HONR 292B - 002 The Social Construction of Knowledge

M W 3:00 - 4:15 pm   Eddy 109             SPRING 2019

INSTRUCTOR: John Kitchens    Office: Clark A-77
Email: john.kitchens@colostate.edu   Office Hours: Tu/Wed/Th 2:00 - 3:00
& by appointment

REQUIRED TEXTS:
*The Society of the Spectacle*, by Guy Debord.
The version I’d like to use is available online but also in book form. I suggest buying the book. http://www.bopsecrets.org/Sl/debord/

All other readings are available on Canvas.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The theme for this course is the social construction of knowledge, and it engages with the ideas of how knowledge is produced, by whom and for what purposes. Other considerations include what counts as knowledge and how has it been produced and transmitted in the past (and present), e.g., public schooling? What other institutions are involved in the production of knowledge? And what is the relationship between knowledge and power? Course materials will range in disciplinary perspectives including philosophy, history, education, sociology, literature, and film. Students will also be guided in a self-reflective investigation into how knowledge has been produced in their personal lives, and specifically how such knowledge informs their worldview, i.e., how they interpret and act in the world.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this course, a successful student will be able to:
1. Analyze how the arts and humanities enhance and express ways of knowing.
2. Apply and integrate ways of knowing in the arts and humanities to contemporary issues and topics.
3. Creatively engage and integrate the arts and humanities to express one's own understanding and experience.
4. Explore and appreciate how knowledge is produced, constructed, expressed, and contested among different disciplines in the sciences and humanities.
5. Reflect on the limits of knowing, how knowledge changes, and the social, historical, political, and cultural influences that shape ways of knowing as expressed in the arts and humanities.
6. Articulate the value and purpose of ways of knowing in and through the arts and humanities.
7. Describe issues of ownership, identity, and power as they relate to the processes of knowledge production in and across the arts and humanities.
8. Critically assess interdisciplinary connections and interdependent overlaps between ways of knowing in the arts and humanities and the natural and social sciences.
Weeks 1 through 5 – The Nature and Values of Knowing

**Week 1: Being Wrong**
(In class)
Wallace Stevens, “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird”
Kathryn Schulz,
Video, *On Being Wrong*, TED Talks

**Week 2: (Mis)Understanding**
Mon.
Thomas Nagel, “What is it Like to be a Bat?” (18 p)
Gerry Callahan, “Chimera” (15 p)

Wed.
Eula Biss, “The Pain Scale” from Seneca Review, 2005. (22 p)
Eli Clare, *Exile and Stones* excerpt. (8 p)

**Week 3: Language and Knowing**
Mon.

Wed.
Recording,
*Words that Change the World* – Radiolab Presentation
(29 min)
Emily Martin, “The Egg and the Sperm” (18 p)

**Week 4: Science and Narrative**
Mon.
Karl Popper, “Science: Conjectures and Refutations” (7 p)
Imre Lakatos, “Science and Pseudoscience” (7 p)
Feynman, “The Value of Science” (7 p)
And
Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, Chapter II only (14 p)

Wed.
In class--“How Can Our Memories Be Manipulated?” by Elizabeth Loftus

**Week 5: The Socially Constructed World**

* Mon.  * The Matrix  *

* Wed.* Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave”  
and Chapter 1, “Computers, Caves, and Oracles” from *The Matrix and Philosophy*

**Week 6: Origin Stories and the Origin of Knowledge**

* Mon.  * Religious Origin Stories on Canvas  *

* Wed.  * The Creation According to Science Videos,  
Neil deGrasse Tyson’s *A Brief History of Everything* (8 mins)*

And the Smithsonian Institute’s video on human origins (scroll down bottom of the page. 4 min., 23 sec.)

Also read the excerpt from Paul Ehrlich’s *Human Natures*

**Week 7: The First Formal Education**

* Mon.  * A Brief History of Schools  
Go to [http://history-world.org/history_of_education.htm](http://history-world.org/history_of_education.htm) and just look quickly at this list and take note of any trends you see, with examples.*

Excerpts from *Learning to Divide the World* by John Willinsky.

* Wed.  * Excerpts from *Howard Zinn on History*, by Howard Zinn  
“Truth and Power,” by Michel Foucault*

**Week 8: Knowledge and Power**

* Mon.  * Excerpts from *Discipline and Punish*, by Michel Foucault*

* Wed.  * “Theses on Feurebach” by Karl Marx  
and Chapter 18, “The Matrix, Marx, and the Coppertop’s Life” from *Philosophy and The Matrix*

* SPRING BREAK  *

**Week 9: The Society of the Spectacle**

Both days, *The Society of the Spectacle* by Guy Debord
**Week 10: Consumerism, Alienation, and Manipulation**

Mon.  
Video, *Consuming Kids: The Commercialization of Childhood*

Wed.  
Videos,  
“Connected but Alone” by Sherry Turkle  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/sherry_turkle_alone_together?referrer=playlist-talks_that_ll_inspire_you_to_u](https://www.ted.com/talks/sherry_turkle_alone_together?referrer=playlist-talks_that_ll_inspire_you_to_u)  
“Do Our Devices Control More Than We Think?” by Tristan Harris  
Article, “Is Internet Addiction Real?”  
[https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/05/18/527799301/is-internet-addiction-real](https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/05/18/527799301/is-internet-addiction-real)

**Week 11: The Social Construction of Race**

Mon.  
Videos, “A Girl Like Me,”  
and *American Denial*

Wed.  
“A Letter To My Son” by Ta-Nehisis Coates

**Week 12: The Social Construction of Gender**

Mon.  
Video *Tough Guise 2* (WARNING: This video contains graphic images of violence and sex. Viewer discretion is advised).

