Syllabus for Spring 2011

Seminar: The Arts and Social Change
Instructor: Professor Sharon Friedler
Meeting Times: T/TH 2:40-4p.m. (Lang Center Seminar Room)
Office Hours: T/TH 1:30-2:30 or, happily, by appointment
Contact information: X8227, or e-mail sfriedl1@swarthmore.edu

Course Intent:
The arts are an important locus for social change work. This has been true in times past and is increasingly the case locally, nationally, and globally. This course aims to bring together students with an interest in investigating and investing in social change work through the arts. Our seminar community will engage in discussion of readings and video viewings, will host and visit local leaders from the arts and social change movement, and will engage in fieldwork opportunities as required parts of the course. Papers, journals, and hands-on projects will all be included.

Required Texts:

Additional Recommended Written Resources:
(More titles will be added and suggestions from students are welcome)
- *Writings on the Healing Walls* published by the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, Jane Golden, Director.
•  *Ethical Ambition: Living a Life of Meaning and Worth*, Derrick Bell, Bloomsbury, N.Y., 2002.

**Additional Resources**

**DVDs on Reserve at Underhill Library or available at Hulu.com**

Over the course of the term, you will each choose to watch one of the following that is new to you and then submit a response paper on its content and effect on you.  
**NOTE: Sign up for your choice by February 1.**

Length 90 minutes  (GV1783.A429)

2.  “Cambodian Stories: an offering in painting and dance”, conceived and directed by Eiko and Koma.  2009   A documentary about the process of creating a performance work with child victims of war.  
Length 60 minutes (?)  (GV1703.C3.C36   2009)

A documentary about Palestinian refugee children and the role that dance and music play in helping them maintain their cultural practices and sense of cultural identity.  
Length 28 minutes  (GV1799.C54 2002)

Length: Approximately 60 minutes

5.  “Beyond the Walls: The Road to Redemption”, produced and directed by Rachel Libert, producer Susan Lowry, Original Theater of Witness Production conceived, written and directed by Teya Sepinuck, 2006.  A work about the families of families marked by violence and the imprisonment of family and community members.  
Length: Approximately 60 minutes

Length: Approximately 60 minutes

Approximately 107 minutes

8.  “Class Act: There’s a Little Drama in All of Us”, by Sara Sackner and Heather Winters, 2006.  From the creators of Supersize Me, comes a funny, provocative, yet heart-felt story of drama
teacher extraordinaire, Jay W. Jensen, who has touched the lives of thousands of students over the years. Class Act is set against the specter of No Child Left Behind and documents how the arts are disappearing from the American classroom.

Approximately 85 minutes

**Grading:**
Assessment of work will be developed from class attendance and participation as well as from a variety of assignments. Short essays intended for in-class discussion, journal writings/responses on readings, video viewings, and observations made while visiting various placements, hands-on projects (both individual and group) and a final project will each comprise part of course evaluation. Attendance and active participation at all seminar meetings is required and any absence will have the potential to negatively impact a student’s grade.

Course assignments will be weighted as follows:
- Short response papers for in-class discussion: 3 at 10% each (One essay will be based on course readings, one on an interview you will conduct, and the third will be based on your response to one of the DVDs listed in the course syllabus).
- Journal submissions: 2 at 10% each
- Hands-on projects and in-class dialogue: 2 at 15% each (1 hands-on, 1 class participation)
- Final project: one at 20%

**Participation:**
The community we build within the classroom is an integral part of the subject we are studying. Given this fact, I strongly encourage you to ask questions (especially those you think may be naïve or otherwise not ‘brilliant’), offer your own opinions, and engage in dialogue that seeks to build the knowledge base and discourse for all of us. Recognize that class participation will be part of your grade. Equally important, it models a capacity we are attempting to build as you grow in your work to become someone bringing the arts and community together within social change work.

**Guidelines for class meetings:**
- Plan to be ready to begin one class meeting a week with a check-in. The prompts for these will vary and, once you are familiar with the practice, you are encouraged to offer prompts for the group.
- Please bring all current readings to be discussed to a given class (even if we are behind schedule).
- Read assigned readings before coming to class and be prepared (through referring to your notes) to engage in active discussion/questioning around what you read.
- Turn written assignments in on time. Late work will be penalized at the rate of 2 percentage points per day, unless you have received permission to submit work after the due date. This permission needs to have been requested via e-mail at least 24 hours before the due date.
- Encourage and respect our class discussion community. We will all learn more as a result.
• Please turn off all cell phones during class. Should you be expecting a call due to a family emergency, please let me know that prior to the beginning of class.
• Plan to arrive on time and to stay until the end of each class period.

