



Tuesday, September 25, 2001

## Attacks discussed on Day of Understanding

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Oakland University faculty were encouraged to address their students' thoughts, fears and uncertainties surrounding the recent terrorist attacks on the United States. To honor those who lost their lives, suffered injuries or experienced emotional trauma and to promote discussion among OU students, Tuesday, Sept. 25, was designated as "A Day of Understanding: Search for Harmony through Classroom Dialogue."

John Lees, special lecturer of political science, spent the first half of his Introduction to American Politics course discussing the terrorist attacks with his students.

"On the first day of class, I told you that politics touches your life," Lees said to his class. "The political events occurring right now are the important things. It's the right thing to do to discuss these events in this setting."

Lees began the discussion by reading a quote from author Roger Zelazny, which read, "Grief and anger shrink my world, and I resent this. They seem to paralyze my memory of happier times, of friends, places, things, options."

"This quote sums up the way I feel," Lees said. "There are students in more than one of my classes who have suffered personal losses. I have not experienced personal loss as a result of the attacks, but I think that our world has shrunk in some sense."

Lees engaged his students by exploring their thoughts, feelings and emotions concerning the attacks.

Sophomore Julie Caleo, a political science major, expressed some fear that prejudice may increase toward those of Arab descent as a result of the terrorism. She also made reference to the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II.

"We should learn from that historical example of the way Japanese-Americans were treated," Lees said. "What it primarily involves is the branding of a certain number of American citizens for what a singular organization has done. This is not what America should be about. It is unfortunate and wrong. If we don't remember that mistake, we'll do it over again. As citizens, we need to be vigilant of having a kind of society that is not based on hate."

Freshman Kim Khemmoro, a psychology major, said she felt the tragic events had brought Americans together. She also made reference to the national day of prayer as designated by President Bush.

"It's a natural reaction to rally around the flag," Lees said. "Though the feeling was not this intense during the Gulf War. President Bush's requisition for people to turn to churches, synagogues and mosques demonstrates the great tolerance we have for others in our multicultural society."

Freshman Reid Turner said he thought of the people on the planes that were hijacked, particularly the passengers aboard the plane that crashed in Pennsylvania.

"I came to class and heard about the first crash into the World Trade Center, but didn't think much about it at first," Turner said. "Then as I heard more about what was going on and learned that classes had been canceled, I knew it was a big deal. Then I started thinking about the victims and the families of those people who were aboard the planes and in the towers."

"Death is always hardest on the survivors," Lees said. "The heroism of the people on that plane which crashed in Pennsylvania is tremendous. They were put in a position that no one should ever be forced into."

As the discussion concluded, Lees said he was "gratified" for those students who shared their thoughts and feelings, and said "we should pause and think of humanitarian concerns when it comes to responding to the attacks."

In addition to the "Day of Understanding" discussions, the OU **Graham Health and Counseling Center** has staff counselors available for students, faculty and staff who seek counseling.

### SUMMARY

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