

VOL VII

Ciências Humanas:

Estudos Para Uma Visão
Holística Da Sociedade



Silvia Inés Del Valle Navarro
Gustavo Adolfo Juarez
(Organizadores)

 EDITORA
ARTEMIS
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PRÓLOGO

En este **séptimo volumen** de la obra titulada ***Ciências Humanas: Estudos para uma Visão Holística da Sociedade***, tenemos la oportunidad de acompañar a los autores, participantes de esta publicación de la Editora Artemis.

En ella se evidencia el interés por la divulgación de las investigaciones realizadas, siendo muy variadas en cuanto a temáticas, no así en lo disciplinar. En efecto, la investigación en educación incluye desde lo histórico, lo socio-cultural realizada mediante el análisis de figuras, gráficas y modelos matemáticos, técnicas comunitarias para escuchar música clásica, la educación superior portuguesa, la pedagogía eficaz desde la aplicación de una encíclica papal y el mantenimiento cultural-religioso.

También observamos temáticas sociales desde la psicología con problemáticas indígenas, los efectos de tareas que producen agotamiento, la problemática del divorcio en su influencia con los hijos, la cultura de la alimentación que produce obesidad infantil, y las relaciones en épocas de gobiernos de hechos donde se observó violencia sexual. Las actividades más liberales como la arquitectura, produce en personajes, una identidad creativa que se transforma en influyente como así también la actividad de la construcción que produce una organización institucional para determinar tareas de gerenciamiento.

Esperando que estos trabajos sean de gran aporte a los lectores, les deseamos una buena lectura.

SILVIA INÉS DEL VALLE NAVARRO

GUSTAVO ADOLFO JUAREZ

PRÓLOGO

Neste **sétimo volume** da obra intitulada ***Ciências Humanas: Estudos para uma Visão Holística da Sociedade***, temos a oportunidade de acompanhar os autores, participantes desta publicação da Editora Artemis.

Demonstra interesse na divulgação das pesquisas realizadas, sendo muito variadas em termos de temas, mas nem tanto em termos de disciplina. Com efeito, a investigação em educação inclui desde o histórico, o sociocultural realizado através da análise de figuras, gráficos e modelos matemáticos, técnicas comunitárias de audição de música clássica, ensino superior português, pedagogia eficaz a partir da aplicação de uma encíclica papal e cultural -manutenção religiosa.

Observamos também temas sociais da psicologia com os problemas indígenas, os efeitos das tarefas que produzem esgotamento, o problema do divórcio em sua influência sobre os filhos, a cultura da alimentação que produz a obesidade infantil e os relacionamentos em tempos de governos de fato onde a violência sexual era observado. As atividades mais liberais, como a arquitetura, produzem nos personagens uma identidade criativa que se torna influente, assim como a atividade de construção que produz uma organização institucional para determinar tarefas de gestão.

Esperando que estas obras sejam de grande contribuição para os leitores, desejamos uma boa leitura.

SILVIA INÉS DEL VALLE NAVARRO

GUSTAVO ADOLFO JUAREZ

SUMÁRIO

CAPÍTULO 1..... 1

TEACHING HISTORY OR RETELLING ANCIENT STORIES WITH PICTURES: WILLIAM BLAKE AND THE SCHOOL VERSION OF *VIRGIL*

Mei-Ying Sung

 https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_2711230621

CAPÍTULO 2..... 10

(UN)GATHERED TOGETHER: COMMUNAL TECHNIQUES OF LISTENING TO CLASSICAL MUSIC IN LISBON

Roman Korolev-Namazov

 https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_2711230622

CAPÍTULO 3.....24

OLHARES DE DOCENTES SÉNIOR SOBRE AS REALIDADES DOS/AS ESTUDANTES DO ENSINO SUPERIOR PORTUGUÊS

Sofia Veiga

Helena Sofia Rocha Lopes

 https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_2711230623

CAPÍTULO 4.....37

THE ECOLOGICAL ETHICS OF LAUDATO SI', ITS PEDAGOGY AND DOABLE SOLUTIONS FOR A GREENER PHILIPPINES

Antonio Levy S. Ingles, Jr.

 https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_2711230624

CAPÍTULO 5..... 46

BAHÁ'Í RELIGION FACING SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS: SOME PROPOSALS

