

**ENGL 496--Senior Thesis  
Literary and Cultural Studies Capstone  
Fall 2018**



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Office Hours: Tues and Thurs 11:30-12:30

Colson 221

### **Course Description**

This semester, you will compose a 20-page research paper on a literary subject of your choosing. Your essay might explore the work of a favorite author (Ralph Ellison, Emily Dickinson) or a subject in literature that matters to you (the environment, human rights, narrative structure). We will spend the early part of the semester brainstorming topics, conducting research, and honing your topic into a thesis. The latter part of the semester will be devoted to organizing ideas, selecting the best sources, strengthening arguments, documenting sources, revising drafts, and presenting your research to the class.

Throughout the semester, we will consider current directions in the field of English and the role of the humanities in public life.

### **Required Text**

You will need to have access to the *Modern Language Association (MLA) Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 8th edition. You can find much of this information here:

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/mla\\_style/mla\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/mla\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html)

### **Course Objectives**

- ✓ To create a stimulating environment for literary and cultural research
- ✓ To facilitate the best research and writing from every student

## Learning Outcomes

Students who complete ENGL 496 should be able to:

- Compose a major research essay on a literary subject
- Synthesize and summarize scholarly articles
- Identify genre conventions and analyze their effects
- Identify and analyze the effects of complexity and ambiguity in literature
- Locate texts in social, economic, political, and literary history
- Connect a text to other literary or cultural texts
- Use effective tone, style, and sentence structure in writing
- Present ideas clearly and effectively in oral presentation
- Develop ideas and respond to the ideas of others

## English Major Program Goals/Learning Outcomes

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.

## Requirements

1. Participation	10 points
2. Exploratory essay	5 points
3. Initial prospectus	5 points
4. Revised prospectus	5 points
5. Annotated bibliography 1&2	10 points
6. In-class presentation	10 points
7. Public presentation	10 points
8. 10-page research essay	15 points
9. 20-page research essay	30 points

### 1. Participation and Attendance

Always be prepared for class. Readings are linked on the syllabus and also available to download from Ecampus. On days when we are reading an electronic text, be sure that you print the text, take detailed notes, and/or have an e-copy in class

You are allowed three absences for whatever reason. **If you miss more than three classes, unless there is a documented emergency, you will not pass the class.** See emergency policy below. Please consider carefully whether this is the class for you.

**Routine tardiness will count as one absence.** I will let you know when I have marked you as absent for this reason. If lateness continues, I will ask you to meet with me.

## **2. Exploratory Essay (4-5 pp)**

In this essay, you will explore your topic broadly. This is a chance to reflect informally on your subject, to consider its scope and implications, and to express why you have chosen it. What do you hope to discover? What are possible challenges? Be sure to indicate what you imagine your primary literary texts will be. See assignment.

## **3/4. Initial and Revised Prospectus**

A prospectus is a concise summary of your research project. The goal is to communicate your argument, the intellectual stakes of your topic, and your contribution to a specific scholarly conversation. See assignment.

## **5. Annotated Bibliography**

The annotated bibliography will consist of a) a title that conveys your topic; b) at least eight scholarly sources, documented in MLA style; and c) 250-300-word annotations for each source. See assignment and sample on ECcampus.

## **6/7. Presentations**

You will give two ten-minute oral presentations, one around midterm and another at the end of the semester. The first will be a presentation of your ongoing research to our class. The second will be a presentation at a public forum. You are welcome to invite friends and family to this celebratory event.

## **8/9. Research Essays**

At mid-semester, you will turn in drafts and a final ten-page essay. We will do the same revision process with your final twenty-page essay at the end of the semester. Please note: The draft is part of my evaluation of your written work. See assignments.

### **Evaluative Criteria for Essays**

- ✓ 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.

## **Submission Requirements**

You will submit written assignments on ECampus in the appropriate folder. **Please upload your materials in Word.**

Papers should be typed in a 12pt font and double-spaced with 1-inch margins. \*\*\*Always number your pages.

## **SpeakWrite**

ENGL 496 has been designated a SpeakWrite course by the Eberly College. As part of the Eberly College's commitment to fostering effective communication skills, this course will:

- Emphasize informal and formal modes of communication
- Teach discipline-specific communication techniques
- Use a process-based approach to learning that provides opportunities for feedback
- Base 100% of the final grade on successful written and spoken performance



**Purpose:** What exactly do I want to happen?

**Audience:** Who is reading, listening, or viewing?

**Conventions:** What is expected in this context?

**Trouble:** What could get in the way of my goals?

## **Writing Resources**

**WVU Library Guide** <http://libguides.wvu.edu/english496>

### **MLA-Style Documentation**

General Info: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/11/>.

