



Missouri State
U N I V E R S I T Y

**Learning Communities and Public Affairs: Launching
a New Program at Missouri State University**

***Prepared for 24th Showcase on Teaching and Learning
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Mike Wood
Director, First-Year Programs

Agenda

- What is a curricular learning community?
- What are the benefits for students and faculty? I.e., why did we start LC's?
- What are we doing this year?
- Future plans...

What is a Learning Community?

- “In higher education, curricular learning communities are classes that are linked or clustered during an academic term, often around an interdisciplinary theme, and enroll a cohort of students. A variety of approaches are used to build these learning communities, with efforts intended to restructure the students’ time, credit, and learning experiences to build community among students, between students and their teachers, and among faculty members and disciplines (*National Learning Communities Project, Evergreen State University*)



Benefits to students

- **Students develop a stronger sense of belonging with the MSU community.**
- **Students connect with their peers.**
- **Build lasting relationships with faculty, both inside and outside the classroom.**
- **Engage in experiential learning experiences which will enhance in-class learning.**



Benefits for faculty

- **Opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and pedagogical innovation**
- **Enhanced collegiality across disciplines**
- **Increased awareness of students' academic and personal needs**
- **Additional \$500 stipend for teaching in LC**



What are we doing this year?

- 16 Themed Learning Communities (see handout)
- Emphasis is on first-year general education courses.
- Full scale launch of common reader
- Planning additional activities for multiple tie-ins to Public Affairs Mission.



Yearly Public Affairs Theme

- 2006/07 One World: Many Voices
- 2007/08 Seeking Solutions: Conflict, Violence, and the Courage to Change
- 2008/09 Sustainability
- 2009/10 Evolving Economic Realities
- **2010/11 Leadership in a Global Society**
- 2011/12 Culture of Connectivity



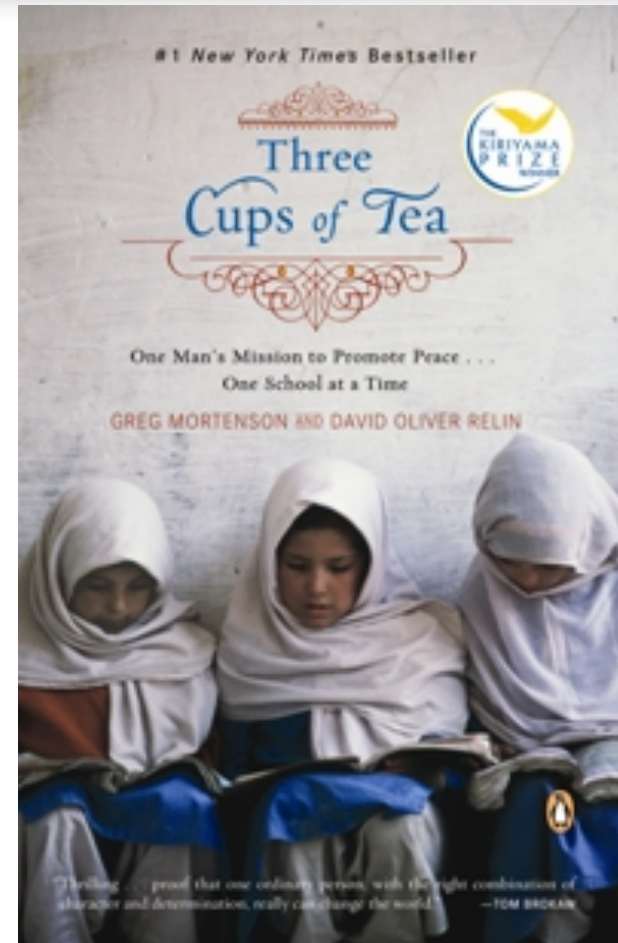
Common Reader, 2010

Three Cups of Tea was selected by a committee of faculty, staff, and a student Peer Leader. The book will be used in all first-year seminar courses (approximately 100 sections, 2500 students).

A variety of activities, including a keynote speaker by the author are planned for fall.

PA Theme for 2010: Leadership in a Global Society

<http://www.missouristate.edu/paw/default.asp>



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Learning Community class at Cook's Kettle Restaurant

Cook's Kettle is a vocational training program for the homeless. Students also wrote a reflective essay about the experience.



What students are saying...

- *“In my LC I felt like I was more connected with the other students and my teacher.”*
- *“Our class became much closer and helped each other by forming study groups—it motivated me to not only come to class, but to participate.”*



LC survey results: positive outcomes

- **85.5%** agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “*I communicated more easily with faculty in my LC than with my prof in my non-LC classes*”
- **92.03%** agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “*The courses in my LC were well connected through a common theme.*”
- **86.96%** agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “*I appreciated the opportunity to be in a learning community.*”



Future Plans

- Continue growing the number and variety of CLC's for first-year students.
- Continue to assess effectiveness of LC's
- Experiment with upper division LC's?



Questions?

Contact information:

Mike Wood: MikeWood@missouristate.edu (417)836-8343



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