Marta Scialdone

 https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_2711230625

CAPÍTULO 6..... 58

ANÁLISIS DE FACTORES SOCIOCULTURALES EN LA MOVILIDAD ESTUDIANTIL
MEDIANTE MODELIZACIÓN MATEMÁTICA

Gustavo Adolfo Juarez
Silvia Inés del Valle Navarro
María Luz del Valle Quiroga
Sonia Laura Mascareño

 https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_2711230626

CAPÍTULO 773

CULTURA ORGANIZACIONAL BAJO LA PERCEPCIÓN GERENCIAL EN PYMES DEL
SECTOR CONSTRUCCIÓN

Román Alberto Quijano García
Roger Manuel Patrón Cortés
Giselle Guillermo Chuc
Fidel Ramón Alcocer Martínez

 https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_2711230627

CAPÍTULO 8.....82

COORDINACIÓN DE PARENTALIDAD Y MODELO MULTIFACTORIAL: DIVORCIOS
CONFLICTIVOS Y RECHAZO DE MENORES

Gloria Terrats Ruiz

 https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_2711230628

CAPÍTULO 9..... 88

RACISMO CONTRA OS POVOS INDÍGENAS DO NORDESTE: DA IDEOLOGIA À
DESIDEOLOGIZAÇÃO

André Luiz Teles Ramos
José Fernando Andrade Costa

 https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_2711230629

CAPÍTULO 10..... 108

ENSAIO SOBRE O ESGOTAMENTO: CORPOS MELANCÓLICOS E NEOLIBERALISMO

Laila Algaves Nuñez

 https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_27112306210

CAPÍTULO 11.....122

OBESIDADE INFANTIL NÃO É DOENÇA? A PERSPECTIVA DE PAIS DE ESCOLARES SOBRE O EXCESSO DE PESO EM SÃO PAULO, BRASIL

Marta Pereira Militão da Silva

Rosana Machin Barbosa

 https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_27112306211

CAPÍTULO 12133

VIOLENCIA SEXUAL Y RESISTENCIA DE LAS MUJERES EN LA LUCHA CONTRA LAS DICTADURAS LATINOAMERICANAS DEL CONO SUR

Pilar Iglesias Aparicio

 https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_27112306212

CAPÍTULO 13..... 149

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY IN FLUX: ERNESTO ROGERS AND THE DUALITY OF ESTRANGEMENT AND FAMILIARITY

Lejla Vujicic

 https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_27112306213

SOBRE OS ORGANIZADORES163

ÍNDICE REMISSIVO 164

CAPÍTULO 1

TEACHING HISTORY OR RETELLING ANCIENT STORIES WITH PICTURES: WILLIAM BLAKE AND THE SCHOOL VERSION OF *VIRGIL*

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Mei-Ying Sung

Associate Professor
History Department
FoGuang University
Jiaosi, Yilan, Taiwan

<https://maysung70.blogspot.com/>

ABSTRACT: History is not only told by words but also by images and objects. This article looks into the book illustrations of an early 19th-century British schoolbook and their means and purposes for history education. The English poet and printmaker William Blake made a famous set of woodcuts for Dr. Robert Thornton's *Pastorals of Virgil* (1821), which later inspired Romantic art. Scholars have observed that Blake's unconventional engravings caused Thornton's hesitation and cut down the blocks to fit the book. The controversial style of Blake's woodcuts was much discussed and justified by his followers, 'the Ancients' and modern scholars. In my book *William Blake and the Art of Engraving* (Pickering & Chatto, 2009), I have also discussed an early imitator of Blake's woodcut reflecting his contemporary aesthetic view. However, the context and motivation of Robert Thornton and his editions of *Virgil* have not been considered fully. This

paper asks why Blake's woodcuts were not supposed to fit the book. By comparing the three editions of Thornton's *Virgil*, I would argue that the 3rd edition was an 'improved' version from Thornton's point of view for publishing and educational purposes. From observing the extant woodblocks engraved by Blake (in the British Museum) and other artists used in the Thornton edition (discovered by me in the Huntington Library), one may understand the contemporary contrast aesthetics and the early 19th-century norm for teaching young people history.

KEYWORDS: William Blake. Robert Thornton. *Virgil*. Schoolbook. Woodcut illustration.

1 INTRODUCTION

History is not only told by words but also by images and objects. This article looks into the book illustrations of an early 19th-century British schoolbook and their means and purposes in education.

