

**CSP 67 ETHICS, ECONOMICS, AND THE DRUG WAR**  
Spring 2009  
MWF 1130-1220

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This seminar for first-year students emphasizes research and writing to develop critical thinking. The objective is to provide students with a comprehensive introduction to the ethical and economic dimensions of the war on drugs. This policy was implicitly sanctioned in the 1930's, officially launched by Nixon in the 1960's, and continues today with no foreseeable resolution. Practically speaking, "wars" are won or lost. Yet forty years and billions of dollars later, there is still no "victory" in sight. Therefore, one looming question is whether this description of national policy on illicit drugs is both misleading and forecloses alternative policy approaches. Topics to be explored include the science of drugs, the history of drugs, recreational drug use in modern society, the science and politics of marijuana, addiction and rationality, and the social and economic costs of prohibition.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

1. Leslie Iverson, *Drugs: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2001).
2. Eric Schlosser, *Reefer Madness and Other Essays* (Mariner, 2004).
3. Pablo DeGreiff, ed. *Drugs and the Limits of Liberalism* (Cornell, 1997).
4. Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing In Las Vegas* (Vintage, 1971).

All articles required for reading can be found on the library's electronic reserves website for this course. The textual editions and/or translations I have selected can be found in the Occidental College Bookstore (x2630). They are affordable, and you must use these editions since we will be reading the texts closely as a class.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

The course requires *minimally* completing the following assignments. No late assignments will be accepted without prior approval, which will NOT be granted as last minute requests in person or by email. No exceptions.

(1) In-class writing exam	Required	2/20
(4) Writing exercises (2 pp.)	30 percent	TBD
(1) Short paper (5 pp.)	20 percent	3/2

(1) Research paper (12 pp.)

50 percent

4/30

Class attendance and participation is expected. There are five basic rules in this classroom. (1) Read all assigned material before class and bring it with you, (2) ask questions if you don't understand, (3) participate in the discussion if you have something to say, (4) respect others, and (5) turn off your wireless devices.

It is the policy of Occidental College to make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. If you are a person requiring such accommodations to complete your course requirements, please see me no later than the second week of classes. For information on documentation requirements for such requests, contact the Center for Academic Excellence (x2849).

This syllabus represents a contract. As students you are expected to fulfill your obligations in this course, just as the Administration, Faculty, and students of Occidental College have a right to expect me to fulfill my duties as instructor.

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Plagiarism is misrepresenting the work of others as your own. Plagiarizing material and academic misconduct more generally will be turned over to the Judicial Examiner. It is standard to receive an "F" for the course, as well as additional punitive measures, for students who commit academic misconduct. There is an Academic Code at Occidental College that can be found at the following link:

<http://departments.oxy.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/academic.policies/academic.ethics.html>

## **SCHEDULE**

### **WEEKS 1 - 2: DEFINING THE DOMAIN**

1. Iverson, *Drugs: A Very Short Introduction*
2. Courtwright, "Opiates of the People"
3. History Channel Documentary: "History of Drugs, I"

### **WEEKS 3 - 4: ORIGINS OF THE "DRUG WAR"**

1. Elwood, "Rhetoric in the War on Drugs"
2. Gould, "The War on (Some) Drugs"
3. History Channel Documentary: "History of Drugs, II"

### **WEEK 5: "WAR" AS METAPHOR AND POLICY**

1. "U.S. Drug Laws"
2. "Senate Task Force for a Drug Free America"
3. Huffington, "The War on Terror's Newest Target: America's Kids"

### **WEEK 6: CONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGY**

1. Bennett, "Drugs Damage American Society"
2. Lowry, "This is a Bust"
3. O'Rourke, "My Problems with the War on Drugs"

**WEEK 7: LIBERAL IDEOLOGY**

1. Connolly, “Drugs, the Nation, and Freelancing”
2. Freeman, “Liberalism, Inalienability, and the Rights of Drug Use”
3. Friedman, “There’s No Justice in the War on Drugs”

**WEEKS 8 - 9: THE SCIENCE AND POLITICS OF MARIJUANA**

1. Schlosser, “Reefer Madness”
2. Gray, “Reefer Madness”
3. Grinspoon, “Whither Medical Marijuana”
4. Walters, “The Myth of Harmless Marijuana”

**WEEKS 10 - 11: ADDICTION AND RATIONALITY**

1. Elster, “Rationality and Addiction”
2. Pogge, “The Irrationality of Addiction—And Does it Matter?”
3. Sheff, “My Addicted Son”

**WEEKS 12 - 13: DRUGS, ALIENATION, AND MODERN SOCIETY**

1. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing In Las Vegas*

**WEEK 14: OPEN**