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## **Professor brings 'world of experience' to class**

It's hard to keep professor Ellis Ivory, 53, in one place.

"I like to be out doing things," said Ivory, who leaves for a trip to China soon. "I'm a world citizen."

Ivory, who has been teaching political science and history at the Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) for more than 10 years, has traveled to more than 20 different countries. He's met world leaders and officials like the eighth Duke of Marlborough; Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, the president of Brazil and Fidel Castro.

Ivory's not just teaching history though, he's making it and, bringing the knowledge into the classroom.

"Instead of just textbook material, I get to bring back actual experiences for the students," he said. "People are people. They all want the basic needs. Traveling takes us there and opens our eyes up to see that. I want to be able to see for myself, then I know what's true and, as an educator and a scholar, I can tell people this is how it is."

Some of his trips—like one to Transylvania—may sound weird to people, but in history, you almost have to do that in order to spark student interest, Ivory said.

"It brings the stories to life," said Ivory. "I'm a historian and a scientist. This is an historical experience for me and a link to the real world."

However, teaching wasn't necessarily what Ivory wanted to do.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do," said Ivory. "I enjoyed college and I guess you could say the career found me."

At first, Ivory dropped out of college, but soon went back to receive a bachelor's degree from Wayne State University in political science, history and English, where he was summa cum laude. He then received a master's degree from University of Michigan in political science. Currently, he's finishing his dissertation for his doctorate degree, as well as teaching.

According to Ivory, everybody has their own style of teaching. His goal is to engage students and ask them what they think to show an interest.

"There is truth in the adage that man repeats past behavior time and time again. If it's been

done today, it's been done before," he said. "For me, history has two components: how it's taught and how it impacts people."

Ivory has passed that wisdom along to numerous schools too, including Highland Park Community College, Macomb Community College, University of Detroit, Mercy College, Mary Grove College and the WCCCD. He not only gives to the students, but the students give back to him, he said.

"I'm learning from them. We can all learn from each other," Ivory said. "I love teaching. I think everyone has a gift or two and that's mine."

Besides college, his classroom also extends into the community through numerous organizations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights and the International Society of Historians.

"Even if I wasn't teaching, I'd be giving back to those groups," he said.

So will his future. Ivory will continue to teach, along with devote more time to international/national affairs, work with the elderly and of course, continue to travel, he said.

"When I saw far away places on TV I envisioned myself there," he said. "Information is such a wonderful thing and I want to spread it to everyone. Now, I have ample opportunity to do that; it couldn't get better for me."

"If I wasn't a teacher and I was a millionaire, I'd travel and stay on one continent and I wouldn't leave until I was done with it all," he said. "That's my dream."

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