

difficult dialogues

course offerings
fall 2007

We often avoid dealing with subjects that might create friction or reveal differences between us – topics of race, religion and politics among them. Can we learn to engage each other on these subjects, and listen for what it is that we can learn – about the subject, about others and ourselves, about our common values? Can we learn to think critically and with discernment about contentious issues? Can we behave with the kind of respect that allows all voices to come forward?

The Difficult Dialogues program at Clark is a campus-wide initiative aimed at developing skills and awareness of dialogue, and encouraging engagement across differences in both our classrooms and community. Clark is one of 27 institutions selected by the Ford Foundation from 675 colleges and universities nation-wide to participate in this initiative.

As part of the DD program, courses with an emphasis on dialogue will be offered in both the Spring and Fall of 2007. These courses will approach the process of dialogue in a variety of ways and across a number of disciplines; they will all draw on DD symposium programming in the content of the course.

Please explore the course offerings in the listings below; for further information on the Difficult Dialogues program and opportunities, go to the website at www.clarku.edu/difficultdialogues. If you have questions about the program as a whole, please feel free to contact Sarah Buie at sbuie@clarku.edu or Jane Androski at jandroski@clarku.edu. For specific queries on the individual courses, please contact the faculty member listed.

dialogue courses **first-year seminars**

COMM 050 | Communication and Culture in Main South **Professor Sarah Michaels**

The course is organized around motivating questions. How are language, communication, codes, and representation intertwined? Second, how are language, culture, and thought related? Do visual, musical, gestural, (perhaps even culinary) messages function like language? Third, how does communicative style link up with cultural identity? Fourth, how are language, power, and ideology related?

In addition to the readings and class discussion, this course will include a “field” component, focusing on communication and culture in Main South, the neighborhood surrounding Clark University. This seminar will highlight the theme of “difficult but transformative dialogues” — in our class sessions, weekly discussion sections, and in our project work with neighborhood students. We will work to theorize communication and enact it in ways that promote understanding across differences – across borders such as the Clark campus and the Main South neighborhood, across cultures, languages, and divergent modes of communication (such as face-to-face vs. via the internet. The seminar will be a studio-space in which to study and develop our skill at transformative dialogue.

GOVT 050 | Dictators and Revolutionaries in Latin America **Professor Paul Posner**

The stereotype of the Latin American military dictator or the leftist revolutionary has become commonplace in contemporary culture. These stereotypical images convey to us in shorthand form understandings about Latin American society. They convey or reinforce the image of a militaristic and violent society, politically passionate

and ideologically polarized. They convey the image of a society where the use of force trumps the rule of law. As with all stereotypes, there is more than a grain of truth in these characterizations but also much insight or understanding that they foreclose. In particular, such stereotyping begs the question as to why Latin America's modern political history is rife with examples of political violence and extremism emanating from both ends of the political spectrum. This course seeks to enable students to answer this question. While the regional focus will be on Latin America, the skills development will be global in its applicability. Ultimately, the skills that students develop in this course should enhance their ability to think critically about contemporary incidents of political violence and inform their actions as concerned citizens.

PHIL 050 | Relativism and Absolutism Across the Disciplines **Professor Wes DeMarco**

Relativists and absolutists make claims about ethics, religion—even math and the sciences—that cause a lot of friction on the contemporary scene. There are proponents of each side who believe the other to be a source of great evil in the world. Misunderstandings abound, and it seems difficult to find neutral ground from which to assess their claims. In this course, we examine several brands of relativism and absolutism and consider some varieties of pluralism as an alternative. Ours is a case-study approach. We study and evaluate the 'Asian values argument' against the universality of human rights. We examine a feminist criticism of empirical science and puzzle over the empiricist claim that there is no set of evidence sufficient to prove that one theory is uniquely and adequately true. We ponder the exclusivism of contemporary religious fundamentalism. We begin with experiments in color perception and some simplified examples of alternate mathematics, and then study claims of cognitive differences across cultures. These case studies prepare us for an engagement with texts from Wittgenstein, Quine, Davidson, Nietzsche, Hegel, Habermas and Tillich. We try to interpret each author generously and evaluate each position fairly. We ask whether there is a need for fair and open dialog, and if so, whether the standards of fair and open dialog are absolute or relative. In these and other ways we think about a family of issues concerning meaning, interpretation, and truth that span disciplinary divides.

dialogue courses

regular courses

AP 239/CMLT 239 | Revolution and Rebellion in the Hispanic World **Professor Belen Atienza**

In this course we will compare different types of revolutions and rebellions in the Hispanic World, including political revolutions, social revolutions, artistic and cultural revolutions, as well as "unruly behavior" (generational conflict, forms of gender and/or sexual rebellion). We will focus in three countries: Spain, Mexico, and Cuba. Starting in 1492 we will examine the process of colonization and the ideology of imperial Spain as origin of later historical and political changes including: the Spanish civil war, the Mexican revolution, and the Cuban revolution. Contemporary social movements such as the Zapatista uprising in Mexico will also be considered. Figures studies include: Malinche, Frida Kahlo, Picasso, Dali, Lorca, Che Guevara, and Subcomandante Marcos. Conducted in Spanish. Prerequisite: Spanish 131, Spanish 133, CMLT "National Imagination", or permission of the instructor.

