

THE GALEN TIMES

"YOU ONLY FAIL WHEN YOU STOP TRYING."- ALBERT EINSTEIN

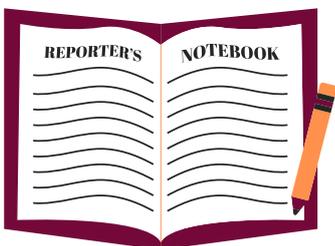


HELLO TO OUR NEW BRANDED NEWSLETTER!

- New Branded Newsletter
- Importance of Course Evaluation
- That's Not Funny, LOL
- Events
- Important Dates

Hi Eagles, guess what? As you can see from the page's topic Galen's Newsletter is now being branded. What does that mean? This means that moving forward, all Galen newsletter issues will have a central theme (Galen Colors). This is to aid in easily distinguishing our newsletter whenever posted.

We hope that you are also as excited to see the Galen colors being expressed proudly through our newsletter. In addition, we hope that we are able to cover topics that are relevant to you. If you believe there is anything of interest that we should discuss, please let us know by emailing us at mmanzur@galen.edu.bz.



**NEW
NEW
NEW**



IMPORTANCE OF COURSE EVALUATION

Galen strives for quality education while making your concerns our top priority. Course evaluations is one of the opportunities that are made available to students in order for them to voice their honest opinions and concerns. This opens windows of improvement for courses, teachers, and the university.

It is important to note that each evaluation has the option to be submitted anonymously. In addition, every course you are enrolled in has a section to evaluate. Overall, each evaluation requires only a few minutes of your time.

Do not hesitate to make a difference.

Steps to access Course Evaluations:

1. Log on to the student portal located at registration.galen.edu.bz
2. Click "My Account" then select "Registrations"
3. Click "Submit Evaluation" for the course you wish to evaluate, located to the far right under "Options".
4. Choose your answers and click "Submit" at the bottom.



"EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON WHICH YOU CAN USE TO CHANGE THE WORLD" - NELSON MANDELA



That's Not Funny, LOL

By: Dr. David Aguilar

Human beings are symbolic creatures. It's what sets us apart from every other living thing of which we are currently aware. While we can train an animal to understand that pressing the green button will produce a pellet of food, almost all such interactions are directly transactional in nature; that is, Action A produces Result B. Human communication, on the other hand, is vastly more complex than that. It is, in fact, the most complicated information-transfer system in the known universe, except for maybe the way that DNA combines to produce *new* humans... but that's another article.

Language, which is one of the things that sets human brains apart from all other processors on earth, both natural and artificial, has proven to be quite elusive when we attempt to replicate it in synthetic systems. I'm talking about Artificial Intelligence here because, how would you know if a computing system was intelligent or not, unless it tells you? It kind of reminds me of the old academic joke, "How can you tell if someone has a Ph. D.?" See if you can figure out the punch line.

Our symbol-loving nature has proven to be something of a double-edged sword. Yes, it has provided us with pattern recognition skills that have been essential to our survival, and the development of civilization, but sometimes patterns don't always mean what we think they do.

It's easy to assume we have the entire picture when we see a part of a set of data, and while it is often a safe bet to predict upcoming events based on current trends, any statistician will tell you that we never deal in absolute guarantees. There's always the chance that a sharp turn lies just ahead.

Pattern recognition has also led to the development of superstitions. Just ask a couple of non-Schrödinger black cats why people tend to avoid them. They probably won't answer you, but I mean... you could ask. And notice the statistician in me saying "probably." We just never know, do we?

In several of the courses that I teach, I suggest that my students would not be wasting their time by learning a little bit of body language. Knowing how people communicate with one another non-verbally is an excellent skill, making one more adept at picking up on social cues, and knowing how to express themselves more effectively when giving presentations, responding to uncomfortable situations, negotiating for their interests, and even asking that soon-to-be-special someone out for a social encounter. Since we're spending a lot of time with one another's faces over virtual media, perhaps it's more important today than ever before.

But one needs to be careful when drawing conclusions about someone's thoughts based on their position and movements.

A chin resting in a hand while you're speaking to someone could indicate boredom, but it could also indicate a sore neck, poor eyesight, disapproval, or just plain old habit. Being good at reading body language means observing and interpreting a constellation of subtle indicators, in which no one element provides a definitive picture. Life and verbally spoken language are very much the same way.

Another example is the fabled browser history. If someone were to see my recent Google searches without knowing anything else about me, they would probably conclude that my Internet usage paints the picture of a man in some kind of crisis. I mean, we're talking explosive chemicals, ancient Sumerian, robot anatomy, cyber-crime, relationship advice, stuff about dwarves (not like the *bad* stuff about dwarves, but... not the good stuff either), software piracy, the benefits of living in a dictatorship, what happened at the end of Dawson's Creek and most recently, "how to hide your browser history."

I can explain about 90% of all that quite reasonably.

