Donna Dunbar-Odom
Donna.Dunbar-Odom@tamuc.edu
Office: HL 224
Office Hours: Most mornings, I'll be in my office, but if you want to see me face-to-face, you should probably make an appointment. Otherwise, send me an email. I tend to check my email a lot during the day.
Phone: 903-886-5264 Fax: 903-886-5980

Overview

Academia is a foreign and strange place for outsiders. Crazy as it sounds, I still feel like an outsider in a lot of ways. Pretty much everything I learned about the culture of the academy, I learned the hard way. The bad part of that is that I still cringe when I think of some of them. The good part is that I survived pretty darned well. I'd like to do what I can to help you avoid some of the mistakes I made out of ignorance. This class is designed to make sure that once you complete your degree, you're prepared for the job market and for the job itself once you get it. In addition, you will become acquainted with some of the contemporary issues facing higher education.

I will try to answer your questions quickly and to check the Virtual Office a couple of times during my office hours, but I don't really like the Virtual Office much and don't quite understand how it's supposed to work. I mean, am I supposed to sit and obsessively refresh the page? If I'm going to be truly honest, I have to admit that I just forget its existence. So the best way to reach me quickly is email. During the week, I should be able to get back to you in 24 hours or so; I'm the head of Liberal Studies so I'll be on campus pretty much every week day, and I check my email all the time. On the weekends, I won't be as fast.

Please note that I will not be using the Gradebook function on eCollege because I don't find it useful. The kinds of assignments I make don't lend themselves well to numerical grades. At any time of the term, if you want to know where you stand grade-wise, just email me. I'll be happy to give you a ballpark grade. And if you're in any kind of trouble grade-wise, you can be sure I'll let you know.

Textbook:

Please get yourself an online subscription to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Anything else we read will be available online for free.

Course Objectives:

This course will make use of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* to provide a quick immersion in issues facing higher education, the job market, how insiders describe what

they do, and how you might map out your own career plan. The course objectives are that you:

- become acquainted with some of the contemporary issues facing higher education.
- understand the steps toward completion of your degree.
- have a career plan that will serve you when you enter the job market.

Grading Policy and **Criteria**

Your grade will be determined by your contributions to the discussion, a backwards calendar and completion plan, 1 position paper, an interview and job ad analysis essay, and a final career plan essay and presentation.

Percentages per Assignment	
20%	Position paper
20%	Backwards calendar and completion plan
20%	Analysis of job ads; Interview on search process
20%	Dream job – plan and presentation
20%	Discussion

Course Policies and Procedures

Classroom activities:
The work we do in this class depends on your "coming" each day, prepared to work. I count on you all to teach and learn from each other and to each be an important presence in our weekly discussions. One of the things I love about online and web-enhanced classes is that no one gets to sit back and be silent. Everybody gets to be a star, and no one person can dominate.

By the way, being prepared means not beginning your discussion until *after* you've read the assignment. Then jump in!

I will do everything I can to make the atmosphere of our discussion a comfortable one; I do not tolerate disrespect, so you can rest assured that at no time will your comments be ridiculed or made fun of by me or anyone else in the class. I want this to be a place where intellectual inquiry is the norm. And if at any time you feel that someone has exhibited disrespect, let me know immediately. We should be able to challenge each

other's reading and ideas in professional ways that stimulate discussion, not shut it down.

I'm always nervous that my humor will come across wrong or mean because I can be a tad on the sarcastic side. Let me know if you think I've been caustic or mean because I am never intentionally either of those--at least not online. :-) And forgive me if I use a lot of smiley icons.

Each day, I'll get us started in the Discussion arena with daily threads; then I'll expect you all to carry the conversational ball. I would also like you to contribute generative questions to keep that ball rolling. I don't expect you to respond to everyone's comments, but I do expect you to take some responsibility in seeing that everyone gets a response and that the responses are substantive. I will expect you to quote correctly and to spell your colleagues' names correctly.

I'm keeping the class as simple as possible because, quite frankly, I'm easily confused.

Since this is an August Mini class, I expect you to be online pretty much every day. It's short but intense. Check the discussion frequently because I will likely be adding questions and making changes to existing changes as needs arise.

The Assignments:

Please upload all assignments to the Doc Sharing function in eCollege AND send each to me in an email.

I expect you to read your colleagues' responses to these assignments and we will make these texts part of our discussion.

Backwards Calendar and Completion Plan:

Basically a two-part assignment (one part calendar, the other part narrative), this assignment requires that you learn the Graduate School's deadlines so that you can manage your time most efficiently. Decide what semester you want to graduate, and then move backwards.

