

Innovative teaching implemented at Capitol

By Barbara Myers

It's the twelfth century—and guess who's coming to dinner?

For students in Dr. Theodora Graham's Western Traditions II class, "dinner" is a Medieval Feast planned and prepared by class members, complete with a seven course meal and entertainment.

Such innovative approaches to teaching are found at Capitol, not only in the Humanities, but in Business, Engineering, and Behavioral Science. They make learning fun.

Part of the fun in studying history is looking at it from many different perspectives.

"There is a new movement in the study of history," says Graham, "that deals with all aspects of history, including how people lived and what they ate. The feast was a part of the fabric of the life of the people during that time."

In addition to the research, planning, and preparation of the meal, Graham said she "challenged the students to use other talents for presentation."

As part of the banquet entertainment one student selected music and choreographed a dance in the spirit of the Renaissance. Another student performed a vocal rendition of Medieval music.

"One of the advantages to students," Graham says, "is that they can become advisors to the next group—ground breakers."

"What innovative teaching does is to open up new possibilities. You take a risk when you try new things, but you hope people will come through and grow."

Dr. Theodora Graham
Humanities Professor

The student who developed the slide presentation of Renaissance and Medieval stained glass will find his work part of the course material presented to future students.

Senior engineering students can also see their ideas take on tangible forms.

William Aungst, associate professor of engineering, has students design a solar home or

system as part of their course in Project Design.

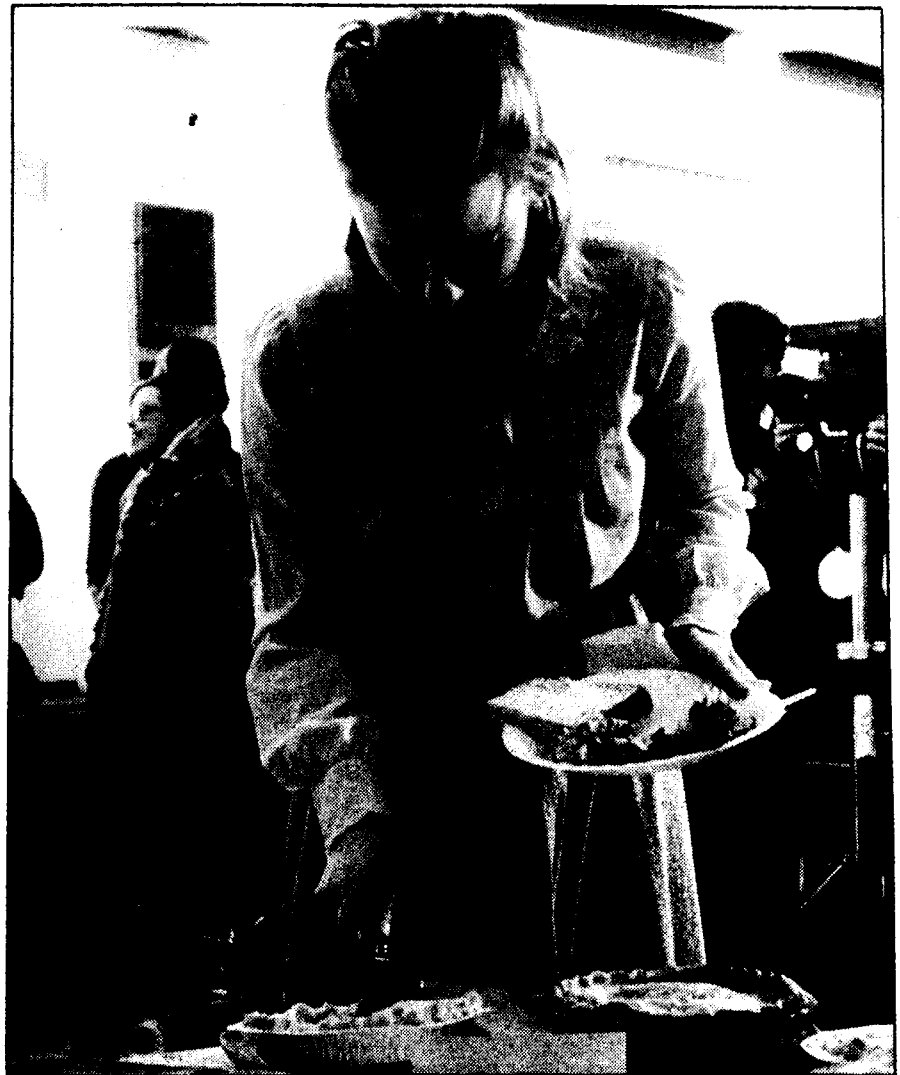
"Students work in groups," said Aungst. "They come up with an idea, develop a proposal, do research, and then continue with the design and construction."

The range of projects extends from log splitters and playground equipment to the solar hot water system which is in operation here at Capitol.

Another creative approach to course material is employed by Rie Genzler, instructor in social science.

The students in her Introduction to Human Service Organizations course have the option of writing a major paper or fulfilling a volunteer work contract with a human service agency. The volunteer work gives students exposure to the actual workings of an organization.

"I would guess that 90 percent of the students do the volunteer work," Genzler said. "Not all students in the Behavioral Science Department can do internships so this way they can get into the field. And we have many students from different majors in that class."



They are surprised to find that organizations need all types of experience."

Volunteer experience varies from typing proposals, to caring for the elderly, to feeding disabled children, to just being there.

The opportunity to observe and experience the atmosphere is as important as the task itself, said Genzler.

Business division also has innovation. Dr. John T. Redington's Marketing Management class devotes the last half of the term to student initiated marketing strategies. They call it a "game."

According to Redington, "The concept of using a 'game' goes back 20 years in various forms. It is really an alternative to case study. The objective is to get students to see that planning comes out of analysis."

In the simulation, students are put into groups representing the different channel levels of middle management. They must make pricing and promotion decisions, distribution policy decisions, and other decisions related to their particular level.

Redington says: "This is designed to show students that implementation goes through channels and everyone may not see the situation alike."

Redington has been using the game approach to marketing management since 1969.

Innovations such as Medieval banquets and business games give both students and instructors the opportunity to develop and use creative ideas.

"One of the things that can happen when you teach the same material for a long time," says Graham, "is the process of teaching can become mechanical and stale—even though you love your material and are constantly learning more. What innovative teaching does is open up new possibilities. You take a risk when you try new things, but you hope people will come through and grow."



Photograph by Joe Hart