

Leading Between the Lines:

Core Texts and Public Leadership



**The Association for
Core Texts and Courses**
30th Annual Conference



*Sponsored by the
Tommy G. Thompson Center
on Public Leadership*

The Association for Core Texts and Courses

The Association for Core Texts and Courses (ACTC) is an international, professional, liberal arts organization dedicated to fostering the use of core texts (world classics and other texts of major cultural significance) in undergraduate education and the development of required or widely taken core programs steeped in such texts.

ACTC advocates for core text programs at all undergraduate institutions. It helps initiate such programs and develops networks to support existing ones. ACTC addresses issues such as the status of core text programs within curricula, the recognition of and professional conditions for faculty who teach these courses, the development of materials appropriate for liberal education, the establishment of networks to encourage core text faculty to share their expertise, and the representation of this concept in interdisciplinary education based on foundational texts in the public media.

At stake, we believe, is the soul of higher education in a democratic society. An educated person should be equipped to live a disciplined and examined life, rich in the fullest expressions of our humanity and dedicated to civic and social service to others, as well as to the exploration of the mystery and glory of our existence. As citizens of an increasingly interdependent world, our graduates must acquire the ability to exercise critical judgment in order to free themselves from instant truths and local passions. Integrated core text courses and programs introduce students to questions that are at once timeless in their philosophical significance and timely in their relevance for us.

Members and member institutions are invited to participate in annual ACTC conferences, publications, informational exchanges, staffing networks, public media presentations, and the organization and leadership of the association. We welcome your inquiries, suggestions, and support.

2025 ACTC Conference Sponsor

The Tommy G. Thompson Center on Public Leadership was established to follow in the footsteps of Governor Tommy Thompson, who proudly worked with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to advance the public good. The Thompson Center seeks to carry on Governor Thompson's legacy by informing and inspiring current and future public leaders, fostering leadership skills, and promoting effective public leadership.

To further these goals, the Thompson Center offers public events, funds research and scholarships, honors exemplary public leaders with the Distinguished Public Leadership Award, and conducts activities across all University of Wisconsin campuses. A significant focus of the center is showcasing leadership through various initiatives, including hosting distinguished speakers, supporting leadership education on campus, and organizing conferences on effective public leadership.

The Thompson Center also takes the lead on pressing policy matters that require strong leadership. It has brought in speakers to discuss leadership in times of crisis, providing historical perspectives on the subject. Featured speakers have included Michael Beschloss and Kenneth Walsh on presidential leadership in times of crisis, David Gergen on civility and politics, Jonah Goldberg on tribalism, Arthur Brooks on unity, and George Will on civility, among others.

Leading Between the Lines: Core Texts and Public Leadership

Sponsored by Tommy G. Thompson Center on Public Leadership

Co-sponsored by

Oglethorpe Core Studies, Center for the Study of Liberal Democracy,
and The ACTC Liberal Arts Institute at Mercer University, The Teagle Foundation,
The Jack Miller Center, The Hertog Foundation,
and The American Council for Trustees and Alumni.

Theme Statement

Socrates spent much of his time engaging with people who had political ambition and power. Confucius served as the Minister of Justice in the State of Lu. Philip recruited Aristotle to educate Alexander. St. Augustine rose to prominence within the Catholic Church hierarchy. Machiavelli worked for the Medici. Montesquieu was a baron and a judge. John Stuart Mill was elected to Parliament. The list goes on.

The history of serious thinkers befriending or becoming political leaders is as old as our literary traditions themselves. Connections between leadership and education are so common, in fact, that we may not think to ask why this is the case. How does liberal arts education—core education—prepare one for public leadership? Are there particular authors, texts, or traditions that are especially important for someone with political ambition? Are certain forms of public leadership better served by liberal education than others? Are some political systems strengthened or weakened when their leaders receive a liberal education?

What authors, texts, and traditions can help us explore these questions? What examples, whether from historical traditions or contemporary experience, can deepen our understanding of these issues and the practical concerns that arise from them?

At this year's annual conference of the Association for Core Texts and Courses, we invite you to address these questions, as well as any others related to the relationship between public leadership and core education. As always, we invite serious and civil discussion of this theme from the broadest and most diverse range of perspectives. Traditional texts are always fair game, but so is contemporary literature from any discipline and genre.

Papers may focus entirely on analyzing a text or idea, but they may also delve into pedagogical, curricular, or practical concerns. Formally, an ACTC paper must be readable within 15 minutes and must include substantial engagement with a core text. The rest is up to you!





The ACTC Liberal Arts Institute at Mercer University, established in 2023, serves as a physical hub for ACTC, offering administrative support and hosting programs for students, faculty, and administrators within the ACTC network on Mercer's main campus in Macon GA.



Humanities at Hertog's virtual seminars are open to all undergraduates. They demonstrate that reading great books with others is compelling on its own terms and needs no promise of credentials, no threat of grades, no gimmicks, and no pandering.



Oglethorpe University's Core, which turns 80 years old this year, is a structured sequence of courses that fosters transformative "Core Moments," connecting academic texts to real-world experiences, enhancing skills in writing, analysis, leadership, and communication, ultimately preparing students for success in their careers.



The Tommy G. Thompson Center on Public Leadership, inspired by Governor Tommy Thompson's bipartisan approach, fosters effective public leadership by informing and inspiring future leaders. They offer free public events, fund research and scholarships, and present the Distinguished Public Leadership Award, engaging communities across the UW campuses and beyond.



The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) advocates for academic excellence, freedom, and accountability in higher education, providing resources to trustees, alumni, and policymakers to improve curriculum quality and promote the value of a liberal arts education.



The Teagle Foundation works to support and strengthen liberal arts education, which they see as fundamental to meaningful work, effective citizenship, and a fulfilling life. Their aim is to serve as a catalyst for the improvement of teaching and learning in the arts and sciences while addressing issues of financial sustainability and accountability in higher education.



The Jack Miller Center promotes the study and teaching of American founding principles and history. They support educational initiatives, provide resources for educators, and foster public discussions to inspire engagement with the ideas that shape American democracy.