Robert Thornton's *School Virgil* (Figure 1) is a schoolbook unknown to most people today. Scholars believe that it is known for one reason: the seventeen wood engravings by William Blake that appear in the 1821 edition of *Pastorals of Virgil*!¹ The English poet and printmaker William Blake (1757-1827), in his

¹ Morton Paley, *The Traveller in the Evening: The last works of William Blake* (2003), p. 20.

Thornton was best known for his extravagant book the *New Illustration of the Sexual System of Linnaeus* (1799-1807, also known by its 1804 title of *The Temple of Flora*). The massive cost of illustration and printing seriously eroded Thornton's fortune. Ultimately, he never recovered the losses from *The Temple of Flora*, leaving his children on the edge of poverty.²

The *School Virgil* was published simultaneously and after *The Temple of Flora*. The first edition, published in 1812, has two versions, one with three illustrations and the other with 53 illustrations, costing 8 and 12 shillings respectively. In 1814, Thornton published a picture-only edition, *The Illustrations of the School Virgil*, removing the texts and adding the illustrations to 123. The 1821 edition consists of 2 volumes with 230 illustrations. In the last edition, Blake engraved six portraits on copper, designed 21 and engraved 17 woodcuts. While the copper engravings are neo-classical, Blake's woodcuts are shockingly unconventional. To the contemporary conventional eye, the dark tone and rough lines look like works by someone with no experience in wood engraving.

3 THE CONTROVERSY OVER BLAKE'S WOODCUTS FOR THORNTON

Under the first woodcut by Blake, Thornton wrote,

The Illustrations of this English Pastoral are by the famous Blake, the illustrator of *Young's Night Thoughts*, and *Blair's Grave*; who designed and engraved them himself. This is mentioned, as they display less of art than genius, and are much admired by some eminent painters.³

Thornton meant that Blake was famous for his design, but the cutting skill of this work was inferior.

According to the *Life of William Blake* by Alexander Gilchrist (1863), when Blake

sent in these seventeen the publishers, unused to so daring a style, were taken aback, and declared 'this man must do no more; nay, were for having all he *had* done re-cut by one of their regular hands....

Doctor Thornton had, ...himself, no knowledge of art, and, despite kind intentions, was disposed to take his publishers' view. However, it fortunately happened that meeting one day several artists at Mr. Aders' table, -- Lawrence, James Ward, Linnell, and others, -- conversation fell on the Virgil. All present expressed warm admiration of Blake's art, and of those designs and woodcuts in particular. By such competent authority reassured, if also puzzled, the good Doctor began to think there must be more in them than he and his publishers could discern. The contemplated sacrifice of the blocks already cut was averted....⁴

² See Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

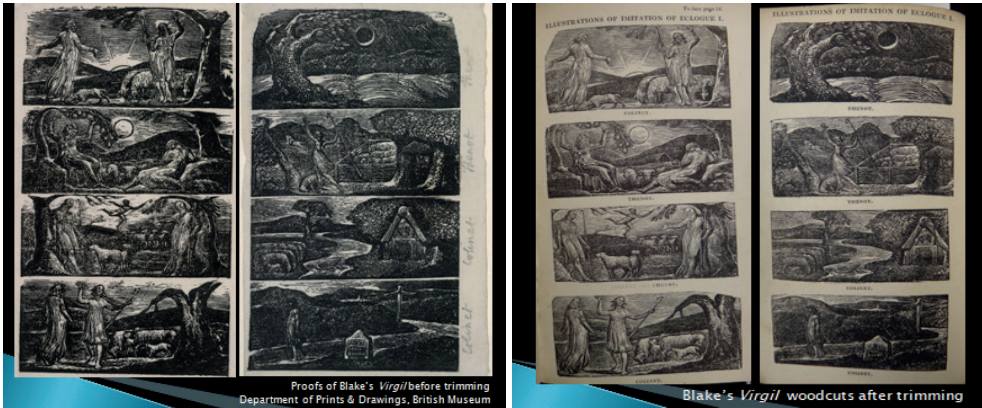
³ 'Illustrations of Imitation of Eclogue I', *The Pastorals of Virgil* (1821), p. 12.

⁴ 'Introduction', *William Blake XVII designs to Thornton's Virgil* (1899), quoting Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake*, ps. xiv, xv.

According to the evidence of two surviving proofs in the British Museum, Blake's original woodcuts were trimmed on the four edges to reduce the size to fit the book with extra text underneath each picture. (Figures 3 & 4).

Figure 3. The proofs of William Blake's *Virgil* woodcuts before trimming, Department of Prints & Drawings, British Museum.

