

**WR150 J4:  
Understanding Someone's Point of View:  
Theory of Mind and Language**

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**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 9:30-10:30am and Thursdays 1-2pm, or by appointment

**Course Dates:** Tue, Thu

**Course Time:** 8:00am–9:15am

**Course Location:** CAS 314

**Credits:** 4 credits + 2 BU Hub Units (Writing; Research and Information Literacy)

**Course Description**

Although we are often encouraged to write what we know, the best research writing is motivated by our interest in the unknown: What do we want to discover, how can we discover it, and what are the most effective ways to communicate our discoveries? These questions will drive our work in WR 150. Building on WR 120 or its equivalent, this class will help you cultivate your writing and research skills through a range of assignments, including a scholarly research essay in which you will be responsible for identifying and refining a topic, devising research questions, and answering those questions by finding and using a range of scholarly and non-scholarly source. You will also translate your academic writing into genres targeted at different audiences. These experiences will help you practice and better understand the ways information is produced, disseminated, and used today. The specific topic of this section is about Theory of Mind.

We all remember Atticus Finch's memorable words in *To Kill Mockingbird*, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." But what does it mean to consider someone else's perspective? How do we come to understand that others' thoughts, memories, and intentions differ from our own? Are we born with this ability or do we acquire it through language? In this course, we will address these questions using cognitive psychology research and writings across genres. We will evaluate our ability to understand others' minds as reflected by everyday behaviors such as acts of empathy and communication. We will apply our understanding of others to how they read and comprehend texts and to the process of writing. We will read papers by leading psychologists such as Alan Leslie, Rebecca Saxe, Jill de Villiers, Steven Pinker, and Paul Bloom.

**Course Objectives**

You will develop your abilities to:

- strategically search for and select both scholarly and non-scholarly sources and read them with understanding, appreciation, and critical judgment
- express yourself orally and converse thoughtfully about complex ideas
- engage a range of sources in order to address research questions and to communicate findings in the form of responsible, considered, and well-structured written arguments
- produce clear, coherent prose in a range of genres and styles, using different media and modes of expression as appropriate
- plan, draft, and revise efficiently and effectively, and help your peers do the same by responding productively to their work
- reflect on how research, reading, writing, and editing practices differ for varied audiences, genres, and purposes

## Instructional Format, Course Pedagogy, and Approach to Learning

Although they differ in their subject content, all WR seminars share common goals and lead you through a sequence of assignments that emphasize a process of planning, drafting, and revising informed by feedback from your classmates and instructor. Seminar activities also give you opportunities to engage in focused scholarly inquiry and discussion.

In WR 150, you will undertake an extended research project related to our course topic. You will conduct individual and/or group research, exploring new ways to find, evaluate, and engage with information from different sources and in different formats. You will become better able to select and use information sources strategically to formulate and respond to research questions and to participate in the scholarly conversation about your topic. You will also become a more flexible writer by adapting your inquiry to address different audiences, integrating research into your writing in various ways to create new knowledge. Reflecting on your approach to writing and research will prepare you to adapt it to future occasions.

## Books and Other Course Materials

Turabian, Kate L., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010. (Required in all Writing Program classes; available for sale at the BU Bookstore.)

**Additional Readings:** Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard.

**Films and other media:** Instructions on how to get access to films and other media for the course will be posted on the course website.

**Writing Resources:** For additional writing resources check the course website and the Purdue Online Writing Lab.

## Courseware

Our class has a Blackboard site that contains the syllabus, assignments, and other course-related materials. You can log in to our Blackboard page at: <http://learn.bu.edu/>  
Digication: to create your writing portfolio; <http://bu.digication.com> to create an account

## Assignments and Grading Criteria

In order to make the most out of WR 150 for you and your classmates, you will do a good deal of reading and writing, and you will engage in a variety of class activities. Specific course requirements are to:

- Develop a sustained research inquiry in which you explore a range of information sources and modes of research to help formulate and engage with research questions
- Communicate about your research in two or more genres to two or more distinct audiences
- Prepare reading, drafts, and exercises as assigned so that you are ready to participate in class
- Attend at least one conference with your instructor
- Reflect on your learning throughout the term in a portfolio, including a self-assessment at the beginning of the term and a reassessment at the end of the term

You will be given a range of assignments in this course, including a self-assessment, various reading and writing exercises, four major assignments, and a final portfolio. Much of this work will not be graded, but that does not mean it is unimportant. Students who prepare diligently for class, participate

actively, and take the homework exercises and drafts seriously learn more and produce better work than those who do not.

