

## **Faculty, staff tackle topic of race/ethnicity**

by David Williams - Wednesday, February 27, 2008

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/552/faculty-staff-tackle-topic-of-raceethnicity/>

Some members of the UW Oshkosh faculty and staff have volunteered for homework — but at least they'll get their books for free.

The University of Wisconsin System Institute on Race and Ethnicity recently awarded six Campus Reading Seminar Grants to UW Oshkosh. A total of 34 grants were given out systemwide for 2008.

The Campus Reading Seminar Grants will support six reading groups on campus, encouraging scholarly exchanges on racial and ethnic subjects. Participants may include faculty members, academic and classified staff, students and members of the community.

Jane Wypiszynski, Affirmative Action and Equity interim director, sent out a campus-wide invitation in October. Five peers from several different departments and offices accepted. They then engaged in an online discussion to come up with a theme.

“We chose to focus on the Middle East. It was something that people didn't know much about and wanted to know more,” Wypiszynski said.

After comparing recommendations, the group chose to read “My Name is Red” and “The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine.” Their first meeting was held in January, and they will continue their discussions through April.

“People are doing a lot of historical research. We're learning about the culture. We're trying to better understand Islam,” Wypiszynski said. “It's a mini course in diversity.”

The College of Education and Human Services has received Campus Reading Seminar Grants the past few years. Marguerite Parks, educational foundations chair and professor, sees it as an experience that encourages unity among the faculty and staff.

“I do think it builds a community,” said Parks, adding that the book clubs are open to students as well.

Parks chose four books and two films for her groups, which she expects will attract between seven and 12 individuals per source. The groups will explore such themes as immigration and race's role in identity.

“We want to read and talk about that because the College of Education and Human Services deals a lot with children who are trying to find their identity. Also, it's important to know what children from other parts of the country deal with,” she said.

Both Parks and Wypiszynski are excited about learning about things that are not traditionally part of their curriculum.

“I’d like to come away knowing that we encouraged people to try out different types of literature,” Wypiszynski said. “Diversity is taking things one person at a time, seeing through a different lens.”

The UW Oshkosh recipients of the Campus Reading Seminar Grants are as follows:

- Arlene Haffa (chemistry), Juyeon Son (sociology), Paul Van Auken (environmental studies), et al. will read and discuss “Whitewashing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society” and “The Race Myth: Why We Pretend that Race Exists in America.”
- Marguerite Parks (educational foundations) et al. will read and discuss these books: “Enrique’s Journey,” “Flight,” “American Born Chinese” and “Snow.” In addition, they will watch and discuss the films “El Norte” and “The Kite Runner.”
- Miriam Schacht (Financial Aid Office) et al. will read and discuss “Wisconsin Indian Literature: An Anthology of Native Voices.”
- Michael White (Financial Aid Office) et al. will read and discuss “Hip Hop Matters: Politics, Pop Culture, and the Struggle for the Soul of a Movement” and “Come on People: On the Path from Victims to Victors.”
- Sally Wilke (Head Start Program) et al. will read and discuss “Building Cultures Between Home and School: A Guide for Teachers” and “Building a House for Diversity: A Fable About a Giraffe and an Elephant Offers New Strategies for Today’s Workforce.”
- Jane Wypiszynski (Office of Equity and Affirmative Action) , Tom Grogan (Chancellor’s Office) et al. will read and discuss “My Name is Red” and “The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine.”

For more information about Campus Reading Seminars, visit

[http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/IRE/grant\\_programs/reading\\_seminars.html](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/IRE/grant_programs/reading_seminars.html).

For more information about available Race and Ethnicity grants, visit

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/?p=558>.