



# BSC 101

*Foundations of Inquiry*

*Spring 2010*

*Dr. Michael I. Niman*

BSC 101 (# 1399 Niman) Spring 2010 Syllabus

## Foundations of Inquiry

Section Theme:

**Lies My Teacher Told Me:**

**Deconstructing Myths, Propaganda and Conflicting Truths**

3.0 Credit Hours

Tuesday/Thursday 1:40-2:55 / CAUD 212

Professor: **Dr. Michael I. Niman**

Office Hours: Tuesday / Thursday 12:00-1:30 & 3:00 – 4:00PM

Wednesday 3:00 -5:45PM & by appt. 230 Bishop Hall

Professor's Website: <http://mediastudy.com>

### **About This Section's Theme:**

Did we win all the wars? Were we always the good guys? This course employs multidisciplinary research approaches to examine public education's role in stifling critical inquiry and perpetuating a simplified whitewashed American history and mythology. We'll explore differing theories concerning the purpose of public education as a socialization force. Who is socializing us into what and why? We'll also examine the concept of truth and its role in a Liberal Arts education, exploring questions such as, "what is truth?" and "can there be competing truths?" The ultimate goal is not to teach memorizable facts or any particular interpretations of reality, but to develop a healthy spirit of critical inquiry which can be applied to any situation or dogma. To get started, we'll employ various conceptual frameworks to critically examine widely taught and common accepted historical "facts," so hold on and enjoy the ride.

### **Grading**

**20% Class Participation** \*- *Attendance is mandatory* in this class. The class participation grade is based upon *participation* in class discussions. Students are expected to arrive at class, having completed reading assignments, and be ready to fully participate as informed contributors to class discussions. Unexcused lateness is equal to an absence. Please remember, the purpose of a college class experience is not to regurgitate reading material, but to critically discuss it and move beyond it. Students who don't do the readings are in effect spectators unable to make an

*informed* contribution to the class discussion. Unprepared students can take something away from the class, but contribute little, hence play a parasitic role. Grades for those students will reflect this lack of contribution.

**50% Five Class Assignments worth 10% each** – Reading Based Short Writing or research assignments. Be sure to cite your readings and any other materials that you refer to when making arguments. Your writing should be concise. Length should be what you deem appropriate to answer questions or deal with the assigned subject matter. All assignments must be “typed.” Assignments that are written freehand will not be graded. Late assignments are only accepted with proper medical, funeral or catastrophe documentation. Class assignments are not accepted electronically. Please put the date, “BSC 101” and the Assignment number on the top of each assignment. Do only the assignments described in this syllabus – do not do the written assignments suggested in Foundations of Inquiry.

**30% Semester Research Paper** – Choose one chapter (2-11) from Lies My Teacher Told Me, research the subject the chapter addresses, and write a researched-based critique of the chapter using Foundations of Inquiry Chapter 7 (Constructing Written Arguments) as a loose guide. Your paper will be graded based on the clarity of your arguments, the coherency of your hypothesis, the depth of your research and the quality and readability of your writing. See my writing style guide online at: <http://mediastudy.com/writingguide.html>.

*\*A student who misses or is late to seven classes will automatically fail this course.*

### **Please Note:**

All policies articulated in this syllabus, including attendance policies, supersede Communication Department suggested policies.

Grading of student papers will reflect Standard American English usage. Buffalo State students and faculty generally use Chicago, APA or MLA bibliographic styles. All are acceptable. Students should use one style consistently throughout their paper. I prefer The Chicago Manual of Style for this class. A Chicago style guide is available online (Adobe) at <http://mediastudy.com/AAAstyleguide.pdf>.

**Plagiarism will result in automatic course failure** and departmental or college disciplinary action. Ask around – I firmly enforce this policy w/o exceptions. Plagiarism means passing off someone else’s ideas, work or writing (intellectual property) as if it is your own. **Quotes must be inside of quotation marks** and clearly cited. Any other use of a sequence of words, no matter how few, not written by you constitutes plagiarism. Likewise,

any series of **ideas** presented by someone else, or any **analytical structure** written by someone else, must be properly cited **even if you present their work in your own words**. Professor reserves the right to upload all papers, minus student names, into an anti-plagiarism database.

Students entering this course *must* possess **literacy skills** appropriate for a first year college student. This is a prerequisite. You *must resign* from this class if you do not possess these skills (meaning do not understand the language used in readings or class lectures – so look over the readings and decide if you are staying).

**Cellies** must be in silent mode. “Ringing” cellular devices = lowered semester grade and/or public torment and humiliation.

