It's a funny numbers game," said Nelson, "and arts are struggling on campus."

To verify this claim, one would only need to look at how many of the well-designed inquiry class posters have been stolen. The campus is more art-starved than most people realize, and goal of "Love, Death and the Arts" is to put the art back into life and learning.

"How much a student gets out of this class all depends on what he or she is willing to do," Dickinson said. It may be hard work, he said, but the result could be the most fun you've ever had in school.

"Besides," Nelson added, "if you never challenge yourself, then you're going to miss out."



TIMOTHY BELL / Clackamas Print

Math Instructor James Dickinson (left) and English Instructor David Mount meet in Mount's office to discuss the future of next term's PSU Inquiry Class: "Love, Death, and the Arts."

More than an act: Model UN in session at Clackamas

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In an unassuming Clackamas classroom, a strange scene is taking place. One student, portraying the United Nations ambassador from Japan, argues her position on a proposed resolution, while another protests that his country's interests are in jeopardy. Other representatives join the debate, and in the end a resolution is passed that meets the approval of a majority of the members of the UN Security Council.

Another typical day in the drama department? Not quite. The little-known class in question is the Model UN, a small group of students under the tutelage of Dr. Stuart King, who meet Thursday nights at 6:30 to hash out international issues.

Some people may remember having a Model UN club in high school, but odds are it was just that—a club, a recreational pursuit.

Not so the Clackamas Model UN. Nancy Hungerford-Levine, a political science major and student in the class, explains the dual nature of the program: "The Model UN that we have here is both a class and a club. It's an extracurricular activity, but it's also a normal history or political science class that you get three credits for taking."

So just what does the Model UN do? That depends on whether you're dealing with the international or local level. The Model UN club, for instance, is a part of two larger organizations [the Columbia Basin Model Security Council and the Model United Nations of the Far West] that stage intercollegiate events. These and other similar groups have regular conventions in which various national (and even a few international) schools, each representing a different country, gather to act out the same activities and decisions which concern the real United Nations.

The focus of the two organizations, according to Dr. King,

is different. "The Columbia Basin Model Security Council does issues that are big and happening, and on the front page of the Oregonian," whereas "the Model UN of the Far West goes a little bit more in depth. . . these are topics that require more research and in-depth study," says King.

These simulations, while not a class requirement, are impressive affairs, in which classmates must work together to represent the interests of their chosen country, by dividing the various issues between students. The class is portraying France at an upcoming simulation, and Nancy Hungerford-Levine, for example, is pulling her weight. "I'm writing a resolution to the UN by France, on what they want done about eco-terrorism and environmental warfare," shares Hungerford-Levine.

Debates are a tricky business because participants must put themselves in the mindset of their new country. "You don't express yourself," stresses King. "You express your country's position, but it gives [students] a chance to examine their own beliefs, and perhaps strengthen their position."

The Model UN class, on the other hand, plays out the same scenarios on a smaller scale. Each individual in the class is assigned a different nation, and is required to defend his or her country's interests each week. This keeps students on their toes and requires constant research to keep pace with other "diplomats."

"Basically, every time the class meets, we're dealing with another topic," Hungerford-Levine warns. "You have to take it seriously, or it will be immediately apparent that you don't know what you're talking about. Because everybody's doing the same kind of research, it's apparent if you haven't done your research."

This demanding side may seem detrimental to the class's fun nature, but Hungerford-Levine finds it exciting to be able to challenge and refute other classmates who haven't done their homework, so to speak. "So, it's fun, but it's

serious," she concludes.

There is a wide range of benefits to taking this course. For instance, in the pursuit of the ever coveted transfer degree, Model UN becomes valuable because it is not one, but two sequences. A student can take it for a full year as a history series or a political science series, or take the class for two years and use it as both. "If you need that, as some people do for their resumes, this is a fun way to get it," says King.

Another positive facet of the class is the fact-finding abilities it fosters. Students are required to constantly keep abreast of the facts surrounding their country's interests, and must utilize a variety of media to do so, including the internet and the various resources of the public library. "You get exposed to a lot of information sources that you wouldn't ordinarily use," King warns.

Other class benefits may be based on the interests of the individual. "For those interested in global events, this is a way to learn about international relations in an unconventional way," King explains.

Hungerford-Levine concurs. "Since I've been concentrating on the political science field," she relates, "I benefit personally from having the hands-on approach. That applied knowledge has really helped me consider what I'm going to be doing in my future."

In fact, Hungerford-Levine nicely pinpoints the essence of the class's practical value: "It's not so much the traditional format of a class. It's applied knowledge. You learn to integrate what you have researched and apply it to a situation."

Thus, the class may require a lot of research, but as Hungerford-Levine says, "you're using it. You're not just writing a report for the instructor. You're researching for your own knowledge. . . You're putting into practice your knowledge instead of writing reports that nobody ever sees."