Until 2007 we took for granted that in the more than sixty years following World War II the industrialized Western World experienced unprecedented economic expansion. The United States was the geopolitically dominant superpower, indeed the U.S. was the primary coordinator and beneficiary of the post World War II and Cold war period. The epoch of Cold War conflict with the Soviet Union (1945 through approximately 1985) characterized by the standoff of the M.A.D. nuclear strategy (Mutually Assured Destruction) ironically turned out to be a period of relative global stability compared to the currently unsettling regional wars, the growth of religious extremism, various jihadisms and the new terrorisms.

Only a few keen observers detected economic flaws or geopolitical vulnerability in advanced industrial capitalism before and during the mid 1970s. In retrospect, the Reagan administration’s focus on general deregulation and its radical policy of almost complete support for free market economic dominance signaled a massive alteration from a post-WWII “Social Contract” of sharing the wealth from the growing productivity to business AND labor. From approximately 1945 to the early 1970s the U.S. had a relatively balanced public/private economy
with government keeping a near peace between business and labor. Ever since the Great Depression when Roosevelt successfully pressured business to accede to New Deal emergency programs for the “One third of the nation that is ill housed, ill clothed and ill fed,” business festered in its hatred and prepared for a the time when they could regain power and take revenge against the New Deal and unions. American Business regained their confidence after WWII. During the Great Depression and WWII American Business needed the support and stimulus of government but when they regained their confidence after the war they began to attack the very government on who they were just recently dependent. With renewed self confidence they generated a renewed conservatism to smear government as the enemy of the ‘Free Market,” without ever acknowledging that from the end of WWII forward, government intervention was a primary facilitator of American Business.

Reaganomics effectively engineered an ideological shift to Free Market Conservatism, a re-orientation that emphasized the priority of private sector values and a desire to privatize as many of the government services that would remain after the Reagan administration’s attacks and its drive for a radical downsizing of government. Much of this was carried out under the image and myth of western cowboy’s façade of extremist individualism. With massive tax reduction primarily aimed at benefiting the top 1 to 3% of the super-rich, government becomes automatically downsized. There is a massive decrease in government’s ability to deliver services that the American people actually want and need. However, while it is well known that most Americans do not like paying taxes, people cannot demand services from the government without paying for them.

With all the “sturm und drang” conservatives claim that freedom and liberty are only possible through the resource of the private sector. BUT, the private sector in fact CANNOT provide these services. Why? Because it is structured primarily to provide profit for its owners, NOT SERVICES for the public good. Well, then, how about relying on the Not-for-Profit sector of the private sphere to provide the services people want and need. This is possible, but only to a limited and dramatically inadequate extent. Private and religious institution based charity cannot meet the needs of the populace or provide the resources that should be available to all in need. History shows that widespread services for the many in need can only be provided through government. The funds Not-for-Profits would need are not readily available in sufficient amounts from the private sector and the necessary amount of funds are most often solely available from public-spirited government tax policies. It is also these tax policies which encourage the wealthy, corporations and Foundations to reduce their tax burden and protect their capital by the amount they give to the Not-for Profits.

Stability is absolutely necessary for the functioning of economies. For the last three decades, the global stage has been plagued by the emergence of various upheavals, new forms of violence and terrorism. There have been major shifts in global economic power, the decline of the U.S. global military and political influence and economic reversals in the U.S. and Europe—all have seriously threatened and are now undermining what has been called up until very recently “The American Century” and “New World Order”.

We have become bogged down in unexpected domestic and international clashes. Our budget breaking wars and overseas military adventurism have had meager success in limiting terrorism.
We have inserted ourselves into asymmetrical and questionable wars that have contributed to destabilizing the American economy and have been one of the real and overlooked causes of the U.S. deficits and long-term debt. We hear everyday that for economies to function effectively, stability and the limitation of uncertainty is necessary. Recently, a self-immolation and breakdown of the U.S. financial system and economy has triggered a deep global destabilization and THE GREAT RECESSION beginning in 2007 and the ongoing Recession continues the economic disaster for many millions of Americans. History teaches us that military preeminence is based upon sustained economic power. Ancient Greece was defeated when its imperial appetites exhausted its armies and bankrupted its treasury. Given our deepening economic crisis, how long will the U.S. be able to remain the world’s military and economic superpower?

