

FYS 134: SECRETS and LIES

COURSE SYLLABUS

Fall Term 2011
M W F 1:10-2:25 p.m.

Prof. Daniel R. DeNicola
Gettysburg College

Oh, what a tangled web we weave/ When first we practice to deceive!
Sir Walter Scott, *Marmion*

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar explores “the ethics of concealment and revelation.” We seem to have a great deal of difficulty with the virtue of honesty and the principle of truthfulness in contemporary personal, professional, and public life. Why do we keep secrets, tell lies, guard our privacy, or betray others? Has our evolution tilted us toward openness and trust, or toward secrecy and guile? What is our responsibility to the truth?

We will examine such practices as: **Privacy, Secrecy, and Confidentiality** (at the personal, professional, organizational, and governmental levels); **Revelation** (confessing, whistle-blowing, informing, and outing); **Lying and Deception** (in their many forms, as well as other forms of truth-distortion, along with methods of detecting them); **Betrayal, Treachery, Fraud, and the Fake** (in several realms); **Self-Deception** (in four accounts); and **Related Moral Concepts**, such as the ideals of trust, loyalty, honesty, authenticity, and integrity. In the end, we shall need to think through the value of **Truth**.

The seminar takes a philosophical perspective, but it draws upon the insights and research of several disciplines and opens up many lines of interdisciplinary inquiry. ***This seminar meets the Gettysburg Curriculum requirement of Effective Communication: First Year Writing. It may also be counted toward a major or minor in Philosophy.***

2. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Although much that is learned in any course is unplanned and highly individual, this seminar does have specific learning goals that should be made transparent. Each student who engages faithfully in the seminar should expect over the semester to:

- Develop a rich conception of the core ideas of the seminar—*secrecy, privacy, confidentiality, deception, self-deception, betrayal, truthfulness, etc.*;
- Develop a well-articulated and plausibly argued position on several of the crucial ethical issues of the seminar—e.g., the ethics of concealment and revelation; of lying and other forms of deception; of the ideals of honesty, loyalty, authenticity, etc.;
- Develop your writing skills, especially in the modes of explication, analysis, and argument;

- Deepen your understanding of the way theory and practice connect, especially the consequences of philosophical theory for individual morality and public policy; and
- Acquire basic techniques of undergraduate scholarly research.

3. SEMINAR METHODS

As a First-Year Seminar, this course emphasizes active and collaborative learning, based upon a common set of issues, concepts, and texts. The dominant teaching methods are: Socratic dialogue, group discussion, individual and group presentations, and collective deliberation or debate. Lectures are brief and occasional. Obviously, the seminar is highly participatory. It encourages critical and philosophical thinking: *it does not promote a set of foregone conclusions*. In this course, it is not the position you take, but your *arguments* for that position that are of primary concern.

4. ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Academic credit and your seminar grade are based on the quality of your performance on the following assignments:

| | | |
|----|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| A. | Critical Responses (8) | 20% of final grade (total) |
| B. | Tests and Final Exam (3) | 45% (15% each) |
| C. | Seminar Paper | 20% |
| D. | Mini-Project | 5% |
| E. | Participation | 10% |

- A. Critical Responses:** These are reactions to specific reading assignments, written in good form, and brought to class. They should be sharply focused and might offer questions, a critique, applications, or counterexamples, or other philosophically substantial responses. Avoid complaints, praise, and stylistic comments. They may be a paragraph or two, but never longer than one page of typescript. You are required to submit eight (8) of these over the course of the term, and each submission must respond to the readings assigned for that day. You may choose the days you wish to submit, except that none may be submitted during the last week of classes. These responses will be used randomly during class and collected; they will be evaluated, graded as a composite assignment, and returned at mid-term and again after all have been submitted. Further instructions will be provided.
- B. Mid-Term Tests and Final Exam:** There will be two tests and a final exam given during the term, each primarily essay in format. Tests are completed outside of class. The first will cover secrecy and related topics; the second, lying and related topics; the final exam will be comprehensive, but emphasize the last weeks' material. Written instructions will be provided in advance through MOODLE, and we discuss them and the criteria for grading in class. Due dates are provided below.
- C. Seminar Paper:** This assignment encourages you to tailor the seminar to topics of your