The calendar can be a typed list or you can download a calendar template and use that if you like. (I have no good suggestions for this; you'll have to just noodle around on the internet.) The idea is that working backwards from the date you want to graduate, you can set deadlines and give yourself a realistic idea of what you'll have to get done each semester to meet that goal.

The narrative part of your assignment is more flexible. How are you going to make it happen? How are you going to get your family and friends to understand that you're not

available 24/7? How will you keep your kids occupied? (My dissertation could not have been written without the help of Mr. Rogers, Big Bird, and all of the programming on Nickelodeon; she watched a LOT of television at that time and turned out just fine.) How will you keep your backside IN YOUR CHAIR?

Note: committee members have to have at least 2 weeks to read dissertation drafts, and you have to have time to do the revision they ask for.

Note: faculty members may not be on contract in the summer.

Note: the Graduate School's deadlines ALWAYS come as a shock.

The calendar helps you to take as much control of this process as you can. I've included some websites that might be useful:

http://taproject.rutgers.edu/publications/taptalk/articles/reverse_calendar.php

www.unl.edu/.../Doctoral_**Backward_Calendar**_and_Tasks.docx

http://www.ehow.com/how_8628220_write-timetable-dissertation.html

Position Paper:

We will be reading and discussing articles and opinion pieces in the *Chronicle*. Please pick one issue being addressed that affects you in some way. You may write in the form of a letter to the editor or as your own opinion piece or as a brief essay. The idea is to insert yourself into the conversation, attempting to match the tone and discursive style of the *Chronicle* as much as possible while still sounding like you.

In your introduction, please make sure that we know to what in the *Chronicle* you're responding and that your position is clearly stated. Your paper should be no longer than 3 double-spaced pages. You might consider using something from the Facts and Figures section of the Chronicle as source material, and you likely want to look at the archive (which you'll have access to as subscriber). Do not go outside the *Chronicle* for research. This paper is due Friday, August 15.

Interview essay:

I want you all to be as familiar as you can with the academic professional process so it will be as demystified as possible. When I went on my first job interview, I knew next to

nothing and had no mentors to clue me in. I did not get that job, and I don't blame the committee that didn't hire me. So your job is to interview an academic about the job search process.

We will brainstorm some good questions together, but one I would definitely ask is a variation of "What do you wish you'd known then that you know now". I would also ask, "What's the smartest thing you did to get through the process?" Of course, you want to know what their search process involved, how they prepared for it, etc.

Your essay should be no more than **4 pages** and should be crafted into multiple-paragraph form. In other words, **no Q&A format**. I want you to select from the information you glean rather than giving me a data-dump of information. And, yes, the interview can be conducted via email, but some people will prefer face-to-face—provide them with an option if it's at all possible.

By the way, if you're interested in working at a particular school, this might be a good chance to connect with someone there by requesting an interview. One of my best friends is a vice president of a community college in the northeast; she wants to be a president. She's not ready to make the move yet, but she's conducting informational interviews among some of the sitting presidents she knows to learn as much as possible. So this is not a bizarre practice. As long as you are clear that it will be no more than 8 or so questions and that it's for a doctoral-level practicum, I don't think you'll have a hard time convincing a stranger to talk with you. Also, consider how you can tie what you ask here to help you prepare your career plan.

A caveat: A lot of people love to tell horror stories about their experiences. Do not get discouraged by this. For one thing, people love to make themselves look like they had it WAY harder than anyone else. For another, they survived it, and so will you. As a professor of mine at Pitt said to me, "We all have stories. Move on."

This assignment is due Monday, August 18.

A career plan

The first part of this assignment asks that you look closely at the ads in the *Chronicle*, finding jobs you can see yourself preparing and applying for. The first part of your paper should provide some analysis of how these ads are structured and what they are asking for. The purpose of this assignment is for you to take the time to detail how you can make getting your dream job a reality. What do you need to do to make yourself the ideal candidate for the dream job you've identified. Feel free to dream big, but stay anchored in reality.

If your greatest hope is to teach at a community college, what sorts of things can you be doing now to point yourself in that direction? If you hope to be teaching literature at a

small 4-year school, what can you do to try to make that happen? What do you need to know? What will make you most marketable? What are the best ways to network? Feel free to integrate some of the information you gleaned in your interview if that proves useful to you.

We'll talk over a variety of strategies together. And I know that, among us, we have contacts among people who are currently working at community and small 4-year colleges. So let's use each other as resources.

Your plan can be in a list form or in narrative form, and length is up to you—although don't make it too long. You have to keep yourself a little flexible.

