

Transcript with Kristie Duyckinck

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What is your background in Century, and what has been your role in Century this school year?

I came to Century when it opened, in 1995(?), I think it opened. And been a teacher this year of social studies, us history, and economics.

How do you feel about block schedule, and how has affected your teaching?

I love block scheduling, I came here from Hilhi because I wanted to try something different; we've been on the 8 period schedule forever, and classes were 50 minutes long and I taught 5 a day, I really like being able to teach 3 a day instead of 5, I really like the extended time we have for class I don't feel so pressured. So for me block scheduling has been really positive.

Do you actually get to teach more of what you want?

Well, with the AP course, actually quite a bit more because on an 8 period day, its only 50 minutes and this way its one 90 minute class a day, so it's obviously huge...

If we do go to 8 period day, would we have a two period AP class?

I suppose that would have been a possibility, I don't know if it could have been two fifty minute periods it isn't in any other buildings, I don't know. Because you see whenever you do more of one you do less of something else and so it creates tensions with other folks who would like to have more time with their courses.

How well informed were the teachers and students about the scheduling issue?

Well it depends on the issue, but about the scheduling issue, I think the teachers were EXTREMELY well informed; it was almost obsessive. I don't know how much the students knew, actually. I'm not real clear. I'm sure there were a lot of rumors, and its really difficult because of that, umm, and I would say [there were] rumors among the staff as well, because one of the problems I think that Century has is that we have such a huge student body, we have a lot of staff. So you go months on end without seeing your colleagues; and when you don't see people and have actual face to face dialog, and you have emails, and all that, the communication can get pretty confused and broken down; and so I think there was a lot of problems with that this year. There's 90 or 100 teachers so its real difficult to have conversations. And you hear things about somebody, but you don't hear it from their own mouth.

How did divisions of the teachers affect the workplace environment?

Well, I think the divisions among the teachers affected the work environment a lot. It was very painful and difficult, umm, being a strong proponent on one side I understood the feelings of the people on the other side, but, nevertheless I wanted to keep teaching on the block; so it was painful. There were very difficult times.

It seems like you were in favor of the block schedule so how did you react to the threat of not having it?

Mm hmm, that's interesting. A little background is that, umm, the tradition in Hillsboro, as its written in the teachers' contract, is that you teach five classes a year, or ten semester classes. Well, when we went to the block, we taught six classes a year, or twelve semester classes. So, in order to do that we had to have a waiver from the union contract [and] that's a really difficult thing to do because the union contract is bargained for the benefit of the members throughout the whole district; not just here. I was part of that bargaining when I was president of the union, and in fact, the teachers in the junior high used to teach 6 while the high schools taught five, I was union president while we fought the battle to get them from 6 to 5. so I was pretty strongly identified with I should be supporting the contract, and so when I was saying "well I think we oughta get a waiver from the contract" that made it really hard. So the union requires an 80 percent vote, well you know its hard in America to get 80 percent vote on you know what date the fourth of July will be held on this year. So, it was difficult to get 80 percent, it was very difficult, so when we first voted, as we had in the past, umm, we had I think 3 or 4 votes shy of 80 percent; we were at 76 point-something. So it was really hard to give up the whole thing, and see our programs get reduced, because if students cant take as many classes, then the programs go too. It effected peoples jobs. My first reaction was to take the question to the union and see if they would approve it at 76%. Well, you can imagine that that made people really, really angry because you know the opponents fought it, and they were like hey we won. We got more than 20% and so its this way. So I actually went to the point of starting to think in my mind about, okay, how do we make decisions in the US? is there anything in the whole United States culture that requires 80%? I couldn't think of anything that went beyond 2/3 or 3/5. so I started talking to the union folks, but meanwhile, I began to realize this is a mistake. I should do that. I was too caught up in the outcome and wanted it to turn out that way. So I backed off and said okay, okay I wont do that.