Year in Review

ACTC 2024-25

- ACTC's first Core Administrators' workshop took place online on September 26, 2024. Jason Wallace (Samford) led us through a conversation he entitled "Building Consensus and Navigating Naysayers: Directing a Core Program in a Post-Modern World." These workshops, which are led by experienced core administrators at ACTC member institutions, are open to anyone interested in discussing the work of creating and managing core programs.
- Our first Lectio of AY 24-25 on St. Augustine's *Confessions* at Assumption University in Worcester Massachusetts, October 25-26. Thirteen Conferees from nine different institutions gathered for a day of intense discussion. Molly McGrath was our host and on-site organizer and Creighton Rosental, the Managing Director of the ACTC Liberal Arts Institute at Mercer University provided administrative support and served as Discussion Leader.
- January 31-February 1, 2025 eleven conferees from six different institutions gathered on the campus of Mercer University for a Lectio on Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*. Charlie Thomas served as on-site host. Creighton Rosental provided administrative support and served as Discussion Leader.
- On February 6th, 2025 Christopher Synder (Mississippi State University) led "Building Intellectual Communities through Core Texts," our Spring Core Administrators' Workshop. We had a lively conversation about organizing co-curricular activities and creating welcoming spaces to support core programs.
- March 7-9, 2025, twenty undergraduates from ACTC member institutions in the US, Canada, and Mexico gathered at Dharma Realm Buddhist University in Ukiah, California for "Happiness in Connection," ACTC's 24-25 student conference. Franklyn Wu was our host, and Nipun Mehta (Service Space) opened the conference as our keynote speaker. Each student has been invited to submit a revised version of their paper to be considered for publication in ACTC's undergraduate journal, *Agora*.
- From June 28th to July 26th students from Dharma Realm Buddhist University and St. John's College will gather in Taipei, Taiwan for "Buddhist Core Texts in Taiwan," a study abroad program co-sponsored by DRBU and ACTC. DRBU's Prof. Franklyn Wu will guide students through Buddhist core texts and his hometown, Taipei. There will be excursions every weekend and cultural opportunities throughout the program.



Looking Ahead

ACTC 2024-25

Core Conversations Podcast and Substack

During the COVID pandemic, ACTC created a Zoom series called “Core Conversations” in order to stay connected throughout that challenging time. After shuttering it two years ago, we realized that we missed it and have decided to revive it with a new format and on two new platforms. The Core Conversations podcast will provide a platform for ACTC members to share insights, challenges, and best practices related to teaching foundational texts across various disciplines. In each episode, a different interviewer drawn from the ACTC membership will talk to a teacher, administrator, or scholar of core texts about “a book they love or love to teach.” For each episode of the podcast, we will also create a post on a new “Core Conversations” substack in order to continue the conversation on that platform. We are excited to announce that Judith Levy (Oglethorpe) has agreed to produce the podcast. (We are still looking for someone to manage the Substack.)

Core Administrators’ Workshops

Running a core program requires skill, judgment, and a network of support. Our first two Core Administrators’ workshops in the 24-25 academic year were productive and enjoyable, so it was the consensus of our leaders and participants that we should continue. Whether you are already a core administrator, hope to become one, or are just interested in the work, you are welcome to join our conversations and become a part of the growing network of ACTC core administrators.

Lectios

The Lectio is a special kind of academic conference, one which spends an entire day proceeding through an entire book (or part of a book if it’s too long to cover in a day). Since we introduced the program in the Spring of 2024, ACTC has hosted three lectios: Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Augustine’s *Confessions*, and Lucretius’s *On the Nature of Things*. There will be a Lectio demo on Machiavelli’s *Prince* at this year’s ACTC conference. Our next Lectio will be on Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* at Concordia University Irvine on November 8, 2025.

Student Conferences

The details on our AY 25-26 Undergraduate conferences are not yet available, but we are working to make this the first year that we organize one student conference each semester rather than one each year. Please stay tuned for more information about these conferences and how you can nominate one of your students for this funde opportunity.

Agora

Professor Sam Stoner (Assumption) has agreed to become the Editor of ACTC’s undergraduate journal, *Agora*, and to reorganize, reformat, and relaunch it. For many years, ACTC had an excellent arrangement with Lynchburg University, where *Agora* was founded, and our students were offered the opportunity to submit their essays for publication to *Agora*’s editorial board at Lynchburg. In the Fall of 2024, *Agora* became an ACTC publication. All students who present at the ACTC student conferences will be invited to submit their essays for consideration.

Selected Essays Volume

In the Spring of 2026, Mercer University will publish the first in an annual series of Selected Essays Volumes based on our conferences. Everyone who presents a paper at our annual conference will be invited to submit revised versions of their presentation papers for consideration by an editorial board convened by the ACTC Publications Committee. All essays will undergo double blind peer review.

Buddhist Core Texts in Taiwan

In July of 2026, ACTC and Dharma Realm Buddhist University will collaborate once again on “Buddhist Core Texts in Taiwan,” a 4 week study abroad program led by DRBU faculty member Franklyn Wu. At a cost of \$4000 (including tuition for two 3-credit hour courses) plus airfare, this is a remarkably affordable opportunity for our students. For more information, please contact Franklyn Wu, franklyn.wu@drbu.edu.



The Association for Core Texts and Courses (ACTC) invites you to

We Hold These Truths: Liberty, Equality, and Core Texts, a conference exploring the universal ideals of liberty and equality through the lens of great works. Rooted in the American experience—echoing through the Declaration of Independence, Lincoln’s addresses, and Hurston’s prose—these principles transcend borders, resonating in texts from Rousseau’s Social Contract to Gandhi’s writings on justice. We invite educators, scholars, and students to examine how core texts grapple with freedom’s scope, equality’s demands, and their interplay across time and place. As these ideas, central to America’s founding, travel beyond its shores, they spark dialogue in classrooms worldwide, addressing local struggles and global aspirations. Through keynotes, panels, and workshops, we’ll share innovative ways to teach these themes, linking the U.S. narrative to a broader human story. In a fractured world, these texts unite us, fostering critical thought and civic purpose. Join us to celebrate their power, drawing from America’s legacy to inspire universal reflection. Together, let’s carry these truths—tested in one nation—to illuminate and uplift all corners of the globe.



