

## **David Craig's Statement**

I became a professor because I knew that I could connect the details and content of biology to the real world, I could inform a potential juror or judge, politician or voter, industrialist or developer. I want nothing short of transforming a student's world view. I want students critically thinking, alert to their world, and aware of their personal responsibilities and possibilities. Pragmatically, this is a philosophy of learning through personal experiences.

A surprise of being a professor at Willamette has been the authentic research connections I have made with colleagues in the arts. These connections are precious because in connecting biology to the arts I have been transformed in the same way I aim to transform my students. My world view today is richly informed by conversations with Mike Strelow in English and Andries Fourie in Art; conversations that started with informal questions about the names of animals and plants have now grown into deeper questions of semiotics. It is because of the company and critical conversations with artists that I am now also able to ask questions about the meaning, signification, and representational designations that these and other species can have.

A scholarly result of my new world view includes a sculpture "Zena Web" that was shown at the Salem Art Association Bush Barn Center in 2011. This work was Fourie's and my attempt to articulate meaning about past, present, and future of Zena Farm and Forest. The work had ecological web information embedded in network of shapes and ties that circled key species that represented important ecological roles as well as ideas about human relationships at Zena over the last 250 years. This sculpture is now one of the first demos I use in my BIOL 255 Ecology course.

In 2011 I co-led a LARC community with Mike Strelow that included Erynn Rebol and we focused on creating fiction, ethnographic essays, and studio art in response to the Columbia River Estuary and conflicts between fisherman and Caspian Terns over the birds' diet of salmon. In that year our research community was selected by the participating faculty as the group best suited to make a presentation to the Board of Trustees highlighting the success of LARC. Strelow has successfully published a couple of essays and his poetic take of our experiences and his ability turn my "tern as an indicator for estuary health" into a "canary in the coal mine and harbinger of a global apocalypse" has provoked me to seriously consider doing the scientific research necessary to use Caspian Terns as a global indicators for effects of climate change throughout their cosmopolitan range (e.g. South Africa).

If funded I can deepen my artistic work with Fourie in his homeland, and expand on previous tern work with Rebol as we explore meaning and representation of Caspian Terns, elephants, and other organisms. I also anticipate Rebol, our shared advisee, should be able to complete work as a co-author on a tern surveying methods manuscript as well as creative art. This will be my first visit to Africa which will facilitate the collection of preliminary data and resources necessary to write a Fulbright to support my next sabbatical in 2 years. I believe LARC should be supported by an endowment and will conduct this work with the aim of producing exemplary interdisciplinary work to share with potential donors.