personal interest: you will propose your own topic for this paper for my review, comments, and approval. (A list of topic ideas plus extensive instructions and a grading rubric will be distributed early in the term.) Though an enormous range of relevant content and form is possible, the paper must be philosophical, must argue for a thesis, and must draw upon our course readings. An abstract and annotated bibliography will be required prior to the submission of the paper. The target is a paper of 2500-3000 words (or 8-10 pages), double-spaced, exclusive of bibliography). Relevant due dates are stipulated below.

- D. Mini-Project:** A small-group, film-related project designed to encourage collaborative learning will culminate in presentations. Details will be provided at the appropriate time.
- E. Participation:** As a seminar, this course *requires* your participation. Your active engagement in our sessions will advance your learning and enrich the experience for other seminar members. This responsibility is heightened for certain assignments, but keeping up, reading critically, asking informed and provocative questions, introducing alternative perspectives and lines of argument, challenging assumptions, reacting thoughtfully to speakers and colleagues—all are signs of active learning. Participating in our out-of-class events is relevant as well, and faithful class attendance is basic. I will make a holistic judgment about your participation at mid-term to provide feedback only; the final participation grade will be determined at the close of the term.

5. REQUIRED TEXTS

Make it a practice to bring your own copy of the day's assigned reading to class.

- A. Bok, Sissela. *Secrets: On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation*. Vintage Books, 1989. ISBN# 978-0679724735.
- B. Bok, Sissela. *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*. Vintage Press, 1999 (updated edition). ISBN# 978-0375705281.
- C. Knapp, Mark L. *Lying and Deception in Human Interaction*. (Penguin Academics) Allyn & Bacon, 2008. ISBN# 978-0205580644.
- D. Frankfurt, Harry G. *On Bullshit*. Princeton University Press, 2005. ISBN# 978-0691122946.
- E. Martin, Mike W. *Self-Deception and Morality*. University Press of Kansas, 1986. ISBN# 978-0700603534.
- F. Lynch, Michael P. *True to Life: Why Truth Matters*. MIT Press (Bradford Books), 2005. ISBN# 978-0262622011.

6. SEMINAR CONSPECTUS (BRIEF FORM)

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|--------------|---|
| Day 1: | Introduction to the Ethics of Concealment, Deception, and Revelation |
| Weeks 1-4: | Privacy, Secrecy, Confidentiality, Confession, and Revelation (<i>Test</i>) |
| Weeks 5-9: | Deception, Lying, and Paltering (<i>Test</i>) |
| Weeks 10-11: | Self-Deception |
| Weeks 12-14: | Truth and Truthfulness (<i>Paper</i>) |
| Week 15: | <i>Readings Days and Final Examinations</i> |

7. CONSPECTUS OF SEMINAR TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

*Class procedure will be to presume that **the assigned reading has been completed prior to the session corresponding.***

M Aug. 29 **Welcome and Introduction: The Ethics of Concealment and Revelation**

W Aug. 31 **Privacy, Secrecy, Confidentiality, and Intimacy**

- Bok, *Secrets*, Introduction and Chapter I (pp. xv-xviii and 3-14).

F Sept. 2 **The Basic Toolbox of Ethical Theory**

- Bok, *Secrets*, Chapter II (pp. 15-28).
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M Sept. 5 **The Impulse to Conceal—in Individuals and Secret Societies**

- Bok, *Secrets*, Chapters III and IV (pp. 29-58).

W Sept. 7 **Revelation: Confession and Gossip**

- Bok, *Secrets*, Chapters VI and VII (pp. 73-101).