In-text Citation: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/>

Works Cited: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/05/>.

The **Eberly Writing Studio** strives to help all members of the university community learn more about effective communication practices. Professional and friendly consultants work one-to-one on all stages of the writing (or speaking) process, from note-taking and pre-writing to revision strategies, proofreading techniques, and presentation practice. Because the Writing Studio works to teach students ways to improve their own work, consultants will not proofread, edit content, or discuss grades. It is helpful to bring your assignment prompt with you on your visit.

To make an appointment, call 304.293.5788 or visit the Writing Studio website (<http://speakwrite.wvu.edu/writing-studio>).

## **PROCEDURES and EXPECTATIONS**

### **Grading Scale**

A+ (98-100) ; A (97-94); A- (93-91); B+ (90-88); B (87-84); B- (83-81); C+ (80-78); C (77-74); C- (73-71); D+ (70-68); D (67-64); D- (63-61); F (60 or below)

### **ECampus and Email**

The syllabus and select course materials are available on ECampus. I will record points for each assignment on ECampus. I will use your MIX email accounts to communicate with you.

### **Academic Integrity**

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, instructors will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of their courses. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the West Virginia University

#### **Academic Standards**

**Policy** (<http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecredittermsclassification>).

Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see the instructor before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

**Cell Phone Courtesy.** Please turn off cell phones.

**Inclusivity Statement.** The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

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. Accessibility Services is located in Suite 250 at 1085 Van Voorhis Rd (beside Applebee's and across from the Mountaineer Station transportation center). 304-293-6700; [access2@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:access2@mail.wvu.edu); <http://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>.

**Emergencies or Health Crises.** If you have an emergency in the course of the semester, once you have the opportunity, contact the Office of Student Life in E. Moore Hall (293-5611). The Dean of Student Life will communicate with me.

### **Student Support Services**

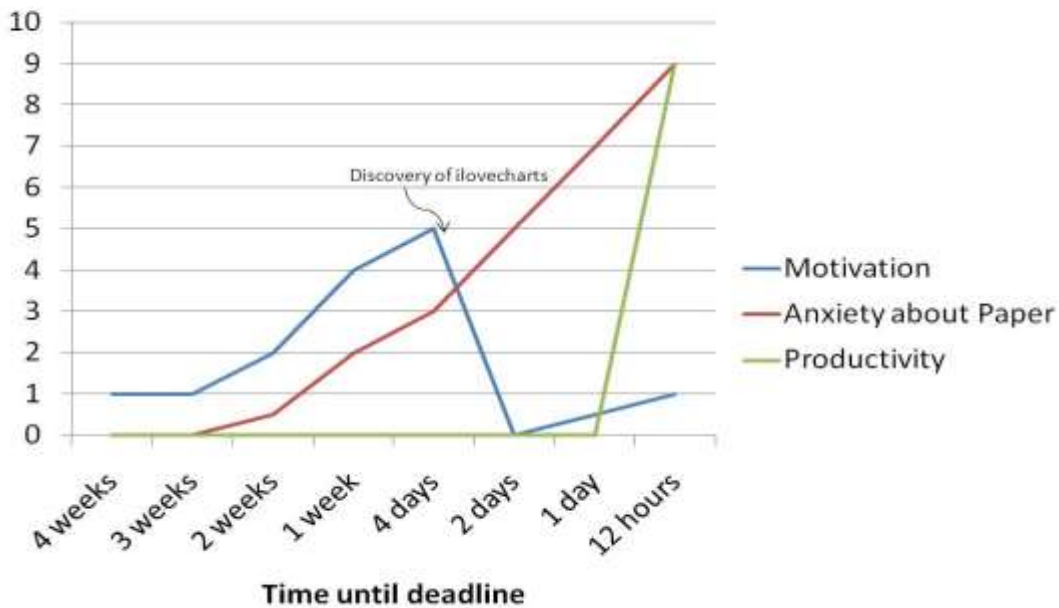
Counseling Services: [http://well.wvu.edu/ccpps/counseling\\_services](http://well.wvu.edu/ccpps/counseling_services)

Division of Student Life: <http://studentlife.wvu.edu/about>

Emotional and Physical Wellbeing: <http://well.wvu.edu/>

Student Disability Services: <http://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/accomm>

# The Paper-writing Process



## Schedule

The course outline is subject to change. If changes are made, I will give adequate notice.

