A Tribute to Professor Charity Scott: Imagination, Reflection, and the Jay Healey Teaching Plenary

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I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.

Albert Einstein[1]

Georgia State University College of Law Professor Emerita Charity Scott quoted these words from Albert Einstein in June of 2022 as she concluded a tribute to Professor Joseph (Jay) M. Healey, one of the founding lights of health law and health law teaching. She chose the quote because she thought the words and sentiment would resonate with Jay. I repeat it because Dr. Einstein's words capture the essence and heart of Charity's approach to teaching, pedagogy, and life. Charity modeled, urged, nudged, and taught the community of health law professors to embrace imagination and creativity. Charity's vision has helped us be more creative and reflective teachers.[2]

My tribute focuses on how Charity fashioned and nurtured the Jay Healey Plenary Teaching Session, which since 2003 has become an opening day tradition at the American Society of Law, Medicine & Ethics annual Health Law Professors Conference. The session honors Professor Jay Healey of the University of Connecticut, one of the primary organizers of the first Health Law Teachers Conference in 1976, a gifted teacher who loved teaching.

During the early decades of the conference, when about 75 people attended, Jay moderated a plenary session in which we discussed issues that arise when teaching health law. Questions like: What should we reveal about our personal positions to students? How do we talk about hot-button issues like abortion? Should we take law students into clinical medical settings? The topics changed from year to year, but Jay always posed questions for discussion that were difficult, thorny, and often controversial. Standing at the front of the room and leading the discussion, Jay modeled how to listen. He was more interested in what we thought than in convincing us of what he thought. Jay's focus was always on others. He created room and

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space in that plenary for all voices — new teachers, experienced teachers, and everyone in between. He created space for reflection and learning.

Charity started coming to what was then called the Health Law Teacher's Conference in 1988, five years before Jay's sudden passing in 1993. Charity, like Jay, was passionate about teaching. She was also passionate about how Jay's plenary sessions helped form her as a teacher and a person. She wanted to continue Jay's tradition and Jay's legacy. She wanted to ensure a space during this annual conference to pose questions that matter about our teaching, hear from and listen to each other, and welcome newcomers' fresh voices. She wanted to create a space where, by talking together and listening to each other, we could make room for imagination and reflection.

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The 1990s were a time when the typical law conference format was a panel presentation where several "talking head" experts shared their knowledge with the audience. The audience took copious notes, asked questions, and gained knowledge. Yet Charity believed in the power of imagination. She also believed in the power of conversation to spark imagination. Charity proposed replacing the expert panel format with one that encouraged small group dialogue, trusting that we all have wisdom and creativity and that conversation can unlock both.

As a student of imagination and unlocking creativity, Charity studied mediation, improvisation, and mindfulness. Somewhere along this path, Charity encountered The World Café, a technique for generating small group conversations about questions that matter and sharing the collective discoveries that come from being in dialogue and listening to each other.[3] She proposed that the Jay Healey Teaching Session adapt The World Café format.

Since 2012, the Jay Healey Teaching Session has been inspired by the design principles of The World Café.[4] Each year, the session explores two to three questions about teaching health law in two to three rounds of small group discussion. We invite attendees into a welcoming space decorated to encourage creative thinking, conversation, and listening. Participants sit in groups of five or six around small tables covered with butcher paper, crayons, markers, pipe cleaners, and stress-relieving toys. The Jay Healey Session aspires to be a fun space for exploration and discovery.

Each table has a host who helps with the planning and whose role is to welcome participants and prompt a conversation that encourages participation. As the rounds progress, participants move among the tables, meeting new people, linking discoveries from one table with others, and listening for patterns and insights. Some years, table hosts report insights to the full group. One year, each table shared a graphical depiction of their insights. Table hosts capture insights from each round in a Google doc available during and after the conference.

Over the last decade, the Jay Healey Session has tackled a panoply of powerful questions that matter for our teaching, for our students, for our sense of self, and for our sense of community as health law teachers: How do we teach the ever-increasing interdisciplinarity of health law in a time of scientific skepticism and pessimism? How do we incorporate antiracism in health law teaching during a year of social and racial protests? What role should we play in humanizing our classrooms and fostering our students (and our own) health, well-being, and reliance in challenging times? How do we use experiential learning in classroom-based settings? Box 1 provides a list of the questions we have explored over the years.

Small group conversation has become the heart and soul of the Jay Healey Teaching Session. The groups are small enough that everyone has the opportunity to participate. The tables are decorated to feel inviting and safe. Each table has a welcoming host. We have learned from The World Café that when people feel comfortable, they do their most creative thinking, speaking, and listening.[5]

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As Charity predicted, our Jay Healey conversations have created space for imagination, discovery, and reflection. We have identified new approaches to teaching health law, many of which draw on small-group learning and active learning through problems and simulations. We have shared how we teach professional values and basic lawyering skills in our health law classes. We have explored why and how we address implicit racial bias in our teaching. We have built an online Health Law and Bioethics Teaching Resource Bank where we share teaching materials, problem sets, syllabi, and more.[6]

