The Life of the Mind
FSCC 100 First Seminar

Fall Semester 2005

Co-Instructors:
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Class meets TR 2:45-4:00 in Sears 552, also in Fourth Hour MW 12:30-1:45 Sears 462.
We will use some but not all of these time slots, you should check the syllabus
regularly to find out which ones you need to come for.

Welcome to The Life of the Mind. As first year, first semester college students, you
are beginning a new chapter in your own life of the mind. This course is designed to
provide an introduction to various dimensions of academic life, and will also allow us
to reflect, together, on our own lives of the mind — past, present and future.

The course is characterized by intense yet open-ended intellectual inquiry, guided by
reading, and will include practice in written and oral communication in small groups.
The goals of the course include the following: 1.) to enhance basic intellectual skills
of academic inquiry, such as critical reading, thoughtful analysis, and written and oral
communication; 2.) to introduce basic information literacy skills, 3.) to provide a
foundation for ethical decision-making, 4.) to encourage a global and multidisciplinary
perspective on the learning process; 5.) to facilitate faculty-student interactions; 6.)
and, in the most general sense, to provide a supportive common intellectual experience
for first-year students at Case.

We will look at the topic ”life of the mind” from many different perspectives, for
example neurology, animal-human differences, creativity, and working with and relating
to others.

Some questions we will explore include: What is mind? What is the connection
between mind and body? Do animals have minds? How does the body we are born
into (girl, boy, black, white) and our location in the social structure (rich, poor, urban,
rural) influence how we think and what we think about? What determines creativity?

Since this is a seminar course, you will be bringing questions to the table as well.
The success of a seminar depends on the full preparation and cooperative participation
of every one of us. You should come prepared to engage the material. Also, students
are expected to be respectful of each other and the instructors, even when or especially when disagreeing, and to encourage and stimulate each other’s thinking.

Under SAGES, writing instruction is being spread out over four semesters (First Seminar, two University Seminars and a Department Seminar).

Readings:


- Temple Grandin and Margaret Scariano Emergence: Labelled Autistic (Warner books, 1996) **We recommend that you buy this book.**

- Oliver Sacks, An Anthropologist on Mars: Seven Paradoxical Tales (New York: Random House, 1996). Readings from this will be available on e-reserve at Kelvin Smith Library.

- Gary Colombo, Mind Readings (Bedford/St Martins, 2002) Readings from this will be available on e-reserve at Kelvin Smith Library.

Additional readings will be available either as links on the course web page or on e-reserve. To buy books, an alternative to the university bookstore is to get second-hand copies via http://www.abebooks.com and amazon.com.

Course Requirements and Grading

1. Class participation (20%). Attendance and active participation in regular class sessions and plenary events is required. Active participation means more than just talking in class: in particular we will give credit for comments which help the discussion move along. Unexcused absences will result in grade penalties. We will grade you on four things for your class participation: (i) turning up (ii) talking in class (iii) saying something that helps move the discussion forward and (iv) handing in the three “cosmic” questions on each reading.

2. Writing assignments (40% in all, 10% per paper). All First Seminar students will complete four writing assignments, which will be spread across the course of the semester. Each assignment will be four to six pages long, totaling approximately twenty pages over the course of the semester.

   All papers must be presented in 12-point font (Times New Roman or similar), double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides. Students must retain both printed copies and electronic files for all four papers, including each draft of those submitted in
multiple drafts. Final versions of these papers will be part of your permanent Writing Portfolio, which you will maintain throughout the SAGES program. (Although not part of the students grade for this course, the Writing Portfolio will be evaluated at the end of your second year.)

3. Group interview project. During the last part of the course, you will explore the life of the mind of a particular university faculty member; working in groups of two to four students each, you will share what you learn through in-class group presentations. Carefully prepared interviews will be conducted by the groups, in order to provide material for analysis, and the faculty member will suggest one or two short, accessible readings for incorporation into the project. Areas of inquiry will include the researchers domain (area of expertise, in both general and more specialist senses); the background and potential significance of the work; the researchers career path leading to this expertise; the particular approaches or methodologies s/he uses; and ethical issues involved in the research. It will also be important to take account of the collaborative character of the research process and its context within the larger community.

The primary goal of this assignment is to learn how individual research projects are actually parts of larger scholarly conversations, spanning both time and space. A secondary goal is to gain a greater understanding of the diverse and exciting range of research that takes place in this university. A third goal is to provide further exercise in written and oral communication.

The project will culminate in an oral presentation on the faculty member and his or her research, as well in a written paper that focuses on one particular aspect or theme with which the project was concerned. The oral presentation will be conducted by the entire group that collaborated in the project, but the papers will be individual. The oral presentation grade will constitute 10% of the students course grade. The individual written paper will count as the last of the four writing assignments described above.

4. Oral presentations (20% in all, 10% per presentation). We will assign two oral presentations, each comprising 10% of the course grade. One of these will be an individual oral presentation, assigned in connection with one of the first three writing assignments. The other will be the group oral presentation connected with the group interview project described above, which will take place near the end of the semester. These should be analytical and interpretive, not just descriptive narrative.

5. Writing folder (20%). In lieu of a final exam, each student will build a Writing Folder comprised of revised versions of your three best papers and a two-page self-assessment of your development as a writer through the course of the semester. Working with the writing instructor, you will make final revisions that use the skills that have been acquired during the semester. These folders should be submitted in digital as well as paper formats, so that they may be digitally archived. This is a very important part of the course. We are emphasizing the revision process of writing and you should
look upon the development of this folder as a final examination, dedicating time to this task that would be similar to the effort that would be taken in studying for a final.