

LIBS 300 – Introduction to Liberal Studies
Texas A&M University - Commerce – Fall 2020
Blended Course – Mon/Wed/Fri 11:00-11:50 (302 Talbot Hall)*
(classroom sessions dependent on social distancing/Covid necessities)

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Office Hours: Mon and Wed 2:00-4:00 or by appointment (Zoom meetings welcomed)

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%
Exams:	20%
Annotated Bibliography:	15%
Research Proposal Draft:	10%
Peer Review Critiques	10%
Revised Research Proposal Draft:	15%
Reflective Review	10%
Participation and Engagement:	10%

Grading System:

A (exceptional) = 100 - 90% B (good) = 89 - 80% C (average) = 79 - 70%
D (minimally sufficient) = 69 - 60% F (failure) = <60%

Though I am a believer in the philosophies of ungradedness, some versions of grading still exist. That stated, I am also a believer in the intrinsic pursuit of knowledge and discovery. If you join in that pursuit, there should be no worries or concerns of final grades. 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.

Covid 19 Considerations

A&M-Commerce requires the use of face-coverings in all instructional and research classrooms/laboratories. Exceptions may be made by faculty where warranted. Faculty have management over their classrooms. Students not using face-coverings can be required to leave class. Repetitive refusal to comply can be reported to the Office of Students’ Rights and Responsibilities as a violation of the student Code of Conduct.

Students should not attend class when ill or after exposure to anyone with a communicable illness. Communicate such instances directly with your instructor. Faculty will work to support the student getting access to missed content or completing missed assignments.

Please, click on the following link to access A&M-Commerce Covid 19 Information,
<https://new.tamuc.edu/coronavirus/>

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.

Exams: During weeks 5, 10, and finals week, 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 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 and Engagement: Whether in the classroom or online, 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

Required

Allen Repko, Rick Szostak, & Michelle Phillips Buchberger (2019). *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies* (3rd Edition). Sage Publishing. (manufacturer price \$85 paperback; \$57 electronic copy)

<https://www.sagepub.com/hi/nam/introduction-to-interdisciplinary-studies/book269113>

Optional

Richard Paul & Linda Elder (2019). *Critical Thinking Concepts & Tools* (7th Edition). Tomales, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking.

Purchase a hard copy via the [Foundation for Critical Thinking website](#). (\$11.99 + shipping)
Earlier editions are equally welcomed should they be found used and at a less expensive cost.

All other course readings will be available via D2L Brightspace. 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 may 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. 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.

Given the pandemic conditions and the needs of social distancing, the mechanics of conducting in-person sessions will need to be fluid both in structure and happening. As the term starts, hopefully a clearer understanding as to how to best conduct class sessions safely, inclusively, and adaptably to all will emerge. As it stands, our Covid number for the classroom is 8. Including myself, this allows for a maximum attendance of 7 students. Some form of rotational system will be proposed if/when in-person sessions will occur. These sessions will be recorded and may be accessed synchronously should the students wish to share in the discussion as it occurs. They will also be available asynchronously if the student is unable to access during the course meeting times. Ideally, having the whole of the course community interacting simultaneously would be best for all involved.

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

D2L Brightspace dropbox no later than the formal due date. Any work turned in after due dates may incur a penalty respective of its relative degree of tardiness (to a point of no credit whatsoever). Given conditions of the Covid 19 pandemic, considerable flexibility in applying this will be enacted. 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.

Student Conduct

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 Guidebook](#) describes as Civility in the Classroom. Additionally, all students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Policies and Procedures, Conduct, pg. 35-45).

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 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

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.

Concealed Carry Notice

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection 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, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Brightspace Support

Need Help?

Student Support

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Course Outline:

Note: The course outline is only a guideline. It is subject to change based on discussion, current events, or other such influences. Additionally, there is considerable fluidity to when reading assignments will occur. These will be updated in class and through D2L announcements.

