



Summer Reading 2015

Facilitation Guide for
The Nature of College

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I. CONTEXT FOR THE SUMMER READING PROGRAM

Goals

The Summer Reading Program is a major component of TCNJ's First Year Experience, a comprehensive program of academic and co-curricular activities promoting the successful transition of entering students to college life.

President Gitenstein highlights the importance of the Summer Reading Program in her annual letter to incoming first-year students, describing the program as a first step in their college careers and preparation for "our challenging and engaging academic environment."

The goals for the Summer Reading Program are:

- To promote first-year student participation in the TCNJ intellectual community by selecting a summer reading text related to the CICPC theme and Community Learning Day
- To promote critical analysis of the text by requiring students to respond in writing to assigned questions
- To model thoughtful intellectual engagement with the text through small group discussions led by a faculty/staff facilitator
- To provide students with a helpful transition to academic life as part of the Welcome Week program
- To provide students an opportunity to understand diverse perspectives

For more information on the First-Year Experience: <http://fye.pages.tcnj.edu>

2015-16 Intellectual Theme: College and Change

College is a place of personal transformation for students, and college prepares students for success in their future lives. But immersion in a campus culture also shapes a student's place in the world, socially and ecologically. What can students learn in college that will help them become responsible agents of change in society and in society's relationship to the nature world? In *The Nature of College*, James Farrell writes, "College education isn't just classes, papers, and GPAs. It's also an open invitation to engage designing minds, first in understanding the designs of nature, second in understanding the culture of nature, and finally in designing a culture that enriches nature's health and our own deep fulfillment." To fully appreciate the possibilities of the college experience, we might look to environmentalist David Orr's words and envision our college as a place where students gain the capacity to design the future.

Selection of the Intellectual Theme and the Summer Reading Text

Each year, the Cultural and Intellectual Community Program Council (CICPC) selects the campus-wide intellectual theme as a guide to selecting the summer reading book and funding co-curricular events across campus throughout the academic year. Faculty, staff, and students from around the college may present speakers, film series, performances, and other events related to the theme.

CICPC also organizes Community Learning Day, a major event that is directly tied to the summer reading text and usually takes place on the first Wednesday of October. This year's summer reading book is *The Nature of College* by the late James Farrell, Boldt Distinguished Professor of the Humanities at St. Olaf's College, who passed away in 2013. The featured speaker for Community Learning Day is David Orr, who will speak at noon on Wednesday, October 7, 2015, at Kendall Hall Main stage. David Orr is the Paul Sears Distinguished Professor of Environmental Studies and Politics and Special Assistant to the President of Oberlin College. He is the author of seven books and the founder of the Oberlin Project, a joint effort between the City of Oberlin and Oberlin College to reduce greenhouse gas emissions below zero.

CICPC is a college-wide program council composed of faculty, staff, and student members. For further information on CICPC's charge and how to apply for funding for an event, see:

<http://liberallearning.tcnj.edu/about/ccic-themes/schedule-of-events-for-the-year/>

II. SUMMER READING DAY, AUGUST 24

Preparation and Follow-Up

Students' writing on Canvas

To prepare for Summer Reading Day, the students have been instructed to submit three short posts of 200 words, one in response to each of three questions in Discussions forums on Canvas. They will also write comments of at least 100 words each in response to three posts by their classmates. Students are expected to complete their posts by August 15. The instructions students see are here: <http://fye.pages.tcnj.edu/summer-reading-2015/>

Facilitators' access to the Canvas site

Facilitators will use the Canvas site to view the discussion forums and to access the course roster. You should familiarize yourself with the Canvas site and review the students' posts before you meet with them on August 24.

Log in to Canvas at canvas.tcnj.edu. You will see an SRP class (look for 1158-SRP-99-01). This course has individual sections for each FSP course.

Locating Course Roster prior to August 24

Please print out a copy of the class list and bring it with you to the discussion session to take attendance.

- To find the roster:
 - Click on Files
 - Click on the Facilitator Content folder
 - Click on the FSP Course Rosters folder; all files are saved with the course number

Marking Attendance after August 24

- Please e-mail liberal@tcnj.edu with names of absent students.

