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## KENDRA KOPELKE

### Introductory Remarks

Good morning, class.  
Before we begin I must tell you I don't know anything about this subject.  
I have studied it many years, over half my life, which is probably too long.

And you, perhaps, have never studied it which will make things difficult, if not impossible. You will expect the world of me; you will expect me to pick up where your last meaningful thought left off.

The subject is older than all of us and for most of that time only men talked about it.  
And then women got in the game.  
And the language is changing every day.  
So we are already behind.

If we begin at the beginning, we will never get through all the material.  
We will run out of time.  
Your first paper is due on March 1st which was, unfortunately, last week.

You will ask me questions about the paper I can't answer.

You will want to know exactly "what I want." I want what I always want, the thing I can't think of,

the thing you can't think of, but did, almost accidentally, because you happened to take this class, this term.  
When you get your paper back, you will not be able to read my handwritten notes in the margin.

I have taught this subject many times and never have I known less about it than I do today. One semester, a year or so ago, maybe longer, I can't remember, it was perfectly clear to me, and the classroom filled with light

and laughter. I'm sorry to disappoint you, I know you paid good money for this.  
But I thought it best we get it out of the way so that we could get to the heart of the matter.  
The truth is, I'm eager to get started.

*Kendra Kopelke is the author of two collections of poetry, Eager Street (1997) and Carpe Diem, Ants (2001). She is the writer-in-residence at the University of Baltimore and founding editor of Passager.*