Wed.  
Video, *Miss Representation*

**Week 13: Real or Fake News**

Mon.  
Video, *Google and the World Brain*

Wed.  
Videos,  
Guardian: Future of Fake News  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7m37bX1oYE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7m37bX1oYE)  
Radiolab Breaking News  
"In An Age of "Alternative Facts," How Do We Know What's True?" by Ali Velshi

“When Seeing is No Longer Believing”  
EVALUATION SYSTEM

The requirements that will be used to evaluate student learning are:
1. Discussion question assignments (10% of grade). Weekly one-page writing assignment on readings (10 total).
2. Two writing projects (35% of grade). Writing assignments (5-10 pages each) can be in the form of a traditional academic essay, personal essay, creative nonfiction, fiction, poetry, or art/design project with narrative.
3. Formal speech (20% of grade). A 7-minute extemporaneous speech to the class related to content.
4. Analytical research writing project (10-20 pages; 25% of grade).
5. Participation (10% of grade).

GRADING

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion question assignments (10)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing projects (2)</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final research paper (1)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal speech (1)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Grade distribution (plus/minus grades may be used):

- 90-100%  A
- 80-89%   B
- 70-79%   C
- 60-69%   D
- <60%     F

Incomplete
The grade of “I” is a temporary grade awarded to indicate that for reasons beyond the student’s control or that the student could not have reasonably have anticipated, he/she could not complete the requirements for the course. When an instructor assigns an “I,” he/she shall specify in writing the requirements the student shall fulfill to complete the course. After one year, or at the end of the semester in which the student graduates (whichever comes first), an “incomplete” grade will automatically changed to an “F” grade unless the course has been
completed and the grade change submitted. *Student must be in good academic standing in the class in order to receive an incomplete.* (CSU Faculty Council policy)

**Honors Competencies and Skills for Honors Students (“PICC” feedback)**

The CSU University Honors Program has prioritized four general competencies skills that should be addressed in each honors course. These skills include (1) Professionalism, interpersonal skills, and emotional intelligence; (2) Interdisciplinary learning integrated with global and/or cultural viewpoints; (3) Critical thinking; and (4) Creativity and problem solving.

This is a two-stage process. First students complete a self-evaluation of these skills at the beginning of the semester. At the end of the semester instructors will provide feedback for each student, based on assignments and activities. The feedback is part of the University Honors Program; it is for advising purposes only and is confidential. It is not part of a student’s grades or academic record. A standardized rubric is used to provide feedback for growth in these areas and to measure the Honors Programs progress in helping students to develop these skills through their academic career. The feedback categories and activities/assignments used to measure progress in HONR 292 are listed below and noted in the assignment descriptions.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Skill Category (PICC)</th>
<th>Relevant Course Activities &amp; Assignments</th>
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| **1. Professionalism, interpersonal skills, & emotional intelligence:** Acts ethically & positively to foster a supportive instructional or work environment. Has the emotional intelligence (ability to perceive, evaluate, & manage emotions) & interpersonal skills to work effectively with others. | • Class participation & conduct  
• Discussion question assignments  
• Formal speech |
| **2. Interdisciplinary learning integrated with global &/or cultural viewpoints:** Integrates diverse knowledge, perspectives, &/or skills into arguments &/or strategies; is aware of and can clearly incorporate global &/or cultural perspectives to an argument or issue. | • Class discussions  
• Discussion question assignments  
• Writing projects  
• Final research paper  
• Formal speech |
| **3. Critical thinking:** Student advances a position with specific theses or hypotheses & can conceptualize ideas or lines of thought. Conclusions and related outcomes acknowledge complexities of an issue (implications and consequences) and recognize differing points of view. Formulates & develops claims with sufficient support, including reasoning, evidence, & persuasive appeals, & proper attribution where necessary. Uses written and oral communication effectively in persuasive arguments. | • Class discussions  
• Discussion question assignments  
• Writing projects  
• Final research paper  
• Formal speech |
| **4. Creativity & problem solving:** Creatively applies discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based knowledge to discover and design a variety of forms often using a problem-solving strategy | • Class discussions  
• Discussion question assignments  
• Writing projects  
• Final research paper  
• Formal speech |

**PICC Self-assessment instructions**

The online PICC Entry Tool is now available for the self-assessment assignment. I will remind you about the deadline for completing the form in class. I will have access to your responses. The Entry Tool is password protected for confidentiality.

**Using the new Online PICC Entry Tool:**
Click this link, or go to honors.colostate.edu/picc in your web browser. Log in with your eName and password.

**To create a new PICC evaluation:**
1. Click on the blue “Create New” button at the top of the page to bring up the PICC Entry Form.
2. At the top of this new page is a link to the full PICC rubric, which you should review before completing the form.
3. The Assessment Type, Student, and Semester fields should be filled in for you.
4. Choose your instructor from the drop down menu.
5. Choose the course for which you are filling out this evaluation from the drop down menu.
6. Choose the level (B, D, P, and M, for basic, developing, proficient, and mature, respectively) for each of the four skill categories. Note that comments explaining why you chose this level are required.
7. If you have any general comments, add them to the general comments field. This field is optional.
8. Once you have checked to ensure the form is correct, click the ‘Submit' button. All done!

If you have any questions or technical problems, email Honors Tech Support at honorstechsupport@colostate.edu