Viewing Forums

- Once students have submitted to the discussion forum, you can click on “Discussion” in the left navigation. This will load ALL discussion forums for all students. To view only your sections, please type your FSP number (for example, FSP164-15) into the Search field. This will display the 3 forums relevant to your section.
 - Please be patient with this step: it may take several minutes to load all of the forums.
- Next, click on the forum title to view the student responses.

***You will not be grading forum completion.
This will be handled by the Liberal Learning Office.***

Note: Bryana Bonfanti (bryana.bonfanti@tcnj.edu) will be handling all CCS student Attendance and Discussion Forum participation.

Preparing to Facilitate

As the facilitator of a classroom discussion of the assigned text, you will guide the students as they engage in the first major intellectual exercise of their college careers. Your role is to model the ways that intellectuals propose questions and formulate strategies for researching those questions. Ideally, both facilitators and students will have more questions at the end of this discussion than they did at the beginning. Our hope is that students will leave with better questions than those with which they arrived.

Section III of this handbook offers tips on how to facilitate. These tips are intended to help you focus your approach in ways that are consistent with the goals of the Summer Reading Program. Section IV lists discussion topics and questions related to *The Nature of College*.

Oops, life happened

If you find that you will be unable to make it to your session, please call the Liberal Learning office at 609-771-2409 as soon as possible so that we can arrange for a replacement facilitator.

Schedule for Summer Reading Day, August 24

Facilitator orientation
12:30-1:45 PM, Education 115

The coordinators of the Summer Reading Program will update facilitators on how the program is working this year so that you're on the same page with your students and can answer their questions. We will also review the procedures for assessing student performance.

We will briefly review the Tips for Successful Facilitation (section III of this handbook) and discuss any questions you have about facilitating group discussions.

Each year several members of the TCNJ community who have a variety of expertise related to the intellectual theme are invited to speak on the summer reading text. This year's speakers are:

Diane Bates, Associate Professor of Sociology, Coordinator of the Environmental Studies program

Michael Nordquist, Interim Executive Director for Community Engaged Learning Programs and Partnerships

Donna Drewes, Co-Director, The Sustainability Institute

Lauren Madden, Assistant Professor of Elementary and Early Childhood Education

Ashley Borders, Associate Professor of Psychology

Lunch will be available at the start of this session.

Discussion sessions

The room and time for your discussion session is listed in a spreadsheet on the Summer Reading site: <http://fspfaculty.pages.tcnj.edu/summer-reading-program-resources/>. The document lists the FSP section assigned to you.

Session 1: 2:00-3:00 PM (please end exactly at 3:00 PM to allow for the next session to start on time)

Session 2: 3:10-4:10 PM

Arrangements have been made to unlock the rooms for all discussion sessions. If your assigned room is locked when you arrive, please try to find a custodian, department staff, or faculty member nearby. If you can't find assistance in the immediate area, contact Facilities (Access Control) at 609-771-2353.

After your session, e-mail liberal@tcnj.edu with names of absent students.

III. TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL FACILITATION

Setting the Stage

Your discussion session is likely to be the students' first college experience in the classroom, so it will be helpful to give them an overview of what the next will look like and help them feel relaxed from the start. Let your group know that you're happy to be with them and that you've been looking forward to meeting them. Share your mood and be authentic. Let them know if you are the class FSP instructor or if they will be seeing a different instructor later in the week.

Attend to "housekeeping" details—for example:

- Let your group know the nearest bathroom and water fountain locations, and that permission is not needed to visit either.
- Kindly request that participants turn their cell phones off and put them away.

Introductions

Start by introducing yourself.

Name

Where you're from

TCNJ unit or department (if you teach classes, what classes do you teach?)

Degree(s)

One outside interest or fact

Have the students introduce themselves.

Name

Where they're from

Major (if open options, ask what majors they're interested in exploring)

One outside interest or fact

This is a great opportunity to explore expectations in college--both what will be expected of them as students and their expectations of what college is like. Ask questions like:

- What do you think faculty and staff will be expecting from you in college?
- What were expectations like in your high school?
- What was challenging about writing about the summer reading book?
- What was challenging about writing the response posts?

