

IDENTITY FROM THE MIND AND THE BRAIN

Who Am I and How Do I Know?

COURSE SYLLABUS – FALL 2012

Instructor Information

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Course Information

Course Number: AHSE 1155, Section 1
Meeting Time: Mondays and Thursdays from 9:00am-10:40am
Classroom: AC 417

The Fundamental Issue in this Course

Perhaps the most fundamental question any developing individual asks himself/herself is: who am I? The ways people have answered this question have evolved over the course of history as the dominant ways of knowing (epistemologies) have shifted. Indeed, the question of how we come to know ourselves has captivated Western scholars since the days of Descartes, but a look at the last fifty to sixty years has also seen enormous changes. Many people invoke psychological perspectives in describing their identity, focusing on their personality, developmental history, and theory of mind. But the explosion of neurobiological research has introduced a new and viable outlook: explaining identity at the chemical and electrical level of the brain.

There is good reason to think that these two perspectives on identity are mutually exclusive; indeed elegant theories have been developed to describe both. On the one side, is the theory of “eliminative materialism” which states that one day all psychological phenomena will be explained by neurobiological data, thus rendering the field of psychology as scientifically useless as pre-Copernican astronomy. In other words, the argument is that just as the discovery that the Earth was not the center of the universe caused all previous astronomical theory and research to be irrelevant, the inevitable explanation of all psychological phenomena through neurological events will ultimately leave psychology unnecessary. On the other side are scholars who argue that events in the brain are simply the lowest level of analysis for thinking about human experience and cannot make meaningful contributions to the ways we understand our sense of self as we live our daily lives.

Why is this debate important? As humans we are in a constant process of coming to know ourselves and understanding our sense of identity. The different types of questions we ask about this essential matter lead to strikingly different explanations. So, when it comes to a topic as fundamental to human existence as identity, it is absolutely essential to wonder not only “who am I?” but to also ask “how do I know?”

About the Course

This course may be quite different than many other courses you have taken, such as those in high school. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers for the subjects we will discuss. You will not take any exams or quizzes. The class is not lecture-based and does not have one single textbook.

Instead, the course is inter-disciplinary by design. The topic of identity is one of major human concern and scholars have approached it from many angles. In working across disciplinary boundaries in planning the course, I have strived to represent the wide array of perspectives that have been brought to bear on the study of identity, and I think the class is stronger for this approach.

Selected readings from books, journals, and magazines, as well as films will serve as a platform for us to discuss the wide array of issues related to the study of identity. Opinions on these issues can be very personal and are often rooted in deeply-held beliefs – which can sometimes be difficult to articulate.

Rather than discussing these issues from a defensive, dogmatic view, our discussions will be approached from the concept of helping each other *understand* all viewpoints, including ones we may disagree with. This concept is critical if we are to have a constructive discussion when disagreements inevitably arise.

In addition to respecting others’ beliefs, **it is critical that each of you complete the assigned reading.** Otherwise, only those who have read the material will have the appropriate background to be fully engaged in the discussion. *You will get out of this class what you put into it!*

To sum up:

1. There are no “right” answers for the material we will discuss. The goal is for you to learn techniques that you can use to defend your position through logic, fact, persuasive writing, and debate.
2. The quality of our discussion depends on your preparation (completing and reflecting on the assigned reading) and your willingness to respect others’ beliefs and share your own.

Learning Objectives

The philosophy and main objectives of this course are embodied in the following goals:

1. Critically examine the concept of identity. We all have an intuitive sense of what identity is, but scholars have worked to define this concept in a variety of ways. In this course we will learn about different conceptualizations of identity and evaluate their merits.

2. Learn about epistemology and apply different epistemological perspectives to the concept of identity. Identity is a topic too big and important to remain under the sole scope of any one field. Yet different fields hold different assumptions about what “counts” as valid evidence in the pursuit of knowledge. Identity is the *content* of this course, epistemology will provide us with several (sometimes incompatible) *processes* of coming to learn about identity and, as a result, is just as central a focus.

3. Apply scholarly work on identity to one's own sense of self. Identity is something every one of us is working on every day. In this course we will highlight the ways in which the many scholarly texts we work with impact our own evolving sense of self. The goal is to learn something about identity as a concept and to learn something about ourselves in the process.

