

Gravett, Emily - graveteo

From: Teaching Toolbox - Center For Faculty Innovation <TEACHING-TOOLBOX@listserv.jmu.edu> on behalf of Center for Faculty Innovation
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To: TEACHING-TOOLBOX@LISTSERV.JMU.EDU
Subject: Teaching Toolbox: Gratitudes

Gratitudes

By Emily O. Gravett

I've been thinking a lot about gratitude lately, both personally and professionally. I find great inspiration in books like Emmons's [Thanks! How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier \(2008\)](#) and Brown's [The Gifts of Imperfection \(2010\)](#), TED Talks like Steindl-Rast's ["Want to Be Happy? Be Grateful" \(2013\)](#), products like [gratitude jars](#), and apps like [The Five Minute Journal](#), which I fill out every morning.

There is much to be grateful for at the end of a school year, not the least of which is just getting through it. I am grateful for my hard-working students, I am grateful for my supportive colleagues, I am grateful for all of the contributors to CFI programs (most of whom are volunteers), I am grateful for a salary and benefits, I am grateful for the chance to teach a subject and courses I love, I am grateful for living in a beautiful valley that's so close to a national park, I am grateful for my family and friends who are like family to me, I am grateful for a car that works and a roof over my head, I am grateful for tulips and all of the flowers that burst into bloom all over town in the spring, I am grateful for Kline's peanut butter chocolate milkshakes, Cuban Burger's El Vaquero, and Extra Toasty Cheez-Its (seriously, try them).

This morning, though, I am especially grateful for the many people who make the [Teaching Toolbox](#) possible. Current members of the [CFI teaching team](#)—Faculty Associates Peter Eubanks, Michael Kirkpatrick, and Kristi Lewis—carry the bulk of responsibility for authoring these Toolboxes. We follow a complex and tight schedule of drafting, offering each other feedback, and revising, and it often takes weeks to get one Toolbox ready for dissemination. This is an amazing example of team work and I'm grateful to them for their dedication. We have also been the recipients of Toolboxes from many other authors across campus this year. I'd like to recognize and appreciate them here: [Colleen Waller](#), [Lucy Bryan Malenke](#), [Liz Thompson](#), [Ben Selznick](#), [Diana Galarreta-Aima](#), and [David Daniel](#). This year's series wouldn't have been possible without your generosity, so thank you.

And thank you, readers, for subscribing to the Teaching Toolbox this year.

If you would like to read any of the Toolboxes from the past, you may find PDFs of them on [our website](#). If you would like to author a Toolbox yourself, or even if you just have a topic you'd appreciate that we tackle, please let me know (graveteo@jmu.edu).

In closing, I'd like to leave you all with a poem I came across recently. Interpretations vary, of course, but I take it to mean that, even amidst the muck and mess of life, we might still be able to say "thank you."

["Thanks," by W.S. Merwin](#)

Listen
with the night falling we are saying thank you
we are stopping on the bridges to bow from the railings
we are running out of the glass rooms
with our mouths full of food to look at the sky
and say thank you

we are standing by the water thanking it
standing by the windows looking out
in our directions

back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging
after funerals we are saying thank you
after the news of the dead
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you

over telephones we are saying thank you
in doorways and in the backs of cars and in elevators
and the beatings on stairs we are saying thank you
in the banks we are saying thank you
in the faces of the officials and the rich
and of all who will never change
we go on saying thank you thank you

with the animals dying around us
taking our feelings we are saying thank you
with the forests falling faster than the minutes
of our lives we are saying thank you
with the words going out like cells of a brain
with the cities growing over us
we are saying thank you faster and faster
with nobody listening we are saying thank you
thank you we are saying and waving
dark though it is

About the author: Dr. Emily O. Gravett is an assistant director in the [Center for Faculty Innovation](#) and an assistant professor in the [Department of Philosophy & Religion](#). She can be reached at graveteo@jmu.edu.

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