F Sept. 9 **The Power of Secrecy and the Classified Universe**

- Bok, *Secrets*, Chapter VIII (pp. 102-115); and
 - Peter Galison, "Removing Knowledge," from *Critical Inquiry*:
<http://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/features/artsstatements/arts.galison.htm>.
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M Sept. 12 **Confidentiality and Its Limits**

- Bok, *Secrets*, Chapter IX (pp. 116-135).

W Sept. 14 **Secrecy in the Corporate World and in Science**

- Bok, *Secrets*, Chapters X and XI (pp. 136-170).

- F Sept. 16 **Field Trip to Washington, DC. (All day event, no class, see below)**
State and Military Secrets
- Bok, *Secrets*, Chapters XII - XIII (pp. 171-209).
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- M Sept. 19 **Whistle-blowing and Leaking**
- Bok, *Secrets*, Chapters XIV and VIII (pp. 210-229, 281-285); and
 - Choose one chapter in Bok, *Secrets*:
 - XV (pp. 230-248); or
 - XVI (pp. 249-264); or
 - XVII (pp. 265-280).
- W Sept. 21 **From Secrecy to Deception: The Evolution of Deception**
- Knapp, *Lying and Deception*: Chapter 4 (pp. 67-90).
- First Test Due**
- F Sept. 23 **Deception, Lying, and the Truth**
- Knapp, *Lying and Deception*: Chapter 1 (pp. 1-18); and
 - Bok, *Lying*, Chapter I (pp. 1-16).
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- M Sept. 26 **Lying and Trust**
- Knapp, *Lying and Deception*: Chapter 2 (pp. 19-40); and
 - Bok, *Lying*, Chapter II (pp. 17-31).
- W Sept. 28 **The Morality of Lying: Deontology and the Principle of Honesty**
- Knapp, *Lying and Deception*: Chapter 3 (pp. 41-66);
 - Bok, *Lying*, Chapter III (pp. 32-46); and
 - Bok, *Lying*, Appendix: Augustine (pp. 250-255), Aquinas (pp. 255-261), Kant (pp. 267-272) and Harrod (pp. 275-282).
- F Sept. 30 **The Morality of Lying: Consequentialism and White Lies**
- Bok, *Lying*, Chapters IV and V (pp. 47-72).
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- M Oct. 3 **Justifications and Excuses**
- Bok, *Lying*, Chapters VI and VII (pp. 73-106).
- W Oct. 5 **Lies in Crises and Ambiguous Domains: When Lying is Expected**
- Bok, *Lying*, Chapters VIII - X (pp. 107-145).
- F Oct. 7 **"Paltering"**
- *ELECTRONIC RESERVES*: "Paltering," Schauer and Zeckhauser, from *Deception*, (2: pp. 38-54); and
 - Knapp, *Lying and Deception*: Chapter 7 (pp. 142-172).
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M Oct. 10  **FALL READING DAY (No Class)** 

W Oct. 12 **Hype and BS**

- Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* (entire essay).

F Oct. 14 **Perjury: Lying under Oath**

- Bok, *Lying*, Chapter XI (pp. 146-164); and
 - *ELECTRONIC RESERVES*: Myron Gochnauer, "Swearing, Telling the Truth, and Moral Obligation," *Queens Law Journal*, 1983.
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M Oct. 17 **The Noble Lie: Lying for the Public Good**

- Knapp, *Lying and Deception*: Chapter 11 (pp. 259-283); and
- Bok, *Lying*, Chapter XII (pp. 165-181).

