

Spring 2010
Issue 4

SUNY Oswego

Civic Engagement

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Constitution Week 2009

This year the center of Constitution Week was our "Rock the Constitution" reading on Wednesday, September 16th during College Hour. Members of the college community gathered on the academic quad to hear us "Rock the Constitution." President Stanley read the Preamble and Provost Coultrap-McQuin the roll call of the states that ratified the Constitution. A group of theatre majors

then read a version of the Constitution edited and prepared for reader's theatre by Dr. Jessica Hester of Oswego's Theatre Department.

This year, other activities featured an emphasis on the First Amendment, and included a week-long banned books display in Penfield Library, the kick-off of our Free Speech/Free Press Film Series, and a Constitutional Challenge.

Students also gathered in the Campus Center Concourse to sign a reaffirmation of their rights under the First Amendment. The Civic Engagement Coalition also participated in a debate sponsored by ALANA and cross-promoted the ALANA keynote address given by Dr. Michael Eric Dyson.

How well do you know the U.S. Constitution?

During Constitution Week this question was posed to various students on the SUNY Oswego campus. The Office of Civic Engagement randomly sampled approximately 143 students by encouraging them to take the brief five question survey on U.S. government. The quiz was based on the actual questions used by the U.S. Department of Immigration for the naturalization test.

Out of the approximately 143 students who

participated; 39 got all of the questions correct, 40 students answered one question incorrectly, 39 students received two wrong answers, and 18 students received three incorrect. Only 7 students got four wrong answers and not a single student chose all five answers incorrectly. Students in Dr. Bruce Altschuler's Political Science 205 class took a longer version of the quiz as a pre-test to their studies, and the results were similar.

The Constitutional

challenge was a fun exercise in both bringing governmental awareness to the student population and assessing their understanding of our basic rights as citizens. The Constitutional quiz gives us great insight, as a community, of what we know and where we may be lacking knowledge in terms of the functions of our government and our responsibilities as informed citizens.



Fall Fair Trade Festal



What is fair trade? And is fair trade shopping available in a small city like Oswego, New York?

On October 30th, 2009, SUNY-Oswego students demonstrated a fun way to provide answers to those questions and to educate locally while thinking globally.



Students for Global Change, with a minor assist from the college's Civic Engagement Office, initiated, planned and hosted the first annual Fall Fair Trade Festival. The fair, held on the SUNY-Oswego campus, was designed to bring together the campus, the community, and local fair trade merchants for the

purpose of promoting fair trade, which is the provision of fair wages to the workers who actually produce imported and local goods. According to Katherine Raymond, one of the evening's student coordinators, about seventy people attended, learned about fair trade, and enjoyed fair trade products.

The educational features of the fair included an information table with literature about fair trade and demonstrations of fair trade crafts. Two Guatemalan weavers, a father and his ten-year old son, came as the guests of a local merchant to demonstrate the weaving of their intricately

designed tapestries, banners, and bags.

The evening also served to introduce the college and community to the fair trade opportunities available in their own backyards. Local vendors of fair trade goods participated, and local growers donated food. To round out the carnival atmosphere, there was live reggae music, games, a pie throwing contest and--for the community's children--a Halloween costume competition.

For more information about fair trade and hosting fair trade events, see <http://www.transfairusa.org/>

A Conversation About Health Care Reform

On Monday evening, October 26th 2009, members of the campus and community joined a panel of experts in Penfield Library to discuss the crisis in health care in the United States and the current health insurance reform proposals. Stefen Short, Vice President and Director of Diversity for the Student Association, acted as moderator of the panel discussion, which included Dr. Said Atri of Oswego's Economics Department; Dr. Gwen Kay, of Oswego's History Department; and Dr. Dennis Norfleet, a physician and Director of Oswego County Public Health.

According to some experts, Americans pay about twice as much *per capita* for health care as citizens of any other nations. However, although we spend about one out of every five dollars of our gross domestic product on health care, resources are

very unevenly distributed among Americans. And yet, the question remains, do we really need health care reform, and if so, what kind?

Dr. Kay provided an historical perspective on government involvement in health care through Medicare/Medicaid systems. While Medicare is now fully institutionalized, there are still gaps in coverage, and technical advances in health care have made it more expensive. In fact, Dr. Atri explained that there is fear that, without reform, Medicare will eventually be bankrupted. Moreover, partly because of the "hybrid" nature of the US's health care payment system, about 45 million people are not covered by any insurance. Current proposals aim to reform these and related problems.

Dr. Norfleet provided the perspective of a physician with many years in

practice. He commented that of the costs for health care, only about 10% actually go to physician salaries. Much more goes to the high costs or specialization and testing, especially as patients become better educated about health and demand more testing. Dr. Norfleet pointed out that Medicare allowances often don't fully cover the expenses of practicing medicine today, and that charges to uninsured patients are often used to make up shortfalls.

Discussion among listeners and panelists often echoed the national conversation, with similar concerns voiced about additional government involvement in health care, versus the consequences of little reform.



Debate at Oswego



As part of ALANA's Multicultural Leadership Conference and Constitution Week, SUNY-Oswego sponsored two debates.

