

Schools

“A thoughtful combination of art and activism. The students talked with him for two hours more after the class was over. He was very patient and generous with his time.” Dr. Aaron Peeks, Sociology, Elon University

“The concert went from 7 to 9. After the show, we stayed and talked with him until the college coffee house closed. Then we talked on the sidewalk. I was the last one to leave. It was midnight. I knew the man was tired, but he was patient and answered every question. I felt like he really cared about us. He was great.” Andy, Dr. Peek’s Soc class, Elon University

“At our 11th annual Peace and Justice Studies conference (“Women, War, and Peacebuilding”) Tom Neilson, performed throughout the conference and then finished the event off with a concert. I cannot express how amazing he is. Tom is a stunningly good songwriter and an excellent singer and performer. Tom is not only a profoundly good performer, but a peacebuilder who has spent many years in South America, Africa, and Latin America working for the UN and other organizations. As you can imagine, he has very much to say worth hearing between songs, as well as in his songs. I cannot overstate how powerful his music is, and how deeply relevant to peace and justice.” Michael Minch, Ph.D. Peace and Justice Studies, Professor of Philosophy, Utah Valley University

“Tom Neilson did a residency at the University of Oregon. He taught two of my classes, Language and Power, and a Freshman Interest Group class that was combined with an Intro to Sociology. He has a rich intellectual background combined with multiple international experiences. He does an amazing job of deconstructing current political buzz words in satirical verse, for example: “Same-Sex Marriage” wonders what all the fuss is about, because “my wife and I have the same sex every night;” similarly, “Corporations are Human.” The man educates while he entertains, or perhaps his real calling is to educate, and the beautiful entertainment is just his method of choice.

His college concert challenged his audience with questions of student debt, socio-economic class, environmental degradation, race, sports, gender and gender identities, and the pervasive question of how our knowledge of the world (and therefore our decision-making process) is shaped by a media industry that is demonstrably uninterested in topics that do not result in larger advertising revenues. They gave him a standing ovation.”

Please feel free to contact me (spike@uoregon.edu) if you have any questions.”



Spike Gildea, Professor of Linguistics, University of Oregon

“Tom is a natural with students. They respect his experience and his wit. They trust his stories, even as he steps on the toes of privilege. He is playful with sexuality to segue into draft resistance, women’s rights, gun violence... He could teach a course on social justice just with his songs.

Tom does a workshop where students create performance art to tell their stories around social justice. Each of the students said they couldn’t do it; And then they all did it and enthusiastically performed their songs for the class. He taught them the power of language. And the power of music.” Dr. David Kinsey, Center for International Education, UMass, Amherst

“Tom has a way with young people. He speaks to them as adults while recognizing that they are teens. His playfulness with sexuality and gender issues conveys a message of personal responsibility. In a 3 minute song, he can enter a child’s brain and heart and change their lives.” Lori Keene, The Putney School, Putney, VT

“I continue to be impressed by his commitment to musical activism. Protest and awareness of issues is so critical in these times when values are under attack.” David R. Evans, Founding Director, Center for International Education, UMass, Amherst

“A hilarious walk through current events and social justice with plenty of great commentary besides, Tom Neilson offered our students thought provoking and educational lyrics that inspired critical thinking. A musical event that was fun and light hearted with moments of serious reflection as we all seek to make sense of this chaotic political landscape we live in.” Charli Eaton, CSUSB

"He is funny and entertaining. He has so much information about contemporary issues and local problems. I’d love to take a class from him." Liz Hogan, Smith College

"It would be great to turn on the radio and hear Tom sing the news each day." College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, ME

"He will teach you about the world you live in. I learned a lot and it was fun. I wanted him to keep going.” Dick Allen, University of Maine, Orono

“Tom is a very much in-demand performer for the environment and his songs tell stories (truthful stories) about activists and whistle blowers and government cover ups, things we know scantily from the news; but thanks to his songs, we see the human side of what happens after the headlines stop. He adds humor, so it's fun believe it or not!” Dr. Milly West, University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS

"With young people he is remarkable for his unusual combination of playfulness, tenderness, and respectful forthrightness. He is 'way cool' and kids know it." William Spademan, Creative Thought & Action

"Tom never loses contact with the students, as he is always asking questions. He comes from the tradition of speaking truth to power. And in a three minute song about STDs, a life may be saved or in the least, made safer about a funny song about using condoms." Brad Clarke, History Department, Gould Academy, Bethel, ME