

**Nomination Materials for Richard Hutchinson for the
Virgil Orr Junior Faculty Award (2008)**

a) Courses Taught and Overall Teaching Evaluation Rating for Each Course

Course Number	Course Name	Sections Taught	Course Evaluation Average
Sociology 201	Introduction to Sociology	25	3.58
Sociology 201-H	Introduction to Sociology (Honors)	1	no evals
Sociology 205	Introduction to Anthropology	3	3.9
Sociology 304	Social Psychology	1	3.7
Sociology 280	Sociology of Religion	5	3.83
Sociology 360	Terrorism & Social Movements	3	3.7
Sociology 370	Environmental Sociology	4	3.87
Sociology 401	Social Theory	7	3.49
Sociology 401-H	Social Theory (Honors)	1	4.0
Sociology 455	Social Movements	3	3.75

I have been teaching night classes at the Barksdale Air Force Base since the Fall Quarter, 2004. I have enjoyed teaching both the active duty personnel and their family members as well as community members taking classes while working. More recently I have begun teaching Honors courses, and that is another sort of rewarding teaching experience.

b) Philosophy of Teaching

Richard N. Hutchinson

“[T]he educator must try to develop men and women who can and will by themselves continue what he has begun: the end product of any liberating education is simply the self-educating, self-cultivating man and woman; in short, the free and rational individual.”

C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (p. 187) 1959

My philosophy of teaching falls within the Enlightenment tradition of promoting the extension of rational thought. More than any particular subject matter, it is a way of thinking that I try to impart, as well as an enthusiasm for learning. Of course sociology, more so than most fields, subjects cherished assumptions to questioning, and that makes it exciting to teach.

Cognitive Capacities

“That which exists does not conform to various opinions, but rather the correct opinions conform to that which exists.”

Aristotle

Promoting rational thought means promoting analytical thinking and critical thinking. To think analytically means to develop the capacity to “examine a complex, its elements, and their relations.” In other words, to analyze is to conceptually take things apart and see how they work. This can be an important end in itself, and it is also essential for the synthetic reconstruction of ideas. Thinking analytically does not preclude intuitive leaps, but subjects any insights gained through intuition to systematic scrutiny. I teach sociology as a natural science, not as an interpretive art. Social science, my students learn, should proceed from careful empirical description to theoretical explanation and empirical verification.

“Doubt is an uncomfortable condition, but certainty is a ridiculous one.”

Voltaire

Thinking critically means questioning assumptions, biases and ideologies. It means abandoning the lawyer’s approach of building the best case for a position determined in advance and discarding evidence for the other side, in favor of the scientific approach of testing propositions with evidence, and being open to discovering something new. It means resolutely walking the middle path between dogmatism and cynical relativism. Again, for me it is the approach that matters more than the content – I am not dogmatically attached to any particular theory. I am always searching for new teaching materials that I can use as examples of theory construction and theory testing, the aim being to explain social reality.

“If we take up the third role of reason, the autonomous role, we are trying to act in a democratic manner in a society that is not altogether democratic. But we are acting as if we were in a fully democratic society, and by doing so, we are attempting to remove the ‘as if’... We are trying to make the society more democratic... To do so of course is to risk ‘trouble’; or what is more serious, to face a quite deadly indifference. It requires that we deliberately present controversial theories and facts and actively encourage controversy.”

C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (p. 188, 198, 191)

Moral Capacities

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Jesus (“The Golden Rule”), Kant (“The Categorical Imperative”) and many others...

Ethics are important in any area of endeavor, but they are important in sociology and social science in ways that are perhaps more complex than in any other. It is something that I have struggled with, and my understanding has grown and changed over the years, from a strongly normative stance to a more strictly value-neutral position, to a more complex synthesis.

There is the ethics of science, which mainly has to do with *means* – the scientific method. If ends are a goal we seek, say true North, then the means are our compass. If we falsify the results, or fit them to a predetermined path, then we will not find the truth. *Ends*, or which direction to go, is a different matter. Here too, science can offer an empirically-based assessment, but it can only give guidance according to agreed-upon criteria. To the extent that we have different values, it is only through the difficult work of coming to agreement on common criteria that we can then use science to adjudicate social conflict. For instance, if we could agree that deterring murder is the justification for the death penalty, then we could agree to abolish it, because the evidence does not support deterrence theory. But capital punishment can still be supported on other grounds, and if you believe that the only just punishment for killing is death, then science will not persuade you to change your mind.

It is through this sort of discussion that I teach ethics. In other words, it has more to do with questioning biases and assumptions than with inculcating any particular set of values. Ultimately, I do have strong personal ethics, and I do not always adopt a stance of value neutrality. My ethics are those of Jesus and Kant, as opposed to their all-too prevalent opposite – “do to others before they do unto you,” and “might makes right.”

