

Drs. Beatrice S. and David I. Miller
Education Seminar Series -
Indiana University School of Education

DR. C.A. "CHET" BOWERS

ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES,
UNIVERSITY OF OREGON



Thursday, February 8th
4:00 PM

School of Education
Auditorium
Reception to Follow

EDUCATIONAL REFORMS THAT ADDRESS "AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH"

PRESENTATION ABSTRACT:

Al Gore's film was very clear about the need to adopt less carbon producing technologies, but the film failed to address how to reduce the level of consumerism that is also a major contributor to global warming and to the degradation of other natural systems. This talk will focus on educational reforms that need to be considered in light of the ecological crises as well as in light of the increased economic insecurity that many people are experiencing. The specific reform that will be discussed is the need to help students to understand how renewing the cultural and environmental commons reduces the human impact on natural systems, strengthens local democracy by enabling students to recognize which traditions of the cultural commons are being taken over by market forces that increase commercial dependence and by political forces that are undermining their civil liberties. How to incorporate commons education into the curriculum from the early grades through university level classes will be touched upon, as well as the difference between understanding the teacher's and professor's role as mediator between the industrial consumer dependent culture and the local cultural and environmental commons. The difference between the teacher's mediator role and that of teachers who promote a constructivist approach to learning will also be discussed. As this will be an overview of a complex yet vitally important set of issues and relationships, it may be useful to read Chapter 5 of *Renewing the Commons*, and Chapter 4 of *Transforming Environmental Education*—both of which are available at <http://cabowers.net/CAPress.php>.

ABOUT DR. BOWERS:

Chet Bowers wrote his first book on the connections between education, cultural ways of knowing, and the ecological crisis in 1974. The title of the book was Cultural Literacy for Freedom. Since then he has written over 95 articles and 19 books that examine how language reproduces ways of thinking that were formed before there was an awareness of ecological limits, the connections between emancipatory/transformational ways of thinking and the globalization of the West's industrial culture. In more recent years attention has been given to understanding the educational implications of eco-justice for Third World cultures, the prospects for future generations, and the need to revitalize the world's diverse cultural commons as sites of resistance to economic globalization and further environmental degradation. This latter phase of writing has led to a series of essays that examine the ideas of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, E. O. Wilson, and Richard Rorty. Bower's work is intended to help clarify the nature of the formulaic thinking that prevents a wider recognition of how the cultural and environmental commons need to be taken into account in thinking about the reform of public schools and universities.

As an introduction to Dr. Bowers' presentation, the School of Education's Lectures and Seminars will host a showing of the film *An Inconvenient Truth* in the School of Education Auditorium on Tuesday, February 6th at 4:00 PM. The movie documents former Vice President Al Gore's efforts to halt global warming.