

difficult dialogues

course offerings
spring 2009

Can we learn to engage each other on issues on which we differ, and listen respectfully 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 put aside our assumptions, and sit with the discomfort and creative potential of not-knowing?

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 was one of 27 institutions originally selected by the Ford Foundation, from 730 colleges and universities nation-wide, to participate in this initiative.

In this fifth semester of DD courses, fourteen courses with an emphasis on dialogue will be offered. These courses will approach the process of dialogue in a variety of ways and across a number of disciplines, and will relate as is relevant to our dialogue symposium programming.

dialogue seminar

IDND 010 The Dialogue Seminar (1/2 credit)

If you want an opportunity to deepen your understanding and experience of dialogue, consider taking the Dialogue Seminar offered as part of the Difficult Dialogues Initiative. Each section of this half-credit course will be led by teams of faculty members paired with experienced DD fellows. The course will include a small set of readings on dialogue, but will focus on in-class dialogues that draw from the experiences and issues raised by the public events in the Difficult Dialogues spring symposia. Attendance at roughly one DD symposia event per week will be a requirement of the class.

dialogue courses

ARTS 125 Graphic Design Projects

Jane Androski

An intermediate-level, projects-based exploration of graphic design, with an emphasis on conceptual development and problem-solving. Studio assignments and supporting lectures encourage students to investigate formal design aesthetics and the nuances of effective visual communication; to develop a critical analysis of the historical and cultural context in which design functions; and to examine the role of designer as an author, maker, thinker and citizen, through a model of 'Social Practice'.

ARTS 254 Graphic Design Studio

Sarah Buie

Advanced applied problems involving the role of designers in professional practice, working with clients and organizations. Consideration of the role of and opportunities for design in meeting communication needs.

ARTS 204 Sacred Space (of Dialogue)

Sarah Buie

Spatial archetypes are by nature dialogic – they all embody the play of dualities, and the creative energy released in that play. This course explores these archetypes in the natural world, the built world, and our inner, psychic spaces. Emphasis is on understanding the interdependent nature of these three aspects of our experience, and its significance to our relationship to the environment. Included are universal patterns (threshold, path, sacred geometry, mandala), natural archetypes (cave, mountain, river, tree) and the relationship between built and natural environments. We will develop skills of dialogue, both in class discussions and creative projects, in order to enter the space of archetype more fully. Class limit 15, and by permission only. Professor Sarah Buie

GEOG 136/WS 138 Gender and Environment / Lecture, Discussion

Dianne Rocheleau

Explores how gender is reflected in the landscape, in our settlement and land-use patterns, in environmental history, and in our present ecological science and practice from the global to the local level. Combines lectures, readings, discussions, films and local field trips. Reviews feminist and other alternative explanations of the gendered nature of knowledge, access, use and control of space and resources in environments - past, present and possible. With a regional focus on New England, we explore changes in gendered knowledge, livelihoods and landscapes over time, from the 1400's to the present. Through readings and films we compare Indigenous, Colonist and Capitalist contexts, in order to better understand our current experiences of gendered environments, as filtered through multiple prisms of class, culture, nationality, religion and sexuality. The format of the class and the spirit of inquiry are based on dialogue, with a strong foundation in learning through sharing experiences and perspectives, as well as just the facts. We seek to better understand our individual and collective visions of nature, culture, gender and science and to enrich those visions through shared inquiry.

HIST 337/HGS 237 The Holocaust Perpetrators

Thomas Kuehne

This course explores the main parts of the German and Central European society that committed the Holocaust, that is the desktop perpetrators like as Adolf Eichmann, the physicians who used Jews for medical experiments, the Concentration Camps Guards, and the death squads (Einsatzgruppen) as the hard core of the SS elite, but also 'ordinary' Germans who served in Police battalions or in the drafted army, women who served as guards or as part of the occupational regime, and not least non-German collaborators. In general, the course focuses on the interrelation of individual and biographical backgrounds, mental and ideological orientations, and social and institutional arrangements: What are the reasons that made ordinary humans becoming mass murderers? Thus, the course asks for critical inquiry into how psychological and social 'normality' is related to the worst crimes in human history.

ID 237/UDSC 203/IDCE 30203 Program Evaluation for Youth and Community Development Initiatives

Laurie Ross

This course provides students with skills required to apply research methods to the assessment of youth and community development programs. By gaining exposure to the various types of program evaluation (e.g. process evaluation, impact evaluation, empowerment evaluation, etc.), analyzing evaluation case studies, and working on an actual evaluation of a program. Students will leave this class with an understanding of the importance of and challenges involved in conducting high quality program evaluations. Students will gain enough skill to assist in the development and implementation of evaluations.

