

Spring 2011 Dialogues

When Gender Identities and Power Converge: A Dialogue on Gender and Power

How often do you think about gender and power in the same sentence? Do you ever feel compelled to explain, defend, or advocate your views on femininity and masculinity? What do “chivalry,” “feminism,” “machismo,” and “queer” mean to you? How do you respond to gender labels and expectations when you interact, date, or engage in intimacy? Is it fair game to use physical appearance and sexual allure to get ahead, or are these questions irrelevant? Join us in exploring the role of gender-power dynamics in your daily life. Open to people of all gender identities.

Black Brown, Red, Yellow: A Dialogue for People of Color

This dialogue convenes with "Who, What, When, Where, and White: Perspectives on Whiteness from Around the World" for two sessions to explore race in a mixed setting.

In the year 2011, racism continues to be an issue that impacts diverse ethnic and cultural groups. As a person of color, what does racism look like to you? Do your personal views and experiences with racism define how you view yourself? Does your racial identity define your relationship with other people of color? A primary goal of this dialogue is to create a safe space to explore how racial issues impact our personal identities. This dialogue is for individuals who identify as persons of color.

Who, What, Where, and White: Perspectives on Whiteness from Around the World

This dialogue convenes with "Black, Brown, Red, Yellow: A Dialogue for People of Color" for two sessions to explore race in a mixed setting

Who do you consider to be white? What does being white mean to you? Do you embrace your racial identity or feel estranged from it? How does being white influence the way you see yourself and those around you? When, and where are you most aware of your racial identity? How often do you think about your race? This dialogue strives to create a safe space for individuals who identify as white to explore the concepts of privilege, race, and racism. Participants are invited to reflect on and share their perspectives in the overall conversation on race that is rarely a focus: Whiteness. Both American and international participants are welcome to participate.

A Meeting Point: Honest Conversations on Faiths and Secularism

Why do you identify with a particular “faith” or “non-faith”? What does being spiritual versus religious look like to you? For you, are they the same? How often do you feel compelled to defend, explain, or advocate for your beliefs? In what ways does your religion, spirituality or other moral authority influence your approaches to decision-making, daily lives, relationships, interpersonal intimacy, career choices, etc.? How do you manage expectations and dilemmas stemming from your beliefs, as a person who identifies with Agnosticism, Atheism, Baha’i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Scientology, Wicca, or others? Join us in sharing how your faith/non-faith identity influences your worldview and behavior.

Religion & Sexuality: Exploring the Divide

In the national and global climate of GLBT rights and marriage equality, the media often portrays a clear divide between LGBT rights activists and religious communities. How valid is this divide? Is there room somewhere in the middle? This group seeks to bring together people from various points on the intimate and sensitive spectrums of religion and sexuality. Come share your personal journeys and stories from these two spheres, how they weave together and how they clash. Listen to the personal experiences of others and in doing so enrich your own. Religion and sexuality are often considered taboo and inappropriate topics of discussion in most cultures. In this group, together, we will create an intentional space of both challenge and safety for all to dialogue on this key topic.

Between Clash and Coherence: Exploring Culture, Identity, and Life in the US

Where is home for you? Has being in the U.S. affected your notion of “home?” How have your general perceptions of the U.S. evolved over time? Have you changed? How do you seek acceptance in your daily life in the U.S? In what ways have you experienced challenges when you interact with others? Join us as we explore your experience living in the U.S. Open to international students and staff living in the U.S.

Fall 2010 Dialogues

For God’s Sake! Exploring Relationships between Muslims and Jews

This dialogue aims to explore the complexity that lies in Jewish-Muslim relations in the US, while focusing on participants' personal experiences. Differences, commonalities, stereotypes, and cultural values are among the topics that will be explored throughout seven weeks of conversation. This dialogue is open to anyone who identifies as Muslim or Jewish, and is interested in sharing views and personal stories in order to better understand the tensions and connections between people of the two religious faiths.

Racism in America: Is it Black and White?

The discourse on race in this country often focuses solely on the racial tension between blacks and whites. As such, racism is most commonly perceived to occur between these two groups. Yet, America hosts a multitude of ethnicities, cultures and skin tones. Does this binary perception of racism alter the ways in which Americans see themselves? How does racism occur within and among groups outside of the black/white paradigm? As the demographics change in the US, will racial reciprocity develop as the minority population moves towards the majority population? This dialogue aims to create a safe space to explore our personal views on race and experiences with racism as well as to examine how racial issues impact various cultural and ethnic identities within the US. Individuals of all ethnic, cultural, and racial backgrounds (domestic and international) are encouraged to participate.

Great Sexpectations: Revealing the Sexual Undercurrents of Our World

Have you ever experienced sexual stress? What does sex cost? Do you need love in sex? When does sex harm? When is it ok to be sexy? Our dialogue will create a space for honest conversation to explore the taboo topic of sexuality from sexting for pleasure to obsessions with body image and searching for healthy sex in a compulsive world. Join us to explore your personal experiences with sexuality and how your sexual expectations are unique.

