

The Borders of Knowledge and the Knowledge of Borders

IDH 1001

Fall 2021

The Honors College
Florida International University

Course Overview

What do we know? And how do we know it? As your introductory course in the Honors College at FIU, this class will begin your journey in higher education by posing a series of epistemological questions that are fundamental to the nature of our intellectual pursuits. Our belief is that it is not just necessary to study or learn something; one must be able to understand the assumptions that are being made, the implications that our study has for the world, and where we stand in relation to all these pursuits.

The goal for the fall semester is to garner the multiple perspectives that make up the production of knowledge and the understanding of reality; to understand where knowledge comes from and how to tell the difference between knowing and other states of judgment, like opinions, beliefs, and assumptions. To this end, we will engage a critical analysis of the use of language through careful reading and discussion of the major texts.

We will seek to discover where knowledge comes from, how it is passed on, what it means to actually *know* something, and what the implications of this knowledge may have for us and our world.

Course Outcomes

By the end of the semester students will be able to:

- describe what knowledge is and the various ways it is acquired;
- demonstrate a command of logical thinking and rhetorical approaches;
- recognize the effect of rhetorical choices on the transmission of knowledge;
- articulate the ways in which perception, conception, memory, imagination, and language affect our ideas about what we know: the origins of human beings and of our societies;
- implement complex research strategies using online and print media.

Assignments

There will be five components to this semester's assignments.

1. Participation (20%). You are expected to come to class prepared and to participate fully and intelligently in the discussions. This means that you will have to critically read the material assigned. One way in which you can demonstrate your preparedness is to come to each class with 2-3 discussion questions/observations drawn from your readings. You may be called during any class session for your contributions.

2. Connection Journal (20%). The intent of this assignment is for you to demonstrate comprehension of the course content through personal, critical analysis. You will make one journal submission per topic (week) covered in class. We will collect the journal three times during the semester, as indicated on the course calendar. Each collection will be graded on a scale of 0–5.

Journal submissions must contain the following:

- Summary of the professors' presentations, activities, and in-class discussions. One entry per week.
- Connections between the assigned readings, the professors' presentations/in-class content and connections you are making to content from other courses or personal findings guided by personal inquiry/interest. One entry per week.
- 1 image that relates to the content per entry (week). Images should demonstrate your own critical analysis and have a brief description (why you chose this particular image), along with three hashtags for the image that synthesize why you chose it and why you think it is relevant. They should not be ones shown in class but ones which you find on your own.

3. Disputation Assignment (20%). The immediate purpose of exercise is to train you in argumentation and in clear, concise writing. The ultimate purpose is to train your mind to think logically — giving serious consideration to arguments of opposing views and understanding what authorities have previously thought —, in order to form a well-informed and well-reasoned opinion on any particular question.

In consultation with your small-section professor, you will choose a question arising from your reading and discussion of Plato's *Republic* on which you will take a position, either for or against. You will then write a paper adhering to the following format.

I. Statement of the question and objection. You will (a) state the question you will be answering and (b) provide the best argument you can make position opposite to your own. The statement and objection must be **one page** in length.

II. Appeal to authority. You will summarize what authorities have argued for your position on the question. This will obviously require that you do some research. Be sure to cite each source correctly in the body of the paper and to include a bibliography. The appeal to authority must be **one page** in length.

III. Proof. You will argue for your position on the question. Your argument must offer rational proof. You should include no appeals to authority in this part of the paper, nor should you seek to answer the objections at this point. Focus on the argument(s) for your position on the question only. The proof must be **two to three pages** in length.

Clarity and economy of writing are essential! Write as much as you need to make your point(s) well, no more — but no less!

IV. Submission. You will be assigned to a small discussion group within Canvas. You will post your paper on the discussion board for your group before the due date. Failing to submit your paper on time will affect the next parts of the assignment, so there will be **no late submissions**.

V. Refutation. On the discussion board, you will **post a refutation** of at least two of the papers submitted to your small discussion group. This should not be merely a restatement of the writers' objections, though you may certainly rely on them. Rather, you should make every effort to provide original arguments against the writers' positions. Each refutation post should be **300-500 words**.

VI. Reply. Finally, you will post a **short video reply** to the posts attempting to refute your paper. Here you may appeal to what you wrote in the paper, either by you in your proof or by the authorities you cited. However, each reply must deal specifically with the objections in the posts. The video reply should be 2-3 minutes long.

5. Design Project (20%). Design in theater is about turning ideas into tangible physical objects. You do not need to be great at drawing to design in theater. You just need to be able to make choices and explain why your choices support the text.

This assignment needs the same kind of focus that an ordinary paper does, but like much of what we do in this class you are being asked to express your ideas in a different way than you ordinarily do.