4. Develop communication skills. In this course, you will craft a variety of communication deliverables, including a formal debate, personal writing assignments, a tightly argued capstone paper (with mandatory revision), a peer-review process, and others. You will also participate in class discussions every day. These activities are aimed at development of the following categories of effective communication:

- a. **Organization and structure:** These deliverables will communicate a clear goal, provide and follow a logical structure governed by the assignment's goals, and orient the audience in terms of how the deliverable is progressing towards its goal (e.g., strategic use of transitions, topic sentences/ideas, etc.).
- b. **Analysis:** Assignments will have a clear and significant goal or goals. These goals will be achieved through a combination of compelling logical reasoning and plausible, detailed analysis of evidence.
- c. **Evidence and support:** Assignments will include an appropriate amount of specific evidence to support the deliverable's goal, while also observing and responding to inconsistencies in the evidence. Evidence will be integrated into the deliverable's structure (i.e., the author will introduce and explain the meaning and relevance of the evidence.) Evidence will be appropriately referenced.
- d. **Mechanics and Style:** Written, spoken, and creative deliverables will follow the appropriate guidelines pertaining to grammar, word usage, sentence length and structure, etc. All deliverables must be clear, compelling, and effective.
- e. **Professionalism:** Assignments and discussions will convey analyses that are both significant and appropriate to the study of identity. In particular, you must use proper methodology for academic work on identity (e.g., correct use of citations, breadth and depth of research, etc.), anticipate your audience (e.g., presentations will engage and educate their audience, papers and presentations will strike an appropriate balance between formality and creativity), and work effectively in teams.
- f. **Constructive criticism.** This course offers many opportunities to give and receive constructive, critical feedback about one another's written and oral contributions. Your constructive critique skills will be developed through class discussions, commentary on one of your colleague's papers, and presentation feedback.
- g. **Critical reading:** This course offers many opportunities to read carefully and critically. Students will pose and discuss critical questions about readings, mine readings for multiple interpretations or points of view, compare and contrast readings to deepen understanding of content, and analyze readings to better understand a writer's use of composition and rhetoric.

5. Have fun in the process. No, seriously – this is *key*!

Competencies

This course primarily develops and assesses the **contextual understanding, communication, and lifelong learning** competencies. These competencies closely relate to the learning objectives listed above and to the feedback you will receive on all of your assignments.

This course also develops the **teamwork** and **qualitative analysis** competencies to lesser degrees. These competencies will be developed during this course but not explicitly evaluated.

Required Texts

1) **Set of articles** – available on our course’s Blackboard site (see below)

2) **Synaptic Self: How Our Brains Become Who We Are** by Joseph LeDoux,
New York: Penguin Books (2002)
ISBN# 0-14-200178-3 (paperback)
Best purchased on-line (your first reading assignment in it is due Oct 14)

The Course Website (a.k.a. Blackboard)

We have a website for the course that can be accessed at <http://www.courses.olin.edu>

I’m not a huge fan of Blackboard, but it was the best option for this semester for disseminating readings. Please see handout on creating your own course pack.

Honor Code Issues:

The honor code helps me focus on cool things, like designing interesting PowerPoint slides and developing fun classroom activities, and saves me from the need to worry about dishonesty, plagiarism, cheating, or food fights. Please follow the spirit of the honor code and ask me to clarify anything that is unclear. Primary honor code issues include:

- **Plagiarism:** always take extreme care to acknowledge the source of all quotes, content, and theories. Even if you reword the original material, or if it merely informs your own argument, you must cite it as an influence. *When in doubt, cite.*
- **Collaboration:** Collaboration will be allowed (and required for certain assignments), but ultimately you are responsible for your own work in this class. If you receive help where help is allowed, you must acknowledge it in a brief note at the end of the assignment. If you are in doubt, ask me beforehand.

Writing Assignments

We will do a considerable amount of writing during the semester, both in-class and out of class. Most of the writing assignments will be evaluated (due dates are reflected on the semester schedule). These graded assignments range in length, and are intended for you to critique and reflect on the assigned reading and ideas from the course.

