

classroom ACTIVITIES

PROMPT **creativity,** CRITICAL THINKING

By Shelly Strautz-Springborn



Students in Dr. Gary Hauck's Philosophy of World Religions class at MCC dressed in costumes and acted out the story of the Book of Esther during class last spring.



Teaching and learning is about more than talking and listening.

At Montcalm Community College, instructors and students alike engage in a variety of activities to enhance their classroom experiences.

MCC Emeritus Dean of Arts and Sciences Dr. Gary Hauck incorporates a variety of field trips as well as a theatrical activity into his Philosophy of World Religions class to engage students.

"In my World Religions class, we study the story of the Book of Esther when considering Judaism. Rather than simply having my class read it, we act it out, with costumes and a makeshift set," Hauck said. "We rehearse it a couple of times, then act it out and video record it, so the class can watch their own performance."

Andrew Naranjo is a student pursuing an Associate of Science & Arts degree as well as a part-time welding instructor at MCC. He said he appreciated Hauck's teaching style while enrolled in his class last year.

"We would go over the different religions and Dr. Hauck would have a different tie and a little story about it, and he brought in trinkets from his travels. All of that added to the overall learning experience. We weren't just sitting there listening to him talk," Naranjo said. "It added a personal dimension and helped me remember what we talked about."

"With the Esther play in general, acting it out, getting up and moving around – I can remember it today, just like it was yesterday because of the way we did it. It was really



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other and with the course material."

Snyder said she appreciated Hauck's first-hand knowledge and experience.

"Dr. Hauck shared a lot of personal stories from his traveling that were relevant to the class," she said. "He offered several field trips, all to places I had not been, such as a Buddhist temple and the Japanese Gardens of Frederick Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park. I learned a lot by seeing, doing and interacting with the other students in this class."

intriguing. We were part of it. We had a role," he said. "We didn't really have to take notes. We were involved in it, and it made it memorable."

Hauck said his teaching style focuses on helping learners find a setting they can relate to and supports critical thinking.

"I found over the years, that they learn the story much better this way, and they are much more engaged in discussing the historical elements of the book, and its significance in religion," Hauck said of his classroom activities, adding that he wrote the script and paraphrased the story, incorporating some humor to get their attention.

"They always seem to enjoy it, and they ace this part of the final exam as well," Hauck added.

Teresa Snyder, of Edmore, was also a student in Hauck's class, and said Hauck's activities "resonated" with her.

"To me, the class was very engaging," she said. "I think because we had so much non-typical classroom time, I got to know the other students and I still remember all of their names. We really had a personal connection with each



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