IDCE grad course | Professor Dave Bell course description to come

MGMT 100 | The Art and Science of Management
Professor Barbara Bigelow

This course introduces students to management. They learn about the primary functions that comprise an organization, and about the structures and processes that facilitate communication within organizations, and between the organization and its environment. The course is taught using a combination of tools, among the role plays, experiential exercises, computer simulations, service learning, and case analyses. A foundation of the course is dialogue, both as an approach to class interactions and as a practice to be taught.

IDCE 30240 | Community Planning Studio
Professor Miriam Chion

The intent of the studio is to acquire a sophisticated understanding of a specific community in its political, economic, social, and spatial dimensions as well as to sharpen the skills necessary for the analysis of the existing conditions and the development of plans and strategies. This Fall 2007 the studio will focus on San Francisco. Since the late 1990s, San Francisco's Eastern Neighborhoods are shifting from industrial and marginal neighborhoods to a center of development for a wealthier population and high technology businesses. Restaurants and cafes, art events and festivals, and the overall cultural diversity and intense street life became a force of attraction for a broad population. However, as new development takes place, families, artists, recent immigrants, and blue collar workers, who have been producing this urban vitality, are squeezed into fewer and smaller spaces to live and work. This planning studio will select one particular development issue of this ongoing process to analyze, explore through an intense field work, and respond to through a report for community leaders. The studio is a creative and safe space to challenge our thinking and explore new tools to address development. Students' visions, knowledge, and engagement with each other and the city are central to the structure of the studio.

EN 120 | Discovering Environmental Science
Professor Tim Downs

This foundation science class will give students the literacy and skills they need to understand the science behind environmental problems that affect us all: Water pollution; air pollution; environmental health risks; population growth and the over-exploitation of natural resources. The course aims to provide a solid foundation in important scientific principles, complementing courses with a joint science-policy orientation or a more policy-oriented approach. Students will be encouraged to think critically, work in teams to solve problems, present solutions and discuss topics. Real-world applications and case studies will be used to place the methods and models in a practical context. A dialogic dimension is to be used: supplementary readings will stimulate dialogue about the application of principles and methods covered during lectures. Every fourth class will be dedicated to this dialogue.

SOC 263 | Deviance
Professor Patty Ewick

Why are some behaviors, differences and people stigmatized and considered deviant while others are not? This course examines theories of social deviance that offer answers to this and related questions such as: How and why are behaviors designated as deviant? How do individuals enter a deviant lifestyle? And how do various social statuses, such as sex, affect the incidence, type and responses to deviant acts?

IDCE 125 | Tales from the Far Side (to come)
Professor Jude Fernando

IDCE 259 | In the Name of God: Religion, Identity and Violence in a Globalizing World
Professor William Fisher

Examines the nature of religion and the interconnections among religious identity, political violence, and globalization in the contemporary world. It will examine conflicts that arise between groups with different religious identities as well as conflicts between religions and secularization. It will consider how globalization has failed to satisfy so many people in the world, why religion has been raised as an alternative, and why the religious rejection of secularization has been so violent.

ENG 20 | Introduction to Literature
Professor SunHee Gertz

In exploring examples of fiction, poetry, and drama, students will learn how to use the most important tools of literary analysis while exploring this semester's theme, "Who's Staging Your Life?" Situated in the metaphor of the stage as a locus in which learned conventions tend to determine our actions, we will explore how to "go behind the scenes," "create and direct our own scripts," and understand how we can find spaces and venues that include rather than exclude. Meets the Verbal Expression requirement.

GOVT 283/IDCE 315 | The Global HIV/AIDS crisis
Professor Beverly Grier

The course examines the economic, social, political and cultural factors that drive the HIV/AIDS pandemic from countries as diverse as Cuba, Brazil, the United States, Russia, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, India, Thailand and China. Structural factors such as poverty, debt, marginalization, and gender discrimination, along with fear and stigma, are examined. Students explore the role of the state, civil society, and international organizations in the search for strategies of prevention and treatment of what is perhaps the most devastating disease in human history. The course emphasizes dialogue among students around questions of gender, class, race, morality, sexuality, the sexual transmission of disease, and the responsibilities of individuals, states, societies and the international community.

