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How Do We Know? Paths to Wisdom

PLACE

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How Do We Know? Paths to Wisdom 2014-2015

Love makes the world go around—or so goes the adage. Storytelling captures our hearts with fictional or real romances such as Romeo and Juliet's or Abelard and Heloise's respectively. The scientific account turns this most human emotion and its attendant passions and follies into neuronal synapses and hormonal discharges. Which give us a better or truer account, the sciences or the humanities? Are they mutually exclusive? Can they be *genuinely* combined? Explaining and understanding love and the rest of wondrous, humdrum, or terrible phenomena in our universe ultimately comes down to *how* we come to learn about and make sense of them.

The 2013-2014 PLACE program seeks to create a common space within the Linfield curriculum to ask this most basic of human questions from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, exploring the *methods* (paths or ways) that we use to acquire knowledge with a particular emphasis on the NW, QR, and UQ modes of inquiry. We will consider questions such as: What are the powers and limits of science? How do the humanities factor into this equation? What are the underlying assumptions of the scientific method and how do we know they are correct? How do statistics, pure mathematics, or computational models inform our views on the human experience? Can philosophy, religious studies, the arts, or literature still reveal deep truths that make a difference? In the end we should always ask as a rejoinder to any answer... how do we know?

A liberal arts education also embraces the connections among disciplines, which in turn fuels a process of collaborative understanding of the search for truth and knowledge. In other words, wisdom arises both from the strengths proper to each discipline and from the connections among them. *How Do We Know?* thus also explores these relations, ultimately asking: how might epistemological inquiry through the liberal arts enhance citizenship and strengthen community?