Assignments are due by class time on the given date. \*Indicates material that you will bring to class rather than upload on ECampus

DATE	Topics and Reading Assignment	Due Dates
8/16	Introductions and Syllabus Wislawa Symborska, "Two Monkeys" Possible Topics and Future Plans Exploratory Essay Assignment	
8/21	Viable research topics and questions  "The Myth of the English Major Barista" <a href="https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2016/07/06/cultural-implications-myth-english-majors-end-working-permanently-starbucks-essay">https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2016/07/06/cultural-implications-myth-english-majors-end-working-permanently-starbucks-essay</a> [ECampus/Reading]  "The Evolving English Major" <a href="https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/07/18/new-analysis-english-departments-says-numbers-majors-are-way-down-2012-its-not-death">https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/07/18/new-analysis-english-departments-says-numbers-majors-are-way-down-2012-its-not-death</a> [ECampus/Reading]	*Bring two topics of interest and two research questions for each topic.  Think about authors or literary works (novels, poems, essays, plays, etc.) that you like or remember. Write freely about possibilities.

8/23	Preparation for Exploratory Essay  Quotation Review  Brooks, Introduction, <i>The Humanities and Public Life</i> [ECampus/Readings]  Williams, "The Raw and the Half-Cooked" [ECampus/Readings]	
8/28	Writing Workshop -- Honing in on a thesis.  "Canon Fodder: Denouncing the Classics" <a href="https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/canon-fodder-denouncing-the-classics">https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/canon-fodder-denouncing-the-classics</a> [ECampus/Readings]	*First 3 paragraphs of draft
8/30	<b>For class, meet in WVU Downtown Library Room 2036 Bring laptop or you can check one out at library</b>	Exploratory essay. See assignment.
9/4	What is an annotated bibliography? See sample on ECampus  Nussbaum, "The Narrative Imagination" [ECampus/Readings]	*Practice: 250-300 word summary of Nussbaum's chapter
9/6	How to write a strong plot summary  What is a research prospectus?  What are your key terms?	Annotated bibliography (part one) with at least four sources. See assignment.  Pay attention to how scholars summarize plots and synthesize critical works.
9/11	Discussion of 10pp Essay  Thesis Check  "They Say" and "Her Point Is" from <i>They Say/I Say</i> [ECampus/Readings]	*Working Thesis
9/13	5-minute presentations	Research Prospectus. See assignment.

9/18	<p>“Yes/No/Okay, But” and “And Yet” from <i>They Say</i> [ECampus/Readings]</p> <p>Working Groups: Developing an Argument and Making Claims</p> <p>Uses of an Outline and Concept Map</p>	
9/20	<p>Scarry, “Poetry, Injury, and the Ethics of Reading” [ECampus/Readings]</p> <p>Larmore, “The Ethics of Reading” [ECampus/Readings]</p>	*Checklist for Essay
9/25	<p>How to Organize an Essay, or Do I Need Subtitles?</p> <p>Discussion of Oral Presentations</p>	*Outline for 10-page essay
9/27	No class--Writing Day	10-pp draft and outline (staggered due dates)
10/2	No class—Conferences	
10/4	No class—Conferences	
10/9	Oral Presentations	Final 10 pp. essay (staggered due dates)
10/11	Oral Presentations	
10/16	<p><b>Meet in WVU Downtown Library Room 2036</b>  <b>Bring laptop or you can check one out at library</b></p> <p>Expanding your Bibliography and Scope of Essay</p>	
10/18	No class—Research Day	
10/23 Last day to drop	Revising your prospectus	Annotated bibliography (part two) with min. of eight sources. This can include your earlier sources.
10/25	Working Groups	
10/30	Writing Workshop	*Outline for 20-page essay
11/1	Writing Workshop	Revised Prospectus (750 words)



11/6	No Class—Election Day	
11/8	Emerging Questions	Drafts of 20-page essay
11/13	No Class—Conferences	
11/15	No Class—Conferences	
<b>Break</b>		
11/27	Editing and Proofreading  “Find Your Passion is Terrible Advice” <a href="https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/07/find-your-passion-is-terrible-advice/564932/">https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/07/find-your-passion-is-terrible-advice/564932/</a> [online]	
11/29	Preparation for Public Presentations Where From Here?	Final 20pp Essay
12/4	Final Thoughts	
12/6	No Class	

**12/7 Public Presentations in Colson 130. Invite family and friends!**