Plenary Speakers

Wilfred McClay Sponsored by the Tommy G. Thompson Center

Wilfred M. McClay is a distinguished historian, author, and professor at Hillsdale College, where he holds the Victor Davis Hanson Chair in Classical History and Western Civilization. He is an outspoken advocate for core text education and a leading scholar in American intellectual and cultural history, having written extensively on the role of history in shaping national identity and civic education. Throughout his career, McClay has held prestigious academic positions and fellowships, including roles at the University of Oklahoma and the Ethics and Public Policy Center. He has served on national commissions related to American history and public policy, contributing to discussions on how history should be taught in schools. His writing has appeared in leading publications, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *National Affairs*, and *The Public Discourse*. Daniel Henninger of the *Wall Street Journal* called McClay's 2019 book, *Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story*, "the most balanced, nuanced history of the United States [he had] read in the past fifty years."



Anika Prather

Dr. Anika Prather is an esteemed educator, scholar, and advocate for core text education. With a BA and MA from Howard, MAs from NYU and St. John's College, and a Ph.D from the University of Maryland, she has dedicated her career to advocating for core text education, enhancing educational equity, and empowering marginalized voices in academia. Dr. Prather's research focuses on the intersection of culture, identity, and learning, emphasizing the importance of incorporating classical texts and diverse narratives into the curriculum. She is the co-founder, with her husband Damon Prather, of the Living Water School, a K12 online school which combines classical education with the Sudbury model. Her commitment to core text education put her in the spotlight after Howard University decided to cut their classics major in 2021. Almost overnight she became one of the most important advocates for classical education and its liberating power.



Molly McGrath

Molly Brigid McGrath, ACTC's newly appointed President, is a professor of philosophy at Assumption University, where she also serves as the Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence. She earned her Ph.D. and M.A. in Philosophy from The Catholic University of America and holds a B.A. in Political Economy and Philosophy from Mount St. Mary's College. Specializing in phenomenology, social ontology, and political philosophy, Professor McGrath's academic interests include Aristotle, Aquinas, Husserl, and Searle. Her scholarly contributions include articles such as "The Poverty of 'Corruption': On Reframing the Debate on Money in Politics," co-authored with Robert G. Boatright, and "The Agent of Truth: A Reflection on Robert Sokolowski's Phenomenology of the Human Person." Beyond academic publications, Professor McGrath also engages contemporary culture with essays such as the "Power and Peril of Sacred Identity" and film reviews including one on "The Ballad of Buster Scruggs, a Frontier Anthology," which offers a philosophical perspective on the Coen Brothers' film.

Plenary Speakers



J. Scott Lee

J. Scott Lee is the co-founder and retired Executive Director of the Association for Core Texts and Courses (ACTC), where he continues to play a pivotal role in promoting the study of core texts in higher education. With a deep commitment to liberal arts education, Scott dedicated his career to advancing the mission of ACTC, fostering dialogue among educators, and enhancing curriculum development at many institutions. His BA from St. Olaf College and a PhD from the University of Chicago laid the foundation for his lifelong dedication to the liberal arts. Throughout his career, he has published extensively on the role of core texts in education and has been an advocate for innovative teaching methods that engage students in meaningful discourse. Under his leadership, ACTC expanded its reach, organizing numerous conferences and workshops that brought together scholars and educators to discuss the importance of core texts in shaping critical thinking and civic engagement. Scott's passion for education and belief in the transformative power of literature and philosophy were central to his vision for ACTC. Since his retirement, Scott has continued to contribute to ACTC and the broader academic community through writing and mentoring emerging scholars.



Stephen Zelnick

Stephen C. Zelnick is the co-founder and past President of ACTC and an emeritus professor of English literature at Temple University, where he served as a faculty member from 1969 to 2017. Throughout his career, Prof. Zelnick held several key administrative positions at Temple, including Director of University Writing Programs, Director of the Intellectual Heritage Program, Special Assistant to the University President, and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies. It was while working with J. Scott Lee in the Intellectual Heritage Program at Temple, that he first had the idea to create an organization that developed into what is now ACTC. As a scholar, Professor Zelnick specializes in Victorian literature and has published extensively on various topics in both British and American literature. His dedication to the humanities is further exemplified by his involvement in ACTC's international educational initiatives, having advised on humanities programs in countries such as Russia, Georgia, and the emerging nations of Central Asia.

2024-25 ACTC Institutional and Liberal Arts Consortium Members

The ACTC Liberal Arts Consortium

Concordia University, Irvine*
Dallas Institute for Humanities and Culture at SMU*
Dharma Realm Buddhist University*
Mercer University
University of Notre Dame
Oglethorpe University*
Pepperdine University
St. John's College, Annapolis
St. John's College, Santa Fe
Samford University*
University of Chicago
University of Dallas
Universidad de Navarra
University of Tulsa*

Institutional Members of ACTC

Baylor University Honors College
Biola University*

Concordia University Irvine
Hillsdale College
Huron University College
Jefferson Scholars Program at American University
Montesquieu Forum at Roosevelt University*
Norfolk State University
Shimer Great Books School at North Central College
School for Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at ASU*
St. Anselm College
St. Mary's College of California
Universitat Internacional de Catalunya
University College Amsterdam
Universidad de los Andes
University of Houston Honors College
University of King's College
Thomas Jefferson Center at the University of Texas
Villanova University

*new Liberal Arts Consortium or Institutional Member

Conference Schedule

Thursday, April 3

3:00	Board of Directors Meeting	Assembly Room
4:00	Registration Opens	Madison Foyer
6:00	Opening Reception Sponsored by The Teagle Foundation	Madison/Wisconsin Ballroom
7:00	Dinner & Presidential Plenary Molly McGrath, Assumption University, ACTC President “Liberal Education as Antidote to Ideology”	Madison/Wisconsin Ballroom

