

2009 August 20

## **Inhabiting Other Lives: Knowing and Understanding**

The Honors College, Florida International University

IDH 2003 ☼ Fall 2009

Instructors: Juan Carlos Espinosa, Ruben Garrote, Bernard Gerstman

Tuesdays & Thursdays: 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM

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### **Classrooms and Professor Contacts:**

Lecture/large-group classes meet on Thursdays in **Architecture 180**

Discussion/small-group classes meet on Tuesdays as follows:

#### **Professor Espinosa: CBC 142**

Office hours: By appointment, DM 233; [espinosj@fiu.edu](mailto:espinosj@fiu.edu); (305) 348-6795

#### **Professor Garrote: GC 276**

Office hours: By appointment, DM 240; [garroter@fiu.edu](mailto:garroter@fiu.edu); (305) 348-1620

#### **Professor Gerstman: CP 107**

Office Hours: By appointment, CP 232; [gerstman@fiu.edu](mailto:gerstman@fiu.edu); (305) 348-3115

### **Overview:**

At an early point in human history, we started asking questions about ourselves and about the world around us. As we found answers, we came up with ways to share our stories, to give them meaning. In this course, we will ask the “big questions” as well as the smaller ones. The main goal is to gain a greater understanding of what knowledge is and how it is acquired and used. Another important goal is to connect the “big questions” to the practical issues that are a part of our daily lives. What do we know? How do we know it? How does knowledge shape us as individuals and the world around us? Who are we? How do we define others? What can happen when knowledge becomes power? Does knowledge come with responsibility? To explore these questions we will turn to a wide variety of sources, from classic works to science fiction, from the literature of science to ancient myth, from documentary film to recent blockbuster movies.

### **Required Reading:**

Students will be responsible for reading the following texts during the fall semester:

- Abbott, Edwin A. *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*. Dover Publications, 1992. Other editions available. ISBN: 048627263X.
- Wilson, Edward O. *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*. Vintage Press, 1999. (Chapters 1 - 4; 7. Selections to be provided in class.)
- Rorty, Richard. “Against Unity,” *Wilson Quarterly*, Winter 1998. (Article to be provided in class.)
- Brecht, Bertolt. *Galileo*. Grove Press, 1966. ISBN: 0802130593.
- Orwell, George. *1984*. New American Library, 1961. ISBN: 0451524934.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition*. Manchester University Press, 1984. (Chapters 1 - 5. Selections to be provided in class.)

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- Foucault, Michel. "Power/Knowledge". In *The New Social Theory Reader*, ed. S. Seidman and J. Alexander. Routledge, 2001. (Excerpt to be provided in class.)
- Harrison, K David. *When Languages Die: The Extinction of the World's Languages and the Erosion of Human Knowledge*. Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN: 0195372069.
- Wells, Spencer. *Deep Ancestry*. National Geographic, 2007. ISBN: 1426201184.

### **Attendance/Classroom Etiquette:**

Attendance is required and will be reflected in the final grade. All students are expected to be on time to class and to remain in class for the duration of the lecture. Material will be covered in class that is *not* covered in the readings, thus each absence will negatively affect the student's ability to do well on assignments. For every unexcused absence the final grade will be lowered 1/3 of a letter. Work not submitted on time will lose points. Unexcused late arrivals and early departures will be counted as absences.

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook. All students must adhere to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#) of The Honors College and Florida International University.

*The use of laptops, cellular phones, iPhones, or any other devices for voice or text communication is prohibited.*

### **Honors College Citizenship:**

Honors College students are expected to be good Honors College citizens. To find out more about requirements, visit [http://honors.fiu.edu/current\\_policy\\_citizenship.htm](http://honors.fiu.edu/current_policy_citizenship.htm). You are expected to attend six Honors events per semester. Three of the six are required in the Fall semester are Convocation (October 15) and two of three colloquia. Please check the calendar often: [http://honors.fiu.edu/events\\_upcoming.htm](http://honors.fiu.edu/events_upcoming.htm)

### **Course Requirements:**

#### **Participation (20%)**

The course will be conducted as a seminar. Students are expected to come to class prepared and participate fully in the discussions. This course requires that students submit written reflections on the assigned reading materials, as well as lectures and movies shown. All written work must consistently adhere to a writing style manual of the student's choice (e.g., Chicago, Turabian, MLA, etc.). Students are advised to carefully proofread *all* papers before submitting them. Students with deficient writing skills should consult the university's free tutoring services: *On-Campus Learning Center*: PC 247; *Online Learning Center*: [w3.fiu.edu](http://w3.fiu.edu).

**Short-Answer Assessments (40%)**

In order to demonstrate their understanding of the material, students will write four (4) short answer assessments. Each assignment will reflect a book or group of chapters/articles. Please refer to the class schedule for more information.

