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# Health psychologist chosen for theology-science fellowship



Brick Johnstone, a health psychologist in the School of Health Professions, begins a nine-month fellowship next month at the Center for Theological Inquiry at Princeton University. Photo by Rob Hill.

Johnstone's research could lead to mental exercises that generate positive emotions

#### By Mark Barna

While living in Berkeley, Calif., I attended meditation sessions at a local zen center. I brought a watch to the 40-minute sessions so I could peek at the time remaining. But eventually I didn't need the watch. A feeling of anticipation would well up in me, then the center's gong would sound, indicating the end of the session. I was able to tell how much time had passed through my internal clock.

Brick Johnstone, a health psychologist in the <u>School of Health Professions (http://healthprofessions.missouri.edu/)</u>, said that my "training the brain" to gauge time was similar to what he wants to achieve in his research with hospital patients. The difference, though, is that he hopes to elevate the training to encompass the development of positive mental states such as forgiveness, selflessness and empathy. Imagine, for example, a person severely injured by a drunk driver being able to forgive, accept and move on by following a brain-training strategy.

Johnstone specializes in the neuropsychology of spiritual experience. He also counsels hospital patients coming to terms with denial, guilt, rage and other negative emotions. This September, he will start a nine-month fellowship with seven other scholars at the <u>Center of Theological Inquiry (http://www.ctinquiry.org/)</u> at Princeton University. The fellowship is called "Inquiry on Religious Experience and Moral Identity."

During the fellowship, Johnstone will talk and share research with scholars of theology and the sciences from institutions across America, Germany, Sweden and Canada. One of the team's research projects involves documenting the spiritual experiences of believers in various faiths, from Hindus in India to Protestants in Boone County, Mo.

### 'Spiritual' meaning

Several years ago, Johnstone created a buzz over his research into spiritual experiences when he gave interviews to a number of media outlets. Though some enthusiasts proclaimed that Johnstone had proven the existence of a supernatural power, perhaps even the Judeo-Christian God, Johnstone's studies were actually more science than faith.

His work suggested that specific parts of the brain affect how people feel, think and behave. Over millennia, these experiences have been characterized as religious, spiritual and transcendent, among other lofty adjectives.

Johnstone said that understanding spiritual experiences might enable people to harness the positive emotions and attitudes that can spring from them.

The health professor defines "spirituality" broadly. Spiritual is not necessarily supernatural. Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists, agnostics and almost everyone else have experienced moments when empathy or oneness with all things fill the mind, Johnstone said. For a Christian it might be while singing a psalm. For an atheist or agnostic, it might be during a walk in the woods or while downhill skiing.

"We are all spiritual in some sense. We look up at the stars and we get a lump in our throat and we feel it's wonderful," Richard Dawkins, author, biologist and atheist, said on CBS's "George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight" in July 2013.

### **Brain lobes**

The euphoria of spiritual experience is triggered by brain biology, Johnstone said. It relates to the release of biogenic amine neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin. Spiritual experience also appears to emanate from specific parts of the brain.

The brain's right parietal lobe identifies the self, Johnstone said. People who have injured the right lobe can have trouble identifying themselves in pictures and gauging their strengths and weakness. But many times they also claim to have heightened spiritual experiences.

During a selfless experience, neurotransmitters inhibit right lobe activity, Johnstone said. Several years ago, tests were conducted on Buddhist monks and Franciscan nuns in deep meditation, a time when they said they felt selfless and one with all things, Johnstone said. Devices recorded that the right parietal lobe was receiving less blood flow. Parts of the lobe had actually shut down.

Out-of-body experiences may also be related to the shuttering of this lobe, Johnstone said. And perhaps also forgiveness.

"The more willing you are to forgive, the less functional is your right parietal lobe," Johnstone said. "In order to forgive, I've got to give up this focus that the self has been wronged."

Empathy, meanwhile, appears to manifest from the left parietal lobe, which focuses outwardly toward others. In several studies, people experiencing empathy had a galaxy of neurotransmitters firing in the left parietal lobe. Johnstone was surprised by the finding: He'd expected that inhibition of the right lobe, effecting selflessness, would generate the emotion. But someone who is selfless is not necessarily empathetic toward other people.

