

Bill Briare: an insight on his insights

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When Bill Briare enrolled at Clackamas to take music classes 12 years ago, he was looking over the schedule book and realized there wasn't a class on the subject of religion. Briare saw an opportunity and approached the school with a syllabus.

The school agreed with Briare that there should be a religious studies class, and soon invited him to teach a class in Comparative Religion, a subject he has been teaching ever since.

"I like to teach religion because it connects to every field: it involves politics, history, anthropology and science," Briare shared. "Religion has the fundamental questions: Why are we here? What should we do while we are here? How should we act?"

According to Briare, ever since humanity has existed, people have been searching for the answers to these fundamental questions.

"I don't ask the question 'Why are we here?' anymore," he said. Instead he asks, "How did we arrive here?"

"I think the Universe must think that the consciousness of human life is interesting, and provided such a place that we could be here. We humans created an image of God, but really, what is the image of God? Is it the ocean, the sunset, the people? Or maybe the computer is the image of God," he said, laughing.

Briare explained that God brought human consciousness into existence and that there is

evidence of a long process of evolution on earth. To Briare it is a very interesting question to explore how we came to be in that process.

"God took dirt and formed humans. If that is what happened, it may have taken millions of years, but isn't it amazing that dirt turned into humans?" asked Briare.

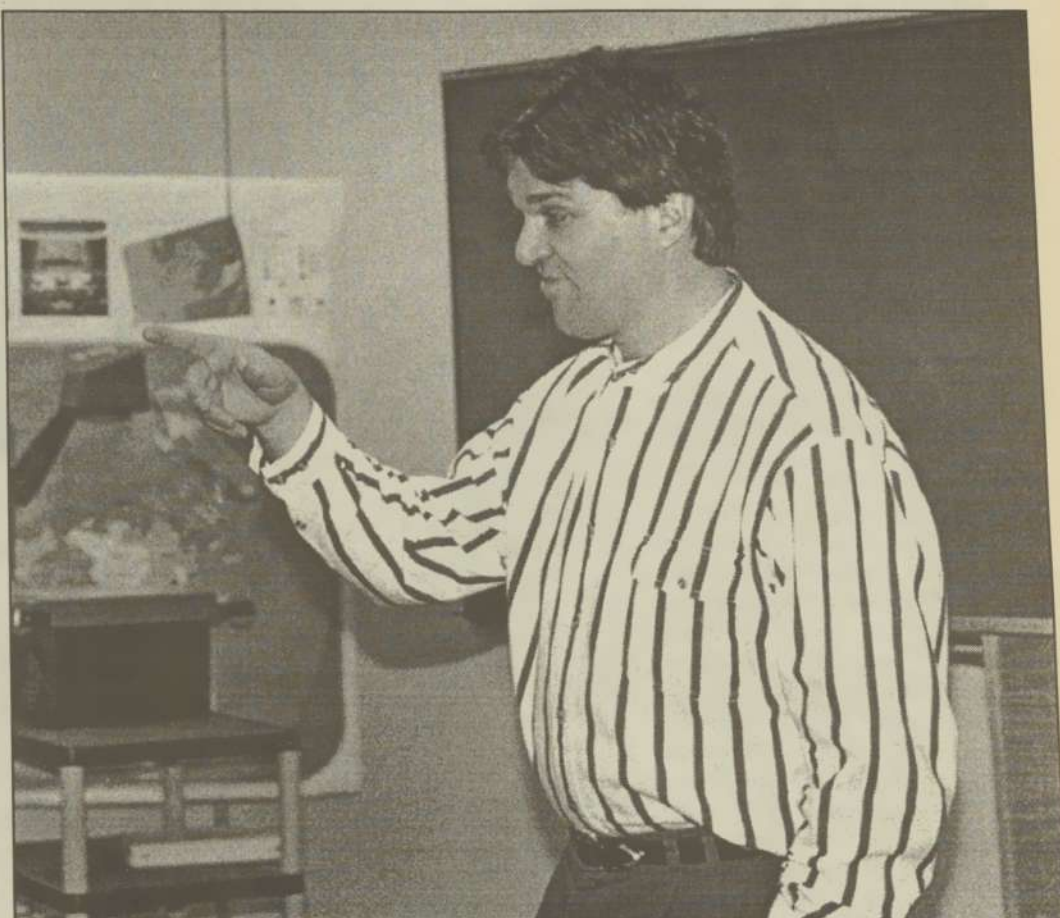
"How this happened is the scientists' job to figure out, through physics, cosmology, anthropology, archaeology, paleontology and biology. The fact that it happened, to me, is a religious question: dirt somehow animated into human consciousness," said Briare.

By studying religion, Briare said, "you can learn who you are, your place in the world. You can learn the questions of life's inevitabilities, dealing with the end of life, the loss of life. You can learn ethics and morality. Religion provides a lot of ways of learning. Mostly you can find out what it means to be human."

Briare said religious study is an opportunity for the student to explore questions that people have been asking for thousands of years about God. Religion is trying to answer the question: who is God? And, how is God working in the world?

"The reality is that the eastern religions offer wonderful answers, and ways to see the world. It is hard to look past the institutions, but if you just look back to the ideas of philosophies of religions, there is wonderful information there. It helps you to see the world in a bigger way," Briare explained.

He went on to say that "the



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Instructor Bill Briare lectures in his Comparative Religion class on Monday. Briare was the first instructor to teach a religion course at Clackamas, and has been doing it for 12 years.

hardest thing for me is to overcome the thought that I am always right. That has been ingrained in me since I was young. . . my high school was the best high school, my town was the best town, my religion was the best religion and so on. Everybody always thinks their way of thinking in religion is number one.

"I used to think I knew; now I know I don't. And that is all right. I thought if you had faith, then you knew everything, but that is

just ego."

Briare continued, "Faith means that you are still willing to search, and you are trusting that there is something worth searching for. If you found the answers, and you stopped looking, then I think that is a loss of faith."

Briare's teaching method is to let the religion speak for itself: here is what Jesus said, here is what Buddha said, and here is what Moses said.

"When you are still looking for truth and answers, that is faith.

Because no matter what you know, it is only a small portion of the universe," said Briare. "When someone says, 'I know God,' that is disturbing, because what you are saying is that you know the whole universe."

Finally, in answer to the big question asked in any study of religion: what is the most important thing in life?

"I don't want to be too simplistic, but: live in the present, and be kind and loving," Briare concluded.

Poet Karen Swenson



SHELBI WESCOTT / Clackamas Print

Poet Karen Swenson read some of her works on Thursday, Feb 4 at 10:30 a.m. in the Gregory Forum. Swenson's work reflects some her own intimate personal experiences while revealing her views on mankind.

Foreign Language Center consistently used



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Students Christina Vann, Liesl Muggli and Ben Reddaway play the Spanish card game Canasta. The new Foreign Language Center, located in Barlow Hall, is used consistently by all of the foreign language programs at Clackamas, and has been doing so for 12 years.

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