Plagiarism:
Since I am committed to helping students develop their own voices as social change agents, all students are advised that the college policy regarding academic honesty will be strictly adhered to in this course. This policy can be found in the student handbook under the heading "Academic Honesty". See also: http://www.swarthmore.edu/Admin/deans/honesty.html. All students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by this policy. Unless specifically assigned as a group project, the intention is that all work submitted for the course will be done solely by the individual submitting that work. Should you be unclear regarding citation procedures for paraphrasing or quoting the writing(s) of others, please consult the stylebooks available at the college bookstore, arrange a meeting with a WA, or ask me for help.

Please Note:
I would like to make this class a rewarding experience for all involved. Anyone who has any disability, either permanent or temporary, which may affect his/her ability to perform in class is encouraged to inform me at the start of the semester. I will adapt methods, materials, or testing where possible to provide for your equitable participation. See also: http://www.swarthmore.edu/Admin/deans/disabilities.html

Arts and Social Change visitors to the course (working list):
1. Dr. John Alston – Chester Children’s Chorus and Chester School of the Arts
2. Dr. Tom Whitman – Children’s Gamelan in Chester
3. Jeannine Osayande – Dunya Performing Arts Company and Intergenerational Dance and Drum Classes at Swarthmore College
4. Jane Golden (or representative) – Philadelphia Mural Arts Program
5. Seth Rozin – Founder and Director - Interact Theatre Company
6. Gayle Isa – Asian Arts Initiative
7. Rev. Susan Teegan-Case – Arts and Spirituality Center – Philadelphia Cathedral
8. Teya Sepinuck - founder of Theatre of Witness method, former Swarthmore faculty member who has created work in the U.S., Poland, and Northern Ireland.

Observation/Volunteer locations for the course (working list):
Arts And Spirituality Center – 3723 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA
Asian Arts Initiative – 1219 Vine St., Philadelphia, PA
Chester Upland School of the Arts – 501 West 9th St, Chester, PA
Chester Children’s Gamelan – Stetser Elementary School, 808 East 17th St., Chester, PA
Dunya Saturday morning Intergenerational Dance and Drum – LPAC – Troy Dance Lab
Interact Theatre Co. – 2030 Sansom St., Philadelphia, PA
Philadelphia Mural Arts Program - 1729 Mt. Vernon St., Philadelphia, PA
Course Goals:
The goals for this course are practice-based and are three-fold:
- To provide an orientation to the history of this field through available literature, video/DVD and web-based resources, as well as through personal interaction with local artist/activists currently engaged in this work.
- To provide opportunities to observe/assist in such work in action on campus, in Chester, and in Philadelphia.
- To result in each student’s ability to map a potential path for participation in artist/activist work during the remainder of her/his undergraduate career and, perhaps, following graduation.

Guiding questions for the course are as follows:
- How do the arts forward social change?
  We will examine significant historical examples, experience current local efforts in and around the Philadelphia region and learn about how such work is growing internationally.
- What skills are useful in shaping social change through the arts?
  We’ll read about and view examples provided by the work of individuals and organizations and then discuss what commonalities they share. We’ll explore strategies for building skills and have the opportunity to begin developing some specific techniques (such as storytelling circles, digital narratives, etc.)
- How does one acquire necessary techniques in art disciplines and in organizing?
  We’ll hear from local leaders in the field regarding their experiences. You will interview on and off campus expert sources regarding their paths. Reading and video resources will provide additional supporting documentation. By the end of the term your final project will be in the form of a proposal for your own path. You will note and justify which courses, internship experiences, off-campus study opportunities, and other campus and off-campus projects may be included in your plan. While not all students will choose to enact their written plans, the intent is for everyone to have a plan should you decide to pursue such work during the remainder of your career as an undergraduate and during the time beyond graduation.

Interview Assignment Guidelines
Your first response papers will be due on February 4 in class and will involve an interview. Please interview someone (on campus or off) who you understand to be engaged in using art as a social change agent. You might begin by asking about the following issues and then branch out. Include their comments and your own reflection on them in your 4-6 page paper. Provide a one-page synopsis to share with your classmates.

1. How did they begin combining their interests in art and social change?
2. What challenges have they faced? How did they move on?
3. What is their current involvement?
4. What vision do they have for next steps/further developments in this aspect of their work?
5. What charge would they give to others?
6. What work(s)/people/connections have inspired/sustained them?

**Sample Journal prompts**

1. Use a quote from a reading that is significant for you. Write it in your journal and then free write for 5 minutes.
2. Write a journal entry that begins with one thing said by a guest artist. Your quote might be something that provided you with a direction or a question. Free write for 5 minutes.
3. Respond to a reading or a visit by a guest artist. What other question(s) would you like to hear this person address? Why?
4. Begin with an idea or an image you gained from a DVD or a photo that relates to a topic being explored in the course. Free write for 5 minutes.
5. Think of a social justice issue you would like to address. Assume that you can get all of the resources you need. Outline your steps for creating a response. If point form makes your thoughts flow more easily, use that form for your writing.
6. Name one artist response to a social justice issue that has motivated you. Explain why it has done so. If you were in conversation with this/these artists, what would you ask about their work?