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The Teaching and Learning Center is pleased to present the *Ten Questions for Faculty Series*. The series is dedicated to helping faculty to stay connected with one another while working remotely. Every week, a faculty member will have the opportunity to answer ten questions about themselves and about navigating the changes brought about by COVID-19. This week, we are pleased to feature Dr. Michael McGowan, Professor of Philosophy.



**Dr. Michael McGowan**  
**Professor of Philosophy**

***Where are you from?***

I moved to Florida from California, but I lived all over the country before that. I grew up in southern New Jersey.

***Which college or university did you attend?***

B.S., Taylor University (Upland, Indiana), 1999  
M.A., Malone University (Canton, Ohio), 2005  
M.Div., Yale University (New Haven, CT), 2008  
Ph.D., Claremont Graduate University (Los Angeles, CA), 2012  
M.A., University of South Florida (Tampa, FL), 2019  
Ph.D., University of South Florida (Tampa, FL), expected 2022

***When did you begin teaching at FSW?***

I started at Edison State College in the fall of 2013, not long before we became FSW.

***What made you become interested in your academic discipline?***

I began studying philosophy of religion for personal reasons: I was dissatisfied with simplistic answers to complicated existential questions. But soon, my interests broadened to include social and political philosophy, continental philosophy, and how philosophical questions/answers get expressed in artistic contexts.

***What is your favorite food?***

I try not to eat anything too high up on the food chain, e.g., animals with a recognizable face (I sometimes fail), but I enjoy much that comes from the sea, especially crab legs and shrimp.

***If you could have dinner with any historical figure, who would it be and what would you ask them?***

My answer to this question changes week to week. Right now, after watching a Ken Burns documentary, I would love to dine with Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. Although FDR came from a privileged background, he overcame severe physical limitations to lead the country through two of its greatest existential threats – the Depression and the Second World War – and in so doing changed the character of the social contract of the United States. Eleanor is a model for us all because she overcame a tragic childhood and used her fame to champion causes that benefit the most vulnerable members of our society. She also played a crucial role in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. What a remarkable woman. I would ask both Franklin and Eleanor what they think of us, the inheritors of their legacies, and how we can better live up to our communal ideals while also respecting liberty and individual choice.

***What is your favorite local restaurant?***

Restaurants seem like a distant memory. Back when I went out to eat, I enjoyed anywhere with a view.

***What new things have you learned or done as a result of COVID-19 & working remotely?***

I still love teaching, and although I usually prefer a face-to-face classroom because of the “real time” discussions we can have without technical glitches; Zoom and Canvas will do for now ☺ And I have really enjoyed updating my lessons and creating new ones. I have a YouTube channel that I use for all my online lessons, and it’s been quite fun to create these new lessons and talk to students about the ideas the lessons cover.

***What are you doing (exercise, cooking, reading, etc.) to take care of your mental and physical health during social isolation?***

I’ve spent the pandemic months immersing myself in history. I recently started a book on the Cuban Revolution, and I’ve also been reading about Marx, Nietzsche, Sartre, the Frankfurt School, and the origins of Critical Theory. My most leisurely activity, however, has been binge watching documentaries about social, political, and artistic issues. For example, I used the spring and summer to make my way through nearly all of Ken Burns’ catalog and found a new respect for our country’s complicated history.

***What advice do you have for your colleagues on how to navigate social isolation and changes from COVID-19?***

Read the Stoics. Also, although sloganeering seems banal in its simplicity, the one-liners repeated by Old

Timers and addicts seem to hold the key to get through this (and any) difficult time: Easy Does It, One Day at a Time, Hang In There, This Too Shall Pass, Be Part of the Solution Not the Problem, Practice an

Attitude of Gratitude, etc.

If you would like to be featured in the *Ten Questions for Faculty Series*, please contact Kelly Westfield, Coordinator of Marketing & Technology for the Teaching and Learning Center: [kwestfield@fsw.edu](mailto:kwestfield@fsw.edu)



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