Introduction
The college experience has been compared to a puzzle consisting of myriad individual pieces that must fit together to achieve a desired outcome. For example, there is life in and outside of the classroom, there is the identity of this university as a Jesuit, Catholic institution; there is freedom and responsibility and the need to balance academic and social life; there is the world of ideas in which to engage, friendships to make and conversations to pursue. The question is: how will the pieces of your college education fit together for meaning and success? How can the vision and the mission of this university help shape us into the persons, and communities that represent our best selves. (Courage to Know Website)

This freshman seminar is dedicated to providing a space of reflection, planning, and integration, designed to facilitate the transition to college and to make it more likely that you will use your time at Boston College well: that is, with a reasonable balance between your own development and your engagement with the world. Or, put differently, Courage to Know is designed to help you figure out what you are good at, what you are passionate about, and what the world needs from you.

Over the course of the semester, we will use both fiction and non-fiction material, mostly short readings, along with film and guest lectures:

- to examine individual learning styles and to reflect on how our own coping styles allow us to connect lovingly to others (or not);
- to study team and group dynamics, and to reflect on how those allow us to enhance our effectiveness in conjunction with others such as roommates, classmates, team and club members;
- to think about having organization-wide impact at BC and how such activities might prepare us for work life;
- to reflect on what the world needs, and how our talents and joys allow us to serve the world.

Students will be asked to perform a variety of tasks, including writing short weekly reflection papers based on evaluating assigned materials, and to attend a variety of activities on and off campus. **Attendance is absolutely essential.** Even more important, a fruitful conversation requires all of us to come to class prepared, to participate in a respectful and thoughtful way with others, to avoid the temptations of going for the “cool” answer over the reflective and more carefully reasoned responses.
“citizenship” in this seminar is so important, class participation will count for more than a quarter of the grade.

All course materials will be available through on-line reserves and on On-Line Reserves.

Other assignments will be weighted as follows:
12 essays @ 6% each = 72%
class participation = 28%

**Academic Integrity**

Guidelines for academic integrity in written work are posted on the Boston College website at

www.bc.edu/integrity

If you have any questions pertaining to academic integrity, please do not hesitate to ask me. If you are caught violating BC’s policies on academic integrity, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment and I will notify the freshman class dean, in accordance with the Boston College rules governing academic integrity.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1: Asking the right questions**

Perhaps the single most essential skill for getting the most out of college is the ability to ask fruitful questions - questions that reveal your thinking, that follow the logic of the work and that allow you to deepen your understanding of the material being presented to you. We will begin the course by reflecting on what makes a good question?

Reading: Fr. Michael Himes, “Fostering Vocational Discernment Among Undergraduates”

Reflection Paper (due the week after class discussion)

What are your most pressing questions at the moment? How many of them concern your ability to find your gifts and your path forward in life? How do you plan to build answers to those questions over the next four years at BC?

**Week 2: Individual learning styles**

People learn in a variety of ways (by reading, by listening, by observing, by experimenting, through reflection, through interaction), and according to different developmental logics. You can move forward on your own developmental pathway more quickly if you know where you are trying to go.

Reading: Dalmar Fisher, David Rooke, Bill Torbert, Personal and Organisational Transformations, Chapter 4 “Stages of Personal Development”
Reflection Paper: Please provide three vignettes of interactions you have observed in which participants seemed to illustrate (primarily) one of the action logics (opportunist, diplomat, expert, achiever/individualist, strategist). Each vignette should focus on a different action logic. At least one of the vignettes should be about YOU. What did you learn about your own action logics from this exercise? If you had it to do over, what would you do differently in the vignette about your own behavior (and/or what could the protagonists of the other two vignettes have done differently) to produce better results?

Week 3: Looking at intimate relations through the lens of learning logics


Reflection Paper: Please do NOT simply summarize the plots of each story. Bearing in mind your earlier reflection essay on “good questions” - what questions occurred to you when reading these three stories. If you were to lead a class discussion on these stories, what questions would you offer to prime the discussion?

