

2010–2011 STANLEY J. DRAZEK TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

DEBORAH GRIGGS

“Central to my philosophy of teaching is respect for the experiences, identities, and perspectives of my students, as well as understanding what I am asking of them: trust and patience,” said Deborah Griggs who has been teaching English, speech, and humanities courses with UMUC Europe for the past 30 years.

Ms. Griggs first started teaching introductory writing classes with UMUC in Greece. Since then, she has traveled widely with the university serving as a collegiate associate professor in U.S. military communities in Kosovo, Bosnia, Italy, and Djibouti. Although she doesn’t have a permanent address, she welcomes new experiences and enjoys the opportunity to explore diverse locations.

Having supported herself through college, Ms. Griggs understands what it means to work hard while earning a degree. In her years as a student and professor, she has enjoyed being with students who are “wrestling with life at the same time they are wrestling with ideas.”

She places a strong emphasis on communication, especially between individuals and groups that have differing values. Encouraging students to argue their points in class, she believes that open exchange can allow fresh ideas to emerge. As a professor, she feels it is important to “be yourself, be honest, be challenging, and let yourself be challenged.”

An avid writer, Ms. Griggs has published numerous articles and also maintains several blogs. In her writing classes, she inspires students to develop their creativity and communication skills. “Creative writing teaches people to see in a different way. To create an effect in writing, you have to enhance your sensitivities to what you see and notice in the world,” she explains.

Ms. Griggs holds an MA in comparative literature and is currently completing her PhD with the European Graduate School. “My students’ experiences into the classroom, and the way these meet with my thoughts under the auspices of the subject matter at hand – this is always different, always surprising, always rewarding.”

