Editor's Preface

Jessica Hollis
University of Kentucky

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editorial collective
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Emily Biggs
Kristi Branhm
Marcia England
Jessica Hollis
Vanessa Hudson
John Paul Jones III
Danny Mayer
Wolfgang Natter
Dana Nelson
Joe Sanders
Theodore Schatzki
Jonathan Vincent
Keith Woodward

issue editor:
Jessica Hollis

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contributors

Jeffrey C. Alexander is professor and Chair of the Sociology Department at Yale University. He has written extensively in social theory. His books *Theoretical Logic in Sociology* (1982-83), *Twenty Lectures: Sociological Theory Since World War Two* (1987), and *Action and Its Environments: Towards a New Synthesis* (1988) are essential to understanding contemporary theoretical debates within sociology. In his new book, Alexander develops a theory of the civil sphere emphasizing the role of culture in shaping the structure of our political life.

Walter Bower is a Ph.D. candidate in the sociology department at the University of Kentucky. His research interests include social theory, feminist theory, and the sociology of religion. His dissertation research is an ethnographic study of the limitations in the rational choice approach to religious participation.

Lisa E. Broome-Price is a Ph.D. candidate in the English department at the University of Kentucky. Her dissertation, *Arachne's Politics*, examines how representations of tapestries in various media illuminate concerns about English liberty and the function of arts education in England from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.

Beth Diamond is an Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture at the California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. She holds a BLA and MLA from the School of Architecture and Allied Arts at the University of Oregon. Her research interests focus on landscape as a visionary medium, the intersection of theory and art in built space, and strategies for multicultural expression in the public realm.

Christopher M. Duncan is Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science at the University of Dayton. He is the author of two books, *The Anti-Federalist and Early American Political Thought* (1995) and *Fugitive Theory: Political Theory, The Southern Agrarians, and America* (2000). He is currently working on a book on the political thought of Dorothy Day and Michael Harrington and the place of Catholicism in the American Left.

Marcia England is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Geography at the University of Kentucky. Her current research interests include exclusionary politics of urban public space and productions of urban identity.

Jessica Hollis is a Ph.D. candidate in the English department at the University of Kentucky and the editor of *distillation* 12. Her dissertation examines intersections of space and social class in Britain from the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century.

G. Wesley Houpt is currently working on his dissertation in Adult Education and Literacy and teaching writing at the University of Kentucky. His poems have appeared in *Kentucky Poetry Review, Wind Magazine, New Growth Arts Review* and *Chattahoochee Review* among others.

Vanessa Hudson is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Geography at the University of Kentucky.

Natalia Ruiz-Junco is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Kentucky.

Jonathan Lepofsky is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Geography at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He also works at the Center for Urban and Regional Studies at UNC. His research interests include urban geography, social theory, community, citizenship, and planning & development. His dissertation will examine community-building and urban restructuring in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He has published in *Urban Studies, Urban Affairs Review, Urban Land*, and *Community Development Journal*.

Martin E. Marty is the Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of the History of Modern Christianity in the Divinity School and the Committee on the History of Culture at the University of Chicago. Martin Marty has taught in the Divinity School, the History Department, and the Committee on the History of Culture since 1963. He specializes in late-eighteenth- and twentieth-century American religion. His scholarly work is centered in a multi-volume work entitled *Modern American Religion*, three volumes of which have appeared: *The Irony of It All, The Noise of Conflict, and Under God, Indivisible*. An ordained minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, he has put considerable effort into the Master of Divinity program at the Divinity School and in teaching for public ministry.

Katharyne Mitchell is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Washington. She has published primarily in the area of migration, urban geography and transnational studies in journals such as *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, Economy and Society, Society and Space, Antipode, Political Geography, Urban Geography and Economic Geography*. She is co-editor of *A Companion Guide to Political Geography, and Life's Work*. Her current work focuses on the impact of transnational migration on conceptions of education, with a particular focus on how children are educated to become citizens of a particular nation-state.

Kyonghwan Park is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Geography at the University of Kentucky.

Patricia L. Price is an assistant professor of geography in the Department of International Relations and Geography at Florida International University in Miami, Florida. Her research interests in the field of cultural geography include gender, “race,” urbanization, and popular religion. She has conducted field research in Mexico and the Mexico-U.S. borderlands. Current research interests keep her closer to home, where she is exploring the intra-Latino dynamics of the cultural politics of neighborhood change in Little Havana, Miami. Her publications have appeared in journals such as *Latin American Perspectives, Society and Space, Social and Cultural Geography*, and *the International Feminist Journal of Politics*. Her book, *Place Visions*, is forthcoming from the University of Minnesota Press in 2004.
Jessica Hollis
Editor's Preface

