



*J. B. Shank, 2015–16 Distinguished Teacher  
Morse-Alumni Undergraduate Teaching Award*

In his courses in modern European intellectual history and the history of Western civilization, J.B. Shank's students experience history as a series of complex and contentious conversations.

"J.B. framed the Western civilization course as an investigation ... questioning the very assumptions about such courses. The primary one is ... that there was a single, coherent object one might call 'Western Civilization,' and we can easily recognize what it is," notes one colleague.

"He ignited my imagination, challenging me to consider how even thought itself is constructed and to consider the practical ramifications of those constructions," says a former student.

It's no wonder that, as a member of his department's Undergraduate Stud-

ies Committee, he offered a "highly innovative and downright bold re-envisioning of the undergraduate curriculum," according to a colleague.

Shank's love of history led him to found the Consortium for the Study of the Premodern World at the University, and he also is a leader of CLA's Humanistic Commons teaching initiative, which puts wide-ranging creative and intellectual energy at the center of University academic life.

Through his teaching, "I have begun to appreciate how knowledge from diverse disciplines is interrelated," writes a student. "I was amazed at how he linked the topics we covered in class to decisions we make in everyday life. ... Every day there is something I see or hear that can be tied back to Professor Shank." ❧

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*"Working as a school teacher while studying at St. John's College, I came to appreciate what the ancient Greek philosophers always stressed: that education in the fullest sense begins and ends with personal bonds between teachers and students."*

