

LIBS 300 – Introduction to Liberal Studies
Texas A&M University - Commerce – Summer I 2015
Online course

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Office Hours: Tues, Wed, & Thurs 11:00-1:45 or by appointment

Course Description: An introduction to interdisciplinary study and the Liberal Studies major. Through readings in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and sciences, students will develop an appreciation and understanding of disciplinary perspectives. Emphasis on learning how to conduct efficient and effective information searches. Students will develop an Individual Education Plan.

Course Objectives:

1. to demonstrate and communicate an understanding of the core concepts of interdisciplinary scholarship and its theoretical underpinnings through a variety of written and discussion-based activities
2. to encounter and engage in readings from a variety of disciplines as a means for generating synthesis, analysis and communication of critical thought
3. to demonstrate the academic skill of researching a topic from multiple disciplinary fields through creating an annotative bibliography
4. to apply the principles of interdisciplinary scholarship by reflectively and informatively contributing to dialogues on a variety of topics
5. to construct a personalized plan of study informed by interdisciplinary academic principles

Evaluation:

Individual Education Plan Project: 10%

Reading Responses: 15%

Annotated Bibliography: 15%

Research Proposal Draft: 10%

Peer Review Critiques: 10%

Revised Research Proposal Draft: 20%

Reflective Review: 10%

Participation/Discussion Board: 10%

Grading System:

A (exceptional) = 100 - 90% B (good) = 89 - 80% C (average) = 79 - 70%
D (minimally sufficient) = 69 - 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 comparable and respectfully achieving 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. This is particularly true of participation and reading response grades.

Brief Assignment Explanations:

Individual Educational Plan Project: The ultimate aim of the course is to demonstrate one's capability to do interdisciplinary scholarship. The LS degree plan requires students to develop a course of study in which the student chooses their area of study and develops a rationale for their following coursework in relation to that topic. This project serves as an introduction to this process.

Reading Responses: As a course objective is tied to engaging with a variety of academic approaches, there will be a considerable amount of reading involved, particularly in the first half of the term when the general foundations of liberal studies are being explored. From week 1 through week 3, a brief response paper will be required. In this forum, one actively practices the tactics of critical thought. One can express opinions, challenges, insights, revelations, confusions, and criticisms stemming not only from the singular articles/chapters but also their collective relationship to other readings or material covered in weeks prior.

Annotated Bibliography Project: Students will be required to utilize online databases for locating source material on a topic which pertains to his/her particular interest. By completing an annotated bibliography of journal articles from diverse areas of scholarship, the student will engage with a variety of styles of academic research while also establishing a scholarly foundation reflecting their Individual Educational Plan and informing their eventual Research Proposal Project.

Research Proposal Project: Students will devise and propose a research topic and the ways in which that topic would be explored interdisciplinarily. An initial first draft of the Research Proposal will be distributed amongst the course community for peer review. Feedback derived from peer reviews will then inform a revised final draft.

Peer Review 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.

Reflective Review: Given the nature of an introductory course, there should likely be discovery and development of new considerations of the topic matter at hand. Here, the student is to reflect on the experiences of the term and the ways in which liberal studies functions as an academic practice and as a scholarly pursuit.

Participation/Discussion Board: Being online, the discussion board acts as the site for communication, discussion, and interactive engagement. Students are expected to dialogue in a way that provokes, clarifies, challenges, and enlightens the course community. In these communications, the concepts of a liberal studies approach to higher education will be practiced and varying interpretations, particularly in relation to the course readings, will be shared.

Additional considerations of a student's relative level of engagement and academic integrity will also be made across all aspects of the course including but not limited to completion and quality of tasks and assignments, communications, following instructions and guidelines, and accessing materials. As mentioned previously, all students will start as receiving 75% and will be assessed as to their respective demonstration of proficiency/deficiency/adequacy across the term.

Readings

Course readings will be available via eCollege in the document sharing area. A full bibliography of the course readings is available at the end of this syllabus.

All readings are to be completed during the respective week they are assigned, and their material will be needed on exams. On occasion, students may be asked to complete additional readings beyond those listed on the syllabus. Should this be the case, sufficient time and access to such readings will be provided.

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, the benefits from discussion specifically depend on each student's respective preparation and distinctive contribution. 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 as an attached document via the eCollege dropbox** 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).

ADA 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@tamuc.edu

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook). Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Course Outline:

Note: The course outline is only a guideline. It is subject to change based on discussion, current events, or other such influences.