For at least 30 or more million Americans, life has become tragically similar to the severe dislocations of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Despite some modest evidence to the contrary, Conservative domestic forces continue to grow stronger and re-assert their long-standing domination over key sectors of the American economy and society. Conservatism continues to inflame our deeply rooted ‘Culture Wars’ and the divisive polarizations of America’s core values and politics.

Until 2007-08, the U.S. attempted to bolster its global economic and cultural influence through its promotion of a world culture based on an ever expanding, all-encompassing consumerism. Now, in a credit crunch and the burst over-heated housing bubble, we can no longer afford our addiction to the consumption levels of the recent past. We are so polarized politically and financially we cannot find our way to new roads of economic productivity and paths toward adequate political functioning. Our politics, social values and economic orientations are almost completely divided. We are politically embattled and paralyzed with no movement toward shared cultural values and a basic economic recovery. We are continually hovering over a potentially disastrous American deficit/debt crisis or a Euro triggered European-American recession and all we can hope for is meager economic growth and an even slower recovery. In fact, increasing numbers of even mainstream economists are predicting a general long-term decline of the American economy.

There will be deepening disasters undermining the basic well being of the Working and Middle Classes if they are the only ones required to make continuing sacrifices and take losses for the failing American economy. Are these sacrifices, otherwise known as living under brutalizing “Austerity” connected in any way to the policies that continue to benefit the already hyper-privileged? The Fall 2012 Republican Budget Proposals called for no sacrifices by the super wealthy; for them the Conservatives call for a lowered taxes and no sharing in the sacrifices being imposed only on the middle and working classes and FORGOTTEN POOR. Why no tax increases or reduction in benefits for the already super rich? Because they are supposed to be the “Job Creators” of the economy. Fine, if this were true. But where is the proof? Why doesn’t anyone test or challenge this assertion and show us all the new jobs that were supposed to be created as a result of the massive pro-rich tax cuts made by the Reagan and Bush administrations over the past thirty years.

The burst housing bubble triggered an already self-inflicting banking and credit crisis in the U.S. As all global financial institutions are completely interconnected the U.S. crisis undermined trust in the European economy and the Euro-Crisis was not far behind and with it the imposition of extreme austerity on national budgets and the living standards of the people of Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, the United Kingdom, with Italy and France not far behind. Why? To
satisfy the demands of international moneylenders for guaranteed percentage returns on their loans. Who pays? Do the banks pay for the role they played in over leveraging their capital? No! The people pay through draconian austerity imposed upon their livelihoods and lives. Austerity is imposed to redistribute the wealth of a society upwards to compensate for the economic systems failure to produce the profits needed for economic growth.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SYLLABUS

This seminar provides an interdisciplinary perspective on the stability that is rapidly slipping from the world’s grasp and the eruptions triggering upheaval among military, social, political, economic, CLIMATE and cultural dynamics. We will look at the deeply rooted character and consequences of American conservatism, political POLARIZATION AND DEADLOCK at home and on the world stage and how the severe ideological polarization of the American Congress and public skews power, politics, the culture of our daily lives and most particularly our economic security. All the convulsions are occurring under the accumulating damage of the climate change American, Russian, Indian and Chinese governments, most particularly, continue to deny or ignore in the name of unabated economic growth.

What have we wrought that the great economic powers are denying? As ecologists Paul and Anne Ehrlich have written, “It’s the top of the ninth inning and humanity has been hitting Nature hard. But we must remember that Nature hits last.”