**Final Project (40%)**

You will be assigned a semester project based on an analysis of an item from the collection of the Wolfsonian FIU Museum. The museum is located on South Beach (1001 Washington Avenue) and houses a unique collection of art and design covering the period 1885-1945. Much of the collection consists of propaganda arts. The internationally renowned museum belongs to FIU and is free and open to FIU students. Parking is available. The Wolfsonian project will allow you to explore notions of knowledge and identity through objects created in the critical first decades of modernity, a time when technology, social change, political upheaval, ideology and population growth transformed the world. Once you have selected an object, you must find a contemporary object that serves a similar “function” today. You will write an interpretative essay on the nature of the Wolfsonian artifact in the context of the class themes: epistemology, identity and inhabiting other lives. Do the same with the contemporary object. You must place the items in the appropriate historical, social, political, ideological perspectives, and analyze their respective purposes in their societies. Failure to attend a Wolfsonian session will result in the loss of 1/3 of the final project grade which is equivalent to a full letter grade.

Here are some helpful questions to consider:

- What was the purpose of the object?
- What was the place of the object in the social context in which it was created?
- What was the aim of the artist in creating the artifact?
- What does it say about the individual identity of the artist?
- Does the item have a “message”? If so, does it succeed?
- Define the how it represents the “self” and/or “other”?

Students **must** attend one of two scheduled class orientation sessions at the museum. The dates are listed below. Additional visit(s) will be required in order to complete the project. Please consult your section instructor should you have any problems or concerns. Students will do a presentation based on their project at end of the semester during one of the small sessions.

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

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Date	Lecture	Topic
8/25	T	Class Overview in individual sections <b>Begin reading <i>Flatland</i></b>
8/27	Th	1 Introductory Lecture: <i>What is the Enlightenment?</i> (Garrote)

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9/1	T		Discuss lecture
9/3	Th	2	Lecture: <i>Perception and Context: Flatland</i> (Garrote)
9/8	T		Discuss lecture and book <b>Begin reading <i>Consilience</i>, Rorty</b> <b>In-class Assessment #1 (Flatland) due</b>
9/10	Th	3	Discuss Wolfsonian Project
9/15	T		Wolfsonian Visit (Option 1) – NO REGULAR CLASS MEETING
9/17	Th		Lecture: <i>Can't We All Get Along? Wilson &amp; Rorty</i> (Gerstman) <b>Begin reading <i>1984</i></b>
9/22	T		Film: <i>Babel</i> (2006), Part 1 – ALTERNATE ROOM: TBA
9/24	Th		Film: <i>Babel</i> (2006), Part 2
9/29	T		Wolfsonian Visit (Option 2) – NO REGULAR CLASS MEETING
10/1	Th	4	Lecture: <i>New Panopticons: Seeing, Being Seen, Liking It, Hating It, Playing with It, Denying It, Fighting It, Dying for It, Accepting It</i> (Espinosa) <b>Begin reading <i>Galileo</i></b>
10/6	T		Discuss lecture and book <b>In-class Assignment #2 (1984) due</b>
10/8	Th	5	Lecture: <i>A Need to Know Everything about Everything</i> (Gerstman)
10/13	T		Discuss lecture and book <b>Assignment # 3 (<i>Galileo</i>) due</b>
10/15	Th	6	Colloquium: <i>Ways of Knowing</i> (Espinosa, Garrote, Gerstman) HONORS CONVOCATION – ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY
10/21	T		Discuss colloquium <b>Begin reading Lyotard and Foucault</b>
10/22	Th	7	Lecture: <i>Hierarchies of Knowledge</i> (Garrote)
10/27	T		Discuss lecture <b>Begin reading <i>When Languages Die</i></b>
10/29	Th	8	Film: Origin of Language(s)
11/3	T		Discuss film, Wolfsonian projects
11/5	Th	9	Lecture: <i>Language Death</i> (Espinosa) <b>Begin reading <i>Deep Ancestry</i></b>
11/10	T		Discuss lecture <b>In-class Assessment #4 (<i>When Languages Die</i>) due</b>

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11/12	Th		Film: <i>The Journey of Man</i> (2002), Part 1
11/17	T		Film: <i>The Journey of Man</i> (2002), Part 2 – ALTERNATE ROOM: TBA
11/19	Th	10	Lecture: <i>Population Genetics</i> (Espinosa)
11/24	T		Student presentations <b>In-class Assessment #5 (<i>Deep Ancestry</i>) due</b>
11/26	Th		<b>THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY –CLASS DOES NOT MEET</b>
12/1	T		Student presentations
12/3	Th	11	Final Lecture (Gerstman) <b>Wolfsonian Projects Due</b>
12/11	W		Students presentations

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