

DAC Newsletter: Fellowships for Curriculum Diversification or Diversity Research

Each summer, DAC provides funding for several faculty members to revise or develop courses that treat issues of diversity, broadly construed. This year, the Curriculum Diversification Fellowship was revised so as to include diversity research as well as the creation of course modules speaking to issues related to diversity. Five fellowships were awarded.

In this week's Newsletter, **Arindam Mandal, Assistant Professor of Economics**, reflects on the work he did last summer with the support of a Curriculum Diversification Fellowship.

Below are also abstracts for the five courses that will be revised/developed by this year's fellowship recipients.



As a part of ongoing commitment to support activities that foster diversity on campus, the Diversity Action Committee (DAC) provides summer support for individuals wishing to restructure an existing course or to develop a new course to include the perspectives of women and/or racial, sexual, ethnic, linguistic, or ability-based minorities. I received this grant in summer of 2013 to develop the "Economics of Discrimination," a course which was offered in Fall 2013. The course was developed as an upper level seminar with a community engagement component. It exposed students to issues surrounding discrimination from an economist's point of view. Topics included economic theories of discrimination and inequality, evidence of contemporary class, race, ethnicity and gender based inequality, detecting discrimination, and identifying sources of racial and gender inequality. Because of the broader appeal of the course, it was cross-listed with the College Honors Program, Academic Community Engagement, and Multicultural Studies. In the community engagement

part, the class worked with the Green Tech High Charter School to develop a comprehensive survey to assess the college preparedness of their students. DAC's fellowship went a long way in providing the right kind of support to develop a course like this.

2014 Fellowship Abstracts

Lisette Balabarca, Assistant Professor of Spanish
Course Title: Early Modern Hispanic Literature

Abstract: SPAN400 is a Special Topics in Spanish course that explores issues not normally treated in regular Spanish courses. It may be taken more than once with different content and it is intended for advanced students in Spanish. It is also a requirement for all Spanish Majors. Next Fall, I will be teaching this course and the Special Topic I have chosen is one that is closely related to my research area and academic interests: Early Modern Hispanic Literature. This means that it will be focused on, basically, Spanish texts written during the 16th and 17th centuries in both Peninsular Spain and its Spanish American colonies (the Viceroyalties of Mexico and Peru).

The goal of this class is to confront students with non-canonical texts. That is, rather than studying mainstream authors of 16th and 17th centuries (such as Cervantes or Lope de Vega, the most productive comedy writer of his time), we will be dealing with the literary and cultural production of subaltern subjects and minority communities that were not included in Imperial Spain's plans of a homogeneous Christian state. Therefore, the course will look at women, gays, Spanish Muslims and colonial subjects in an attempt to make them visible through their texts. Ultimately, what brings them together is their marginality based on gender, sexual orientation, religious identity, race or ethnicity. It is my intention, then, to expose Siena students to this diverse population and to what it meant to be "the other" in 16th and 17th Spain.

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Paul Konye, Associate Professor of Music
Course Title: African Art Music: Its Evolution and Practice

Abstract: African art music is defined as a genre of African music that is dependent on music notation for its synthesis and dissemination. Its evolution and practice in the 19th century Africa was significantly impacted by major historical, cultural, and political factors and other issues of the time. African art music is in essence, a representation of the multi-faceted cultural pluralism that characterizes the fabric of African cultural landscape. The genre is a direct reflection of Africa today—acculturation of diverse elements from various sources.

As a musicologist who has studied, taught, and conducted research in art music of various types for over 15 years, I am proposing to introduce a new course titled "African Art Music: Its Evolution and Practice," as a Franciscan Care course based on diversity. The nature of the course is such that it will expose students to extensive exploration of the historical, political, and cultural landscape as well as overview of Africa as a continent, thus giving students a much needed insight into African culture.

Given that the nature, evolution, and practice of African art music on the continent evolved differently and is practiced differently as well, the course will be taught in four sequences:

- (a) West Africa
- (b) East Africa
- (c) North Africa
- (d) South Africa

This initial proposal is limited to facilitating research on the evolution and practice of African art music in English speaking West African countries, namely:

- (a) Nigeria
- (b) Ghana
- (c) Liberia

Although the course will be titled African Art Music: Its Evolution and Practice, it will however, require that students first gain a thorough understanding of the African culture and its indigenous music characteristics that are the basis of the art music. Thus, a summer research opportunity will make it possible to gather materials for teaching the class possibly in the fall of 2014. Given that the author of this proposal has a published text book on the subject, further research on the indigenous and the art music traditions of the named countries would allow for a much needed update of class materials and text.