Week 1 (6/8-6/15)

- general course information
- general introduction to liberal studies and critical thinking
- academic paradigms and interdisciplinary tenets
- readings:
 - Ruggiero (14-28)
 - Nosich excerpts (87-97; 102-107; 113-122; 124-127)
 - Deitering & Gronemyer (489-503)
 - Davies (19-25)
- **Reading response #1 due June 15, 11:59 AM**

Week 2 (6/15-6/22)

- navigating interdisciplinarity – paradigms and critical thinking applied to the research process
- readings:
 - Szostak (27-49)
 - Omoyibo and Oboro (320-325)
 - Broom (16-27)
 - Lee (84-101)
 - Barrett (27-31)
- **Individual Education Project due June 18, 11:59 AM**
- **Topic for Annotated Bibliography Project to be emailed to Doc Brad no later than June 20**
- **Reading response #2 due June 22, 11:59 AM**

Week 3 (6/22-6/29)

- doing interdisciplinary studies – generating a topic
- readings:
 - Jacoby and Barr (18-25)
 - Berg (378-407)
- **Annotated Bibliography Project: due June 27, 11:59 AM**
- **Reading response #3 due June 29, 11:59 AM**

Week 4 (6/29-7/6)

- doing interdisciplinary studies – getting it written and reviewed
- readings:
 - Graff (81-87)
 - VanDeWeghe (95-99)
 - Yang (1202-10)
- **First Draft of Research Proposal Project due July 2, 11:59 AM**
- **Peer Review of Research Proposal Projects due July 6, 11:59 AM**

"Week" 5 (7/6-7/9)

- bringing it together as a whole
- readings:
 - none
- **Revised Research Proposal Project due July 8, 11:59 PM**
- **Reflective Review due July 9, 11:59 PM**

final grades available via MyLeo on July 14

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

- To fully participate in online courses, you will need to use a current, Flash enabled browser. For PC users, the suggested browser is Internet Explorer 9.0 or 10. For Mac users, the most current update of Firefox is suggested.
- You will need regular access to a computer with a broadband Internet connection. The minimum computer requirements are:
 - 512 MB of RAM, 1 GB or more preferred
 - Broadband connection required courses are heavily video intensive
 - Video display capable of high-color 16-bit display 1024 x 768 or higher resolution
- You must have a:
 - sound card, which is usually integrated into your desktop or laptop computer
 - speakers or headphones.
- Depending on your course, you might also need a:
 - webcam
 - microphone

For courses where interactive tools are used, like VoiceThread or ClassLive Pro, headphones are suggested for use with recording and playback. We recommend a webcam with an integrated microphone, such as the Microsoft LifeCam Cinema. All devices should be installed and configured before class begins.

- Both versions of Java (32 bit and 64 bit) must be installed and up to date on your machine. Java can be downloaded at: <http://www.java.com/en/download/manual.jsp>
- Current anti-virus software must be installed and kept up to date.
- You will need some additional free software for enhanced web browsing. Ensure that you download the free versions of the following software:
 - Adobe Reader
 - Adobe Flash Player
- At a minimum, you must have Microsoft Office 2013, 2010, 2007 or Open Office. Microsoft Office is the standard office productivity software utilized by faculty, students, and staff. Microsoft Word is the standard word processing software, Microsoft Excel is the standard spreadsheet software, and Microsoft PowerPoint is the standard presentation software. Copying and pasting, along with attaching/uploading documents for assignment submission, will also be required. If you do not have Microsoft Office, you can check with the bookstore to see if they have any student copies.
- For additional information about system requirements, please see:
<https://secure.ecollege.com/tamuc/index.learn?action=technical>

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

Pearson LearningStudio (eCollege) Access and Log in Information

This course will be facilitated using Pearson LearningStudio, the learning management system used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. To get started with the course, go to: <http://www.tamuc.edu/myleo.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@tamuc.edu.

It is strongly recommended that you perform a “Browser Test” prior to the start of your course. To launch a browser test, login to Pearson LearningStudio, click on the ‘myCourses’ tab, and then select the “Browser Test” link under Support Services.

Pearson LearningStudio Student Technical Support

Texas A&M University-Commerce provides students technical support in the use of Pearson LearningStudio.

Technical assistance is available 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week.