What are the solutions to these crises? What are the prospects for the U.S.A., Western Europe and all our very own lives in this radically changing environment?

“And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and Flight, Where ignorant armies clash by night.”

Matthew Arnold
“Dover Beach”

Can we take some heart from Tennyson’s words?

“Some work of noble note may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods,
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs, the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
‘Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be well that the gulls will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the happy isles.
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew,
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper or heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive. To seek, to find, and not to yield.”

_Ulysses_, Alfred, Lord Tennyson

**JANUARY 28 Professor Laurin Raiken, DIRECTOR, ARTS AND SOCIETY PROGRAM,**
Gallatin School of Individualized Study. Associate faculty, Program on Arts & Politics, Tisch School of the Arts.

Introduction and Overview of seminar issues and concerns. Orientation, readings, course expectations, and assignments. Introduction of class members.

**Ways of Thinking: Cognition and Conflict**

**We will introduce issues**

ON THINKING: The Processes of Thinking, Cognition, Analysis, Interpretation, the Quest for Understanding and Meaning are regularly taken for granted and generally misunderstood and misused. An inadequate or lack of understanding of how and why we think, relying on what we consider the “taken for granted” “logic of the everyday”, often leads to what the 20th Century commentator Gregory Bateson called “obsolescence” and Paul Goodman called “compulsory mis-education.”

At this first meeting I will offer a brief introduction to a few of the major issues and problems raised about our often distorted and inadequate thoughts about thinking. To this end I will briefly mention for further study the works of: 1) Gregory Bateson in his letter to the Board of Regents of the University of California, and his major orientations developed in _MIND and NATURE: A NECESSARY UNITY_ and _STEPS TO AN ECOLOGY OF MIND_ 2) George Lakoff’s Chapter 22 on the human brain and mind in his book _MORAL POLITICS_, which we read later in the course. 3) Some basic ideas from Daniel Kahneman’s _THINKING FAST AND SLOW_. 4) Some key ideas from Michael S. Gazzaniga’s _WHO’S IN CHARGE? Free Will and the Science of the Brain_. 5) The ideas of Organizational theorist Don Michaels on Critical Thinking: Cross Perspective Dialogue as shared with us by Dr. Martin C.J. Elton, founding chair of the Interactive Telecommunications Program of the Tisch School of the Arts, NYU. 6) Herbert Marcuse, a “Note on the Dialectic” in his study of Hegel, _REASON AND REVOLUTION_. 7) Paulo Friere’s groundbreaking and internationally influential concepts in _THE PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED_ and his powerful critique of the “banking concept of education.” And 8) Arthur J.

Other materials on the history and varieties of American thought and conservatism will be distributed or recommended to the class throughout the semester.

From these perspectives, and with particular reference to Sociologist Erving Goffman and noted cultural theorist Harold Rosenberg’s discussion of Marx’s historical study. THE EIGHTEENTH BRUMAIRE OF LOUIS BONAPARTE, I will introduce a Dramaturgical, Theatrical, and Performance model of what was once considered real political action in history.

FEBRUARY 4 Major Trends in American Society and Culture: Changing forces in the American Social, Moral, and Cultural Creations of Community and Individualism.

Our context is tension, identity and contradictions among the individual, community and society drives that try to maintain STASIS, the status quo and often to simultaneously change within the creation of, then “the Waning of American Empire”, as American society navigates its rise to economic preeminence and then begins its descent into the continuing Economic Crises within a fragile and fragmented World Disorder.

Class will have read selections from Dorothy Lee, Valuing the Self: What We Can Learn From Other Cultures. Since this book is no longer available I will provide you with selected chapters.

“I am in part looking at race (and I would add gender, LR) to provide a key to the problems that face all of us in America.” Walter Mosley, WORKIN’ ON THE CHAIN GANG: Shaking Off the Dead Hand of History.

