

# EDUC 800 - Ways of Knowing

Priscilla Norton  
703-993-2015  
[pnorton@gmu.edu](mailto:pnorton@gmu.edu)

## I. Course Description

This course examines various “ways of knowing” and explores the psychological and social construction of knowledge. The course is designed to help students become aware of their own ways of knowing, to understand alternative ways of knowing as conceptual tools, to critically reflect on the strengths and limitations of various ways of knowing, and to become aware of the implications of different ways of knowing for research and practice.

## II. Course Methodology

The course is structured around readings, reflections on those readings, and class discussions and activities. Using this collection of activities, the methodology of the course seeks to build clear bridges between ways of knowing, theoretical/research perspectives, and professional practice.

## III. Course Texts

The following texts will be used in the course:

1. Rene Descartes' *Discourse on Method and the Meditations (Penguin Classics)*  
ISBN: 0140442065
2. C. P. Snow's *The Two Cultures* ISBN: 0521457300
3. Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* ISBN: 0226458083
4. Jerome Bruner's *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* ISBN: 0674003667
5. Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* ISBN: 0262631598
6. James Gleick's *Chaos* ISBN: 0140092501
7. Xerox articles as appropriate

## IV. Course Requirements

1. Attendance in class is mandatory, as discussions, lectures, and hands-on activities are important parts of the course.
2. Each student is expected to complete all readings and participate in discussions.
3. Each student is expected to participate in and complete all classroom activities.
4. Students who must miss a class are responsible for notifying the instructor (preferably in advance) and for completing any assignments, readings, etc. before the start of the next class.
5. All written assignments must be completed on a word processor. Assignments are to be turned in at the beginning of class on the date due. Late assignments will not be accepted without making prior arrangements with the instructor.

## V. Course Assignments

1. Reflections – (30 points/3 points each) Students are expected to write reflections, which are both reflective and analytic, during the course. The overall purpose is to use personal writing as a means to think and reflect as well as to prepare for class discussions. In particular, the reflections are a means to connect course readings to experience and to analyze course readings critically. The course outline lists specific assignments for reflections. Reflections must be word-processed and turned in on the assigned week. Reflections should be double-spaced. Although there is no specific length requirement, two or three, well-constructed pages **might** serve to frame the scope of writing. Reflections should be thoughtful with ideas clearly presented. They are opportunities for the student and the instructor to interact one on one and should be seen as iterative when appropriate.

2. Reflective Analysis Paper – (35 points)– Drawing on reflections, class discussions, and other course activities, students will write a scholarly paper that addresses the following questions: How has the course affected your ways of knowing as a practitioner and as a researcher? How would you describe your current position on suitable way(s) of knowing? What are the implications of your reflections on the above two questions for your personal, professional, and doctoral activities? Criteria for assessment include: evidence of serious reflection and analysis; clear organization and writing; connections with class readings. This paper is due at the beginning of the last class meeting.

3. Knowing Paper – (35 points) – Students will select a way of knowing that is new to them or one in which they would like to delve more deeply. Examples include but are not limited to: multicultural ways of knowing or a particular cultural way of knowing, metaphysical ways of knowing, women's ways of knowing, narrative ways of knowing, hermeneutic ways of knowing, the ways in which technology shapes knowing, the ways in which a particular technology shapes knowing, scientific ways of knowing, chaos/complexity as a way of knowing, reflection as a way of knowing, etc. The paper should explore this way of knowing and be presented in a scholarly paper. Again, no specific length is required. Although there is no specific length requirement, 2500 words or 10 double-spaced, well-constructed pages **might** serve to frame the scope of writing.

As part of the development of your paper, please submit one page that outlines your proposed paper no later than class on March 24. This outline should address the following questions: What are/is the way of knowing you will explore? How do you propose to go about exploring it? What are some of your sources? The paper is due at the beginning of the fifteenth class (May 5). Criteria include: clearly defined focus, clear and accurate presentation of assumptions and definitions, well articulated implications for research and inquiry, and sufficient and clear organization and writing.