Friday, April 4

7:45	Breakfast and Plenary J. Scott Lee, ACTC Co-founder, Retired Executive Director “Invention, Fire, and Making Ourselves: Art and Forethought in the Tradition of the Liberal Arts”	Madison/Wisconsin Ballroom
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9:00-10:45 am	<u>Panel Session One</u>
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Session 1a	Leadership for the Ages: Enduring Insights from Classical Texts Sponsored by the Tommy G. Thompson Center on Public Leadership	University Room A
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Jeff Beneker (ch), University of Wisconsin-Madison
Carey Seal, UC Davis
Alexander Stajkovic, University of Wisconsin

Session 1b	“One can never leave the Romans”	University Room C/D
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“Stuck in the Middle with You”: Montesquieu on Brutus, Cassius, and Cato Taking Their Own Lives
Stuart Warner (ch), Roosevelt University

Machiavelli’s Many Romes
Vickie Sullivan, Tufts University

Leo Strauss’s Notes on Dante’s “De Monarchia”
Svetozar Minkov, Roosevelt University

Session 1c	Language, Talk, and Rhetoric	Conference Room 1
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The Importance of Being Socrates in Cicero’s *De Oratore*
David West (ch), Ashland University

Let’s Talk About It: Hesiod’s “Talk” in Book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*
Brittany Guzman, University of Dallas

Philology as Philosophy: Gadamer’s Critique of Heidegger
Matthew Dean, Tulane University

Session 1d Uses and Abuses of Religious Traditions

Conference Room 2

Pascal's *Pensées*, the Jews, and the Bible

Jarrett Carty (*ch*), Concordia University

King David: Very Model of Modern Major Messiah?

Paul Lewis, Mercer University

The Gospel According to Borges: Encountering the New Testament in the Secular Classroom

Patrick Harris, Rhodes College

The Eumenides as a Model of Restorative Practices

John Kerr, St. Mary's University of Minnesota

Session 1e Core Texts, Refracted

Conference Room 3

Dante's Ulysses

Roger Barrus (*ch*), Hampden-Sydney College

Nguyen Tuong Thiet's "My Mother An Dong Unit": Making the Inaccessible Accessible

Le Dung Rohmer, Austin College

Stand and Unfold Yourself: The Philosophy of *Hamlet*

Kathryn Lawson, University of King's College

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and the Classical Tradition

Bretton Rodriguez, University of California, San Diego

Chinua Achebe, "Dead Men's Path" and Paulo Freire, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"

Lisa Jennings, Valparaiso University

**Session 1f Teaching Core Texts Where the Students Are: Community
Colleges, Virtual Learning Communities, and High School Programs**

Conference Room 4

Beyond the Classroom: Community Seminars at Community Colleges

Ted Hadzi-Antich (*ch*), Austin Community College

One Fell Swoop: Reading Shakespeare with Whomever Shows Up

Sarah Skwire, Liberty Fund, Inc.

Gulliver and the "Life of the Mind"

Jonathan Gondelman, Catherine Project/Jack Miller Center

Engaging Dual-Credit Students Through Close Reading and Small Group Discussion

Kerri Pope, Austin Community College

(*ch*) designates the chair of each panel session

Session 1g Reading and Teaching Hegel

Conference Room 5

Should Anything Hegel Ever Wrote be Taught as a Core Text?
Jason Wallace (*ch*), Samford University

Hegel, Mind and Norms
Daniel Murphy, Saint Peter's University

Hegel's Critique of Morality in the *Philosophy of Right*
Joseph Keegin, Tulane University

"The wounds of the Spirit heal and leave no scars behind": Hegel on Confession, Forgiveness, and Philosophy
Peter Wake, St. Edward's University

11:00 am-12:30 pm

Panel Session Two

Session 2a Oglethorpe's Core at 80 years
Sponsored by Oglethorpe University

Conference Room 1

Core Scaffolding Initiative
Judith Levy (*ch*), Oglethorpe University

ePortfolio Pilot
Stephen Mattern, Oglethorpe University

The Individual, Society and Civic Responsibility in Ibsen
Jay Lutz, Oglethorpe University

Session 2b The Psychology of Tyranny

Conference Room 2

The Tyrant's Soul in *Republic 9*
Alan Pichanick (*ch*), Villanova University

The Psychology of Tyranny in Marlowe and Shakespeare
John-Paul Spiro, Villanova University

Gabrielle Suchon on the Psychology of Tyranny
Margaret Matthews, Assumption University

Session 2c Machiavellian Leadership

Conference Room 3

Citizen Virtue in Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy*
Michael Dink (*ch*), St. John's College, Annapolis

Truthful Speech and Leadership: Lessons from Machiavelli and the Book of Jeremiah
Cristiana Conti-Easton, Austin Community College

Metaphysics from out of politics--in Machiavelli?
Borden Flanagan, American University

Session 2d Augustine's Art: Conversion and the *Confessions*

University Room A

On Augustine's *Confessions* and Divine "Arts"

J. Scott Lee (*ch*), ACTC--Co-founder, Retired Executive Director

Augustine of Hippo's "Liberating Arts"

Richard Rawls, Georgia Gwinnett College

Where Was Reason in the Garden: A Retrospective Solution to the Problem of *Confessions* 8

Timothy Troutner, Assumption University

Augustine's Hopeful Transformation of Leisure and Political Action in *The City of God*

Elayne Allen, University of Notre Dame

Session 2e Normalcy, Exclusion and Human nature

Conference Room 4

Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*: Towards New Articulations of Individuality

Aran Gharibpour (*ch*), Austin Community College

Intellectual Tradition as the Locus of Human Nature: Kang Youwei and the Path for Collective Transformation

Quan Gan, University of Texas, Austin

Marx and the Mastery of Nature

Paul Gray, Brock University

On the Tyranny of the Normal

Susan Dodd, University of King's College, Halifax

Session 2f Core Novels 1

Conference Room 5

Public Leadership From Below in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*

