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In 2011, Teaching Remained at Heart of U.Va.'s Mission

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As the year draws to a close, UVA Today will look back at milestones, achievements, trends and big stories of 2011. To share your 2011 thoughts, visit the [UVA Today News Blog](#) or send us a tweet @uva using hashtag #uva2011.

December 20, 2011 — What happens in Vegas may stay in Vegas, but what happens in University of Virginia classrooms reaches around the world. Exceptional teaching and new courses, programs and degrees enriched the U.Va. student experience in 2011.

The focus resonated from the top down, with **President** Teresa A. Sullivan, a highly regarded sociologist, teaching as well as leading the University in her first full year in office. At her direction, her inauguration in April included a daylong symposium on "**Using Evidence to Improve Teaching and Learning in Higher Education**." During the spring semester, Sullivan had three sociology undergraduates **as interns** in her office, and for the upcoming **January Term**, she will teach a three-credit course, "Sociology of Work."

Here are a few highlights of teaching at U.Va. in 2011.

Cool Courses & Programs

- 'History Behind the Headlines' Course Features Miller Center Colloquium Series
Jan. 25 — U.Va.'s **Miller Center** joined forces with the College's **Corcoran Department of History** and **Woodrow Wilson Department of Politics** to launch a new undergraduate course that explores the historical context behind today's **most pressing issues**.
- Sullivan Kicks Off New Interdisciplinary Initiative in Social Sciences
Feb. 10 — President Teresa A. Sullivan kicked off a spring lecture series sponsored by the Quantitative Collaborative, a new initiative of the **College of Arts & Sciences** that aims to marry quantitative research and the social sciences, and use the data to shape public policy at the highest levels. The interdisciplinary "QC," as it is known, has the potential to distinguish **the College**.
- **Students, Community Members Reflect on Benefits of the U.Va. Institute on Aging's Inaugural 'Art And Aging' Course**
May 2 — Recent research demonstrates that viewing nature and art may improve mood, reduce stress and improve attention or concentration. University students in a three-credit, interdisciplinary "Art and Aging" course this semester used this research to benefit local individuals with dementia and their caregivers.

- **History Repeats Itself: Students Examine Rotunda Fire in University Seminar**

May 5 — Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear — Oct. 27, 1895, to be exact — when the University of Virginia's Rotunda practically burned to the ground. Ten undergraduates in a University Seminar did just that, using digital technology to research and recreate the historic fire.

- **New Course Uses HBO's 'The Wire' To Examine Urban America**

May 11 — A popular television drama was the subject of a just-concluded media studies course, "'The Wire': Understanding Contemporary America Through Television at Its Best," taught by Bruce Williams, a professor of **media studies**.

- **iPads Help U.Va. English Students Turn Back the Pages of Literary History**

May 11 — A thick, printed anthology is required for many a college literature course. But that's so 20th century. English students experimented this semester with iPads to test the possibilities they offer for learning and scholarship.

- **U.Va. Professors Use Mead Endowment to Foster Interactions with Students**

Sept. 21 — Eleven U.Va. faculty members have been awarded Mead Endowment grants for "Dream Idea" projects ranging from beekeeping to dinner-hour philosophy, all designed to develop extracurricular interactions between faculty and students.

- **Architecture School 'un-Painting' Project Is a Lesson in Public Art**

Oct. 5 — When architecture professor Sanda Iliescu heard that a bright yellow wall in the east wing of the **School of Architecture** that is used as an exhibition space was going to be painted white, she knew it was the perfect opportunity for students in her "Painting and Public Art" course to put into practice what they were studying.

- **U.Va. Class Project Leads to Hand-Built Mongolian Greenhouse**

Oct. 19 — An assignment born in a U.Va. classroom grew into an international development project this summer when an interdisciplinary group of students traveled to a former Soviet-era spa in rural Mongolia to build a greenhouse made mostly of discarded glass vodka bottles.

- **Innovative French Course Brings Film, Language and Students Together**

Nov. 9 — Students crowd around video cameras and editing software in the **Digital Media Lab**. They greet each other with "bonjour" instead of "hello," then continue in French as they discuss their documentary film. They are in a new **French language and literature** course called "Reel Life Stories" that bridges the gap between foreign language and filmmaking.

