

College Seminar 23101/35
Fall 2017

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Office Hours:
Decio 301
M, W 2:30-3:20
and by appt.

Truth

College Seminar

The College Seminar is a unique one-semester course experience shared by all sophomores who have decided to major in the College of Arts and Letters. The course offers students an introduction to the diversity and distinctive focus of Arts and Letters at the University of Notre Dame. Specific sections of the College Seminar vary in their topics and texts, but all feature an interdisciplinary approach, commitment to engaging important questions, employment of major works, and emphasis on the development of oral skills.

Attendance and Participation

Given the oral-intensive nature of the course, and given that the majority of the grade you will receive will reflect your ability to communicate your thoughts clearly and effectively, it is **imperative** that you attend every class meeting. While an excellent attendance record will be rewarded, any unexcused absences (without documentation from your coach, your band director, your doctor, etc.) will affect your grade negatively. This attendance policy includes days before and after holidays and vacations. You should inform me in advance of unavoidable absences. Although missing class is *never* recommended, departmental policy allows 3 absences without penalty (Keep them for emergencies only!) For every unexcused absence after the third your final grade will be lowered one step (e.g. A to A-, B+ to B, B- to C+).

Homework and Assignments

In order for the class discussions to be fruitful and well-grounded, we will be reading a substantial amount throughout the course of the semester. It is therefore **extremely important** that you come to class prepared: i.e. that you have read the **entire** assignment for class that day, if possible made notes or the like, and thought about the text before class. And given the pace of the semester, it is likewise **crucial** that you keep up with the reading; falling behind will only add to the reading burden and make it difficult, if not possible, to catch up.

In addition, there will be an **Oral Presentation** once a week by each participant of the class on the topic of that week or day. The precise nature of the topic of the presentation is to be determined in advance in consultation with me. The presentation can be given extemporaneously or

from a written text (former preferred), but should be no longer than 10-15 minutes in length. The presentation will be followed by a short discussion of it by the class.

There will also be a short paper and a written final exam.

Honor Code

Throughout all course activities, including written assignments, quizzes, and exams, the Honor Code is in effect: all of this work has to be your own and not anyone else's. To familiarize yourself with the Honor Code, please read the pertinent chapter in *Du Lac* (beginning on p. a-33): particularly section IV, entitled "Student Responsibilities under the Academic Code of Honor," points A through D; or visit http://www.nd.edu/~hncode/IV-Student_Resp.htm. If secondary sources are used for any assignments, these sources should be listed in a bibliography at the assignment's end, and any quoted material should be placed in quotation marks and clearly attributed in a footnote. Plagiarism (i.e., any written work presented as entirely your own and original to the particular assignment that is *not*, in fact, entirely your own and/or original to the particular assignment) is a serious matter. If you have questions about this policy and how it applies to your work for our course, and if you are in doubt about the legitimacy of your activities with respect to this course, please don't hesitate to ask me—before any problems can arise.

Required Texts

Simon Blackburn, *Truth: A User's Guide*
 Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*
 Henrik Ibsen, *An Enemy of the People*
 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On Truth and Untruth*
 Plato, *Theaetetus and Sophist*

I will also send you pdfs of the other texts on the syllabus.

There will also be a showing of the film by George Cukor, *Gaslight* (1944)

Requirements and Evaluation:

Attendance, Class Participation	45 %
Oral Presentation	25 %
One Short Essay	10 %
Final Exam	20 %

Contacting and Meeting:

During office hours, I will be in my office in Decio 301, available to discuss course issues or anything else. If you can't make my office hours, contact me after class or by e-mail; we can then either solve the issue right there or

set up a time to meet. E-mail (rnorton@nd.edu) is a good way to get in touch with me to ask specific questions.

Week One

Wednesday
Aug. 23 Introduction Assignment: The Truth about Truth
Plato, *Theaetetus* and "Introduction"

Week Two

Monday
Aug. 28 Origins Assignment: Plato, *Sophist*
Simon Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide*,
"Introduction" and Chapter 2 "Man the Measure"

Wednesday
Aug. 30 Origins II Assignment: Aristotle, excerpts from *Metaphysics* etc.

Week Three

Monday
Sept. 4 Correspondences Assignment: Michel de Montaigne, "Of Liars"

Wednesday
Sept. 6 Truth and Lie I Assignment: Henrik Ibsen, *An Enemy of the People*
Acts 1-III

Week Four

Monday
Sept. 11 Fear and Trembling Assignment: Henrik Ibsen, *An Enemy of the People*
Acts IV-V

Wednesday
Sept. 13 Hypocrisy and Society Assignment: Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Nonmoral Sense"
Blackburn, *Truth*, Chapter 4, "Nietzsche: The Arch Debunker"

Week Five

Monday
Sept. 18 Radical Skepticism Assignment: Nietzsche, "On The Pathos of Truth"

Wednesday
Sept. 20 The Value of Truth Assignment: Nietzsche, Excerpts from *The Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil*

Week Six

Monday
Sept. 25 The Revaluation of Values Assignment: Nietzsche, from *The Genealogy of Morals*

Wednesday Pragmatic Solutions
Sept. 27 Assignment: William James, "Pragmatism's Conception of Truth"

Week Seven

Monday Against Idealism
Oct. 2 Assignment: William James, "The Will to Believe"
 Blackburn, *Truth*, Chapter 1, "Faith, Belief and Reason"

Wednesday Transcendent Possibilities
Oct. 4 Assignment: Bertrand Russell, "William James's Conception of Truth"

Week Eight

Monday Doubts
Oct. 9 Assignment: Bertrand Russell, "On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood" and "Truth and Falsehood"

Wednesday For Realism
Oct. 11 Assignment: G.E. Moore, "The Nature of Judgment"

Mid-Term Break
Oct. 14-22

Week Nine

Monday How to Judge the Truth
Oct. 23 Assignment: Ludwig Wittgenstein, Remarks on Truth
 Blackburn, *Truth*, Chapter 5 "The Possibility of Philosophy"

Wednesday Representation, Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity
Oct. 25 Assignment: Richard Rorty, "Representation, Social Practice, and Truth"

Week Ten

Monday Truth, Consensus, and Transsubjectivity
Oct. 30 Assignment: Jürgen Habermas, "Richard Rorty's Pragmatic Turn"

Wednesday

Nov. 1 Assignment: J. L. Austin, "Truth" and "Performative Utterances"

Week Eleven

Monday Non-Propositional Truth: Language, Art, and the World
Nov. 6 Assignment: John Searle, "What is a Speech Act?"

Wednesday How to do Things with Words
Nov. 8 Assignment: Jacques Derrida, "The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing"

Week Twelve

Monday Deconstructing Truth
Nov. 13 Assignment: Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth"

Wednesday Truth as Disclosure
Nov. 15 Assignment: George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language"

Week Thirteen

Meetings to be rescheduled

Watch *Gaslight*

Week Fourteen

Monday Truth and Power
Nov. 27 Assignment: Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics"

Wednesday How to Make Reality
Nov. 29 Assignment: Martha Nussbaum, "The Professor of Parody"
Judith Butler, "A 'Bad Writer' Writes Back"

Week Fifteen

Monday Bad Writing = Bad Thinking?
Dec. 4 Assignment: Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*

Wednesday Bullshit and How to Prevent It
Dec. 6 Study for final paper