Overview

In Dec 2022, the CWU EthicsLab was awarded a $1000 grant from APA’s Berry Fund for Public Philosophy. The purpose of the grant was to provide refreshments for an existing public discussion series for the 2023-2024 academic year. This funding has been instrumental in allowing us to provide a more impactful and enjoyable discussion series this Spring.

Background

The EthicsLab is a public-facing ethics initiative housed at Central Washington University. The mission of the EthicsLab is to promote critical thinking, cultivate ethical leadership, and facilitate moral dialog on complex ethical problems using innovative interdisciplinary and empirical approaches. Starting in Winter 2022, in collaboration with Ellensburg Public Library and the Hal Holmes Community Center, the EthicsLab began to host ‘Good Life Community Discussions.’ These events involved inviting speakers and practitioners to lead community discussions on a variety of topics related to living well. Speakers have addressed issues like living meaningful lives, arts and the good life, the nature and pursuit of happiness, having better moral conversations, and ancient Greek accounts of the good life. However, due to budget constraints, we had been unable to fund basic refreshments for this series.

Use of Funding and Results

We were pleased to feature a diverse series of public discussions in 2023. In February, we hosted a local Dzogchen Buddhist (Jampa Dorje) who detailed his account of a long retreat, and led a community discussion on retreat, meditation, and spirituality. The public loved the “knowledge and wisdom shared,” “the topic and questions,” and hearing “something new [from a] different perspective.”

In March, we collaborated with students from Dr. Matt Altman’s Public Philosophy course (PHIL 301, CWU) to host a student-led session on freedom of speech titled ‘The Language of Liberty.’ Students presented a number legal and ethical considerations before leading a public discussion on freedom of speech, harm, and offense. The community enjoyed the “relevant” information and arguments, the “lively discussions,” “willingness to hear from others,” and the ability to foster a “open discussion.”

In April, I presented an interactive workshop on intellectual virtue titled ‘What Makes a Good Thinker?’ featuring tools developed by the Constructive Dialogue Institute (Perspectives course). Participants enjoyed the “space to talk,” the “balance of information, questions, and discussion” and questions that they “probably wouldn’t have considered” otherwise, particularly related to intellectual curiosity and humility.

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1 Event rated 4.5/5 satisfaction. 46 attendees. This event was also covered by a local newspaper (Daily Record) on Feb 12, 2023: [https://www.dailyrecordnews.com/ellensburg/presentation-on-mans-spiritual-journey-as-dzogchen-buddhist-draws-crowd/article_9dc21840-a7e7-11ed-a761-7388f578cc40.html](https://www.dailyrecordnews.com/ellensburg/presentation-on-mans-spiritual-journey-as-dzogchen-buddhist-draws-crowd/article_9dc21840-a7e7-11ed-a761-7388f578cc40.html)
2 Event rated 4.6/5 satisfaction. 20 attendees.
3 Event rated 4.5/5 satisfaction. 13 attendees.
Finally, we concluded the Spring series with an interactive discussion titled ‘Dreaming in World Religions’ presented Dr. Jeffrey Dippmann. This session focused on the moral and religious importance of dreaming in human life and action. Audience members enjoyed the “deep subject” which was “a rare experience” for some. Several commented on the “interesting speaker” and “topic choice.” Most enjoyed the “inclusion of multiple cultures” and “examples of how different cultures have tried to understand dreams.”

In each case, the audience very much appreciated the availability of refreshments (which we note are provided by the APA Berry Fund grant at each event). The Good Life Discussions take place in the evening (6PM-7:30PM) and thanks to the Berry Fund grant, we can now provide a selection of coffee, tea, and soft drinks as well as a selection of cookies/donuts, chips/crackers. Presently, we have used approximately one quarter of the grant funding for our Spring events and look forward to providing refreshments into Fall 2023 as we continue to host engaging conversations on the Good Life in our community.

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4 Event rated 4.6/5 satisfaction. 20 attendees.