

FINDING MEANING FOR THREE DECADES

ASSOCIATE PHILOSOPHY PROFESSOR SAM LIPUMA CONTINUES TO INSPIRE — AND BE INSPIRED BY — TRI-C'S MISSION AND STUDENTS

Sam LiPuma has seen Tri-C undergo many changes since he started teaching part-time at the College in 1991. However, he has found the students' enthusiasm and Tri-C's mission have remained constant — and so has his passion for teaching philosophy.

"Every philosophy class is different," LiPuma said. "The students are being presented with this material often for the first time, and their reaction to it makes it a unique discussion. And I often learn from their questions."

A full-time faculty member since 2000, LiPuma first discovered his love for philosophy during his freshman year at the University of Dayton.

"It really resonated with me... It was amazing," he said. "I just knew that there was something special going on with this discipline."

But LiPuma didn't see himself working in academia then. The University Heights native was also pursuing his passion for music. He met his future wife, Kathy, through the university's concert band.

Musical talent runs in his family. His uncle was Tommy LiPuma, the Grammy-winning record producer and namesake of Tri-C's Gill and Tommy LiPuma Center for Creative Arts.

He graduated from the University of Dayton with his bachelor's and master's degrees in philosophy (1984 and 1986) and briefly pursued his Ph.D. at Loyola University Chicago. But the music industry kept calling, and he found himself serving as a manager for Camelot Music stores at the Randall Park Mall and Parmatown Mall locations from 1987 to 1991.

"That was supposed to be a stepping stone — but I wasn't stepping anywhere," LiPuma said. "I was telling a good friend of mine from college, 'I'm not happy. I'm not going anywhere.' He said, 'Well, you're building your career in retail.' And I thought to myself, 'That's not what I want to do.'"

He realized his master's degree in philosophy qualified him for part-time teaching positions in higher education. From 1991 to 2000, he taught courses at Tri-C's Western Campus, Kent State University and other area institutions.

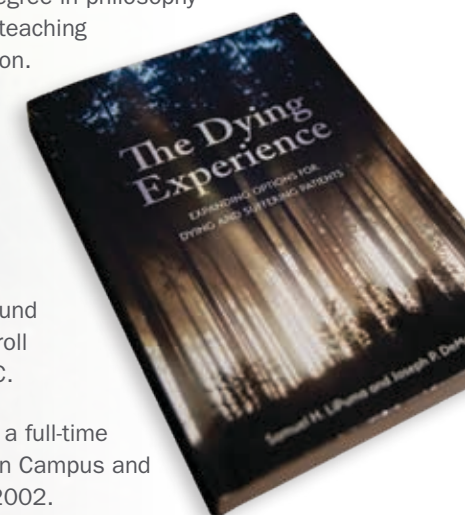
He even had a chance to tap into his music background when he taught a rock 'n' roll appreciation course at Tri-C.

In 2000, LiPuma accepted a full-time lecturer position at Western Campus and a tenure-track position in 2002.

With his three kids getting older, LiPuma was able to focus on his career and pursue his passion for bioethics with advanced coursework at Cleveland State University in 2003. Through the program, he met his mentor and writing partner, Joseph DeMarco. Together, they wrote *The Dying Experience: Expanding Options for Dying and Suffering Patients*, published in 2019 by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

He plans to end his career at Tri-C, but at 61, that's still a few years away. In the meantime, he decided to again pursue his Ph.D. This time, he chose Bowling Green State University, which has a concentration in his favorite topic, bioethics.

"I'm inspired to be part of Tri-C's faculty," LiPuma said. "The most inspiring element for me is an issue of justice, a fair society. You have to give people a chance. And that's what we do. I'm happy to have contributed to it in some way."



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— Sam LiPuma, Associate Philosophy Professor

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
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