

Civility and Disobedience

Thoreau wrote, "Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice." Societies and organizations depend on compliance and obedience in order to function. Markets suffer if rules are not followed, and societies do not thrive in a state of chaos. But governments and organizations can be morally corrupt; the United States once allowed people to be enslaved, and the tobacco industry deliberately withheld the risks of their potentially lethal product. Under these circumstances, obedience becomes complicity and disobedience becomes the ethical course of action. Thus groups of people and individual whistle-blowers are often called to acts of disobedience and subversion by injustice they observe or experience. Martin Luther's reformation, the American Civil Rights Movement, environmental activism, military draft-resistance, WikiLeaks, Occupy Wall Street, the African National Congress, Gandhi's Indian independence movement, the Chiapas Rebellion, and the Arab Spring all represent significant rebellions against dominant authorities. The targets of dissent are not limited to governments, but also include economic, educational, religious, and social institutions that expect adherence to ideologies. In some cases, individuals and organizations engaged in disobedience may themselves engage in morally questionable activities. When is it ethical to rebel against authority? When do moral causes become more important than the rule of law or compliance with norms? What is the role of dissent in healthy democracies? Should protest always be peaceful or is violence sometimes the right thing to do? When is "working within the system" the best thing to do?

Through its special events and thematic lectures, the Center for Ethics emphasizes opportunities for continuing development of our powers for ethical reflection, moral leadership and responsible action. The Center's programs are designed to engage us in intensive and reflective thinking about our individual and collective values. Center programs are open to all members of the Muhlenberg campus and local community. Each year, the Center sponsors programming designed to encourage discussion and reflection on timely, pertinent topics.



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FALL 2014 PROGRAM



Program Directors:

Brian Mello

Associate Professor of Political Science

Christine Sistare

Professor of Philosophy

<http://www.muhlenberg.edu/main/aboutus/cfe/>

FALL 2014 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

Barbara Cruikshank

U. Mass Amherst

Tuesday, Sept. 2, 2014

7:30PM Miller Forum, Moyer Hall

"Silencing Protest: On the Ethics and Politics of Social Theory"

Cruikshank studies the history of reform, social movements, the politics of sex and sexuality, and relations of power and knowledge. She is the author of the forthcoming book *Neopolitics: Activism, Reform, and the Practices of Freedom*.



Muhlenberg Alumni Activism Panel

Friday, Sept. 12, 2014

2:00PM Trumbower 130

Adrian Shanker, Alex Lotorto and Kelly Howe

Three Muhlenberg alumni discuss different forms of activism. In conjunction with Homecoming Weekend.

Scott Lemieux

St. Rose College

Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2014

7:30PM Miller Forum, Moyer Hall

"From the Party of Lincoln to the Party of Calhoun: The Supreme Court and Voting Rights in Historical Perspective"

Lemieux writes about blogging as activism and voting rights. His research interests include public law, constitutional law, comparative law and institutions, and American politics. He contributes regularly to the *American Prospect* and the *Guardian Online*.

Constitution Day Speaker



The Molly Maguires

Film screening

Monday, Sept. 22, 2014

7:30PM Recital Hall

A 1970 film directed by Martin Ritt based on the historical secret society of 19th century Irish-American coal miners who led a worker's uprising in Pennsylvania coal country.



Erik Loomis

U. Rhode Island

Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2014

7:30PM Miller Forum, Moyer Hall

"Resistance in the Pennsylvania Coal Country: Past and Present"

Loomis studies U.S. environmental history and labor activism. He is working on the forthcoming book *Empire of Timber: Work and Nature in the Pacific Northwest Forests*.



Pennsylvania Coal Mine Tour

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2014

11 AM to 3:30PM

Join Erik Loomis for a bus trip and tour of the Pioneer Tunnel Coal Mine in Ashland, PA.

She Said: Ursula Rucker Live

Writer/Performer

Saturday, Oct. 11, 2014

8:00PM Baker Theatre, Trexler Pavilion

Ursula Rucker is a poet and hip-hop recording artist whose work deals with confronting social injustice, especially as it relates to race and womanhood.



Tuesday, Oct. 21, 2014

8:00 PM Red Door Café

We.Are.Here

Student performances curated by Ursula Rucker.

Co-sponsored by Theatre & Dance

David Pellow

U. Minnesota

Monday, Oct. 20, 2014

7:30PM Miller Forum, Moyer Hall

"Radical Politics, State Repression, and the Problem of 'Eco-Terrorism'"

David Pellow's interests include environmental justice studies, racial and ethnic inequality, transnational social movements, and labor studies. He is the author of the forthcoming book *Total Liberation: The Power and Promise and Animal Rights and the Radical Earth Movement*.



Carroll Bogert

Human Rights Watch

Monday, Oct. 27, 2014

7:30PM Miller Forum, Moyer Hall

Bogert studies human rights in the U.S. and abroad and media coverage of protest and human rights issues.

Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellow



Nancy Fraser

The New School

Thursday, Nov. 13, 2014

7:00PM Miller Forum, Moyer Hall

Fraser is a critical theorist who studies justice and feminism. She is the author of *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*.

Sponsored by Women's and Gender Studies