This assignment is due on the last day of class, Thursday, August 21.

Policies:

Attendance: "Attendance" is mandatory. Don't disappear. I will not let you make up the work unless you experience something dire--and I don't wish that on anyone. If something is going on that's getting in the way of your class time, please let me know.

Late assignments: You must keep up with the reading. Since we only have 2 weeks, I will not accept late assignments. If you experience truly exceptional circumstances (e.g. car wrecks, fires, and the like--God forbid), please contact me immediately.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the unauthorized use of someone else's work. I try to come up with distinctive assignments that make it difficult to find appropriate "matches" on the internet or on file here at the university, but I also know that's not always possible. If a find a student has intentionally made use of another's work without giving that person credit, that student will fail the course.

It will be tempting to cut and paste from the internet for some of your responses. Do not. To do so without correct citation will result in an F for the entire course.

If at any time you find yourself overwhelmed by the work required or you find yourself confused, please contact me. Don't feel miserable all by yourself. Share the misery with me!

Americans with Disabilities Act Statement: Requests from students with disabilities for reasonable accommodations must go through the Academic Support Committee. For more information, please contact the office of Advisement Services, BA 314, 903/886-5133. You should also please let me know so that I may help facilitate the request.

Deportment: Apparently student behavior in some classes has deteriorated to the point that we have been asked to include statements about appropriate behavior in our

course descriptions. Therefore, it is expected that you will be a civil and productive member of this class. Disruption of the class or the interference with other students' learning will not be tolerated. If you are unsure what is expected of you, please email me immediately. As I said above, disrespect of one's colleagues or of me will not be tolerated.

SYLLABUS

Friday, August 8 – Introductions; overview, academic writing process, discuss backwards calendar and completion plan. Check Discussion for Week 1.

Saturday, August 9 –Today we're talking about getting through the dissertation and writing a lot. Check out some of these websites and report your findings to the rest of us in the discussion:
http://www.aurora.edu/academics/programs-majors/graduate/edd/dissertation.html#axzz228q41YCm

http://www.cgu.edu/pages/880.asp
http://www.sonjafoss.com/html/overview.html
http://www.gradshare.com/advice.html?id=609
http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/dissertations/
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJ5l4j78OiY
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohdU6RuTmMw&feature=related
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yUQ4H5d8fo&feature=related
http://www.lifeessentialscoaching.com/strategies.html

If any of these links are dead, please let us know.

Please consult the Graduate Handbook available on the website for the Department of Literature and Languages. It may need a little updating, but the information is there to tell you the steps. Also go to the Graduate School's website where you can find a dissertation timeline:
http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/documents/thesis--dissertation-services/dissertationtimeline.pdf#Dissertation%20Timeline

Check Discussion for Week 1.

Sunday, August 10 – Begin reading the articles listed under Home, News, and Opinions and Ideas (see bar at top of the home page) of the current issue of the Chronicle; begin thinking about which current issues interest you and what issue you may want to write about. Continue your discussion of what you're finding on the websites for Saturday, and please add some websites of your own.

Monday, August 11 –Backwards calendar due. (Note: if you don't make reference to the dissertation timeline on the Graduate School's website [link above], I'll scold you.) Keep reading. Check Discussion for Week 2.

Tuesday, August 12- Select one of the articles in the Home, News or Opinions and Ideas sections of the *Chronicle*; provide a brief summary; respond briefly but substantively. (In other words, don't respond that it's interesting or good or smart or whatever; do some analysis.) Check Discussion for Week 2.

Wednesday, August 13 –Read Facts & Figures section of Chronicle. Check Discussion for Week 2.

Thursday, August 14 –Read Jobs Section of Chronicle and Read First time on the Market section (http://chronicle.com/section/First-Time-on-the-Market-/146/)
Check Discussion for Week 2.

Friday, August 15 - Getting a job and (ideally) keeping a job; discuss position papers; discuss interview and job analysis assignment. Position paper due.

Saturday, August 16 - Read Graduate Students and Academic Culture under the Advice section. Check Discussion for Week 2.

Sunday, August 17 – Work on interview and job ad analysis assignment.

Monday, August 18 – Interview essay assignment due. Check Discussion for Week 3.

Tuesday, August 19 –Read Manage Your Career under the Advice section. Check Discussion for Week 3.

Wednesday, August 20 – Skim through (reading articles at random) *Inside Higher Ed* (free at http://www.insidehighered.com/). Check Discussion for Week 3.

Thursday, August 21 –Final discussion. Career plan due.