LIBS 400 – Liberal Studies Senior Seminar
Texas A&M University - Commerce – Fall Semester 2012
Online course

Instructor: Dr. Brad Klypchak
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Office Hours: Tuesday 10:00-12:00 or by appointment

Course Description: This course provides each student in the Liberal Studies Program with opportunities for making connections among his or her concentration, support fields, other educational experiences, and possible careers. A project reflecting a sound application of research methods, analytical frameworks, or performance criteria and a learning outcomes learning assessment will also be required. Must be taken in final semester.

Course Objectives:
1. to demonstrate the effective application of interdisciplinary scholarship and its theoretical underpinnings through designing and carrying out an independent research project.
2. to demonstrate the academic skill of researching a topic from multiple disciplinary fields and to then use the findings to inform one's project.
3. to generate and effectively communicate scholarly material which is informed by critical thought and the student's personal academic career.
4. to communally engage in the process of assessment, critique, and refinement as applied to the work of not only the student but of their classmates as well.

Evaluation:

Academic Autobiography:	5%
Future Applications Project:	5%
Annotated Bibliography I:	5%
Annotated Bibliography II:	5%
Proposal Plan:	10%
Progress Reports:	10%
Draft Final Project:	10%
Critiques:	10%
Revised Final Project:	25%
Reflective Review:	5%
Participation and Engagement:	10%

Grading System:
A (exceptional) = 100 - 90% B (good) = 89.99 - 80% C (average) = 79.99 - 70%
D (minimally sufficient) = 69.99 - 60% F (failure) = <60%

I am a firm believer in the formal significance to these letter grades and their meaning. As much as it pains us on occasions to realize, exceptional is a difficult realm to achieve. As well, average is just that, average – on a level with one's peers. Average does not equate to poor or a "bad" grade. In nearly all grading instances, I start from a mindset that one begins at middle "C" (75%), and one proves their relative ability to shift above, shift below, or remain at that mark with their work.

In a course such as this one, the ability to work with independence in a productive manner is crucially important. As well, the ability to problem solve and to synthesize are key skills to develop and demonstrate. I will continuously be looking for evidence that these qualities are being demonstrated and will evaluate with such considerations in mind.

Brief Assignment Explanations:

Academic Autobiography: As the first step in the process of developing a project which successfully reflects their LIBS degree, students will depict their academic career, their specific areas of academic interest, and their potential future pursuits as they fit with their scholarly experiences and/or professional aspirations.

Future Applications Project: As a second step to the process, the student will locate potential outlets for scholarly and/or professional connection to their respective field(s) of interest. Beyond locating where like-minded professionals gather and network, the student should also become aware of outlets where a project's results could be put to practical academic use. This might include outlets such as conference presentations, journal submissions, staged performance or exhibitions, or the like.

Annotated Bibliography Projects: Students will be required to locate source material from scholarly-sound sources on a topic which pertains to the student's particular interests. Specific attention will be also given to discovering a specific scholarly theory which may be applied to the further analysis/conceptualization of the chosen topic.

Proposal Plan: Part of the nature of the Senior Seminar course is to demonstrate the integrations and synthesis of the entire undergraduate experience. For a program like Liberal Studies, one inherently engages an interdisciplinary approach towards one's academic pathway. The proposal plan simply declares how your eventual completion of the Senior Seminar will effectively demonstrate such qualities: you declare what your project will be, how it is scholarly-sound in both methodological conception and connection to existing scholarly literature, and provide a timeline for when each component step to the project's execution will be achieved. The proposal plan establishes an effective plan for the student to follow throughout the duration of the term.

Progress Reports: Periodically throughout the term, students will be asked to inform the professor and/or their classmates as to their relative progress on their individual projects. Documentation of such progress at the given time may be requested. These reports are intended to serve as both reflections of what had been done on the project during the given time span, but also what needs to happen in the coming future for the project to reach its intended aims. Additionally, progress reports serve as a means to encourage self-reflection on the process of doing independent work.

Draft Final Project: A completed draft of the final project is to be distributed amongst the course community. This draft will then be reviewed by one's colleagues, allowing for feedback and offering outlets for where revision may well be in order thereby improving the project as a whole.

Critiques: One will provide feedback to the work of one's colleagues. The relative degree of effort and engagement contributed to the critiques offered will be assessed.

Revised Final Project: A completed final project, informed by the critiques and thoroughly demonstrating the intentions of the Senior Seminar, will be required.

