

Handout # 1

Introduction: We will examine the concept of a beautiful mind, taking that provocative idea from the movie and Sylvia Nasar's book of the same title. [See reading list below.] We will focus on the characteristics of the human mind in general and on the works and lives of a few people with surpassingly powerful intellects. There will be an assortment of assignments including several essays; regular, active participation in discussions in class is also required. There's much reading in the course, some easy and some quite challenging. You'll love some of the readings and struggle with others, and you'll disagree with one another about which readings elicit which response.

This course is meant for students with relentless, wide-ranging curiosity, intellectual tenacity, and a desire to work hard at learning to be a better thinker and a better writer. If you are enrolled in the course, you have the intellectual capacity to do well in it.

Attendance: You must make every effort to be present for all classes, to arrive on time, and to remain until the class ends. But busses run late, tires go flat, and even the most conscientious students sometimes miss part of a class. If you miss any class time, it is your responsibility to find out from classmates what you have missed. If you arrive even 5 minutes late, you have missed a lot of important content and you are accountable for finding out in detail what that was.

Reading: Five paperback books are required.

1. EX LIBRIS (EL), Anne Fadiman
2. A BEAUTIFUL MIND (ABM), Sylvia Nasar
3. SURELY YOU'RE JOKING, MR. FEYNMAN (SJ), Richard Feynman
4. BRUNELLESCHI'S DOME (BD), Ross King
5. TRACE (TR), Lauret Savoy

Supplemental shorter readings will be handed out in class.

First Reading Assignment: EL, pp. ix - 28. Due Thursday January 18.

Writing Assignments: Writing assignments must be submitted when due except in extraordinary situations. Only a death in the family, a documented serious illness, or something similar will justify late submission. Work that is late without justification will receive a lowered grade. Requests for extensions must be made in advance, unless you can document inability to use a phone or any other mode of communication.

1. All papers should be crafted with great care and must be typed, in 12 point

font, double-spaced, with one inch margins. Make every word count. You should spend at least as much time revising and editing your papers as writing the initial drafts. When a paper has more than one page, the pages must be numbered (except for page one) and stapled (not clipped). Use no folders, binders, or cover sheets. Keep a photocopy of each paper until receiving your final course grade.

First Writing Assignment: Write a brief essay in which you address these questions:

What are (at least some of) the criteria you would use in deciding that someone has (or had) a beautiful mind? Why did you choose those criteria? What are some criteria you did not choose, but might have? Why did you exclude them?

This paper should be 2 - 3 pages long, i.e., approximately 500 - 745 words. Choose each word carefully. **Due:** in class on Thursday, **January 25**. Your paper should contain nothing that is not directly responsive to the questions above.

Questions: When you have questions, ask them. If you have none, you are not thinking hard enough.

Cell Phones: No cell phone is allowed in class. They must be off and out of sight.

Final Examination: The final examination has not yet been scheduled. When it is, the time and place will not be negotiable..

Contacting me: My office is Hall of Languages 430. My office hours will be announced in class. I typically see students mostly as needed by appointment. My email address is: sgcas@syr.edu. My mailbox is in the Philosophy Department Office, HL 541; the Department telephone number is 443 - 2245.

Help: Students who need disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, (315) 443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to me and review these accommodations with me. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodation as early as possible is necessary. For more information, see the Office of Disability Services, <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>.

Religious Observance: If you need to miss class for religious observance, you will have makeup opportunities if but only if you provide timely notification via MySlice.

Academic Integrity: (You must sign the statement on the last page.)

[The following statement is based on one developed by Prof. Kevan Edwards (SU Philosophy), derived from one developed by Prof. Stephen Stich (Rutgers, Philosophy).]

Here is an important text from the University:

“At Syracuse University, academic integrity is expected of every community member in all endeavors. Academic integrity includes a commitment to the values of honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and respect. These values are essential to the overall success of an academic society. Each member of the University community has a right to expect adherence to academic integrity from all other community members.

An individual’s academic dishonesty threatens and undermines the central mission of the University. It is unfair to other community members who do not cheat, because it devalues efforts to learn, to teach, and to conduct research. Academic dishonesty interferes with moral and intellectual development, and poisons the atmosphere of open and trusting intellectual discourse. “

For more information and the complete policy, see

<https://class.syr.edu/academic-integrity/policy/>

Here are several important reminders about plagiarism:

- Plagiarism includes working with another person and not citing that person’s contribution.
- Plagiarism includes using material that you have found on the internet without citing the source.
- Plagiarism includes borrowing ideas and treating them as your own, even when these ideas are expressed in your own words.
- It is almost always easy to avoid plagiarism simply by citing your sources. If you are worried that something you have written could be construed as plagiarism, you should err on the side of caution and indicate the source in a footnote.

Here are a few additional remarks to take seriously:

- Clear cases of plagiarism or cheating on a test/exam in this class will result in the student being assigned a failing grade in the course.
- Ignorance will not be accepted as an excuse for violating any of the university’s regulations. It is your responsibility to ensure that you adhere to the university’s policies.
- If you have any questions, ask. *No question is inappropriate.*

Now, carefully reread this handout (if you have not already reread it).

Sign and submit this statement:

HNR340: Beautiful Minds Spring 2024

I have read and I understand the above Statement about Academic Integrity. I agree to abide by its provisions.

Print name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____