This issue of *disclosure* explores a myriad ways we understand and employ the term "civil," some of the various behavioral and institutional forms civility and incivility take, and the different social realms and spaces in which we see these concepts and forms operating. The inspiration for the title and theme of this issue of *disclosure*, *(in)civilities*, came from The Committee on Social Theory's Spring Seminar title: "Civil Society / Civic Practice." As the editorial collective began brainstorming a call for submissions for an issue that would explore these concepts, we quickly found that our paths of thought led to ideas that extended beyond the particular concepts themselves to include questions about the various meanings, definitions, and connotations of "civil," its opposites or counterparts, and its absence. What, we asked, were the connects and disconnects between a Western European notion of "civil society" and the seemingly de-politized definitions of "civil" such as "humane, gentle, kind" (OED "civil" 11)? What forms of civic practice preceded and proceeded such connects and disconnects? In selecting "(in)civilities" as our issue title, we wanted to galvanize critical inquiry into the intersections and bifurcations across and along the boundaries of state/civil society, public/private, personal/political, and conceptual/material. designing civic space that acknowledges and respects a spectrum of social and cultural identities. In keeping with *disclosure*’s commitment to publishing interdisciplinary work and innovative and nontraditional modes of academic inquiry, we begin this issue with Patricia Price’s montage, “Entre Amigos / Among Friends,” which employs a range of discursive tools to explore various manifestations of (in)civility at the border between Mexico and the U.S. Through a series of interwoven meditations, images, and poems, Price attempts “to get at ideas and feelings that are elusive, ineffable, difficult to grasp outright” and that evade

Sara Sahni studies law at the Louis D. Brandeis School of Law at the University of Louisville. She finds her inspiration in the color pink and the invisible smile of Hello Kitty!

Krista Schneider is a practicing landscape architect and planner working at John Milner Associates in Charlottesville, VA. Previously, she taught design studios and planning classes at the University of Kentucky where she served as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture and as an associate faculty member in the Graduate Program of Historic Preservation. Ms. Schneider’s work has been focused on understanding how public landscapes shape civic identity as well as cultural landscape preservation. Her published works include “The Shaping of Public Space: A Reflection of Lexington’s Evolving Identity,” and “Negotiating the Image of the Inner-Bluegrass,” forthcoming in *Landscape Journal*.

Jeff Shantz
Brett Smith is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Kentucky.

Donald L. Turner is a doctoral candidate in the Ph.D. Program in Religious and Theological Studies administered jointly by Denver University and the Iliff School of Theology, and he teaches Philosophy at Austin Peay State University. His diverse work includes writings on William James, the “UFO cult,” and the Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna. His current research focuses on the work of Heidegger, Levinas, and Derrida, and his dissertation is titled *Animal Alterity: Levinasian Ethics and the Relationship Between Human and Non-human Animals*.

Jonathan Vincent is a Ph.D. student in American Studies at the University of Kentucky. His research interests are in American war writing, aesthetics, and national identity.

Keith Woodward is a graduate student at the University of Kentucky.
traditional forms of academic discourse. Beth Diamond's and Krista Schneider's “Urban Fabric” is, likewise, a nontraditional form of critical inquiry. An entry in Lexington, Kentucky's New Courthouse Design competition, “Urban Fabric” argues for the facilitating role of art and history in designing civic space that acknowledges and respects a spectrum of social and cultural identities.

Two of our article submissions continue these explorations of spatialized group dynamics to investigate the idea of “community” as it relates to citizenship and political practice. Jonathan Lepofsky argues for the usefulness of a radical reconceptualization of “community” to facilitate forms of belonging, identity, and citizenship that are not place based. Jeff Shantz, in turn, discusses the labeling of anarchists and their actions as “uncivil” and points out the irony of such labels in light of many anarchists' commitment to community building not only as the basis of political action but as a form of political practice. Christopher Duncan also addresses the issue of labeling political action (or in this case a lack thereof) to examine the seeming political and social apathy a portion of U.S. youth demonstrate. Rather than rage against the group exhibiting this disaffection, Duncan finds these individuals privately desiring civic participation but hindered from engaging in such pursuits by a “social logic” of futility. Donald Turner advances these discussions of civil society, civic practice, and civility beyond the purely human realm to ask how the concept of “civility” can inform our relationships with non-human animals and to gesture towards thinking about what it might mean to include these relationships in our notions of civil society and civic practice.

Our interviews with Jeffrey Alexander, Martin Marty, and Kathrynne Mitchel extend considerations of our theme to include, respectively, reconceiving traditional understandings of the concept of “civil society” by analyzing the complex and dynamic boundary relations between the “civil” and “uncivil” spheres of society; exploring civic “associations” (both in terms of organized groups and voluntary, pre-given, and enforced affiliations at the individual level) ability to facilitate “the common good”; and, the construction of citizens in an increasingly transnationalized world. Finally, our literary submissions from Sara Sahni and G. Wesley Houpt offer narrative and poetic renderings of personal and political (in)civilities and their intersections.

We hope you enjoy disClosure's contributions to dialogue about civility. In an effort to create more continuity between our annual issues, we also would like to invite our readers to respond to (in)equalities. Selected responses and/or excerpts from them will appear in the next issue of disClosure Pangaea, forthcoming in 2004. Responses can be sent to our address found on the editorial page.