Please keep in mind Professor Raiken’s discussion of the research in cognition, neuro-cognitive science and studies of ideology that add to our understanding and challenges to how we think and what we believe. Then we will look at some comments on the continuing American historical cancer of race, but we will do so by introducing a vital part of American history usually avoided, buried, or made invisible to us. It is unusual in American society and extremely rare, as far as my experience extends, for at least the last forty plus years at New York University that there is any awareness and discussions of the First Peoples, the Indigenous peoples, the Native nations whose land we expropriated to advance the United State’s definition of its “Manifest Destiny.” We live in the wake of the United State’s attempt to extinguish Native American life. Tonight we introduce the need to begin what is almost always a very painful discussion of the racism, discrimination and violent near elimination of America’s First Peoples. U.S. history with Native nations has been the breaking of treaties, betrayals, incarceration and attempted genocide. The Indigenous peoples have been among the most overlooked, most invisible to us and still, in many cases, the ongoing target of theft, dislocation, the denial of religious freedom and a litany of ongoing discrimination, racist violence and poverty.
Required reading includes a most powerful, challenging and disturbing work of Jack D. Forbes in *COLUMBUS AND OTHER CANNIBALS*.

“An ancient Chinese proverb says that women hold up half the sky.” We introduce the scourge of gender inequality, particularly at a time of Conservative historical regression to a “War against women” and a 2012 Republican Platform denying women the right of control of their own bodies even when they are most viciously and violently assaulted.

**FEBRUARY 11**  
**JOANNA SHERMAN,** Artistic Director, Bond Street Theatre (Gallatin MA), Joanna will give a presentation of Bond Street is a theatre with a social consciousness, global view and a sense of humor that crosses cultural boundaries in critical boundaries in critical areas worldwide. Presented by the Gallatin Arts and Society Program.

**FEBRUARY 18**  
**NO CLASS** – Presidents Day Holiday

**FEBRUARY 25**  
**The Triumph of Conservatism: Origins, Conquests and Influences**  
Presentations by Professor Raiken and class discussion of the readings.

A member of the British Parliament hoping to catch the great economist John Maynard Keynes off-guard, in a contradiction opined, “Well, it seems Mr. Keynes, that you have changed your mind.” Keynes responded I change my mind when “…facts change, what do you do?”

Class will read essays by Robert Nisbet, Brigette and Peter L. Berger, Barrington Moore Jr., George Lakoff and Laurin Raiken on Conservatism.

“The fate of an epoch that has eaten of the tree of knowledge is that it must… recognize that general views of life and the universe can never be the product of increasing empirical knowledge, and that the highest ideals, which move us most forcefully, are always formed only in the struggle with other ideals which are just as sacred to others as ours are to us.”  

Max Weber
I see the characteristics of what many call “Postmodernism,” in these words of Jurgen Habermas. “The new value placed on the transitory, the elusive and the ephemeral, the very celebration of dynamism…” Then Habermas goes on to describe what we know as one of Conservatism’s deepest reactions that “… discloses a longing for an undefiled, immaculate and stable present.”

MARCH 4 The Continuing Impact of Conservatism: Political, Social and Economic Consequences

In this light we read Ill Fares the Land by Tony Judt, one of New York University’s most distinguished historians, a book he dedicated to his teenage children and all young people. He dictated this brief book, while almost completely paralyzed, just before dying of Lou Gehrig’s disease. While this book seems more and more reasonable to readers it remains is highly controversial in the U.S. because its ideals are seem foreign to many North American who do not remember the emergency needs for and the success of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal. It is a book whose ideas have currency, approval and are accepted in many advanced industrial societies and democracies around the world, especially in Northern Europe. There ILL FARES THE LAND is already considered to be a new classic.

Do we dare to try to entertain ideas and to think in ways that are both old and new but make us highly uncomfortable?

Remember our reading from one of America’s most important philosophers of linguistics, from the chapter “The Human mind”, Chapter 22 in George Lakoff’s Moral Politics.