Lee Trepanier (*ch*), Assumption University

The Education of a Modern Man: *The Three Musketeers* and D'Artagnan

Rene Paddags, Ashland University

All the Heroism of Principle: Jane Austen on the Judgment of the Young

Mary Mathie, University of Texas at San Antonio

Mary Shelley, Twenty-First Century Influencer

Becky Dibiasio, Assumption University

The Public Need for Meaningful General Education

Shannon Watkins, James C. Martin for Academic Renewal

Session 2g Reason: Ancient and Modern

University Room C/D

Constructing Modern Reason as Rule

Daniel Maher (*ch*), Assumption University

On Kant's Platonism
Samuel Stoner, Assumption University

How to Beat Your Father: A Beginner's Guide to Best Practices
Alex Priou, University of Austin

Session 2h Leadership and Liberty

University Room B

Adam Smith on Leadership
Peter McNamara, Utah State University

Feudalism and Liberalism in Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*
Peter McDonald, Baylor University

Monarchical Moderation: How the Prince Subtly Leads the People to Liberty and the Common Good
Anthony Jones, Baylor University

Comparing Odysseus and Aeneas as Leaders
Michael Nelson, Rhodes College

12:30

Lunch & Plenary

Madison/Wisconsin Ballroom

Wilfred McClay, Hillsdale College
"Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Hebraic Strain in American Thought"
Sponsored by the Tommy G. Thompson Center for Public Leadership



2:00-4:30 pm

Panel Session Three

Session 3a Studying Foreign Languages Through Core Texts
Sponsored by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA)

University Room A

Veronica Mayer Bryant (ch), ACTA
Joshua Parens, University of Dallas
Jacob Ivan Eidt, University of Dallas
Brendan Boyle, St. John's Collegem Annapolis

Session 3b Core Texts and Leadership on TV - 1

University C/D

The Good Life in The Good Place: Socrates on the role of the philosopher
Erin Dolgoy (ch), Rhodes College

Bureaucracy, Leadership, and Law in The Good Place: Machiavelli and Montaigne
Kim Hurd Hale, Coastal Carolina University

Animating the Presidency: Education through Comedy
Benjamin Isaak Gross, Jacksonville State University

Session 3c Human Nature and the State

University B

Elites and 'Our Democracy'
Joe Knippenberg (ch), Oglethorpe University

The Spirit of the Laws: Human Nature and Regime Transformation
Jacob Rodriguez, Baylor University

Nobility and Agricultural Responsibility in the works of Alexis de Tocqueville
Graham Harrison, University of Dallas

Rousseau's Mosaic Moment: Religion and the Limits of Political Philosophy in The Social Contract
Nicholas Allmaier, Tulane University

Leading Workers, Warriors, and Philosophers against the Universal and Homogeneous State: On the End of Leo Strauss's
"Restatement"
Joshua Shmikler, University of Mount Saint Vincent

Session 3d Pain, Suffering, and Compassion
Aristotle on Sorrow in Book 10 of the Nicomachean Ethics
Robert Anderson (ch), Saint Anselm College

Conference Room 1

Compassion False and True: Nietzsche on the Praxis of Nihilism
Ethan Cutler, Boston College

"Solving the Body Problem: The Role of Resistance in "Revelations of Divine Love"
Laura Crawford, Samford University

Bare Humanity: Arendt's Lesson on Lessing
Natalie Moreira, Baylor University

Are stories good for us? Boccaccio and Manzoni on the beautiful and the public good
Giulia Ricca, Columbia University

Session 3e What makes a leader?

Conference Room 2

On Not Giving One's All: Rev. Farebrother's Partial Ambition in Eliot's *Middlemarch*
Mary Elizabeth Halper (ch), St. John's College / Humanities at Hertog

The Art of the U-Turn: Backflipping Philosophically with Cicero (and Plato)
Bryn Ford, University of Houston

Aristotle on Good Leadership: a reading of *Politics I & III*
José María Llovet, Universidad Panamericana

Václav Havel's leadership: the art of the struggle against transactional systems
Michele Rozga, Norfolk State University

Leading Across the Line: Ernst Junger's Lessons in *Storm of Steel*
Minn Thant, Michigan State University

Session 3f Core Novels 2

Conference Room 3

Oh! That unfulfilments should follow the prophets.
Amy Thomas Elder (ch), University of Chicago

The Politics of the Pequod
Lin Atnip, University of Chicago

Dostoevsky's Devils and Ours
Lauren Weiner, Alexander Hamilton Institute for the Study of Western Civilization

Anna Karenina and the Ladder of Love
John Hope, Huron University

Session 3g Lectio on Machiavelli's *Prince*

University C/D

Creighton Rosental (discussion leader), Mercer University
Kevin Honeycutt, Mercer University
Daniel Kapust, University of Wisconsin
Matthew Oberrieder, Rogers State University

Session 3h Lessons for Leadership in Plato and Aristotle

Conference Room 4

The Philosopher-King: The Pursuit of Knowledge and Justice in Leadership
Mariana Flores-Rabasa (ch), Universidad Panamericana

The Legal Setting of Plato's *Apology*: Helping Students Discuss Truth and Justice
Alex Istok, Samford University

Aristotle on Good Leadership: a reading of *Politics I & III*
José María Llovet, Universidad Panamericana

Good Decision and Prudence in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*
Deborah De Chiara-Quenzer, Boston College

4:45-6:30 pm

Panel Session Four

Session 4a Civic Education Through Core Texts: Opportunities for Program Growth University Room A

Sponsored by The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA)

Bradley Jackson, ACTA

Joseph Knippenberg, Oglethorpe University

Thomas Merrill, American University

Stuart Warner, Roosevelt University

Session 4b Core Texts and Leadership on TV - 2

University Room C/D

Erin Dolgoy (ch), Rhodes College

The Impossibility of Civic Happiness? The Difficulty of Virtue and Persistence of Fortune

Evan Lowe, Arizona State University

We Are the End of the World: Reforging America out of the State of Nature on *The Walking Dead*

Aaron Kushner, Arizona State University

Presidential Leadership in Locke, *The Federalist Papers*, and *Mad Men*

Kevin Kearns, Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi

Session 4c Homeric Leadership

Conference Room 1

Odysseus the Autocrat and Athena the Transformer: An Exploration of Leadership in *Odyssey*