If at any time you experience technical problems (e.g., you can't log in to the course, you can't see certain material, etc.) please contact the Pearson LearningStudio Help Desk, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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 a Pearson LearningStudio Representative.
- **Phone:** 1-866-656-5511 (Toll Free) to speak with Pearson LearningStudio Technical Support Representative.
- **Email:** helpdesk@online.tamuc.org to initiate a support request with Pearson LearningStudio Technical Support Representative.

Accessing Help from within Your Course: Click on the 'Tech Support' icon on the upper left side of the screen inside the course. You will then be able to get assistance via online chat, email or by phone by calling the Help Desk number noted below.

Note: Personal computer problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, an Internet cafe, or a bookstore, such as Barnes & Noble, etc.

Policy for Reporting Problems with Pearson LearningStudio

Should students encounter Pearson LearningStudio based problems while submitting assignments/discussions/comments/exams, the following procedure **MUST** be followed:

1. Students must report the problem to the help desk. You may reach the helpdesk at helpdesk@online.tamuc.org or 1-866-656-5511
2. Students **MUST** file their problem with the helpdesk and obtain a helpdesk ticket number
3. Once a helpdesk ticket number is in your possession, students should email me to advise me of the problem and to provide me with the helpdesk ticket number
4. At that time, I will call the helpdesk to confirm your problem and follow up with you

PLEASE NOTE: Your personal computer/access problems are not a legitimate excuse for filing a ticket with the Pearson LearningStudio Help Desk. You are strongly encouraged to check for compatibility of your browser **BEFORE** the course begins and to take the Pearson LearningStudio tutorial offered for students who may require some extra assistance in navigating the Pearson LearningStudio platform. **ONLY** Pearson LearningStudio based problems are legitimate.

Internet Access

An Internet connection is necessary to participate in discussions and assignments, access readings, transfer course work, and receive feedback from your professor. View the requirements as outlined in Technology Requirements above for more information.

myLeo Support

Your myLeo email address is required to send and receive all student correspondence. Please email helpdesk@tamuc.edu or call us at 903-468-6000 with any questions about setting up your myLeo email account. You may also access information at <https://leo.tamuc.edu>.

Learner Support

Go to the following link [One Stop Shop](#)- created to serve you by attempting to provide as many resources as possible in one location.

Go to the following link [Academic Success Center](#)- focused on providing academic resources to help you achieve academic success.

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Reading list – Summer I 2015

Week 1

- Davies, M. (2007). *Doing a Successful Research Project* (pp. 19-25). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Deitering, A. & Gronemyer, K. (2011). Beyond peer-reviewed articles: Using blogs to enrich students' understanding of scholarly work. *Libraries and the Academy*, 11 (1), 489-503.
- Nosich, G. (2005). *Learning to Think Things Through* (2nd Ed.) (pp. 87-97, 102-7, 113-122, 124-7). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Ruggiero, V. (2004). What is critical thinking?. In *Beyond Feelings: A Guide to Critical Thinking* (7th Ed.) (pp. 14-28). New York: McGraw Hill.

Week 2

- Barrett, J. (2001). Interdisciplinary work and musical integrity. *Music Educators Journal*, 87(5), 27-31.
- Broom, C. (2011). From critical thinking to critical being. *ENCOUNTER: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*, 24(2), 16-27.
- Lee, J. (2000). Critical thinking and science. In *The Scientific Endeavor: A Primer on Scientific Principles and Practices* (pp. 84-101). San Francisco: Benjamin Cummings.
- Omoyibo, K. & Oboro, O. (2012). Doing sociological research: Standard methods and fallacies and methodological pluralism. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 28(3), 320-325.
- Szostak, R. (2003). "Comprehensive" curricular reform: Providing students with a map of the scholarly enterprise. *Journal of General Education*, 52(1), 27-49.

Week 3

- Berg, B. (2009). Writing research papers: Sorting noodles from the soup. In *Qualitative Research Methods of the Social Sciences*, 7th ed. (pp. 378-407). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Jacoby, J. & Barr, L. (2007). *Research navigator.com guide: Sociology* (pp. 18-25). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Week 4

- Graff, P. (2009). Approaching authentic peer review. *The English Journal*, 98(5), 81-87.
- Van De Weghe, R. (2004). Research matters: "Awesome, Dude!" Responding helpfully to peer writing. *The English Journal*, 94(1), 95-99.
- Yang, Y (2010). Students' reflection on online self-correction and peer review to improve writing. *Computers & Education*, 55, 1202-10.

Week 5

No assigned readings