Figure 4. William Blake's *Virgil* woodcuts after trimming, Department of Prints & Drawings, British Museum.



4 THORNTON'S IDEA OF BOOK ILLUSTRATION & EDUCATION

For Thornton, the illustrations were meant to be educational aids, as the book's subtitle says, 'in which all the proper facilities are given, enabling youtm[sic] to acquire the Latin language, in the shortest period of time, as words'.⁵

In the 1814 supplementary volume, Thornton took only the illustrations from the 1812 edition and added some more pictures. In the preface 'Address to school-masters, parents, and others', he wrote about the importance and benefits of pictures in children's learning.

The impression made on the *memory* will also be such as never afterwards to be obliterated; for the new art of memory is by *association*, ...here the *words* and the *pictures* correspond as much as possible. Every person must recollect, from his childhood, what an impression even the *bad* woodcuts to the Fables in Dilworth's Spelling-Book created,⁶ especially where the Huntsman is beating his old faithful Dog. Boys will likewise feel eager to know the meaning of the different cuts, and this will surely spur them on to the diligent reading of the original matter, to which these allude.⁷

At first glance, Thornton's emphasis on the picture is justifiable. However, a question about this statement arises: how do the boys associate the pictures with the text

⁵ Subtitle for the 1821 edition.

⁶ Dilworth, Thomas, d. 1780, *Dilworth's spelling-book, improved: a new guide to the English tongue ...* Philadelphia, [Pa.] : Printed and sold by John M'Culloch, 1796 (3rd ed.).

⁷ 'Address to School-Masters, Parents and others', *Illustrations to the School-Virgil* (1814).

in this 1814 publication, which has no text attached to the illustration? Was it only intended for purchasers of the original 1812 edition with only three illustrations?—It is, therefore, questionable that Thornton's motivation for publishing the book was for education.

In the succeeding paragraph, Thornton mentions Benjamin West, the president of the Royal Academy at the time, who believed book illustrations could also encourage children's love for art.

Benjamin West, President of the Royal Academy, thinks *such a plan* will rouse the British youth to a love for painting; and we could have wished the designs had been more perfect, but the increased expense would then have defeated the intention, and this will apologize with the discerning, for our not making them of a more splendid nature. Even now it is to be feared, that the expense will deter several from the purchase of such a desirable adjunct to Virgil; ...⁸

The reality is Thornton's lack of finances, which limited his ambition.

5 THORNTON'S FINANCIAL PROBLEM & PUBLISHING STRATEGY

Looking back at Thornton's life, the *Virgil* publications were probably a compromise under his ambition in publishing career under financial pressure. The first edition of 1812 was published with only a few illustrations, perhaps because Thornton was short of money. Earlier, from 1799 to 1807, Thornton spent a vast amount of fortune publishing *The New Illustration of the sexual system of Linnaeus* in large folios with fine engravings by famous artists and engravers of the time, especially its third part, *The Temple of Flora*, with colour plates. Although the book was criticized for having little scientific value⁹ but perhaps shows some romantic aesthetics, the publication won him national and international fame. It was sent to Queen Charlotte, the Prince Regent, and the Emperor of Russia, who returned a ring to acknowledge his achievement. Thornton's ambition was to create a tradition of British botanical publication to parallel Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery.¹⁰ However, worse than Boydell's financial failure, Thornton almost drained his inheritance with little return. By 1812, Thornton was struggling with finance and trying to make up with minor publications. He held an exhibition of the botanical illustrations but did not make enough money selling the tickets. In 1812, Thornton issued a smaller edition of *The Temple of Flora* with few subscribers.

The *School Virgil* was, therefore, perhaps Thornton's venture of another subject on a smaller scale. After publishing the luxurious *Temple of Flora*, Thornton turned to small

⁸ 'Address to school-master, parents, and others', preface to Thornton's *Illustrations of the School-Virgil* (1814), ps. iii, iv.

⁹ Blunt Wilfrid, *The Art of Botanical Illustration*, London: Collins, 1950, p. 203.

¹⁰ *Thornton's Temple of Flora: with plates faithfully reproduced from the original engravings: and the work described by Geoffrey Grigson; with bibliographical notes by Handasyde Buchanan*, London: Collins, 1972, p.4.

and easy reading for children. *Juvenile Botany: Being an easy introduction to that delightful science, through the medium of familiar conversation* (1818), was written in simple language with conversations between son and father.

