

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
JOHN DEWEY HONORS PROGRAM

Luis A. Vivanco, Ph.D.
Dept. of Anthropology
Office: 514A Williams Hall
Office Phone: 656-1184
lvivanco@zoo.uvm.edu

Fall 2001
A500 Old Mill
Time: W 3:35-5:35pm
Office Hours: MF 3:00-4:30pm

Honors 100: Knowledge and Theory

URL: <http://www.uvm.edu/~lvivanco/honors100.html>

"Our analysis may seem a bit labored, but only because we are so accustomed to our own well-worn grooves of expression that they have come to be felt as inevitable. Yet destructive analysis of the familiar is the only method of approach to an understanding of fundamentally different modes of expression"

Edward Sapir, *Language* (1921)

Course Description

Western science has long claimed status as *the* privileged knowledge system for understanding nature and the human condition. Quintessentially modern, objective, and universal, the scientific world view is often contrasted with 'the savage mind,' irrational superstition, primitivism, localism, static tradition, and attachment to ideology. Yet, when we closely examine the knowledge systems of non-Western and multicultural societies (including our own), we find that equally complex and dynamic – if not empirically accurate and effective – ways of knowing coexist and interpenetrate with the sciences. What are the implications of this revelation for a critical understanding of scientific practice itself? What are the cultural values embedded in a scientific world view, and how can we know them? Whose interests (capital, state, class, gender, etc.) are served by scientific findings and theories? What happens to scientific knowledge in cultural contexts where its basic categories differ from the native categories? A critical understanding of science as a way of 'representing and intervening' (Hacking) is of central public concern, both because of its perceived inevitability and that our lives – and those of people in different cultures around the world – are increasingly mediated by the knowledge scientists generate. It is also in this light that Sapir's insight has keen intellectual and moral relevance: if there is any possibility of understanding a fundamentally different way of knowing and expression, a 'destructive analysis of the familiar' – of the basic categories and concepts that *we* take for granted, including those of the sciences – is necessary.

Drawing on a variety of academic disciplines, this seminar explores how knowledge systems and their truth claims are produced, expressed, validated, accommodated, resisted, rejected, and hybridized in an interconnected world. During the first part of the semester, we will focus specifically on how scientific knowledge and practices both reflect and create new social relationships and culture. During the latter part of the semester, we will consider cross-cultural contexts in which different knowledge systems and world views interact. These topics will provide a prism through which we can consider how

and why people know what they know, as well as broad social phenomena like modernity, the increasingly globalized construction of authority and expertise, and how people in different social contexts construct autonomous ways of knowing and being in an interconnected world.

These are enormous tasks! We will try to focus our explorations through the following questions: Is knowing a culturally-specific activity? What distinguishes a ‘science’ from a ‘non-science?’ How is it possible to observe, describe, or compare a knowledge system or world view? How is the production of scientific knowledge mediated by social processes, ideologies, and relationships of inequality (i.e., gender, class, and race)? How have people in non-Western and multicultural contexts accommodated, integrated, resisted, and/or altered scientific and modernist practices? What is an effective strategy to represent the contingency of knowing the world and one’s place in it?

The following required texts are available for purchase at the University Store:

1. Jackson, M. (1995) *At Home in the World*. Duke University Press.
2. Fuller, S. (1998) *Science*. University of Minnesota Press.
3. Martin, E. (1992) *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*. Beacon.
4. Lewontin, R.C. (1993) *Biology as Ideology: The Doctrine of DNA*. HarperPerennial Library.
5. Esteva and Prakash. (1998) *Grassroots Postmodernism: Remaking the Soil of Cultures*. Zed Books.

Course Format and Requirements

The format of this course is a seminar, and therefore carries with it certain opportunities and obligations. Although we will periodically have lectures, guest lectures, and films, the in-class portions of this course are organized primarily around discussion of the readings and the broader themes raised by course materials. Therefore, it is essential that each of you comes to class prepared – this means having done the assigned readings *before* every class session and considered the issues you would like to contribute to discussion. **Needless to say, attendance is mandatory at all course activities, and the only excused absences are for family or health emergencies (with proof).**

You will be graded on the following:

EXERCISE	% OF GRADE
Class Attendance and Participation	15
Syndicate Assignment	20
Discipline Research Memo	25
Research Paper	40

I will randomly assign you to a syndicate during the first class. Each syndicate will be required to facilitate a class discussion **once** during the semester. This entails summarizing the material in the readings, explaining what each of you found interesting and/or difficult about the material, and raising questions for discussion. This will also involve a brief writing assignment in which each member of the syndicate will write 3 pages summarizing the main points of that particular week's reading and/or class discussion. This writing assignment will be due the week *after* the syndicate presentation.

You will undertake an introductory analysis of an academic discipline and produce a 5-page research memorandum on that discipline. It is up to you what you write about – you are **not** required to work on your major discipline if something else interests you. This assignment will require you to conduct **at least two interviews** with people in that discipline, most likely faculty members here at UVM. The purpose of these interviews is to become generally aware of the current state of the discipline, the major theoretical or methodological controversies at the present time, and the likely directions that discipline might take in the next generation. You should also ask your interviewees to suggest two or three pieces of literature that would constitute required reading for someone like yourself learning about the discipline. The memo you produce should summarize the content of these interviews, and raise and reflect on questions and ideas that occur to you as a result of the interviews. I would also like to you read from and include in your memo **at least one** of those pieces of literature. It will be due in class **October 31**. Please make enough copies of this memo for myself and all the other members of the seminar.

