

difficult dialogues

course offerings
spring 2008

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

In this third semester of DD courses, nearly twenty courses with an emphasis on dialogue will be offered in the spring 2008 semester. These courses will approach the process of dialogue in a variety of ways and across a number of disciplines; they will relate as is relevant to the dialogue symposium programming on climate change.

dialogue seminar

IDND 010 The Dialogue Seminar – Climate Change Symposium | Walter Wright, Faculty Advisor

If you want an opportunity to deepen your understanding and experience of dialogue – and to learn more about the topic of Climate Change – consider taking The Dialogue Seminar, offered this spring as part of the Dialogue Project. This half-credit course is intended for everyone, but will also benefit students who are looking for a partial credit. Each section will be led by teams of faculty members, paired with experienced Dialogue graduate 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 Dialogue Project's spring symposia. Attendance at roughly one Dialogue symposia event per week will be a requirement of the class.

dialogue courses

ART HISTORY 230 Caravaggio (seminar) | Andrea LePage

Focuses on the work of one of the best known artists of any period, the painter Michelangelo Merisi or Caravaggio (1573-1610). Although he died a young man in 1610, he is often considered the most important painter of the 17th century. Explores Caravaggio's intense naturalism and the controversy it caused, his sense of drama and supernatural light and the role of his personality in works of art. Surveys his life in Rome, Naples, Malta and Sicily, considering his religious paintings, genre scenes and still lives. This course emphasizes open dialogue in the classroom and treats various contradictory aspects of Caravaggio's character: his sexual ambivalence, his criminal violence and his intense spiritual devotion. Explores his artistic legacy in Italy and abroad with a strong emphasis on Artemisia Gentileschi. Readings include art-historical scholarship, history and original documents from the period.

ARTS 258 Printmaking Workshop/Artists Books | Jennifer Hilton

This semester, the Artist's Books class will collaborate with the Difficult Dialogues program by taking up the topic of climate change in relationship to our work. Many of our projects will focus directly on your interpretation of this important issue. We will ask the questions: How does this affect me, my family, friends, town? What can I do as an individual to help? Can I have any impact? What are the global consequences of global warming if it continues at this rate? Projects will include journals, accordion and meander books, altered, books, French fold books, collage, collaborative books, and many other variations and processes.

COMM 101 Communication and Culture | Matt Malsky

Examines the ways in which communication creates and represents ideology, social orders and cultural identities. Emphasis is on critical analysis of communication in contemporary society, and particularly on constructive dialogue about contentious political, religious, racial and cultural issues. Subjects include culture-based metaphor, nonverbal communication, computer-mediated communication, advertising, print media and television.

GEOG 136 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.

GEOG 179 Globalization, Environment and Justice / Lecture, Discussion | Dianne Rocheleau

Integrates ecology and political economy from local to global scale through case studies. Starts from a view of people in environmental "hot spots," following links to world economy and planetary ecosystems. Explores connections of international environmental and economic policy with everyday realities and possible ecological futures of people from the Amazon rain forest to the African Savannas, and from New Orleans, to the streets of Worcester. The course uses case studies as a way of entering into realities inhabited by others and challenges students to explore the threads that link us to people and places across the world and in some cases, close to home, but worlds apart. Each case is embedded in situations of conflict or controversy and we try to reach an understanding of multiple actors and experiences within complex ecological and political contexts.

GOV 147 World Order and Globalization | Kristen Williams

This course examines the ways in which states have attempted to establish order in the anarchic international system. We will examine the theory of world order, the tools available to states to maintain order, historical cases, and the various issues that challenge the order in the contemporary international system. An overriding challenge to the existing world order, particularly in the post-Cold War period, comes from globalization (economic, political, and social). We will also look at the ways that gender, world order, and globalization intersect. We will conclude with an exploration of the challenges for the future from globalization and the issue of world order.

Moreover, this course will emphasize the practice of dialogue, in conjunction with the Difficult Dialogues initiative and symposium. As such, students will be expected to 'dialogue' or have a conversation with the readings and their authors. Questions to consider when you read each article/book: What is the main argument? How does this relate to world order and globalization? What evidence does the author provide for his/her argument? Is this convincing to you? Why or why not? What factors or elements should the author have considered?

HIST / HGS 237 / 337 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 131 Local Action, Global Change | Ellen Foley

This course is a research-learning/community-based learning course offered annually through the International Development, Community, and Environment department. The course introduces students to many contemporary issues of local and global concern: urban poverty, racism, migration, the environment, class, gender relations, and conflict. Course content includes theoretical understandings of power relations and their relevance for these issues, as well as examples of concrete problems and solutions. The course addresses how attempts to resolve social problems translate into forms of civic action, social services provision, advocacy, and activism for social change. A significant part of the course is devoted to community-based learning: students work as consultants with social service agencies in Worcester throughout the semester. These placements allow students to engage with the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that they are learning in class, and to reflect on different modes of intervention in community settings.

