

ICSM 10169
Ithaca Seminar
How the Mind Works: Writing About Consciousness
M 12:00-12:50, Job Hall 160
MWF 1:00-1:50, Business School 202
Fall 2009

Instructor **Dr. Jack Wang**
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Office Phone **274-3493**
Office Hours **MWF 3:00-3:50 and by appointment**
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Course Description

[L]iterature is a record of human consciousness, the richest
and most comprehensive we have.

—David Lodge

What is consciousness? Does it mean we each possess a unique soul or is it simply an elaborate illusion produced by the brain? How do we think, feel, and remember, and do these activities constitute a genuine self? In this course, we will explore theories of consciousness through engagement with philosophy, science, film, and especially literature. Furthermore, by practicing narrative, analytical, and research-based writing, you will develop foundational writing skills important to your academic careers. This course will be writing-intensive and will satisfy departmental and school requirements for a 100-level writing course equivalent to WRTG 10600 or 10800.

Some Course-specific Goals

- To gain a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual and cultural activities (music, science, literature, etc.).
- To develop skills in expressing oneself orally and in writing.
- To learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.
- To acquire an interest in learning more by asking questions and seeking answers.

Goals of the Ithaca Seminars

Students taking an Ithaca Seminar will

- feel they have developed a connection with their ICSM faculty member;
- understand resources and events available on campus;
- be engaged with the Ithaca College community;
- appreciate the importance of using interdisciplinary approaches for understanding issues;
- satisfy general education learning outcomes;
- advance their capacity for critical thinking.

Required Texts

Saturday, Ian McEwan
White Noise, Don DeLillo
Selected readings posted on Blackboard.

Coursework

Essay One: The Philosophical Essay	20%
Essay Two: The Reader Response Essay	20%
Essay Three: The Text in Context Essay	25%
Site Visit Presentation	5%
Academic Conference	10%
Final Exam	10%
<u>Participation</u>	<u>10%</u>
	100%

All assignments will be explained in due course.

Course Policies

Blackboard

All handouts will be distributed electronically through Blackboard, which can be accessed by going to <https://akron.ithaca.edu/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct> and logging in with your e-mail username and password. Please download all required readings and bring a copy to class.

Attendance

Regular attendance is vital to the learning process and your success in this course. Most of our classes will involve discussions, workshops, and in-class writing, all of which is critical to your success as a writer. **All students are allowed two unexcused absences. Thereafter, every unexcused absence will result in a one-third letter grade deduction to your final grade. Students who have nine absences (excused or unexcused) will be dropped from the course, and if the last absence occurs after the period of withdrawal, they will receive an F in the course.** Whenever possible, please let me know ahead of time that you won't be in class. In cases of emergencies and school-authorized events, please document your absence, and please remember that you are responsible for anything you've missed, including any changes to the syllabus.

Grading

To receive full credit, essays must be typed, submitted in MLA format, and accompanied by any required supporting materials. I will not grade a final draft unless I have previously read a draft of the essay. **Late work, including late drafts, will be penalized 10% a day. Assignments more than two days late will receive a grade of F**

(0-59%). Failure to complete all three essays will result in failure in the course. On weekends, late work can and should be submitted electronically.

Specific requirements for each assignment will vary, but in all cases my evaluation of your work will consider content, organization, expression, mechanics, and maturity of thought. More specific criteria are as follows:

- A An A essay has a well-defined sense of purpose. This purpose is consistently developed and supported throughout the essay and suited to the form of essay assigned (i.e. narrative, analytical, argumentative, etc.). The writer conveys a sense of complexity not just of the topic but of the interaction among purpose, audience, and persona evident in the content, organization, and expression of the text. There are no problems with mechanics or usage which distract the reader, and the style is not just clear but vivid.
- B A B essay also contains a sense of the complexity of the rhetorical situation, but there may be less specificity in addressing the audience's values, beliefs, and assumptions. The writer's purpose is again clearly articulated and supported throughout the essay and is evident in the content and expression, although it may be less developed than it is in an A essay. A B essay fulfills most aspects of the assignment and contains few problems with mechanics or usage.
- C A C essay is a competent essay, one whose content is simple and clear, but which may have less of a sense of the complexity of the rhetorical situation. The writer develops the purpose throughout the essay in ways that are clear and obvious. The writer may still be struggling with some of the interplay of content and expression. A C essay minimally fulfills the assignment.
- D A D essay is weak in one or more of the areas of purpose, audience, and persona, as reflected in the content, organization, expression, and mechanics. The purpose of the essay may be unclear or inconsistent. The author may have chosen an inappropriate audience or may have ignored the question of audience altogether by writing in a style and depth which suggest that only the author will understand the essay.
- F Assigned when the criteria for the assignment have clearly not been met. Also assigned in cases of...

Academic Dishonesty

Some students believe that the word "plagiarism" only describes acts of outright cheating. In fact, plagiarism describes any instance when you take someone else's language or ideas and present them as your own, including any inadvertent misuse of

secondary sources. One of the goals of this course is to teach you how to use other people's words and ideas responsibly. **Any intentional misuse will not be tolerated. A first offense for intentional plagiarism will result in failure in the course and may require further action by the College.** This course gives you the chance to express your own thoughts and your own voice, so don't relinquish that opportunity.

Students with Disabilities

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodation will be provided to students with documented disabilities on a case-by-case basis. Students must register with the Office of Academic Support Services and provide appropriate documentation to the College before any academic adjustment will be provided.

