



Wednesday Evening Seminar Spring 2013 Syllabus

Bridges and Barriers: *Overcoming Obstacles to Change in the Asia-Pacific Region*

**Keoni Auditorium
Hawai'i Imin International Conference Center
January 30 – April 10, 2013
6:30 - 8:30 pm**

INTRODUCTION

Isaac Newton said long ago “we build too many walls and not enough bridges.” Although the great achievement of humanity exists in the ability to develop collective social organization, why do we continue to ironically build walls and divide ourselves? The human capacity for collaboration and forging partnership for collective improvement presents the opportunity to overcome the tremendous challenges we face as a society. Barriers, in both a metaphorical and literal sense, represent the gaps separating us from the goals of progress, while bridges signify fostering connections between people, cultures, policies, ideas and ultimately at our ability towards developing more sustainable solutions. Identifying barriers and bridges as such allows us to better understand the elements and the dynamics to be catalysts for change.

During the fall 2012 semester the Wednesday Evening Seminar (WES) created a foundation by exploring the theme of ‘Catalysts for Change.’ Throughout the semester we inquired into the spark that initiates inspired actions, whether by the individual or through collective efforts. In the continuation of this academic year’s journey, the Spring 2013 WES series will take a broader approach by exploring the successes and some of the stumbling blocks of development efforts throughout the Asia-Pacific region: Bridges and Barriers.

We know barriers all too well. We build walls to separate nations, create obstacles to poverty alleviation, institute impediments to education, and construct cultural barriers that separate ourselves. At times these outcomes develop unknowingly. Yet on the other hand, we have all foreseen impending destructive outcomes and feel powerless to speak in a way to be heard, or to act in a way that can be felt. Conversely, we feel inspired when a catalyst speaks for truth and justice. We sense what we are capable of when we come together to stand for sustained actions that instill hope and dignity. We are capable of amazing feats to bring one another together. We are inspired when we see the attempt at building bridges, whether in a physical sense as the great bridge that went up to connect Brooklyn and Manhattan, or more metaphorical illustrations as hands coming together to create peace between warring states.

Ralph Ellison wrote, “Education is all a matter of building bridges.” By identifying bridges and barriers, WES Spring 2013 will look into contemporary examples throughout the Asia-Pacific, and as a result, through group discussions we will discuss how we can overcome barriers and begin building more bridges.

OVERVIEW OF THE WEDNESDAY EVENING SEMINAR

The Wednesday Evening Seminar (WES) is a weekly gathering of East West Center fellows in their first fall and spring semester. WES brings together students and researchers from diverse academic disciplines, geographic areas, life experiences, and East-West Center programs to learn and dialogue on issues of common concern that impact the U.S. and Asia-Pacific region.

While the graduate student experience tends to focus attention on highly specialized fields of study at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, the WES challenges EWC fellows to explore regional issues that may extend beyond their range of expertise or comfort zones. Issues are explored through invited speakers, films and facilitated small group discussions and activities. Through this process EWC fellows forge bonds among themselves through relating their personal or community concerns and experiences that ultimately strengthen the Center’s diverse global community.

As with many innovative activities at the East-West Center, WES emerged from student recommendations and student-led action. EWC fellows perceived the need for a unifying intellectual experience in an increasingly diversified student program. WES began as a series of East-West Center-wide discussions to explore the concept, and emerged as a student leadership project that developed into a distinctive, on-going feature of the student program.

Currently, the seminar is planned and organized by East-West Center degree-fellow interns, with the support of the Center’s Education and Research program staff. The Seminar is required for degree student fellows during their first fall and spring semesters, and fall semester for Asia Pacific Leadership Program fellows. Continuing fellows are welcome to attend and often continue to participate in the seminar series.

OBJECTIVES

The goal of the East-West Center is to contribute to a peaceful, prosperous, and just Asia-Pacific community, thus serving as a vigorous hub for cooperative research, education, and dialogue on critical issues of common concern to the Asia-Pacific region and the United States. The Wednesday Evening Seminar helps reach this goal by facilitating dialogue and mutual understanding among the students of the United States, Asia, and the Pacific who study together at the East-West Center.

REQUIREMENTS: ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Students must attend all WES sessions and participate in group discussions and activities. If you are unable to attend a session, please contact Mendl Djunaidy (DjunaidM@eastwestcenter.org). Attendance will be kept.

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