

CAP 121 - How Do You Know? Exploring Human Knowledge
Fall Semester, 2002
Monday & Wednesday 10:30 – 11:45

Course Description

We have designed this course to introduce you to the primary methods of inquiry used in the humanities and social sciences. It is not a course in the research methodologies used in any particular discipline. It is a course that examines how we gain knowledge and our critical standards for evaluating information. We have segmented the course into three parts. In each of the three parts, we will highlight a specific approach to developing a greater understanding of important issues we encounter as citizens and as scholars. The issue on which we will concentrate during the semester will be the attack of September 11 and its repercussions.

The first third of the course is entitled “How Do You Know About Current Problems – Examining the Deep History of the Situation’. The main reading for this section comes from a book by Karen Armstrong that develops the premise that the current conflict in the Middle East can be understood as a continuation of patterns of interaction that began in the Crusades. We will explore her contention and engage in analysis of both the Crusades and the modern conflict that led to the September 11 attack. The Armstrong book contains some very controversial statements. We don’t expect you to agree with all of her points. In fact, we encourage you to read this and all other assignments with a critical eye. Our goal will be to develop an understanding of the perspective of all three parties to the conflict and to understand the impact of differing worldviews on both conflict and conflict resolution. During this first part of the course, the faculty will discuss the contributions their scholarly disciplines bring to the inquiry and we will highlight the importance of transcending disciplinary boundaries to provide a richer context for the understanding of problems. The first assignment will ask you to provide an explanation of two conflicting stands on an issue.

The second third of the course is entitled “How Do You Know About Current Problems – Looking for Analogous Situations”. One of the issues raised by the September 11 attack is the danger of terrorists using biological agents as weapons of mass destruction. Those concerns were highlighted when anthrax was used as a means of attack last fall. The main text for this portion of the course is a book by Gina Kolata examining the 1918 influenza outbreak and its impact on later public policy decisions. It seems a little strange to be going back to 1918 and reading about an outbreak that was not the result of a biological weapon if we want to learn about current issues related to bioterrorism. However, as you will see in Kolata, in 1918 people were concerned that the influenza outbreak was the result of a biological weapon. Scientific uncertainty and popular insecurities tied to World War I clouded the decision making of public and private individuals. Later, when faced with concerns about the swine flu, public policy makers focused on the influenza outbreak when trying to decide whether a program of mass vaccination was warranted. Those decisions led to legal cases that called into question the decision makers conclusion that the swine flu presented dangers analogous to those in the 1918 outbreak. This line of analogies has continued and shows up in a reading from this summer’s debate about whether the government should begin mass vaccinations to protect us from smallpox as a bioterrorism weapon. That debate sorted out to have two sides: one side argued that we faced a 1918-like threat and needed to vaccinate; the other side argued that the swine flu was a better analogy and that vaccination was not an appropriate response. We will discuss the use of analogies in public policy and legal decisionmaking and how scientific method and risk assessment methodology contribute to the debate. The second assignment will ask you to weigh the utility of two historical analogies as guides to action for those making current policy decisions.

The last third of the class is entitled “How Do You Know About Current Problems – Consulting Multiple Contemporary Sources”. Our main text for this section will be a book by Lance Bennett that provides a critical examination of the impact of the mass media on the American public. Bennett argues that the commercial imperative of the mass media spurs them to distort the news to maintain an audience. We will bring in panels of individuals involved with the mass media to seek their perspective on the contentions Bennett raises. The use of many sources of information is one antidote to the biased media portrayed by Bennett. The third writing assignment will ask you to consult a wide range of sources to identify their value in gaining a fuller understanding of an issue than what you would have from just one or two commonly used media sources.

CAP121 is a **linked course**, connected through its content and assignments with CAP111: Writing for Cultural Literacy. Linked courses are essential in a well-integrated curriculum: they create connections between courses that maximize the opportunities for learning. They are guided by the principle that writing in context is almost always more interesting and vigorous than writing primarily because an instructor has assigned a paper. In practical terms, the two courses share all major writing assignments. The context for the assignments will primarily come from CAP121, while the process approach to writing that involves drafting and revising each assignment will occur primarily in the WCL course. The CAP111 faculty will play an active role in discussing the content covered in CAP 121. The CAP 121 faculty will review one, and only one, draft of each written assignment. Your professor will explain his or her procedures for reviewing drafts.