Box 1

Jay Healey Teaching Sessions and the Questions We Explored

2023 **Teaching Up: How do we use challenge to lift up our students?**	• Taking Stock: How did we move forward this year as we continue to emerge from COVID? • How do we use challenge to lift up our students? • How do we move forward in the spirit of teaching up? What concrete steps can help bring rigor and compassion to our teaching?
2022 **Looking Forward: How to bring energy, engagement, science, and humanity to health law teaching?**	• What do we do to renew our passion, energy, and creativity for teaching? • How do we teach the ever-increasing interdisciplinarity of health law in a time of scientific skepticism and pessimism? • What have we learned about compassion in reaching and teaching students and taking care of ourselves?
2021 **Teaching in a Time of Pandemic and a Year of Racial Protest**	• What pedagogical innovations have we adopted in a pandemic and which will we keep going forward? • How did we incorporate antiracism in health law teaching in the midst of a year of social and racial protests? • What role should we be playing in humanizing our classrooms and fostering our students' (and our own) health, well-being and resilience in challenging times?
2020 **Jay Healey goes virtual**	• Many of us have transitioned rapidly to on-line teaching this past spring semester. As we think about the next academic year, let's consider the big picture of on-line teaching, and some of the different models for online teaching. Even if we aren't compelled to teach online in the fall and could go back to in-person classes, are there reasons to go ahead and invest in designing an on-line course? What are the benefits and costs of doing so? • For folks thinking about transitioning from "emergency remote teaching" to a consciously-designed online course, what are some of the key terms and practical considerations? • How do we choose among synchronous, asynchronous, and blended formats for online courses?
2019 **Preparing Practice-Ready Health Law Attorneys**	• Why might health law be a good course to help students form professional values and develop basic lawyering skills? • How do you teach professional skills and professional values as part of the classroom health curriculum?
2018	Poverty Simulation
2017 **Experiential teaching and learning**	• How do you use experiential teaching and learning in the classroom-based settings? • How do you use experiential teaching and learning in settings beyond the classroom?
2016	• What are the benefits and challenges of interdisciplinary teaching and community-engaged learning? • What are the benefits and challenges of teaching implicit bias?
2015 **Best practices, challenges and balance**	• What have you found most challenging about teaching health law? • What have you found to be best practices in health law teaching? • How do you achieve balance between your professional and personal life?
2012	• What have you found to be "best practices" in health law teaching? • What do you find most challenging about teaching health law? • Teaching is only one leg of the three-legged stool in academia required for promotion and tenure: scholarship and service are also responsibilities. What are the keys to juggling these commitments successfully? How do you balance your personal and professional lives?

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The Jay Healey Teaching Session has also helped build community. The small group conversations have created a space where, in talking together and listening to each other, we have fostered a community of mentors, colleagues, and friends. The table discussions lend themselves to intimate conversation. It provides us a space to personally welcome newcomers to health law teaching. It is a place where those new to teaching — and those who have been at it for decades — can make new personal connections and deepen existing relationships.

Charity reached and invited us to join her on this journey, and the Jay Healey Teaching Session is a team effort. Each year, a planning group comes together to reflect about their teaching, students, the state of the world, and the difficulties and possibilities that arise in teaching health law.[7] During a series of conversations, we begin to craft two to three rounds of questions we might pose during the upcoming Jay Healey Session. We then reach out to our table hosts, a cadre of twenty or so health law teachers, who hone and refine the questions and develop conversation prompts during a Zoom conversation.[8]

One of the many legacies Charity leaves behind is the Jay Healey Teaching Session. She showed us how to make room for imagination, creativity, and reflection. She created a space at the Health Law Professors Conference where we can pose questions that matter to our teaching, hear from and listen to each other, welcome newcomers' fresh voices, and create community by talking together and listening to each other. For this and many other things, we thank Charity.

Note

The author has no conflicts of interest to disclose.

References

1. Goodreads, Quotes, Albert Einsten, *available at* <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/2177-i-am-enough-of-an-artist-to-draw-freely-upon> (last visited December 19, 2023). There are a few variants of this quote. This is the version Professor Charity Scott quoted in June 2022.
2. I know convention suggests I should refer to Charity Scott using her title and surname. However, such formality risks losing the personal and humanity that Charity (and Jay Healey) brought to conversations about teaching.
3. The World Café Method, The World Café, *available at* <https://theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/> (last visited December 19, 2023).
4. Café to Go! A Quick Reference Guide for Hosting World Café, *available at* <https://theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Cafe-To-Go-Revised.pdf> (last visited December 19, 2023).
5. *Id.*
6. The Teaching Resource Bank is a private site for those who teach health law, bioethics, public health law, and related courses. The site allows the teaching community to share syllabi, problems, PowerPoints, and other materials without sharing them with the whole world or next year's students. For more information, Abigail Allred at resourcebank@law.slu.edu.
7. The 2024 planning team is Zack Buck, Brietta Clark, Elizabeth McCuskey, Ross Silverman, and myself. Wendy E. Parmet, Dayna Bowen Matthew and, of course Charity Scott, were part of the team in earlier years.
8. In 2023 and 2024 Table Hosts included Valarie Blake, University of Tennessee College of Law; Kathy Cerminara, Shepard Broad College of Law, Nova Southeastern University; Mary Crossley, University of Pittsburgh School of Law; Deborah Farringer, Belmont University College of Law; Jacqueline Fox, University of South Carolina School of Law; Erin Fuse Brown, Brown University School of Public Health; Rob Gatter, Saint Louis University School of Law; George Horvath, UC Law San Francisco; Matt Lawrence, Emory University School of Law; Medha Makhlouf, Penn State Dickinson Law; Elizabeth Pendo, University of Washington School of Law; Nadia Sawicki, Loyola University Chicago School of Law; Karen Shaw, Loyola University Chicago School of Law; Asha Scielzo, American University Washington College of Law; Matiangai Sirleaf, University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law; Michael Sinha, Saint Louis University School of Law; Michael Ulrich, Boston University School of Public Health; Lindsay Wiley, UCLA Law; and Patti Zettler, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law.

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