ENG 239 | Aliens and Others in Science Fiction
Professor Betsy Huang

This course examines figurations of aliens and outsiders, treatments of otherness and difference, and dramatizations of alien encounters and "first contacts" in science fiction and film. Short fiction and novels by H.G. Wells, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert A. Heinlein, Joanna Russ, Samuel R. Delany, Frederik Pohl, Stanislaw Lem, Octavia E. Butler, Orson Scott Card, Ted Chiang, among others, will be read. Feature films and television series that deal with alien contact will also be studied. The seminar focuses on the "first contact" subgenre in science fiction in which two or more races/species first encounter one another and must learn to coexist. The genre borrows heavily from (and allegorizes) discourses of colonialism, immigration, race science, slavery, identity politics, etc.—issues that never fail to stir up dialogue in class.

HIST/HGS 234/334 | Racial Thought and Body Politics in Modern Europe (1500-2000)
Professor Thomas Kühne

The category of “race” has been used since about 1500, when Europe’s Renaissance met with the exploration of “other” human beings in different continents. It served to create difference and to naturalize inequality among groups of people based on ideas and images of their bodies. However, the confrontation between Europeans and non-Europeans had a deep impact on identity construction in Europe itself. The seminar explores the relation between notions of race and the social construction of the body. It focuses on Europe and the European encounters with non-European peoples in the wider World, the scientific foundation of modern racism in the Enlightenment, with Social Darwinism and Hygienic Movements around 1900 and pays special attention to racist body politics that led to the Nazi extermination policies. The relation between anti-Semitism and other traditions of racism will be a core issue of the seminar. The seminar concludes with a look on present tendencies of globalizing European body norms and their racial roots.

These topics will be explored in a consequently dialogic way. The seminar confronts students with three axes, on which the “other” is negotiated—the historical opposition between then and now, the cultural gap between dominant and suppressed categories of distinction (“race”), and the anthropological opposition between mind and body. Each axis asks students for running a dialog between what is familiar and what is strange. Students have to play the “devil’s advocate” to learn looking at things from different points of view.

MUSC 211/ARTH 211 | Seeing and Hearing in Early Modern Europe
Professors Ben Korstvedt and Andrea LePage

This seminar investigates how art and music were seen and heard in early modern Europe, and treats this exploration as a way to discover how these art forms entered into the cultural discussions of the time. We begin from the idea that people within a given culture share experiences, frames of reference, and modes of thinking and feeling that influence how they perceive and interpret artworks. Our focus, therefore, is not the creation of art, the traditional focus of music and art criticism, but rather the perception and reception of art, as we treat the aesthetic experience as a topic in its own right and as an avenue of new historical understanding.

Through a process of dialogue, we will explore the ways that our own cultural frame impacts our perception and interpretation of works created before our time. The seminar concentrates on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, an era in which Europe reached several fundamental turning points that revolutionized Western culture, the most important of which included the revival and creative appropriation of Classical art and thought, the explosive appearance of printed media (which directly impacted our subject areas by means of engravings and printed music), and the enormous ramifications of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation. All of three of the developments directly affected art and music, and, perhaps more importantly, both of these arts became mainsprings by which these developments participated in the cultural discussion of the time.

ENG281 | American Literary Renaissance/Seminar
Professor Meredith Neumann

Special topics in nineteenth-century literature through the Civil War invite in-depth consideration of how extraordinary cultural, political and technological changes made this one of the most vibrant and studied periods of the American literature.

Topic for Fall '07: Transcendentalist Variations

We think we know who the Transcendentalists were and what they stood for, but how can we when they themselves so often disagreed? By moving beyond the usual Emerson essays and Thoreau's *Walden*, we will begin to form a more accurate picture of all the varied ways that these extraordinary and often radical thinkers saw the major issues of their day – from changes in the nature and practice of Christianity to the reasons and methods for abolishing slavery, from the call for an "original" American literature to the nuts and bolts of true social reform. We will explore not only the ways in which their ideas diverged from 19th-century American norms but also the ways in which they disagreed with each other on how best to awaken and transform their world.

In the spirit of dialogues past and present, we will try various ways of engaging in the course material, including student-led discussion sessions, staged debates and imitations of nineteenth-century dialogic practices (such as partisan journal publication, lyceum, and salon conversations).

EN 103 | The Sustainable University
Professor Jennie Stephens

This course emphasizes the dialogic challenges of promoting social and institutional change related to environmental sustainability. Climate change has emerged as the dominant challenge to environmental sustainability, but individuals and institutions must engage on this issue at a deeper level than they are currently for societal change to occur to respond effectively to climate change. Research demonstrates that one-way communication about environmental science and projected environmental impacts does not motivate behavior change or policy action, so new and different strategies to engage individuals and institutions on climate change are needed. Drawing on several chapters focused on dialogue and communication approaches in the new book "Creating a Climate for Change, Communicating Climate Change and Facilitating Social Change" edited by Susanne Moser and Lisa Dilling, class assignments (reading, writing, and campus-based group projects) will be developed within this dialogue and engagement context.