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Professor Takes Questions By Flight

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Dr. Jonathan Arnold has always tried to pass on his love for learning to his students. No matter what the topic, he seeks to ignite a passion for learning more. He strongly believes participation is important because there's more to education than just getting a degree, and he uses unique teaching methods to encourage this.

The way he encourages his students to ask him a question in class is unconventional, but the method allows the students' questions to take flight.

Arnold has his students throw paper airplanes in class whenever they have a question about the lecture or class assignments. If a student throws 25 paper airplanes over the course of a semester, they're rewarded with extra credit.

Clearly, his teaching style is one-of-a-kind, but it's heavily inspired by his dedication and desire to help students succeed academically.

Arnold has taught church history, historical theology and historiography for many years. He's interacted with undergraduate, graduate, Ph.D., and seminary students over the course of his long academic career. "What keeps you going a lot of the time is when students come back and say, 'I didn't think I was going to like history at all or I didn't think I was going to like theology at all, but now I want to learn more.'"

Everyone isn't going to be completely engaged in general education courses, and Arnold acknowledges that fact. Therefore, he aims to break down initial barriers and make participation an exciting part of each class and not something to dread. His paper airplanes and other teaching strategies are a part of his teaching style.

Airplane Questions B-ROLL:
<https://youtu.be/xUSAs9q6ROk>

"It sets an atmosphere for the class that this isn't just formal, I'm not going to just pour information into you. I want this to be engaging," says Arnold. "The goal is to get you thinking instead of just listening."

Eager to contribute to the classroom conversation, students respond to Arnold's teaching method and speak up.

“If somebody has a question, and an airplane suddenly hits another student in the back of the head, it’s a nice break from a long lecture,” he pointed out. Arnold doesn’t interrupt lectures to gather the scattered airplanes; he prefers to let students stay completely engrossed in the topic.

In order to accommodate those students who may not be comfortable speaking up in front of an audience, Arnold also encourages small-group work in class.

Arnold believes fun is an important part of learning. He wants to get students to process the important ideas he is teaching about and aims to show them how knowledge can have practical, real-life applications outside the classroom as well. He aims to continue to think of innovative ways to facilitate classroom engagement.

Currently, Arnold teaches Theology I and Theology II in the Bible minor. Students from all majors take Bible minor classes during their time at Cedarville University. One of his favorite things is hearing the unique perspectives and questions each student brings to his classes.

The biggest lesson Arnold hopes students take away from his classes is that it’s important to be a good student and fully engage whatever it is God has gifted you with. His large classrooms usually span many diverse learning styles and different majors. He hopes to engage a broad audience by teaching methods like throwing airplanes to ask a question.

“Know yourself well,” he says, “so you can better engage for kingdom work. I always tell my students at the beginning of the semester: ‘I don’t know you well yet, I don’t know where you are in life, and I don’t know what you’re going through. But I do know that you’re called to be a student right now, in this class, and that’s why you’re here. And you’re called to do that with excellence.’”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 5,082 undergraduate, graduate, and dual-enrolled high school students in more than 175 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is one of the largest private universities in Ohio, recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, including various [Biblical Studies](#) programs, high graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and the #4 national ranking by the Wall Street Journal for student engagement. For more information about the University, visit cedarville.edu.

Written by Marielle Payton

Cutlines:

1. A student in Dr. Arnold's class flies a question up to the professor in class
2. Dr. Jonathan Arnold teaching at Cedarville University