Topics: For each written assignment I will provide you with a sheet explaining the details of the particular assignment, including the length requirements and expectations.

Formatting: Each written assignment should be typed in Microsoft Word, 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, with one inch margins (top, bottom, right, and left). Your name should appear in the upper right-hand corner of every page, and each page numbered at the bottom right. Essays not completed according to these guidelines may be returned for re-formatting and a deduction to the essay grade applied.

References: The citation of scholarly sources serves three very important purposes:

1. Citations provide a starting point for anyone who wants to use your research for their own work.
2. Citations indicate to the reader how extensively you researched your subject.
3. Citations give credit to those responsible for the ideas, knowledge, and words used in your essay.

Failure to properly cite sources is known as plagiarism.

*****Writing Tutors:**

You are **required** to work with a writing tutor on at least one written assignment this semester. You may want to look over the list of writing assignments very early in the semester and choose one ahead of time for this purpose (it does not have to be a major assignment for this to be useful!). When you have decided which assignment to bring to the tutor, you need to e-mail me a draft of the paper *before* meeting with the tutor, so I can assess how the paper changes after you have worked with the tutor. You will also be required to work with a writing tutor for any writing assignment that receives a grade of C+ or below. You will also be required to work with a writing tutor on any Analytical Target Practice assignment that receives a grade of check-minus. If you receive two check-minuses on the Analytical Target Practice Assignments, you will be required to meet with Gillian Epstein, Olin's professional writing consultant. (Any meetings you are required to attend will count towards the semester requirement.)

You are encouraged to contact the writing tutor at *any time* with any question regarding any issue or assignment for this course. I urge you to do this because it will help you maximize your skill development and fast-track you for future coursework. Indeed, the AHS Foundation is the perfect time to focus on developing your writing skills for the rest of college, and beyond! The dedicated tutor for our course is Jeff Holzgrafe, who can be reached via email at: Jeffrey.Holzgrafe@students.olin.edu

When choosing to work with a tutor, please try to book Jeff. He is familiar with the course (he took it in his first year at Olin) and is thus best prepared to be of service. (If he is over-booked he will work with you to find you another writing tutor).

If you are having any trouble contacting our writing tutor or have other writing tutor comments or concerns, please email Olin's writing consultant, Gillian Epstein: gillian.epstein@olin.edu. Feedback and suggestions about Olin's writing tutoring program are always welcome!

In addition to sessions by appointment, all of Olin's fall semester writing tutors hold approximately one "walk in" office hour weekly. The time and location of these office hours will be posted on the writing tutor wiki: <http://gillianwiki.wikispaces.com/Olin+Writing+Tutors>.

Other Course Policies

Attendance/Participation:

To take full advantage of the learning opportunities this course offers, you are obligated to come to class and participate. In fact, I hope this course will be so enjoyable that you will want to come to class! Since this is a discussion-based class, attendance and participation will factor significantly in the determination of your final grade. *If participating in discussions is stressful to you in any way, it is your responsibility to come talk to me about it. I am more than happy to work something out.*

Lateness is disruptive. I will make sure we end on time, and you must arrive on time.

If you are too sick to come to class...well, don't come to class! Focus on getting healthy. Please contact me as soon as you can – before class if possible, or at the first opportunity after class if necessary. If you have a different reason for missing class, contact me as early as possible.

Laptop use in class:

Laptop use has proven distracting to me and to other students in the past, so only use your laptop for taking notes or for sanctioned activities. Please keep your screen folded down until you are ready to type something, at which point you should raise the screen, type whatever you like, and lower it. No web, email, Facebook, or chat. Thank you!

Americans with Disabilities Act:

The Office of Student Life coordinates services for students with learning disabilities, sensory impairments, psychological disabilities, and medical conditions. Students are responsible for identifying themselves to the Assistant Dean of Student Life for Advising and providing appropriate documentation of their disability and need for accommodation in a timely manner. Students requesting accommodation should contact the Assistant Dean of Student Life for Advising as soon as possible after matriculation. A wide range of support services for students are available. Any specific modifications granted will be based on detailed discussions with each student and the Assistant Dean of Student Life for Advising about their particular situation, and on information from a medical care provider concerning the student's disability and related needs. If you have any questions or concerns about using SSD, *please* come talk to me about it and we will work to find the best accommodation strategy.

