



How Does Your Program Grow, Clarence Lo?

A professor in the sociology department for over two decades, this multitasker also is the director of the Peace Studies Program
By Melody Galen

Named director of the Peace Studies Program in summer 2011, Associate Professor Clarence Lo spends half his work time as director of graduate studies in the sociology department; then he must switch gears for peace studies. Lo not only balances the two areas, he's also working on ways to expand the Peace Studies Program.

The Road to Peace

Lo holds a doctorate in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley, and he specializes in the study of political and economic elites, protests against those elites, and social movements that try to change society. He was led to peace studies by many things in his research, but particularly by studying the Korean War, American society during wars, and social movements.

The Peace Studies Program was officially launched in 1970, and he has expanded it to encompass four areas: international war and civil war, the environment, social movements, and global cultural understanding. As part of the plan to broaden the program, Lo says that the program is on the verge of launching a fifth area on indigenous peoples and the imperial state.

Peace studies is unlike most other departments or programs on campus because of its highly interdisciplinary nature. It is not taught by faculty who all hold degrees in peace studies but by sociologists, historians, and faculty from Romance languages, English, and geography.

Taking Peace Studies Online

Not only does peace studies offer 19 courses in classrooms every semester, with most of them cross-listed in their home departments, but there is a significant list of classes offered

online. Soon the program will offer a minor that can be completed online and will be available to anyone in the world.

"If you're an MU student sitting in your dorm, you can take an online course and get full credit, just like you marched into the lecture hall three times a week," Lo says.

One advantage to an online class, as Lo sees it, is that everyone is expected to participate in online discussions. It's expected, they're graded on it, and that is different than a typical lecture, because in a larger face-to-face class there is simply not enough time to allow everyone to weigh in on a topic.

As one student in the summer online environmental policy class said of the discussion boards, "I gained so much more, because I came to conclusions on my own and formulated my own thoughts. Allowing other students to respond through online discussion boards also helped clarify confusing concepts and share thoughtful ideas."

Offering a minor online will require the program to keep increasing its online offerings. Five classes will be required to complete the minor; thus there will need to be a sufficient number of classes to allow students some attractive choices and keep the course listings vital.

Growing Scholars

Continuing its growth trend, the program will begin recruiting next year for a visit-

ing scholar to start in fall 2014. In sort of a perpetual cycle, peace studies will need to continue to grow and develop its program so that there will be supporting courses and lasting student interest, which in turn will develop the reputation of the program and make it attractive to a visiting scholar, which will, again, draw more students.

In Global Environmental Policy, Lo's favorite class to teach, the issue of global warming has the potential to galvanize large numbers of students when they realize that in their lifetime the changes in the biosphere could very well be cataclysmic. He believes that when an 18-year-old learns about global warming, it makes quite an impact. "They want to see a political system where their voices and actions matter," he says.

This is one of the reasons that the peace studies faculty sees a need to have courses drawing from different de-

partments that will meet the student interest in environment and sustainability issues. "I teach them about all this stuff, and they're very interested, and they end up applying it to what other courses to take and what careers to pursue, but it also leads them to

It might not be an obvious choice for a man living in the middle of the nation, but a favorite activity for Lo is surfing.



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Clarence Lo began teaching sociology at the university in 1987, and he began teaching in Peace Studies about 2003.

very specific involvement on political issues," says Lo.

"I think that training people for peace requires knowledge and understanding and insight, and these are the hallmarks of a liberal arts, broad education," he says. "Peace studies is a *doing* kind of discipline, it's not just theoretical. So many of our students go on to service work: they go to Peace Corps or Teach for America or other agencies and nonprofit organizations. It's important to give

people some very nitty-gritty practical experience in things like community organization, issues of global health, and sustainability."

In that vein, Lo feels that it's valuable for disciplines to address a broader audience than those already in the discipline, "because no one discipline has a stranglehold on ways of seeing things or public policy and principles."

There are plans afoot to offer a graduate seminar on immigration, the state, and human rights with involvement by Kerby A. Milller, of the history department, and Michael Ugarte, of Romance languages, to come up with novel, theoretical ways of analyzing the identity of exiles, stateless refugees, and migrant workers in a global economy. Lo strongly believes that it's a worthwhile task for a person of any discipline to make his or her research accessible to an intelligent person who is outside that discipline. He also believes that that accessibility will yield engaging discussions among the public and, hopefully, higher levels of understanding of diverse points of view.

"I've organized the peace studies curriculum around critical dialogues courses on democracy movements and nonviolence, on business corporations and social responsibility, and on resolving conflicts over global environmental policies. These are the great issues and tasks for our time," Lo concludes.

"Growing the Peace Studies Program means a widening circle of discussion among MU students, faculty, alums, and the Friends of Peace Studies, a group of extraordinarily generous donors based in Columbia, Mo. Peace is the power of a thousand pointed conversations, concluding that there is a better way than violence and war."