Kerri Pope (*ch*), Austin Community College

Reading the *Iliad* as a Crisis of Leadership

Ján Hreško, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University

Returning Leaders in the *Odyssey*: Valuing Connection in Community

Christine Kern, Azusa Pacific University

Odysseus' Embrace of Mortality and Mutability

Erica Johnson, University of Dallas

Session 4d In Tune with the World: Music and Character Formation

University Room B

Aristotle on Music for Citizenship and for Rule

Michael Krom (*ch*), Saint Vincent College

Experiencing transcendence through music as core text

Matthew Post, University of Tulsa

Putting music into classroom rhythms

Lanta Davis, Indiana Wesleyan University

Session 4e Tech, Science and Leadership in Classical Political Thought

Conference Room 2

Techne and the Idea of Nature in Aristotle's Metaphysics and Politics
Paul Diduch (ch), University of Colorado Boulder

The Floating Phoenician Finds Physis: Recovering Xenophon's Natural Philosophy
Gregory McBrayer, Ashland University

The Classical Case Against a Technological Science: Notes on Seneca's Letter 90
Tobin Craig, Michigan State University

Technological and Moral Necessities in Thucydides' War of the Peloponnesians and Athenians
Travis Hadley, Collin College

Session 4f Oaths & Honor

Conference Room 3

Le Morte d'Arthur Redux: Tennyson (and other's) Reappropriation of Thomas Malory's Pentecostal Oath
Lynn Tatum (ch), Baylor University

To Preserve, Protect, and Defend: Can Malory's Pentecostal Oath still be a Blueprint for Leadership in the 21st Century?
Ann McGlashan, Baylor University

American Patriotism: A Contested Virtue
Andrew Carico, Hampden-Sydney College

Session 4g Expanding the Core

Conference Room 4

Cross Cultural Philosophy as a Great Conversation
Daniel Breyer (ch), Illinois State University

Teaching Ibn Tufayl's Hayy ibn Yaqzān in a Core Texts Curriculum
Sean O'Neil, University of Nevada, Reno

Douglass's Narrative: A Common Text Across FYS
Daniel McDonald, Ashland University

Autonomy, reason, and the theatre: Engaging Antigone in an Economics and Personal Finance Course
Tommy Johnson, Woods Charter School

Wit and Satire in Lin Yutang's My Country and My People
Jay Black, Mercer University

6:00 - 7:00 pm

Graduate Student Mixer

Private Dining Room

Saturday, April 5

7:45 Breakfast and Plenary Madison/Wisconsin Ballroom

Stephen Zelnick, Temple University, retired, ACTC Co-Founder and Past President
“Thoughts on Liberal Education and the Founding of ACTC”

8:45-10:45 am Panel Session Five

Session 5a Contentious Virtues of Leadership University Room A
Sponsored by the Hertog Foundation

Nietzsche on the Paradox of Education and Leadership
Hadar Hazony (*ch*), University of Notre Dame

Alexis de Tocqueville on the Crisis of Modern Love and Friendship
Jack Bevacqua, University of Notre Dame

Captain Delano in *Benito Cereno*: American Hero or American Idiot?
Avi Dugginapeddi, Stanford University

Gentleness: The Preparation for Philosophy and Politics in Plato’s *Laws*
Ethan Nylen, University of Oxford

Geist and the Good Citizen
Andrea Ray, University of Chicago

Session 5b From Medieval to Modern University Room C/D

Is Descartes’s *Meditations* a work of enlightened kalam?
Joshua Parens (*ch*), University of Dallas

Demoting Metaphysics and Promoting the Vernacular: Connected Puzzles in Dante’s *Convivio* (*The Banquet*)
Joseph Macfarland, St. John’s College

Reading Erasmus’s *Education of a Christian Prince* as Response to Machiavelli
Gregory McBrayer, Ashland University

Robert Bellarmine’s *Controversies* on the Problem of Religion, Politics, and Writing
Douglas Kries, Gonzaga University

Session 5c (More) Contemporary Novels and the Core Conference Room 4

Shining towards an Ethics of History: Spacetime, Race, and Motherhood in *Beloved* and *The Shining*
Judith Levy (*ch*), Oglethorpe University

The Elegance of the Hedgehog (2006), by Muriel Barbery
Sandra Hernández-Gonzalez, Universidad Panamericana

The (Science) Fiction of Leadership
David Dolence, Dominican University

Finis Africae: Limits and Otherness in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*
Christopher Snyder, Mississippi State University

Session 5d Healing Philosophy

University Room B

Sam Stoner (*ch*), Assumption University

Ravelstein's Convalescences
Matt Dinan, St. Thomas University

Philosophical Palliatives in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*
Derek Duplessie, Assumption University

The Charms of Healing in Plato's *Charmides* 155e-157d
Mary Townsend, St. John's University

A Sickness unto Health: Recovering Philosophic Life in Nietzsche's *Human, All Too Human*
Paul Kirkland, Carthage College

Session 5e Lies Like the Truth: Deception and Education in Homer, Plato, and Aristotle Conference Room 1

Achillean Sacrifice and Socratic Virtue in Plato's *Apology*
Samuel P. Hage (*ch*), Tulane University

Justice and Deception in the Court of Achilles
Jordan Poyner, Catherine Project

Homer's *Odyssey* as Reference Point to Understanding Plato's Ideas About Educational Process
Victor Udwin, The University of Tulsa

"Two Going Together...": Socrates and Homer
Matthew Oberrieder, Rogers State University

"Let There Be One": On Many Readings of Homer's Appearance in *Metaphysics Lambda*
Patrick Corry, Villanova University

Session 5f The Art of the Core

Conference Room 2

The Politics of Visual Literacy: Teaching Visual Arts in a Liberal Arts Context
David Carl (*ch*), St. John's College

"Actuality Overpowered by Appearance": the Social Force of Beauty in Schiller and Beyond
Mark Walter, Aurora University

Tolstoy's *What is Art?* as a Revolutionary Text
Richard Kamber, The College of New Jersey

How to Stream Shakespeare
Martha Bayles, Boston College

11:00 am-12:30 pm

Panel Session Six

Session 6a The Humanities and Civic Education
Sponsored by the Jack Miller Center

