

Study Group Schedule

Spring 1989

OFFERED

Monday, 10 a.m. - Noon

The National Debt

Margaret C. Dwyer

What can ordinary citizens do about the national debt? Can ordinary citizens develop a plan to reduce the national debt when our elected officials have failed? If you are a concerned citizen you might be the best asset this country has to solve its national debt. Our elected officials have spent years talking about the debt. Now the time has come for us to do something about it. With your help and suggestions we can show the way and make this a better country for all of us. This group will consist primarily of discussion, with each participant presenting one element involved and the rest discussing the findings and any suggestions for the solution. Topics will include the size and composition of the debt, budgets, economics, and possible remedies. A goal for the group is to suggest responsible and innovative plans for eliminating the national debt voluntarily or some plan that would move the congress to take effective and immediate action. Copies of the national budget(s) will be available for reference.

Dates: March 6 - April 24

Location: Faculty Club, University of Massachusetts

Tuesday, 10 a.m. - Noon

The 1920's Revisited: A Relative Calm Between World War I and the Great Depression

Edward M. Lawton, Jr.

To those who were schoolchildren or preparing for college in the Twenties, as many of us were, the political, economic, social, and cultural movements of that era often appeared as a blur, passing swiftly and without much definition. Yet a review of that postwar time will reveal it as the great divide between life in the horse and buggy era and life in a period of technology, with profound effects on society of gasoline-powered vehicles, radio, cheap electricity, and the attainment of high school education for the average citizen. Dramatic villains (the Ohio Gang in and near the White House, "Scarface Al" Calpone, George F. Babbitt, and the KKK) and national heroes and heroines (Charles A. Lindbergh, Babe Ruth, and Margaret Sanger) were household names in those days. The era of Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover saw the economic roller coaster soar to great heights and crash, devastating the lives of untold tens of millions in America and threatening Capitalist institutions everywhere. By means of common readings from William Leuchtenburg and Frederick Lewis Allen and by reports from participants in the group, we shall reacquaint ourselves with this watershed period. Each member will be encouraged to present a talk on some aspect of the decade under discussion, basing his or her remarks on knowledge attained from research or from personal experience or both.

Dates: March 7 - April 11

Location: People's Institute, Northampton

Tuesday, 1 - 3 p.m.

What Happened to the Plot?: Reading the 20th Century Novel

Jean Sudrann

We will read at least four novels of this century, each in its own way opening up new territories for the genre. Each member of the group will be required to bring to each session a copy of the novel being discussed so that we can together explore our varying reactions to specific ideas embodied in the fiction and attempt to analyze just how the novelist achieved the particular effect and how that effect in turn helps to create the whole meaning of the work - or at least enables us to come to a fuller approximation of that meaning. The first novel will be Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse. Subsequent novels will be chosen by the group from:

Iris Murdoch: Under the Net
V. S. Naipaul: A Bend in the River
Thomas Pynchon: The Crying of Lot 49
Nadine Gordimer: The Conservationist
Graham Swift: Waterland

Each group meeting will be a discussion session - there will be no formal presentations or lectures.

Dates: March 7 - April 11

Location: Dutch Room, Smith College Alumnae House

Wednesday, 10 a.m. - Noon

Bernstein

Everett Hafner

Leonard Bernstein (1918 -) reached his seventieth birthday amidst a shower of honors from musicians and music lovers everywhere. And yet, controversy continues to swirl around him, as it has done throughout his career. We shall study Bernstein in depth: as conductor, composer, television star, Harvard lecturer, pianist, and liberal activist. Our emphasis will be placed on his music, which we examine in the long context of a history of controversy in music, beginning in the middle ages, continuing with great force in our own chaotic era, and presumably stretching into the future. Participants will hear a great deal of the music in class but should be prepared to use listening facilities at the five colleges. We will also read excerpts from Bernstein's writings, including material from Findings, The Unanswered Question, The Infinite Variety of Music, and The Joy of Music.

Dates: March 8 - April 26

Location: Emily Dickinson Hall, Hampshire College

Wednesday, 10 a.m. - Noon

Three Utopian Projects and How They Succeeded: the Shakers, the Perfectionists, and Esperanto

Sally Muther Lawton

The nineteenth century was a time when various Utopian projects to create an ideal society were enthusiastically undertaken. Many failed rapidly. Three which were relatively successful were the Shakers, the Perfectionists of the Oneida Community and the international language Esperanto. All these people were inspired by religious and humanistic idealism. We shall study the history of each movement and discuss their appealing and disturbing characteristics, the lure and risk of idealism. Esperanto will be a particular emphasis. Readings will be drawn from Kephart, Extraordinary Groups; Robertson, Oneida Community Profiles; Guerard, A Short History of the International Language Movement and other relevant works.

