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Walls & Bridges: 2014 Theme

As part of Illinois Wesleyan's strategic initiatives and commitment to a strong intellectual campus environment, we continue to enhance the use of intellectual themes in curricular and co-curricular programming. Ultimately, the goal is create an annual campus-wide theme that serves to frame engagement for the summer reading, convocations, May term programming, and any other potential collaborative efforts across campus. This year, the theme that's been selected is Walls and Bridges. This theme was selected first by the International Studies faculty as we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the destruction of the Berlin Wall.



In the spirit of collaboration and mutual support, the faculty involved with the course clusters led by Rebecca Gearhart and Mark Criley also selected this theme. This "Walls and Bridges" theme reflects faculty-led interest that we hope will permeate the campus community in 2014-15 and serve as a model for future intellectual themes.

The world continues to be marked by the construction and demolition of both walls and bridges, physical, economic, ideological, and political. Walls and bridges serve to both separate and unite; however, the reasons for building walls and bridges is complex – informed by history, power, and ideas.

Today's global interest appears to be replacing walls with bridges, but the reasons for the construction of these bridges need to be unpacked and better understood. The problems associated with the exercise of power in the construction of both walls and bridges continue to exist, as the interest of people and states continue to shift. Are bridges two-way avenues of liberation and mutual support? Or are they the openings by which domination is expanded by the powerful? Are walls fortresses of control? Or the fortifications of defense?



The theme of "Walls and Bridges" calls upon us to examine relations of power and people, in the past, in the present and in the future. The theme calls upon us to examine walls and bridges both literal anniversary of the 1989 demolition of the Berlin Wall, the Israel/Palestine experiences of the (the 25th present and more) and figurative (the contrasting experiences of internet walls constructed in Turkey or China compared to the impact of social media in mobilizing social justice action). The theme allows us to explore a multitude of subjects,

ranging from trading blocs to flows of capital; from border controls to border crossing; from diversity to homogenization, as people express themselves through culture, the arts, literature, and other media.



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