The point I am making is that signs and symbolism are important to us, and in many cases, context is critical for understanding what we are seeing. We benefit from having as wide a pool of references as possible so that we become adept at picking up the thread, but even then we need to roll with the punches and plan for the unexpected. That's actually why some things are funny to us... because a situation that appeared to

be strange, inappropriate, or even frightening, suddenly becomes re-contextualized. The victorious underdog, the positive twist ending, the payoff at the end that connects the dangling plot threads, these things are appealing to us because they reaffirm our belief that there's a solution to every problem and a way to figure out the obscure.

And how do we grow our reference pool? We do so by reading books, watching educating films, participating in stimulating conversations, and challenging ourselves mentally. I try to make my programming classes engaging to our Computer Science students by giving them puzzles to solve. "Okay, so we've gone over Program A together. See if you can modify it to now accomplish Task B." Like a mystery, or like a game, we stretch ourselves by applying what we know to novel situations.

Programming is actually a very good example of pattern recognition and use. It's all about knowing and employing the right symbols in the right context so that the computer (which is very literal) knows what we (who are very symbolic) want it to do. And I'll let you in on a little secret. We, here at Galen, are very interested in how our graduates do once they leave our hallowed hall (I think we only have one). We maintain good communication with various industries and speak with both past and prospective employers, and for the most part, we hear good things. Those who graduate with Galen degrees in any of our majors are described as "knowing their stuff," being quite adaptable to new circumstances, and almost always the first choice amongst recently gowned professionals.

It's not all glowing testimony, however. One common weakness that is consistently pointed out over the years (and my CS students are not immune by any means) is that while the professional skills are up to par, sometimes the communication expertise is a little lacking, especially in the area of writing.

'Tis the season, as summer draws near, for students who are about to graduate to approach their professors for recommendations for both jobs and scholarships. Just this past week, I've written about four of them for current and former students, and whenever possible I will highlight how capable my recommenders are in written and spoken communication... because I know that this is important to both scholarship committees and employers. And I'm honest about it; many of my students are excellent communicators, so that's not a problem, but when they aren't, then, I find other nice things to say about them.

So, if there's one thing above all that I would advise our students of any major, it is to practice your symbolic mastery, a.k.a. your writing prowess. Don't just see "English" as a couple of courses you need to take on the way toward your degree; understand that it is the scaffolding on which you hang every other skill you are learning here. And really, this goes for Spanish and any other language – including programming languages! – that you have the opportunity to pick up.

We must acknowledge that English, as with most human languages, changes over time.

Try reading an original manuscript of *Beowulf* from a thousand or so years ago. An article like this one, written fifty years from now, might look entirely different, and will probably consist of the descendants of our modern emojis thrown in for effect. The language of texting, and casual messaging, isn't really English anymore. It is something else – maybe something bigger. Like any emerging dialect, it requires familiarity to understand. Fortunately, it isn't too widely divergent from standard language yet, and so with a little bit of exposure, most people can pick it up well enough. But then, that might not be the case for long.

As of the time of this writing, there still exists a firm line of distinction between casual conversation and formal, professional writing. And I'm not here to tell you that one form of communication is "bad" and another is "good." They are what they are, and they are equally appropriate in their right circumstances... but that is where the problem sometimes arises.

As common forms of speech creep into formal communication (as I suppose, it inevitably must over time) the lines between the types of speech we know become blurred. It isn't that people are becoming careless, necessarily; maybe they were never taught the importance of care... or at least, it wasn't presented to them in a way that made the distinction meaningful. Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation were early victims, and while some of the slack is taken up by autocorrect, we all know the horror stories that have arisen from the imperfections of that system!

What I believe is that we set ourselves up for the highest form of success if we attempt to master all of the tools at our disposal.

Symbols, characters, and even deliberately out-of-context terms, if they are useful if they set a pattern that is appropriate for our audience... that's all fine. But when writing in a formal setting, I don't think we should attempt to revolutionize professional language faster than it's willing to walk.

There is still a place for precise, elegant speech. We aren't all going to be poets, but we can know our audiences, "read the room," as they say, and work within the context that has been provided for us. Employers and future colleagues will appreciate that. Computer Scientists absolutely need this in order to write programs, but they aren't the only ones who benefit.

So let me conclude by encouraging this: practice reading and writing. I know it can be a struggle, especially with videos online about a multitude of subjects, showing you visually, step-by-step, just about anything you could wish to learn.. There are even YouTube channels in which an automatic voice will read websites to you, in case you don't want to read them yourself. There are some pros and cons of this, no doubt.

But I think that, if you find a topic you're really interested in and believe is worth pursuing, spend some time reading about it... spend some time with the symbols that express its ideas to you. If you do this and learn how to be skillful with this shared language of ours, then you too will be able to express your thoughts with elegance and

power...and there's nothing abstract or ambiguous about the gains that this can provide.