I find teaching to be a never-ending challenge and joy. It give me a great sense of satisfaction when I get the sense, from their work, from their comments, and from the looks on their faces, that my students are engaged in the process of learning.

c) Selected List of Publications, Grants and Similar Activities

GRANTS

- 2008 **(applied)**
“Peru: A Fusion of Identities” Research Trip – Center for International Educational Exchange
(Louisiana Tech University Summer Faculty Enhancement Grant)
- 2006 *Beyond Oil to Renewable Energy* – Principal Investigator
Board of Regents Support Fund Grant #32-3250-40839 (\$13,750)
- 2006 “China’s Southwest” Research Trip – Center for International Educational Exchange
(Louisiana Tech University Summer Faculty Enhancement Grant)

PUBLICATIONS

- 2008 **(under review)**
Hutchinson, Richard. “God and the Bodhisattva: A Buddhist Reading of *Stranger Than Fiction*,” under review at the *Journal of Popular Culture*
- 2005 Hutchinson, Richard. “Teaching Islamic Movements.” *Critical Mass Bulletin*
(Newsletter of the Section on Collective Behavior and Social Movements,
American Sociological Association) Spring 2005, Vol. 30 (01): 7-8.
- 2004 Hutchinson, Richard. “Population and the Environment,” Chapter 15 in
Sociology In Our Times, Louisiana Tech University Sociology Program custom edition.

PRESENTATIONS

- 2008 Liberal Arts Research Symposium XXXI, Louisiana Tech University
“Caring for Creation: The Greening of Evangelical Christianity”
- 2008 Mississippi Philological Association, Mississippi College, Clinton, MS
“The Ecological Apocalypse of 1972: Science & Social Movements in John Brunner’s
The Sheep Look Up”
- 2007 Liberal Arts Research Symposium XXX, Louisiana Tech University
“The Solar Society: The Sociology of the Renewable Energy Transition”
- 2007 Mississippi Philological Association, Mississippi Valley State University, Itabena, MS
“Suturing, God and the Bodhisattva: A Buddhist Reading of *Stranger Than Fiction*”
- 2006 Mid-South Sociological Association, Lafayette, Louisiana
“Oil Depletion, Global Warming, and 21st Century Society”
- 2005 American Sociological Association, Philadelphia
“Solar Sociology: A Research Agenda for the Renewable Energy Transition”
- 2004 American Sociological Association, San Francisco
“Network Sequences in Local Social Movement Organizing”

d) Selected List of Community/University Service Activities

EVENTS ORGANIZED

- 2008 *Global Climate Change Symposium*, Louisiana Tech University
Speakers from biology, architecture and sociology departments
- 2007 *Beyond Oil to Renewable Energy Speaker Series*, Louisiana Tech University
Speakers from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, the Union of Concerned Scientists, the Green Blue Institute, and the Tech physics department
- 2007 *The U.S., Iraq and Iran: What Next?* Forum, Louisiana Tech University
Speakers from history and sociology departments

PRESENTATIONS

- 2008 Russian Society & Culture (History 495-H), Louisiana Tech University
“Shostakovich and Prokofiev: Classical Music in Stalin’s U.S.S.R.”
- 2008 Environmental Sociology (SOC 370) & American Poetry (ENG 408) joint class session,
Louisiana Tech University – “Environmental Themes in the Poetry of Kenneth Rexroth and Gary Snyder”
- 2008 Global Climate Change Symposium, Louisiana Tech University
“Global Warming: The Science and Its Policy Implications”
- 2008 Kiwanis Club of Ruston (Sunrise)
“Global Warming: The Science and Its Policy Implications”
- 2007 All Souls Unitarian-Universalist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana Tech University
“How to Live in a Glass House: Working With Guilt”
- 2007 The U.S., Iraq and Iran: What Next? Forum, Louisiana Tech University
“The U.S., Iraq and Iran Since the Iranian Revolution”
- 2006 All Souls Unitarian-Universalist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana
“Is Nothing Sacred Anymore?”
- 2006 LEH Summer Institute “Blues at the Crossroads”
“Music and 1960s Social Movements: An Application of Framing Theory”
- 2006 All Souls Unitarian-Universalist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana
“Bodhisattvas and Stewards of Creation: World Religions and the Environment”
- 2006 Revolution in the Modern World Honors Seminar (HIST 490H), Louisiana Tech University
“Theories of Revolution”

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Faculty Senate, 2007-2010

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Sociological Association (ASA)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Council, Section on Evolution and Society of the ASA