DIRECTED READINGS COURSE: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, DISCUSSION AND MENTORING

J. MARCOS FERNANDEZ
MARIANNE STOWELL BRACKE
PURDUE UNIVERSITY
Denialism: How Irrational Thinking Harms the Planet and Threatens Our Lives” (2010) by Michael Specter

Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can’t Stop Talking (2012) by Susan Cain

The Omnivore’s Dilemma (2006) by Michael Pollan

Life Without Oil: Why We Must Shift to a New Energy Future (2011) by Steve Hallett
New Course Offering for the 2nd half of the Fall 2012 Semester

Winner of the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for History, David O’Connell’s book presents the story of polio, a disease that struck fear in the hearts of parents in the first half of the 20th Century. The book explores the intersection of science and policy on many levels: the social and human impact of disease; technological vs. medical treatment of disease; the battle between two strong personalities; and ethical issues embedded in testing the efficacy of a vaccine: a revolutionary model for philanthropic fund raising; development of public ownership of research funding and patent treatment control; the role of the scientific agenda; the role of the President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was a polio victim; and the ultimate success.

The book provides an opportunity to think deeply about the forces that determine our priorities and strategies for combating disease.

During the second eight weeks of the Fall semester, Dr. Karl Brander will lead a group reading and discussion of the recent 2006 Pulitzer Prize Award for History, “Poli: An American Story” by David O’Connell (2006). Brander is a Professor Emeritus of Biochemistry and former Associate Dean of Agriculture. He is also a recipient of Purdue’s Charles Murphy Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching and the College of Agriculture’s Outstanding Undergraduate Teacher Award. He developed and taught a freshman/senior honors course on the history of world food, focusing on malnutrition. Enrollment for the one-credit course is limited to 25 students per section and registration is by permission only, granted by the instructor.

If you are interested please contact Ms. Jan Wait at janwait@purdue.edu

At first Glance...

“As Michael Specter sees it, this amounts to a war against progress. The issues may be complex but the choices are not: Are we going to continue to embrace new technologies, along with acknowledging their limitations and threats, or are we ready to step back into an era of magical thinking?”

- Jereme Grossman, M.D., Recanati Professor, Ioraan Medical School, author of How Doctors Think

During the second eight-weeks of the current Spring 2013 semester, Dr. Marcos Fernandez, Professor & Associate Dean of Academic Programs, and Ms. Amy Wei, Assistant Director of Pathways to Purdue and Transfer Programs, will lead a group reading and discussion of Specter’s best seller 2012 book, “Denialism: How Irrational Thinking harms the Planet and Threatens Our Lives.” The book is a lucid, entertaining, and informative look at the psychology of denial and the real-world effects that this has on the world around us. The book’s messages are as relevant today as ever. Enrollment in the one-credit course is limited to 10 students and registration is by permission of instructors only (CRN 68134). Interested? Please e-mail Ms. Kelly Lough (klough@purdue.edu) in the College of Agriculture Office of Academic Programs.
AGR 294

• One credit
• 2 hours/week, for 8 weeks
• 6-12 students
• Instructors lead the discussion

AGR 294 Honors

• One credit
• 1 hour/week, for 16 weeks
• 6-12 students
• Students lead the discussions
COURSE GOALS

1. Critical reading of an important, timely and/or popular topic in Agriculture, Environment & Society.

2. Participation in open discussion and evaluation of contemporary issues facing society in the management of food, renewable & non-renewable natural resources, environment, and communities, locally and globally.

3. Development of critical thinking skills across disciplines and/or topics.

4. Appreciation of the interconnectivity & broad factors affecting & influencing agriculture in today’s world.

5. Understand “Small Group Dynamics,” and experience facilitating “Small Group Discussions.”
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Develop an appreciation and understanding of the importance for the practice of critical reading.
2. Develop the ability to come up with questions that address the “bigger/broader picture” as shared through the readings.
3. Clearly articulate position and/or justify and defend stand amongst one’s peers.
4. Carefully review and consider the facts, consider and propose future directions, next steps that could be taken as a result of the readings.
5. Develop initial strategies to discover pertinent and reliable information to improve your understanding.
6. Obtain and articulate an understanding of Small Group Dynamics and practice leading a small group.
ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS

1. Weekly instructor and peer evaluation of discussion contribution
2. Presentation and explanation of supplemental material
3. And for Honors, preparation and perceived effectiveness of leading the group’s discussion that session.
A. This week’s “Readings reflection”: Briefly write a major theme, discovery or question that stood out from your pre-class readings. Be willing and prepared to share with the group (30% of total class grade).
B. Peer Assessment of Weekly Class Engagement/Discussion/Participation Grade (weekly, combined with faculty, comprises 50% of total class grade): Engaged participation (“A”), Adequate participation (“B”), Marginal participation (“C”), Minimal participation (“D”), No participation or absent (“F”).

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C. Assessment of Today’s Literacy Contributions (comprises 10% of total class grade):
Excellent (“A”), Good (“B”), Average (“C”), Poor (“D”), Failed or Absent (“F”).

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D. Assessment of Today’s Student Discussion Leader (comprises 10% of total class grade):
Excellent (“A”), Good (“B”), Average (“C”), Poor (“D”), Failed or Absent (“F”).

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Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information."

Evaluating information in context, incorporate selected information into one’s knowledge base, & understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information.

www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency
• Small class size
• Seminar style
• Sense of community & differing viewpoints encouraged
• Strategies that encourage everyone to contribute to the discussion
• Critical thinking
• Incorporate external information into a larger discussion
• Enjoy learning (again)
“For me, it was just such an applicable class. I could see how what I'm learning, how science and ag, is viewed, applied, and understood in the world. *It brought out real-world, social issues tied to science, not just the lab results side!* Definitely thought-provoking and beneficial to my learning!”

“An amazing course, preparing students for the future more in depth. I am working with vaccines *& without having discussed Denialism in depth with a small group of bright minds, it would be difficult to understand the big picture of controversies within this industry.* I would highly recommend this course!”
Purdue's "Directed Readings Class" (AGR 294 Fall 2015)
Of Susan Cain's "Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking"

It's an inspirational 6-week "Directed Readings" class (AGR 294E). I'd like to present a wall-sharing insights, perspectives and wisdom with one another during the reading of Susan Cain's (2012), best seller "QUIET: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking". A wonderful class of students always helps - at Purdue University.
CONTACT INFORMATION

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