

INTD 1120: Spirit of Change

Draft Syllabus

Winter Term 2014

Instructor: Dr. Cheryl Mitchell

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802-989-8141 (before 9:30 P.M. please)

Course Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, 10:30 – 12:30 Wednesday 12:30 – 4:30

Course Location: Atwater A100

Retreat Days: Wednesday, Jan 15 and Jan 29 at Treleven Farm

Office Hours: after-class and by appointment.

Experiential Learning Labs: 2 or more hours per week, flexibly arranged with site supervisor.

Spirit of Change: Shifting the Paradigm from Poverty to Prosperity

Purpose: In this course we will explore the question” How can communities be developed so that all children and families have a pathway toward prosperity?” We will reflect on the ways our personal sense of social justice is formed and transformed; work with non-profit agencies, and consider the implications of our local learning in a global context. The interactive foci of this course are contemplative practice (two days will be spent in retreat at Treleven Farm); scholarly engagement with texts: *Let your Life Speak, The New Feminist Agenda, Whatever It Takes*; discussions with experts: P/CC participants and staff, Jacquelyn Reike, creator of Nutty Steph’s, Sec. Doug Racine, Gov. Madeleine Kunin, National Bank President Ken Perine, and Pax Christi USA Peace Ambassador, Beatrice Parwatiker.

Desired Skill Development:

It is hoped that this course will provide each participant with opportunities to practice five skills central to effective social justice work:

1. Inner Calm
2. Clear Vision
3. Deep Listening
4. Responsive Action
5. Reflective Practice

Course Goals:

1. Each learner will reflect on the forces and life experiences that shaped their own understanding of the poverty/prosperity continuum and their own sense of commitment to social justice. Each will develop personal recommendations.
2. Each learner will engage with a non-profit agency, group or project in Addison County with enough depth that she/he can help to explain that work.

3. Each learner will conduct one or more interviews, capture them on audio or videotape, and link them back to the course project if appropriate.
4. Working in teams, learners will specialize in one sector of the poverty/prosperity continuum and present information for the class about the current status of that sector in Addison County.
5. The full class project will be linking our individual work and small group projects to an explanation of how communities can better support vulnerable families.

Assignments please refer to the timeline for further details:

The **group end product** of this course is the Community and Policy Development portion of a training being prepared for a National Conference on ***Creating Communities that Support Vulnerable Families***. The conference is expected to take place in late spring in Naples FL. The class will help to shape the format of the work, which is likely to be 4 short on-line video segments (Inspiration/Overview, Community Linkages and Policy Changes, Program Logistics/Services, Outcomes/closure). The on-line video will have links to more extensive interviews and research findings, many of them created by course participants. Students will be working collaboratively with program participants, staff, and Board members in shaping this process, identifying important questions, and editing information. It is expected that each student, alone or as part of a team, will:

1. Conduct and edit interviews
2. Create a YouTube presentation about their agency or group
3. Conduct peer interviews about how listening to others helped them create a personal philosophy of social justice work.

Short daily assignments will help to make the projects doable and will promote reflective practice. Written assignments are to be completed in a Word document (unless otherwise specified) and posted on the course web site. Audio and Video assignments may be completed using whatever format the student is most comfortable with, as long as they have the capacity to be linked to the final product. Unless otherwise specified, citations for written assignments should be in APA format.

Personal Grounding Practice: It is likely that many learners already have a well-developed grounding practice (such as yoga, journaling, hiking, playing an instrument, drawing, praying, etc.), we hope to share these practices with one another. For those who are still in a seeking mode, we will share a variety of practices. I will be opening each class with a short Tai Chi segment, based on the Sun Style. On days when we do not have guests, we will end class with a short breathing practice. Each person is requested to spend at least 20 minutes a day with the practice of his or her choice. If your life is so packed that you cannot add an extra 20 minutes, we will review some ideas for incorporating grounding practices into our crowded lives.

Reflective and Contemplative Practice: As we move deeper into exploring issues of poverty and social justice, learners are asked to spend time reflecting on their learning, thinking, changed insights, dreams... This can take the form of a written journal, blog,

series of drawings or photos, poetry. The instructor will ask to review this documentation of reflection at the end of the second week and beginning of the fourth week of class. It will not be graded and will only be commented on if the learner wishes.

Exploring Theories of Change: There are many ideas about why families get “stuck” in poverty. As a friend of mine said “It’s not that simple.” To help ground ourselves in what it takes to make changes please select a very small area of your life that you would like to transform (e.g. running an extra .25 miles a day, eating less meat, being kinder to your room mate, meditating once or twice a week). This is not a request to transform your whole life or even anything major. As you work to make that personal change, please use it as experiential material to consider various theories of change that we will discuss.

Readings and annotated bibliographies: Please refer to the timeline for more detail:

Required texts:

Week One: Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*

Week Two: Madeleine Kunin, *The New Feminist Agenda*

Week Three: Paul Tough, *Whatever it Takes*

Week Four: Thich Nhat Hanh (your choice of several texts)

Peace is Every Step

Living Buddha, Living Christ

Love in Action

A Guide to Walking Meditation

The Miracle of Mindfulness

Personalized bibliography: learners will select three additional resources (books, articles, films, documentaries) in consultation with their site supervisors and the instructor, to help fill out specific areas of interest related to poverty, social justice, and spiritual practice. Please submit your draft selections by the end of week two.

Additional Readings and Resources: will be provided in class and on the course site. Links to useful sources of information will be provided. Learners are encouraged to share resources with one another: time will be provided weekly for this activity.

Annotated Bibliography: Please keep a running list of the resources you use and a very brief reflection on their value to you. This growing compilation is to be submitted at the end of weeks Two and Four.

