Call for Critical Conversation Faculty Participants

As part of the new General Educational Curriculum, the First Year Experience includes a series of “Critical Conversations” based around a theme or series of themes to introduce students to our academic community, to model the different types of intellectual debates and inquiries found on the University Campus, and to invite students to think and talk about issues that are central to their educational development and the world around them. In particular, we are looking for interdisciplinary conversations and debates that represent the range and substance of intellectual activity on our campus. Because diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the core of Brandeis’ history and mission, we value and are seeking participants with a variety of social identities as well as proposals that engage with ongoing conversations about diversity and social justice.

We are calling for groups of three faculty volunteers to participate in public moderated conversations and/or debates on our given theme (“Truth”), to be scheduled in the early evening around the middle to late middle weeks of each semester, followed by opportunities to also engage with students in smaller settings. Later in the spring, we will invite additional faculty to volunteer to meet with first year students in small groups to discuss related subjects that draw on their own specialities and varieties of academic discourse. In addition to proposals to stage these public conversations for audiences of approximately 200-400 first year students and possibly other members of the campus community, we are also interested in more experimental frameworks that encourage active student participation.

For the inaugural series of “Critical Conversations” we have selected the theme of “Truth” because of its centrality to our particular University’s history and identity and because it is a foundational feature of all types of academic inquiry. Despite such centrality, we are often hard-pressed to agree on definitions of the meaning of the word “Truth”. And, perhaps because of this, we live in a time where what is true is contested in political and scientific domains.

We are interested in proposals from a range of academic disciplines that reflect on the search for and the nature of the truth. What is the nature of evidence acceptable in scientific practice and how does it inform what we believe to be true? What do different schools of philosophy have to say about the ontological status of truth? How does the truth of history affect our concept of the past? What is the relationship between truth and identity? What do the visual and performing arts have to tell us about the pursuit of the truth?

Conversants will receive honoraria of $750.00 and moderators will receive $250.00. We welcome proposals that pair discussants from different disciplines with a moderator from a third discipline, but we are also willing to hear from volunteers who want to be placed in a discussion if an appropriate topic and partners are available.

Proposals should be submitted through the form and should specify (1) the envisioned title of the Critical Conversation; (2) the faculty participants; (3) any material or audiovisual needs; (4) how the event supports the year’s theme of “Truth”; and (5) what you would hope for students to integrate from your presentation and argumentation into their writing.
For discussants, please include two to three sentences explaining what kind of a perspective you bring to your discussion of “Truth”, what disciplinary framework your contribution will introduce, and what you think students may gain from the discussion. In the Spring Semester, we will issue a second call for faculty to meet with small groups of students (between 9-18) in support of the Critical Conversations and the University Writing Seminar.

Please submit your proposal through the form by November 9th. Notifications for accepted proposals will be issued before the end of the Fall Semester’s Finals Period.