

Brief Encounter with the Taos Institute

February 2019

This month we welcome Duane Bidwell who is the director of the Diploma Program and a Taos Institute Board member.

Learning to Change the World: The Taos Diploma in Social Construction and Professional Practice



By Duane Bidwell

We're learning all the time, expanding our knowledge and changing our behaviors in response to experience. Learning occurs through an active process of building what we know as we observe and explore the world, engage with others, and make connections between new ideas and prior understandings.

Yet no one gets smarter alone. Learning requires relationship.

Understanding grows richer, and we construct new perspectives, by talking and acting with others. *We need mentors, coaches, and conversation partners as we engage in learning to change the world.*

Ideally, our learning partners engage with us in a project that's mutually exciting—a vibrant way to challenge ourselves, stretch our understanding, and increase our capacity as a professional and as a person.

That's exactly what you'll experience through the Taos Institute's International Diploma in Social Construction and Professional Practice. The two-year program allows you to earn a professional diploma for pursuing a project that excites you: writing a paper or article, developing a website, engaging in action research, creating a video, designing a course, or another activity that serves your learning goals.

The diploma identifies you as an advanced practitioner in your profession or area of interest, attesting to your ability to integrate theory and practice relevant to your professional context. You leave the diploma program with practical tools for sparking innovative thought and practice; a multi-disciplinary support system for exploring, developing, and launching new initiatives in your profession or area of interest; and greater clarity for your trajectory as a leader in your discipline.

Learning with a Thought Companion

You'll work with a PhD scholar-practitioner who serves as a thought companion, mentor, coach or advisor to stimulate reflection and creativity. Through this relationship and your project, you'll consolidate, integrate, and communicate what you've learned as a professional—and

establish that you are an advanced practitioner who uses social constructionist ideas to change the world.

Almost any Project is Possible

Current students are:

- Creating a website to promote non-pathologizing, relational approaches to healthcare
- Developing a book proposal to apply Appreciative Inquiry principles to personal growth
- Writing a paper that integrates traditional Yoruba worldviews with principles of transformative leadership
- Writing a series of essays to advance social constructionist theory in light of recent scholarship

Advisors, more like mentors and coaches, for the program come from the Taos Institute's global network of engaged-scholar practitioners. Each advisor is a Taos Associate; currently more than 35 people representing nine languages are available to advise Diploma students

How It Works

There isn't a fixed curriculum; you'll work with your advisor to develop an informal and tailored process of growth that addresses your goals. Your advisor provides feedback and learning tailored to your situation and project, and you receive support and inspiration from a broad network of conversation partners.

The process normally consists of four semesters of six months each. There are no grades. You create your own deadlines, design your own learning goals, and work virtually with scholars and practitioners around the world. You join with other learners in workshops and webinars.

The program is open to everyone, but it is especially suited to the experienced professional who is a lifelong learner and wants to extend her/his knowledge and capacity in a particular professional context. It's possible to do a collaborative partnership, or "team" or "group" project. We'll customize a pricing structure that works for you.

Learn More!

Intrigued? Know someone who's a great candidate for a professional diploma?
See <https://www.taosinstitute.net/diploma-programs> for more information!