



Identities: Mirrors & Windows  
Humanities Division Class

IMW 100H4  
Knowledge and Democracy  
TR 9:30-10:45 (BEAL 1)  
Instructor: Robert Smithson

### **Neighborhood Description: Identities: Mirrors & Windows**

Who do you see when you look in the “mirror”? How does your self-image relate to the view beyond your own “window”? As the title of our neighborhood suggests, the study of identity is fundamentally the study of context. In IMW, we will examine the communities and networks that shape the ways that we exist in and interact with the world around us. As we analyze these intersections between self and community, we will come to understand how people of diverse backgrounds impact, and are impacted by, the larger social, cultural, natural, and physical networks of which we all are a part. What you learn in our neighborhood will ultimately empower you to take meaningful and responsible action as citizens of the world – a goal that is central to our College’s overarching mission.

### **Course Description:**

Our ethical, political, and religious convictions are among our most important and deeply-held beliefs. But these beliefs raise many difficult questions. Do we form these beliefs on the basis of evidence, or do we form these beliefs simply because of our upbringing? What should we do when we encounter people who seem just as reasonable as us, but who disagree with us on religious questions? Should we trust the testimony of experts, or should we view their testimony with critical scrutiny? How are our political and ethical beliefs influenced by factors such as gender or race? How might the mechanisms of knowledge acquisition and transmission be used for political ends (either good or ill)?

This course is part of the Rollins Foundations in the Liberal Arts. This curriculum is intended to:

- Introduce students to the liberal arts
- Expose students to a broad array of disciplines and ways of thinking and understanding
- Provide an academic and extracurricular community for the students
- Teach students how to integrate knowledge and skills across disciplines and courses

This course fulfills the **100 level** Neighborhood requirement.

This course fulfills the **Humanities** requirement.

Students must receive a C- or higher to fulfill the above requirements.

**Professor Contact info:**

Instructor: Robert Smithson

Email: [rsmithson@rollins.edu](mailto:rsmithson@rollins.edu)

Office: French House, Room 104

Office Hours: TR 10-11am and by appointment

**Foundations Objectives<sup>1</sup>:**

- **Information Literacy:** This is the ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share that information for the problem at hand. - Adopted from the National Forum on Information Literacy.

**Events:**

At Rollins, part of our mission is to empower graduates to pursue meaningful lives. The Foundations curriculum models this goal by taking learning outside the walls of the classroom. Your participation in this course includes attendance at 3 neighborhood events; these events allow you to take advantage of some of the most important opportunities that a liberal arts college affords. Rollins opens its doors to the public by bringing nationally and internationally recognized speakers to campus, staging plays at the Annie Russell Theater, concerts in Tiedtke Hall, and exhibitions at the Cornell Fine Art Museum. In this way, intellectual community becomes a lifelong pursuit, a pursuit that begins with your Foundations neighborhood.

As a member of the Identities: Mirrors and Windows neighborhood, you will attend the Foundations Summit on April 27, 2-3:30pm. At this event, students in the capstone course will present work that uses the multiple skills and approaches they've learned in the program to tackle a complex question in the world—a task you'll take on in your own 300 level class.

You must also attend **two neighborhood events** during the semester. Here is the list of possible events for this class:

- Feb. 15. (5-7pm): A Dinner Dialogue: Engaging Cultural Difference and Religious Diversity
- Feb. 21-24 (8pm): The Women of Lockerbie
- Mar. 7 (5:30-7:30pm): Table Manners: Identity and Intersectionality.
- Mar. 7 (7pm): Phil Kaye from Project Voice
- ~~-March 8 (6pm): Correcting Ignorance: A Lesson on Haiti in Politics, Culture, and Race Relations~~
- March 21 (12pm): My Escape from Fundamentalism and Cult Control. (Knowles Chapel)
- March 21 (6:30pm): My Escape from Fundamentalism and Cult Control. (SunTrust Auditorium)
- March 22 (4pm): #MeToo Movement: A Panel Discussion (Galloway Room)
- April 4 (7:30-9pm): Writings on the Wall: An Evening with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar
- April 20-28 (8pm): 9 to 5: The Musical

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<sup>1</sup> Course learning objectives follow the definitions offered under the American Association of Colleges and Universities' LEAP initiative (Liberal Education and America's Promise).

The location for these events can be found on the Rollins events calendar (when not otherwise listed). All events will count towards your attendance grade. In addition, you will write response papers about these events as homework assignments.

