For more than two decades students have consistently praised this professor’s extraordinary erudition, energy, intelligence and good humor. A prolific scholar, this teacher is nonetheless constantly found at the office, warmly greeting students and inviting them to discuss at greater length a challenging question earlier posed in class. As one recommender writes, “more than any other,” this professor “will read drafts of students’ papers, offering suggestions and insightful commentary.” Writes another, this person “engages students in conversation both in [and outside] the classroom.... and not just about [topics raised there], but about other classes, study abroad experiences, and campus involvement.” Notes a third student, this teacher takes a “keen interest in [our] lives.”

Just as much as students praise this professor’s impressive knowledge and genuine concern, they appreciate the irrepressible excitement he brings to their discussions. Again and again, students marvel – and succumb to – the tremendous passion that animates his teaching. As one student attests, this professor “changed my attitude towards education, excellence and life”; what one notes “first and foremost upon seeing [him] in the classroom is not [only] his mastery [of his subject] but his excitement.” Others too praise this professor’s evident love for the difficult but rewarding books he explores with them. “Studying...with [him] is among the most thrilling experiences I have had....[it] has made life more exciting, more interesting, and more meaningful.”
And this professor, students make clear, certainly does know, and knows deeply, the
great books he so passionately explores with them. Writes one alumna, this
professor is simply “one of the smartest people I know.” Recalls another, whether
lecturing about the “larger-than-life love affair between two worldly leaders” in
Shakespeare’s Anthony and Cleopatra, or leading a seminar discussion exploring the
“indescribably strong friendship between Patroklos and Achilleus in Homer’s Iliad,”
this professor’s erudition simultaneously captivates and instructs. Writes yet a
third alumnus, “I was wooed by his charm, passion, and genius…. I took one of his
seminars, audited one class, and designed an independent study with him on Islamic
and Jewish Medieval Political Philosophy. In the three years that I studied with him,
[he] became my most admired professor.”

Yet however much these students, past and present, praise this professor’s
remarkable erudition and enthusiasm, they agree that these would count for less if
he did not so generously share them. And share them he does indeed! Whether
conversing informally in his office with students for hours about an especially
enigmatic remark in Plato’s Apology, meticulously reviewing their drafts for an
upcoming assignment on Aristotle’s Politics, or providing extensive comments on
completed papers about Machiavelli’s Prince, this professor is an unstinting teacher
and mentor. Explains one student who has taken more than a half dozen classes
with him, this professor “takes our contributions seriously and carefully considers
and responds to both our comments and our questions.” Or as an alumna recollects,
“from the day he walked into his Classical Political Theory class my sophomore
year” to our “parting lunch at a local deli” shortly before graduation, this person remained “a tremendously valued mentor and counselor.”

For his extraordinary willingness to share his overflowing passion and knowledge, and for his genuine concern for his students’ personal and intellectual well-being, we award the 2013 Hunter-Hamilton Love of Teaching Award to Professor Peter J. Ahrensdorf.