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## DELAMARTER ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO AVOID THE 'HERO'S JOURNEY' LIFE STORY



Last Lecture with Professor Delamarter. Photo by Zac Price

By Trevor Wood

Northwest University's Last Lecture is a regular event on campus where staff and faculty members are asked to give a lecture as if it was the last lecture they would ever give, answering the question: "What wisdom would I impart if I knew that tonight was my last chance to impart wisdom?"

On Thurs., Nov. 30, Last Lecture featured Dr. Jeremy Delamarter from the College of Education. His lecture was grounded in the theme of stories, their ability to impact lives and their tendency to sculpt unhealthy beliefs in people's minds. He spoke specifically about the "Hero's Journey," and its subconscious message of dissatisfaction.

"Many of the stories of my childhood—stories I read and watched over and over and over—share a common structure: 'Situation A,' where you start, is untenable, you can't stay there. So you go through trials and tribulations and challenges and you end up in 'Situation B,' which can be sustained," he said.

Delamarter illustrated this common structure by revealing its prevalence in media and literature, listing stories like Star Wars, Harry Potter, Jane Eyre, Superman, Lord of the Rings, Beauty and the Beast, The Hunt for the Red October, The Little Mermaid, The Odyssey, Stranger Things, Finding Nemo, and even Moses and Jesus.

But Delamarter's lecture wasn't an exploration of the Hero's Journey story arc throughout history, it was a challenge to not let that story arc's theme guide one's life.

"These stories are all based on the assumption that *here* is vastly inferior to *there*, and *now* pales in comparison to *then*," Delamarter said. "The problem with this narrative...is that once you've been on your grand adventure, *there* becomes *here*, [and] the once awaited *then* becomes the intolerable *now*...If salvation is found in the motion of 'X moving to Y,' then you can never stop moving...[This kind of story] demands restlessness and perpetual discontent."

According to Delamarter, these stories are not the stories to be gleaming life lessons from. The heart of Delamarter's lecture was when he challenged the audience to not take this type of story at face value.

"Question them, challenge them. If you must love them, do so critically. Keep them at a slight remove. Be skeptical, learn to see through things," he said, "Or even better, find new stories."

These new stories that Delamarter encouraged his audience to find are ones that focus on the *here* and *now* rather than the *there* and *then*. The reason is simple.

"If you can't do good right where you are, you can't do it anywhere. In what possible future could God be more present than He is right now? In what possible place could His grace be available to us than right here?" he said.

"The stories that we need are those that place heaven not over the horizon, but here in our midst. The stories we need are not the ones that say 'it will be better *when*,' but those that remind us it can be better *now*," he said.

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