

LIBS 300: Introduction to Liberal Studies
Dr. Emily L. Newman
East Texas A&M University

Web-Based Class, Fall 2026

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For Office Hours, email to schedule an appointment (F2F or Zoom)

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OUTCOMES

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 and utilizing the library. Students will develop an Individual Education Plan. *This class is entirely online.* This course uses the Olympic Games to explore how a variety of subjects can be applied to a singular topic.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- enhance critical thinking skills (discussion posts and short papers)
- understand, demonstrate, and communicate the core concepts of interdisciplinary studies (discussion posts and individual education plan)
- develop the skills to thoroughly research multiple disciplinary fields
- generate and effectively communicate scholarly material through the creation of an annotated bibliography
- 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.
- ability to work both independently and productively, while developing effective time management skills
- to construct a personalized plan of study informed by interdisciplinary academic principles

ASSESSMENT:

Students' ability to meet the course objectives and learning outcomes will be evaluated through written assignments, discussion posts, worksheets, and a research project.

READINGS:

- **Required:** Tommie Smith, Derrick Barnes, Dawud Anyabwile, *Victory. Stand! Raising my First for Justice*, 2022. ISBN: 1324052155
- You will also need a subscription to Netflix for the duration of this course.

All other readings will be distributed via our online course shell. Every attempt is made to make course materials free and easily accessible. However, on occasion, students may be asked to watch movies or documentaries that must be rented or watched via a streaming service. These costs are minimized as much as possible.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: (subject to change)*

Engagement: Each person is expected to participate fully in class, by following the guidelines listed below.

- **Preparation:** reviewing readings and material before class
- **Focus:** avoiding distractions during in-person and online activities
- **Presence:** engaged and responsive during all activities
- **Asking Questions:** in class, out of class, online, offline
- **Listening:** hearing what others say, and also what they are not saying
- **Specificity:** referring to specific ideas from reading and discussions
- **Synthesizing:** making connections between reading and discussions

Discussion: Each student will write numerous times to the discussion page for the class. There will be clear class prompts, with word counts for you to follow.

Short Papers: Throughout the course, you will have a number of short papers and small assignments that ask you to expand on your thoughts and also develop your writing skills.

Individual Educational Plan Project: The aim of the course is to demonstrate one's capability to do interdisciplinary scholarship. The Liberal Studies 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.

Research Project: Students will pursue a research project of their own choosing, which will include a discussion post about ideas, peer review of the proposal, a library meeting, bibliography, and the final project introduction and annotated bibliography.

Assignments will NOT be accepted over one week late. For each class day late, the grade will be reduced. Further, the final project will not be able to be accepted late. No extra credit will be given.

Grade Breakdown:

Discussion: 20%

Short Papers/Projects: 15%

Individual Education Plan Project: 20%

Article/Film of Choice 10%

Research Project: 25%

Reflection Paper: 10%

Grade Scale:

A = 90%-100% (exceptional)

B = 80%-89% (good)

C = 70%-79% (average)

D = 60%-69% (minimally sufficient)

F = 50%-59% (failure)

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 school or local library, office service companies, an Internet cafe, or a bookstore, such as Barnes & Noble, etc.

DISCUSSION:

Each person will bring their own experiences to this class and should feel comfortable expressing their opinions and vulnerabilities. The classroom is a safe environment, and each student should behave with integrity and treat their peers with respect.

HANDING IN ASSIGNMENTS

Each assignment must be uploaded on time. Discussion posts will not be accepted after their due date. For other assignments, for each class day late, the grade will be deducted. **Assignments will NOT be accepted over ONE week late.**

*** THERE WILL BE NO EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENTS***

WORKLOAD

The rule of thumb for time required for course study and preparation each week for a face-to-face class or an online course during the spring and fall semesters is three times the number of credit hours (or 9 hours per week) for the course. If you find yourself unable to complete course requirements in a timely manner, refer to the University's withdrawal policy and the appropriate dates. Incomplete grades are only granted for extreme emergencies. Being "overloaded" either from other class assignments or job commitments are not considered to be emergency situations.

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

NONDISCRIMINATION NOTICE

East Texas A&M University 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.

CLASSROOM POLICIES:

Statement on Student Behavior:

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenet of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct).

All students must show respect toward the instructor and the instructor's syllabus, presentations, assignments, and point of view. Students should respect each others' differences. If the instructor determines that a student is not being respectful towards other students or the instructor, it is the instructor's prerogative to ask the student to leave, to refer the student to the department head, and to consider referring the student to the Dean of Students who may consider requiring the student to drop the course. Please refer to pages 42 – 46 of the East Texas A&M University Student guidebook's Codes of Conduct for details.