ID 258 Controlling Capitalism – Another World is Possible

Liza Grandia

The purpose of this course is to shine an anthropological mirror back on our own society to examine the culture of corporate capitalism. While anthropologists have traditionally viewed culture as a deep unchanging structure, this course considers the fragility and malleability of the human mind as the last frontier of neoliberalism. We will examine core Western cultural assumptions about 'choice' and 'individualism' to ask whether or not the North American model of corporate capitalist development is as 'free' and 'democratic' as it presents itself to be. As we explore the hidden, invisible and unconscious mechanisms of control in industrialized societies, specific topics include: corporate personhood, 'free trade,' group think, media and advertising, manners and emotion, gender and the family, the military-industrial complex, academic disciplines, and consumer habits. By analyzing how control functions in everyday life, students will gain a richer understanding of the concept of hegemony or what anthropologist Laura Nader has described as 'controlling processes.'

IDCE 242/332 Sustainable Development Assessment & Planning

Tim Downs

We confront one of the most pressing issues of our time: How can society transition to more sustainable development? We discuss how 21st century impact assessment needs to evolve into a multi-stakeholder sustainability assessment process, how that can be done, its challenges and barriers. Beginning with the domestic U.S. context in Part 1, we explain the fundamentals of impact studies, and cover impacts on land resources, economy, air quality, water resources, health, historic resources, wetlands, wildlife, as well as social and cultural impacts. An emphasis is placed on which indicators of impact to use for each category, and how to measure them. In Part 2, we switch to an international context. This includes the capacity building needed for integrated environmental assessment and reporting for developing countries. Case studies are used extensively. The course has a major group project dimension: students work in teams to critically review current practice for typical development projects (e.g. wind farms, landfills, mining projects and dams), making arguments for how it should be improved.

IDCE 346 Practicum in Community Development & Planning

Laurie Ross

Engages students to work as a team on a critical community-development project. Students gain skills in field research, applied qualitative and quantitative data analysis, multidisciplinary teamwork, negotiation with clients, and writing professional reports. Practicum clients and topics have included a project with the Worcester Public Schools to involve public-school students in urban secondary-school reform and work with the City of Worcester and two community-development corporations on assessing the economic impact of housing production in low-income neighborhoods.

IDCE 390 Community Development and Planning Research seminar

Miriam Chion

This seminar advances research and communication skills by working on specific projects proposed by students. Students will refine their research questions or objectives, design a research methodology, and prepare a presentation of their project. This seminar focuses on the research process and the delivery of information rather than the research content. The first part of the course includes an overview of research approaches in community development and planning, as well as data interpretation, definition of assumptions, policy inferences, and assessment of contextual situations. The second part focuses on the review and discussion of students' projects to refine the

overall research design. Projects can be at any stage of development, from a preliminary proposal to a completed report or thesis. The third part consists of presentations by students of their proposals or findings with the intent of sharpening their delivery and communication skills.

IDCE 30202 Land Use Seminar

Miriam Chion

Land use decisions are central to the development opportunities of any community. Those decisions are embedded in very complex political and social processes that defined the economic value of land. We will explore the complexities of these processes to understand how various communities define and appropriate land and how residents, workers, developers, and government officials shape development through land use decisions.

This seminar proposes to advance current land use knowledge through two major tasks. First, we will engage in a thoughtful examination of recent research and major influential studies on land use and space from a multi-disciplinary perspective. Second, we will work on the construction of new knowledge through reflections and dialogue. We will address three major questions: How is the use of land related to concepts of space? How are land use decisions related to the development processes? How are the physical qualities of land embedded in economic, social, and political processes?

MGMT 100 Introduction to Management

Barbara Bigelow

This course introduces students to basic management skills and the context in which they are applied. The course involves considerable interaction between the professor and students, and among students, because the practice of management is about people working with, listening to, and respecting people who have different backgrounds, experiences, and opinions. As a result, the learning is based on a combination of dialogue, discussion, experiential exercises, and community service learning.

SOC 277 Punishment, Politics and Culture

Patty Ewick

In the past thirty years the purposes and practices of punishment in the U.S. have changed dramatically, becoming increasingly harsh (i.e., death penalty, three strikes, supermax prisons), retributive (abandonment of all rehabilitation efforts) and far reaching (over 2 million Americans are in prison or jail). These changes represent a near-complete and rapid reversal of fairly long term trends in penal justice in the U.S. This course will explore what factors – political, cultural, demographic, and technological – changed crime from a remote possibility in the minds of most Americans to a defining concern of Americans. Why, despite similar experiences of modernity, are European democracies characterized by such different cultures of control? In what ways, do our penal practices reflect and reinforce major social divisions – of race, ethnicity, gender and class? What are the affects of such a transformation on the economy, the family, community, schools, and our ideals of justice? In short, what do our penal practices reveal about late twentieth century American culture, social structure and politics?

