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Opening the Door to Multicultural America

"I would recommend this class because it's an eye opener! It really gave me insight on race, ethnicity, etc. I would never have known about a lot of these things if it wasn't for the class." - Multicultural America student, spring 2013.

At the heart of the Cultures and Communities certificate is Multicultural America 150 (MA 150), a required course that includes service learning and offers students a chance to examine the ethnic, racial and gender implications of identity—including their own—through the lens of a variety of disciplines. Multicultural America is variously offered in Anthropology, Art, Film, History, Urban Studies, Women's Studies and Urban Planning. Here's a look

at the course in several of these disciplines with summaries from MA 150 faculty. We'll feature more in print and online in the coming months.

ART 150: MULTICULTURAL AMERICA

Instructors: Shelleen Greene, Nirmal Raja, and Donte McFadden

By Shelleen Greene

ART 150: Multicultural America is a hybrid theory/practice course that examines the visual

circulation of racial ideologies in photography, film and television.

Through readings and other assignments, Art 150 provides students a knowledge base to move towards the visual analysis of race and ethnicity in popular culture and contemporary fine art

practice, and to consider the ways in which race and ethnicity intersect with ideologies of gender, sexuality, and class. Students also look at how artists from communities of color use their visual art practice to create counter-narratives concerning racial and ethnic difference in the United States.

One of the primary objectives of the course is to develop an understanding of both how images work on us and how we might make them work ourselves. Students in the course use basic digital media to "write" new narratives of cultural diversity which include photo essays, digital stories, and a multimedia archive of their service learning experience at local organizations. Over the past two years, ART 150 students have worked with the UWM Libraries Digital Collections, creating digital remixes of archival materials that document the history of the Civil Rights movement in Milwaukee. The historical remix not only allows students to learn about the significant role played by Milwaukee in the U.S. Civil Rights movement, but also to consider its legacies in present-day Milwaukee.

We also encourage students to be cognizant of the representations of racial and ethnic identities in the media they view on a daily basis, encouraging them to visit museums, gallery exhibitions, screenings and events organized by various university organizations such as UWM Sociocultural Programming. To this end, the course makes use



HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Find out on page 3.

Students in Mai Phillips class learn about sustainable gardening and much more.



FROM THE DIRECTOR: *Robert Smith*

CULTURES & COMMUNITIES CERTIFICATE: THE BEST EDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY STUDENT

Greetings C&C Family!

Penning my first Cultures & Communities newsletter entry as the incoming director comes with great excitement and anticipation. The excitement stems from the start of another academic year that was kicked off by our campus's inaugural Welcome Week celebration; the first semester of the Social Justice Living Learning Community that uses Multicultural America/History 150 as its common course (taught by Dr. Kimberly Hernandez); a new round of promising Community University Partnership (CUP) Grant projects; and the addition of two departments— Community Arts and the Middle Childhood to Early Adolescence Teacher Certification—that now require the Cultures & Communities Certificate for their students. My anticipation flows from the brimming possibilities that this year, and those that follow, promise Cultures & Communities and all the students, faculty, staff and community partners with whom we collaborate. Indeed, we are as clear and directed as ever in our pursuit to provide *The Best Education for the 21st Century Student*.

What do we mean by this robust statement?

The various components of Cultures & Communities, but especially the certificate program, are expressly designed to answer the call of the emerging educational needs of the 21st century student.

Students today find themselves preparing for futures that will demand expertise in a vast array of professional, personal and sociocultural competencies. To say the globe is a smaller place due to technology— especially digital technology—is an understatement.

Today's budding professionals must engage in a world with a globalized economy that relies less on manufacturing skills and more on managerial skills. As students complete their studies they do so with an increased awareness of the importance of being flexibly mobile. Our country and nation is under constant change, and always has been, due to migratory patterns, so students must locate themselves in a diverse city, nation and globe.

Twenty-first century students are required to have a fluid adroitness with technology. They must be able to absorb and synthesize vast amounts of information, and communicate using steadily evolving digital media. New millennium students must develop a high degree of cultural awareness to be conversant with a wide array of peoples and cultures, both domestically and beyond. Students must also be able to engage, collaborate, problem solve and communicate with and across diverse bodies of people. Perhaps most importantly, institutions of higher learning must produce civically responsible citizens. And yet, these core literacies of the 21st century student must be honed alongside the student's degree program. And, if we are able to embed these literacies within the professional preparation of their degree programs, we in Cultures & Communities say, "even better"!

With the Cultures & Communities Certificate, the 21st century student experiences the value of engaged learning and scholarship while also developing a range of employable skills. Students can experience the richness of cultural diversity domestically and abroad as they engage important questions about the arts and science and their connections to culture and society. And what makes this all so usefully seamless, is that students who complete the Cultures & Communities Certificate meet their General Education Requirements at the same time.

Whether you are a student, faculty member or community partner and would like to know more about the Cultures and Communities Program, please contact me. There's a lot to talk about when it comes to the CC Certificate!

Robert Smith
smithrs@uwm.edu



Cultures and Communities welcomes Niles Niemuth, a new Graduate Project Assistant. Niles is working towards a M.A in history with a thesis that examines efforts to redevelop Milwaukee's neighborhoods in the 1960s and 1970s. In the summer of 2012, he participated in the first Picturing Milwaukee Field School, a project funded in part by a C&C Community University Partnership grant. The project explores how neighborhoods practice historic preservation and environmental stewardship. "During the field school I witnessed firsthand the importance of the C&C program," he says.