**Surreptitiously turning in an absent student’s assignment** constitutes fraud on the part of both students involved and will result in automatic class failure for both students. A student with an **excused medical or catastrophe absence** may send their paper to class or to my office, with a clear note attached explaining their excused absence.

**The use of electronic recording devices is prohibited** in class except with specific permission of the professor, or except, after notification of the professor, as provided for under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. All course content is protected intellectual property.

3.0 credit courses require at least **9.0 hours of work per week**.

**Please remember that grading is never quite fair**, so don’t expect your grade to always adequately reflect what you have learned. The best strategy to address the injustices inherent in grading is to carefully read the reading material, submit exemplary assignments, show up on time, participate in class and avoid any possible ambiguity regarding the quality of your work.

By registering for and remaining in this class, students are agreeing to abide by these guidelines.

**BSC Disabilities Policy:** “ *Any student who requires accommodations to complete the requirements and expectations of this course because of a disability is invited to make his or her needs known to the professor and to Marianne Savino, the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities, 120 South Wing, 878-4500*” (BSC Office of Disabilities Services Syllabus Statement).

**Required Texts (2 books)**

Lies My Teacher Told Me (Revised and Updated Edition), by James W. Loewen. Touchstone 2007. ISBN-10: 0743296281 / ISBN-13: 978-0743296281 (new retail price \$11.25 and up)

Foundations of Inquiry – Buffalo State College 2009-2010, Edited By Douglas G. Koritz. Pearson Custom 2009. ISBN-13: 978-0-558-33645-5 (common text only available at BSC Bookstore)

## Spring 2010 Course Outline

### WEEK 1 (1/26, 1/28)

Isolated Incoherent Meaningless Data. Boredom and Socialization. Daily Acts of Resistance. Welcome. Why are you're here?

*Assignment for next Tuesday:*

*Buy books and **Bring** them to class next Tuesday.*

**Read** *Lies* pp. 1-30

**Read** *Foundations* pp. 1-10

### WEEK 2 (2/2, 2/4)

Heroes and Villains. People's History. Liberal Arts Vs. High School. Critical Thinking and Empirical Arguments. Watch: "Howard Zinn: You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train."

*Assignment for next Tuesday:*

**Read:** *Lies* pp. 31-69 ("1493")

**Writing Assignment #1:** *Your reaction to the above reading. Cite the reading. Cite what you have been taught. Cite any conflicts or agreements. Articulate your feelings and informed opinion about your own education with regards to this subject. Make an empirical argument about why you stand by or oppose the way your teachers taught this subject.*

### WEEK 3 (2/9, 2/11)

Discuss 1493. Discuss empirical arguments and Critical Thinking. Discuss concepts of truth. Were you lied to, and if so, why?

*Assignment for next Tuesday:*

**Read:** *Lies* 70-92 (Thanksgiving)

**Read:** *Foundations* 11-25

## WEEK 4 (2/16, 2/18)

Discuss Thanksgiving. Critically examine iconography of Thanksgiving. Were the Pilgrims White Supremacists? Discuss Elements of Reasoning.

*Assignment for next Tuesday:*

**Read:** *Lies* 93-134 (*Red Eyes*)

**Read:** *Foundations* 26-36

**Writing Assignment #2:** *Critically analyze this week's reading in Lies (Red Eyes) using at least five of the elements from the Circle of Elements described in Foundations. Please use subheads for each of the elements you use.*

## WEEK 5 (2/23, 2/25)

Discuss writing assignment. Discuss the teaching of Native American history. Who is the target audience? Who can empathize with this narrative? Why is it taught this way. Do global current affairs mirror Native American history. How can understanding history help us understand contemporary geopolitics? Compare teaching history of American holocaust to that of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century European holocaust. What are facts?

*Assignment for next Tuesday:*

**Read:** *Lies* 135-171 (*Gone With The Wind*)

**Read:** *Foundations* 53-63

## WEEK 6 (3/2, 3/4)

"Our society has been slave much longer than it's been free." Wall Street was a slave market in its early days. Ten of the first 12 presidents owned slaves? Were they White Supremacists? Rapists? Enslaved structural engineers from West Africa helped build the early American infrastructure. How many racists' pictures are on your money? Any? Why is history boring? "Nothing" is boring. What disjointed historical factlets did you memorize? Did your teachers rely on Primary or Secondary sources?

*Assignment for next Tuesday:*

**Read:** *Lies* 183 (start with last paragraph) – 218 (*Lincoln & Land of Opportunity*)

**Writing Assignment #3:** *How has Racism or Social Class exploitation impacted your life or that of your parents or grandparents? Construct a **reasoned empirical biased** argument using **primary** and **secondary** source material to support your arguments. Clearly state your **hypothesis** and back up your **claims**.*

### **WEEK 7 (3/9, 3/11)**

Compare the Confederate Flag (The Southern Cross) to a Nazi swastika. Is this fair? Every Confederate State except South Carolina supplied troops to the Union Army. Why the myth of Carpetbaggers?

