

**Robert Fischer**
SociologySchool of
Social Sciences

Had Garp given way to this professor, "The World According to Bob Fischer," would be the California State University, Fresno campus.

That is not to imply that the world beyond CSUF is of no consequence to this 16-year veteran sociology professor. As a matter of fact, a genuine concern for the world is at the forefront of Dr. Fischer's personal ethic. This professor simply believes the world comes to call on all who take part in the CSUF experience.

"I always tell people about the many cultures here," responds Dr. Fischer, when asked what makes CSUF special. "I think of it as the human equivalent of a botanical garden, and I get to be one of the gardeners. How fascinating it is to be here. The human variety is wonderful."

From the perspective of this sociologist, there is no better place to be than on campus. But sociologists, he quickly adds, are not the

only ones who benefit from spending time on campus.

"I tell my students this is consecrated ground. A university is a hallowed place to be respected. It is where history is made. It's where human evolution is advanced every day. To teach at the university, or to be a student here, is a wonderful thing."

All faculty are required by policy to make themselves available five hours per week for student conferences. Bob (as he asks his students to call him) holds his office hours at a table in the Free Speech Area in front of the Student Union. The setting is perfect, especially when you consider the good advice he offers the students who seek him out there.

"Really listen to others, that is the best advice I can offer. Everybody has a story. When you listen to other people, you learn about the world, your own society and yourself. We need to stop rushing around, and listen to what the people of the world are trying to tell us."

Bob adheres to his own advice. Just visit his classroom.

"Beginning on the first day of the semester, we agree to create a safe environment, where people are free to speak their minds without fear of being attacked or ridiculed because someone disagrees with them. That is, we agree to practice democracy. We make it safe to be honest. This makes the classroom fun, instead of scary."

His open forum style of teaching is not without its doubters. In fact, he has had students sign-up for his classes

specifically to challenge his ideas, he says.

"They've heard from someone that my ideas are 'un-American' or even 'anti-American,' and they want to straighten me out. I love it, because they are the ones that go through the biggest changes just by learning to really listen. People fret over my classes, because the topics can be controversial. But the people who worry the most haven't taken my class."

Bob admits to feeling the change as well.

"We are all students, and we are all teachers. Every semester, I notice the changes in me, the progression in my own thinking. My students make that happen. Open and honest dialogue with probing minds and loving hearts, that is a growth process, and no one escapes it."

The 1988-89 academic year will be the first for the university's new Peace and Conflict Studies Interdisciplinary Minor, a program close to Bob Fischer's heart. An ex-Marine who spent several years teaching young men combat skills, he now believes there are better ideas to share with people.

"The Peace and Conflict Studies Program is useful whatever your major. There are conflicts in every individual, family, workplace, and in every aspect of society. The trick is to make the conflicts constructive, rather than destructive. That is done by looking at the problems from several different points of view. To do so, you really have to listen to others."