

Winthrop University
Department of Interdisciplinary Studies
Master of Liberal Arts Program
LART 601.001 -- The Search for Order: The Empirical Eye (3 credits)
Fall, 2015

Dr. Timothy S. Boylan

Course Location and Schedule: Tuesdays, 5:00-7:45 p.m. (Kinard 105).

Office: Bancroft 109 **Office Phone:** 323-4572 **email:** boylant@winthrop.edu

Office Hours:

Tuesdays: 1:00-2:15 (Bancroft 326)

Wednesdays: 10:00-11:15 (Bancroft 109)

And by appointment.

Please Note: I have a second office in the Political Science Department, located in Bancroft 326. The phone# is 323-4664. On most weekdays when I teach classes I will be on campus and in one of the two offices.

Overview and Goals of the Course

This is one of the three core courses of the Master of Liberal Arts program. It complements the rational and intuitive approaches in “The Search for Order,” the theme of the program. In this course, we will discover how experience and perception are used as epistemological approaches to knowing, and will survey how writers and practitioners from varied disciplines and backgrounds have explored the empirical path. By the end of this course, students will have learned:

- How empirical knowing is defined and understood.
- How language, mathematics, logic, and measurement affect experience and perception.
- How logical fallacies and errors can skew one’s perception of an event or experience.
- How to explore, through individual research and writing, the search for order and knowledge in the subject of the student’s own choosing.
- How to critique and discuss the core texts and readings of the course.

Student Learning Outcomes

It is the intent of this course that, by the time it concludes, students will:

- Understand the interdisciplinary nature of this course.
- Think critically about “how we know what we know” through experience.
- Write clearly and effectively in review essays and the final integrative paper.
- Engage in effective oral communication through project presentations and class participation.

A Note on Course Attendance: Given the schedule of writing assignments and the demands of the course material, it will be almost impossible to do well in this course if you are consistently absent from the weekly class. You need to assess your own ability to consistently attend this class and participate in its work before committing yourself to it. Please see me if you have any questions about these factors.

Required Course Texts

Alfred Crosby, *The Measure of Reality*.
Leonard Mlodinow, *The Drunkard's Walk*.
Carol Tavris, *Psychobabble and Biobunk*
Roger Shattuck, *Forbidden Knowledge*.
Edward. O. Wilson, *Consilience*
Michael Frayn, *The Human Touch*.

Additional Readings and Resources (Online essays or videos, PDF files, or Library Reserve)

Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. (selected chapters)
David Boyle, *The Sum of Our Discontent*. (selection)
Nicholas Carr, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" (essay)
Guy Deutscher, "Does Language Shape the Way We Think?" (essay)
Daniel Kahneman, TED, "The Riddle of Experience vs. Memory." (video)
Michael Segre, "Kuhn, Meritocracy, and Excellence." (essay)

Course Evaluation.

- **Interpretive Essays (40% of overall evaluation -- 10% per essay).** In these review essays you will respond to an assigned question or theme presented in class. In addition to exploring the ideas, concepts, and implications tied to the questions, you will interact with the relevant course texts and draw conclusions based on what you have read and learned during the semester. I expect these essays to be well thought-out, well written, and typed. Include a title for the paper and page numbers. You should plan to write papers that are **1500 words or 5-6 pages in length, minimum**. Since these short evaluative papers will provide the basis for your participation in class, they must be completed on the day that they are due and they cannot be turned in if you are not in class, unless for documented illness or compelling reasons.
- **Integrative Paper (30% of overall evaluation).** During the first half of the semester, we will take time to showcase different authors, books, and ideas that connect with our readings and discussions. If you wish to take one of the course themes and explore it further, you can choose one of these monographs as a more in-depth project. Or, you can focus on a book or set of writings that explore an area relevant to the broad themes of empirical knowing not covered in class. These major papers should be **4000 words or 12-13 pages in length, minimum**, and should be well-crafted and written. Further detail on the final paper will be presented in class.
- **Active Participation (20%) and Final Paper Presentation (10% of overall evaluation).** This is a graduate-level seminar. The enrollment is purposely kept low to ensure a class environment conducive to conversation, interaction, and active participation. The latter term includes probing and questioning the ideas and concept presented in the readings, thinking and wondering out loud, and posing questions to presenters and peers. Each of you should come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that week. I encourage you to take notes on the readings and to utilize those notes during class discussions. Everyone is expected to make a contribution to the work of the class, whether by asking questions, making comments, suggesting criticisms, or offering insights.

Dropping the Course: Winthrop's "N" Grade Policy

The last day that you can withdraw from a graduate fall semester course with an automatic "N" grade is **Friday, October 23rd**. Per university policy, you may not withdraw from a course after this date without documented extenuating circumstances. Appeals must be made to the Registrar.