To make the link more efficient the faculty from both courses have formed pairs, as follows:

CAP 121 Faculty	Small Group Meeting Room	Section	Faculty Office	CAP 111 Linked Faculty
Cecilia Cornell	BRK 372	Section A	BRK 484	Douglas Woken
James Stuart,	PAC 3F	Section B	LRH 101	Kristine Muschal
Pinky Wassenberg	PAC 3G	Section C	PAC 378	Karen Moranski
Peter Wenz	PAC 3B	Section D	BRK 445	Jennifer Haytock
Kyle Weir	BRK 371	Section E	BRK 349	Kristine Muschal

If you are in Professor Stuart's section of CAP 121, you will be in Professor Muschal's section of CAP 111. The pairs of professors will work together to plan activities, teach the courses, and offer feedback on your writing. Students will submit all three major writing assignments to both professors and the teachers will collaborate on grading.

Course Objectives

After completing this course students should be able to demonstrate the ability to:

1. critically assess claims to knowledge and appreciate the vulnerability of human reasoning in the evaluation of evidence,
2. understand the influence of culture on claims to knowledge,
3. understand the use of the scientific method in the evaluation of evidence,

4. identify, locate, and evaluate various kinds of evidence about the past, and use that evidence to test popular assumptions about the past, and
5. explain how the interpretation of texts is vulnerable to assumptions.

Required Texts

Armstrong, Karen. *Holy War: The Crusades and Their Impact on Today's World*. Alfred A. Knopf. ISBN: 0385721404

Kolata, Gina. 2001. *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus that Caused It*. Simon and Schuster. ISBN: 0743203984.

Bennett, Lance. 2003. *News: The Politics of Illusion*. Longman Publishing. ISBN: 0-321-08878-6.

Course pack in bookstore & readings placed on electronic reserve through BlackBoard

Course Requirements

Your grade for this course will be based on your performance in class and on written work. Each required element of the course is listed below with the percentage it constitutes for calculation of your course grade.

Paper #1	10%
Paper #2	15%
Paper #3	15%
Midterm exam	15%
Final exam	15%
Participation	10%
Quizzes	10%
Portfolio	10%

Quizzes. Short quizzes will be given periodically throughout the semester. The purpose of these quizzes is to give you an incentive to do the reading as assigned. You will be able to use your notes during the quizzes but you won't be able to use your books or the printed course packet. The quizzes will constitute 10% of your final grade. The number of quizzes to be given during the semester is not fixed. Therefore, we cannot tell you in advance how much each quiz will be worth. If you are absent the day of a quiz, you may make up that quiz **only if** you have spoken to the Capital Scholars office personnel and they categorize your absence as excused or the absence is your one "free" absence. If the office personnel determine it was an excused absence, then your professor will arrange a make-up assignment for the missed quiz. If the office personnel do not categorize your absence as excused, your professor cannot allow a make-up and you will receive a grade of zero for that quiz.

Exams. There will be two exams on lectures and assigned reading material. The midterm exam is worth 15% of your course grade. It is a take home exam that will be handed out on October 7 and will be due at the beginning of class on October 14. If your exam is not turned in on that date, a penalty will be imposed. The final exam is an in-class exam that will be administered on December 11. It is worth 15 percent of your course grade.

Linked Writing Assignments. During the semester you will complete three major writing assignments that are requirements for **both** this course and CAP121. Assignment #1 will be 10 percent of your final grade; assignments #2 and #3 will each contribute 15% to your final grade. Detailed information on each of these linked assignments will be available on the Guidelines we will distribute. Due dates for each of these assignments are listed on the guidelines and in the class schedule. Each linked assignment should be turned in to your professors for CAP111 **and** CAP121. Give one copy to your CAP111 faculty, one to your CAP121 faculty, and keep the original. These assignments must be submitted in both paper and electronic versions, but **to receive credit for submission, you must turn in PAPER copies of final versions.** Drafts of papers should be submitted electronically, through the Blackboard site for the course. Please do not fax or e-mail any of your written assignments. No late assignments will be accepted. You will have to opportunity to re-write two of the three assignments. The two re-written assignments will constitute your portfolio that will be 10% of your final grade.