ID 263 Youth and Community Development | Laurie Ross

This course integrates readings, class dialogue and field observations to understand the complex relationships between youth and community development. It provides an overview of adolescent development, with a specific focus on urban teens. Students are encouraged to explore the contexts in which they were adolescents and are introduced to the strengths and challenges of young people growing up in inner-city neighborhoods. The course examines neighborhoods and after-school programs as particularly important contexts for youth development. The roles of city government, funders, and researchers are explored. Students discover that few youth-development programs address community-level factors that influence young people's futures, and conversely, few community-development initiatives involve youth as key actors in the development process. As a final project, students develop proposals based on evidence and driven by theory to begin to fill this critical gap.

ID258 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 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?

IDCE 30226/EN295 Energy & Climate Social Change Research Seminar | Jennie Stephens

This research seminar is designed to support independent student research examining challenges, opportunities and approaches for facilitating a social and technological transition toward climate change mitigation. The course content will vary with the interests of the participants, but the course is designed for students interested in developing their own research projects on either social or technical dimensions of energy generation and use, including: renewable energy technology, electricity production and distribution, energy efficiency and conservation, new consumption patterns, new policy alternatives and technological innovation. The course will encourage students to focus on the most recent literature; current technological advances; grass roots and policy initiatives; case studies and small scale experiments with new technologies, products and services; social movements; and new and emerging policies and institutions on the scales ranging from local to regional, national and international

IDCE30238 Public Communication Seminar | Ray Munro

Why is it so hard to have a really good time on New Year's Eve? Why are amusement parks some of the saddest places on the planet? Why do Creativity Courses and Speech Communication Seminars though so attractive to the business community always seem to disappoint? Because you can not approach fun, amusement, creativity or effective communication directly. There is some innate resistance. Someone trying to have fun, amuse, create, or communicate ends up not having fun, being amusing or creating anything and only communicates effort. T.S.Elliot said that to write poetry you have to "give a bone to the watch-dog of the mind." When community organizers study acting they develop through art's indirect process: presence, confidence, and the ability to speak from the deepest part of themselves to that which is highest in their audience.

MGMT 100 Introduction to Management (two sections) | 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.

PHL 270 Philosophy of Law | Judy DeCew

This course will be a systematic consideration of fundamental issues in the conception and practice of law such as the nature and function of law, the limits of law, the nature of judicial reasoning, and the relationship of law to morality. We will assess how alternative theories of law explain rights, duties, liability and responsibility. We will also focus on philosophical issues raised in court cases associated with such topics as justice, privacy, causation, responsibility, the insanity defense, good samaritanism, freedom of expression, privacy, abortion, affirmative action and capital punishment, depending on student choices of topics. Readings include selections from philosophical and legal theory and a variety of historical and contemporary court decisions.

The class will be a combined lecture and discussion format. Lecture material will provide background information and clarification on the theories. Discussions will focus not only on various interpretations of the texts and analytical skills in identifying major philosophical and legal positions and arguments but also on issues in court cases where students often hold different viewpoints. Thus as a Difficult Dialogues course, class discussions will support respectful speaking and listening aimed at mutual understanding or appreciation of difference, an environment that will create safety so that students are encouraged to participate in this way, and class discussions will encourage critical thinking and engaged listening to explore conflicting points of view.

PSYCH 240 Psychology of nonviolence: Personal Transformation and Social Struggle | Joe de Rivera

This course considers the growing literature on personal and societal nonviolence. The first third of the course examines ideas about nonviolent communication, empathy, and nonviolence in American literature. Then we consider the pragmatic investigation of historical nonviolent social struggles. Finally, the course considers the strategy of nonviolence, current nonviolent actions, and how nonviolent theory might be applied in contemporary struggles.

The struggle for peace and justice is best resolved through negotiation rather than violence. However, those with power may refuse to come to the negotiation table. Rather than engaging in violence those with less power may find it desirable to use nonviolent action to get their opponents to negotiate. When does nonviolent struggle occur, when should it occur, when is it successful? The success of nonviolence may depend on the psychology of empathy, justice, and reactance, and its failure may involve the tendency to devalue those whom we hurt.

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?

SPAN249 Studies in Hispanic Cinema/Lecture | Inmaculada Alvarez

Provides students who have already completed Spanish 246 or 248 the opportunity to further explore development of film and film culture in Spain or Spanish America. Topics vary each time the course is offered. Sample topics from Spanish cinema include: Spanish and foreign constructions of national identity; narratives of female empowerment; selected film auteurs (Almodóvar, Borau, Buñuel, Saura). Sample topics from Latin-American cinemas include: race, gender and ethnicity in various Latin-American cultures; cinema as political intervention; selected film auteurs (Tomás G. Alea in Cuba, Emilio "Indio" Fernández and Arturo Ripstein in Mexico and Maria Luisa Bemberg in Argentina).