(Question cannot be heard over noise)

Umm, its really a mess, being from Hilhi, I can tell you that those people there, many people there, not all but many have been angry at us from the very beginning of what we've done. And Glencoe as well. Because they feel its put pressure on them to teach more classes that they don't want to do, they don't like our schedule, et cetera. And I'm sure that's to some degree true, umm, as far as next year, theres this really peculiar thing about Oregon now that there's a change in the bargaining law, and it has weakened the union dramatically. The change is some subjects can be dealt with in what's called expedited bargaining, which means that at the end of a certain number of days of bargaining, the management or the school district can impose what they want. Well, you can see theres not much point in bargaining, is there? Theyre not going to make any concessions if they know that in the end they can just impose it. This summer, in June, begins a round of expedited bargaining on only two subjects, one is workload; five, six or whatever. And the other is numbers of days cut from next year. Well, it's 150 days of bargaining, and then November 1st or so, the district can do what they want. So, I think what may well happen, since the district does want more flexibility, they do want more buildings on a block schedule is they may very well at the end of this say you're all on

the block, and then we're the enemy for sure among my colleagues in other buildings. Uh, they may do something different but I doubt that in that structure that the requirement of five periods is going to last. So in practice, I think our schedule is going to survive.

So, if our block scheduling actually does go away, in what way would that affect classes?

AP I don't think would be severely affected, you'd get the same number of kids signing up, more or less. They have fewer opportunities, I suppose, to enroll so maybe you'd get a few less because they'd have to make more choices. You know, people have taught AP US history on 50 minutes a day since the beginning of time, I don't want to do it, but to me the more important thing is that whole programs that have been developed and are umm CAMs would be very difficult because students would have to go un-enrolled for some things they've enrolled in. and when you do that, of course, that leads to fewer kids in classes and then some more have to be dropped. So we just started our CAM, you know the PAC I, and PAC II, I'd hate to lose it; the FAME CAM, some of those things, the band, it just gets more difficult to have more programs. So I wouldn't be so worried about AP as I am about those other elective opportunities.

In light of these events, what do you think the morale of the students and staff have been here at Century?

These events meaning the budget situation? Or the block? The budget situation. Ohh, I have to say its really terrible, I cant say anything other than that. I mean, I feel so bad for the people who've just finished their Masters degrees, they have debts, college loans, and they're getting laid off, and you know they're not going to find teaching jobs in Oregon, and its just sad. I'm, I'll be okay, I'll have a job, I mean, you know, it might, eh, next year for advanced economics at the moment there are 117 kids signed up, and in the past that would have been four classes next year its supposed to be three, that means there will be 39 kids in each class. So, you know, it will be really big, but, you know, it depends kind of on where you are, obviously younger teachers with threats of lay offs, older teachers with losing their retirement system. Some of the laws that are being passed right now about the retirement system are going to take hundreds of dollars a month out of your check for the rest of your life, so its demoralizing you have to admit it.

(Question cannot be heard over background noise)

It saves money. Oh, you know I'm not real swift about grading essays (laughter), and I think about okay, how many essays will I assign my classes, you know? When there's 39 per class, holy cow, you know, and then I've still got a whole bunch more classes, so I think its going to effect how much grading you can get done, how much you can get to know each student, how much you can individualize instruction, how much you can really get to know the kids. One of the best things for me has been being able to teach AP and then advanced econ. Because for the first time in my career I have kids twice. And so, you know, the seniors now that I've had two years, I really feel like I know these kids and I have a bond with them. I always used to be jealous of the retirees who taught band, choir, coaching, because they knew the kids from fifth grade on. And so they had a real strong bond and when these folks got to their retirement dinners or events, they talked about the kids because they remembered them. But if you teach one

half credit course over and over for your whole career, its just like this fog of kids and and its hard to really connect with them.

National coverage of Hillsboro's budget problems...

I have such mixed feelings, I love that they put pressure on Oregonians that folks, we do have a problem, the fact that your published, you know your story is in the national cartoons, the national media, like the Washington Post, New York Times, you hope that somebody in Oregon will say "oh! Hmm, this isn't normal is it? Maybe we should do something." On the other hand, I feel just, kind of sick at heart, because as a transplant in 1970, I just feel myself to be such an Oregonian and I've always been so proud to be here and be an Oregonian because we represented such progressive traditions. But now I think, you know, we don't represent those progressive traditions and its sort of depressing. I guess we need the media.

If you could change the outcome of (cannot be heard) what would you change?