How would you identify common themes linking these stories?

Do the learning logics help you to understand any of the protagonists?

Week 4: Team and Group Dynamics – you are never really alone.
From roommates (difficult or delightful), to study groups, to families, human beings live their lives among others and our efficacy is enhanced to the degree that we really do “play well with others.” BC is a laboratory for human connections – some of them healthy and life giving, some of them less so.


Reflection Paper: Try analyzing a difficult (or, alternatively, a particularly successful) interaction you have had recently with a friend, classmate, roommate, etc. Use the exercise on pp. 25-27 as your format. What did you learn about your own role in creating and resolving difficulties or successes? What might you try differently next time, in a group situation?

Week 5: Bringing it home to BC
Readings: Peggy McIntosh “The Knapsack of White Privilege” and

Reflection Papers: NB: the first two subjects are to be group reports. The last question is to be answered by each person individually – thus the assignments below will produce three separate grades.
Group Exercises: How are gender, race, class, age, sexuality and other privileges normalized at BC?
What changes of behavior on the part of students, faculty and administrators would be required to change this normalization
What will you, as an individual, do differently in the coming weeks, months, years?

Week 6: Groups, groups everywhere


Reflection Paper:
Can you identify the qualities that make each of the groups/teams at the center of each story effective or ineffective? How might the protagonists have resolved their differences or met their challenges in a better way (or, if the story illustrates effective coping, how might those strategies be transferred to other situations in your life?)

Week 7: Achieving Organizational Impact: You CAN change BC.
Individuals often feel able to change their own behavior or even team/group dynamics. But we often feel that we could never change a whole organization – one as large as BC or a government program or corporate employer. But organizations DO change over time, so somebody must be able to make a difference.

Readings: Bowles and Diehl “Leadership for Organizational Learning,”

Reflection Paper: Find two groups on campus you might be interested in joining (or have already joined). Using Bowles’ and framework (organizations are structures, politics, people, and symbols), describe the organizations you have observed – why are they, or are they not, a good fit for you?

Week 8: Organizations as Benign or Malevolent contexts
Readings: John Sayles “At the Anarchists Convention,” George Orwell, “Shooting an Elephant”

Reflection paper: Using the stories as a starting point, discuss two incidents from your own life - one in which the environment was such that you felt invited to be your best self, and one in which the environment seemed to invite your worst self to come forward. How could you intervene to make the second organization more like the first?

Weeks 9 and 10: Individual Conferences with me for each student

Week 11: Serving the world
Readings: Film - TBA
Reflection paper: What options do the various protagonists see for serving the world? How do they justify their strategies? Short of self-sacrifice (large or small), what causes are you passionate about and how do you plan to serve them?

Week 12: Serving the World, Part II
Guest Lecture: Maria Di Chiappari – Boston Community Center
Reflection paper: If you had to pick one cause for which you wanted to make a difference, beginning now, what would it be and what are some “next steps” you might take to make good on that commitment in the context of your BC education.

Weeks 13 and 14: Conclusion – or What I Plan to do with My College Years:
Reading: The Boston College Mission Statement

Student Presentations – Today is the first day of the rest of my college education – here’s what I plan to do over the next three and one half years. Please be sure to include study plans (major, minor, rationale for choosing among the core options, electives), summer plans (what kind of job or experience am I looking for), study abroad, service, internship, work, and extra-curricular activity plans. How will this allow you to answer Fr. Himes’ third question – what does the world need from me?

Additional Activities for Courage to Know:

Make a List of 10 things to try this year that will stretch you
Talk to a professor during office hours
Identify three things you want to do in Boston
Visit to the Library
Visit to Campus School
Visit to Robsham Theater
Campus Walk with Dean J. Burns
Visit to Career Center
Visit to Study Abroad office
Visit to the McMullen Museum
Christmas Concert or Ballet
Visit to St. Mary’s Hall
Dinner at Eve Spangler’s house.