Academic Dishonesty: Students at East Texas A&M University are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. There is **no tolerance** for any kind of academic dishonesty in this course. This includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, cheating on exams, theft of instructional material or exams, representing the work of someone else as one's own, and misrepresenting absences. Academic dishonesty is a severe transgression and may result in referral to the Dean of Students, expulsion from class and/or the University, and a failing grade.

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

Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Artificial Intelligence (AI): The use of ChatGPT, Copilot, or any other AI platform or tool to generate ideas, write content, or produce any material is strictly prohibited in this course.

This class is designed to develop your writing skills, and if you are using AI, you are not writing or learning. This is because the use of AI diminishes opportunities to learn from our experiences and from each other, to play with our creative freedoms, to problem-solve, and to contribute our ideas in authentic ways. In a nutshell, college is a place for learning, and this AI simply cannot do that learning for us.

Any work written, developed, created, or inspired by generative artificial intelligence does not lend itself to our learning goals and is a breach of ethical engagement and our academic integrity policy. Using AI opens up academic honesty issues, both because it raises the question if the work is "your" work, and also because tools like ChatGPT rely on taking material from uncredited scholars and writers. **If discovered that you have used any type of AI for your work, you will face negative consequences, which will include failing the assignment and potentially failing the course and facing discipline from the university.**

Please be cautious using tools like Grammarly, which can be very helpful with spell check and grammar help but should be avoided when they generate content.

TURNITIN

East Texas A&M University uses Turnitin software to help students avoid plagiarism and cheating. Turnitin is a 'text-matching' software which is designed to educate students regarding appropriate citation and referencing techniques. Turnitin is also used to provide East Texas A&M University with confidence in the academic integrity of students work. Turnitin does this by comparing a student submission against an archive of Internet documents, Internet data, a repository of previously submitted papers, and subscription repository of periodicals, journals, and publications. Turnitin then creates an 'Originality Report' which can be viewed by both lecturers and students, which identifies where the text within a student submission has matched another source.

EAST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SUPPORTS STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M University, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

STATEMENT ON ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ADA ELIGIBLE STUDENTS:

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

East Texas A&M University, Waters Library, Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5150, Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@etamu.edu

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

After contacting the Office of Student Disability Resources and Services, it is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor of what accommodations are needed **IN ADVANCE** of when they are needed (for example, if testing accommodations are necessary, please inform the instructor with appropriate documentation at LEAST one week before the test date).

EMAIL POLICY:

Email is the preferred form of communication, with a general response time of 24 hours during the week (do not expect replies over the weekend). For all emails sent, please **include full name, student ID, and the class** that you are attending. Do not send emails to myself and other professors at once, as each professor has different issues to address. You are allotted three absences for this course; plan accordingly and there is no need to contact me about unexcused absences that are incorporated into this allowance. For excused absences, you need to bring in a hard copy of appropriate documentation of your absence.

GRADE POLICY:

If you have concerns regarding a grade, email me **within one week of receiving the assignment back** clearly explaining why you think the assignment was addressed incorrectly. After the email is received, we will then set up an appointment to discuss the concern.

CAMPUS CONCEALED CARRY

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University 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 East Texas A&M University Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to

((<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>) and/or consult your event organizer).

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

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University 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@etamu.edu.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

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

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>

MINIMAL TECHNICAL SKILLS AND PROGRAMS NEEDED

At a minimum, you must have access to and be able to use 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, the university provides access here:

<https://inside.tamuc.edu/facultystaffservices/academictechnology/documents/Office-365-Students.pdf>

SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

Please note that on the 4th Sunday of each month there will be System Maintenance which means the system will not be available 12 pm-6 am CST.

Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

Aug 21: Intros

Aug 25: Interdisciplinary Discussion

READ: selection of contemporary news articles on Liberal Arts, Interdisciplinarity, and Liberal Studies

- Brandon Busteed, "Higher Education: Drop the Term 'Liberal Arts,'" *Gallup*.
- Josh Moody, "How Interdisciplinary Studies Majors Work," *U.S. News and World Report*, December 2, 2020.
- Staff, "What is 'Liberal Arts'?" *Best Colleges*, August 26, 2022.
- Steven Mintz, "Why Liberal Education Matters." *Inside Higher Ed*, October 23, 2022.

Aug 27: Degree Review #1 Due

Sept 1: Olympic Background

READ: David Young, "From Olympia 776 BC to Athens 2004: The Origin and Authenticity of the Modern Olympic Games," in *The Olympics: A Critical Reader*, edited by Vassil Girginov, New York: Routledge, 2010: 40-49.

READ: Mark Dyreson, "Olympic Games and Historical Imagination: Notes from the fault line of tradition and modernity" in *The Olympics: A Critical Reader*, edited by Vassil Girginov, New York: Routledge, 2010: 50-64.