Feedback:

Feedback is an *essential* part of this course! I will devote half of a class session to getting anonymous feedback from you in a formal way on October 11 and again at the end of the semester. However, I welcome suggestions or concerns at *any time*, so please do not hesitate to be in touch with me in person or via email.

Grading:

This course will use the ABCDF grading system as outlined in the Student Handbook, including pluses and minuses (note that Olin does not use the A+ grade: an A is fully delightful in and of itself!). Final grades will be assigned in accordance with the guidelines provided in the Student Handbook. Of course, first semester Olin students can only receive a grade of "pass" or "no credit" on their official transcript. I will still grade all assignments (and the course as a whole) on

the ABCDF scale even though their transcript will not record this. I do this to give you a sense of how you're doing at Olin, even though it won't actually appear on your transcript.

Grading will be done using a standard scale, i.e. 90%-above = A; 80-89% = B, etc. I have no problem with giving every member of this class an A if performance warrants.

As with all AHS Foundation courses, failure to complete any assignment with a passing grade will result in a failing grade for the overall course. This means that a repeat or alternate AHS Foundation course must be taken in a later semester for a passing grade.



Assignment	Percent of Final Grade
<i>Attendance and Participation</i>	20%
<i>Final Paper</i>	20%
<i>Debate</i>	20%
<i>Evaluation of a Source Paper</i>	15%
<i>Analytical Target Practices</i>	10%
<i>Personal Reflection Paper I</i>	5%
<i>Personal Reflection Paper II</i>	5%
<i>AHS Writing Exercises</i>	5%
TOTAL	100%


Due Dates: Each paper is due *at the start of class on the date specified in the syllabus*. Late papers will be penalized one letter grade per day (i.e., from A to A-, from A- to B+, etc.)

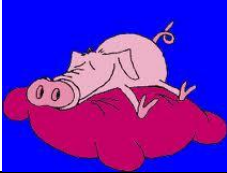



Please contact me if you need to submit a paper late because of an emergency, personal matter, or illness.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE – FALL 2012

Note: All assignments (reading and writing) are DUE on the date listed.

WEEK 1	INTRODUCTION		
	Thursday, August 30		
	Introductions/Review Syllabus		
	Nothing due...just bring your Self.		
WEEK 2	HISTORY / CONTEXT		
	Monday, September 3		Thursday, September 6
	Labor Day – NO CLASS		The Mind/Brain Divide
	Nothing is due – no class! 		<u>Reading:</u> - Dennett, The Reality of Selves - Knobe, In Search of the True Self <u>Writing:</u> - AHS WRITING EXERCISE <u>Other:</u> - Bring to class a complete Course Pack
WEEK 3	THE MIND		
	Monday, September 10	Thursday, September 13	Friday, September 14
	Modern Personality Theory: An Overview	Levels 1 & 2 of Personality	Narrative Identity / Writing Workshop 1 (Evidence)
	<u>Reading:</u> - McAdams, What do we know... <u>Writing:</u> - PERSONAL REFLECTION PAPER 1	<u>Reading:</u> - textbook section on personality traits - textbook section on developmental stages and tasks <u>Writing:</u> - Analytical Target Practice 1 (McAdams)	<u>Reading</u> - Habermas & Bluck, Getting a life... (just read to the top of page 752)
WEEK 4	Monday, September 17	Thursday, September 20	
	The Person in Context	Movie Day!	
	<u>Reading:</u> - Baumeister & Muraven, Identity as an adaptation to social, cultural, historical context.	Nothing due – just come to class (<u>meeting in the MH Auditorium</u>) to watch <i>Capturing the Freudman's</i> 	