MARCH 11 “The Omnipresence of Violence and “The Sources of Terrorism”

(“A jus so kumm Holze, als woraus der Mensch gemacht ist, kann nichts ganz Gerades gezimmert warden”)

“Out of timber so crooked as that from which man is made nothing entirely straight can be built.”

Immanuel Kant, “Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in welbürgerlicher Absicht” 1784 Berlin, 1912

This phrase of Kant’s is quoted by Isaiah Berlin in his philosophical argument that, given the differences between their world views and values, peoples from different cultures are unlikely to agree on any single universal set of the best means and ends of individual life, society and civilization. Thus to achieve any kind of peace Berlin believes we must adopt PLURALISM as the core element of our political philosophy so as to allow for people with different “weltanschauung” (world views) to live side by side, if not in harmony, than without continuous direct violent conflict.
Class will have read Hannah Arendt’s **On Violence**

*This semester we will have to take into greater consideration the escalation of violence on the American “home front,” the continuous domination of our political apparatus by the American military arms manufactures and their front, the National Rifle Association, violence against women, home and abroad and the seemingly hidden violence visited on the growing number of economic victims of the vaunted American economic system.*

In response to another kind of battle, the violence and tragic loss of life in the authentic struggle for self-determination and democracy in the Irish Freedom Uprising of the early 20th century, the great Irish poet W. B. Yeats, wrote of other tragic paradoxes in his “Easter 1916”. This verse, with its rhythm and recognition of the intertwining, the braiding of history’s unexpected elements, has become a classic of human sentiment:

“And what if excess of love
Bewildered them till they
Died
I write it out in verse-
MacDonagh and McBride
And Conally and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn
Are changed, changed utterly
A terrible beauty is born.”

William Butler Yeats

**MARCH 18  SPRING RECESS: NO CLASS**

**THE U.S. AND GLOBAL ECONOMY IN THE MOST DEVASTING FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRISIS SINCE THE GREAT DEPRESSION OF THE 1930s**

**MARCH 25:  Class One” The Fate of “Homo Economicus” in America**

“U.S.A., U.S.A.: We’re Number One, We’re Number One”: The Largest Economy on Earth But for Whom and for How Long?

**WHY AND HOW HAVE THE TEA PARTY, THEIR TEAVANGELICAL AGENDAS AND THEIR ELECTORAL ACTIVISM BEEN ABLE TO WIN AND DOMINATE THE DIRECTIONS OF AMERICAN POLITICS, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY?**
I will bring to your attention the names and publications of the many excellent writers on the ongoing U.S. and global financial crisis. It is these still current economic, credit, housing and unemployment crises that continue to destroy standards of living for the middle, working classes and those growing number of those denied any stake at all in the economy. Thus we witness, and millions experience, intense “immiseration.”

**APRIL 1  Midterm Presentations/Reports and Papers**

Please be alert that your Midterm Reports come after the first class on the Economic Crisis and before the second class on the Economic Crisis.

For this evening you are to prepare a three page mid-semester review, (a paper of approximately 750 words) and a three-minute oral commentary, based on your paper, for presentation in class tonight. The oral commentary should be a briefer version or written outline of the major issues and questions you raise in your midterm paper.

**THE U.S. AND GLOBAL ECONOMY IN CRISIS**

**April 8  CLASS 2: Boom and Bust: The Genius, Success and Decline of American Economic Power**

Class and Professor Raiken continue discussion on the impact of the U.S. financial and economic systems: Who works, who pays, and who benefits?

We are all witness to the gathering storm of a broken economy. All the established political parties lack new ideas for the breakthrough necessary for a 21st century economy that works for all. FROM WHERE WILL THESE IDEAS COME?

