LIBS 300 – Introduction to Liberal Studies
Texas A&M University - Commerce – Spring Semester 2014
online course

Instructor: Dr. Brad Klypchak
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> Office Hours: Tues and Thurs 10:00-12:00, Wed 11:00 – 1:00, 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:	10%
Exam:	10%
Annotated Bibliography:	15%
Research Proposal Draft:	10%
Peer Review Critiques	10%
Revised Research Proposal Draft:	15%
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 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 6, a brief response paper every second week will be required. In this forum, 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 for the given two week period or the material experienced in weeks prior.

Exams: During week 7, a timed examination will be given to assess mastery of the course's core concepts. All topics build upon one another. As a result, the exam will be cumulative in nature. Exams will include short answer and essay-based questions and will consist of questions asking students to demonstrate their mastery of the course material through the critical thinking skills of analysis, reflection, evaluation, synthesis, and application.

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 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 project/paper in which a plan of future coursework or a collection of academic literature derived from diverse disciplines will be presented as being effective in gaining a critical understanding of a particular topic, concept, practice, or behavior. 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 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 equivalent 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).

Disability Accommodation Statement

For additional information, please see the *Student Guidebook*, p. 50 or visit the Disability
Services website:
http://www.tamuc.edu/CampusLife/CampusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/default.aspx

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 (1/13-1/22)
- general course information
- general introduction to liberal studies and critical thinking
- readings:
  - Ruggiero (14-28)
  - Nosich excerpts (87-97; 102-107; 113-122; 124-127)

Week 2 (1/22-1/29)
- academic paradigms and interdisciplinary tenets
- readings:
  - Szostak (27-49)
  - Mittwede (23-40)
- **Reading response #1 (covering weeks 1 and 2) due January 29, 11:59 AM**

Week 3 (1/29-2/5)
- navigating interdisciplinarity – modernism, postmodernism, and the research process
- readings:
  - Mahoney & Schamber (234-247)
  - Omoyibo and Oboro (320-325)
- **Individual Education Project due February 5, 11:59 AM**

Week 4 (2/5-2/12)
- navigating interdisciplinarity - skepticism and communicating discovery
- readings:
  - Broom (16-27)
  - Lee (84-101)
  - Garber (618-628)
- **Reading response #2 (covers all week 3 & 4 readings) due February 12, 11:59 AM**

Week 5 (2/12-2/19) (*Doc Brad unavailable for office hours 2/18-20)
- liberal studies in action - the online classroom and educational paradigm shifts
- readings:
  - Barrett (27-31)
  - O'Hara (1677-1684)
  - Seitz (37-42)
  - Crossland (362-365)

Week 6 (2/19-2/26) (*Doc Brad unavailable for office hours 2/18-20)
- liberal studies in action - thought, language and education
- readings:
  - McConnell-Ginet (497-527)
  - Orwell (1-10)
  - Ritter (601-631)
- **Reading response #3 (covers all week 5 & 6 readings) due February 26, 11:59 AM**

Week 7 (2/26-3/5)
- liberal studies in action - belief, value and empiricism
- readings:
  - Moore (11-14)
  - Mellor (51-56)
  - Jasper and Young (270-299)
- **Exam One to be completed no later than March 5, 11:59 AM**

Week 8 (3/5-3/19) (* includes spring break week)
- doing interdisciplinary studies – generating a topic
- readings:
  - Davies (19-25)
  - Jacoby and Barr (18-25)
- **Topic for Annotated Bibliography Project to be emailed no later than March 19**

Week 9 (3/19-3/26)
- doing interdisciplinary studies – establishing theoretical foundations and methods
- readings:
  - Edmonds and Candy (470-6)
  - Hall et al (17-21)
- **Annotated Bibliography Project: Part One due March 26, 11:59 AM**

Week 10 (3/26-4/2)
- doing interdisciplinary studies – getting it written
- readings:
  - Berg (378-407)
- **Annotated Bibliography Project: Part Two due April 2, 11:59 AM**

Week 11 (4/2-4/9)
- bringing it together as a whole
- readings:
  - Deitering & Gronemyer (489-503)
- **First Draft of Research Proposal Project due April 9, 11:59 AM**

Week 12 (4/9-4/16)
- the peer review process
- readings:
  - Graff (81-87)
  - Gift & Krasny (270-8)
  - VanDeWeghe (95-99)
- **Peer Review of Research Proposal Projects due April 16, 11:59 AM**

Week 13 (4/16-4/23)
- incorporating peer feedback
- readings:
  - Yang (1202-10)

Week 14 (4/23-4/30)
- tying things back together and looking ahead
- readings:
  - Yancey (13-18)
- **Revised Research Proposal Project due April 30, 11:59 PM**

"Week" 15 (4/30-5/9)
- **Reflective Review due May 6, 11:59 PM**

final grades available via MyLeo on May 13

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.

