



Cheryl Talley's the one ...

who acknowledges that there's no such thing as absolute knowledge and loves learning all the more for it

Position: Assistant professor of psychology

Area of Expertise: Psychobiology with an emphasis in neuroscience

Highlights:

Spent 10 years between her junior and senior years in college, during which she and her husband raised four children; highly motivated classroom teacher; earned her undergraduate degree from JMU through the Adult Degree Program

What's your favorite part of the educational process?

I love learning. I am intrigued by the questions of brain and mind. I'm fortunate to be living in an age where so much is being revealed, from quantum physics to how the brain works to what reality is, and that science is addressing questions like these. I think that the Buddhists and quantum mechanics are going to come up to the mountaintop, and say, "Aha, I knew you were there. Oh it's you," to each other. And here I am studying that and trying to interest my students in those questions, to give them the opportunity to see - to really see - that nobody knows it all.

What's your favorite time with your students?

I love it when they realize that there is no such thing as absolute knowledge; it's just absolute knowledge for that particular time. Everything is true because this is what we understand to be true right now. I love it when I can challenge their thinking by talking about distance-healing experiments where people in Boston attend the healing of a patient in Los Angeles and measurements are being taken, and there's a control group in Boston that is just reading about the patient, and that the patient's measurements actually change. In the Newtonian world view, it's a miracle. It's impossible. It's an object separation issue. But in quantum mechanics, where there is no distance and there is no time, it's no big deal.

What courses are you teaching these days?

I teach Introduction to Psychopharmacology and the Science of Sight and Audition, a GenEd course I really enjoy teaching. We go through the mechanics of how you actually see, and that there's a lot more to

seeing a piece of art than just seeing what is there. I do the same thing with hearing, and we end up with jazz, from how a tone actually enters your ear to what it is about jazz that causes an emotional experience and what it is about the creation of music, about how musicians actually hear something. Mozart said he heard the whole thing and just wrote it down. Duke Ellington could hear a train whistle and get a new song out of it.

How demanding are you?

My 285 behavior class is known to be very hard. I get reviews all the time that say "This is not a 200-level class. It's too much work," and yet it fills in two days, and there are 10 people on the override list right now. I ask them why, but here they are, and they keep coming.

The idea [at JMU] is to offer students a basis for lifelong learning by challenging them to become active in their own education and to explore the foundations of knowledge.

- Bill Gentry