

Professor Bruce Larkin  
Cowell College  
Fall 2007

University of California at Santa Cruz  
Th 2-3.10  
Cowell College 133

## Cowell 194

### Warrants: Why Should You Believe What I Say?

**Warrants** is an advanced undergraduate seminar exploring what it means to offer and assess 'reasons why' and kindred grounds for deciding whether to rely on another's claims. In short, 'why should you believe what I say?' or what anyone writes or speaks.

Our quest and discussions will turn on reading three books together: Wayne C. Booth, *The Vocation of a Teacher* (Sessions 2-4); James Boyd White, *When Words Lose Their Meaning* (Sessions 5-8); and (substantial selections from) James Madison, *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787* (Sessions 9-12). One convenient edition of Madison's *Notes* is that edited by Adrienne Koch. Please use that edition so that we can work effectively together in seminar when we examine the text. Please expect to bring to class the text for that session.

This is a 2-unit course, with class meetings and requirements roughly 40% of those of a full quarter-course. The course is open to juniors and seniors. Enrolment is limited.

*Schedule.* The first meeting of this class is **Thursday, 27 September 2007**. There is reading assigned for the second class: **please be prepared**. The last regular class is **Thursday, 6 December**. The class does not meet on Thursday, 22 November. There are **10 regular class meetings** 2-3.10 Thursdays in Cowell 133, **and an 11th and 12th meeting** in lieu of a final examination at the scheduled time for the final, Tuesday, 11 December, 4-6.30

Attendance is *required* at all 12 meetings and an attendance log is kept. Absence will be noted in the evaluation.

*Paper and Presentation.* An eight-page term paper is required. It is due to be handed in person to me at the beginning of the class meeting of 6 December. No late papers will be accepted. At the beginning of the last double session (Sessions 11-12) you will be asked to write a very brief explanation of the significance of a designated passage or exchange in Madison's *Notes* and how it is germane to the subject of *warrants*. Each class member will prepare on a different passage or exchange which I'll designate, and then present your explanation to the class, concisely and with reference to the text, in just a few minutes.

*Description.* A good starting point is Wayne Booth's question "is there a supreme art of inquiry through symbols that is designed ... to discover and refine, in critical exchange, our ends, our purposes, our values?". Booth then puts on the table "the art of appraising the warrants for assent in any symbolic exchange." [pp. 112-113] Booth, at one time Dean of the College of the University of Chicago, identifies himself as a teacher of English and a rhetorician, but he turns again and again to political speech and media reportage of political events.

The author of *When Words Lose Their Meaning*, James Boyd White, retired in 2007 as L. Hart Wright Collegiate Professor of Law at the University of Michigan, where he was also Professor of English and Adjunct Professor of Classics. [See his full résumé at [http://cgi2.www.law.umich.edu/\\_FacultyBioPage/facultybiopagenew.asp?ID=14](http://cgi2.www.law.umich.edu/_FacultyBioPage/facultybiopagenew.asp?ID=14) , or Wikipedia entry at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Boyd\\_White](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Boyd_White) ]. And Madison's *Notes* present political

speech and argument at a high-stakes occasion, the drafting of the US Constitution, pervaded by offering and contesting reasons.

At the same time, Booth searches for the central point of a 'liberal arts college.' Does it lie in learning to distinguish 'good reasons' from 'not-so-good reasons'? So this short course is not only about warrants, but also about what it means to teach and learn.

I was a member of the founding faculty of Cowell College, taught at UCSC from 1965 to 2004 and in 2006, and am Professor Emeritus of Politics. I've written *Nuclear Designs* and *War Stories*, and *Designing Denuclearization* (forthcoming). During Fall 2007 I'm teaching Politics 161 War, and Politics 190U Security, Disarmament, and Nonproliferation.

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