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://casx.tamuc.edu/cas/login?service=https%3A%2F%2Fmyleo.tamuc.edu%2Fpaf%2Fauthorize.
.

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 nearly every Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00-12:00 and Wednesday from 11:00 – 1:00 (nearly every as a result of travels to conferences) 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…)

LIBS 300 – Introduction to Liberal Studies
Reading list – Spring 2014

Week 1

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

Mittwede, S. (2012). Research paradigms and their use and importance in theological inquiry and education. *Journal of Education & Christian Belief, 16(1)*, 23-40.

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

Mahoney, M. & Schamber, J. (2011). Integrative and deep learning through a learning community: A process view of self. *The Journal of General Education, 60(4)*, 234-247.

Omoyibo, K. & Oboro, O. (2012). Doing sociological research: Standard methods and fallacies and methodological pluralism. *European Journal of Social Sciences, 28(3)*, 320-325.

Week 4

Broom, C. (2011). From critical thinking to critical being. *ENCOUNTER: Education for Meaning and Social Justice, 24(2), 16-27.*

Garber, M. (2006). Loaded words. *Critical Inquiry, 32(4)*, 618-628.

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.

Week 5

Barrett, J. (2001). Interdisciplinary work and musical integrity. *Music Educators Journal, 87(5)*, 27-31.

Crossland, R. (2013). Cultivating common ground: Interdisciplinary approaches to biological research. *New Phytologist, 197*, 362-5.

O'Hara, E. (2004). How Neuroscience Might Advance the Law. *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences, 359(1451 Law and the Brain)*, 1677-1684.

Seitz, J. (2002). Mind, dance, and pedagogy. *Journal of Aesthetic Education, 36(4)*, 37-42.

Week 6

McConnell-Ginet, S. (2008). Words in the world: How and why meanings can matter. *Language, 84 (3)*, 497-527.

Orwell, G. (1946). Politics and the English Language. *Horizon 13(76)*, 252-265.

Ritter, K. (2005). The economics of authorship: Online paper mills, sudent writers, and first-year composition. *College Composition and Communication, 56 (4)*, 601-631.

Week 7

Jasper, J. & Young, M. (2007). The rhetoric of sociological facts. *Sociological Forum, 22(3)*, 270-299.

Mellor, F. (1999). Scientists' rhetoric in the science wars. *Public Understanding of Science, 8(1),* 51–56

Moore, J. (2012). A personal insight into researcher positionality. *Nurse Researcher, 19(4)*, 11-14.

Week 8

Davies, M. (2007). *Doing a Successful Research Project* (pp. 19-25). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jacoby, J. & Barr, L. (2007). *Research navigator.com guide: Sociology* (pp. 18-25). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Week 9

Edmonds, E. & Candy, L. (2010). Relating theory, practice and evaluation in practitioner research. *Leonardo, 43 (5)*, 470-476.

Hall, H, Griffiths D, & McKenna L. (2013). From Darwin to constructivism: the evolution of grounded theory. *Nurse Researcher, 20(3)*, 17-21.

Week 10

Berg, B. (2009). Writing research papers: Sorting noodles from the soup. In *Qualitiative Research Methods of the Social Sciences*(7th ed.) (pp. 378-407). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Week 11

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.

Week 12

Gift, N. & Krasny, M. (2003). The great fossil fiasco: Teaching about peer review. *The American Biology Teacher, 65 (4)*, 270-278.

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.

Week 13

Yang, Y (2010). Students' reflection on online self-correction and peer review to improve writing. *Computers & Education, 55*, 1202-10.

Week 14

Yancey, K. (1998). Getting beyond exhaustion: Reflection, self-assessment, and learning. *The Clearing House, 72(1)*, 1-18.