What is social class and how does it work? What is class warfare? Why are we sitting in this room instead of toiling in a Nike™ sweatshop? Why do your teachers expect you to be stupid? What about your professors? Do we live in a meritocracy or an oligarchy? What did your high school teachers think? Why is social studies boring? Why do many of you have to a job while going to school?

Discuss using Primary and Secondary sources when exploring social class and racism. Discuss your hypotheses on social class impacts on American history.

*Assignment for next Tuesday:*

**Read:** Lies 219-258 (*Watching Big Brother and See No Evil*)

### **WEEK 8 (3/16, 3/18)**

"Mommy, Where do bananas come from?" Maintaining disparity. Invisibility of social history. Invisible multinationals. Saving countries from their voters. Blowback. Fighting Civil Rights. Vietnam. Invisible history.

*Assignment for next Tuesday:*

**Read:** Lies 280-300 (*Progress*)

**Read:** Foundations 67-82

**Optional Additional Reading:** Lies 259-279 (*Memory Hole*) because reading is fun.

**Writing Assignment #4:** Using the criteria outlined on pages 81 and 82 of Foundations, evaluate Loewen's arguments regarding "progress" as articulated in this week's readings.

### **WEEK 9 (3/23, 3/25)**

Worshiping at the altar of Progress. Who benefits from this thing we call "progress?" Did we almost bite it with CFCs? Did we almost lose Detroit? Do you plan to stay on earth? Hello!!?? Discussing the undiscussed. Back to Columbus and the mentality of conquest. Ethnocentric worship of Western notions of progress. Global whining.

*Assignment for 4/6:*

**Read:** Lies 301-339 (*Why is History Taught Like This*)

**NO CLASSES 3/30 & 4/1 → Spring Break / April Fools Day**

## **WEEK 10 (4/6, 4/8) Pass/Fail /Withdraw Deadline is 4/7**

Critiquing the pedagogy of conformity. "School is in business to produce reliable people." What is a reliable person? Reliable to whom? Why teachers bore you rather than challenging you. Textbooks abandoning research, primary sources and accuracy. Abandoning you. Silly book layout. Inside the textbook mill. Why we don't use the prefabricated BSC 101 writing assignments. Sucking up to Texas. Ghostwriters and other zombies. Plagiarizing intellectual bankruptcy. Letting the teachers Edition teach. Yow, Loewen is on a roll? Fear and self-loathing. What do YOU think?

*Assignment for next Tuesday:*

**Read:** *Lies 340-354 (Results of teaching like this)*

**Writing Assignment #5:** *Use primary sources and library sources to evaluate and critique Lies Chapter 9 (Vietnam-You read it a few weeks ago). Interview a veteran or a peace activist or a draft evader or someone otherwise affected by the Vietnam War and present this primary source material in your assignment along with citations from secondary source material such as newspaper or magazine articles from the period.*

## **WEEK 11 (4/13, 4/15) Photo Array # 2 due 4/13.**

The business of bad teaching. Assessment and rote memorization of useless minutia. Day to day resistance. Socialization theories. Why more educated people are less likely to think critically. Why educated doesn't always equal informed. Loewen's concept of "social stupidity."

*Assignment for next Tuesday:*

**Read:** *Lies 355-352. (Afterward)*

**Read:** *Foundations 83-108*

## **WEEK 12 (4/20, 4/22)**

Wow, the library is like sooo cool. Sodexo sells pastries and Gourmet (pronounced gore-met) teas in the library. The nuts and bolts of research. It's so easy it's like cheating, but it ain't. Using secondary sources. Using databases. Getting funky with books. Discuss progress on Final research papers.

*Assignment for next Tuesday:*

**Read:** *Foundations 109-117, 119-126.*

**Write:** *Hand in preliminary References Cited Section for Final Paper.*

### **WEEK 13 (4/27, 4/29) The End is Near**

Discuss Cronin's comments on Liberal Arts Education in the context of Loewen's book. Discuss final papers.

***Write: Final Papers Due 5/6***

### **WEEK 14 (5/4, 5/6)**

It's the end of the world as we know it . . . .

Open discussion on truth, lies, facts, critical thinking and Liberal Arts!

Guest Speaker: World's foremost Peacable Peoples Scholar, Robert Knox Dentan.

**(CEP Meeting 5/11 @ 1:40 PM)**

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