This celebration of debate began on Sunday, September 13th with ALANA's showing of the film, "The Great Debaters." The next Monday evening featured Oswego's own great debaters. Teams were made up of faculty, including Professors Elliot Boise, Pat Clark, Ulises Mejias, and John Kares Smith, and students, including Ms. Natifa Adolphus, Mr. Adam King, and Mr. Justin Tossas. Debaters were organized by Ms. Maggie Rivera and coached by Dr. Nola Heidlebaugh. The teams debated two resolutions. The first was "Resolved: We have seen the end of

racism in the United States with the election of the first President of color," and the second (chosen in honor of ALANA's keynote speaker, Dr. Michael Eric Dyson) was on hip-hop: "Resolved: Hip-Hop music is destroying today's youth." Judges were Professor Jessica Reeher, Ms. Cathy Santos, and Ms. Bridget Lawson. In both debates, the affirmative teams were judged winners.

Inspired by the experience, Adam King, a veteran of high school competitive debate, initiated efforts to establish the Oswego Debate Society, which became a chartered Student Association organization in Fall, 2009. Adam founded, wrote the charter for, and served as the first president of the

fledgling organization, with Isaac Shapiro serving as vice-president and Dean Fritz Messere of the School of Communication, Media, and the Arts serving as advisor. The group will encourage debates and discussions involving faculty as well as students and aim eventually toward fielding a team in competitive debate.

The first activity of the new group was to host the Cornell debate team to do a demonstration "world style" debate, which requires debaters to debate a world issue extemporaneously. Members of the Oswego student body were able to participate by joining with the Cornell teams to debate issues related to U.S. policy on nuclear weaponry.



Economic Panel Discussion

On the evening of November 18th over 100 students and community members joined a panel of experts to discuss the state of our economy. This year's panel discussion, titled "The Financial Crisis One Year Later: A Lesson in Recession" served as a follow up to a similar discussion held last fall. The panelists included Dr. Ranjit Dighe and Dr. Lawrence Spizman, members of the Economics Department faculty at SUNY-Oswego; Dr. John MacDonald, faculty member of the Risk Management Program in the School of

Business at SUNY-Oswego; and Mr. Thomas Schneider, President and CEO of Pathfinder Bank and Adjunct in SUNY-Oswego's School of Business. Dr. Richard Skolnik, Dean of the SUNY-Oswego School of Business, served as the moderator for the discussion.

Some of the key questions discussed included: Is the worst over, or are there still downward trends facing us? Did the stimulus package actually work, or could there have been similar results without it? What, if anything, should the

government do to improve the employment picture? Just how has the economic landscape changed during the past year and what do those changes foreshadow for our future.

The event was sponsored by SUNY Oswego SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise). The goal of SIFE is to teach the principles of free enterprise and business by creating outreach programs for the campus and local community. To learn more about SUNY Oswego SIFE visit: www.oswego.edu/sife

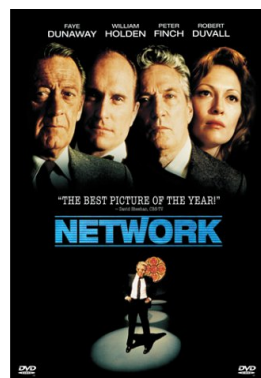


Free Speech/Free Press Film Series

This year, Civic Engagement sponsored a First Amendment Film Series, weekly showings of well regarded popular films that illustrated various freedom of speech and press issues. Dr. Helen Knowles of the Political Science Department selected twelve films, starting, during Constitution Week, with the Robin Williams film "Good Morning Vietnam!" Other films included "RKO 281," about Orson Welles' efforts to film "Citizen Kane" despite interference from William Randolph Hearst; "Citizen

Kate," itself, which chronicled the rise of a Hearst-like newspaper owner; "Good Night and Good Luck," about Edward R. Murrow's television campaign against the fear mongering of Senator Joseph McCarthy; "All the President's Men," about the Washington Post's investigation of Nixon and the Watergate break-in; and "The People Versus Larry Flynt," which told of the legal battles between Hustler publisher Flynt and the Reverend Jerry Falwell. Professor Knowles herself introduced most of the

films, which were well attended by students and other members of the campus community.



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Science Café – Home Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Sources

On the evening of October 22nd, SUNY-Oswego's Science Café group hosted a panel presentation on home energy efficiency and renewable energy sources in the community room of the Oswego City Library. Over 50 people were in attendance to hear a slide presentation by Chris Carrick of the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). According to NYSERDA, if every homeowner took small steps to reduce energy consumption, these small actions would greatly reduce the emissions that lead to climate change while saving households

hundreds of dollars yearly.

Mr. Carrick spoke on some of the effects of moving toward renewable energy sources, and about assistance programs available to homeowners eager to make their homes more environmentally friendly. Following Mr. Carrick's talk, listeners heard from four homeowners who had installed different forms of renewable energy, including solar, wind, and geothermal, about their experiences.

Those in attendance responded with lively discussion and many questions while they enjoyed snacks from Aunt

Mary's Catering. SUNY-Oswego, in an effort to extend the conversation and enhance their role as an information provider to the community, began a list-serve, [Sunny-OswegoGoGreenResources-list](#) for campus and community members.

The Science Café group represents an ad hoc group of members including faculty, staff, students and community members, including the Civic Engagement Coalition, the Office of Business and Community Relations, Experienced Based Education, the Syracuse Section of the American Chemical Society, and the Oswego County Environmental Management Council.

