**UNST 151**

**MAKING SENSE OF BELIEFS AND VALUES:**

**A GUIDED TOUR FOR GLOBAL CITIZENS**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Instructors:** Tim Brearly, M.A. Whitney Giesing, M.S., Steve Grande, Ph.D., Vesna Hart, Psy.D., Jenna Holt, Psy.D., Craig Shealy, Ph.D., Renee Staton, Ph.D., Krystal Studivant, Ed.M.

**Course Location and Time: MW 3:35-4:50, Duke Hall Room 2036**

**Office Hours:** By appointment

**E-mails:** [vesna.hart@gmail.com](mailto:vesna.hart@gmail.com); [kms7ng@gmail.com](mailto:kms7ng@gmail.com)

**ORIENTATION TO THE COURSE**

Over the past several years, many professional figures (e.g., scholars, religious leaders, educators, activists, politicians, journalists) have emphasized the need for a more enlightened citizenry that acknowledges its increasing global interdependence and is able and willing to address the concomitant sociocultural, economic, and political issues of our day (e.g., Henriques, 2005; Shealy, 2005). Although such calls are ubiquitous across the sociopolitical landscape, it is necessary to translate such sentiment into a deliberative and targeted educational program that is designed to achieve these goals. Through a series of lectures, readings, videos, and discussions, students in UNST 151 have the opportunity to engage in a comprehensive and intensive process of examining the beliefs and values of self, others, and the world at large. This course is taught by an interdisciplinary team of faculty with expertise in this area.

**COURSE FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES**

Consistent with the above orientation, the fundamental objective of UNST 151 is for students to examine, describe, and explain the linkages between the implicit or explicit beliefs and values of individuals, groups, organizations, governments, and societies around the world and ascertain how those actions, policies, or practices are demonstrably grounded in or legitimized by these specific beliefs and values. Students will acquire substantial understanding of a number of religious, political, environmental, gender-based, artistic, cultural, and sociopolitical issues and events that are relevant to all global citizens. At an experiential level, students will come to appreciate and assess the processes by which beliefs, values, and worldviews—their own and others—are and/or are not acquired, modified, and "transformed" as a result of these experiences.

More specifically, in pursuing the above emphases and objectives, students will learn that human beliefs and values are 1) central mediating processes for behavior at individual and societal levels, but they may or may not be "known" (i.e., may be implicit or non-conscious), and are not necessarily logically grounded; 2) determined by an individual's history, larger culture, and unique Zeitgeist, inculcated over time, and may or may not transcend (i.e., may be relative to) a specific time and place; 3) acquired and maintained via complex interactions among developmental, affective, and attributional processes; and 4) inextricably and ultimately linked to the actions, policies, and practices of individuals, groups, organizations, governments, and societies.

**PROJECT AND PRESENTATION**

Working in teams, students will identify between 10 – 20 local, national, and international organizations that are seeking to promote “transformation” across five areas of focus: conflict resolution, human rights, sustainability, global education, and religious and cultural understanding. On the basis of this research, each team will be asked to prepare a written document that provides information about each organization (e.g., name, mission, major activities, how “transformation” is promoted, whether any measurement / assessment occurs regarding the work of the organization, website). Students are then asked to create a brief video regarding their specific topic in which the following issues are considered: 1) what is the topic of focus and why does it matter to team members; 2) why the topic is and should be of relevance to “young people” and future generations both from the standpoint of ethics / values as well as empirically (i.e., citing relevant findings / data); 3) a brief description of how the topic is being addressed, drawing upon the work of various organizations that have been researched; 4) how and why such work is demonstrably “transformational” at the individual, group, organizational, or societal level; and 5) future directions / recommendations for how this topic should be pursued in the years to come. At the conclusion of the semester, teams will show and discuss their video with the larger class. Creativity, depth, and engagement are key to the success of this project, which is worth 25 percent of your final grade. An opportunity to post this video (e.g., on the Madison International website; at an upcoming summit series) may also be provided. More information about this project / presentation will be provided in class.

**LEARNING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

Because UNST 151 is part of the Madison International Learning Community at JMU, and to coordinate activities in a coherent manner, UNST 151 also provides the academic “home” for completion of learning community requirements. These requirements are as follows:

1. Personal and Professional Development

Each class member is asked to reflect upon and select at least one personal and professional development activity in which to participate each semester. These activities should be 1) aligned with the goals of MI and 2) congruent with one’s own professional interests and aspirations. For those students also enrolled in UNST 150, please choose a personal and professional development activity that is different from the one that you select for UNST 150. (For example, students cannot use the same volunteer experience to complete the requirements of projects for both UNST 150 and UNST 151). There are numerous possibilities in this regard, including, but by no means limited to, the following:

* Participating in an independent study opportunity with a faculty member of his or her choosing
* Submitting a conference proposal (e.g., poster, paper)
* Attending a conference or meeting
* Getting involved in some aspect of student governance or leadership
* Writing a research paper on a topic of relevance
* Joining and becoming active in an organization
* Developing a portfolio of one’s learning experiences and activities

2. Campus and Community Participation

Each class member will participate and/or attend at least two international events that are occurring on or off campus. It is possible that participation in one or both of these events may be required.