Thornton was reusing the materials and made simple versions out of them. Likewise, the publications of schoolbooks show a reduced ambition. The *School Virgil* is small in size, cheaply produced with wood engravings, but still includes works by famous artists and could make a profit.

In the 1821 edition, Thornton in the Address named some designers and engravers of this edition.

In order to render this work worthy, as much as possible, of public patronage, and the distinguished honor conferred upon it, by the approbation of the learned, Messrs. *Thurston, Craig, Cruikshanks, Blake* and *Varley*, with others of great merit, have been selected for the *designs*; whilst the most eminent engravers on wood have been employed, as *Nesbit, Clennell, Branston, Bewick, Thomson, Hughes, Byfield, Williams, Lee, Mackenzie, and Sears*, for the *Cuts*, so that *Boys* will now learn Latin with *greater facility and pleasure* to themselves, *deeper impressions* be made, and *ideas*, as well as *words*, be acquired.¹¹

Bewick was named as an engraver, but none of the illustrations were done by him but by his workshop.¹² Similarly, in Thornton's *New Family Herbal* (1810), Bewick is advertised on the title page, but all the engravings are by workshop. Blake was named a designer but not an engraver, though he did engrave on copper and wood for the book.

The style overall is neo-classical in the earlier editions and became more ornamental in the 1821 edition. However, the mixture of refined and crude illustrations shows Thornton chose whoever whose fame could help the sale or whose work was cheaply available.

Unlike Thornton, Blake was sincerely opposed to formal and classical education.¹³ The reason why Blake participated in the project was probably also financial, even though he had John Linnell as a patron at this time.¹⁴

6 THE WOODBLOCK EVIDENCE

If we compare Blake's woodblocks (British Museum) (Figure 5) with the block engraved by another hand, which was more to Thornton publishers' taste (Huntington Library) (Figure 6), one can detect from the surface that Blake's cut lines are much more irregular and rough, whereas the other hand shows regular and uniform dots and lines.

¹¹ 'Address to school-master, parents, and others', preface to Thornton's *The Pastorals of Virgil* (1821), p. iv.

¹² Preface by Kenneth Clark, *The Wood Engravings of William Blake* (British Museum, 1977), p. 7.

¹³ 'Dark Pastoral: illustrations to Thornton's *Virgil*', *The Traveller in the Evening: The last works of William Blake*, by Morton Paley, Oxford University Press, 2003.

¹⁴ *The Traveller in the Evening: The last works of William Blake*, by Morton Paley, p. 23.

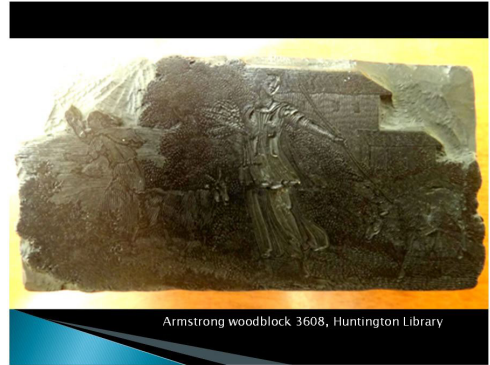
(Figures 7 & 8) Blake seems to treat the block as a canvas, filling in lines and 'colours' (so to speak) rather than cutting away the white areas. It is unique and revolutionary in style and spirit.

Figure 5. William Blake's *Virgil* woodblocks in the British Museum, author's photograph.



William Blake, *Virgil* woodblocks (British Museum)

Figure 6. Anonymous woodcut for Thornton's *Virgil* in the Huntington Library, author's photograph.

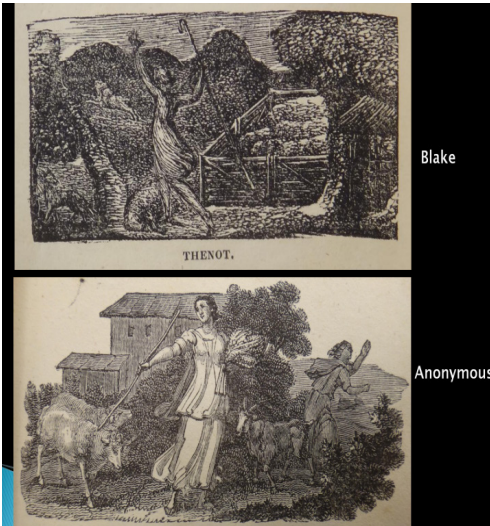


Armstrong woodblock 3608, Huntington Library

Figure 7. William Blake's *Virgil* woodblock no. 8 in the British Museum (top) versus the Anonymous woodcut for Thornton's *Virgil* in the Huntington Library (bottom), author's photograph.



