

MUM Excellence in Teaching Award, 2005-2006: Rob Schorman

Rob Schorman, Assistant Professor of History, writes that his “pursuit of teaching excellence has . . . just begun” as he begins his fifth year of teaching at Miami Middletown. These are humble words in light of the portrait drawn of him by both faculty and student nominators.

A former student notes his “outstanding ability to teach students who have a very broad range of aptitude and interest in the course matter.” He helps student learn not only about history but about their own learning. For example, he asks his students to write reflective “before and after” papers that document students’ beginning and ending understandings of an historical time period. One student’s “after” response articulates this growth in awareness: “The history of the time we are studying is much more complex than I thought it was. I see now that there were many different groups, each with their own motives. . .”

Rob describes his teaching practice itself as shaped by “intensive self-reflection” as well as a “sustained and systematic effort to learn more about pedagogy and more about [his] students.” He keeps remarkably extensive teaching journals (e.g. 80,000 words about one semester’s HST 111 sections!) for each course, documenting his observations on all aspects of his classes, a collection of “field notes” modeled after the type of notes he takes during his historical field research. In fact, Rob studies “teaching with the same discipline and rigor that [he] studies history.”

A faculty nominator wrote that “wherever you find targeted efforts to improve teaching and learning at Middletown, you are most likely to find Rob at the core of these activities.” To name a few, Rob serves on the Center for Teaching and Learning’s Leadership Collaborative, is the co-facilitator of the annual Proseminar, and administers many Small Group Instructional Diagnoses for colleagues across the disciplines. But perhaps his greatest influence continues to be the intelligent reflection on teaching that he inspires through his example and ~~supports in us~~ through probing conversations on all things pedagogical.