University Room A

Thomas Cleveland, Jack Miller Center
Greg Mc Brayer, Ashland University
Alex Duff, University of Texas, Austin

Session 6b On Fate, Prayer, and Divine Will

University Room B

Bound by Moira: The Tension Between Fate and Divine Will in Homer's *Iliad*
Francis Grabowski (*ch*), Rogers State University

Prayer, Chance, and Fate in Plato's *Alcibiades II*
Matthew Oberrieder, Rogers State University

Fate or Necessity? An all-important distinction in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*
Victor Udwin, The University of Tulsa

Joseph's Fate, Divine Will, and the Refunctionalizing of Myth
David Tingey, The University of Tulsa

Session 6c Educating for Greatness

Conference Room 1

"To study men and things": Education Beyond the Great Books.
Matthew Young (*ch*), Elon University

Education as Quest: Liberal Arts in the Heroic Life
Alfredo Watkins, Duke University

Horses, Homer, and Egyptian Philosophy in Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*
Josh Renfro, Purdue University

Northrup Frye and the Imagination in Undergraduate Education
Jacqueline Pfeffer Merrill, American University

Session 6d Before the Law

University Room C/D

The Secret of *Oedipus at Colonos*
Seemee Ali (*ch*), Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture at SMU

A Wedding in Another Key – A Dream of a Civil City in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*
Michael McShane, Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture at SMU

The Euthyphro: A Preface to the *Republic*
David Sweet, University of Dallas

"I durst not so much as dare": Ahab's Ancient Wound
Elizabeth Reyes, Thomas Aquinas College

The Problem of Representation in Madison's *Debates at the Federal Convention*
Christopher Burkett, Ashland University

Session 6e The Novels of Chaim Potok

Conference Room 2

Crucifixion as Exile and Atonement in Chaim Potok's Asher Lev Novels
Alex Taylor (*ch*), Christendom College

The Role of Place in the Creation of Art in *My Name is Asher Lev*
Hannah Luke, University of Dallas

Faith and Excess in *The Gift of Asher Lev*
Annemarie Krall, University of Dallas

Session 6f The Human Touch: Friendship, Connection, Legacy, and Leadership Conference Room 3

How to Hunt for Friends
Janet Dougherty (*ch*), St. John's College Annapolis, MD

Liberal Education, Envy and Sophistry
Frank Pagano, St. John's College

The Paradox of the Island
Shih Yu "Franklyn" Wu, Dharma Realm Buddhist University

Session 6g Pedagogies and the Core

Conference Room 4

The Phenomenology of the Core Text Discussion Seminar
Phillip Sloan (*ch*), University of Notre Dame

What is Power?: Hannah Arendt on Action in Public
Stuart Patterson, North Central College

"And Glaucon Laughed" (And So Did We): Pedagogical Laughter in Plato's *Republic*
Cana Beverage, University of Dallas

Walking the Road to Larissa in an Age of Artificial Intelligence
Grant Potts, Austin Community College

Session 6h Stoicism, Humanism, and Law in Montaigne's Essays

Conference Room 5

Montaigne's Mitigated Stoicism
Christopher Edelman (*ch*), University of the Incarnate Word

Montaigne's Critique of Renaissance Ambition
Neil Robertson, University of King's College

Montaigne and Plutarch on Socrates's Daemon
John Colman, Ave Maria University

12:30 Lunch & Plenary Madison/Wisconsin Ballroom
 Dr. Anika Prather, Catholic University of America
 “Consolation on Captivity: How the Classical Tradition Brings Comfort in Our Darkest Times”

2:00-4:30 pm Panel Session Seven

Session 7a ACTC and HBCUs: Thoughts toward Future Collaborations University Room A

The Liberal Arts as the Possession of All
 Joshua Parens (*ch*), University of Dallas

To Be Young, Gifted and...Martian? Nikki Giovanni’s AfroFuturistic “Quilting the Black-Eyed Pea (We’re Going to Mars)” as Core Text Poem
 Page Laws, Norfolk State University (retired) Dean Emerita

The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass
 Elizabeth-Jane McGuire, Villanova University

Between the Lines or Within the Veil?: the logic of speculation and “fancy” in Chapter X of Du Bois’ *Darkwater*
 David Metzger, Old Dominion University

Kevin Marshall, University of Dallas

Anika Prather, Catholic University of America

Session 7b America and Some “isms” University Room C/D

A Core Texts for Nationalism? The Practice and Theory of Giuseppe Mazzini and Ernest Renan
 Annie DeVries (*ch*), Samford University

Teaching the History of Democracy and Authoritarianism: Timothy Snyder’s “On Tyranny” as a Core Text
 Mark Meyers, University of Saskatchewan

Aristotle, Populism, and Defining the Political Need for Expertise
 Evelyn Behling, University of Notre Dame

State Constitutions as Core Texts: Texas
 Tony Bartl, Angelo State University

Socrates via Spengler: Toward Philosophic Life and Education in 2025 America
 Simon Frazier, Independent

Session 7c Virtue, Law, and Leadership University Room B

What Would Mahavira Do? Governance and the Jaina *Acaranga Sutra* in the Mauryan Era (3rd Century BCE)
 John McCormack (*ch*), Aurora University

The Excellence of Water: On the Principle of Yielding in the *Daode Jing* and the *Zhuangzi*
 Justin Howe, Clemson University

Algernon Sydney and the Republican Need for Political Virtue
 John Eastby, Hampden-Sydney College

Session 7d Reading and Re-Reading

Conference Room 1

Kierkegaard's Prefaces: Lessons in Effective Communication
Claudine Davidshofer (*ch*), High Point University

Enkidu is Neanderthal? Reading *Gilgamesh* as Literary Anthropology
Elizabeth Ferszt, Oglethorpe University

Plato Daedalus Calling Forth an Ariadne-Less Theseus Reader
Stefanos Kourkoulakos, University West, Trollhattan, Sweden

"Save us from deceiving ourselves": Reading as a Spiritual Practice in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*
Mark Makin, Biola University

