

Truth-Seeking and Democracy (Fall 2024)

W5 (12:50-1:40 PM) in Honors Village Room 114

Course Instructor: Mr. Michael O'Malley

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Office Hours: Walker Hall 201, by appointment

Peer Instructor: Liz Thomason

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Office Hours: Walker Hall Room TBD, Thursday 11AM-12PM and by appointment

Course Objectives:

1. Employ effective communication techniques to cultivate a respectful and active environment for group discussions
2. Reflect consistently and actively on the importance and impacts of civil discourse and how it influences one's perception of key societal issues
3. Evaluate and articulate the merits and flaws of arguments from diverse and/or opposing perspectives
4. Present substantive introductory information that faithfully represents the multiple perspectives of hot-button topics for the purpose of helping students establish foundational knowledge to argue the merits of one or more sides

Course and Reading Schedule*

This schedule is subject to change, and any adjustments will be announced in class and posted on Canvas.

*Readings should be prepared for the class period in which they are listed—for example, the reading from Emma Goldman listed in Week 3 should be prepared for class on September 11th.

August 28th	Week 1	Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Review of the course syllabus● Discussion of Dr. George and Dr. West's work and course goals● Start creating ground rules	Truth and Democracy statement, "Willing to be Disturbed"
September 4th	Week 2	Civility and Discourse <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Guest Instructor: Dr. Amy Martinelli● Learn and review fundamentals of dialogue and different models of communication	reading(s) assigned by Dr. Martinelli

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue creating ground rules (if needed) 	
September 11th	Week 3	<p>Marriage (Its Significance and the Role of the State)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Presentation 1 Group discussion 	<p>Week 2 reflection due, Marriage and Love by Emma Goldman and What is Marriage? (pages 246-255) by Sherif Girgis, Robert P. George, and Ryan T. Anderson</p>
September 18th	Week 4	<p>Marriage (Its Significance and the Role of the State)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guest Instructor: Dr. Teresa Cornacchione Group discussion 	
September 25th	Week 5	<p>American Exceptionalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Presentation 2 Group discussion 	<p>Week 4 reflection due, explore this page about Manifest Destiny, John Winthrop's City on a Hill sermon, and the introduction (2-19) of <i>The Soul of America</i> by Jon Meacham</p>
October 2nd	Week 6	<p>American Exceptionalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group discussion 	
October 9th	Week 7	<p>What is the "Right" Version of History?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Presentation 3 Group discussion 	<p>Week 6 reflection due, What's Actually Being Taught in History Class by Kassie Bracken, Mark Boyer, Jacey Fortin, Rebecca Lieberman and Noah Throop, Should Social Studies Be Patriotic? By Joel Westheimer, and The Making of a Non-Patriot by Alex</p>

			Rosenberg
October 16th	Week 8	<p>What is the “Right” Version of History?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Guest Instructor: Dr. Elizabeth Washington <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Structured Academic Controversy Activity ● Group discussion 	Bring entry cards with questions for the group
October 23rd	Week 9	<p>The Critical Race Theory Panic in K-12 Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student Presentation 4 ● Group discussion 	Week 8 reflection due, <i>Critical Race Theory: What It Is and How to Fight It</i> by Christopher Rufo and “ <i>Behind the absurd attacks on ‘Critical Race Theory’</i> ” by Stephen Menendian
October 30th	Week 10	<p>The Critical Race Theory Panic in K-12 Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group discussion 	
November 6th	Week 11	<p>Is the Constitution a Living Document?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student Presentation 5 ● Group discussion 	Week 10 reflection due, review introduction to theories of constitutional interpretation (included on Canvas), <i>Why Originalism Is the Best Approach to the Constitution</i> by Justice Neil Gorsuch, and <i>Even the Founders Didn't Believe in Originalism</i> by Erwin Chemerinsky
November 13th	Week 12	<p>Is the Constitution a Living Document?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group discussion 	
November 20th	Week 13	<p>Case Study (determined by student preference and surveys)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student Presentation 6 	Week 12 reflection due as determined for the topic

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group discussion 	
December 4th	Week 14	Conclusions and Reflections	Final Reflection Due

Grading Policies

- A: 100.00 - 93.00%
- A-: 92.99 - 88.00%
- B+: 87.99 - 85.00%
- B: 84.99 - 81.00%
- B-: 80.99 - 80.00 %
- C+: 79.99 - 78.00%
- C: 77.99 - 76.00%
- C-: 75.99 - 74.00%
- D+: 73.99 - 71.00%
- D: 70.99 - 69.00%
- D-: 68.99 - 67.00%
- E: 66.99 - 0.00%

40%	<p>Attendance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are expected to be present and punctual to class each week • Students can miss one (1) class period without incurring a penalty, but any other absences must be accompanied by a UF-approved excuse or will lead to a 2% penalty to the student's overall course grade
20%	<p>Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are expected to prepare their readings for each week and participate in discussion, either by asking questions or responding to those of others • All readings will be provided through Canvas as links and/or PDFs, so students need not worry about purchasing reading materials • Participation may also include one or more survey to collect student feedback throughout the semester

20%	<p>Student Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At the start of the semester, each student will sign up to present on particular topic as listed in the course schedule ● Students will be graded on a rubric provided on Canvas
20%	<p>Weekly and Final Reflections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Approximately every other week, students are expected to submit a journal entry/reflection of 300-500 words concerning both: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a quote from the reading(s) that you found interesting and why ○ Whether your preconceived notions and/or mind was changed as a result of this week's discussion, and if so how and why ● Reflections can be done with students' preferred medium (including but not limited to paper, computer documents, and websites), but must be submitted in a manner that is accessible and readable for your instructors

Attendance

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies. Click here to read the [university attendance policies](#). However, students are invited to reach out to their instructors to discuss extenuating circumstances as needed.

A note on the structure of this course: A seminar-style dialogue is a particular type of classroom conversation owned and driven by all participants. It is quite different from a traditional classroom lecture, in which the professor directs the conversation and speaks most or all of the time. The success of a seminar dialogue is the responsibility of every single member, and can be considered a gathering of equals. Consequently, every member has a right to speak and be heard—within the bounds of respectful conversation and any ground rules we agree upon as a class—with equal respect given and received. In more traditional classroom discussions, students often have a fear of saying the “wrong” thing, but one goal of a seminar is to generate a space defined by openness and the freedom to share and respond to thoughts and ideas within the discussion’s framework.

We will know whether we are successful in our endeavor to foster a seminar-style dialogue if each student contributes and responds during each class session and if each session generates new ideas based on synthesis and analysis of topics introduced in our readings and activities. In this sense, a successful seminar becomes a “text” of its own with each member of the seminar having contributed to its creation. Finally, in order to participate effectively, it is imperative that students prepare well for each class session. This goes beyond simply reading what has been assigned for the week; Students should prepare as if they were responsible for leading that day’s discussion by taking the time to think and reflect on the readings and preparing comments, questions, and notes to share with their peers.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center.](#) It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Expectations for Student Conduct

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click here to read the Conduct Code.](#) If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

In-Class Recording Policies

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited.

Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Campus Resources

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the [Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis Services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the [Student Health Care Center website](#).

University Police Department: Visit [UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the [UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

[Career Connections Center](#): Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

[Library Support](#): Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

[Teaching Center](#): Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

[Writing Studio](#): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the [Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage](#) for more information.