Understanding how the brain works helps people learn about themselves and, perhaps, relate more positively toward others, Johnstone said. "There are ways to get along better with others, and they are brain-based," he said.

"Let's try to figure out the best way to use what we are learning [in neuroscience] so that we can all get along better."

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# Record enrollment of minorities and international students this fall



Corey Matzat, shown with his mother, Cindy Matzat, moving into Mark Twain Hall, was among 6,227 MU freshmen enrolled on opening day. Matzat is majoring in computer engineering. Photo by Nicholas Benner.

Freshman class smaller due in part to fewer Missouri high school graduates

On the first day of classes, the University of Missouri welcomed the most diverse student body in its history. With 34,111 students enrolled, diversity in the student body increased 3.4 percent compared to this time last year. In spite of declining high school graduates, Mizzou's freshman class of 6,227 is the second largest in MU's history, second only to last year's class of 6,560. International and out-of-state students increased as well.

Read the MIZZOU magazine Web Exclusive story <u>here (http://mizzoumag.missouri.edu/2013/08/diverse-and-talented/)</u>, which includes a close-up look at a freshman with great potential. The story is by Kelsey Allen.

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# Mizzou Online shows substantial growth during past 12 months



Guy Wilson, an education technology specialist at Educational Technologies at Missouri, leads a session at the TeAchnology Workshop July 8–12 in the Heinkel Building. Photo by Nicholas Benner.

Faculty and students adapting to combining digital media in traditional classroom setting

In 1995, Dale Fitch enrolled in the first online social work course offered at any university. It opened his eyes to the possibilities of e-learning, broadly defined as all forms of electronically supported learning and teaching, from using clickers in the classroom to delivering lectures via podcast.

Fitch, now an assistant professor in the School of Social Work, uses e-learning in the classroom and online undergraduate and graduate courses he teaches.

But he still wants to learn more. He and five other MU faculty participated in the TeAchnology Workshop July 8–12, sponsored by <u>Educational Technologies at Missouri (ET@MO) (http://etatmo.missouri.edu/)</u>. There, faculty worked with ET@MO staff on a project that integrates technology software, tools and applications into their teaching.

"We help faculty teach well with technology," said Danna Vessell, director of ET@MO. "We don't believe in technology for technology's sake. We want to make sure it's helping the teaching and the learning that is going on."

### The Changing Frontier

Kim Siegenthaler, co-director of <u>Mizzou Online (http://online.missouri.edu/)</u>, likens the ever-changing landscape of e-learning at MU to the transition from the era of the Pony Express to that of the railroad. As

e-learning becomes more expected and accepted, Mizzou Online created partnerships with academic units to develop and deliver distance programs.

In August 2012, MU invested \$2.5 million in online degree programs, resulting in 16 new degree and certificate options, including two bachelor's degrees and six master's degrees. In early fall 2013, Mizzou Online plans to announce another \$2.5-million

request for proposals, hoping to add to the 86 programs and 593 courses offered.

In the past year, Mizzou Online has seen a nearly 40 percent increase in enrollment. Almost one-third of MU students take at least one online course, and that is expected to rise to half the student population within the next few years, said Gera Burton, co-director of Mizzou Online.

Much of the revenue being generated by enrollment in distance classes goes to the academic units, Burton said. "We can take that money and reinvest it in what we do and do it better," she said. "It's up to us where we go from here."

### **Educating Faculty**

More faculty are embracing e-learning. Just five years ago, ET@MO associate director David Reid said he spent a lot of time helping faculty understand <u>Blackboard (http://online.missouri.edu/prepare/demo.aspx)</u>, MU's learning management system. Now, about 90 percent of courses at MU have a Blackboard component.

During the TeAchnology Workshop, Fitch investigated how the master of social work program can move entirely online to make it more accessible to students across Missouri. The biggest problem is how to allow for the interactive component of a social work class, including role-plays and simulated client experiences, Fitch said.

Fitch explored the full capabilities of Blackboard's online Web conferencing tool, Collaborate, to create virtual classrooms.