3. Final Community Celebration

Each semester will conclude with a final celebration for the entire community. This is a time for group-level reflection upon the activities of the semester and enjoy food and conversation together.

4. MI Journal

All members of MI are asked to keep a journal of their weekly activities in MI (i.e., a minimum of one entry per week). These journals may include reflection on any aspect of their experience in this course / the community. Journals should include information about each of the requirements in UNST 151 (e.g., they should reference what the student did to fulfill requirements). Attachments are encouraged to illustrate completion of specific requirements and provide sufficient context (e.g., a paper that was completed in the context of an independent study experience; information about a conference; information about the service learning experience, etc.). Although the journal will be reviewed by the course instructor for purposes of deriving a grade for UNST 151, material in the journal will be kept confidential (i.e., won’t be shared with anyone else). Journals are due on a weekly basis. Submission processes / guidelines will be described in class.

**PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE**

As with the Madison International Learning Community, this course is particularly interactive and participatory in nature. Therefore, it is very important that students not only attend class, but are prepared for each class meeting by completing readings and other assignments, and continue to participate fully in the requirements of the Madison International Learning Community (listed above). It is expected that written and verbal contributions will represent a wide range of perspectives; in class discussions and on paper, students should strive to be critically minded and self-reflective, and to offer contributions that are grounded in sound scholarship and informed by reasoned dialogue. Because the issues and themes discussed in this course may be evocative, students should strive to listen hard to perspectives that may be very different from their own. Although agreement with others is not required for this course, thoughtful inquiry and respectful dialogue are.

Participation and attendance are worth 25 percent of your final grade (students are permitted one absence for the course; each additional absence results in a loss of 5 percent of your final grade).

**ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING PROJECT**

One aspect of participation that is voluntary, but highly encouraged, is completion of an assessment measure that is part of a multi-institution and national assessment of international, multicultural, and transformative learning project. Students will be given the opportunity to complete this measure during the first week of class. More information will be shared in class.

**EXAMS**

This course includes a midterm and final exam. Possible exam questions will be circulated to students in advance of each exam. Each exam is worth 25 percent of your grade.

**COURSE READINGS**

Specific readings corresponding to various topic areas will be assigned in class and made available to students.

**GRADING**

Grades will be assigned on the following basis:

Project and Presentation = 25%

Participation = 25%

Midterm Exam = 25%

Final Exam = 25%

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

= 100%

Grades will be awarded according to the following scale:

A = 90-100%

B = 80-89%

C = 70-79%

D = 60-69%

F = below 60%

**NOTE:** This syllabus (including the course schedule) is subject to change. Students will be notified of any changes in class. All aspects of the JMU Honor Code are applicable to this class. If you have any questions about the relevance or applicability of the JMU Honor Code, please ask your course instructor.

**UNST 151: COURSE SCHEDULE[[1]](#footnote-1)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Dates | |  |
| Mon | Wed |  |
| 13th Jan | 15th Jan | Making Sense of Beliefs and Values: A Guided Tour for Global  Citizens (Overview and Introduction)  Craig Shealy, Ph.D. |
| 20th Jan  MLK Day  No Class | 22nd Jan | Making Sense of Beliefs and Values: A Guided Tour for Global  Citizens (Overview and Introduction)  Craig Shealy, Ph.D. |
| 27th Jan | 29th Jan | Making Sense of Beliefs and Values: A Guided Tour for Global  Citizens (Overview and Introduction)  Craig Shealy, Ph.D. |
| 3rd Feb | 5th Feb | Culture  Renee Staton, Ph.D. |
| 10th Feb | 12th Feb | Economics  Whitney Giesing, M.S. |
| 17th Feb | 19th Feb | Leadership  Steve Grande, Ph.D. |
| 24th Feb | 26th Feb | Environment  Jenna Holt, Psy.D. |
| 3rd Mar | 5th Mar | Midterm Exam |
| 10th Mar | 12th Mar | SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS |
| 17TH Mar | 19th Mar | Religion  Tim Brearly, M.A. |
| 24th Mar | 26th Mar | Biology  Krystal Studivant, Ed.M. |
| 31st Mar | 2nd Apr | Forensics  Vesna Hart, Psy.D. |
| 7th Apr | 9th Apr | Gender  TBA |
| 14th Apr | 16th Apr | Putting It All Together: Implications and Applications for Self, Others, and the World at Large |
| 21st Apr | 23rd Apr | Presentations |
| 28th Apr | 30th Apr | Presentations |
| 5th May | 7th May | Exam Preparation and Community Celebration |

1. Because this is a team taught course, it is possible that changes may be made to this course schedule depending upon instructor availability and other factors. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)