READ: Jean-Loup Chappelet and Brenda Kübler Mabbott, "A Brief Overview of the Olympic System," in *The Olympics: A Critical Reader*, edited by Vassil Girginov, New York: Routledge, 2010: 211-220.

Sept 3: Degree Review #2 Due

Sept 8: The Greeks

READ: Bruce Kidd, "The Myth of the Ancient Games," *Sport in Society* 16, no. 4 (2013): 416-424.

READ: René Goscinny, *Asterix at the Olympic Games*, 12th comic book in Asterix series, originally published in French on February 15, 1968.

READ: David Goldblatt, "The Grandiose and Salutary Task: The Reinvention of the Olympic Games," *The Games*. New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016: 5-52.

Sept 10: Degree Review #3 Due

Sept 15: \$\$\$

READ: Robert A. Baade and Victor A. Matheson, "Going for the Gold: The Economics of the Olympics," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 201-218.

READ: Sarah Shephard, "Money Talks" and "Profile: Maggie Alphonsi" in *Kicking Off: How women in sport are changing the game*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016: 79-121.

WATCH: *I, Tonya* (2017)

Sept 17: Degree Review #4 Due

Sept 22: Psychology and Sports

WATCH: *The Weight of Gold* (2020)

READ: L. Jon Wertheim and Sam Sommers, "Why We Are All Dog Lovers at Heart (but Not Deep in Our Hearts)" in *This is Your Brain on Sports*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2016: 43-58.

Sept 24: Mission Statement Draft Due

Sept 25: Mission Statement Comments Due

Sept 29: Difference

WATCH: *To Russia with Love* (2014)

READ: William P. Cassidy, "Comparing Coverage of King, Swoopes, and Griner," in *Sports Journalism and Women Athletes*, Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019: 63-86.

READ: David Rowe, Kevin Markwell, and Deborah Stevenson, "Exploring participants' experiences of the Gay Games," *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* 2, no. 2 (July 2006): 149-165.

Oct 1: Education Plan Due

Oct 6: Race

READ: John Nauright and David Wiggins, "Race," *Routledge to Companion to Sports History*. New York: Routledge, 2009: 148-161.

READ: Tommie Smith, Derrick Barnes, Dawud Anyabwile, *Victory. Stand! Raising my First for Justice*. New York, Norton Young Readers, 2022.

Oct 8: Review of *Victory* Due

Oct 13: Politics

WATCH: *Athlete A* (2020) on Netflix

WATCH: *One Day in September* (1999) on Tubi (free)

WATCH: *Icarus* (2017) on Netflix

Fiction vs. Documentary vs. Real Life Short Paper Due

Oct 20: Barriers

READ: Brian Chalkley and Stephen Essex, "Urban Development through Hosting International Events: A History of the Olympic Games," *Planning Perspectives* 14 (1999): 369-394.

READ: Gertrud Pfister, "Outsiders: Muslim Women and Olympic Games: Barriers and Opportunities," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*. 27 (2010):16-18, 2925-2957.

WATCH: *The Swimmers* (2022, Netflix)

Oct 22: Project Idea Discussion Post

Oct 27: Art

READ: Ashley Feters, "Remember When the Olympics Used to Have an Art Competition? No?" *The Atlantic*, July 26, 2012.

Make Your Own Mascot Due

Oct 29: Proposal Due for Peer Review

Nov 3: Disability

READ: P. David Howe, "Cyborg and Supercrip: The Paralympics Technology and the (Dis)empowerment of Disabled Athletes Author(s)" in *Sociology* 45, no. 5 (October 2011): 868-882.

READ: Sim Butler and Kim Bissell, "Olympic Effort: Disability Culture, and Resistance in the 2012 London Olympic Games" *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 17, no. 4 (2015): 228-273.

Film/Book of Your Choice Selection Due

Nov 5: Peer Review Comments Due on Proposal

Nov 10: The Underdog

READ: Jeffrey P. Fry, "Underdogs, Upsets, and Overachievers," *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 44, no. 1 (2017): 15-28.

WATCH: *Age of Champions: Senior Citizens at the Olympic Games* (2011)

READ: Aleksander Berentsen, "The Economics of Doping," *European Journal of Political Economy* 18, no. 1 (March 2002): 109-127.

Nov 12: Proposal Due

Nov 17: Film/book of your choice presentation due

Nov 19: Library Meeting Due

Nov 24: Revisiting Liberal Studies

READ: Jennifer Fray, "This Is Who's Really Driving the Decline in Interest in Liberal Arts Education," *New York Times*, July 17, 2025.

READ: Mia Bahadur Bista, "The value of liberal education in a skills-obsessed world," *University World News*, Aug 20, 2025.

Dec 1: Bibliography Due

Dec 8: Project Introduction and Annotated Bibliography Due

Dec 8: Reflection Paper Due