**Exercises:** These are low-stakes assignments and activities that are designed to help you make progress on assignments that will be graded. You will do some of these exercises in class; others will be given as homework. They will not receive explicit grades, but you will receive credit for completing them on time.

**Major Assignments:** You will complete four major assignments: one short paper, one prospectus (research plan & annotated bibliography), a long research paper, and an op-ed. You will write at least one draft of each major assignment. These drafts will receive comments from me and your classmates. They will not receive explicit grades, but you will receive credit for completing them on time. Your course grade will be determined primarily by the quality of the final versions of these assignments.

**Oral Presentation:** As the semester advances, you will be asked to speak about your work with the class. You will receive feedback from your instructor and classmates, which you will apply to your spoken word assignment.

**Metacognition:** You will have opportunities throughout the semester to reflect on your reading and writing practices. The self-assessment you write at the beginning of the semester will take stock of your writing skills and establish personal goals you wish to pursue over the course of the semester. You will also reflect on your experiences and assess your progress as you complete each major writing assignment, ultimately leading to a final reflective essay in your portfolio.

**Portfolio:** At the end of the semester, you will submit a portfolio containing your self-assessment, major assignments (drafts and final versions), other supporting artifacts, and an introductory essay. The portfolio provides you with an opportunity to document and reflect on your development as a reader and writer over the course of the semester. Your portfolio will contain work that has already been graded. This work will not be re-graded in the portfolio. Rather, your grade for the portfolio will be based on those things that make the portfolio itself a coherent work: the introduction and additional framing (annotations, captions, etc.), the selection of and reflection on artifacts, and overall organization.

### Grading and Evaluation

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Major writing assignments:	<b>75%</b>
- Short Paper	10%
- Prospectus (proposal and annotated bibliography)	15%
- Research Paper	30%
- Op-Ed	20%
Portfolio	<b>10%</b>
Participation, in-class exercises, homework	<b>15%</b>

### Participation and Attendance

Since this course is a seminar, your regular attendance and active participation are essential both to your own learning and to your classmates' learning. Under ordinary circumstances, missing more than one week of class will lower your final grade. Missing more than two weeks of class may lead to failing grade the course. **Your final grade in WR150 may also be adjusted downward if your drafts or**

**peer critiques, both of which are required components of class participation, are late or missing – or if you are late to class chronically.** If you have a special obligation that will require you to miss several classes (e.g., religious observances, varsity athletics), please talk with me at the beginning of the semester. Missed conference appointments will be counted as absences.

### **Late and Missed Assignments**

All students may request a “no questions asked” extension on graded assignments if they email me 24 hours in advance before the deadline. Besides this, unless you make other arrangements with me in advance, graded assignments will be penalized by one-third of a letter grade for each day they are late. Please note too that we will regularly work with our exercises and drafts in class. If you are habitually late with your assignments, you will be unable to participate fully in the class, and this will affect your participation grade.

I am committed to providing you with timely written or verbal feedback on one draft of each major paper and written feedback and a grade on the final version of each major paper. You can generally expect my responses to your drafts within 1 week of your punctual submission of them; graded final versions will be returned to you within 2 weeks.

### **CAS Writing Center**

The CAS Center for Writing (100 Bay State Road, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, with a satellite location at Mugar Library, 1<sup>st</sup> floor) offers one-on-one consultations for students to discuss their work for WR courses with well-trained writing consultants. Consultants will work with you at any stage in your writing process, but they will not edit or correct your paper for you. They will work with you to help you do your own best work, so you should expect to be actively involved in your session. The center is a resource for all WR students. Whether you consider yourself to be a strong writer or a weak one, you can benefit from meeting with a writing consultant.

The CAS Center for Writing is open Monday through Friday. Hours for the current semester are posted on the website below. While the center accepts walk-in visits, you are strongly encouraged to reserve an appointment in advance. Because of the high demand for consultations, students are limited to one reservation per week. You may schedule a session online:

<http://www.bu.edu/writingprogram/the-writing-center/>

You may also schedule a session in person at the front desk of CAS Center for Writing or by calling 617-358-1500 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Cancellations must be made at least 9 hours in advance.

### **Academic Integrity**

In this class, we will discuss conventions for using and citing sources in academic papers. Cases of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the disciplinary procedures described in Boston University's Academic Conduct Code. All WR students are subject to the CAS code, which can be read online:

<http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>

### **Chosen Name and Gender Pronouns**

This course aims to be an inclusive learning community that supports students of all gender expressions and identities. While class rosters are provided to instructors with students' legal names, please let me know if you would like to be addressed by a different name than that listed in the

StudentLink. You are also invited to tell me early in the semester which set of pronouns (she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/their/theirs, etc.) you feel best fits your identity. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

### Office of Disability Services

I assume that all of us learn in different ways. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for accommodations that will satisfy both your learning needs and the requirements of the course. Whether or not you have a documented disability, BU provides many support services that are available to all students.