Discussion tips

Getting started

One way to easily get your group's discussion started (as well as warm up the group) is to share a personal anecdote. Keep in mind that this may be the first opportunity that some of these students have had to speak with a college faculty or staff member. Sharing a personal story can help open the students up to sharing and make you more approachable.

Remind participants that this discussion is not a test, but rather an opportunity for them to share their ideas and thoughts related to *The Nature of College*. There is no right or wrong answer.

Discussion dynamics

Pose straightforward questions, and let the students take the discussion from there.

Allow at least 20 seconds of silence for an answer before rephrasing or posing a new question or prompt.

Encourage participants to discuss among themselves, rather than look and speak only at you.

Some students may be nervous that they didn't finish the book, so make sure to raise questions that they can respond to as well.

If a discussion becomes heated, refocus the discussion on the book, or guide discussion toward answering why the book elicits strong feelings, ideas, or opinions.

All participants bring different personality types to the discussion. Here are a few suggestions for managing discussion to guide participation toward balance:

- The "Expert": Does someone else have something to say about _____?
- The "Dominant": Does anyone feel differently about _____?
- The "Rambler": Avoid eye contact, focus on other participants, and insert a question to the others when there is a pause.
- The "Disrupter": Remind them that we aren't asking everyone to agree, just to think critically and value others' opinions.
- The "Shy One": Ask to hear from participants who haven't shared comments. Example: Can anyone add to _____?
- The "Griper": Can you add something positive to _____?

Wrap-up

Open the floor for general questions. In past years, many group leaders have reported that their students benefitted from having a few minutes just to ask general questions related to Welcome Week, classes, and so forth.

Ask participants to reflect on how they can use or apply what they have learned.

Please remind students to complete the post-discussion session survey that they will receive in an e-mail or by accessing the survey via the Welcome Week app.

Thank them for their participation and remind them that David Orr will be speaking at Community Learning Day on October 7 at noon in Kendall Hall Main Stage.

Marking attendance

After your session, it's time for you to report attendance, as described on page 5 of this handbook.

IV. QUESTIONS ABOUT *THE NATURE OF COLLEGE*

Discussion prompts on Canvas

You might find it helpful to start discussion with the questions to which the students responded in their posts on Canvas, then address other discussion topics that interest you. The three questions on Canvas are:

- 1) Imagine the world in which you would like to live and work twenty years after college graduation. What do you need to learn in college in order to contribute to the changes needed to build this world? Frame this essay as a letter to your TCNJ professors. Use terms from the ecologist's dictionary, which appear throughout Farrell's book.
- 2) In what ways does Farrell's book challenge your expectations of college life and your own role as a college student? How does the book help you identify specific ways in which college students can instigate crucial and fundamental cultural change?
- 3) Farrell argues that every action you take has an impact on the environment. As a citizen of Earth, discuss the implications of one action you've taken since you got up this morning and consider whether those implications are consistent with your values.

Readers' Guide for *The Nature of College*

Students' responses to the text will help lead the direction of the discussion, but it is likely that you will need to make suggestions or refocus the conversation from time to time. The following questions, quotes, and topics are suggestions for discussion. However, if your students want to explore other themes or topics from the text, please encourage them and do your best to supplement their conversation with examples from the text when needed.

The topics below are excerpted from the Reader's Guide for College Students for *The Nature of College*, which TCNJ has permission to use. For more discussion points, please refer to the entire document, available at <http://natureofcollege.org/wp-content/uploads/Readers-Guide.pdf>

Prelude

1. Farrell contends that "global weirding" is a better term for current climate changes than "global warming." Why? Is this just a sign of his weirdness, or is there more substance to the idea?
2. Farrell agrees with David Orr that the purpose of college is to prepare "designing minds." Do you agree? If so, why? If not, why not?