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Carolyn Malloy, Professor of Spanish

Course Title: Latin American and Spanish Literature and Popular Culture

Abstract: This new course taught in Spanish will incorporate contemporary literary (high culture) and popular cultural production from Latin America and Spain (latter part of 20th century to the present) and deal with questions of diversity and identity. In the course, students will analyze recent literature in Spanish using various methodologies and they will also critically approach popular representations that reflect similar themes and issues, such as gender, race, sexuality, social class, religion, immigration, and hybrid identities. In this fashion, students will reflect upon and compare these issues to realities of their own, thus becoming more cross-culturally aware. Contemporary Latin American and Spanish literature will include short stories, novels, poetry and theatre; popular cultural material or media and genres may include magazines, newspapers, television, radio, commercials, blogs, comics, graphic novels, political cartoons, film, etc. Students will become aware of the historical and social contexts in which popular culture has manifested itself. In addition, they will incorporate some of the ideas of an important Latin American critical thinker, Néstor García-Canclini who has written widely on how popular culture can be a strong tool for development, but it can also be a pretext to identify differences and often be used to discriminate.

Smita Ramnarain, Assistant Professor of Economics

Course Title: Political Economy of Gender, Race and Class

Abstract: This course – the Political Economy of Gender, Race and Class – emerges from the rationale that economic life has material, cultural and political facets and that aspects of an individual's (or group's) identity – gender representation and/or sexuality, race, class – may constrain or empower agents in their participation in economic life. The political economy approach used in this class will critically interrogate:

(a) how assumptions regarding gender, race and/or class permeate economic theorizing of the household, with respect to labor markets, and about productive and reproductive work;

(b) how economic policy-making based on these assumptions systematically reproduces unequal opportunities and outcomes across (socially constructed and historically contingent) categories of gender, sexuality, race, and/or class; and

(c) how certain groups – women, the LGBT, and racial minorities – have been underrepresented (or misrepresented) in economic theorizing, perpetuating inequality over time.

As such, this course challenges students to confront the dominant narratives regarding social hierarchy, to identify their systematic reproduction by existing economic structures or policies, and to start a dialogue on what effective and egalitarian policy-making might consist of.

The methods used in the course are diverse, ranging from statistical summaries of economic and social indicators, ethnographic descriptions of work in offices, factories, and households, and historical accounts of the evolution of social policy in the US. An intersectional approach to the topic is emphasized, examining gender, race and class as interdependent and co-constituted axes along which oppression and agency might be experienced.

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Fanny Söderbäck, Assistant Professor of Philosophy

Course Title: Ethics of Birth and Reproduction

Abstract: This course will be offered as a section of the newly introduced philosophy course *Ethics of Science and Technology*, and will examine a variety of ethical issues pertaining to birth and reproduction. Birth is a topic largely lacking in the philosophical canon, and its absence amounts to an erasure of a defining feature of life in general and the lives of women in particular. To make it a topic of study is thus to make visible the experience of marginalized groups, most obviously women, but also – in the context of eugenics, queer parenting, and various bio-political attempts to control populations – racial minorities, the LGBT community, and the socio-economically oppressed.

The course will be divided into two thematic blocks. The first will focus on the category of birth by turning to primary historical sources from Sophocles to Simone de Beauvoir. We will assess what it means that thinkers since Antiquity have discussed birth primarily in abstract, disembodied terms. Our reading of traditional texts will be complemented by alternative feminist accounts that stress perspectives largely lacking in the canon. How, we will ask, might awareness of our own birth color our present lives and impact our ways of thinking about existence, embodiment, sexual difference, subjectivity, finitude, and human relations? The second part of the course will apply these historical materials to contemporary ethical issues surrounding birth, such as pregnancy, reproductive technologies, queer parenting and adoption, abortion, and eugenics. Students will conduct research on a topic of their own choosing, addressing the often-complex ethical dilemmas we are faced with when considering scientific and technological advancements in the context of birth and birthing.

If you are interested in applying for a Fellowship for Summer 2015, please visit our website: www.siena.edu/DAC for instructions and application forms.