Disability Services (<https://www.bu.edu/disability>) is the office responsible for assisting students with disabilities. If you have a disability that interferes with your learning (whether visible or invisible, physical or mental), you are encouraged to register with this office. Disability Services will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations for your courses, such as additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, or note-taking assistance. This office will give you a letter outlining the accommodations you need that you can share with your teachers; specific information about your disability will remain private. If you have any questions about accommodation, or what constitutes a disability, I invite you to speak with me or to Disability Services.

#### Important Dates for Spring 2020:

<b>January 21, 2020</b>	Classes Begin
<b>January 27, 2020</b>	Official Registration Deadline for Continuing New and Transfer Students (Non-MET only)
<b>February 3, 2020</b>	Last Day to Add Standard Courses Last Day for Undergraduate Students to Change Standard Courses from Credit to Audit Status
<b>February 17, 2020</b>	Presidents' Day Holiday, Classes Suspended
<b>February 18, 2020</b>	Substitute Monday Schedule of Classes
<b>February 25, 2020</b>	Last Day to Drop Standard Courses (without a "W" grade) Last Day for Graduate Students to Change Standard Courses from Credit to Audit Status
<b>March 7 – March 15, 2020</b>	Spring Recess, Classes Suspended
<b>March 16, 2020</b>	Classes Resume
<b>April 3, 2020</b>	Last Day to DROP Standard Courses (with a "W" grade)
<b>April 3, 2020</b>	Last Day for Undergraduate Students to designate a course Pass/Fail
<b>April 15, 2020</b>	Last Day to Officially Take a Leave of Absence or Withdraw from the University
<b>April 20, 2020</b>	Patriots' Day Holiday, Classes Suspended
<b>April 22, 2020</b>	Substitute Monday Schedule of Classes
<b>April 30, 2020</b>	Last Day of Classes
<b>May 1 – May 4, 2020</b>	Study Period
<b>May 5-9, 2020</b>	Final Exams Period

**Course Schedule.** This schedule is intended as a blueprint and is subject to change based on the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and will be posted on Blackboard.

Date	Learning goals	Readings/viewings due	Assignments due
<b>Module: Course Foundations</b>			
In this unit, you will learn how research in this discipline works, from what is studied to how it is typically analyzed.			
Week 1			
<b>T 1/21</b>	Define course goals and Theory of Mind Exercise; Self-Assessment Pt. 1; Intro to Psychology; <i>Background Sources:</i> How was ToM discovered?		
<b>Th 1/23</b>	Coming up with good research questions; Methodology; ToM studied in psychology;	Course syllabus; Turabian Ch. 1; Psych 101: Experimental Design	HW: Self-Assessment Pt. 2 (300 – 350 words) as an email due 8pm 01/24  HW: Create an ePortfolio on digication and upload your self-assessment due 8pm 01/24
Week 2			
<b>T 1/28</b>  [M 1/27 Last Day to add WR courses]	ToM Experimental Tasks; <i>Exhibit &amp; Method Sources;</i> Summary and paraphrase;	Turabian Ch. 9 & 10  Assigned reading: you will be emailed a methods section of an empirical paper;	HW: Paraphrase of your assigned ToM task (max. 150 words)
<b>Th 1/30</b>	Argument Sources; <b>Assign Short Paper;</b>	Turabian Ch. 6; Bloom & German (2000);	HW: Bloom & German Worksheet
Week 3			
<b>T 2/4</b>	<i>Argument &amp; Method Sources;</i> Counterarguments; ToM & language; Discuss Saxe & Kanwisher (2003)	Saxe & Kanwisher (2003); Hale & Tager-Flusberg, (2003);	HW: Summarize the arguments in the readings
<b>Th 2/6</b>	Discuss Hale & Tager-Flusberg (2003); ToM in autism	Watch: Pixar’s Partly Cloudy	<b>HW: Short Paper Draft 1 due Thurs 2/6 at 8pm;</b>