Academic Honesty: All learners in this course are expected to adhere to Middlebury’s Academic Honesty policy. Please review policy and submit a written statement to me that you have reviewed it. Because so much of our work will be collaborative, we will decide as a group how to tease out the contributions of each class member for grading purposes.

Confidentiality: As we explore the driving forces in our own views of poverty/prosperity and our learning from community agencies, we may reveal a number of sensitive or

private issues. We expect to create a vibrant learning community in which we are all free to challenge one another's assumptions as well as our own and in which we are protected by knowing that what is shared will not be revealed beyond our class without our explicit permission.

Grades:

This is a letter-graded course:

- Participation in class and on-line 25%
- Full engagement with community agency/group 25%
- Written and video/audio assignments 25%
- Contribution to the final course product 25%

Timeline:

January 7-10 Week One

Abundance is a communal act, the joint creation of an incredibly complex ecology in which each part functions on behalf of the whole and, in return, is sustained by the whole.

Community doesn't just create abundance- community is abundance. If we could learn that equation from the world of nature, the human world might be transformed.

Parker Palmer 2000

This week we will work out the logistical details of our community placements, select our content area focus group, reflect on the way our prior experiences have shaped our ideas about poverty and prosperity, work in small groups to gather an in-depth understanding about some aspect of the poverty/prosperity continuum, share our own grounding practices and explore a few new ones. We will practice Appreciative Inquiry as a method of conducting useful interviews.

We will meet the participants and staff at the Addison County Parent/Child Center, and participate in the "ground floor" discussion of entrepreneurial ways to support the Center with Jacquelyn Reike (AKA Nutty Steph).

Readings: ***Let Your Life Speak***, Calkins, Spirit of Change, Understanding Vermont and P/CC publications (handed out in class).

Submit your proposed personalized bibliography and annotated bibliography by 1/17.

Organizational Practices: we will review a few Theories of Change, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and look at a few planning strategies.

Assignments: Letter of introduction, Initial Sector Research.

January 14-17 Week Two

The End of Patience: Reclaiming Family Values

The nations' economic security and moral integrity are at risk. It's time to sound the alarm bells and beat the drums to awaken the country up from its dormant state. We, the richest, the most compassionate nation on earth, have the ability to respond to the call for action. To succeed we

have to jettison three firm beliefs:

That we can't afford the expense

That family policies impede job growth

That the family is solely a private domain

Instead we must embrace these beliefs:

That the cost to the nation of inaction is greater than the cost of action

That investment in family/work policies fosters economic growth

That we must share this investment for our children, our grandchildren, and the nation.

It is time to strengthen the institution that all Americans—of every political persuasion—value the most: the family. We cannot wait for the perfect moment.

Now is the right time to begin.

Gov. Madeleine Kunin

This week we will continue exploring aspects of poverty in Addison County, begin creating YouTube videos, and reflect in more detail the influences affecting our own responses to poverty. We will begin to explore the relationship between local service agencies with state and national policies. We will talk with Doug Racine, Secretary of the Vermont Agency of Human Services and Chair of the VT Poverty Council: and Madeleine Kunin, Governor of VT, Ambassador to Switzerland, and Under-Secretary of Education during the Clinton Administration. We will hold our first full day retreat at Treleven Farm using the guided meditations of Thich Nhat Hanh as our template (Dress warm!!!)

Readings: *The New Feminist Agenda*, Madeleine Kunin (p.s. bring this text and your other copies of her books if you would like to have them signed) Selected resources provided in class or on the class site.

Assignments: documentation of reflective practice, review of web sites. Draft presentations of sector/project information (7 minutes per group) for 1/17. May be verbal, written or YouTube.

January 21-24

What Would it Take?

That was the question Geoffrey Canada found Himself asking.

What would it take to change the lives of poor children—not one but in big numbers, and in a way that could be replicated nationwide? The question led him to create the Harlem Children's Zone, a ninety-seven block laboratory in central Harlem where he is testing new and sometimes controversial ideas about poverty in America. His conclusion: if you want poor kids to be able to compete with their middle-class peers,

you need to change everything in their lives—their schools, their neighborhoods, even the child-rearing practices of their parents.
Paul Tough 2009

This week we will continue exploring aspects of poverty/prosperity in Addison County, Vermont, and beyond, finalize the YouTube Pieces for our community agencies/projects, complete our interviews and describe in more detail the influences affecting our own responses to poverty. We will talk with Ken Perine, Bank President, and get to the near final products for our training tape presentation.

Readings: *Whatever It Takes*, Paul Tough, handouts, posted documents. What ever resources your colleagues have suggested that sound good to you.

Assignments: Penultimate version of your agency/project YouTube (share this with your site supervisor) your small group's analysis of community building in Addison County. N.B. On January 24 you have the option of attending the colloquium or working with your small group.

January 28-31 Week Four

***Our Capacity
To understand suffering
Can bring forth
Our compassion, our love.
Happiness is not possible
Without understanding,
Love and compassion
Understanding and compassion
Are born from suffering.
Thich Nhat Hanh***

This final week we will: compile and edit the final version of *Spirit of Caring*, share the work with our site mentors, and post our personal recommendations for achieving social justice. We will hear from Beatrice Parwatiker of USA ambassador of Peace for Pax Christie. We will hold our final retreat on Treleven Farm. During our last day of class we will present portions of *Spirit of Caring* for ourselves and any of our mentors who are able to attend and do final evaluations and appreciations.

This syllabus has been designed as a foundation for our work together. As the course evolves, we may decide to make some changes and adjustments. Let's have fun, learn a lot, and make a great contribution to the community.