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FOCUS ON FACULTY



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Assistant Professor of
English Education: Stephen Goss



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Tactile Teaching and Tangible Results



Associate Professor of English Education Stephen Goss photobombs Scrappy

Associate Professor of English Education Stephen Goss is not your average teacher; not when you can turn in an actual 1991 Ford Taurus covered entirely in writing – inside and out – as a final project. Yes, that happened. Goss believes teaching can and should happen both inside and outside the classroom walls. As he puts it, “Be willing to think of your classroom as a space that exists beyond just the four walls; we have a giant campus where [teaching] can happen. Make good things happen beyond those walls.”

His inspiration comes in part from an experience he had as a junior in high school as a student in an Ethics and Society class when his teacher took an interest in his answers during class discussions. Goss says, “I just remember him saying when the class conversation would start dying down, ‘Mr. Goss, you always have something interesting to say.’” That validation and

acknowledgement of ideas can inspire engagement and confidence in a student. Goss tries to inspire his students in similar ways by validating their thoughts and contributions through a variety of tactile experiences and publishing their writing in a range of creative and tangible ways – like accepting a whole car covered in poetry and other writings as a final assignment.



Associate Professor Stephen Goss is creative in his teaching techniques and hopes to inspire his preservice English teachers to get creative too.

He believes it is important to approach classroom work not as an assignment to be written for an audience of one – the instructor – but with the expectation that there will be multiple audiences. “There should be something more than just that one person, to me that doesn’t constitute a true audience,” Goss says. Whether the work is posted on a white board, as a theatre poster accompanied by an essay explaining the artwork, or writings covering the four panels on a light box from each student that collectively become a class art installation, Goss’s approach to teaching is creative and tactile. His students become physically engaged in their work, reach audiences outside of the classroom, and have unique products that become part of their resume as they graduate to become inspirational educators.

One of his most satisfying experiences as an English Education professor, says Goss, is when students adopt one of his lessons, modify it, and make it their own. This was the case recently when one of his students saw his presentation on storytelling at the Georgia Council of Teachers of English. The student subsequently used the lesson in his own classroom which was observed by his supervisor. The supervisor who asked about the origins of the lesson was Goss’s colleague, and he shared this with him. He said of that experience, “For me, that was a huge honor that one of my college colleagues said, ‘Oh my God, that was the coolest lesson.’”

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Goss incorporates a lot of art into his curriculum, so his students are not only writing, they are creating, collaging, drawing, and becoming physically engaged in their studies. It is a very tactile learning experience. However, this doesn't mean his classes are all fun and games. He also focuses on the "more unglamorous stuff" such as how to move students from one classroom to another, handling situations when a student gets in trouble, and communicating effectively and collaborating with peers. He says his preservice English teachers must know how to be, "less like an individual operator coming in and just teaching and more of a team member."

Seeing his work manifest with his students fuels his passion. He is motivated by knowing if he can inspire his students to bring their classrooms to life, he has made a difference in how the next generation of teachers teach and how students learn.