Week 4 ***Conferences*** Fri (2/7) & Mon (2/10)			
T 2/11	ToM in autism; Genre and audience;	Strate (2003)	HW: Strate (2003) worksheet
Th 2/13	ToM in autism; Genre and audience; Peer-review of Paper 1	Strate (2003)	HW: Strate (2003) worksheet  <b>HW: Short Paper Final Version due Sunday 2/16 at 8pm;</b>
<b>Module: Research as Exploration</b>			
In this unit, you will conduct open-ended research to develop and shape a research question that will drive your project. You will design and propose an executable research project.			
Week 5			
<b>T 2/18 – No Class Monday Schedule</b>			
Th 2/20	ToM different names; Genre & Audience; Annotated Bibliography <b>Assign prospectus</b>	Pinker (2014): The Curse of Knowledge	HW: Worksheet HW: 300-word reflection on ToM in everyday life
Week 6			
T 2/25  [Last Day to Drop Courses without a "W"]	Finding sources & Annotated Bibliographies; APA Style	<b>Room 503 in the Mugar library</b> (take North elevator near Circulation Desk)	Library Session  HW: Create a RefWorks account  HW: Complete the Blackboard Module on Scope of Research Questions  HW: Brainstorm tentative topics for prospectus
Th 2/27	BEAM; Annotated Bibliography	HW: Bloom (2016): Against Empathy Chapter 1  BEAM Materials; Annotated Bibliography Materials;	<b>HW: Draft of Prospectus due Sunday (3/1) at 1pm</b>
Week 7 *** Group Conferences*** Mon (3/2) & Tue (3/3)			
T 3/3	Concrete Strategies to improve style; How to be Concise	Pinker (2014): Chapter 1	HW: Upload a passage of good writing
Th 3/5	Peer-Review of Prospectus; Style; Portfolio In-class work;	Bring Laptop Metacognitive Exercise; APA Style Citations; Portfolio work	Bring most recent draft of Prospectus; <b>HW: Prospectus due Friday (3/6) at 8pm</b>

<b>Week 8: Spring Recess: March 7-15 – No Class</b>			
<b>Module: Writing for an Academic Audience</b>			
In this unit, you will apply the best practices of writing and research—planning, drafting, integrating feedback, and revising—to communicate your research to an academic audience with authority and precision.			
<b>Week 9</b>			
<b>T 3/17</b>	Thesis Statement; <b>Assign Research Paper – extension of Prospectus</b>	Goodman & Prince (2019): Chapter 6 Review Thesis statements and Intros from past students	Recommended: Students seek out individual research help from librarians
<b>Th 3/19</b>	Structure & Organization; Peer-review of outlines;	Peer-review of outlines via email  NO CLASS!	<b>HW: Outline of Research Paper due 3/19 by 8pm via email</b>  <b>Peer-review of peer’s outline due 3/23 by 4pm via email</b>
<b>Week 10 ***Conferences***</b>			
<b>T 3/24</b>	Principles of style;	Born Good? – Moral Babies Video	Discussion Post on Blackboard about the video
<b>Th 3/26</b>	Paragraph Structure & Acknowledgement & Response		HW: Watch videos and fill put worksheet  <b>HW: Draft of Research Paper due Saturday (3/28) at 8pm</b>
<b>Week 11 ***Conferences*** Sun (3/29) &amp; Mon (3/30)</b>			
<b>T 3/31</b>	ToM & Language; Style	Pennebaker (2011): Chapter 2	Discussion Post (Body Paragraph) & Counterargument/Acknowledgment and Response Post
<b>Th 4/2</b> <i>[F 4/3 Last Day to Drop Classes with a “W”]</i>	Assembly Line Peer-Review; Constructive Feedback	Peer-review activity; Guest Lecture: Chelsea La Valle	
<b>Module: Writing for a Non-Academic Audience</b>			
In this unit, you will transition to a new genre or discipline for a new audience, highlighting how new contexts call for different kinds of argument, research, and prose style. Our specific genre: Op-Ed.			
<b>Week 12</b>			
	Genre & Audience		HW: Work on your papers!