The final course assignment is a 10-12 page research paper on a topic of your choice. There will be several steps involved in producing this essay:

- 1) Initial 1 paragraph statement of topic (September 19)
- 2) Annotated bibliography of **at least ten** initial sources (October 17)
- 3) Revised 1 page statement of topic (October 24)
- 4) First draft (November 14)
- 5) Final draft (December 10)

You should work steadily on this research throughout the semester. We will discuss the requirements and subtleties of each step throughout the semester. The Honors Program has a special relationship with Bailey-Howe reference librarian Patricia Mardeusz. She is available to meet with you individually to help you with the research process (pmardeus@zoo.uvm.edu).

Policies on writing papers:

In these days of computer-mediated writing, there are no excuses for the two following problems: 1) late papers due to 'computer crashes,' and 2) poor spelling and grammar. Regarding the former, claiming a 'computer crash' is the basically the same as telling me that your dog ate your homework. **This is not a valid excuse** if you are backing up your materials on diskettes or the UVM mainframe. If indeed this has happened, I expect you to provide a note from a computer specialist explaining the problem; otherwise your late paper will be evaluated in terms of my late paper policy. Regarding the latter problem, use your spellcheck option and proofread - **I will mark you down for poor spelling and grammar.**

My policy on late papers is that I do not accept them, although I will make an exception if you are willing to receive a lower grade. **For every 24 hour period your paper is late, you drop a full grade from the grade I feel your paper would receive if it were not late.** For example, if your 'A' paper is not turned in when it is due, you will receive a 'B' if it is turned in within the next 24 hours. The next day, your grade drops to a 'C.' The day after that, it is a 'D.' If you turn in a paper late and expect to receive a non-reduced grade, you must provide evidence of an emergency.

If you have not already, you should familiarize yourself with the UVM Writing Center. Tutors will not write or edit your papers for you. However, they will offer advice on developing ideas, finding a thesis, seeing a draft from a reader's point of view, strengthening an argument, and advise on style and correctness. It is located in Room 244 Commons of Living/Learning, and their phone is 656-4075.

Schedule of Readings

READINGS WITH AN ('R') NEXT TO THEM WILL BE ON RESERVE. Reserve articles are available online through Bailey-Howe's Voyager. A hard copy of every reserve reading will always be available in the Anthropology Department office – 509 Williams Hall, open 8:00am-4:30pm. The reading should be done *before* the class date under which they are listed.

Introduction: The 'Great Divide' and Beyond

Course Introduction

Wed. August 29: Introduction to the course, instructor's expectations, requirements, etc.

No reading

Wed. September 5: Science and 'The Savage Mind?'

Reading: 1. Horton, R. (1970) 'African Traditional Thought and Western Science.' In Wilson, ed.

(R) *Rationality*. Oxford: Blackwell. pp. 131-71.

2. Barnes, B. and D. Bloor (1982) 'Relativism, Rationalism and the Sociology of

(R) Knowledge.' In Hollis and Lukes, ed. *Rationality and Relativism*. Cambridge: MIT Press, pp. 21-47.

Wed. September 12: Moving Beyond 'The Great Divide'

Reading: 1. Geertz, C. (1984) 'Anti-Anti Relativism' *American Anthropologist* 86(2): 263-

(R) 78.

2. Harding, S. (1994) 'Is Science Multicultural? Challenges, Resources, Opportunities,

(R) Uncertainties.' In Goldberg, *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 344-70.

Science in/as/of Socio-Cultural Context

Wed. September 19: What is a Science? A Scientist?

Guest: TBA

Reading: 1. Fuller, *Science*, Chs 1-4.

Wed. September 26: Social Epistemologies of Science

Reading: 1. Fuller, *Science*, Chs 5-7.

Wed. October 3: The Cultural Politics of Biology

Reading: 1. Lewontin, *Biology as Ideology*, Chs. 1-3 (pp. 1-57).

Wed. October 10: Dangerous Knowledge? The Human Genome Project

In-class debate: *Resolved: The Human Genome Project generates dangerous knowledge and should be stopped immediately.*

Reading: 1. Lewontin, *Biology as Ideology*, Chs. 4-6 (pp. 59-123).

Wed. October 17: Perspectives on Science and Gender

Reading: 1. Martin, *The Woman in the Body*, prefaces and Chs. 1-6.

Wed. October 24: Knowledge and Metaphor

Guest: Dana Walrath

Reading: 1. Martin, *The Woman in the Body*, Chs. 7-12.

Knowledge, Power and Autonomy in an Interconnected World

Wed. October 31: Australian Aboriginal Arts and Ways of Knowing

Guest: Jim Petersen

Reading: 1. Jackson, *At Home in the World*, Chs. 1-7.

Wed. November 7: Strategies for Knowing and Representing Home

Film: 'Babakiueria'

Reading: 1. Jackson, *At Home in the World*, Chs. 8-Epilogue.

Wed. November 14: Sagas of Resistance and Liberation

Reading: 1. Esteva and Prakash, *Grassroots Postmodernism*, Chs. 1-3.

Wed. November 21: Thanksgiving Recess (no class)

Wed. November 28: Regenerating Peoples' Space

Guest: Corrine Glesne

Reading: 1. Esteva and Prakash, *Grassroots Postmodernism*, Chs. 4-6.

Wed. December 5: Knowing Beyond Universalism

Reading: 1. Raine, 'The Shaman and the Ecologist' (all of it)

Your research paper is due December 10 by 12 noon in the Anthropology Department Office (509 Williams Hall).