The SBS Compassion Project

The goal of the NAU SBS Compassion Project (SBSCP) is to explore the concept, development, and application of compassion into our everyday lives. The project has four sub-committees that involve faculty, staff, and students from across campus: curriculum, research, community, and conference planning.

Living Compassion Conference in October!

The SBS Compassion Project is in the midst of finalizing the plans for the "Living Compassion" Conference that will be held on the NAU campus October 26 & 27, 2012. This conference will provide an opportunity for academic and non-academic scholars, researchers, students, practitioners, laypersons, and community members to learn about both basic and applied research that expands our understanding of compassion, its evolutionary and philosophical roots, describes skills training programs (in educational and personal settings) for fostering and strengthening compassion, and community-based projects and programs that incorporate a compassionate stance. The ultimate goal of the conference is to heighten our awareness of the multiple benefits compassion can make in our everyday lives.

The conference schedule is now complete and available on the SBS website. While the bulk of our faculty presenters are from SBS, we have presenters from 10 different departments across campus, representing nearly all of the colleges and schools on campus. There are also many presenters from northern Arizona Communities, including Flagstaff, Sedona, and Prescott. This conference is truly interdisciplinary in scope and is generating quite a bit of excitement thus far.

The first day of the conference (Friday, October 26) will be held at the DuBois Center (2nd floor ballroom) will feature two plenary talks, and symposia sessions representing a wide variety of academic disciplines. The event will be free to all. We are seeking very high student participation for that day. On Friday evening, we will have a keynote speaker at the Cline Library (6:45-8:00): Mary Gordon, International speaker and founder of Roots of Empathy educational program/intervention. This event will be free and open to all. The second day of the conference (Saturday, October 27) will be held at the High Country Conference Center where we expect a broader audience, both from the academic and general communities. In addition to multiple symposia sessions throughout the day, we will have special plenary talks. The last event on Saturday will be a poster session with students, community organizations, faculty, individuals who would like to talk about their experiences and work that speaks to compassion on some level—its development, encouragement, implementation. The event on Saturday will be free for students with a modest food/refreshment fee for everyone else ($20). Efforts to get the word out to teachers, health care professionals, psychologists, business owners, and interested members of the community will begin in mid-August, continuing through to the conference date. Please help us get the word out! We are seeking to offer a rich educational experience that fosters connections between NAU, CCC, and the community.

http://www.nau.edu/SBS/Events/Living-Compassion/
Conference Partners

Additional Events Planned for Conference Weekend

In addition to the main conference events, two additional opportunities for learning and training have been organized for the weekend of the conference. First, on Thursday, October 25, Dr. Kristin Neff will provide a workshop (for CEU credit) for local psychologists, health care, and interested members of the community to attend a day-long workshop “Self-Compassion Workshop for Health Professionals.” This one-day workshop will provide an overview of Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) training program developed by Kristin Neff, Ph.D. and Chris Germer, Ph.D. Using lecture, meditation, scientific research, interactive exercises, and discussion, this course is relevant to the general public as well as to practicing mental health professionals. Contact compassionpsych@nau.edu for more details. Cost is $75 for adults, $50 for students, $25 extra for 6 CEU credits for Licensed Psychologists. This event is co-sponsored by the Northern Arizona Psychological Society and will be held on the NAU campus.

On Friday morning (while the conference is being held at DuBois—with mostly a student audience), NAU Faculty are invited to participate in a discussion of Sentipensante with author, Laura Rendón on Friday, October 26, 10-11:30 am at The Gathering Hall at the NAU Native American Center. Registrants (free to faculty) will receive a copy of Dr. Rendón’s book in advance of the session. Interested faculty can go to nau.edu/facdev in the Upcoming Events section to get information about the book, about Dr. Rendón, and to register for the session. This session is co-sponsored by the Office of the President and the Faculty Development Program.

Community Impact

Hot Topics, Civil Discourse, & Arizona

During the 2011-2012 academic year, the SBS Compassion Project helped sponsor a project housed in CAI’s Philosophy in the Public Interest Program, called “Hot Topics.” This project creates opportunities that allow people to do three things: (1) have a general educational discussion about a timely issue of political concern that is focused on bringing different points of view to light, but not focused on building consensus. Not coming to some sort of agreement about a solution is important, because it gives people the opportunity to relax their defenses and really listen to what other parties have to say; (2) This project is grounded in an ethos of compassion, which gives people the opportunity to practice civility and care for one another. We are not merely fostering civility or politeness, but an empathetic listening and understanding of alternative points of view; (3) Hot Topics Cafés are facilitated by philosophers who welcome all substantive points of view, yet do point out fallacious reasoning or claims that cannot be supported. Overall this project is unique because it creates an opportunity for the general public to learn about issues, strengthen their logical reasoning, and to do so in a safe, compassionate environment.

A total of seven Hot Topics discussions were hosted and covered a variety of topics: SB1070, women’s reproductive rights, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Snowmaking at Snowbowl, wind energy, gay marriage, and the Tucson book ban HB 2281 and removing books from Tucson school rooms. The goal of these discussions was to engage in civil conversations, guided by faculty experts from relevant fields and motivated by a desire to listen with an open-mind and open-heart. The Hot Topics series was very successful; just over 550 individuals attended the discussions. The program will continue in an expanded form in 2012-2013. Hot Topics Cafe will be held in Sedona and Flagstaff as well as on the NAU Flagstaff campus. In addition, a community committee and a campus committee have been formed to help develop a non-partisan list of topics to cover in these discussions. Twenty-five events are planned for this year and the first set of topics selected by the respective committees includes Media Impact on Thought, Socialists and Vulture Capitalists, Super PACs and elections, Media and Rhetoric, Taxes and the National Debt, The Costs of Higher Education, Health Care: Access and Coverage, Is Freedom threatened by Equality? and Climate Change.