

## Personal Statement

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Thank you for taking a moment to check out this web site. Its primary purpose is to inform prospective students on the kinds of professional interests I have that may serve as a resource, and perhaps to shed light on some areas of interest that we may hold in common.

My area of expertise is known as the “Foundations of Education.” We study education through the lenses of psychology, philosophy, history, sociology, and anthropology. From these various disciplines, as we focus them specifically on issues related to education, the field derives ‘educational psychology,’ ‘history & philosophy of education,’ and ‘social foundations.’ Anthropology, applied to education, yields comparative studies, cross-cultural studies, some aspects of multicultural education, as well as naturalistic and qualitative methods of working with various groups of people to gain shared understandings of the nature, purposes, and effects of education and schooling.

My own research and scholarship has given me occasion to try to reconstruct how human beings, emerging from the last ice age over twelve thousand years ago, managed to transform their minds, their cultures, and their societies through a series of innovations, adaptations, discoveries and other advances or changes in the technologies of thought and of labor. Some of those transformations are well known – the agricultural revolution and the rise of cities, the refinement of metals and the crafting of tools and weapons, the harnessing of various forms of power, and the development of machines, for example.

The effect of physical tools is more readily grasped than is the significance of social or cultural tools, such as the development of democracy and rule of law, the discovery of mathematical order in the world and the methods of scientific investigation, the development of symbols and of writing, and so forth. Researchers today are beginning to recognize that “tools for the mind” are as significant as physical tools. Both serve to mediate human activity, though it is more difficult to study how ‘cognitive activity’ advances as a consequence of our development of “cognitive tools.” But that is the sort of thing I am interested in.

As we look closer and with a more fine-grained appreciation, we begin to understand how the various traditional cultures and the formalized academic disciplines came into being and changed over time. We come to appreciate how our cultural systems contribute to our adaptation to the land, to one another, and to our cultural and historical circumstances. As we follow this twelve thousand year timeline of cultural development we come to appreciate how the increasing pace of the development of cognitive tools has served to open up entire new mental landscapes, providing human beings with more ways of harnessing the powers of the mind. Cultures shape and transform the mind. So do academic disciplines.

Modern researchers speak of “the co-evolution of human culture and human consciousness.” Humans learned to think mathematically, for example, by inventing

symbols and concepts and protocols for the conduct of reason as they explored mathematical relationships. These stories are complex, but they are fascinating and revealing. Much of my work has been dedicated to finding ways of bringing these foundational perspectives to bear on the design and conduct of the curriculum at all levels of schooling.

Outside of work, I have widely varied interests which serve to shape who I am. My family is foremost in my heart and on my mind – my wife Annette who is my partner in all things great and small, and our four children, Rebecca, Kelly, Athena, and Charles. Each of them reminds me of how precious human life is, and how great the responsibilities are that one generation owes to the next. Serving them gives meaning to my life.

In an earlier life, I was an outdoorsman, a mechanic, a carpenter, operator of heavy machinery, a social worker, a transportation consultant (that's a euphemism for working in a bus station) and, always, a teacher. I have tried to get an insider's view of the arts and sciences by participating in most of them to the extent I could. In this website I have included samples of my oil painting and an early effort to write poetry (*The solipsism in Shelley's 'Alastor'*, a poem written about and in the style of the romantic poet, Shelley). These efforts were not professional grade, but they did serve to help me get inside of the head of those who actually know how to write or paint professionally. And that has helped me to build an appreciation for the creative work of artists, writers, scholars, scientists, and others who live by the fire of their imagination.

I read extensively, and have sought just about every opportunity to travel, having been at one time or another to Canada, Mexico, Jamaica, England, Scotland, Wales, France, Italy, Turkey, Egypt, Greece, Australia, and Thailand, and all regions of the lower 48. As Nelson Goodman observed, we humans have many 'ways of world-making,' and I find this diversity and adaptability absolutely fascinating.

In the past, I have rebuilt automobiles, built houses, and written fiction, poetry, and professional research papers. I have painted pictures with oil on canvas, and have studied all kinds of intellectual disciplines. I took a few semesters each in French, Swedish, and Latin, but did not master any of those languages. Still, they gave me a way of seeing how language frames thought, and how different languages frame thought in different ways.

I have been at Montana State University since 1991, and have served as department head since 2001. Our campus is one of those quiet gems among universities that one feels privileged to discover. It continues to surprise me with its energy, vibrant minds, and congenial atmosphere. This is a great place to work, study, play, make friends, and commit to a lifetime of service to others.

### **Education.**

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Ph.D. in Educational Policy Studies, Dec. 1991  
Major Area of Concentration: Philosophy of Education.

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
M.S. in Educational Policy Studies, 1989.  
Major Area of Concentration: Philosophy of Education.

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
B.S. in Psychology, 1980.

### **Teaching Areas.**

Foundations of Education – Educational Psychology,  
Social Foundations, History & Philosophy of Education.

### **Professional Interests.**

Curriculum Design. Cognition. Psychology of Learning.  
Interest & Motivation. Memory. Semiotics. Cultural History.  
Social Contexts of Learning. Diversity and Multicultural Education.  
History of Education. Social Foundations. Philosophy of Education.  
Distance Learning and e-learning strategies for curriculum design  
and delivery.

### **Programs and Research Projects**

- \* Ourstory – A Foundational Approach to Curricular Coherence.
- \* NPTT – A distance delivered teacher certification program  
for degreed professionals who want to become teachers.
- \* History and Philosophy of Science and Science Education
- \* Using Foundational Approaches to Teach Mathematics