Partnership yields rich harvest

The gardens that students in Dr. Mai Phillips' Conservation and Environmental Science class built and planted on campus are yielding a harvest not only rich in produce, but also in knowledge. They've raised vegetables which will help feed many of Milwaukee's hungry this winter and learned important lessons about food disparities and sustainable growing practices.

This hands-on project is supported by a Cultures and Communities partnership grant which brings Phillips class together with The Gathering, a community meal program preparing and serving over 100,000 meals annually to the hungry and homeless in Milwaukee. Food cultivated by the class will be donated to The Gathering's Fresh Produce Preservation Project (FPPP), which preserves produce for use in winter meals to help boost the nutritional value of those meals. By the end of the semester, students will also be schooled in food handling, preservation and storage by the produce project.

Becky Long, of the Gathering, says the FPPP and the UWM class are a good fit. The Gathering was working to increase donations of fresh produce and develop additional space to cool and store it when she connected with Phillips. "We know preservation," she says. "Mai knows cultivation."

Indeed she does. Phillips brings to her class a wealth of experience in sustainable agriculture. Her background includes work in Kenya where she demonstrated how to set up sustainable gardens for people with HIV/AIDS – a group for whom access to a nutritious, balanced diet is critical but often difficult. Given a lack of space, the gardens in Kenya needed to be small enough to be tended by one person— just a square meter— and follow some simple principles including keeping compost manageable, planting a diverse number of vegetables and rotating crops.

Mai Phillips who teaches the Conservation and Environmental Science course partnered with Becky Long of The Gathering. The class gardens are pictured in full flower and after harvest with students learning how to prepare compost.

"We are faced with some of the same issues here," Phillips says, noting that many groups suffer food insecurity and hunger, a situation in which communities are dependent on food that comes from miles away. But she wants people to know that with compost, cardboard and some wood framing, small, sustainable gardens can be built almost anywhere.

Although some of her students may never have grown a vegetable, Phillips believes they leave her class thinking differently about food, be it growing, harvesting, preservation or cooking or issues like erosion and water resources. They also leave with a feeling of accomplishment. "When you see something growing" she says, "it uplifts you spiritually."



**"WE KNOW PRESERVATION,"
SHE SAYS.
"MAI KNOWS CULTIVATION."**

Multicultural America



Shelleen Green teaching Multicultural America.

of and considers the role of social media in circulating ideologies of race and ethnicity.

Our goal in ART 150 is to develop visual literacy and analysis skills as it pertains to representations of racial and ethnic identities, and to allow students to become empowered as media producers.

ENGLISH 150: MULTICULTURAL AMERICA

By Aline Lo

In what way is America, particularly its literature, multicultural? What is there to be gained from a focus on ethnic literature? What kinds of histories, identities, and issues surround these stories? How are location and migration central to understanding multicultural American literature? Thinking about these questions, English 150 focuses on how different narratives and writers have been able to continuously define and (re) imagine multicultural America. Moving through different regions of the United States, students read texts that look at how

individuals and communities evolve or try to remain the same as times change and people pass in and out of territorial boundaries. The course emphasizes the role that community and migration plays in defining race, multiculturalism, gender and identity.

Because of the students' various strengths, interests, and schedules, there are a number of learning sites that provide services to persons in transition. Some of the students are working as mentors and tutors at the COA Youth and Family Centers, Brown Street Academy, and the International Learning Center. Students also have opportunities to work in the Jewish senior community where they gain knowledge of how Milwaukee has changed over the years. Whatever service the students provide, they all take time to think about their service learning through reflection papers. Throughout the semester, they write about their learning goals, experiences, and growth in order to be fully engaged in their community service.

URBAN STUDIES 150: MULTICULTURAL AMERICA

By Jamie Harris

Urban Studies 150 is an interdisciplinary course that explores the intersection of multiculturalism and urban development. This course is required for urban studies majors and counts toward the certificate in urban studies.

By drawing on a variety of case studies, we examine how city building and

suburbanization are linked to race, ethnicity, immigration and class. Among the wide range of topics we study are the histories of urban renewal, public housing policy, freeway development and gentrification. We also look at other policies that have created inequality and the marginalization and privilege of certain groups and communities.

We also consider the ways different groups have used urban space to construct community identities and foster movements for social change such as the Open Housing marches in Milwaukee in 1967-68. A significant part of the course addresses how race and ethnicity have shaped patterns of segregation and economic division across the American urban landscape as well as how immigration and ethnic enclaves and economies have transformed urban spaces in the 20th and 21st century in such cities as Miami and Los Angeles. We also consider how gender and sexual orientation have been defined and represented in urban space from the growing new fields of feminist urban studies and gay urbanism.

Service learning placements give students the opportunity to connect with organizations directly involved in urban revitalization. Students are working on projects ranging from creating an inventory of illegal dumping sites in the 30th Street industrial corridor, to developing a job training curriculum for the Department of City Development, to constructing a little free library at Highland Gardens Public Housing.

In total, placements across nine different sites allow students to learn about the ongoing efforts and challenges that exist in Milwaukee to address urban inequality, residential segregation, the foreclosure crisis and the need for affordable housing.

Contact Cultures & Communities

Cultures & Communities UW-Milwaukee Holton Hall G36
2442 East Hartford Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53211

Tel: 414-299-5960 uwm.edu/cc
Deborah Fagan, *Editor* dfagan@uwm.edu

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