Oh, one last thing... speaking of symbolic language... Mathematics. The University of Belize holds an annual Mathematics Symposium in the month of March. Last year, it was scheduled just as the Covid-related restrictions were coming online, and so the 2020 session was canceled. Fortunately, they have adapted to the times, and the 2021 Symposium will be held virtually on Zoom. I have accepted an invitation to speak at the series that covers Mathematics in a variety of contexts, and this year will be the third time I have participated. My topic this year will be "Mathematics for Rebels."

If you believe this is something you would be interested in supporting and giving our university a presence at this nationwide event, I encourage you to sign up at the link below (it is open to anyone), and to reserve the morning of **March 26th**, beginning at **8:30 am**.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1QFoqWPd13TopAxMaYqe7JZ9WuAfpjh2rgQD9IqHFT_I/edit

I hope to see some of you there!





national institute of culture and history

Dear Friends of ISCR-NICH,

Happy Women's Month! This month the National Institute of Culture and History through the Institute for Creative Arts and the Museum of Belize is hosting a three-day series of events in celebration of International Women's Day. Female writers, photographers, poets, dancers, musicians, visual artists, and others working the arts and culture are invited to participate! This year's events are being hosted under the theme Women At Work from March 17-19, 2021.

For more information on the events, please see the flyers below.

To register for the Virtual Symposium sessions:

18th March <https://bit.ly/3sSn45x>

19th March <https://bit.ly/3uXqiGJ>

Women In Art

**MARCH 17 TO 19
A VIRTUAL EVENT
WOMEN'S MONTH**

**WE'RE CALLING ALL VISUAL ARTISTS, DANCERS, WRITERS,
POETS, PHOTOGRAPHERS, RESEARCHERS, CULTURAL
EDUCATORS ETC. IN THE ARTS AND CULTURAL FIELD.**

W O M E N : A R T W O R K

**MARCH 17TH, 2021
VIDEO LAUNCH**

**MARCH 18TH, 2021
ONLINE SYMPOSIUM**

**MARCH 19TH, 2021
ART N UNWIND**

**SEE ATTACHED FLYERS FOR INFORMATION ON HOW TO
PARTICIPATE.**

**FOR MORE INFO CONTACT: KIM
VASQUEZ AT
[KIM.VASQUEZ@NICHBELIZE.ORG](mailto:kim.vasquez@nichbelize.org)**



Women In Art

Women: ArtWORK

Online Symposium

March 18th, 2021

Online Symposium

Info: Join us as we bring together our collective thoughts and voices. The day will feature virtual networking, presentations, guest speakers and discussions. Topics will range from motivational to economic issues. We are stronger when we pull together.

Time: 10 a.m. to 12 noon
Artists must register ahead.

Register: Deadline 12th March via [Zoom link](#)

**MARCH 17 TO 19
A VIRTUAL EVENT
WOMEN'S MONTH**

**For more info contact: Kim Vasquez at
kim.vasquez@nichbelize.org**





Women In Art

Women: ArtWORK

A Virtual Event: We're calling all visual artists, dancers, writers, poets, photographers, researchers, cultural educators etc. in the arts and cultural field.

March 17th, 2021 Video Launch

Info: This year we're doing something different! We're calling artists from the art and culture sector to show us your artWORK. Send us a video, between 3 - 5 minutes, showing how you do what you do. Share your creative process, whether glamorous or not, and give us a glimpse into a day in the life of you, the artist. Any art submissions should also be included in your video.

Deadline: Submit by March 9th, 2021

Submit video to:
nich.communication@gmail.com

Launch of Videos: March 17th, 2021

March 18th, 2021 Online Symposium

Info: Join us as we bring together our collective thoughts and voices. The day will feature virtual networking, presentations, guest speakers and discussions. Topics will range from motivational to economic issues. We are stronger when we pull together.

Time: 10 a.m. to 12 noon
Artists must register ahead.

Register: Deadline 12th March via [Zoom link](#)

March 19th, 2021 Art N Unwind

Info: For artists 18 years and older! It's ladies night via ZOOM featuring drinks, snacks, art and girl talk! Come join us as visual artists and creatives paint and create together. The evening is open to performing artists as well, and there is room to share performances, or simply chat with us as our visual art sisters paint. Moderators will guide the conversation but it's anything goes.

Time: 7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Register: Deadline 12th March via [Zoom link](#).

**MARCH 17 TO 19
A VIRTUAL EVENT
WOMEN'S MONTH**

For more info contact: Kim Vasquez at
kim.vasquez@nichbelize.org



MAR.20-31 (VIRTUAL)

2021



JOIN THE RACE!

Join Friends for Conservation and Development (FCD) and the Belize Wildlife & Referral Clinic (BWRC) to celebrate the Chiquibul Forest and promote fitness!



IMPORTANT DATES:

- **March 9-13th-** Course Evaluation/ Evaluation of Teaching by Students
- **March 15-27th-** Mandatory "Selection of Courses" for 2020-3 Summer semester
- **March 27th-** Deadline to submit directed study request
- **March 27th-** Deadline for payment of the directed study fee



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