Class Discussions and Classroom Decorum

The classroom—especially at the graduate seminar level-- is an arena for discussion and free exchange of ideas. All students are expected to behave in a respectful and appropriate manner toward their fellow students, even when you disagree with them. In addition, all students are expected to refrain from any behaviors that disrupt the learning environment for others. Inappropriate activities include, but are not limited to, chronic tardiness, engaging in idle chitchat during presentations and discussions, using cell phones, IPODS, Blackberries and other personal electronic devices in class, or using laptop computers for activities such as checking e-mail, that are unrelated to what is happening in the classroom. Please see me if you have any questions about these issues.

Academic Dishonesty

Winthrop University takes an extremely serious view of violations of academic integrity. My in-class policy is one of zero tolerance for **any** form of academic dishonesty. In short, this means that a proven instance of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the **course**, and not solely for the assignment or exam in question. I will discuss this in detail during the first weeks of classes. However, it is your responsibility to talk with me if you have any questions about research, citations, internet use, or paper composition. Such a discussion must take place before you submit a paper or sit for an exam. **Please carefully review the Department of Political Science's statement on academic dishonesty** at: <http://www.winthrop.edu/cas/politicalscience/default.aspx?id=19401>

Students with Disabilities

Winthrop University is dedicated to providing access to education. If you have a disability and require specific accommodations to complete this course, contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 323-3290. Once you have your official notice of accommodations from the Office of Disability Services, please inform me as early as possible in the semester.

Appropriate Use of Technology in the Classroom

I abide by the College of Arts and Sciences Policy for the Appropriate Use of Technology. View at: <http://www.winthrop.edu/uploadedFiles/artscience/AppropriateUseOfHandHeldWirelessTechnologyApprovedPolicyMar2010.pdf>.

Syllabus Change Policy

I intend to adhere to the schedule of assignments and deadlines laid out in this syllabus. However, I may need to make minor changes in the schedule to accommodate special events, inclement weather, guest presenters, the instructor's unplanned absence or other unforeseen circumstance. I will announce any changes to the syllabus in a timely manner in class and/or by e-mail. You are responsible for this information.

Tentative Course and Reading Schedule

- August 25: Introduction to the Course
LART 601 and the MLA Core
Epistemology, "Multidisciplinarity," and "Interdisciplinarity"
Introduction of Participants
Review of Syllabus: Requirements and Expectations
Introduction and Review of the Texts and Authors
Discussion of interpretive and integrative papers.
Coming to Terms: What is *empirical knowledge*?
How do we know what we know?
- September 1: Exploring what it means to experience.
Carr, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?"
Deutscher, "Does Language Shape the Way We Think?"
Kahneman, "The Riddle of Experience vs. Memory"
Discuss implications of readings and video empirical knowledge.
Books to Consider for Integrative Papers.
- September 8: Science, scientific theory and method.
Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*
Segre, "Kuhn, Meritocracy, and Excellence"
Dr. Bill Rogers, Guest Participant and Facilitator
****First Interpretive Essay Due****
- September 15: **Crosby, *The Measure of Reality*** (Part I, pp. 3-126) and
- September 22: **Crosby, (Parts II and III, pp. 127-240)**
Boyle, *The Sum of Our Discontent* (pp. 29-46)
- September 29: **Mlodinow, *The Drunkard's Walk*** (Try to have the entire book read before this class; we will skip around the chapters during both classes.)
Dr. Tom Polaski, Guest Participant and Facilitator
- October 6: **Mlodinow, *The Drunkard's Walk*** (Continued)
****Second Interpretive Essay Due****
- October 13: **Tavris, *Psychobabble and Biobunk*** (selected review essays)
Guest Instructor TBA

- October 20: **Fall Break / No Class This Evening**
- November 3: **Shattuck, *Forbidden Knowledge* (pp. 1 - 169)**
****Third Interpretive Essay Due****
- November 10: **Shattuck, *Forbidden Knowledge* (pp. 173-346)**
****Written Proposals for Investigative Paper Due****
- November 17: **Wilson, *Consilience* (pp. 3 - 124)**
- November 24: **Wilson, *Consilience* (pp. 125 – 298)**
Sign up for Integrative Paper Presentations
****Fourth Interpretive Essay Due****
- December 1: **Frayn, *The Human Touch***
- December 8: **Integrative Paper Presentations (1)**
(Date Subject to Approval by Class.)
- December TBA: **Integrative Paper Presentations (2)**
****Integrative Papers Due by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 10****
(Day and Time To Be Discussed; Official Final Exam Time is Saturday,
December 13th at 11:30 a.m.)