Week 1 (8/24-8/30)

- general course information
- general introduction to liberal studies and interdisciplinarity
- readings:
 - Blum (p. 1-5)
 - Repko et al (Ch 1 & 2)

Week 2 (8/31-9/6)

- Critical thought and interdisciplinarity in action
- readings:
 - Deitering & Gronemyer (p489-503)
 - Repko et al (Ch 3)

Week 3 (9/7-9/13)

- navigating interdisciplinarity – paradigms
- readings:
 - Repko et al (Ch 4)

Week 4 (9/14-9/20)

- navigating interdisciplinarity – critical being and investment into the subject
- readings:
 - Repko et al (Ch 5&6)

Week 5 (9/21-9/27)

- liberal studies in action - the research process initiated
- readings:
 - Broom (p51-61)
- **Exam One to be completed between Thurs, September 24 and Fri, September 25**

Week 6 (9/28-10/4)

- liberal studies in action - thought, language and education
- readings:
 - Repko et al (Ch 7-9)
 - Ritter (p. 601-631)
 - Stoller (p. 22-35)
 - Newton
- **Individual Education Project due October 4**

Week 7 (10/5-10/11)

- liberal studies in action – reading scholarship critically
- readings:
 - Repko et al (Ch10)
- **Sample Annotation due October 11**

Week 8 (10/12-10/18)

- doing interdisciplinary studies – generating a topic and thinking through connections
- readings:
 - Repko et al (Ch11)

Week 9 (10/19-10/25)

- doing interdisciplinary studies – establishing theoretical foundations and methods
- readings:
 - Repko et al (Ch12)
- **Full Annotated Bibliography due March 22**

Week 10 (10/26-11/1)

- doing interdisciplinary studies – getting it written
- readings:
 - TBA
- **Exam Two to be completed between Thurs, October 29 and Fri, October 30**

Week 11 (11/2-11/8)

- bringing it together as a whole
- readings:
 - TBA
- **First Draft of Research Proposal Project due November 8**

Week 12 (11/9-11/15)

- the peer review process
- readings:
 - Graff (p81-87)
 - VanDeWeghe (p95-99)

Week 13 (11/16-11/22)

- incorporating peer feedback
- readings:
 - Yancey (13-18)
- **Peer Review of Research Proposal Projects due November 22**

Week 14 (11/23-11/29)

- revision and refinement
- readings:
 - TBA

“Week” 15 (11/30-12/4)

- tying things back together and looking ahead
- readings:
 - none
- **Revised Research Proposal Project due December 4**

Finals “Week” (12/5-12/11)

- **Exam Three to be completed 1between the start of Exam Week and the close of our designated exam time, Wednesday, December 9 at 12:30 PM**
- **Reflective Review due Thursday, December 10**

final grades available via MyLeo on Tuesday, December 15

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Reading list bibliography – Fall 2020

Week 1

Blum, S. (2017, November 14). Ungrading: The significant learning benefits of getting rid of grades. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved December 7, 2017, from <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2017/11/14/significant-learning-benefits-getting-rid-grades-essay>

Week 2

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. https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy.tamuc.edu/journals/portal/libraries_and_the_academy/v011/11.1.deitering.html

Week 5

Broom, C. (2011). From critical thinking to critical being. *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*, 24(2), 16-27. <https://great-ideas.org/Encounter242/Broom242.html>

Week 7

Ritter, K. (2005). The economics of authorship: Online paper mills, student writers, and first-year composition. *College Composition and Communication*, 56(4), 601-631. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30037888>

Stoller, A. Educating from failure: Dewey's aesthetics and the case for failure in educational theory. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 47(1), 22-35.

Newton, D. (2015). Cheating in online classes is now big business. *The Atlantic*, Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/11/cheating-through-online-courses/413770/?utm_source=facebook&utm_content=edit-promo&utm_term=2018-07-15T16%3A19%3A19&utm_campaign=the-atlantic&utm_medium=social

Week 12

Graff, P. (2009). Approaching authentic peer review. *The English Journal*, 98(5), 81-87. <http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/EJ/0985-may09/EJ0985Approaching.pdf>

Van De Weghe, R. (2004). Research matters: "Awesome, Dude!" Responding helpfully to peer writing. *The English Journal*, 94(1), 95-99. http://www.csun.edu/~krowlands/Content/Academic_Resources/Composition/Responding/VanDerWegh-Responding%20to%20Peer%20Writing.pdf

Week 13

Yancey, K. (1998). Getting beyond exhaustion: Reflection, self-assessment, and learning. *The Clearing House*, 72(1), 1-18. <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?sid=39f9576e-6ff7-4499-bd2c-de1be3cc4907%40sessionmgr4003&vid=1&hid=4211&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmU%3d#AN=edsjsr.30189412&db=edsjsr>