I would change, oh boy, I would be in smaller schools, I really do think 6 or 800 is just about right to get a diversity of courses offered, but a student body that knows each other and a faculty that knows each other, that's really critical, I think. I would put more power in the schools to run the way they want, because I think that there's no schedule that makes students learn, if you think about it, and that what makes a schedule work is that the people who do it are committed to working out the problems that it creates. All schedules create problems. And I think, I'm increasingly in favor of building autonomy and that the students and parents and teachers in the building should have some say in those things.

How do you feel about our school (cannot be heard over background noise)?

Well, you know, its interesting I cant speak as well for the students as you can, but in an odd way it seems like my colleagues that I'm in contact with, a lot, we've become more supportive towards each other, we've become better communicators, we've realized that we need each other. I cant tell you, its amazing to me, I'll even have friends over for dinner, people who I've known for years, who I think like me and care about me, and they start attacking the PERS system. Its like what is this? You know, go blabber about that someplace else, that's my retirement. So you start to feel kind of under attack, and um, its good to have your colleagues who understand all that, and I think we've been building on that and having more social events, just kind of being together and having a good time so that your morale isn't always beaten down by some things.

What do you think about the (cannot be heard over background noise)?

Its really sad, yeah. I don't know what to attribute that to, I, again, I think some of it is that we are so big, that we don't know everybody. So kids don't feel connected to the school, perhaps its kind of anonymous. I entered a high school of 5,000 so it could be bigger. But I think maybe size has something to do with it, um I really don't know beyond that. You know, I wonder, and again, interview students and ask them, but I wonder if just as the attacks on education make me feel they make also make the students feel like the adult world isn't really taking care of them and it isn't fulfilling its responsibilities, and so they feel angry and alienated. Now, I don't know if that accounts

for every individual who's abandoned. You know, I grew up in a atmosphere where we knew that what was for kids was supported, people voted yes for taxes because it was for kids, there wasn't any question about it and I think that would make kids angry.

How do you think the opening of Liberty will affect the teachers?

At the moment, its mostly the uncertainty, because we don't know, perhaps we'll know tomorrow, but we don't know right now whos going and whos staying and so that's you know speculation, rumor. We're not even sure whos going to be laid off. So at the moment its pretty tense. But opening a new high school is a great opportunity, people have fun opening a new high school. You feel like youre making the world over in your own little professional life and so its exciting as well. I don't mind the fact that we'll be smaller because I felt we should be all along.

In your view, how should the programs be cut?

Well, I think of course, none of it should be cut. There you have it. I cant support any of the cuts, I don't know. The union position will always be you should cut programs and staff rather than days, but its got so dramatic I mean the amounts of money that we have to cut are so dramatic that its hard to put it all in once place I mean, maybe some combination of days and programs and people and because, you know, cutting days is really cutting salary. That's how you save money, by cutting days, you don't save it... some people think we're saving it by cutting days because we don't have to heat and air condition the building, well yeah, but it's the salaries that really are the way its cut, so its tough for people at the bottom of the salary schedule to lose 9%, all of a sudden.

(Question cannot be heard over background noise)

I'm in shock, I cant believe it. If anybody had told me, at any point in my career, that I would live to see a 17 day layoff, I wouldn't have believed it. I don't know what more I can say. It just seems impossible that we're actually doing it.

What has been the high point of the year?

The high points in the school year, for me, have been my students and my colleagues. When I come in here, I leave it behind. I have a good time with my students, I love history I love economics, I like my kids and so its my classroom experience and so if I start moping about one thing and another, my husband will say "well, what happened in class today?" oh yeah, that's right. That parts going fine. Other than that, I can't really think of any events, umm, I enjoyed the Measure 28 debate. I must say, even though we lost the election I enjoyed that.

What was your reaction toe the war & did you feel any kind of any of your old antiwar...?

Sure, but umm I guess as far as how it impacts Century and how it impacts this year, I really wanted a forum to be able to talk about how I actually felt and how students felt. That's why I started that brownbag lunch thing because I was really very distressed about the war but I don't feel it's appropriate right in the classroom to be ranting about it during, ya know, we're supposed to be studying the Civil War or whatever. So, ya know, try to keep it out of the classroom but have a forum to talk about it. My activism this year

has really amounted to nothing more than just going to demonstrations, writing to my congress people, ya know, pretty normal things.