W Oct. 19 **Placebos and Paternalistic Lies**

- Bok, *Lying*, Chapters XIV-XV (pp. 203-241); and
- Legins, *et al.*, "Is Prescribing Placebos Ethical?"
http://www.acsh.org/healthissues/newsID.678/healthissue_detail.asp

F Oct. 21 **Lies to Children**

- Knapp, *Lying and Deception*: Chapter 5 (pp. 91-116); and
 - Bok, *Lying*, Chapter XVI (pp. 242-249).
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M Oct. 24 **Frauds, Fakes, and Forgeries**

- Knapp, *Lying and Deception*: Chapter 8 (pp. 173-204); and
- David Harley and Andrew Lee, "A Pretty Kettle of Phish," ESET:
[http://www.nod32.com.sh/download/whitepapers/Phishing\(June2007\)Online.pdf](http://www.nod32.com.sh/download/whitepapers/Phishing(June2007)Online.pdf)

W Oct. 26 **Deceptive Images**

- Knapp, *Lying and Deception*: Chapter 13 (pp. 314-338).

F Oct. 28 **Detecting Lies**

- Knapp, *Lying and Deception*: Chapter 9 (pp. 205-232).
 - Review Brain Fingerprinting site: <http://www.brainwavescience.com/>
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M Oct. 31 **Detecting Lies**

- Knapp, *Lying and Deception*: Chapter 10 (pp. 233-258).
- **Second Test Due**

W Nov. 2 **The Puzzles of Self-Deception**

- Martin, *Self-Deception and Morality*, Chapters 1 - 2 (pp. 1-30).

- F Nov. 4 **Self-Deception as Inner Hypocrisy**
- Martin, *Self-Deception and Morality*, Chapter 3 (pp. 31-52).
 - Optional: Bok, *Secrets*, Chapter V (pp. 59-72).
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- M Nov. 7 **Sincerity and Authenticity**
- Martin, *Self-Deception and Morality*, Chapter 4 (pp. 53-79).
- (Seminar Paper topic and bibliography due)*
- W Nov. 9 **The Moral Ambiguity of Self-Deception**
- Martin, *Self-Deception and Morality*, Chapter 5 (pp. 80-108).
- F Nov. 11 **Vital Lies and Willful Ignorance**
- Martin, *Self-Deception and Morality*, Chapter 6 (pp. 109-137).
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- M Nov. 14 **The Cunning of Self-Deception**
- Martin, *Self-Deception and Morality*, Epilogue (pp. 139-144); and
 - Knapp, *Lying and Self-Deception*, Chapter 6 (pp. 117-141).
- (Abstract for Seminar Paper due)*
- W Nov. 16 **Truisms about Truth**
- Lynch, *True to Life*, Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 9-30).
- F Nov. 18 **The Attainability of Truth**
- Lynch, *True to Life*, Chapter 3 (pp. 31-44).
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- M Nov. 21 **The Relativity of Truth**
- Lynch, *True to Life*, Chapter 4 (pp. 45-58).
- Seminar Paper Due*
- W Nov. 23 **THANKSGIVING RECESS: No Class.**
- F Nov. 25 **THANKSGIVING RECESS: No Class.**
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- M Nov. 28 **Dangerous Truths**
- Lynch, *True to Life*, Chapter 5 (pp. 59-74).
- W Nov. 30 **The Pragmatic Conception of Truth**
- Lynch, *True to Life*, Chapter 6 (pp. 75-100).
- F Dec. 2 **Truth as Scientific Fact**
- Lynch, *True to Life*, Chapter 7 (pp. 101-116).
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| M Dec. 5 | Truth and Happiness |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lynch, <i>True to Life</i>, Chapters 8 and 9 (pp. 117-158). |
| W Dec. 7 | Truth and the Ideals of Liberal Democracy |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Martin, <i>True to Life</i>, Chapter 10 and Epilogue (pp.159-182). |
| F Dec. 9 | Holding on to Truth (LAST DAY OF FALL CLASSES) |
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| Th Dec. 15 | FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD (1:30-4:30 pm) <i>Final Exam due (by 4:30 pm).</i> |

8. LIBRARY LIAISON

Library Liaison: Our seminar has an assigned reference librarian, **Kerri Odess-Harnish**, who is available to assist you in learning about our library's resources and researching your assignments. Please contact her directly for a bibliographic appointment.

