

Constructing a Conceptual Framework for Social Action

Description • Modality

This course begins 24 January 2010, 20 June 2010, and 26 September 2010

Course Content

Constructing a Conceptual Framework for Social Action explores a framework within which an individual concerned with the transformation of society acts and reflects on action.

In order to participate in action that contributes to meaningful social change, a person needs to apply certain principles that are consistent with one another, and form elements of a collective conceptual framework. To understand these principles, and to share and apply them, is something one must learn how to do. This learning happens both through individual study and application, and by interacting with a community engaged in conversation, interpretation, and action.

The elements that build the conceptual framework for social action explored in this course can be grouped in categories, including fundamental issues of existence, the role of knowledge in the life of the individual and the development of society, principles and values, and approaches and methods. Various elements from each category are discussed.

The course text consists of seven chapters prepared by FUNDAEC. The chapters present extensive passages from pertinent literature, and include Reflection Questions to be written individually, some of which are then shared among course participants through submissions to an online Discussion Forum, others of which are submitted to the group's tutor. Supplementary readings and the writing of a Final Paper are also required.

To whom is this course directed?

Constructing a Conceptual Framework for Social Action is directed to students of social processes, people engaged in social action, and those whose careers are oriented toward service, who want to learn to become more effective in their application of spiritual principles to bring about change.

The course text proposes that social action needs to take place within a consistent conceptual framework shared by a group of people working together to effect positive change. This framework evolves as those who have embraced it engage in action and converse with like-minded people about the results of what they do. Therefore those who participate in the online groups should be engaged in action, and motivated to study by their concern about injustices in the world and a sincere desire to make effort to bring about change in the context in which they act.

Course Modality

The online study of Constructing a Conceptual Framework for Social Action has been designed in such a way as to encourage the approximation of some of the elements of reflection, discussion, and thought about the application of concepts in action that characterize the in-person study of FUNDAEC's materials.

Below you will find questions about certain aspects of the course modality – the study group, the course tutor, the instructor, the program coordination and administration, as well as about aspects of a typical week, including the work load and the structure of the course site.

How does the Internet-based study of Constructing a Conceptual Framework for Social Action work?

The organizational structure of the Internet-based course presently has the following components:

Study Group of Ten to Fourteen Participants Connected Online

Participants in one online group may be located anywhere in the world. Interactions amongst students and between students and the tutor occur entirely online.

Tutor

The tutor is connected both to the program coordination and administration and to a group of students. This tutor monitors the online Discussion Forum, receives submitted assignments, and responds to the group's assignments each week, giving collective and individual feedback.

Tutors also receive guidance regularly from the program coordination, including highlights from the responses of students in other groups in different parts of the world.

Instructor

An instructor from FUNDAEC collaborates closely with more than one tutor and group. The instructor receives, through the central administration, the final papers written by the students. The gradual elaboration of these papers forms part of the students' weekly assignments. The instructor and his or her assistants read and grade these papers.

Program Coordination and Administration

There is an overall Coordinator of the program, who collaborates with the instructors and the tutors, and works with an Information Officer - who sends and receives electronic correspondence about the program up to the point of a potential student submitting an application - and a Course Registrar who receives applications, communicates admissions decisions, and with whom accepted students correspond regarding details of registration and course functioning.

How long is the course?

The duration of the online study of Constructing a Conceptual Framework for Social Action is 15 weeks. The final paper is due two weeks later. During weeks 16 and 17, while students are completing the paper, the tutor is available for consultation. Occasionally other study formats may be offered.

How is the course organized?

The course site has proven easy to navigate, and includes an overall syllabus as well as a weekly outline that guides participants each week to the various areas – the Discussion Forum, tutor-submitted assignments, the Final Paper Journal

– where particular assignments are submitted.

The required weekly sections of the course text, as well as links to required supplementary readings, are also included in each week's outline.

Tutor responses, along with any correspondence from the program coordination and administration, appear on the site in the "From the Tutor" area.

An area called "Course Thoughts" is envisioned as a discussion space within which participants can write about ideas generated by their study of the materials, or about any of the Reflection Questions that are not assigned for submission.

And a final area called "Tutor Dialogue" permits tutors and students to correspond about any aspect of the study of the course.

How does a typical week work?

A weekly calendar posted on the course site announces upcoming assignments.

From Sunday to Thursday, students are asked to read a certain amount of the course text and supplementary readings, and to write notes on all Reflection Questions.

Thursday students submit concise thoughts on one or two assigned Reflection Questions to the Discussion Forum.

From Thursday to Sunday, students read the Discussion submissions of others in their group, and, by Sunday, submit a response to the Discussion Forum.

By Monday of the following week students submit an assignment to the tutor and complete an entry in their Final Paper Journal – a course area that permits the gradual development of the Final Paper over the length of the course.

Meanwhile a new week has begun Sunday, and reading for the subsequent chapter may begin.

How much work is required of each course participant?

The pace and course load are fairly intensive. Experience has shown that participants spend an average of approximately 15-20 hours per week on course reading and written assignments.

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