Figure 8. William Blake's *Virgil* woodcut print in the British Museum (top) versus Anonymous woodcut print for Thornton's *Virgil* in the Huntington Library (bottom), author's photograph.



Blake

Anonymous

The block used to illustrate page 8 of Volume 2 *School Virgil* (1821) typifies the standard printing block used in a mechanical printing process. The engraving on the recto shows a clear contrast of relief and incised lines, the regular white lines popularized by the Bewick School. The top side of the block has stamped into the wood a mechanical number, which would have been done by the manufacturer. (Figure 9)

In contrast, the woodblocks Blake used were not standard, and he did not engrave on the end grain as was the practice of Thomas Bewick and his pupils and followed throughout the 19th century. The two proofs of Blake's *Virgil* before cut separately and cut down in size in the British Museum show that Blake engraved initially on a larger than usual piece of boxwood, cut from a tree trunk instead of a standard block from the regular block-makers. It means the images were possibly engraved on the plank side rather than on the end grain part. They are rightly called 'woodcuts' and not 'wood engravings' in the 19th-century printmaking terminology. (Figure 10)

Figure 9. Multiple views of the Anonymous woodcut for Thornton's *Virgil* in the Huntington Library (Armstrong woodblock 3608), author's photographs.



Figure 10. Multiple views of William Blake's *Virgil* woodblock no. 8 in the British Museum, author's photographs.



In this aspect, Blake returned to the old woodcut tradition instead of following contemporary fashion.

7 CONCLUSION: BLAKE & THORNTON'S CONFLICTING IDEAS OF EDUCATION

If both Blake and Thornton shared a financial rather than educational incentive, at least Blake spoke out a visual protest against the classical tradition. In contrast, Thornton was the embracer of an old world of classical culture. The supposed aim of the *School Virgil* book is to educate. Whether this is true for Thornton and Blake, they had very different ideas about it.

Thornton has experience as a lecturer on medical topics & has developed a theory of education centring on using visual images to aid learning. William Blake rejected all formal schooling, as his *Notebook* states,

Thank God, I never was sent to School
To be Flogg'd into following the Stile of a Fool.¹⁵

¹⁵ Blake, *Notebook*, p. 42.

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SOBRE OS ORGANIZADORES

SILVIA INÉS DEL VALLE NAVARRO: Profesora y Licenciada en Física, Doctora en Ciencias Física. Directora del Departamento de Física de la Facultad de Ciencias Exactas y Naturales de la Universidad Nacional de Catamarca, Argentina. Editora de la Revista Electrónica “Aportes Científicos en PHYMATH” – Facultad de Ciencias Exacta y Naturales. Profesora Titular Concursada, a cargo de las asignaturas Métodos Matemáticos perteneciente a las carreras de Física, y Física Biológica perteneciente a las carreras de Ciencias Biológicas. Docente Investigadora en Física Aplicada, Biofísica, Socioepistemología y Educación, dirigiendo Proyectos de Investigación de la Secretaría de Ciencia y Tecnología de la Universidad Nacional de Catamarca con publicaciones científicas dentro del área multidisciplinaria relacionado a fenómenos físicos-biológicos cuyos resultados son analizados a través del desarrollo de Modelos Matemáticos con sus simulaciones dentro de la Dinámica de Sistemas. Participación en disímiles eventos científicos donde se presentan los resultados de las investigaciones. Autora del libro “Agrotóxicos y Aprendizaje: Análisis de los resultados del proceso de aprendizaje mediante un modelo matemático” (2012), España: Editorial Académica Española. Coautora del libro “Ecuaciones en Diferencias con aplicaciones a Modelos en Dinámica de Sistemas” (2005), Catamarca-Argentina: Editorial Sarquís. Organizadora de Ciências Humanas: Estudos para uma Visão Holística da Sociedade. Miembro de la Comisión Directiva de la Asociación de Profesores de Física de la Argentina (A.P.F.A.) y Secretaria Provincial de dicha Asociación.

