

MIND 100—The First Year Preceptorial

Fall 2009

Course Description

MIND 100 is a course designed especially for first-year students that focuses on classical and contemporary texts in the humanities. The books we'll be reading this fall all have to do in one way or another with the topics of war and identity.

Though the course is designed to be taught in multiple sections (of which there are four this semester), it is also designed to function, as much as possible, as a single unit. In all sections of the course, students will read and discuss the same texts, follow essentially the same syllabus, complete essentially the same assignments, and take essentially the same tests—the purpose of all this being to create a shared experience for incoming students.

Large group meetings will be held every other week so that all the students in the sections meeting at the same time can come together to hear external lecturers, etc. Students will be evaluated using essays, quizzes, tests, class participation, and performance as discussion leaders. Blackboard will be used to post assignments and to administer on-line quizzes. The design of the course has much in common with that of first year preceptorials taught at a number of colleges around the country. Especially comparable are the Knox College First Year Preceptorial and the Ursinus College Common Intellectual Experience.

Course Objectives

The course's primary objective will be to explore the semester's theme in depth. Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars* will enable us to explore that theme in relation to the Second World War and its aftermath. Feiler's *Abraham* will bring us up to the present and the current conflicts in the Middle East while contextualizing these conflicts in reflections on the figure of Abraham, a figure common to the faiths—and identities—of the people most centrally involved in those conflicts: Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Homer's *Iliad* and Weil's and Bespaloff's essays on war and the *Iliad* will make it possible to appreciate more deeply the universality of our theme. Malraux's *Man's Fate* will give us the opportunity to examine the way in which the very identity of a country can be at stake in a revolutionary movement, and Ellis's *Founding Brothers* will help us to appreciate how our own national identity as Americans is rooted in struggles connected with war, race, religion, and ethnicity.

Secondary objectives are to help the students who are taking the course

- cultivate habits of reading, thinking about, and discussing challenging texts
- develop their abilities as writers, and
- acquire a sense of belonging to an intellectual community

Student Outcomes

Everyone who successfully completes the requirements of this course will have become:

- better able to see interconnections among works belonging to various areas within the humanities
- familiar with what is involved in thinking about expressive works drawn from various cultural contexts and historical periods
- more capable of thinking about ways in which non-fiction works can be related to different academic disciplines
- better at recognizing, analyzing, evaluating, and constructing arguments
- more active, more thoughtful, more careful, and more discerning as a reader
- both more skilled and more reflective as a writer

Required Texts

- Guterson, David. *Snow Falling on Cedars: A Novel*. New York: Vintage, 1995.
- Feiler, Bruce. *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths*. New York: Harper, 2005.
- Weil, Simone and Rachel Bepaloff. Trans. Mary McCarthy. *War and the Iliad*. NYRB Classics, 1987.
- Homer. *The Iliad*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.
- Malraux, André. *Man's Fate*. Trans. Haakon M. Chevalier. Vintage, 1990.
- Ellis, Joseph J. *Founding Brothers*. New York, Vintage, 2002.

Course Calendar

(Dates Cover Both the MWF and the TTh sections)

8/24 – 8/28	Introduction to the course
8/31 – 9/16	<i>Snow Falling on Cedars</i>
9/17 – 10/2	<i>Abraham</i>
10/5 – 10/21	<i>War and the Iliad; The Iliad</i>
10/22 – 11/6	<i>Man's Fate</i>
11/9 – 11/24	<i>Founding Brothers</i>
11/31 – 12/4	Presentation of end-of-semester projects
—	Poster sessions at the times scheduled for the final

The above schedule will serve as a rough guide. A much more detailed calendar for the MWF sections and the TTh sections is available on the Blackboard site under the heading “Course Calendar.”

Major Assignment Due Dates

9/14-16	Small group presentations on <i>Snow Falling on Cedars</i>
10/2	An essay on <i>Abraham</i>
10/21	An essay on <i>War and the Iliad</i>
11/6	An essay on <i>Man's Fate</i>
11/24	A Wikipedia-style assignment on <i>Founding Brothers</i>

Method of Evaluation

At the end of the semester, you will receive a letter grade. Your final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

• Quizzes (these are online quizzes — to be taken on Blackboard)	10%
• Participation (both in-class participation and online participation)	20%
• The <i>Snow</i> Presentation (in-class small-group presentations on <i>Snow</i>)	10%
• The Three Essays (each of the essays will be worth 10% of your grade)	30%
• The Wiki Assignment (a wiki assignment on <i>Founding Brothers</i>)	10%
• The Last Presentation (small-group presentations during the last week of class)	10%
• The Poster Session (essentially your final exam)	10%

Grading Scale

The grading scale we'll use to convert numerical averages to letter grades at the end of the semester will be as follows: 93–100 = A; 90–92 = A–; 87–89 = B+; 83–86 = B; 80–82 = B–; 77–89 = C+; 73–76 = C; 70–72 = C–; 67–69 = D+; 63–66 = D; 60–62 = D–; 0–59 = F. We reserve the right to give grades higher than those dictated by students' overall mathematical averages if we judge that

higher grades are deserved. Grades lower than those dictated by students' overall mathematical averages may be given in such cases as those involving academic dishonesty.

Policy on Quizzes

Quizzes are due prior to most class meetings. Each of the quizzes will be available online during the two or three days preceding the time at which the reading assignment covered by the quiz will be discussed. Quizzes are typically due on Mondays and Wednesdays at 11:00 a.m. (even for the TTh sections), though we'll be on a different schedule during the third week of the semester, when they'll be due on Tuesday and Thursday at 9:00 a.m. (even for the MWF section). Check the calendars on Blackboard and watch for announcements there too for details. Missed quizzes will be recorded as zeros. Under no circumstances may quizzes be made up.

Policy on Academic Dishonesty

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's *Student Handbook* (see http://www.unco.edu/dos/handbook/academic_expectations.html). Violations of those policies and/or the *UNC Honor Code* (see below) will *not* be overlooked. Honesty is a cornerstone of the academic community. Penalties for academic dishonesty on quizzes and/or plagiarism (*i.e.*, copying either the ideas and/or the words of another without proper attribution) in any of your other work will be severe and may result in a failing grade for the course. See the *Student Code of Conduct* (http://www.unco.edu/dos/student_code_conduct/).

The UNC Honor Code

All members of the University of Northern Colorado community are entrusted with the responsibility to uphold and promote five fundamental values: Honesty, Trust, Respect, Fairness, and Responsibility. These core elements foster an atmosphere, inside and outside of the classroom, which serves as a foundation and guides the UNC community's academic, professional, and personal growth. Endorsement of these core elements by students, faculty, staff, administration, and trustees strengthens the integrity and value of our academic climate.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services at (970) 351-2289 as soon as possible to ensure that accommodations are implemented in a timely way.

Disclaimer

We will stick to this syllabus as closely as we can, but we reserve the right to make revisions if necessary. Changes will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard.