

Capstone Seminar
Love and Indoctrination

From Thoreau's *Walden: If you have put your castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.*

UNCP 5517.01
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Hrs: M: 2-4pm

REQUIRED BOOKS:

LeGuin, Left Hand of Darkness
Orwell, 1984
Rice, "The Adding Machine" (play)
Thoreau, Walden
Watts, The Wisdom of Insecurity

PREMISE AND PURPOSE:

This is a course specifically intended to review your career here at BC and to look forward to your lives to come after graduation. In reviewing your lives here, we will use Chickering's Seven Vectors of Development (see below) as a guide or format for organizing our path through an examination of the various aspects of your individual selves and your lives. We will adapt his schema and vectors to the specific theme of this class, which is to develop the ability to distinguish propaganda (fake news, lies) from truth.

The ability to distinguish lies from truth is essential for evaluating what you have learned, and for determining how you will live as you go forward. Students will be invited to study their own lives using this perspective, to determine the relative value of the various parts of them.

As it turns out, there is much evidence that love is a factor in this process of discernment, helping us, via its processes, to distinguish lies from truth.

In George Orwell's *1984*, a mere affair engaged in by Winston Smith and his lover Julia threatens the entire political structure of Big Brother. Why would that be? What is it about love that so fundamentally threatens large systems based on indoctrination?

In this course we will explore and develop working definitions of both *love* and *indoctrination* in order to differentiate them, via close readings from the books and essays assigned.

For the purposes of this course, we will use as working definitions the following, noting that these definitions will evolve as we make our way through the readings:

Love: The principle of connectedness that connects connection and disconnection. Requires paradoxical logic.

Indoctrination: Any system (political, spiritual, economic, social) that operates via splitting, one idea from another, one person/people from another. Essentially misuses Aristotelian logic. Its main tool is *propaganda* which, like fake news, seeks not to clarify (even if that clarity presents as a paradox), but to obfuscate. Thus for example, the climate change deniers "win" if they can merely muddy the waters of the subject, convincing people that the science is not settled because 1% of scientists disagree that humans are causing climate change. The result is that nothing is done to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Critical Thinking: "Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action." From Paul and Elder, *Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools*.

As an ongoing project in this course you will review your four years at BC, pay attention to the present, and look toward the future, asking questions that arise, among which are:

- 1) What is the value (intellectual, moral, spiritual, practical) of what you studied?
- 2) How will you apply all you've studied to choosing a career, engaging in all manner of relationships, and developing and contributing to your community?
- 3) How will you keep spirit (religious, educational) in your lives?

These questions echo in some way Jesuit ideals in their connection to love. (Love was imagined by the ancients as a spirit, a *daimon*). You have studied subjects in part because you love the subject, the authors, and the teachers. You will explore what to do

with your lives, in part by thinking about not only what you love to do, but also what your soul wants of you, and what the world wants you to do. (Fr. Himes' Three Questions)

This requires distinguishing education from indoctrination, and becoming conscious of the various values you live by that we all assume. By reading and discussion, viewing films, writing an autobiography and essays, and engaging in ongoing class discussions, you will be given the tools to determine the value and usefulness of your studies, and how to apply your studies to your lives beyond Boston College.

READINGS

Week 1: Introductions, brief reading over of Chickering's 7 Vectors summary; discussion of terms and review of assignments and goals for the course.

Weeks 2, 3 and 4:

Focus:

1. The distinction between love and indoctrination; how love connects
2. Chickering Vectors: "Moving from Autonomy to Interdependence", "Developing Mature Relationships", and "Managing Emotions"
3. Suffering and love: "suffering unto truth" (Aeschylus)
4. Keeping community alive in your lives

Read: 1. *1984* by George Orwell.

2. *The Art of Loving*, Erich Fromm (selections)

3. (essay) *Soul Definition*, James Hillman (brief excerpt)

4. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr on love: "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" 1963 and "An Experiment in Love" 1958

5. Selections on "agape, eros and philia" from *A Guide to Jesuit Education* and Fr. Himes "Three Questions"

6. Selections from *Woman in the 19th Century*, Margaret Fuller

Discuss: Love and relationships at BC; what have you experienced? What have you learned both from suffering and from joy? Hookups vs dating.

Weeks 5, 6 and 7:

Focus:

1. Chickering Vectors: “Establishing Identity” and “Developing Integrity”
2. Connection between Identity and Spirituality

Read:

1. (essay) *The Wisdom of Insecurity*, Alan Watts
2. (short story) *The Mysterious Stranger*, Twain
3. (excerpts) *Animal Envy*, Ralph Nader
4. (film) *Anima Mundi*
5. (essay) “What is Mindfulness”, Kabat-Zinn
6. (essay) “Where Reason Ends and Faith Begins”, Luhrmann
7. (speech) “Commencement Speech”, Anna Quindlen
8. (book) *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Ursula LeGuin

Discuss: God at BC: how does an intellectual life connect to a spiritual life; does or must religion clash with rationality; is religion an indoctrinated system.

Weeks 8, 9 and 10:

Focus:

1. Chickering Vectors: “Developing Competence”
2. Practical living; connection between theory and practice in your education

Read:

1. *Political Essays*, Orwell, Emerson, Benjamin
2. *Walden*, Thoreau (selections)
3. *Political Emotions*, Nussbaum (selections)
4. (film) *The Century of the Self*
5. (film) *The Corporation*
6. (website) *Taxonomy of Logical Fallacies*
7. (essay) *War is a Racket*, Gen. Smedley Butler

8. (essay) "What is Critical Thinking?" from Richard Paul and Linda Elder, *Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking*

Discuss: Finding the ways in which theory connects to practice in your lives; discerning the practical applications of your various majors and fields of study. Figuring out what you have learned to do that is practical. The place of politics and political activism at BC.

Weeks 11, 12 and 13:

Focus:

1. Chickering Vector: "Developing Purpose"
2. Taking what you have learned into the world; figuring out a career

Read:

1. *Walden*, Thoreau (selections)
2. (essay) "The Way to Produce a Person", Brooks
3. (essay) "I Used to be a Human", Sullivan
4. (essay) "The Gospel According to Me", Critchley and Webster

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Autobiography: you will write in the form of a journal, an ongoing autobiography mainly focused on your time at BC. In it you will consider issues and subjects as they arise in our readings and in class discussions, such as: sex, spirituality, your animal nature, aspirations, majors, professors, subjects of and for study, what was missing from your education, where connections were made between the classroom and your lives outside of them.
2. Weekly 3 page response essays to one of our readings, which will both give your personal response to the reading and analyze the reading in the larger context of the subject and the course itself.
3. Each of the first two sections of the course will culminate with a longer analytical essay on some larger topic derived from the course section of approx. 6-8 pp, with the final section culminating in a longer final analytical essay of about 10-12pp.

GRADING:

Your final grade will be based on the following:

1. Written assignments
 - a. Weekly 3 page response papers valued *in toto*: 20% of your grade
 - b. 2 analytical essays at the end of sections 1 and 2 *averaged*: 30% of your final grade
 - c. Final longer (10-12pp) analytical essay: 20% of final grade
 - d. Autobiography: 20% of final grade
2. Class participation: 10% of final grade

ATTENDANCE:

Because the class meets once a week, attendance is critical and mandatory. Excused absences are only for illness, family emergency or team travel. Coming back late or leaving early for a weekend or holiday, including spring break, is not excused.

For each unexcused absence, your final grade will be reduced by a half grade. Come to class!