DAY AT VASSAR 2014

Lectures: Period II
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

A Brief History of the English Language:
Words and their Meanings
MARK AMODIO / Professor of English

What are Emotions and What Good are They?
An exploration of the nature of emotions, how to define them, and what their various functions are. There will also be a bit of a tour of the history of emotion science and talk about why scientists are interested in emotions. We’ll conclude with a discussion of how the class members can use what has been discussed to better understand themselves and their interpersonal relationships.
RANDOLPH CORNELIUS / Professor of Psychology

Athens and Jerusalem: Two Sources of Western Ethics
The Western ethical tradition has many sources ancient and modern. The two most important ancient sources are classical Greek culture (Athens) and the Biblical writings of Judaism and Christianity, including the Law, the Prophets and the Gospels.
MICHAEL McCARTHY / Professor of Philosophy Emeritus
Stem Cells: The Hype, the Hope and the Hard Facts
This class will provide an introduction to the science behind stems cells: what they are, where they come from, and why many people believe they have the potential to treat a variety of medical conditions.

NANCY POKRYWKA / Professor of Biology

Homonationalism: The Cuban Example
In the early years after the revolution, the Castros jined people who were gay or were sex or gender non-conforming. Many were sent away to rural work camp where they were expected to expunge their behavior and become appropriate members of the revolutionary Cuban community. Until they did so, they were cast as enemies of the revolution. This treatment continued until 1993 when Fidel Castro re-thought his position. Since then, people formerly treated as “sexual deviants” have been integrated into Cuban society. By 2006 transgendered people were able to receive gender reassignment surgery and out LGBTQ citizens are now eligible for election to the National Assembly, which supposedly sets government policy. There is also a week of social and cultural events that culminate in the International Day Against Homophobia led Mariela Castro, Raul Castro’s daughter who may be the next Castro to rule the country. We could simply decide that this change is another example of shifts in dictator policy. A more nuanced reading, however, is that, similar to countries that are democratic and capitalist, the change may serve nationalist purposes. Might, for example, the LBGTQ acceptance bring new energy to the “revolution”? Is the mobilization of the LGBTQ community a signal to the rest of the world that Cuba is no longer a “backward” country?

DIANE HARRIFORD / Professor of Sociology

Teaching Comics
PETER ANTELYES / Associate Professor of English
The Most Heavily Illustrated Book of the 15th Century
Nearly 2,000 woodcuts were made to illustrate the Nuremburg Chronicle, a history of the world first published in 1493. Today the work stands as a remarkable achievement which epitomizes the skill of early German printing. This lecture will include a tour of the library exhibition of the same name.
RON PATKUS / Head of Special Collections and Adjunct Associate Professor of History

Sex & Gender: Differences between boys and girls, and how that relates to risk taking or the social intensity of adolescence
ABIGAIL BAIRD / Associate Professor of Psychology

The Cost of an Oil Spill
PAUL RUUD / Professor of Economics

Gypsy: An Aristotelian Heroine in the Mother of All Musicals
DENISE WALEN / Professor of Drama

Binomial Coefficients: A Chamber of Secrets
Inspired by the French writer Raymond Queneau, and the literary group, the Oulipo, I have been exploring notions of style in mathematics by focusing on the lowly binomial coefficients. The talk will be about this project, some of the surprises I have found, and some of the results of a search for style.
JOHN McCLEARY / Professor of Mathematics on the Elizabeth Stillman Williams Chair