

Downton
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Fall
2003

SOCIOLOGY 3041

SELF AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Jim Downton
Fall, 2003

"Self and Consciousness" is a deep exploration of the issues of human development, especially how to expand our sense of self, develop wisdom, reduce our suffering, and increase our level of happiness and well-being. It derives inspiration from different approaches and, most importantly, it draws on our own lives. It will be an experience that will challenge our current conceptions of self and may launch us on an inner career of personal development. This course is an experience for those who may want to pursue that inner objective, who are willing to share themselves with others, and who are open to change. In a world which often seems cruel and destructive, this quest is a faint but important call for sanity, because it is a call for a new way of thinking, living, and being. We are all socialized to a particular way of being. Self and Consciousness is about opening up the possibility that there is another way.

Important note: All the classroom processes are sequential. One piece of work builds the foundation for the next. So, missing a class means that you miss that fundamental preparation. While you're going through the experience you may forget this, but at the end, those who were present at each session will see how it all builds and fits together. The power of the experience rises in proportion to the number of processes you go through. So, please understand that your presence in class is crucial for determining how much you get from this experience. Having said that, I also understand that some of you will get sick and that emergencies will come up in your lives that make it impossible for you to be in class. Please let me know when that happens, because we must allow for the unexpected. All I'm asking is that you see the importance of each process we do and, no matter what your mood on any particular day, that you show up for the work if you are physically healthy. If you miss a class, for whatever reason, do the work in that chapter on your own.

Another note: Not all processes will affect you. When that happens, just keep coming, because the next process may be the one that really teaches you something. Also, some of the processes may bring up issues that make you feel "bad." Know that these reactions usually go away with understanding as the semester progresses. Use the "bad" feeling as a point of departure for more awareness. Deeper awareness is what makes new choices possible.

BOOKS AS TEACHERS

We often don't stop to notice that a book that really hits us is like a teacher: It opens up new ways of seeing, feeling, and being. Some books can really have a major impact on our understanding and development, so approach books as teachers and ask: What is it from this work that I want to take and begin to practice in my life? Following are the books we'll use.

Jim Downton, *The Woo Way: A New Way of Living and Being*. This book includes the work we'll do together over the semester. If you miss class, you'll be able to do the session on your own. It will also allow you to share important pieces of the work with friends and family. After each class session, read the corresponding chapter, because there are segments in the book that won't be covered in class. This is also a helpful way to review the work. Please don't read ahead. The element of surprise makes the work more interesting. Because you will have the book which covers what we will do in class, there is no need to take notes during our classroom sessions, although you'll need a notebook for recording responses to processes.

Dan Millman, *Way of the Peaceful Warrior: A Book that Changes Lives*. You will find this a fascinating and life-changing book. It addresses an issue that will run like a thread throughout the course—managing the mind is the path to a better life.

Don Miguel Ruiz, *The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom*. This small book can have a big impact on your life because it provides simple daily practices. These practices give you new ways of living with power and more freedom in the way you respond to others and the challenges in your life.

David Kiersey and Marilyn Bates, *Please Understand Me*. This book is about personality types and their influence on social relationships and personal choices. You will discover your type and learn how it affects the way you see the world, how you relate to others, and how you see yourself. Taken seriously, this work can be an important vehicle for increasing understanding and self-acceptance.

Benjamin Hoff, *The Tao of Pooh*. The wisdom of Taoism (pronounced "Daoism") is explored in this little book about Pooh, who is a Woo Master.

JOURNAL WRITING

Each of the books you read will be a teacher, but none are as important as your own self-awareness. You are the creator of your life and only you can develop the insights to change it so your suffering is reduced and your sense of well-being is enhanced. Happiness is always within your grasp. Journal writing will be one of the ways you generate those insights. Journal writing is like writing a book of your own; one that advances your self-awareness enough so that it can change you. After each class session journal more deeply about the work we did. Deepening awareness through this self-reflecting effort is what opens up new choices. Then, practice and change follow. Since I'll be asking for your journal during midterm and at the end of the semester, please keep your classroom work in a separate notebook.

Finally, teach others about what you learn. Last semester, students often taught their friends and roommates by guiding them through the processes. Others shared the work with their parents, sisters, or brothers. By teaching the work to others, you integrate it.

EVALUATION

At the end of the semester, your grade will be based on your effort--how much time you put into journal writing, how regularly you attended class, whether you did the processes on your own when you were unable to attend, and how thoroughly you read the books.

Sometime during the middle of the term, we will meet in small groups to share discoveries and progress.

At the end of the term, I will meet with each of you in a private review session of your work. We'll explore how much reading you did, how carefully you read, and how much effort you put into your journal writing. Your attendance will also be strongly taken into account. After comparing everyone's effort, I will give you a grade for the course. This private conference will take place in my office.

If you have a learning disability that will interfere with your completion of the assignments, please talk to me about it at the beginning of the semester.

Jim's office hours: (Ketchum 8D)

Office Hours:

Tuesday: 9:30-10:30

Thursday: 2:30-3:30

or by appointment

To find my office, go to Ketchum. It's the first building South of the main library entrance (East side). Enter the East door of Ketchum, go downstairs, then take an immediate left turn. You will enter the Ketchum 8 complex of offices. Head down the hallway and you'll find my office at the end.

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