He already uses Collaborate in his face-to-face classes for exercises that involve, well, collaboration. For instance, students create diagrams or drawings and log into a Collaborate session. Next, Fitch projects the images onto the big screen for everyone to see. He is integrating technology in his curriculum to present the content in the most effective way possible.

"That's the thing I like about online teaching," Fitch said. "It really requires interaction and engagement. I've taught too many face-to-face classes where students show up, but they're not engaged. It's frustrating. In an online classroom, you have to be self-directed and motivated.

"There are so many different ways of learning: visual, auditory, tactile. The technology can — if it's done in the right way — facilitate [the learning process]."

- Kelsey Allen

### **TEACHING TECHNOLOGY**

Educational Technologies at Missouri offers programs for faculty looking to delve deeper into e-learning, from funding to resources to recognition, including:

### **Open Help Hours**

ET@MO staff are available for drop-in appointments every Thursday from 1 to 3 p.m. at 130 Heinkel Building.

### **Teaching with Technology Innovation Fund**

Faculty with an idea for integrating technology into the classroom can apply for up to \$1,000 to be used toward equipment or software.

### Excellence in Teaching with Technology Award

Faculty, staff, graduate instructors and teaching assistants who currently use technology in the classroom are eligible for a \$500 award to be applied toward educational technology expenses.

### Academic Transformation

Faculty interested in taking a course online can apply for up to \$5,000 for individual course development or up to \$40,000 for a larger enrollment course redesign.

ET@MO also offers syllabus reviews, teaching assessments, in-office software training and curricular planning consultations. For more information, visit <u>etatmo.missouri.edu (http://etatmo.missouri.edu/)</u>.

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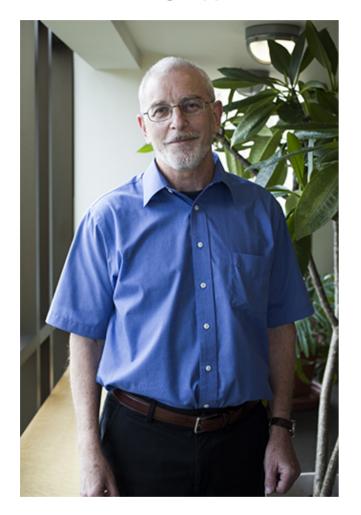
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# Mizzou Advantage appoints education facilitator



Mike Gold, associate director of the Center for Agroforestry, has been teaching online-only since 2011. In his position as Mizzou Advantage education facilitator, Gold hopes to be a catalyst for more online certificate and degree programs. Photo by Nicholas Benner.

Appointee has years of educational experience fostering collaboration

Michael Gold was fostering interdisciplinary collaboration long before <u>Mizzou Advantage (http://mizzouadvantage.missouri.edu/)</u>. As the associate director of the Center for Agroforestry, Gold works with landowners, entomologists, horticulturalists, agricultural economists and rural sociologists on everything from the production to the economics to the environmental protection of both agricultural and forested landscapes.

He was a natural choice as the new educational facilitator for Mizzou Advantage, said Program Director Meg Phillips.

"He is a big thinker with interesting ideas who takes the time to listen, is good at working with people and who likes to think about how to focus to make the best impact," Phillips said. "He understands what the program is trying to do."

#### **Harvesting Power**

Even before Gold came to Mizzou in 1998 as a research professor in the forestry department, his work crossed boundaries. His career started at Michigan State University as the international forestry professor. For nearly 15 years, he traveled around the world, working in areas outside his expertise in forestry genetics. Using ethnographic methods, he reported how people in Nepal, Jamaica or Rwanda describe and interpret the value of trees in their agricultural production.

Gradually he yearned to settle in America, where he was familiar with the culture and language. When a position opened up at Mizzou on the ground floor of the then-new Center for Agroforestry, Gold applied.

His research focuses on how to use specialty crops to create more market opportunities for the family farmer.

For instance, at the Horticulture and Agroforestry Research Center in New Franklin, Mo., researchers plant Chinese chestnut trees in the fertile soils of the Missouri River hills. On a 1-acre plot, a farmer can plant about 50 trees. When the trees are young ("This is the agroforestry part," Gold said), farmers can plant anything from wheat to pumpkins to tomatoes in between the tree rows, gradually shifting to bluegrass or hay when the trees mature.