Reflective Review: Independent projects are a process (much like achieving an undergraduate degree in and of itself). Here, the student is to reflect on the experiences of the term and the ways in which the project experience as a whole has come to achieving what initially was considered.

Readings

There is no required text for the course. There is a recommended text, particularly suited for those individuals less certain as to their immediate aims for the Senior Seminar.

Davies, Martin Brett. (2007). *Doing a Successful Research Project* 1st Edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
ISBN-13: 978-1-4039-9739-3 manufacturer list price $25.00
http://www.palgrave-usa.com/catalog/product.aspx?isbn=1403993793
companion web site: http://www.palgrave.com/sociology/davies/index.html

Academic Dishonesty

All coursework is to be an original work by the student and created specifically for fulfilling the requirements for this course. Plagiarism, cheating, or otherwise representing another's work or ideas as one's own without proper attribution will not be tolerated. It is the student's responsibility to:

1. research and write their own papers
2. give proper credit through documentation when using words or ideas of others
3. rely on their own knowledge when taking tests
4. refuse to give another student the opportunity to be dishonest

Any act of academic dishonesty will result in the automatic failure of the course and may be subject to further disciplinary action by the university.

"Attendance" policy, instructor's rights and expectations:

All courses demand active participation and regular attendance. Online courses offer no exception. Rather, it is imperative that the student do all assigned work in a timely fashion. In particular, this course demands the student to be independently dedicated to making positive progress throughout the term. As we are working toward a collective goal of not only accomplishing our own projects, but also aiding others in their pursuits, it becomes all the more important that each and every student stays actively engaged in the process. Failure to do so hurts not only the individual student, but the collective community as a whole.

> *Please be aware*: Full term online courses are typically already quite time-involved as the amount of outside library work, reading, and writing is greater than a traditional classroom course. One must stay active and disciplined with researching, writing, discussion board posting, and assignment management throughout the term.

All assignments are devised for the explicit purpose of offering educational benefit, be that academic growth, hands-on experience, development and display of critical thought, or expression of our academic selves. Coursework is to be completed as assigned and is to be turned in no later than the formal due date. Any work turned in after due dates will incur a penalty respective of its relative degree of tardiness (to a point of no credit whatsoever). Failing to complete assignments not only inhibits the immediate learning process but, again, ultimately hurts the overall learning community as discussion of the process and its results can prove insightful as well. Repeated failures to meet deadlines (be it missed assignments, periods of minimal progress, failure to engage with the course community, etc.) will constitute the equivalence of "absences" in a traditional classroom setting. Students with more than **three** "absences" may be dropped from the course. For additional information, see the *Student's Guide Handbook*, p. 37. Additionally, I reserve the right to assign a final course grade no higher than a "C" for students accumulating more than **three** "absences."

Course participation includes aspects of respectful, thoughtful, class interaction and engagement in group discussions. This course's expectations work in conjuncture with what the *Student's Guide Handbook* describes as Civility in the Classroom (see p. 36). Additionally, all students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Student's Guide Handbook*, Policies and Procedures, Conduct, pg. 42).

STATEMENT ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR

As stated in the student handbook: "All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment." (See Student Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct, for more information.)

Disability Accommodation Statement

Students with Disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library, Room 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu

For additional information, please see the *Student Guidebook*, p. 50 or visit the Disability Services website: http://web.tamu-commerce.edu/studentLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/facultyResources/default.aspx.

Course Outline:

Week 1 (8/27-9/3)

- general course information
- establishing expectancies and introducing options
- **Academic Autobiography due September 3 at 11:59 AM**

Week 2 (9/3-9/10)

- **Future Application Project due September 10 at 11:59 AM**

Week 3 (9/10-9/17)

- **Annotated Bibliography I due September 17 at 11:59 AM**

Week 4 (9/17-9/24)

- **Annotated Bibliography II due September 24 at 11:59 AM**

Week 5 (9/24-10/1)

- **Proposal Plan due October 1 at 11:59 AM**

Week 6 (10/1-10/8)

- Independent work

Week 7 (10/8-10/15)

- **Progress report I due October 15 at 11:59 AM**

Week 8 (10/15-10/22)

- Independent work

Week 9 (10/22-10/29)

- **Progress report II due October 29 at 11:59 AM**

Week 10 (10/29-11/5)

- **Progress report III due November 5 at 11:59 AM**

Week 11 (11/5-11/12)

- **Draft Final Project due November 12 at 11:59 AM**

Week 12 (11/12-11/19)

- **Critiques due November 19 at 11:59 AM**

Week 13 (11/19-11/26)

- Independent work

Week 14 (11/26-12/3)

- **Revised Final Project due December 3 at 11:59 PM**

"Week" 15 (12/3-12/14)

- **Reflective Review due December 10 at 11:59 PM**

final grades available via MyLeo on December 18

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

This course will be conducted via the eCollege system. Internet access is required. High speed internet connections are strongly recommended.