WEEK 5	Monday, September 24		Thursday, September 27	
	Postmodern Identity Theory 1: Overview		Postmodern Identity Theory 2: Sex and Gender	
	<u>Reading:</u> - Gergen, The Saturated Self, Chapters 5 & 6 - movie: <i>Capturing the Freidman's</i> <u>Writing:</u> - Analytical Target Practice 2 (Gergen)		<u>Reading:</u> - Zita, Male lesbians and the postmodern body - Bornstein, selections from My Gender Workbook - Carter, Flesh and the Mirror	
WEEK 6	Monday, October 1		Thursday, October 4	
	Doing Research & Writing Workshop 2 (Close Reading)		Postmodern Identity Theory 3: The Body	
	<u>Reading:</u> - Jordan & Zanna, How to read a journal article <u>Writing:</u> - list of ideas for Evaluating Sources Paper topics		<u>Reading:</u> - Dreger, The limits of individuality - Herbert, Politics of Biology - either: handout on history of chronic fatigue syndrome or handout on history of homosexuality diagnosis <u>Writing:</u> - Analytical Target Practice 3 (Articles for Evaluating Sources Paper)	
WEEK 7	Monday, October 8		Thursday, October 11	
	Columbus Day – NO CLASS		Postmodern Identity Theory 4: Race & Course Feedback	
	Nothing due – no class! 		<u>Reading:</u> - Zuckerman, Some dubious premises in research and theory on racial differences <u>Writing:</u> - List of topics for Course Feedback - EVALUATING SOURCES PAPER	
WEEK 8	THE BRAIN			
	Monday, October 15		Thursday, October 18	
	Ways of Knowing in Neuroscience		Introduction to Neuroscience: The <i>how</i> of identity	
	<u>Reading:</u> - Gilovich, How we know what isn't so, Intro. - LeDoux, Synaptic Self, Chapters 1 & 2		<u>Reading:</u> - Gazzaniga & Heatherton, Psychological Science - <i>optional</i> : Jabr, IBM Chip Based On Human Brain	

WEEK 9	Monday, October 22	Thursday, October 25
	Learning and Memory: The who of identity	Emotion & Motivation: The why of identity
	<u>Reading:</u> - Dudai & Carruthers - Schacter & Addis - LeDoux, Synaptic Self, pp. 97-119, 174-180, 190-199 <u>Writing:</u> - Analytical Target Practice 4 (LeDoux)	<u>Reading:</u> - LeDoux, Synaptic Self, p. 200-210, 221-240, 255-259 - Ekman & Matsumoto, Reading faces: The universality of emotional expression
WEEK 10	Monday, October 29	Thursday, November 1
	NO CLASS	AHS WRITING PANEL
	Nothing due – class cancelled because Jon will be out of town. 	Meet in the MH Auditorium <u>Reading:</u> - none!
WEEK 11	Monday, November 5	Thursday, November 8
	Meet The Brain Day Field Trip to Harvard Brain Bank	Introduction to Synthesis / Introduction to Upcoming Assignments
	We will depart at 9:00am and return to campus by 1:15pm. Please be on time! 	<u>Reading:</u> - Dooremalen, Summary of Churchland's theory of eliminative materialism - Brendel, Philosophy of mind in the clinic... - Lehrer, Coda <u>Writing:</u> - AHS WRITING EXERCISE
WEEK 12	DEBATE, SYNTHESIS, AND INTEGRATION	
	Monday, November 12	Thursday, November 15
	Preparation for Debate	The Debate!
	Nothing due: debate preparation	Nothing due: debate preparation
	Monday, November 19	Thursday, November 22
	NO CLASS... THANKSGIVING BREAK!	NO CLASS... THANKSGIVING BREAK!
		

WEEK 13	Monday, November 26	Thursday, November 29
	Multiple Levels of Analysis	Articulating Your Own Theory
	Writing: - PERSONAL REFLECTION PAPER 2	Writing: - Thesis statement and outline of final paper
WEEK 14	Monday, December 3	Thursday, December 6
	Consolidating Your Ideas & Writing Workshop 3 (Thesis)	Course Debrief & Individual Appointments
	Writing: - ROUGH DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER	Writing: - PEER FEEDBACK FORM - WRITTEN AGENDA FOR INDIVIDUAL APPT.
WEEK 15	Monday, December 10	
	Individual Appointments	
	Writing: - PEER FEEDBACK FORM - WRITTEN AGENDA FOR INDIVIDUAL APPT.	
WEEK 16	Final Exams Period	
	FINAL PAPERS DUE: December X th (whenever the Registrar determines that all AHS Foundation finals are due), e-mailed to Jon	