By the time a chestnut cultivar is about 11 years old, it will produce upward of 40 pounds of chestnuts, which retail for \$5 to \$8 per pound. With 10 acres of chestnuts in full production, a farmer can gross about \$100,000.

After conducting market research on the chestnut crop, Gold organized training programs for landowners. He estimated that there are some 20 chestnut farms around the state.

### **Spearheading Programs**

Gold understands the importance of preparing students who are capable of working across disciplines, something important for today's multi-skill jobs.

"If you have different disciplinary perspectives in your training, you can see the world from more than one perspective," Gold said. "Wherever you might be, you're that much more nimble and able to function in the world of the 21st century."

Gold, who has been teaching online-only since 2011, hopes to be a catalyst for more online certificate and degree programs. Two years ago, the forestry department launched the only online master's in agroforestry program degree in the world.

"There are people who want to study agroforestry in depth, but it's not offered in Springfield, Joplin, St. Louis, Kansas City, Rolla," Gold said. "That's a microcosm. I want to reach beyond the smaller numbers and the limited population of Mizzou students."

Since 2010, nearly 100 research projects, involving some 400 faculty members and hundreds of students, have been spearheaded by a facilitator in each of the four areas of strength and an education facilitator. As the education facilitator, Gold looks forward to removing the geographic limitations of the other educational programs that Mizzou Advantage offers and expanding their reach even farther.

"I'm excited to bring folks together from across the university and create educational opportunities that complement those strengths," Gold said.

- Kelsey Allen

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# Mizzou Advantage names new Media of the Future facilitator

Mike McKean brings 27 years' experience to his role as the new facilitator of Mizzou Advantage's <u>Media of the Future</u> (<u>https://mizzouadvantage.missouri.edu/media/</u>) initiative. "It's a natural position for me to take," said McKean, associate professor of journalism and director of the Reynolds Journalism Institute Futures Lab.

"It will be an easy transition for him," said Randy Picht, executive director of RJI. "As the ringmaster of the Futures Lab, he always kept the plates spinning."

Many of those plates will continue to spin, considering the aligned missions of the School of Journalism, RJI and Media of the Future. The school creates journalists, RJI creates media and Mizzou Advantage creates opportunities for expanding audiences and applications. Together, the combined mission is to create journalists that utilize effective media to best serve an audience.

"Mike intuitively understands the nature of a changing media landscape: innovation adoption, experimentation, reflection and adaptation," said Lynda Kraxberger, associate dean at the School of Journalism. "I'm looking forward to his application of this method on campus and hope it will mean more opportunities for journalism students to collaborate with other students and faculty across campus."

McKean will be responsible for developing interdisciplinary projects that involve journalism and bring together faculty from other disciplines on and off campus. For example, students from the School of Journalism, College of Engineering and School of Medicine are working in teams to explore how motion capture technology used in video games can be used to help rehabilitate patients. Students in the Reynolds Journalism Institute lab also are expanding mobile application development on campus. A recent example is a new app that helps consumers locate, store and prepare fresh local produce.

"Jobs in today's world require students to have expertise in more than just their area of study," McKean said. "For example, journalism students need to know how to use data sets for applications and online media, while information technology (IT) students need to learn how to use media to promote their work.

"By bringing journalism and IT students together, they can learn important skills from one another that they may not have had the opportunity to in the classroom," McKean continues. "This can lead to better job opportunities."

— Lauren Steele

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# **Chancellor Search Committee named**

Committee to help find replacement for retiring Chancellor Brady J. Deaton

An 18-member committee composed of faculty, staff, students, retirees, donors and administrators will help conduct the search for a new MU chancellor to replace Brady J. Deaton, who retires Nov. 15.

The committee will be led by co-chairs Ann Covington, University of Missouri curator, and Dean Mills, School of Journalism dean.