- **Law, Graduate Students Explore Ethical Issues Through Fellini Films**

Nov. 18 — One recent evening in David Gies' living room, graduate students debated a film scene depicting an ecclesiastical fashion show. The students converge weekly to discuss the films of Federico Fellini as part of a seminar in practical ethics and cinema, co-taught by Gies, a **Spanish** professor in the College, and **law** professor Daniel Ortiz.

- **Landscape Architecture Course on 'The Bodied Environment' Links Movement and Space**

Dec. 9 — U.Va. landscape architecture lecturer Alison Hirsch and eight students spent the semester considering how the body moves in the environment by studying theory, engaging in environmental movement exercises and learning from guest lecturers about their experiences and research in a School of Architecture pilot course, "The Bodied

Environment: Performance and Movement Experience."

January Term Classes

- **Courses Examine the Technology and the Politics of Food**

Jan. 6 — Two January term courses focus on food from different directions: an engineering course on relationships between technology, nature and food, and a politics course on how policy issues around food are shaped. The courses, while separate, are being taught in tandem by two members of the University's Food Collaborative, an interdisciplinary consortium of faculty, staff and students that addresses all aspects of sustainable food issues.

- **Course Explores Martin Luther King Jr. and the Law**

Jan. 13 — A team of law professors is teaching a new January Term course that examines how the law affected Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement.

- **Class Delves Into 'Dark Side of the 20th Century'**

Jan. 13 — On the first day of his January Term class, "The Dark Side of the 20th Century: Between Auschwitz and the Gulag," Dariusz Tolczyk poses the question: "Does it make sense to dwell on the historical atrocities and great negative experiences of humanity?"

- **Students Study the 'Captive Ocean'**

Jan. 18 — Stephen Macko took his U.Va. students to explore the ocean in captivity. Macko, who teaches organic geochemistry and oceanography, and his January Term class examined the ocean in microcosm — contained, along with its denizens, within tanks and walls.

Excellent Teaching

- **U.Va.'s Beatley, Ryan Named Winners of State's 25th Annual Outstanding Faculty Awards**

Jan. 26 — Timothy Beatley of the **School of Architecture** and James Ryan of the **School of Law** are among a dozen faculty members from Virginia's public and private colleges and universities selected as recipients of the **2011 Outstanding Faculty Awards**.

- **Award-Winning Teachers Cultivate Curiosity, Change Hearts and Minds**

April 28 — U.Va. honored 20 award-winning teachers from all across the University. Some received endowed chairs or were recognized for their mentoring or teaching in study-abroad courses. Nine were named All-University Teaching Award winners. Three graduate teaching assistants also received awards. "We are here to honor your excellent teaching and also your service as the protectors and inventors of the knowledge that passes from one generation to another," U.Va. President Teresa A. Sullivan said. "Teaching has an eternal effect. Those who learn from you in turn will teach others, and so on. Teaching weaves the generations into an historical fabric that connects us all."

- **Marva Barnett and Jahan Ramazani Are Honored With 2011 Thomas Jefferson Awards**

Oct. 28 — Marva A. Barnett, French professor and founding director of the **Teaching Resource Center**, and R. Jahan Ramazani, Edgar F. Shannon Professor of English, are the recipients of the **2011 Thomas Jefferson Awards**. Over more than 20 years, Barnett, founding director of the Teaching Resource Center, has done much to improve the caliber of teaching at the University. Two of Ramazani's former students wrote of his influence in the classroom. "As an instructor, Professor Ramazani did for his students what I imagine he did

for WTJU listeners [as a disc jockey in his own student days]: open their minds to an art that seemed esoteric, dissonant and inaccessible," one wrote.

Programs & Degrees

- **U.Va. Launches Interdisciplinary Minor in Global Sustainability**

Feb. 11 — The University of Virginia has launched an interdisciplinary minor in global sustainability, open to students from all the undergraduate schools at the University. Students who meet the program requirements are eligible to graduate with the minor this May. The **Office of the Provost** approved the curriculum initiative on Jan. 28.

- **Fast-Growing Batten School Launches Five Dual Degree Programs, Welcomes First Post-Graduate Class**

Sept. 29 — Barely settled into its new home in Garrett Hall, which opened in August, the **Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy** is growing quickly.

- **Revamped Kinesiology Major Expands Curry School's Undergraduate Reach**

Oct. 24 — A new program at the **Curry School of Education** will make the school's educational offerings available to more undergraduates from the day they step on Grounds. Curry's new four-year kinesiology major will enroll its inaugural class starting in fall 2012, marking Curry's first direct-admit program for first-year students.

— *By Rebecca Arrington*

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