Your assignment has three parts:

I. DESIGN: Work with a partner. Choose a section/scene from *Hamlet*. Discuss what happens in this part of the play and what it means. Discuss relationships, ideas, and themes. What are the things that change in this part of the play? Brainstorm on how you can communicate visually what you discussed.

Together you will create a scenic design and two costume designs. You can divide up the work between you however you want, but the resulting designs should work together.

You will draw your scenic and costume designs in *Hamlet*. We are not interested in your drawing ability but rather in your ideas. Consider **what** you feel should be communicated by the costumes and set, think about **how** your ideas could be communicated through clothing, space, and objects, and then **draw** the costumes and set.

For the set, think about the size of the theater you want to design for. You can choose a theater of any size you want. Also, you can choose to do it somewhere

on FIU's campus rather than in a theater. If you do this, look at the actual site and think about whether you need to add to it or modify it in some way.

Label parts of your drawing in a way that will help us understand your sketch. The labels might tell us what fabrics you are using, colors, how tight or loose the fit is, how new or worn the clothing is, etc. It might specify what materials will be used to construct your set or what feature of the site you feel are important. If you find a photos or artwork that will help explain your design, you can attach them as well. If a groundplan will help to communicate your scenic design, you can include one.

II. PAPER: In a two-page paper (12 pt. Times New Roman type, double spaced) explain your thought process in developing your designs. Explain why you made the decisions about the set and costume that you did. What was it in the script that led you to make the design you did?

III. PRESENTATION: Each team will show their designs and make a 2- to 3-minute presentations explaining their choices. This can be a VERY ABRIDGED version of the paper.

6. Embodying Concept Project (20%). For our final project, you will consider everything we have covered in class thus far and how it has shifted or informed your perspective on what we know and how we know it. You can choose to expand on your original Concept Materiality and Relations Map or switch gears all together. For the purposes of this assignment, we will explore a full unpacking of your terms and a transposition of said terms into material form. The project will be three-pronged consisting of the following: **(1)** map, **(2)** written unpacking of concept and discourse and **(3)** embodiment of concept. The paper should be 2 pages minimum, font no larger than 12pt. Here you will basically go into detail. It needs to include your sources and proper citations. You will also do a 3-minute presentation where you will explain what you chose, why and what your process was. Where appropriate, you will demonstrate or, if time permits, allow your classmates to experience what you have designed.

This entire exercise is intended to get you to really consider the “how we know what we know” part of this course. In other words, you are summarizing all that we have done in this course so far: identifying an idea, understanding its parts (i.e. “unpacking”), situating it in the broader discourse and finally, embodying it. More detailed instructions are provided in the course Module.

Course Textbooks

You are responsible for acquiring and reading the following books:

Plato, *The Republic*, 2d ed. (Perseus, 1991)

William Shakespeare, *Othello* (Folger, 2003)

Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 4th ed. (Aunt Lute, 2018)

Additional shorter readings will be made available to you as PDFs.

Your grade for class discussions and class participation will depend on your careful reading and understanding of the material provided. Be prepared to discuss it in class.

Active Class Participation. Your participation grade rests on your active participation during class. This means contributing to class discussions. Each student is expected to demonstrate knowledge of the course content by actively participating in class.

Course Calendar

MODULE I – *The Republic*

Week 1	08/24 – 08/26	<i>The Republic</i> , Book I
Week 2	08/31 – 09/02	<i>The Republic</i> , Book II; George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language”
Week 3	09/07 – 09/09	<i>The Republic</i> , Book III
Week 4	09/14 – 09/16	<i>The Republic</i> , Book VI
Week 5	09/21 – 09/23	<i>The Republic</i> , Book VII
Week 6	09/28 – 09/30	<i>The Republic</i> , Book X Due: Disputation Paper (10/03)

MODULE II – *Othello*

Week 7	10/05 – 10/07	<i>Othello</i> , Act 1
Week 8	10/12 – 10/14	<i>Othello</i> , Act 2 through Act 3.2
Week 9	10/19 – 10/21	<i>Othello</i> , Act 3.3 through Act 4
Week 10	10/26 – 10/28	<i>Othello</i> , Act 5 Due: Design Project (10/31)

MODULE III – *Borderlands*

Week 11	11/02 – 11/04	What are the “cultural tyrannies” we are unaware of and how might they shape what we think we know? Read: <i>Borderlands/La Frontera</i> , Introduction, Editor’s Note, Preface, Chapter 1 & 2 and I (Más antes en los ranchos)
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Week 12 11/09 – 11/11 **Is knowledge binary? How might considerations of a third space expand our understanding?**

Read: *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Chapters 1 (review), 3 & 4, II (La Pérdida), III (Crossers) and Introduction to the second edition

[Veterans Day – 11/11]

Week 13 11/16 – 11/18 **What is the role of the body and ritual in the acquisition of knowledge?**

Read: *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Chapters 5 & 6, IV (Cihuatlyotl, Woman Alone) and Introduction to the third edition

Week 14 THANKSGIVING WEEK

Week 15 11/30 – 12/02 **Can we come to a place of tolerance for ambiguity? What might allowing these spaces to exist afford us?**

Read: *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Chapter 7, V (Animas), VI (El Retorno) and Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa.