**APRIL 15  A GREAT AMERICAN DILEMMA: EDUCATION AT THE PRECIPICE**

Guest Lecture: Dr. C.J. Churchill, Professor of Sociology Thomas Aquinas College, and practicing Psychoanalyst will lead our discussion of:


**APRIL 22 “THE FEVER,”** by Wallace Shawn, Winner of the Obie Award for the Best Play 1991, Performed by Jerry Levy
Here is perhaps the most important challenge of our time, one that is taken up centrally in many other courses and throughout public conversation. The challenge of planetary survival smolders at the foundation of any study of the social, economic and political battles of our time. As a species, do we have much more time? Do we in the U.S. have the freedom, openness, and courage to debate the consequences of global climate change in our own Congress where conservative forces block honest discussion? (Amongst other sources refer to the Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change, Executive Summary and “Global Warming,” The New York Times, Tuesday August 31, 2010, both online, and over the past decade articles in The New Yorker magazine and The New York Review of Books.)

ERNEST CALLENBACH, ECOTOPIA

“And in today already walks tomorrow,”
Samuel Taylor Coleridge

“The trouble with our time is that the future is not what it used to be.”
Paul Valery

“The future is called ‘perhaps’ which is the only possible thing to call the future. And the only important thing is not to allow that to scare you.”
Tennessee Williams
“Orpheus Descending,” 1957

“We have met the enemy and they is us”
Pogo

“The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”
William Faulkner
Requiem For A Nun

“It is the bottom of the ninth inning and nature bats last.”
Paul and Anne Ehrlich

THE FUTURE IS NOW!
WHAT ARE YOUR TACTICS, DESIGNS AND STRATEGIES?

“The interval between the decay of the old and the formation and establishment of the new, constitutes a period of transition, which must always necessarily be one of uncertainty, confusion, error, and wild and fierce fanaticism.”
John Calhoun
May 6 Transformations of Contemporary Society and Economy: The United States, Europe and the World on the Cusp of a new WORLD Economic and Geopolitical ORDER?

Final Student Presentations based on papers to be handed in May 16th

You must take notes on your classmate’s presentations for class discussion on May 13.

For this class and the final class meeting on May 13th, you are to prepare a final, brief (again, three minutes) oral statement integrating the issues and questions under discussion throughout this Interdisciplinary seminar. This verbal presentation may be in the form of raising new questions but it must include your focus of one or more of the issues analyzed in the course and refer to our class discussions and readings. Or, you may wish to write your own little synthesis of the entire course, to use this final paper to write an end of course HERE I STAND essay.

The oral presentation you offer your class colleagues should be an adaptation of your final paper.

There are other questions we could ask. Some of them might be: What local and global conditions are influencing you to think and act in new ways? What new innovations on the material and technological fronts are creating new problems but are simultaneously fostering significant breakthroughs? Are our crises so great, so complex that they are overwhelming our capacity to understand them? Why may some crises be beyond resolution? What kinds of thinking and action show promise of helping us solve our great dilemmas? What kinds of groups and what relationships within and between these groups are generating new ideas and positive implementations? Who is doing the work of healing and creating new forms of healing that will enable us to have a humane future?

May 13 Final Student Presentations and Class Discussion

Transformation of Contemporary Society and Culture

To conclude our seminar productively, please prepare a paragraph of your responses to the ideas your classmates presented last week. This way we will all contribute to a lively final class discussion.

Welcome to a Gallatin School Interdisciplinary Seminar
ABOUT YOUR FUTURE

One of the most visionary thinkers of the 20th century, Walter Benjamin, wrote, about history, “There is a painting by Klee called “Angelus Novus.” An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The angel of History must look just so. His face is turned toward the past. Where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which increasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so fair (Verweilen: a reference to Goethe’s Faust) to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future to which his back is turned while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. This storm is what we call progress.”

Walter Benjamin, Theses on the Philosophy of History, 1939

“HIC RHODUS, HIC
SALTUS
“HERE IS THE ROSE, NOW DANCE!”