9. SEMINAR POLICIES

Attendance: Philosophy is not simply something you study; it is something you do. Philosophizing is a form of active learning that requires engaged participation. Showing up regularly and on time is basic. Moreover, this is a seminar, which places a special emphasis on contributions by each student to the in-class experience of all. **All students are expected to attend all classes.** Unavoidable absences may be excused at the discretion of the instructor. If it is necessary to miss class, you should notify me *beforehand* if at all possible. You are still responsible for the work of that session. Multiple absences will undoubtedly lower your participation grade; excessive and extended absences will result in failure.

Class Preparation: My working assumption for each class is that every student will have read *and studied* the assignment prior to that class. If you are not prepared for class, you should attend anyway (learning happens!)—though you may find the need to acknowledge your unpreparedness during our discussions. Class time is precious, so we will endeavor not to waste a moment of it.

Late Work: **Work submitted late is not accepted for credit.** The timing of submission of your written work is documented through our MOODLE website.

Grading: In this seminar, grading is not “on the curve,” i.e., it is not comparative within the class. In theory, everyone could receive a very high grade—or no one! A rubric (a chart listing criteria and standards) for grading major assignments will be discussed beforehand. Grading will be relatively prompt, with tests normally graded and returned in one week. It is

not a mistake to consult with the instructor about any puzzling grade you receive—it is a very good idea!

Academic Integrity: Adherence to the principle of academic integrity as expressed in the Gettysburg College Honor Code is, of course, expected of all in this class. This includes giving proper citation of sources for all intellectual work, compliance with the announced conditions of assignments, and offering a forthright expression of your views. We will discuss at the outset the importance of academic integrity and specific expectations for the assignments. You should include the Honor Pledge on all written work. Please consult with me if you are uncertain about how to maintain academic integrity in a specific assignment.

Learning Disabilities: Please let me know if you have a diagnosed learning disability. Be prepared to present your College IEAP form for consultation. This will enable us to determine appropriate accommodations, if any, within the context of this course.

Course Website: The course will make extensive use of its on-line MOODLE site. You should already be automatically enrolled in MOODLE as members of the class. Communications on our website are official for all purposes, so ***you should consult the site frequently***. Important announcements, course documents, assignments, discussions, and a variety of learning resources will be posted there, and you will submit several assignments, including tests, via MOODLE. ***Please be sure you are fully familiar with MOODLE.***

Personal electronics: During class, please turn off all cell phones, iPhones, cameras, iPods, Blackberry's, and other personal electronics. If you have special need to keep a pager turned on during class, or if you wish to use a device to take class notes, please consult with me.

Co-curricular events: We shall take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the First-Year Seminar Program and special campus events related to the course. This seminar will include a few activities scheduled outside normal class time, such as a field trip, special lectures, social events, and film screenings. Your attendance is expected, but I recognize that, inevitably, unfortunate conflicts will arise. (I will help you in arranging for our day-long trip to Washington, DC, on Friday, September 16.) If you must miss a scheduled event, please notify me in advance, and I will explain what you need to do. It will be helpful if you can keep the Friday noon hour free of regular commitments.

Privacy and Sharing Work: Normal seminar practice will be to share papers and postings (but not tests). This is in keeping with the ideals of philosophical dialogue and the practice of seminars. If you are concerned to keep a particular written piece confidential, however, please let me know, and—especially in light of the concerns of this course—we will make appropriate arrangements. Grades are, of course, confidential.

Consultation: I have listed my regular hours for academic advising and consultation below. Barring an emergency, I will be available for a “drop-in” consultation at these times—though please do understand that others may show up for consultation as well. If these times do not work for you, you may arrange an appointment.

10. INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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| Prof. DeNicola's Office: | Weidensall Hall #306 |
| Office Phone: | (337-) 6784 |
| Campus Mail Box: | 404 |
| e-Mail Address: | ddenicol@gettysburg.edu |
| Office Advising Hours: | M W: 2:00-3:30 p.m., and T Th: 2:30 – 3:30 p.m., or by appointment at other times |
| Admin. Assistant, Dept. of Philosophy: | Carol Priest |
| Library Liaison | Kerri Odess-Harnish |
| Department Office Phone: | (337-) 6780 |

Note: The instructor reserves the right to change the information presented in this syllabus, within the basic parameters of the course description. Unforeseen events and responsive teaching may require adjustments. The instructor will confirm any changes in writing as far in advance as possible.

FYS 134: Washington, DC Trip

When:

Friday, September 16, all day.

Depart campus promptly at **7:00 am** from Christ Chapel (Stevens St.) in the College minibus.

Depart Washington at **3:00 pm**. Return about **4:45 pm**, depending on traffic.

What and Where:

Morning (9:00 AM): **"The Classified Universe."** Our host is William Cira, Director of the Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO), assisted by Ms. Carolina Pelagios. The National Archives, Information Security Oversight Office, 700 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Room 503, Washington, DC. (202-357-5342) For more information see: www.archives.gov/isoo/. Our presentation will be in a "clean room"—no phones.

Lunch (12:00): Wolfgang Puck's Café at the Newseum, using lunch vouchers.

Afternoon (1:30 PM): **"Media Ethics: Deceptive Quotations and Photos."** The Newseum, 555 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Washington, DC (202-NEWSEUM). For more information, see: <http://www.newseum.org/>. Enter through C Street entrance.

Dress:

Dress appropriately for a job interview, and bring clothes suitable for the day's weather.

Food:

A modest lunch in Washington will be covered. Be sure to have breakfast, coffee, etc. before we depart. Bring snacks and sodas if you wish. We should be back to campus in time for dinner.

Bring:

Cell phone, camera, notepad & pen, snacks and sodas, medicines, and sweater or umbrella (if needed). The trip takes about 1 hour 45 minutes each way if traffic is not a big issue—so you may want to bring something to do while riding. It will be possible to lock personal possessions in the van for the day—but you will not have access to them. You might want cash or a card for small purchases.

Notes:

You should have talked with professors of your other Friday classes and presented my letter. Making these arrangements, gaining permission, and making up your work is your responsibility.

This is a required activity of our class. Please let me know at once if you have a problem of conflict that needs to be resolved or cannot go. The content of this field trip is considered part of the content of the course. I will carry a cell phone during the trip with this number: XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Prof. Dan DeNicola

Field Trip Guide

Secrets & Lies

Some questions to consider during our events in Washington:

ISOO at the NATIONAL ARCHIVES

- What is ISOO?
- What is the scale of the system of classified documents? Is Galison's estimate on the mark?
- Where are they held?
- How are they ordered or classified?
- What are the main problems in keeping a system of classified documents?
- How are documents classified and declassified, why, and by whom?
- How long are official secrets kept secret?
- Who has access to a classified document?
- What is the Freedom of Information Act?
- How common are leaks?
- Who redacts (blacks out) sections of released documents—and why?
- Does this system meet Bok's "Test of Publicity"? Why or why not?

The NEWSEUM

- What is a journalist's obligation to the truth?
- What is the difference between an incomplete, inaccurate, or deceptive quotation?
- What does "taken out of context" mean?
- In how many ways can photographs deceive?
- Can "doctoring" an image ever support the truth?
- What rights do (or should) you have over images of yourself?
- What is the difference between doctoring a photo and lying?
- Journalism is about disclosure, revelation—when does or should it rely on secrecy?
- What is the difference between "enhancing" your glamour photo or facebook picture and doctoring a photograph for a tabloid or TV show?
- What ethical principles justify altering a quotation or an image?
- Would the use of confidential sources meet Bok's ethical tests?