### **Course Objectives:**

1. In the first third of the course, students will be provided with an overview of the assumptions and questions of traditional epistemology (i.e., the study of knowledge).
2. In the second third of the course, students will challenge the assumptions of traditional epistemology by considering the ways in which knowledge and belief are affected by one's concrete social location.
3. In the final third of the course, students will consider how the mechanisms of knowledge acquisition and transmission can be used for political ends, both good and ill.

### **Readings:**

All texts for the course will be posted to the course's Blackboard site.

### **Grading**

Three writing assignments (3 pages each): 30%

Two rFLA event responses (1 page each): 20%

Final: 25%

Miscellaneous homework assignments (reading responses, etc.) 15%

Participation/Unannounced quizzes: 10%

### **Schedule:**

This schedule is subject to change, depending on the progress of the discussion in the class. If there are changes, I will make note of them in class and will send out an email about the changes. Next to each class period, there is an assigned reading. The readings for 1/23 should be completed before class on 1/23, etc.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>
R 1/18	<b>Introduction</b> Syllabus.
<b>UNIT 1: TRADITIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY</b>	
	<b>Prejudice, objectivity, and skepticism.</b>
T 1/23	Descartes (1988). <i>Selected Philosophical Writings</i> . Meditation 1. Blackboard handout on anti-skeptical strategies.
R 1/25	NO CLASS (interview) (make-up class TBA)

**Key concepts, problem of the criterion**

- T 1/30 Edmund Gettier (1963). "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"  
Roderick Chisholm (1973). "The Problem of the Criterion."  
Blackboard handout.
- R 2/1 Richard Feldman (2003). "Evidentialist Theories of Knowledge and Justification."  
(sections II-III)  
Blackboard handout.
- T 2/6 NO CLASS (interview) (make-up class TBA)

**UNIT 2: THREATS TO TRADITIONAL OBJECTIVITY**

**Situated knowers.**

- R 2/8 Elizabeth Anderson (2015). "Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science."  
(excerpts)  
Blackboard handout.

**Threat 1: peer disagreement.**

- T 2/13 Richard Feldman (2012). Reasonable Religious Disagreements. Blackboard handout.  
R 2/15 Catherine Elgin (2010). Persistent Disagreement. Blackboard handout.

**Peer disagreement, continued.**

- T 2/20 No reading.  
R 2/22 No reading.

**Threat 2: relativism**

- T 2/27 No reading.  
R 3/1 No reading.

**Threat 3: social determinants of belief, feminist empiricism**

- T 3/6 No reading.  
R 3/8 No reading.

**Threat 4: standpoint theory**

- T 3/20 Helen Longino (1991). Multiplying subjects and the diffusion of power.  
R 3/22 No reading.

**Threat 5: testimonial injustice, hermeneutic injustice**

- T 3/20 Miranda Fricker (2007). *Epistemic Injustice*. Ch. 1.  
R 3/22 No reading.

## UNIT 3: KNOWLEDGE AND DEMOCRACY

### Expertise, epistemic democracy

- T 4/3 Blackboard handout.  
R 4/5 [Fox Day???

### Propaganda

- R 4/12 *What is oppression?* No reading.  
T 4/10 *Controlling images*. Patricia Hill Collins (2000). Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images. (ch. 4 of *Black Feminist Thought*)  
T 4/17 *Social science*: Khalil Muhammad (2010) Writing Crime Into Race.  
Optional background reading: W.E.B. Du Bois (1898). The Study of Negro Problems.  
R 4/19 *Education*: W.E.B. Du Bois (1935) The Propaganda of History.  
T 4/24 *Speech and language*: Lynne Tirrell (2012). Genocidal Language Games. Sections 1-2, 3.2-3.3, 4.1.  
R 4/26 *Art*: DuBois (1926) Criteria of Negro Art.  
Locke (1928) Art or Propaganda?  
T 5/1 *Resisting stereotypes, self-definitions*. Patricia Hill Collins (2000). The Power of Self Definition. (ch. 5 of *Black Feminist Thought*).

M 5/7 11-1 **FINAL**

### Syllabus Statements:

#### Accessibility Services

Rollins College is committed to equal access and inclusion for all students, faculty and staff. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 create a foundation of legal obligations to provide an accessible educational environment that does not discriminate against persons with disabilities. It is the spirit of these laws which guides the college toward expanding access in all courses and programs, utilizing innovative instructional design, and identifying and removing barriers whenever possible.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of academic accommodations in order to fully participate in your classes, please contact the Office of Accessibility Services, located on the first floor of the Olin Library, as soon as possible. You are encouraged to schedule a Welcome Meeting by filling out the "First Time Users" form on the website: <http://www.rollins.edu/accessibility-services/> and/or reach out by phone or email: 407-975-6463 or [Access@Rollins.edu](mailto:Access@Rollins.edu).