## VI. Class Topics and Schedule

Dates	Class Topics	Assignments
Week 1 Jan 21	Introductions – The Name Game Overview of Course and Syllabus	<b>Watch</b> Al Pacino’s <i>Looking for Richard</i> and Sean Connery in <i>The Name of the Rose</i> <b>Reflection</b> – define/compare/ponder the following: knowledge, understanding, meaning, knowing, learning. Try dictionaries and Internet to get you thinking.
Week 2 Jan 28	Happy Hour: <i>Looking for Richard</i> And <i>The Name of the Rose</i> Discuss definitions	<b>Read</b> Descartes’ <i>Discourse</i> <b>Reflection:</b> I _____, therefore I am. What do you think belongs in the blank and explain.
Week 3 Feb 4	Discuss Descartes’ Exercises in the Big 4: SJR, Tall Tales, The Scientific Method. <i>The Hidden Structure</i>	<b>Begin</b> C. P. Snow’s <i>Two Cultures</i> <b>Reflection:</b> What is meant by rationalism, empiricism, positivism. <a href="http://www.britannica.com">www.britannica.com</a> is an excellent resource. What are some examples of empiricism, positivism, rationalism in action – in your discipline, job, and/or life?
Week 4 Feb 11	Discussion: Rationalism, Empiricism, positivism Writing a Dissertation	<b>Finish</b> C. P. Snow’s <i>Two Cultures</i> <b>Reflection:</b> Locate a Quantitative Research article in your field. Analyze the article in terms of Descartes’ “list” – Is this a useful way to “know”? Is there another way? A better way?
Week 5 Feb 18	Discuss: Research Article An Image of Snow – A Conversation Between Two Scholars	<b>Read</b> half of Kuhn’s <i>The Structure of . . .</i> <b>Reflection:</b> Pick a concept, idea, or belief related to your “field” – represent it “artfully.” Then write about the process - How is your “artful” representation better, different, useful, not useful
Week 6 Feb 25	Sharing “Artful” Representations Thomas Kuhn Goes Poetic	<b>Finish</b> Kuhn’s <i>The Structure of . . .</i> <b>Reflection:</b> What’s a paradigm; do you and/or your discipline have any?
Week 7 Mar 3	SPRING BREAK – Part 1	<b>Finish</b> Kuhn’s <i>The Structure of . . .</i> <b>Reflection:</b> What’s a paradigm; do you and/or your discipline have any?  <b>Begin thinking about Ways Paper !!!!!</b>

Week 8 Mar 10	Can you spare a pair'a dimes? Mapping the "Knowing" Cycle A Theory of Knowledge and History	<b>Begin</b> Bruner's <i>Actual Minds</i> . . . <b>Reflection:</b> Does Kuhn inform your understanding of your own discipline? Pick a case history, thinker, question, or problem
Week 9 Mar 17	Discuss "ways of knowing" paper topics Narrative Modes of Thought – good, bad, indifferent Norton's Personal Example of the Good, Bad, and Ugly Analyzing some sample stories	<b>Finish</b> Bruner's <i>Actual Minds</i> . . . <b>Reflection:</b> Write a story that illustrates an insight, lesson, concept in your own disciplines <b>Submit</b> a one page outline for knowing paper at the next class
Week 10 Mar 24	Sharing and analyzing Stories Stories and Research <i>60 Minutes</i> on television Planning a Strategy for Sharing of Knowing Papers	<b>Read</b> McLuhan's <i>Understanding Media</i> <b>Reflection:</b> Watch two or three sitcoms; how do they shape knowing; what do they tell us about ourselves OR Watch two versions of the national news (ABC, NBC, CBS) on the same night; how do they shape knowing <b>Work</b> on Knowing Paper
Week 11 Mar 31	SPRING BREAK – Part 2	<b>Read</b> McLuhan's <i>Understanding Media</i> <b>Work</b> on Knowing Paper & Reflection
Week 12 Apr 7	SPRING BREAK – Part 3	<b>Read</b> McLuhan's <i>Understanding Media</i> <b>Work</b> on Knowing Paper & Reflection
Week 13 Apr 14	Discussion: Media and Knowing NOVA's <i>Chaos</i>	<b>Read</b> half of Gleick's <i>Chaos</i> <b>Finish</b> Knowing Paper
Week 14 Apr 21	<b>KNOWING PAPER DUE</b> David Letterman's Top Ten <i>The Game of Life</i> Simulations, Logo	<b>Finish</b> Gleick's <i>Chaos</i> <b>Begin</b> Reflective Analysis Paper
Week 15 May 5	Sharing "Knowing" Papers Discussion: Chaos and your interests and discipline Everything I Needed to Know about Knowing, I learned . . .	<b>Work</b> on Reflective Analysis Paper
Week 16 May 12	Sharing "Knowing" Papers <b>Reflective Analysis Paper Due</b> Summing Up and Course Evaluations	Have a great summer!

## VII. Evaluation

Since this is a graduate level course, high quality work is expected on all assignments and in class. Points for all graded assignments (see section 6) will be based on the scope, quality, and creativity of the assignments. All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late assignments will not be accepted without making arrangements with the instructor.

Points will be assigned to the Reflective Analysis and Knowing Papers using a rubric process. Both class participants and the course instructor will be involved in assessment of graded assignments. Prior to the due date for any assignment, the class will participate in the development of an assessment rubric. This rubric will result from a discussion of applicable course objectives and an elaboration of qualities and components associated with excellence in completion of the assignment. In this way, the development of the rubric will inform the final completion of the assignments as well as serve as the instrument for assessment and determination of points awarded.