Due: *Embodying Concept Project* (12/05)

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change. Please confirm with instructors that you have the latest version.

Tentative Grading Scale

90-100 A
80-89 B
70-79 C
60-69 D
0-59 F

(+/- grades will be given at the junctions between letter grades)

Religious Observances

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students whose religious practices coincide with class requirements or scheduling. Please make sure to notify your instructor at the beginning of the semester of which dates you will be absent or any anticipated problems with completing course work.

Physical, Mental and Sensory Challenges

The Disability Resource Center collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and sustainable. The DRC provides FIU students with disabilities the necessary support to successfully complete their education and participate in activities available to all students. If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize

academic accommodations, please contact the DRC at 305-348-3532 (MMC) or at 305-919-5345 (BBC) to schedule an appointment. You can also visit them in person in GC 190 at MMC or in WUC 131 at BBC campus.

Honors College Policies and Requirements

Academic Misconduct Procedures and Policies

In The Honors College, the term “honor” refers both to academic accomplishment and character. Students in Honors should therefore adhere to and be held to the highest standards of personal academic accountability. Academic dishonesty in any form, including plagiarism, is antithetical to the very definition of being an Honors student at FIU. Consequently, an Honors College student found responsible for academic misconduct will be dismissed from the College.

An Honors faculty member may bring charges of academic misconduct against an Honors student if the faculty member suspects plagiarism or other forms of academic misconduct. The faculty member will decide whether to pursue informal resolution, file formal resolution charges, or take no further action, and will follow the procedures outlined in the Academic Misconduct Procedures available at <https://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/get-support/student-conduct-and-academic-integrity/academic-integrity/index.php> . Please refer to the following documents for additional information:

FIU Student Handbook: <https://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/about/student-handbook/index.php>

Student Portfolios

The Honors College will be using a portfolio method to assess students’ learning outcomes. The portfolio allows for maximum flexibility in gauging student learning. Students decide (with instructor consultation) what “artifacts” or assignments to include for consideration in their portfolios to demonstrate successful achievement of each of five key student learning outcomes over the 4-year Honors experience. Portfolios provide a rich context for students to show what they have learned and to explain their learning process. Because the Honors curriculum is meant to be thought-provoking and reflective, student self-assessment through portfolios will facilitate learning and provide in-depth assessment. Each Honors College course includes at least one assignment that could potentially fit portfolio requirements. <http://honors.fiu.edu/current-students/portfolio/>

Honors Engagement

Requirements Honors College students are required to accumulate at least 20 engagement points each academic year (Fall and Spring) by attending Honors College activities. Students attending only one semester (Fall or Spring) are required to accumulate 10 engagement points. Each activity has a point value. Students may select which events and activities they want to attend. The new system is designed to be more flexible for students, offering events at various days and times (including some weekend events) and allowing for a variety of ways to meet the requirements. Please plan accordingly. <http://honors.fiu.edu/current-students/citizenship/>

Community Service

Honors College students must also complete 20 volunteer service hours. These hours DO NOT count toward the 20 engagement points discussed above. <http://honors.fiu.edu/current-students/community-service/>

Honors Education in the Arts (HEARTS)

The HEARTS program is designed to give Honors College students opportunities to “explore and appreciate different artistic and cultural traditions and modes of artistic expression. HEARTS will also serve as a clearinghouse (and curatorial framework) for our students to experience the arts on campus and in the community by providing them with information about cultural activities and access to performances with free or discounted tickets. <http://honors.fiu.edu/current-students/hearts/>

Resources:

Panthers Care & Counseling & Psychological Services

If you are looking for help for yourself or a fellow classmate, Panthers Care encourages you to express any concerns you may come across as it relates to any personal behavior concerns or worries you have, for the classmate’s well-being or yours; you are encouraged to share your concerns with FIU’s [Panthers Care website](#).

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers free and confidential help for anxiety, depression, stress, and other concerns that life brings. Learn more about CAPS at <http://caps.fiu.edu>. Professional counselors are available for same-day appointments. Don’t wait to call 305-348-2277 to set up a time to talk or visit the online self-help portal.