All test-taking accommodations requested for this course must first be approved through the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) and scheduled online through *Accommodate* at least 72 hours before the exam. Official accommodation letters must be received by and discussed with the faculty in advance. There will be no exceptions given unless previously approved by the OAS with documentation of the emergency situation. We highly recommend making all testing accommodations at the beginning of the semester. OAS staff is available to assist with this process.

#### Academic Honor Code Reaffirmation

<http://www.rollins.edu/honor-code/documents/academic-honor-code-rollins-college.pdf>

Membership in the student body of Rollins College carries with it an obligation, and requires a commitment, to act with honor in all things. The student commitment to uphold the values of honor - honesty, trust, respect, fairness, and responsibility - particularly manifests itself in two public aspects of student life. First, as part of the admission process to the College, students agree to commit themselves to the Honor Code. Then, as part of the matriculation process during Orientation, students sign a more detailed pledge to uphold the Honor Code and to conduct themselves honorably in all their activities, both academic and social, as a Rollins student. A student signature on the following pledge is a binding commitment by the student that lasts for his or her entire tenure at Rollins College.

The development of the virtues of Honor and Integrity are integral to a Rollins College education and to membership in the Rollins College community. Therefore, I, a student of Rollins College, pledge to show my commitment to these virtues by abstaining from any lying, cheating, or plagiarism in my academic endeavors and by behaving responsibly, respectfully and honorably in my social life and in my relationships with others. This pledge is reinforced every time a student submits work for academic credit as his/her own. Students shall add to the paper, quiz, test, lab report, etc., the handwritten signed statement:

*"On my honor, I have not given, nor received, nor witnessed any unauthorized assistance on this work."*

Material submitted electronically should contain the pledge; submission implies signing the pledge.

#### Absences – religious holidays and/or campus business

The professor will accommodate a reasonable number of excused absences for religious holidays and official off-campus college business such as academic conference presentations and athletic competitions. However, per the College's policy on excused absences ([http://www.rollins.edu/catalogue/academic\\_regulations.html#class-attendance](http://www.rollins.edu/catalogue/academic_regulations.html#class-attendance)), students must discuss with the professor the dates of the anticipated absences no later than the last day of the drop period. Students must present to their professor written evidence of the anticipated absences and discuss with him/her how and when make-up work should be completed prior to missing the class. Students should not expect to receive allowance for excused absences if they do not meet with the professor beforehand and clarify the dates as necessary. Absences will be addressed by the faculty member in accordance with his/her attendance policy. The professor retains the right to determine what would be considered to be a reasonable number of absences (excused or otherwise) for the course. A student will not fail a course because the number of religious observances and/or college business absences exceed the number of absences allowed, except if excessive absences make it impossible to fulfill the expectations of the course. The student's class participation grade in the course, though, may still be affected.

### Credit Hour Statement for Rollins Courses

This course is a four-credit-hour course that meets three hours per week. The value of four credit hours results, in part, from work expected of enrolled students both inside and outside the classroom. Rollins faculty require that students average at least 2 ½ hours of outside work for every hour of scheduled class time. In this course, the additional outside-of-class expectations are the careful study of (i) the assigned readings, (ii) the class handouts posted to Blackboard, and (iii) the student's notes from class.

### Recording Device Use

In order to protect the integrity of the classroom experience, the use of recording devices is limited to either the expressed permission of the faculty member or with proper documentation from the Office of Accessibility Services. Information about accommodations through Accessibility Services can be found at <http://www.rollins.edu/accessibility-services/>. Recording without the proper authorization is considered a violation of the Rollins Code of Community Standards.

### Title IX Statement (updated 7/12/16)

Rollins College is committed to making its campus a safe place for students. If you tell any of your faculty about sexual misconduct involving members of the campus community, your professors are required to report this information to the Title IX Coordinator. Your faculty member can help connect you with the Coordinator, Oriana Jiménez (TitleIX@rollins.edu or 407-691-1773). She will provide you with information, resources and support. If you would prefer to speak to someone on campus confidentially, please call the Wellness Center at 407-628-6340. They are not required to report any information you share with the Office of Title IX.

Sexual misconduct includes sexual harassment, stalking, intimate partner violence (such as dating or domestic abuse), sexual assault, and any discrimination based on your sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation that creates a hostile environment. For information, visit <http://www.rollins.edu/titleix/>