Dates: March 8 - April 12

Location: Dutch Room, Smith College Alumnae House

Wednesday, 10 a.m. - Noon

Four Poets in the Connecticut Valley: Edward Taylor (1645? - 1729), Westfield; Emily Dickinson (1830 - 1886), Amherst; Robert Frost (1874 - 1963), Amherst, et al; Wallace Stevens (1879 - 1955), Hartford

Marjorie Kaufman

A commonality of geographic location -- Westfield, Amherst, Hartford -- serves as a happy excuse to read together the work of four major American poets who wrote over three hundred years. Ultimately, I hope we can ask if place affects the created work in imagery or theme or matter. In any event, we will read some splendid poetry together, supplying ourselves with whatever background material we need to confront the problems the work of each poet raises and to share the pleasures. Our central question will be how to read the poetry to enjoy it as fully as we can. We will look at imagery, metrical patterns, themes. Taylor's poetry needs more background information than the later poetry does. We will try to supply ourselves with whatever specific background information is necessary to read the poem before us. What we will NOT do: we will not read the poems as illustrative of the poet's life; our focus will be on the poems. Individually, or in pairs, group members will come to each session prepared to lead our discussion of a poem or group of poems which we will all have read. Discussion leaders will "get up" the poem(s), checking allusions, perhaps critical controversies, etc. -- do, in short, whatever the work demands to enable us to READ it well and talk about it sensibly. All poems will be read aloud; we'll take turns at it. Because none of this poetry is "easy," we should have a fine time disagreeing and, I hope, synthesizing our views of the poems read.

Dates: March 15 - April 19

Location: Jones Library, Amherst

Wednesday, 1 - 3 p.m.

The Piano Concertos of Mozart

David H. Navon

The set of 27 piano concertos of W. A. Mozart perhaps play, in the history of their genre, a part comparable to that played by Beethoven's nine masterpieces in the history of the symphony. It is of interest to examine these works in their totality, perhaps concentrating on the lesser known concertos. The relationship of these works to his other works both chronologically and in other ways will be discussed and comparisons will be made with the piano concertos of other composers. Participants will listen to two or three concertos in preparation for each of the weekly meetings and will share their impressions of the works with the group. Mozart and His Piano Concertos, by Cuthbert Girdlestone will be used as a reference.

Dates: March 1 - April 19

Location: Jones Library, Amherst

Wednesday, 1 - 3 p.m.

Confronting 20th Century Art: the Challenge of Change

Jean Morrison Becker

Ever since the early 20th century, the worlds of art and architecture have confronted us with revolutionary and sometimes confusing changes in vision, style, and execution. In this group, we will explore some of the most radical and pervasive changes, and try to place them in context. Each participant will choose an artist or architect whose work presents a good example of change and report to the group. Occasional brief slide lectures by the moderator will supplement the materials used by members for their presentations. There will be at least one trip to a museum.

Dates: March 1 - April 19

Location: Five Colleges, Amherst

Thursday, 10 a.m. - Noon

The Personal Uses of Myth: Is There a Holy Grail in Your Future?

Virginia L. Senders

Joseph Campbell has made the study of mythology relevant and popular for thousands of people, awakening in them the sense of personal connection to great universal themes. In our study group we shall quickly read The Power of Myth, the augmented transcripts of the recent TV dialogues between Campbell and Bill Moyers on that topic, in order to start from common ground. (Tapes of the programs are available. Some participants might prefer viewing

The Personal Uses of Myth: Is There a Holy Grail in Your Future? (continued)

to reading, and perhaps the group will choose to view one tape together). Then we will examine a series of mythic themes, to be chosen by the participants, to see how each mythic theme is played out, or shapes, the lives of men and women in today's world. The writings of Carl Jung and his successors will be an important resource in understanding the place of myth in the human psyche. The emphasis in the study group will be psychological and spiritual rather than literary. No previous knowledge of mythology is assumed. Each participant will choose a myth or mythic theme, read the myth itself, and, if time permits, make this material available to members of the study group ahead of time, identify psychologically related issues, make a presentation, and lead a discussion or involve the group in some form of experiential learning. Participants may choose to work together in teams of two or three. Beyond The Power of Myth, participants will be responsible for searching out materials from mythology and psychology and integrating them in their presentations.

Dates: March 9 - April 27

Location: Faculty Club, University of Massachusetts

Thursday, 1 - 3 p.m.

The Hapsburgs: All in the Family

Patricia B. Keating
Edgar Buck

As one of the most influential families in Europe for nearly 650 years, this extraordinary family came close to dominating half the world. There has hardly been a ruling house in history to equal them as a symbol of the splendor and power of secular might. No other family can boast of having molded the face of the continent as they did! Our group will study the foundation of a dynasty/Maximilian I; Charles V and Martin Luther; the Spanish branch/Philip II, with particular emphasis on art during this period; the making of modern Austria; Joseph II, the reforming despot; and the last act/Charles I. Each participant will be responsible for a short presentation and leading the ensuing discussion. There will be no specific text - any appropriate source materials in history or biography may be used.

Dates: March 2 - April 20

Location: Clapp Laboratory, Room 203, Mt. Holyoke College