**Instruction Plan: The Ghost of Bobby Dunbar**

\*First Year Seminar Student Learning Outcomes include: **Information Literacy, Integrative Thinking and Inquiry-Based Thinking**. This assignment incorporates all three of those outcomes.

Students: an important component to critical/integrative thinking is to be able to consider an issue from different points of view. This assignment will challenge you to do just that!

**Part One**

**Chapter One and Backstories as impediments to Critical Thinking**

* Administer Ch. 1 Quiz (chapter from FYS Critical Thinking text)
* Review Ch. 1 Quiz via PowerPt
* Listen to this portion of an episode of This American Life (TAL) where you will find other examples in which background stories sometimes do not mesh with critical thinking:

*This American Life* Ep. 293 (A Little Bit of Knowledge) Act One:  Small Thoughts in Big Brains - <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/293/a-little-bit-of-knowledge>

* Write a journal entry following the double-entry/dialogue journal approach we have discussed.  How might these stories and examples relate to others you have observed?  You don't have to look far to find urban legends and conspiracy theories that some believe without questioning or believe without thinking critically about the matter.  Sometimes we may be duped by stories forwarded to us by family and friends via email, Facebook or other social networks.  Sometimes we even see examples on the news reported as news and/or fact.  (Humorous examples - [Snowball the Giant Cat](http://www.snopes.com/photos/animals/bigcat.asp%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) and the [hero pig who saved a goat trapped in water](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/27/arts/television/pig-rescues-goat-and-the-video-is-really-cute-but-totally-faked.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0" \t "_blank).  Egregious examples that are politically motivated - President Obama was born in [Kenya](http://www.snopes.com/politics/obama/birthers/birthcertificate.asp%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).  George W. Bush and his administration were behind the [9/11 attacks](http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-201_162-20104377.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), not Osama Bin Laden.)

So, compare/contrast/relate the examples from TAL "A Little Bit of Knowledge" to examples from the Internet, social media, news, etc.

How long do journal entries need to be?  My typical teacher response:  As long as they need to be to work out your thoughts thoroughly and thoughtfully in writing.  What I can say is that a thorough and thoughtful journal entry is not a sentence or two.  So, shoot for a minimum of 300 words (which is about one typical typed/word processed page of writing in 12 point font).  Certainly, you may well exceed the minimum, and I hope you do!  Also, while this is not a formal piece of writing, running spell check and checking your grammar before submitting never hurts!  Please do it!

**PART TWO**

* Listen to the entire TAL episode (352) of The Ghost of Bobby Dunbar: [http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/352/the-ghost-of-bobby-dunbar](http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/352/the-ghost-of-bobby-dunbar%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

(FYI - Written transcript of the episode is available here: [http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/352/transcript](http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/352/transcript%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

Take notes as you listen.  Try to keep track of the characters involved in the story, particularly those involved when the incident happened in the early 1900s as well as the 21st Century descendants of the three families involved.  You might even want to map out the families or try to construct family trees or some kind of visual representation of who's who.

WIKI

Then, use your notes to contribute to our class Bobby Dunbar Case Wiki.  Use the Wiki to list the names of people involved in the case and when they were involved (1912 or in the years immediately afterwards  OR 1999 - present descendants who reopened the case and learned that the backstories they had been told were not what they had be led to believe).  Naturally, the first students to post may cover a particular character you had in your notes.  If you have something else to add, do so.  Otherwise, try to add new details, information, observations, questions, etc.

In a sense, it's almost as though as a class we are amassing the kind of documentation that Margaret Dunbar Cutright did (although not as extensive).

Each student should add to the WIKI at least two pertinent bits of information/observations based on your careful listening and consideration of the *This American Life* episode.

**PART THREE**

Gather more information about the case/story by investigating:

## *The Diane Rehm Show* - Tal McThenia & Margaret Dunbar Cutright: "A Case For Solomon: Bobby Dunbar And The Kidnapping That Haunted A Nation" August 14, 2012. <http://thedianerehmshow.org/shows/2012-08-14/tal-mcthenia-margaret-dunbar-cutright-case-solomon-bobby-dunbar-and-kidnapping-haun>

* *A Case for Solomon* – website for the book by Margaret Dunbar Cutright and Tal McThenia: <http://www.acaseforsolomon.com/about-the-book/>

The first letter of your last name will determine the family whose point of view you are assigned to represent:

Dunbar family – Last names A-G

Anderson family – Last names H-O

Walters family – Last names P-Z

Based on the individual/family assigned to you, complete a reflective journal entry that addresses the following points:

1. Name of character or family assigned to you:
2. From that character’s point of view and the character’s family members, what happened? What was this character’s role? Base your reflection in this part on the situation as it was in 1912 and the following trial and coverage. Write from a first person point of view – become that character.
3. Now, fast forward (in your thinking) to then end of this story as presented in this episode of *This American Life*. What has changed from your character’s and family’s point of view now that more facts are known? How do these new developments make you feel? Again, write from a first person point of view – be that character.

How long does your journal entry need to be? As long as it needs to be to address the points above thoughtfully. Aim for at least 300 words, but that’s just the minimum. Take the time you need to work out your thoughts thoroughly. This isn’t a formal essay; I want you to write freely. However, run spell check and check your grammar before submitting.

**Part Four**

Group Activity

The class will be divided into three groups based on the family whose perspective they considered in Part Three.

Group instructions:

* Groups meet to compare notes and journal entries and to review the TAL website featuring this episode, the Diane Rehm episode based on the story and the book’s website.
* Determine which half of each group will represent family members and viewpoints from 1912 and shortly thereafter, and determine which half will represent viewpoints from their family’s descendants 1999-present.
* Once each group is subdivided into 1912 vs present day, ask each student to determine what character/role s/he will represent in a whole class activity that will bring together all three families for a “conversation/debate” in the form of a talk show, moderated by the course instructor.
* The course instructor will moderate a “talk show” in two parts: 1. members of the Dunbar, Anderson and Walters families representing the 1912 viewpoint will discuss what happened from each of the family’s perspectives and 2. members of the Dunbar, Anderson and Walters families representing the descendants’ viewpoints from 1999 – present will discuss what they believe now that more information about the case is known. How do they feel now that the “backstories” they once believed have been challenged?