Femininity and Power: Perspectives on Women's Relationship with Power

As a woman, have you given much thought on how power affects you? Does your identity as a woman empower or disempower you? Do you embrace the "F" (feminism) word or do you shy away from it? Have you ever been called witch, bitch, ball-buster, or butch when you showed your strength? How do the conventional notions of power affect you in your career, relationships, and life? Join us in this all women's dialogue as we explore our experiences with power. (For those who self-identify as women)

Dudes and Dames: A Dialogue on Gender

In every country and in every culture, people are identified by their gender. From the clothes they wear to their career choices to their safety on the streets, gender matters. But how do YOU relate to gender? Do you identify 100 percent as a man, woman, or somewhere in between (or outside the gender spectrum altogether)? Are men and women naturally all that different, or is it all about how we are socialized? Do you ever feel limited by your culture's expectations of your gender? How does gender impact your friendships, sexuality, career choice, and overall identity? Do you find that you relate to other genders differently, or feel that gender plays no role in your relationships? This mixed gender dialogue aims to create a safe and open space for honest and engaging conversation about the role of gender in your life, and is open to participants of all gender identities.

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What if Obama Were Muslim? A Community Dialogue on Perceptions of Islam

On November 17, 2010, DDG hosted a community dialogue in response to recent events around the country.

This event was co-sponsored by: AU Vets; American Student Peace Alliance; Graduate Student Council; Middle East Studies Program; Office of the University Chaplain; IPCR Program; Mohammed Said Farsi Chair of Islamic Peace; Muslim Student Association; Society for Ethics, Peace and Global Affairs

Dialogue description: *Islamophobia, Islamisation and many other charged words appear in daily media reports, highlighting a wide range of perceptions of Islam in the US. In the current climate of increased anti-Islamic sentiment, including the threat of Quran burning in Florida and the demonstrations against an Islamic Center near Ground Zero, this facilitated community dialogue aims to create a space for honest and inclusive conversation. Join members of the AU community from a wide range of ideological points of view to share experiences and concerns, and explore this topic in an engaging format.*

Spring 2010 Dialogues

Stranger in a Strange Land: Navigating Cultural Identity in an Interconnected World

Have you ever traveled to another country or walked down the next block and felt like a fish out of water? In these situations we often find ourselves confronted with a major dilemma - when do you assimilate or when do you hold onto your own cultural identity? How have you navigated this dilemma? What do you do when you're in a place with a culture that directly challenges your identity? Has your own identity and sense of self changed or have you become more self aware? This dialogue will explore the personal factors that motivate our behavior in other cultures, and the implications of our shifting and interconnected cultural identities.

Dudes Before Dames: A Critical Look at Gender (for those who identify as men)

As a man, do you feel empowered or repressed by the social expectations of your gender? Is it acceptable to think that males are better at some activities and occupations? Is there a sense of entitlement that comes with being a male? In this dialogue, we will address the issue of gender in depth. Despite progress, do we still ascribe separate roles in the workplace and family based on sex? Are universities and academic fields gendered for a reason? And most importantly, what personal stories and experiences have framed your opinions about such questions of gender? This all-male* dialogue aims to create a safe space for an honest and engaging conversation about gender, with the possibility of holding several joint dialogue sessions with the all-female dialogue group.

Dames Before Dudes: A Critical Look at Gender (for those identify as women)

As a woman, do you feel empowered or repressed by societal expectations of your gender? Or are other forms of oppression, such as race or class, more relevant in your life? Do you identify as a feminist, or hate the word altogether? Do you find that you relate to men and women differently, or feel that gender plays no role in your relationships? Do you have a responsibility for the struggles other women face? If women were more empowered, would the world be more peaceful? And what does "empowerment" even mean? This all female* dialogue aims to create a safe space for an honest and engaging conversation about gender, with the possibility of holding several joint dialogue sessions with the all-male dialogue group.

"White," Like Me: Conversations About Race

What does it mean to be a white American in 2010? Have you fully considered how you may have benefited from unearned advantages because of the ways in which whiteness is normalized? Have you thought about the personal factors and outside influences that have shaped your perception of your own racial identity and the privilege of choosing to explore this identity or not? Do you have questions about race, but hesitate to explore them because of your worry about being called a "racist" or offending people of color? This dialogue offers an opportunity for white individuals to explore these challenging topics in a safe space while working together to understand one piece of the race conversation that is rarely a focus: whiteness.

Religion and Sexuality: Exploring the Divide

In the national and global climate of GLBT rights, marriage equality, etc., the media often portrays a clear divide between LGBT rights activists and religious communities. How valid is this divide? Is there room somewhere in the middle? This group seeks to bring together people from various points on the intimate and sensitive spectrums of religion and sexuality. Share your personal journeys and stories from these two spheres, how they weave together and how they clash. Listen to the personal experiences of others and in doing so enrich your own. Religion and sexuality are often considered taboo and inappropriate topics of discussion in most cultures. In this group, we will collectively create an intentional space for all to dialogue on this important issue.

Abrahamic Faiths: Relationships and Perceptions

Many current conflicts carry the label of disputes between People of the Book: Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Yet Christianity, Islam, and Judaism share the same roots, the Old Testament, and many other commonalities. This dialogue aims to illuminate and address stereotypes, explore current and historical tensions and generate greater understanding between these three faith traditions. We will explore the “living past,” how participants' understanding and perceptions of history relate to their current identities in meaningful and unexpected ways.