The other members are:

- James Birchler, Curators Professor of Biological Sciences
- Nick Droege, undergraduate student and Missouri Students Association president
- · Joan Gabel, Trulaske College of Business dean
- Anita Hampton, vice chair of communications, Extension State Council, University of Missouri Extension

• Jana Hawley, professor and chair of the Department of Textile and Apparel Management, College of Human Environmental Sciences

• Ellis Ingram Sr., associate dean for diversity and inclusion, and associate professor of pathology and anatomical sciences, School of Medicine

- Tracey Mershon, Mizzou Alumni Association president
- Deborah S. Noble-Triplett, assistant vice president for academic affairs, University of Missouri System
- James Pace, alumnus, retired CEO of ROM Corp.
- · Cheryl B. Schrader, Missouri University of Science & Technology chancellor
- · Gary L. Smith, director emeritus of admissions and registrar (retired)
- · Rebecca Stafford, Staff Advisory Council chair

• Jinglu Tan, director of the Division of Food Systems and Bioengineering, and professor and chair of the Department of Biological Engineering

- Mitch Wasden, CEO and chief operating officer, MU Health Care
- William Wiebold, professor of plant sciences, College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources
- Jacob 'Jake' Wright, doctoral student and Graduate Professional Council president

The UM System announced the committee members July 25. The committee will be assisted by the Los Angeles-based search firm Storbeck/Pimentel & Associates.

Visit the Chancellor Search Committee page on the University of Missouri System Web site <u>here</u> (<u>http://www.umsystem.edu/muchancellor\_search</u>), and read about the attributes faculty and staff want in the next chancellor in this <u>Mizzou Weekly story (../../34-34/new-chancellor/index.php.html</u>).

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# Mizzou prepares to celebrate its 175-year anniversary in 2014

Prepare to festoon the party balloons and uncork the champagne bottles. MU will be celebrating its 175th anniversary throughout 2014.

MU was founded in 1839 on a nondescript Columbia field. Today, it's a \$2 billion globally competitive higher education institution on a 1,262-acre botanic garden. In 1908, MU became a member of the Association of American Universities.

The university is known worldwide for its research and quality of its faculty.

Keep reading Mizzou Weekly for more information and stories on anniversary events.

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# **Campus curators prepare to move Mizzou treasures**



The Gallery of European and American Art is part of the Museum of Art and Archaeology, which along with the anthropology museum is moving to Mizzou North. The art and archaeology museum has the third-largest visual-arts collection in Missouri. Photo by Shane Epping.

Mizzou North offers more space, easier access to museums

The Museum of Art and Archaeology and the Museum of Anthropology are moving from central campus to Mizzou North due to the <u>Renew Mizzou (.././34-31/renew-mizzou/index.php.html)</u> construction project. Read all about the treasures of these museums <u>here in this story by Nancy Moen (http://news.missouri.edu/2013/museum-megaplex/)</u>.

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# **Online Calendar**

MU has rolled out Mizzou Events, an online calendar full of upcoming events, from sporting events to lectures. This is the official online calendar for MU. To submit information to Mizzou Events, faculty, staff and students need only to log in with their university identification and press the Submit and Event button. Check out Mizzou Events <u>here (http://calendar.missouri.edu/)</u>.

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# Museum moving sale

The Museum of Art and Archaeology is moving from Pickard Hall to Mizzou North, formerly the site of Ellis Fischel Cancer Center. The museum's store is having a 30 percent discount on all merchandise through Aug. 31.

Museum and store hours are 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday-Friday; 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday; and noon-4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

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# Healthy office calls

Schedule your office's 15-minute session covering tips on being a healthy workplace with <u>Healthy for Life</u> (<u>http://www.umsystem.edu/curators/wellness/</u>), the University of Missouri System wellness program. Workshops on wellness in the workplace are also available.

Contact Blaine Snow at snowb@umsystem.edu.

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# IT classroom help

Faculty can receive help involving software in the classroom. Aspects of Adobe Creative Suite, Microsoft Office and HTML coding can be taught in the classroom with help from Information Technology representatives. Representatives can work with faculty to customize the classroom presentation. Email training@missouri.edu for more information.

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# Master your garden

MU Extension is offering a master gardener course for those wanting a greener thumb. The course will be 6–9 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays from Sept. 9 to Oct. 30. That's 16 classes. Cost is \$140 for those registering before Aug. 30, and \$150 for those registering by Sept. 6. For more information, contact Kent Shannon at shannond@missouri.edu, or call 445-9792.

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