

**ENG 496--Senior Thesis
The English Capstone**



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Fall 2013
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Office Hours in Colson 221: Wed 11:00-1:00

Welcome to your English capstone experience, an opportunity to create something original, creative, and important. I am looking forward to working with you as a class and individually. In the coming months, you will compose a 20-page research paper on a literary subject of your choosing. We will spend the early part of the semester brainstorming topics, strengthening your ability to conduct literary research, learning to incorporate sources into your writing, and honing your subject into a thesis. The latter part of the semester will be devoted to organizing your ideas, selecting the best sources, checking your documentation style, revising drafts, and presenting your research to the class.

The course will strengthen your ability to analyze literary and critical texts, to compose compelling essays, and to present your ideas effectively in speech. The key will be to work consistently throughout the semester. This is not a sprint. It's a marathon.

Required Text

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th ed. (New York: MLA, 2009)

Course Goals

- To create a dynamic and supportive community of scholars
- To become stronger writers/thinkers

Course Objectives

Through assignments, you should be able to demonstrate the following:

- Facility with academic discourse and literary research
- Capacity for analysis, idea development, and critical thinking
- Understanding of appropriate tone, style, and sentence structure of academic writing
- Proficiency in oral presentation

Requirements

- Attendance. You are allowed two absences. If you miss more than two classes, you will fail the class (unless there is a documented emergency. See policy below.)
- Initial prospectus and revised prospectus
- 5-page exploratory essay
- Annotated bibliography
- 10-page research paper
- 20-page research paper
- Oral presentation

Grade Breakdown

Initial prospectus	5 points
Revised prospectus	5 points
Annotated bibliography	10 points
5-page exploratory essay	10 points
Oral presentation	10 points
10-page research essay	25 points
Final 20-page research essay	35 points

Evaluative Criteria

My **criteria** for evaluating your essays will be the following:

- Complete drafts that engage with a difficult, original, or complex question
- A final revision that demonstrates a reworking of the draft in terms of argument, content, style, and organization
- A clear thesis or insight, which is suitably complex and provides a blueprint for the essay
- Smooth and grammatical integration of primary and secondary sources
- Solid evidence from literary works (in the form of quotations, paraphrases, and summaries) to support your interpretations
- Strong transitions that move the essay forward logically and thoughtfully
- A polished final essay free of grammatical and surface errors.
- A detailed outline
- Consistent use of MLA style for documentation.

Writing Resources

- Check out our Library Guide <http://libguides.wvu.edu/english496>
- Purdue has a useful website on MLA style at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/11/>. You can find “Basic In-text Citation” at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/> and “Basic Works Cited” at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/05/>.
- The Writing Center is available for writing assistance. Colson G02. You can drop in or call for an appointment: 304.293.5788

English Major Program Goals

Upon completing a B.A. in English, a student should be able to:

1. Interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts.
2. Demonstrate a general knowledge of the social and structural aspects of the English language.
3. Demonstrate a range of contextually effective writing strategies.

Four aspects of Goal 1 are especially important. A student should be able to:

- Identify genre conventions and analyze their effects
- Identify and analyze effects of complexity or ambiguity
- Locate texts in social, economic, political, and literary history
- Connect a text to other literary or cultural texts

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

Plagiarism/Cheating. The following definitions are from the *West Virginia University Undergraduate Catalog*. Please see the section on Academic Integrity and Dishonesty for the full definition and discussion of procedures.

Plagiarism: material that has been knowingly obtained or copied in whole or in part from the work of others . . . including (but not limited to) another individual's academic composition.

Cheating: doing academic work for another student, or providing one's own work for another student to copy and submit as his / her own.

Scholastic dishonesty: involves misrepresenting as your own work any part of work done by another; submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without the written approval and consent of all instructors concerned; depriving another student of necessary course materials; interfering with another's work.

Social Justice. . . I share the University's commitment to social justice and try to create a learning environment based on communication, respect, and nondiscrimination. Let me know if there is any way to create a more inclusive environment.

Disabilities. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services. Also, Accessibility Services has moved to Suite 250 at 1085 Van Voorhis Rd (beside Applebee's and across from the Mountaineer Station transportation center). The phone number is 304-293-6700, and email is access2@mail.wvu.edu. The website is at <http://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>.

Emergencies or Health Crises. If you have an emergency or serious health problem in the course of the semester, you or your family should contact the Office of Student Life in E. Moore Hall (293-5611). The Dean of Student Life will communicate with me and authorize arrangements. Please reserve the Dean's services for emergencies.

Schedule

**This class is based on individual research and writing. I may need to make occasional adjustments to the schedule, depending on how projects develop.

- Tues. Aug 20 Introductions
Why we are here & what we are doing
The Thesis: How do you choose a topic? What are viable questions to pursue?
How do you transform a topic into a research question?
What is a scholarly source?
- Tues. Aug 27 **Meet at the Wise Library downstairs classroom (Room 136) for Presentation**
Discussion of topics. What is a research prospectus?
What makes writing compelling? What makes a great literary analysis?
- DUE: Typed paragraph (approx. 300 – 400 words) describing possible topics and research questions.** At the end of your paragraph, provide at least two bibliographic citations of scholarly sources. (MLA Works Cited style)
- Tues. Sept 3 Guest: Sandy Baldwin, Director of the Center for Literary Computing
How to do research online
How to summarize an article
How to create an annotated bibliography
- DUE: Five-page exploratory essay**
- Tues. Sept 10 Discuss returned essays
Workshop on strengthening sentences and creating strong paragraphs
How to incorporate quotations gracefully
- DUE: Annotated bibliography (seven sources minimum)**
- Tues. Sept 17 **DUE: Research Prospectus**
- Announcement: Thursday, September 19 Gary Fincke Reading 130 Colson Hall, 7:30-9:00 p.m.
- Tues. Sept 24 Writing Workshop
- DUE: 10-page draft of research paper and outline. Bring two copies of essay to class**

Announcement: Monday, September 30 Janisse Ray Reading Gold Ballroom 7:30

Tues. Oct 1 No class. Individual conferences on essay drafts

Announcement: Wed, October 2 Semi-Annual Pizza Party, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Colson 130

Tues. Oct 8 Preparation for the oral presentation

DUE: Final 10-page research paper due (also turn in draft with my comments)
Proofread several times and read your work outloud. You will hear mistakes that you do not see.

Tues. Oct 15 Fall Break: No class. Begin work on 20-page essay.

Announcement: Thurs, October 17 Beverly Donofrio Reading Robinson Reading Room, 7:30

Tues. Oct 22 Oral presentations (15 – 20 min)

Tues Oct 29 Oral presentations

Announcement: Tuesday, October 29 Hugh Blumenfeld Reading 130 Colson Hall, 10:00 a.m.

Tues. Nov. 5 Group conferences during class time

DUE: Revised prospectus and outline

Tues. Nov. 12 No class. Individual conferences

Announcement: Wed, November 13 "Extending a Hand: Personal, Literary, Historical, and Political Perspectives on U.S. Efforts to Aid the Developing World." Rhododendron Room, 7:30

Tues. Nov 19 **DUE: 20-page draft of research paper and outline. Bring copy of introduction to class (staggered deadline available)**

Thanksgiving Break

Tues. Dec 3 Writing Workshop

Tues. Dec 10 Writing Workshop and final thoughts

Final Research Paper due by Fri., Dec 13 at 2:00