Can you talk about what things you decided to discuss in class and what you left out?

There were days when, and you can tell me better than I can if I succeeded, but I tried to at least give students the facts they needed about the... I know students were distressed about the 5 versus 6 and the block voting and I tried to get students the facts about how the union works and why. I don't know. As far as the war, I honestly don't recall spending a lot of time on it in class. Maybe I'm forgetting something, but I hope my students will see it in the context of all the previous wars. I guess that's what I'd like, is to be able to see a thread from the beginning and think about everything from George Washington's farewell address up to, ya know, the current period.

In your opinion, has there been any controversy over the president's decision for war? Extreme tension?

I don't perceive it, in fact, if anything my feeling is there's too much apathy about the war, to be honest. I don't hear a whole lot of conversation among many people about it. I don't know, you could tell me about it if you're concerned about terrorism or not.

Who are the key people who have made an impact on you this year?

Yes, I'll incite one person who we must interview and that's Jerry Taylor. I mentioned when we got to the end of the first vote that, you know, the block seemed to be dead, Jerry Taylor (the counselor) played a critical role in going and talking to both sides of the debate and really, face to face, started with the people he knew were against it and he really devised a process to get us talking again. And so we wound up with a second vote, which was an interesting one, because what we did was we learned that some of the people were voting against it, not so, I mean some were voting against it because they don't like the schedule, but others were voting against it because they didn't want to waive a union contract while we were bargaining a union contract and while we're under so much attacks. So they had this kind of solidarity feeling. So what the second vote was was would you vote yes for a waiver with the understanding we will never waive a contract again. Well, at least in the foreseeable future. And that made it possible for people to say yes, and so then we got 85% 85 and a half percent. So I think Jerry Taylor is a critical person in pulling that together and getting people talking so we need to interview him about that. Others? Well, yeah there are other people but that would be the main one, I'd say.

What are your stances on companies like Wal-Mart coming to our area?

Well, interesting I teach economics and so I taught about Wal-Mart this year. It's the largest corporation in the world by far, they open up a new store daily somewhere in the world. It's globalization comes to Hillsboro, we have changed from an agricultural little town to now a place where the global environment, the global economy comes. I have real trouble with all the cheap labor that gets behind all those cheap products. And what kinds of conditions they were produced under. But you might as well try to stop a tsunami as to stop Wal-Mart. It'll be somewhere near here. Krispy Kreme, I don't care.

What's your personal take on the Wal-Mart that's set to go up right near here?

I think it's crazy, look at the traffic there, I never drive there, never never. So, I don't know what they're going to do about traffic.

What do you think about the students' efforts to support both teachers and education?

Well, the main effort I'm really thrilled about is the SAFFE, the students who are working on that I think is fabulous. I didn't, you know, I knew that two students were talking about a walkout, what I'd like students to do is study nonviolence and how it works and realize that you don't immediately go to a walkout. You start with talking to people and then you state your demands, and you ask people to make a change before you actually just walk out or whatever. So I wanted that to be a little better thought through. But you know, its good students care about things. Even if their tactics I may not like.

Because of the budget cuts, what programs, classes, etc will you especially miss?

Oh what will I especially miss? I guess I'd have to say smaller classes. I think we're mostly going to continue, I mean I know we're losing some programs but not so much in social studies so they don't affect me as directly as, you know I'm sad to see German go, I'm very sad if we don't have a newspaper class, but I think the biggest loss is going to be that we're just going to have very large classes.

How will bigger classes affect your teaching style?

That's really hard, it's just so much harder to individualize as I say, I mean you have to standardize a little bit more, when you have so many. I don't know how to get around that, try to have students teaching students more, so that there's more interactions perhaps in groups rather than whole group activities. But its just hard with more kids.

How do you feel about standardized tests and the CIM and the CAM?

The CIM, by the way most states are doing something like this and now with No Child Left Behind every state has to do testing. An insane amount of testing. The CIM, my frustration has been we have spent I can't imagine how much money and hours trying to come up with