Inhabiting Other Lives: Knowing and Understanding
The Honors College, Florida International University
IDH 2004 ⋆ Spring 2009
Instructors: Juan Carlos Espinosa, Ruben Garrote, Bernard Gerstman
Tuesdays & Thursdays: 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM

Classrooms and Professor Contacts:
Lecture/large-group classes meet on Thursdays in GL 523
Discussion/small-group classes meet on Tuesdays as follows:

**Professor Espinosa: GC 275B**
Office hours: By appointment, DM 233; espinosj@fiu.edu; (305) 348-6795

**Professor Garrote: GC 275A**
Office hours: By appointment, DM 232; garroter@fiu.edu; (305) 348-1620

**Professor Gerstman: DM 163**
Office Hours: By appointment, CP 232; gerstman@fiu.edu; (305) 348-3115

Overview:
At an early point in human history, we started asking questions about ourselves and about the
world around us. As we found answers, we came up with ways to share our stories, to give them
meaning. In this course, we will ask the “big questions” as well as the smaller ones. The main
goal is to gain a greater understanding of what knowledge is and how it is acquired and used.
Another important goal is to connect the “big questions” to the practical issues that are a part of
our daily lives. What do we know? How do we know it? How does knowledge shape us as
individuals and the world around us? Who are we? How do we define others? What can happen
when knowledge becomes power? Does knowledge come with responsibility? To explore these
questions we will turn to a wide variety of sources, from classic works to science fiction, from
the literature of science to ancient myth, from documentary film to recent blockbuster movies.

Required Reading:
Students will be responsible for reading the following texts during the fall semester:

  0679777857. Other editions available.
- L. Michael White. *From Jesus to Christianity: How Four Generations of Visionaries &
  Storytellers Created the New Testament and Christian Faith*.

Attendance/Classroom Etiquette:
Attendance is required and will be reflected in the final grade. All students are expected to be on
time to class and to remain in class for the duration of the lecture. Material will be covered in
class that is not covered in the readings, thus each absence will negatively affect the student’s
ability to do well on assignments. For every unexcused absence the final grade will be lowered
1/3 of a letter. Work not submitted on time will lose points. Unexcused late arrivals and early
departures will be counted as absences.
Course Requirements:
Participation (20%)
The course will be conducted as a seminar. Students are expected to come to class prepared and participate fully in the discussions. This course requires that students submit written reflections on the assigned reading materials, as well as lectures and movies shown. All written work must consistently adhere to a writing style manual of the student’s choice (e.g., Chicago, Turabian, MLA, etc.). Students are advised to carefully proofread all papers before submitting them. Students with deficient writing skills should consult the university’s free tutoring services: On-Campus Learning Center: PC 247; Online Learning Center: w3.fiu.edu. All students must adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy of The Honors College and Florida International University.

Short-Answer Assessments (40%)
In order to demonstrate their understanding of the material, students will write four (4) short answer assessments after each book or group of chapters/articles.

Ethnographic Project (40%)
Each individual student will be involved in a semester-long group project in which he will prepare a mini-ethnography of a particular social group selected in consultation with his professor. The group must be markedly different from the student’s own.

An ethnography is a study and portrayal of a social group based on fieldwork and participation in the life of the group. It has two main parts:

1. A description of the group: This should be written in a language in which members of the group can recognize themselves.
2. An interpretation of the group: This should be an attempt at translating what has been described.

In preparing the ethnography, students will be required to study the selected group in three ways:

(a) accessing scholarly material;
(b) visiting with and observing the group (a minimum of three visits is required); and
(c) engaging members of the group in meaningful exchange.

The object of this three-fold exploration is to learn as much as possible about the selected group. Thus, the students will first acquaint themselves with some relevant information about the group; after which they will be prepared to begin their observation and engage members of the group.

Each student will present the final product to the class on the dates indicated in the calendar. The final product must include a visual element (documentary, photo essay, etc.), though the exact nature of this component will be left up to each student to determine in consultation with his professor.
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| 1/6   | T   | 1       | First meeting in individual sections  
Start reading Nagel’s “What Is it Like to Be a Bat?” |
| 1/8   | R   | 1       | Guest Lecture: *Can We Inhabit Other Lives?* Prof. Bruce Hauptli |
| 1/12  | T   | 1       | Discussion: Hauptli lecture  
Start reading *The File* |
| 1/14  | R   | 2       | Discussion: Ethnographic Project  
Short Answer Assessment on *The File* |
| 1/20  | T   | 2       | Lecture: *Stealth Identities*. Prof. Espinosa |
| 1/22  | R   | 3       | Discussion: Espinosa Lecture |
| 1/26  | T   | 3       | Term Project/Ethnography Instruction |
| 1/28  | R   | 4       | Film: *Transamerica* |
| 2/3   | T   | 4       | Discussion of Ethnographic Project  
Start reading “Shakespeare in the Bush” and “Body Ritual among the Nacirema” |
| 2/5   | R   | 5       | Panel: *Shifting Identities*. Prof. Espinosa (moderator) |
| 2/10  | T   | 6       | Discussion: Shifting Identities |
| 2/12  | R   | 7       | NO CLASS: Work on Project |
| 2/17  | T   | 7       | Lecture: *Cultural Relativism*. Prof. Garrote  
Start reading *From Jesus* |
| 2/24  | T   | 8       | Discussion: Garrote Lecture |
| 2/26  | R   | 9       | Lecture: *Revolutionary Identities: Jewish or “Christian”?*  
Prof. Gerstman  
Short Answer Assessment on *From Jesus* |
| 3/2   | T   | 10      | Discussion: Gerstman Lecture |
| 3/4   | R   | 11      | Lecture: *Revolutionary Identities: British or “American”?*  
Prof. Gerstman |
Short Answer Assessment on Gass and Bundy |
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| 3/24 | T   | Discussion: Garrote Lecture  
| 3/26 | R   | 7 Lecture: *The Unexamined Life, Bad Faith and Good Works*  
Short Answer Assessment on Bierce, Bennett and Sartre |
| 3/31 | T   | Discussion: Garrote Lecture |
| 4/2  | R   | PRESENTATIONS |
| 4/7  | T   | PRESENTATIONS |
| 4/9  | R   | PRESENTATIONS |
| 4/14 | T   | PRESENTATIONS |
| 4/16 | R   | PRESENTATIONS |