Acknowledgments

If there is one thing I have learned from editing this issue of disClosure, it is that the number of individuals involved in the production of an issue far exceeds that of the editorial collective itself. This issue of disClosure is the product of the time, energy, and support of many individuals, and on behalf of the editorial collective, I would like to thank those individuals. Professors Ted Schatz, John Paul Jones, III, and Dana Nelson, our faculty advisors, have generously contributed their time, helpful advice, and encouragement. Other members of the Committee on Social Theory have likewise supported us in a variety of ways. For these contributions to this issue, we thank Professors Virginia Blum, Brian Gran, Tom Janowski, Sue Roberts, Betsy Taylor, and Chris Zurn. Our hats are off to those who assisted us with the editing of manuscripts: Chad Barbour, Tony Brusate, Frankie Finley, Bess Fox, Jim Hanlon, Chris Kays, Melinda Spencer Kingsbury, Meg Marquis, Christine Metzo, Ben Smith, Becky Weaver-Hightower, Jeff West, and Rynetta Davis. We are especially indebted to Sheila Collins and Kristi Branham for their invaluable editing assistance of during the last days of production. Thanks also to Jeff Osborne and Jim Hanlon, who provided helpful commentary during the review process, and Kristi Branham for leading us in our conceptualization of the issue cover. For taking time for interviews and contributing to the strength of this issue, we thank Jeffrey Alexander, Martin Marty, and Kathryne Mitchell. Most sincere thanks go to all of our contributors for their hard work, cooperation, and goodwill over the last year. We congratulate them on a job well done.

The Departments of Geography and English and the Committee on Social Theory furnished us with space, technology resources, and production materials, which are highly valued and much appreciated. In particular, we are obliged to Emily Biggs and Melissa Purdue, the editors of Limestone, for sharing their office space and computer software with us during production. Lynn Hiler, Chris Wolcott, and the staff of the English Department supplied us with much needed and valuable administrative support. Thanks also to John Pantazacos at Central Printing for his advice, energy, and availability, and to Lori Melamed at EBSCO Publishing for her patience, persistence, and good humor. Finally, without funding from the Committee on Social Theory, the Vice-President for Research and Graduate Studies, and the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Kentucky, disClosure would cease to exist. We thank them for their continued support and faith in this enterprise.

I want to personally thank those who made my job as editor easier and more enjoyable. As the RA for the Social Theory Program, Matt McCourt never failed to ask how things were going, and I drew a great deal of encouragement from this show of interest. Previous editors, Christine Metzo and Paul Kingsbury, provided me with advice, guidance, encouragement, and, perhaps most importantly, empathy during my tenure. I thank them for sharing their time and experiences with me. As the new director of The Committee on Social Theory, Dana Nelson has
not only generously taken the time to advise me on various legal, ethical, and political issues associated with journal editing and publishing, she has been a source of moral support and collegiality for me. Finally, I want to thank my predecessor, Jim Hanlon. From the moment I embarked on this almost-two-year tour as editor, Jim has been my most important source of information, advice, and encouragement. His support sustained my enthusiasm in this endeavor when nothing else did. I am particularly indebted to Jim for his considerable contribution during the final days of production. Without his willingness to share his experience with and knowledge of desktop publishing, you would not be holding this issue right now.

Patricia L. Price
Entre Amigos / Among Friends

Introduction

This is not traditional academic prose. It is, rather, an amalgam of meditations, images, and poetry that gathers around the play of civilities and incivilities which together constitute the border between Mexico and the United States. It is also play-like, arranged in three 'acts' of sorts. Act One picks out (and at) the myriad ways that incivility masquerades as strict politeness at the border: a neat row of stadium lights, the symmetrical staccato click of the turnstile, stacks of coins in toll-booths, an occasional smile by the customs officer, and the Budweiser billboard reminding us all that friendship has clear limits. Act Two follows the arc of the cast-off beer bottle from the billboard in Act One to sort through border garbage. It examines the praxis of disposability as constituting a life-cycle from birth to decline, to death, and then resurrection at various ontological levels. Act Two delves into the deepest incivility, turning on the disposability of human lives as well as on the miraculous ways that everything from old tires to human souls can literally and figuratively rise from the dead to haunt the landscape of the present. In Act Three, these repetitive plays between opposites—civil/uncivil, alive/dead, useful/useless, here/there, us/them—are pursued to the point where their ceaseless fission results in something wholly new and lovely. For no one could live in a place so constantly riven, yet the fact that so many of us do suggests that we engage in constant acts of healing, faith, and even love, acts that render any divide partial at best.

It is not, however, playful. For play can evoke a light-hearted distraction that would constitute a dangerous approach to the violent edges of empire. My use here of poetry and photographs to examine the sharply contentious edges of the contemporary world is intended, rather, to be productive, and can be thought of as an artisanal un-