The Gettysburg Address as Civic Education
Jason Stevens, Ashland University

Session 7e How Not to Lead: Kings, Tyrants, and Villains

Conference Room 2

Confronting Wolsey
Jason Wallace (*ch*), Samford University

Shakespeare on Tragedy as Failed Comedy
John Norton, Concordia Irvine

Cardinal Thomas Wolsey and His Critics: Leadership in Henry VIII's England
Sean Bortz, Concordia University Irvine

How to Not be a Tyrant: Lessons from Thomas Aquinas
Kevin Walker, University of Mary

The Medieval Ruler in Two Registers: Thomas Aquinas and Niccoló Machiavelli on Virtú and the Morality of Ruling Well
John Kern, Pepperdine University



Agrippina in the Hallway: Crises of Leadership in Racine's *Britannicus*
Taddy Kalas, Augustana College

Session 7f Leadership, Philosophy, and Politics in Plato's *Republic*

Conference Room 3

Plato's Katabasis as Propaidea
Maxwell Anthony (*ch*), Teachers College, Columbia University

Socratic Leadership
Juan Ignacio Riveros, Universidad de Los Andes

The Guardian Class of Kallipolis: Political Deterrent to the Young yet Model City to the Old
Carol Kowara, University of Chicago

Session 7g Shakespearean Statesmen

Conference Room 4

To Be Caesar: Shakespeare on Greatness Surpassing Virtue
Frank Rohmer (*ch*), Austin College

Prudence in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*
Ann Charney-Colmo, Dominican University

The tragic greatness of Caius Martius Coriolanus
Joseph Reisert, Colby College

Shakespeare's Grasp of the Feminine: Power and Purpose - The Political Skill of Shakespeare's Cleopatra
Carol McNamara, Great Hearts America

"A Good Heart is the Sun": Immature Machiavellianism in Shakespeare's *Henry V*
Michael Lucchese, Liberty Fund

**Session 7h Where are We Leading the Liberal Artists? A Panel
Discussion on What We are Forming Leaders For**

Conference Room 5

Education for the Politics of Spiritual Warfare: Donna Tartt's *The Secret History* and the Impotence of Nietzschean Liberal Education
Alex Taylor (*ch*), Christendom College



“To the advantage of the liberal arts”: Josef Pieper and Property Ownership as Liberal Learning
Megan Russo, University of St. Thomas, Houston

Educating for Hospitality: Robert Capon’s *The Supper of the Lamb*
Melissa Dow, University of West Florida

To Bear a Wary Eye: How Engaging *Hamlet* Habituates Revision
Daniel Spiotta, Christendom College

Arendt on Benjamin: Refitting Pearls of the Past in Contemporary Settings
Natalie Moreira, Baylor University

4:45-6:30 pm

Panel Session Eight

Session 8a New Thinkery Podcast
Live Podcast on *King Lear*

University Room A

Alex Priou (*ch*), University of Austin (UATX)
Gregory McBrayer, Ashland University
Michael McShane, Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture

Session 8b Reading Black Authors in a Core Text Curriculum

University Room C/D

The Bottomless Well under the Cathedral at Chartes: James Baldwin’s Reflections on Core Texts in
“Stranger in the Village”
Tom Merrill (*ch*), American University

Walking Harlem: Langston Hughes’s “Theme for English B”
Jason Miller, North Carolina State

Benjamin Banneker, Thomas Jefferson, and the Science of Human Equality
Sarah Marsh, Seton Hill University

Race and Culture in Ibram X. Kendi’s *How to Be an Antiracist*
Joseph Spoerl, Saint Anselm College

Session 8c Core Poetry

Conference Room 1

“To speak on their behalf in my own tongue”: Seamus Heaney on poetry and conscience
Antony Lyon (*ch*), UC San Diego

Poetry in the Works of Thomas Aquinas
Brendan Luke, University of Dallas

“Roland is fierce, Oliver is wise:” Dilemmas of Leadership in the *Song of Roland*
Sarah Houser, Benedictine College

Night Sky and Ancient Seas: Ocean Vuong, Homer, and Expanding the Great Conversation
Hilda Ma, Saint Mary’s College of California

Dreaming and Debating About the Purpose of Life in The Parliament of the Three Ages
Jeffrey Davis, Wheaton College

Session 8d Mathematics, Metaphysics, and Natural Science

Conference Room 2

Astronomy as a Liberal Art: Time and Number in Aristotle and Heidegger
David Arndt (*ch*), Saint Mary's College of California

Kolmogorov, The Euclid of Probability Theory
John Anders, Trinity University

Alfarabi's Account of the Five Rational Arts: An Exposition of *The Book of the Utterances Employed in Logic*,
sections 52-53
Terence Kleven, Central College

Revolution to Resistance: The Political Nature of Science from Copernicus to Feyerabend
Sarah Karam, Concordia University Irvine

Session 8e Liberal Arts Consortium Meeting (*by invitation*)

University Room B

Representatives from each Institution in the ACTC Liberal Arts Consortium are invited to join Charlie Thomas and members of the board to discuss future programs.

Institutional Members of the ACTC Liberal Arts Consortium

Concordia University, Irvine*
Dallas Institute for Humanities and Culture at SMU*
Dharma Realm Buddhist University*
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St. John's College, Annapolis
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University of Chicago
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University of Tulsa*

* a new members

6:45	Closing Reception Sponsored by the Hertog Foundation	Madison/Wisconsin Ballroom
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Sunday, April 6

9:00 Continental Breakfast & Business Meeting University

The Association for Core Texts and Courses 31st Annual Conference

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Southern California in the Spring of 2027!**

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**2027
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how can you help ACTC?

**For more information contact
Charlie Thomas:
charlottethomas@coretexts.org**

Would you like to get more involved with ACTC?

*We're looking for people who
can help us with the following
things:*

- Interviewing ACTC members on books they love or love to teach
- Being interviewed about a book you love or love to teach
- Managing ACTC's Social Media
- Managing or serving on the editorial board for the new ACTC substack
- Contributing to ACTC's new substack



Would you like to bring ACTC to your campus?

Please contact Charlie Thomas (charlottethomas@coretexts.org) to discuss become the naming sponsor of our 2028 conference or hosting a Lectio or student conference on your campus.

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