

**WRT 205: CRITICAL INQUIRY & RESEARCH
THOUGHT FOR THOUGHT'S SAKE**

days: TTh Spring 2006
 time: 2:00 PM location: MSQ 208A
 section #281

Instructor: John Holliday
Office: 017 HBC
Office Hours: Th 3:30 – 4:30

All men by nature desire to know.
Aristotle, *Metaphysics*

Man has no nature; what he has is history.
José Ortega y Gasset, *Toward a Philosophy of History*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why are you here, meaning here in this classroom, at this university, participating in any sort of higher education? What do you say when people like me ask you why you're here? Do you think about these things? Or do you rather move from class to class and simply do what needs to be done and that's that? Do we even have time to think about these things? These questions have something to do with knowledge, or at least have the possibility to do something with knowledge, and that's the focus of this course: the societal place of knowledge.

Although it is highly relevant and seriously important, we won't be so much concerning ourselves with epistemology, but rather with questions such as: Where in society is knowledge acquired? Why is it acquired? Who has access to its acquisition? What is its function? Does the intended function change with the environment? Is there a difference between professional and academic knowledge? Could this have anything to do with how knowledge is presented? How is it presented? How is it compartmentalized? Why is it compartmentalized? Who produces knowledge and how does it come to be valued or discounted? Is knowledge a form of currency? If so, how much *intellectual capital* does one need?

As members of an establishment that makes its living on the distribution of knowledge, it would seem a little strange if we didn't take the time to consider these questions above (and all the others that in turn come forth, maybe bringing back memories of your tweed-jacketed high school English teacher who said you should read to become a better person or whatever). And, in fact, it seems a bit strange for anybody to not consider these questions above (an intuition that goes back to Socrates). So we'll be considering them. Over the course of the semester we'll work through three units (society & knowledge, ideology & knowledge, and identity & knowledge), using Peter Watson's recent and massive book (we'll only be reading half of it) *Ideas: A History of Thought and Invention, from Fire to Freud* as our primary reading, and a few supplementary papers to frame our discussion.

In Writing 105 you learned the basics of analysis and argument. In Writing 205 we'll use those skills with an added focus on research (hence the title of the course), particularly research across disciplines, looking at the unification of knowledge, what the biologist E.O. Wilson termed *consilience*. Everyone is familiar with academic research (at minimum, WRT 105 introduced you to the idea), but here we'll be pushing that familiarity, understanding that a heavily researched paper is not necessarily a "research paper," and that information not properly within your field can be highly relevant to your field. Your research will be used to analyze a concept or issue, to juxtapose competing views and data, to examine the implications of such juxtapositions, not to simply regurgitate information. So it's crucial that you bring the specific issues of your discipline to the table; the more perspectives we have, the better we'll be able to understand the societal place of knowledge since society is, by definition, the aggregate of all its members.

LEARNING GOALS

1. Students will compose texts that investigate a focused topic of inquiry that raises issues of diversity and community and that offers multiple points of entry based on their interest and expertise.
2. Students will develop a working knowledge of strategies and genres of critical research.
3. Students will learn critical techniques of reading through engagement with research-based texts.

TEXTS & MATERIALS

Glenn, Cheryl, Robert K. Miller, Suzanne Strobeck Webb, and Loretta Gray. *The Writer's Harbrace Handbook, Brief Second Edition*. Boston: Thompson Wadsworth, 2005.

Watson, Peter. *Ideas: A History of Thought and Invention, from Fire to Freud*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

Various papers provided as PDFs on Blackboard (blackboard.syr.edu).

ASSIGNMENTS & OTHER GRADE-CONTRIBUTING ITEMS

presentation	15%
journal/magazine	17.5%
journal article	17.5%
research paper	30%
informal writing	10%
class participation/quizzes	10%

Note: All work should be typed unless stated otherwise. Please double-space, use Times New Roman, 12-point font, one-inch margins, and follow formal citation guidelines (whether it be MLA, APA, or Chicago).

SPECIAL NEEDS & SITUATIONS

Students who need special consideration due to any disability or situation should see me right away.

THE WRITING CENTER

According to a recent survey, most S.U. students who use the Writing Center have GPAs higher than 3.0; moreover, one in four have GPAs higher than 3.6. At the Writing Center (101 HBC; 443-5289), experienced, professional writing consultants will teach you how to succeed on individual assignments and ultimately become a better writer. Consultants work one-on-one to help you understand the assignment, discuss your response, revise your draft, develop proofreading strategies, and more. Appointments are available in 25- or 50-minute sessions, Monday through Friday, and can be reserved up to seven days in advance via an online scheduling program: <http://tutortrac.syr.edu>. Drop-in appointments are available Monday through Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All writing submitted for this course is understood to be your original work. In cases where academic dishonesty is detected (the fraudulent submission of another's work, in whole or part, as your own), you may be subject to a failing grade for the project or the course, and in the worst case, to academic probation or expulsion. For a more detailed description of the guidelines for adhering to academic honesty in the College of Arts and Sciences, go to <http://www-hl.syr.edu/cas-pages/PromAcademicHonesty.htm>.