GUSTAVO ADOLFO JUAREZ: Profesor y Licenciado en Matemática, Candidato a Doctor en Ciencias Humanas. Profesor Titular Concursado, desempeñándome en las asignaturas Matemática Aplicada y Modelos Matemáticos perteneciente a las carreras de Matemática. Docente Investigador en Matemática Aplicada, Biomatemática, Modelado Matemático, Etnomatemática y Educación, dirigiendo Proyectos de Investigación de la Secretaría de Ciencia y Tecnología de la Universidad Nacional de Catamarca con publicaciones científicas dentro del área Multidisciplinaria relacionado a Educación Matemática desde la Socioepistemología cuyos resultados son analizados a través del desarrollo de Modelos Matemáticos con sus simulaciones dentro de la Dinámica de Sistemas y de la Matemática Discreta. Autor del libro “Ecuaciones en Diferencias con aplicaciones a Modelos en Dinámica de Sistemas” (2005), Catamarca-Argentina: Editorial Sarquís. Coautor del libro “Agrotóxicos y Aprendizaje: Análisis de los resultados del proceso de aprendizaje mediante un modelo matemático” (2012), España: Editorial Académica Española. Desarrollo de Software libre de Ecuaciones en Diferencias, que permite analizar y validar los distintos Modelos Matemáticos referentes a problemas planteados de índole multidisciplinarios. Organizador de Ciências Humanas: Estudos para uma Visão Holística da Sociedade. Ex Secretario Provincial de la Unión Matemática Argentina (U.M.A) y se participa en diversos eventos científicos exponiendo los resultados obtenidos en las investigaciones.

ÍNDICE REMISSIVO

A

Antropologia da saúde 122

Antropologia médica 122

Audience 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23

B

Bahá'í 46, 47, 48, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57

C

Cansaço 108, 109, 110, 111, 113, 115, 117, 118, 120

Capitalismo neoliberal 108, 111, 113, 115, 118

Classical music 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23

Community 10, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 37, 38, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 59

Conflicto post-divorcio 82, 85

Continuity 46, 149, 151, 152, 154, 156, 157, 160, 162

Corpo 27, 30, 33, 34, 108, 109, 110, 112, 113, 114, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 129, 130, 132, 148

Cultura empresarial 73, 75, 80

Culture 8, 16, 18, 23, 40, 45, 46, 49, 50, 51, 54, 56, 73, 74, 81, 120, 152, 156, 157, 158, 162

D

Dinâmica poblacional 58, 59, 60

Doable Solution 37, 38, 42, 43, 44

E

Ecological education 37, 39

Ecological Ethics 37, 38, 39

Effective Pedagogy 37, 38

Ensino Superior 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 35, 36

Ernesto Rogers 149, 150, 151, 153, 157

Escritoras de narrativa latinoamericanas 133

Esgotamento 108, 110, 113, 115, 118, 120

Estilo de liderazgo 73, 74, 80

Estudantes 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36

F

Fenômenos históricos 88, 89, 103

Futuro 24, 28, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 64, 107, 114

H

History 1, 2, 12, 46, 49, 56, 57, 120, 149, 150, 151, 152, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 160, 161, 162

I

Identidades 24, 97, 98, 103

Ideologia 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 95, 97, 100, 101, 103, 111, 142

Índigenas 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 142

L

Listening 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23

M

Melancolia 108, 110, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 120, 121

Modelización matemática 58, 59, 60, 61, 64, 71

N

Nordeste (Brasil) 88

O

Obesidade 122, 123, 124, 125, 129, 130, 131, 132

Obesidade pediátrica 122

P

Performance 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 55, 81

Processo de ensino-aprendizagem

Processo de Ensino-Aprendizagem 24, 27, 31, 32, 34

Pymes 73, 75, 76, 77, 80, 81

R

Racismo 88, 89, 90, 91, 95, 96, 97, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 105, 106

Relación paterno-filial 82

Religion 46, 47, 50, 52, 53, 55, 57

Resistencia-rechazo de menores 82

Right-Relation 37, 39

Robert Thornton 1, 2

S

Schoolbook 1

Sistemas dinámicos 59

Sobrepeso 122, 123, 124, 129, 130, 132

Sustainability 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 54, 55, 57

T

Terrorismo de Estado 133, 135, 136, 137, 138, 141, 144, 147, 148

Torre Velasca 149, 150, 155, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161

Tradition 5, 8, 15, 46, 52, 57, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 158, 161

V

Violencia sexual 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 141, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148

Virgil 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

W

William Blake 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9

Woodcut illustration 1