Plagiarism Policy. Any time you use words or ideas that are not your own, you must give credit to the author, whether or not you are quoting directly from that author. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, a serious academic violation. Penalties for plagiarism may vary depending upon the extent of the problem, but are always serious. See p. 44-45 of the catalog for details. Consult your instructor or the Center for Teaching and Learning in Brookens 460 if you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism or how to avoid it.

Attendance. Attendance is required at all class sessions and is in each student's interest. Students who attend class regularly generally enjoy the course more, learn more, and earn higher grades. Through participation in class activities they can also enrich the learning experience of others, fellow students and teachers alike. You can miss one class during the semester and we will ask no questions. There will not be a penalty for one absence. **A two-percentage point penalty will be applied to your final course grade for every unexcused absence** after the one "free" absence. If you miss class due to illness, participation in a UIS athletic event or other activity, or for other unavoidable reasons and wish to have the absence excuse, you must contact the Capital Scholars Office. They will determine whether the absence is excused or unexcused. Your professor will not do this nor will they override a decision made by the office personnel. Attendance at more than half of the class but arrival significantly late or departure significantly early will constitute one-half an absence. If you miss a class, you are required to turn in a typed response to that session's study questions. These answers are due at the beginning of the next class you attend. If you turn in the answers later than that, there will be a reduction in your course participation grade.

Participation. The ability to contribute information and your informed opinions in meetings with colleagues and employers is an important skill. In this class, we emphasize discussion not only as means of covering information and eliciting views, but to help students develop oral communication skills. Discussion will usually proceed largely through voluntary contributions, but instructors may call on students who have not volunteered their comments. To be prepared to participate in the discussions, you will need notes. We will give you study questions to guide your note taking. As you do your assignments you should think about how you would respond to the study questions if called on in class, and you should take the kind of notes that will help you when called on. Chapter 2 of *The New Century Handbook* (pp. 9-30) contains helpful information on note taking. There may be small group discussions and you may be asked to do in-class writing on some of the assigned material. All in-class writing exercises (except quizzes) will be open-book and open-notes. Class participation is worth 10 percent of the course grade.

At the end of the semester you will be asked to evaluate your participation in the activities of the class:

- A (excellent): did all assignments completely and carefully, made notes and was prepared to discuss all the material, was a frequent contributor to each discussion, comments were informed and on the topic.
- B (good): did all assignments completely, made notes, was prepared to discuss most of the assigned material and contributed to the discussion. Comments were generally informed.
- C (adequate): did all of the assignments completely, made notes on most of the assigned material, was usually prepared, contributed at least once to most discussions.
- D (poor): did most of the assignments, seldom made notes, did not contribute to most discussions, or participation was uninformed.

Grading Policies

As explained in the section on course requirements, each assignment and required activity contributes a stated percentage to your course grade. Your grade for the course will reflect mathematical computations using these grades and percentages.

- 92-100%= A
- 90-91%= A-
- 88-89%= B+
- 82-87%= B
- 80-81% = B-
- 78-79% = C+
- 72-77% = C
- 70-71% = C-
- 68-69% = D+
- 62-67% = D
- 60-61% = D-
- 59% or less = U

Incompletes will only be given if you have had an emergency during the last part of the semester and cannot complete one of the assignments or tests. Incompletes **will not be given** so that you may repeat the course.

Students with Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify the Office of Disability Services (Student Life Building, Room 11; 206-6666) during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for the course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodations to be unavailable.

LINKS TO OTHER COURSE MATERIALS:

- [Schedule](#)
- [Unit 1 Assignments](#)
- [Unit 2 Assignments](#)
- [Unit 3 Assignments](#)

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