<b>T 4/7</b>			
<b>Th 4/9</b>	Genre & Audience Style  <b>Assign Op-Ed inspired by your research</b>  <b>Assign Cover Memo</b>	Read through: <a href="https://commskit.duke.edu/writing-media/writing-effective-op-eds/">https://commskit.duke.edu/writing-media/writing-effective-op-eds/</a> & <a href="http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/hks-communications-program/files/new_seglin_how_to_write_an_oped_1_25_17_7.pdf">http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/hks-communications-program/files/new_seglin_how_to_write_an_oped_1_25_17_7.pdf</a>	HW: Find an Op-Ed & analyze  <b>HW: Final Version of Research Paper due on Thur (4/9) at 8pm</b>
Week 13			
<b>T 4/14</b>		Bloom: Baby in the Well & Op-ed	HW: Reflection on differences in style + strategies on how you will adopt the Op-Ed style
<b>Th 4/16</b>	Genre of Conference Abstracts and Posters  Genre of Presentation	Watch: Pinker Presentation of Sense of Style	HW: Reflection on the Genre of Presentation;  <b>HW: Draft of Op-Ed due Monday (4/20) at 8pm.</b>
Week 14			
<b>T 4/21</b>		Student Presentations on their Op-Eds	<b>HW: Draft of Op-Ed due Monday (4/20) at 8pm.</b>  <b>HW: Present on your Op-Ed</b>
<b>Th 4/23</b>		Student Presentations on their Op-Eds	<b>HW: Present on your Op-Ed</b>
<b>Module: Closing Reflection</b>			
In this unit, you will reflect on what you have learned in this course and consider how you can transfer your new knowledge to other areas of your studies and your life. •			
Week 15			
<b>T 4/28</b>	Reflection Exercises	Office Hours	<b>HW: Final version of Op-Ed due Tuesday (4/28) at 8pm</b>
<b>Th 4/30</b>	Final Portfolio and Wrap Up; Course Evaluations	Wrap Up	<b>HW: Reflection Paper/cover memo due at 10pm</b>

**References for assigned readings:**

Baron-Cohen, S., Leslie, A., & Frith, U. (1985). Does the autistic child have a “theory of mind” ?  
*Cognition*, 21(1), 37-46.

- Bloom, P. (2016). *Against empathy: The case for rational compassion*. New York, NY: Ecco. Chapter 1
- Bloom, P., & German, T. P. (2000). Two reasons to abandon the false belief task. *Cognition*, 77(1), B25–B31. [http://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277\(00\)00096-2](http://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277(00)00096-2)
- Doherty, M. (2008). *Theory of Mind: How Children Understand Others' Thoughts and Feelings*. Psychology Press.
- Goodman, A., Prince, Michael, Pidgen, Emmeline, & Pharand, Michel W. (2019). *Speaking of writing : A brief rhetoric*. Peterborough, Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press.
- Implicature. (2012). In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/implicature/#Spealmpl>
- Hale, C. M., & Tager-Flusberg, H. (2003). The influence of language on theory of mind: a training study. *Developmental Science*, 6, 346–359.
- Hogrefe, G.-J., Wimmer, H., & Perner, J. (1986). Ignorance versus false belief: A developmental lag in attribution of epistemic states. *Child Development*, 57(3), 567-582.
- Mant, C., & Perner, J. (1988). The Child's Understanding of Commitment. *Developmental Psychology*, 24(3), 343-351.
- Onishi, K.H., & Baillargeon, R. (2005). Do 15-month-old infants understand false beliefs? *Science*, 308 (5719), 255–258.
- Pennebaker, J. W. (2011). *The secret life of pronouns: What our words say about us*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Press/Bloomsbury Publishing. Selected Chapter.
- Pinker, S. (2014). *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century*. New York, NY: Penguin. Chapter: The Curse of Knowledge
- Premack, D., & Woodruff, G. (1978). Does the chimpanzee have a theory of mind? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1(4), 515–526. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00076512>
- Saxe, R. (2006). Why and how to study Theory of Mind with fMRI. *Brain Research*, 1079(1), 57–65. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.brainres.2006.01.001>
- Saxe, R., & Kanwisher, N. (2003). People thinking about thinking people: The role of the temporo-parietal junction in “theory of mind”. *Neuroimage*, 19(4), 1835-1842
- Schacter, D. L., Gilbert, D. T., & Wegner, D. M. (2011). *Psychology*. New York, NY: Worth Publishers. – Chapters 1 & 2
- Strate, L. (2003). Something from nothing: seeking a sense of self. *Etc: A Review of General Semantics*, 60(1), 4–21.
- Sullivan, K., Zaitchik, D., & Tager-Flusberg, H. (1994). Preschoolers Can Attribute Second-Order Beliefs. *Developmental Psychology*, 30(3), 395-402.
- Wellman, Henry M., & Wellman, H.M. (2014). *Making Minds: How Theory of Mind Develops*. Oxford University Press.
- Wellman, & Woolley. (1990). From simple desires to ordinary beliefs: The early development of everyday psychology. *Cognition*, 35(3), 245-275.

**IMPORTANT: Once you have read the entire syllabus, please sign and date the statement below. Please return the statement to me at the beginning of our second class meeting.**

**I understand all the policies of this course, including those regarding plagiarism.**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please print your name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you!**