

Instructor loves job, poetry

Katie Wilson

Co-Editor-in-Chief

For part-time English Instructor Steve Wallin, working at the college is a little bit like being a squirrel.

"It's a lot of work," he said. "I didn't get to sleep until 1 this morning. I work really hard for about six months, and then in spring, when the workload lightens into the summer, I have more time to pursue my own interests. It's kind of like being a squirrel, in a way."

Wallin has taught at Clackamas since 1990.

"I did leave for a while," he said, talking about a break he once took from teaching. "I went back into the real world, and I didn't like it."

So, he returned to the college and has been teaching ever since.

"Once I started, nothing else really compared to it," he said.

And he loves where he works. "I drive up to work with a smile on my face every day," he said. "It's a really nice place ... just the ambience."

"Also, I like working with [students]. I enjoy it more as I get older. I was afraid, when I started getting older, that I would be out of touch, but no. Now, I'm remembering what it was like to be them ... I'm much more protective of them now."

"It's a cool profession," he added. "It's a privilege ... It has its drawbacks, but I don't worry too much. I feel lucky I'm getting paid to do this."

It has its challenges as well. What doesn't?

"You see yourself when you are tired or upset," he said, speaking about how easy it is to take personal troubles out on the students or let it show in class. "You have to say, 'No, no. Remember who they are.' The instructor may not mean it, but they, the students, take it to heart."

The lot of a part-time instructor is often considered difficult, but for Wallin it is near perfection itself.

"In some ways, I'm a selfish person," he said. "I do what I like. This [part-time job] gives me time to write, and I'm always around really pleasant people."

The journey Wallin took to becoming an instructor at the college is not the average trip.

He grew up in Vancouver, Wash. and still considers it "home" even though he's lived in Portland for the last 20 years. He attended high school in Vancouver; however, his interests at the time ran more towards sports — not that this was entirely a bad thing, according to Wallin.

"I learned about not giving up and being tenacious from my coaches," he said.

As for the rest of high school: "I wasn't very academic," he said. "I only studied what I wanted to."

But that all changed when he began taking classes at Clark Community College.

"Clark opened so many doors," he said. "For the first time, I realized I had a

brain."

He went on to study sociology at Portland State University, and while he was there, he took his first literature class.

Wallin credits the instructor of that class and another friend, a literary critic, as being two of the people who brought him to where he is now.

It only took six words from the literary critic to keep Wallin encouraged and writing poetry.

"He said, 'Don't give up; there's something there,'" said Wallin.

"As an instructor, you never know how you're going to influence and affect lives," he added, recalling how these men influenced his own life.

Wallin says that sometimes all a student needs is someone to say his or her work is good.

"It's surprising how much it helps," he said. "For better or worse, I took [my instructor] at his word."

He went on to study at Brown University, and now, as an English

instructor, Wallin feels quite capable at his job. Post-graduate work in English made up for his lack of credentials in that department.

"I think I'm competent enough now," he said, "or I fake it pretty well."

He has taught almost every class, from the writing sequence, to Introduction to Drama, to poetry.

"Poetry, of course, is my favorite," he said.

He began writing poetry in high school. What got him started was the usual muse: love. He set out to write a love poem to a young lady, but then something unexpected happened:

"I realized I liked the poem more than the young lady, and I've been writing ever since."

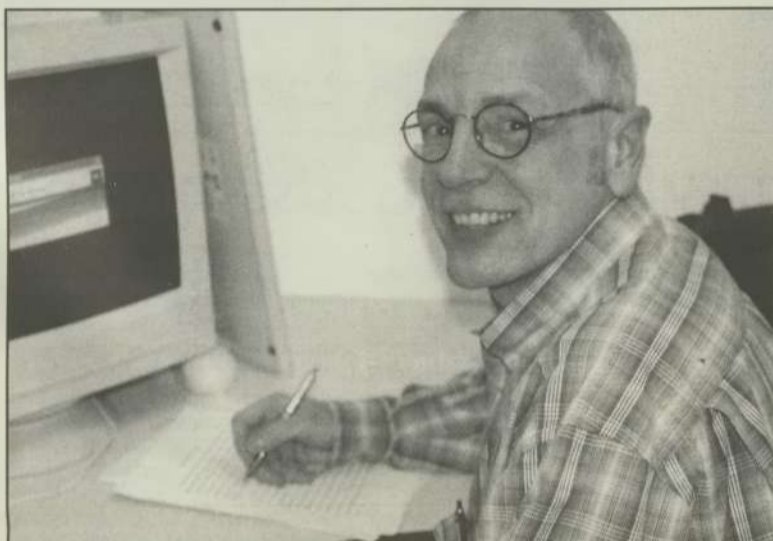
Wallin loves poetry, his work and being a part-timer.

"My goal is always the next class ... to live in the moment and be as effective as I can on any given day," he said.

He admits that, yes, someday he will have to retire. But ...

"They may have to drag me out of here."

English Instructor Steve Wallin says he has taught nearly every class offered by the English Department, but he doesn't find his job boring or mundane; he looks forward to each class and the challenges of working as a part-time instructor.



Katie Wilson Clackamas Print

Class credits: They DO make sense!

Frank Jordan

The Clackamas Print

Everyone at Clackamas takes classes for different reasons: Some want to use CCC as a springboard to further their education at a four-year school, some just want to acquire knowledge for personal use, and some just take classes to help decide what they want to do with their lives.

Clackamas requires a certain amount of credits in order to achieve a transfer degree or a certificate. Financial aid will only pay for a minimum amount of credits taken in any given term. So, the concept of college credits leaks into almost everyone's collective consciousness.

But how are credits determined, and who decides what constitutes a college credit?

"Credit for a class is essentially the amount of time for lecture in a topic and any lab time used to supplement that topic," said Jennifer Bown, CCC science instructor. "A specific example is lab science classes.

Take

biology, for example. A biology class at Clackamas is offered for four credits. That is one hour a week, three days a week in the lecture portion and three hours a week in the lab. The lab is used to supplement the lecture. Some biology classes are inclusive; that is, they have the lecture and the lab included together."

A lot of classes that meet in the evenings and on weekends use the all-inclusive method, mainly because those classes are limited in the hours that they can meet. Those classes meet three hours a night, two nights a week.

Why do they do it this way? No particular reason, except that the state university system has their requirements as far as college credit is concerned, and the community colleges do their best to make sure that their students are able to transfer those credits

to the state universities.

Instructors at Clackamas are given great freedom on how to teach their individual classes, as long as they meet the lecture time and lab time requirements. Some instructors love to talk about a topic, so they use up most of the lecture time, as some of us students who have taken these classes can well attest to. Some instructors, however, love to get students some more hands-on learning, so they use the labs to their full extent.

In the end, it really does not matter how much time is used outside of class to get homework done. Some students do almost no work outside of class in certain subjects, while others spend three to four hours a week studying and doing homework.

We all learn differently. But that time is not figured in to the credit breakdown for each class.

So, next time you sign up for a class, you might want to take into account how much time you are going to be in class and how much time you will spend studying outside of class. All of those credits add up, and hopefully all of those credits earned will transfer. That is a goal that most of us share.



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