All course documents will be distributed via the document sharing area and will most likely be delivered in pdf format. The Adobe Reader program is available for free download at http://get.adobe.com/reader/ and is used to access pdf files.

Assignments are to be turned in electronically as attached documents via the eCollege dropboxes. Word processing programs such as Microsoft Word are recommended. Any additional technological requirement will be dependent on the student's specific project, its design, and its execution.

Additionally, the following hardware and software are necessary to use eCollege:

Our campus is optimized to work in a Microsoft Windows environment. This means our courses work best if you are using a Windows operating system (XP or newer) and a recent version of Microsoft Internet Explorer (6.0, 7.0, 8.0, or 9.0).

Your courses will also work with Macintosh OS X along with a recent version of Safari 2.0 or better. Along with Internet Explorer and Safari, eCollege also supports the Firefox browser (3.0) on both Windows and Mac operating systems.

It is strongly recommended that you perform a "Browser Test" prior to the start of your course. To launch a browser test, login in to eCollege, click on the 'myCourses' tab, and then select the "Browser Test" link under Support Services.

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

eCollege Access and Log in Information

This course will be facilitated using eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. To get started with the course, go to: https://leo.tamu-commerce.edu/login.aspx.

You will need your CWID and password to log in to the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact Technology Services at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamu-commerce.edu.]

Before beginning the course, it is strongly recommended that the student complete the eCollege tutorial in its entirety. This can be found upon entry into eCollege. Find the entry link in the "My Courses" area under the "Special Courses" heading.

Upon entering the course for the first time, read all course announcements and follow all instructions presented in those announcements.

In general, each week will have an introductory page specifically addressing the tasks and considerations intended for that period. Downloading materials from document sharing, contributing to interactive discussion with classmates (via the discussion boards located within the week's respective eCollege subsection), completing assigned tasks, and submitting those materials as attached documents (via the specific dropbox for each respective assignment) are representative of course tasks.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

I can be most easily contacted via Email (Brad.Klypchak@tamuc.edu). This will be the primary means of communicating with me throughout the term.

I do hold in-person office hours every Tuesday from 10:00-12:00 and welcome any additional in-person meetings. With advanced notice, I can most likely accommodate meeting at alternate times – simply email me with any such request.

The eCollege Virtual Office can also be used for contacting me. All communications via the Virtual Office are public. If you have private issues that need to be dealt with, contact me via email or arrange for an in-person meeting. I check email far more regularly than the Virtual Office so if timeliness is of concern, I recommend emailing me. Virtual Office inquiries will typically be responded to within 48 hours.

I will typically respond to email within 24 hours of receipt if not sooner. On weekends, I'm less likely to respond quite as quickly - a day of rest every once in a while seems a reasonable consideration. Similarly, if I am travelling/attending a conference, I may be slightly delayed in responding. Should travelling/conferences take place during the course of the term, an announcement will inform students of any such potential inconvenience.

The eCollege system works in association with the myLeo email system. If/when I send any email to all course members, it will be sent to whatever account is designated to the TAMU-C system. Please be mindful of checking your myLeo email on a regular basis.

All communications throughout this course should be respectful, thoughtful, and mindful of collegiality. The principles of "netiquette" are representative of the spirit of communal and collegial support this course embodies: http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html.

eCollege Student Technical Support

Texas A&M University-Commerce provides students technical support in the use of eCollege. The student help desk may be reached by the following means 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Chat Support: Click on *'Live Support'* on the tool bar within your course to chat with an eCollege Representative.

Phone: 1-866-656-5511 (Toll Free) to speak with eCollege Technical Support Representative.

Email: helpdesk@online.tamuc.org to initiate a support request with eCollege Technical Support Representative.

Help: Click on the *'Help'* button on the toolbar for information regarding working with eCollege (i.e. How to submit to dropbox, How to post to discussions etc…)