Chapter 1: Waking Up to Nature

3. “Cultural work” — the idea that everyday actions, artifacts and entertainments reinforce (or challenge) deep cultural values, institutions, assumptions and expectations — is one of the most important concepts of this book. What does Farrell mean by cultural work, and how does it show up in our daily lives? How do we get worked over by the cultural work of everyday events and amusements?
4. Farrell contends that “we are making history with each of our everyday actions,” but few of us usually think so. What would happen if we began to understand ourselves as agents of history, whether or not we intend to be?
5. Who decides what’s normal? How much freedom do we have to set the norms for our own lives? To influence the norms of our culture? Where have you come in conflict with cultural norms, and what did you do about it?

Chapter 2: The Nature of Stuff

6. Why — socially, psychologically, economically and politically — do we have so much stuff? What is it for? What does it mean?
7. What is at the end of your personal waste stream? Where does your garbage go? Where is the “away” when you throw stuff “away?”
8. When the buy-o-sphere threatens the biosphere, what can we do, individually and collectively? What are you doing now? What measures might help to curb the culture of consumption?

Chapter 3: The Nature of Clothes

9. How do appearances work in your life? How do peers socialize you in your choice and use of clothes?
10. What is sweatshopping? How is it an environmental justice issue? What is your ethic of globalization? Out of sight and out of mind? Something else? Does your ethic show up in what you wear?
11. What is the politics of clothes? What political policies (domestic and international) make it easier to exploit other people and the world’s environments? What groups are working to change those policy rules? What “new rules” would make it easier to be good?

Chapter 4: The Nature of Food

12. What is the common sense of a college cafeteria? What is on your mind when you go to eat? What is not on your mind?

13. How and why does industrial agriculture work so well to feed the world (except, of course, the thousands of people who die of starvation every day) and degrade it at the same time?
14. What is grace and why might it be important even to people who don't pray?
15. What is the politics of your food? How do politicians and their policies (especially farm policy) affect your diet? What is the food politics of the future? What can we do now (individually and institutionally) to move toward that new politics?

Chapter 5: The Nature of Cars

16. How many miles are on the odometer of your car? If a car is, as Farrell says, a meaning machine, what does that mean, individually and culturally and environmentally?
17. After you were born, did you come home in a car? What other steps were important in your automotive socialization? Do cars seem natural to you?
18. Farrell suggests that there are ten components of the common sense of cars. What would you add to his list? As a counterpoint, he also offers an uncommon sense of cars. Which do you think are his strongest arguments? Weakest?

Chapter 6: The Nature of Screens

19. Farrell lists many benefits of screens (TV, computers, video games, smart phones, etc.). Based on your own experience, what would you add to his list?
20. What is the difference between invisible technologies and appropriate technologies?
21. We often think of electronics (and especially computers) as a kind of de-materialization, but there are material inputs/impacts of our screens. Like what? How could we make those inputs and impacts more visible?

Chapter 7: The Nature of Parties

22. If we lived happier lives, would we need to party so much? Or would life be a party?
23. What makes you truly happy? How could you increase the happiness (qualitatively and quantitatively) in your life)? In the lives of other people in your culture? How could institutions be configured to make more people happier?

Chapter 9: The Nature of Religion

24. What do you think of Tim Clydesdale's idea that college students stow their religious values in an "identity lockbox" while they are busy with everyday life management at college?

25. If you are religious or spiritual, what difference does it make to anyone else buy you? How does your religion/spirituality shape your responses to social institutions? How does it shape your work? How does it shape your everyday consumption choices? Driving behavior? Sexual practices? Party time? How does it shape your environmental values (and practices)? Why?

Chapter 10: The Nature of Politics

26. When you think of politics, what are the first words and/or images that come to mind? Why?
27. When you look at your own political socialization, how did you learn (by expression and example) to do politics? Who socialized you most — parents, peers, teachers, media, or someone else? And what's the result: what's your operative political participation?
28. When people say "I'm not political," what do they really mean? What are the primary patterns of this apolitical pride?

Chapter 11: Making Environmental History

29. Farrell contends that we all make history every day, even though we're not intending to. How do you think that historians a hundred years from now will judge college culture and American culture? What will your grandchildren say to you in the year 2050? Are you making the history you want to make?

THANK YOU!

Thank you for serving as a discussion group leader for *The Nature of College*! We appreciate your support of this program and your support of first-year students at The College of New Jersey.