

Capstone course Spring 2025

Commitment and Freedom

Catherine Cornille
Office: Stokes North 433
Email: cornille@bc.edu

Description

In an age of “infinite browsing” and endless personal and professional possibilities, the idea of commitment to a particular person, religion, ideal, and vocational path seems more than ever countercultural. Why limit oneself to one option when a variety of attractive alternatives readily present themselves, or when one might continuously scan the horizon of possibilities without locking oneself in? Though freedom and commitment seem diametrically opposed, we will explore in this seminar the ways in which they may actually intersect, considering the ways in which freedom may lead to commitment and commitment may in turn generate freedom.

Textbooks

Pete Davis, *Dedicated. The Case for Commitment in an Age of Infinite Browsing*. New York: Avid Reader Press, 2021.

Gary Chartier, *The Logic of Commitment*. London: Routledge, 2018.

David Brooks, *How to Know a Person. The Art of Seeing Others Deeply and Being Deeply Seen*. New York: Random House, 2023.

Requirements

Participation: 20%

The seminar requires active participation on the part of all students. Participation may involve simple questions of clarification, critical reflections, or engaging the topics brought up by the leaders of the seminar.

Unexcused absences can result in an automatic reduction of the overall semester grade.

Leadership in guided discussion: 20 %

Starting week 2, each week’s seminar will be led by two students working together to prepare a summary of the readings and lead discussion. The students will prepare a list of comments and questions for the seminar to discuss. This may include particular quotes from the readings that were meaningful to them, and/or questions raised. In addition to purely academic questions and points of discussion, leaders ought to find ways to relate the readings to their own personal life and past experiences.

Weekly reflections: 20%

Every student will post a 1 to 2 pp. reflection on the readings of the week, focusing half of the reflection on general questions raised by the reading and half on whether and how the readings relate to their own past experience and personal values and ideals. The reflections

may agree with or push back on the readings. Authenticity and truth are more important than agreement.

Each student should read the posting of at least one other student.

The leaders for the week need not post, but should read all of the postings by other students.

Midterm exam: 20%

This written exam will ask some questions about the speech by Pete Davis, to be related to the materials discussed in class.

Final paper: 20%

The final paper will pick up themes of the course and tie them into a narrative that looks mainly at the future.

Syllabus

January 13

Introduction to Capstone and the course.

January 27

Infinite Browsing: pleasures and pains

Dedicated, pp. 1-44

February 3

Loneliness and Connection

How to Know a Person, pp. 97-159

February 10

The Counterculture of Commitment

Dedicated, pp. 45-106.

February 17

Fear and Freedom

Dedicated, pp. 106-172.

February 24

Commitment and Identity

The Logic of Commitment, pp. 20-55.

March 10

Pete Davis, "A Counterculture of Commitment" Speech

Midterm exam

March 17

Commitment and Vocation

The Logic of Commitment, pp. 56-66.

Dedicated, pp. 173-205

March 31

Commitment and Interpersonal Attention

How to Know a Person, pp. 3-70

April 7
Commitment and Self-giving
How to Know a Person, pp. 175-272

April 14
Religious Commitment and Religious Hybridity
C. Cornille, “Religious Hybridity and Christian Identity: Problem and Promise”

April 21
Commitment and Love
The Logic of Commitment, pp. 67-100.

April 28
Conclusions