

Two Unlikely Roommates: Narcissus and Sisyphus

In his many years of creative teaching and leadership at public institutions in two key member states of CAMWS (Iowa and Indiana), Jim Ruebel made a "classics" course central to the general education of hundreds and hundreds of students for whom a single course in "classics" would likely be all they had room for in their increasingly compartmentalized degree programs.

More than anything else, a single course might encourage critical thinking. What are the key issues in a text, or an author? Why do we care now? And in Jim's case, when his attention turned to bright, "honors-level" students, the opportunities magnified.

This paper attempts to honor Jim's legacy by showing cartoons (based on the Narcissus, Sisyphus, and the Olympian Gods) allow good teachers to stimulate critical thinking in their general education classes. As such, they remind us of the central role of a single general education course for undergraduates whom we serve.

The paper will draw on testimony to his effectiveness and leadership that his Ball State University colleagues recall with pride and with admiration. In particular, the recollections of Dom Caristi, professor of Telecommunications and interim Associate Dean of the Honors College, give us a portrait of Jim's work as Dean of the Honors College at Ball State University, and Jim's three passions: his love for classics, athletics and every student he met.