Humanities and Sciences Effective Writing Program

If you are enrolled in the School of Humanities and Sciences, you must be certified an effective writer as a requirement for graduation. Effective writing is defined as writing that is clear, focused, and adequately developed in response to an assignment. Such writing is well organized and reasonably correct, according to conventional standards of grammar, punctuation, and usage. As your academic writing professor, I will evaluate your writing for effectiveness at the end of the semester.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center serves Ithaca College students who wish to become better writers, readers, and thinkers. As an integral part of the Department of Writing, the Writing Center has two main goals: to help students from all disciplines develop their basic academic writing skills and to foster advanced writers throughout the College. In a friendly, comfortable atmosphere, writers at all levels may participate in one-on-one conferences to work on effective strategies for all aspects of the writing process.

You may choose to go to the Writing Center on your own. However, those who face particular challenges to their writing may be asked by me to make an appointment. Drop in to the Writing Center in 107 Smiddy Hall or call 274-3315. Their hours are as follows:

M-F 9:00am-5:00pm
Su-Th 7:00-10:00pm

Schedule

Week 1

W August 26 Introduction to How the Minds Works: Writing About Consciousness.

I. Consciousness: An Introduction

F August 28 “Bullet in the Brain” (story) by Tobias Wolff and “The Official Theory” (essay) by Steven Pinker from *The Blank Slate* (handout).

Week 2

M August 31 “A Pain in the Brain” and “Believing is Seeing” (essays) by V.S. Ramachandran from *A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness* (handouts).

W September 2 “Reverse-Engineering the Psyche” and “Life’s Designer” (essays) by Steven Pinker from *How the Mind Works* (handouts).

F September 4 “Conscious Will” by Susan Blackmore from *Consciousness: A Very Short Introduction* (handouts).

Week 3

M September 7 **Labor Day. No class.**

W September 9 “The Reality of Selves” (essay) by Daniel Dennett from *Consciousness Explained* (handout).

F September 11 Introduction to rhetoric. Using secondary sources.

Week 4

M September 14 **Common hour: Mental Health, Deb Harper, Textor 103. First draft of Essay One due.** Bring copies for peer review. Introduction to workshop. Sign up for individual conferences.

W September 16 Peer review session.

Dr. Maura Cullen, Emerson Suites, 9:00pm

F September 18 Discussion of Dr. Maura Cullen’s presentation.

Week 5

M September 21 **Common hour: Myers Briggs Type Indicator, Mary Tomaselli, Textor 103.**
Film: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.

W September 23 **Final draft of Essay One due.**
Film: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.

F September 25 “Marcel Proust: The Method of Memory” (essay) by Jonah Lehrer from *Proust was a Neuroscientist* (handout).
Discussion of film.

II. Rendering Consciousness

Week 6

- M September 28 Part One, *Saturday* by Ian McEwan (1-52).
W September 30 Part Two, *Saturday* (53-119).
F October 2 Part Three, *Saturday* (121-77).

Week 7

- M October 5 **Common Hour: ZAP! Catherine Kirchoff, Textor 103.**
Part Four, *Saturday* (179-242).
W October 7 Part Five, *Saturday* (243-89).
F October 9 Sample reader-response essays (handouts).

Week 8

- M October 12 **Common hour: Lecture on Aesthetic Appreciation, Ford Hall.**
First draft of Essay Two: Reader Response Essay due.
Bring copies for peer review.
T October 13 **Wind Ensemble, Ford Hall, 8:15pm**
W October 14 Peer review session.
F October 16 **Fall Break. No Class.**

Week 9

- M October 19 Film: *Away from Her*.
W October 21 **Final draft of Essay Two: Reader Response Essay due.**
Film: *Away from Her*.

III. Memes and Cultural Evolution

- F October 23 Discussion of film.
“The Third Evolutionary Process: Memes and Cultural Evolution”
(essay) by Daniel Dennett from *Consciousness Explained* (handout).

Week 10

- M October 26 **Common Hour: Study Away Panel, Clark Lounge.**
I: Waves and Radiation, Chapters 1-12, *White Noise* by Don
DeLillo (3-58).
W October 28 I: Waves and Radiation, Chapters 13-20, *White Noise* (59-105).
F November 30 II: The Airborne Toxic Event, *White Noise* (109-63).

Week 11

- M November 2 **Common Hour: Sexual Assault Prevention, Laura Durling, Clark Lounge**
III: Dylarama, Chapters 22-33, *White Noise* (167-256).
- W November 4 III: Dylarama, Chapters 34-40, *White Noise* (257-326).
- F November 6 **Essay Proposal due.**
Introduction to library research.

Week 12

- M November 9 **Common hour: Presentation on site visits.**
Library research session. Meet at the library.
- W November 11 Using secondary sources.
- F November 13 MLA documentation.

Week 13

- M November 23 **First draft of Essay Three: Text in Context Essay due.**
Bring copies for peer review. Sign up for individual conferences.
- W November 25 Peer review session.
- F November 27 Individual conferences. No class.

November 21-29 Thanksgiving. No classes.

Week 14

- M November 30 Preparation for the Academic Conference.
- W December 2 Academic Conference. Panel 1.
- F December 4 Academic Conference. Panel 2.

Week 15

- M December 7 Academic Conference. Panel 3.
- W December 9 Academic Conference. Panel 4.
- F December 11 **Essay Three: Text in Context Essay due.**
Preparation for the final exam.

Finals Week

- M December 14
10:30am-1:00pm **Final Exam**