

English 496: Senior Thesis/Capstone
Spring Semester 2013
Instructor: Lowell Duckert
Email: Lowell.Duckert@mail.wvu.edu
Meeting Time: 11:30am-12:20pm MWF
Meeting Place: Woodburn Hall 109
Office: Colson Hall 333
Office Hours: 1:00-4:00pm W and by appointment
Office Phone: (304) 293-9700



In this course, you will pursue an extensive research project in literary or cultural studies, culminating in a substantial scholarly essay at the end of the semester. Far from *capping* the expertise you have already acquired in your English classes, the “Capstone” will hone – even extend – your research and writing skills by giving you the opportunity to explore a topic of your choice. To help you produce the most intelligent (and interesting) essay you have written so far, we will cover several themes:

- choosing a text and topic
- researching textual criticism and historical context
- reviewing sources and compiling bibliographies
- citation formats and scholarly standards
- outlining, drafting, and revising longer essays
- presenting work for peer review

After completing the assignments, you will be able to demonstrate:

- awareness of academic discourse and research on a particular topic.
- skills of research, analysis, argumentative development, and critical thinking.
- appropriate tone, style, and sentence structure of academic writing, including synthesis of research.
- command of academic written English and conventions of documenting research.
- proficiency in oral presentation of research, analysis, explication, and argument.

Choosing a text: Your text may be a novel, short-story collection (by a single author), long poem or book of poems (likewise), play, memoir, essay collection, graphic novel, or film. Stumped? I want you to pick a topic that you are *passionate* about rather than choose one because it is “popular,” “important,” “culturally relevant,” and so forth. Instead, think back over your past English literature courses and what intrigued you; be creative; challenge yourself; take risks. (Note, however, that you may not recycle work you have previously submitted for another class.)

Code of Courtesy

Arrive on time with your cell phone silenced. Bring the appropriate book to class. Give me your full attention. Laptops are allowed only for note-taking purposes. Remain in the room until the class ends. Never hesitate to ask a question, to express a doubt, or to request clarification. West Virginia University is committed to **social** justice, and so am I. Any attempt to disrupt the nondiscriminatory, communicative, and open environment of this class will not be tolerated. Conduct yourself in a manner respectful to all present at all times.

Required Texts:

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th ed. New York: Modern Language Association, 2009. Print.

Assignments and Grading Rubric:

Your grade for the course will be determined by adding together the following:

Research proposal (1 pg., ungraded)	
Secondary source summary (3 pp.)	10
Annotated bibliography (6 sources)	10
Ten-page essay, preceded by outline	20
Oral presentation	10
Draft and revision of twenty-page essay	40
Class participation	10
Total	100

Attendance Policy:

I will allow **four** absences. Late work will not be accepted, and you may not take an incomplete. If you foresee a scheduling conflict, you must notify me as soon as possible. In general, though, I do not want to know why you are absent.

Academic Dishonesty:

Academic dishonesty of any kind will be treated as a serious offense. In most cases, you will fail the course. You can find more on the Student Conduct Code (III.B.1) at http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code

Disability Statement:

If you feel you need accommodations based on the impact of a disability, the Office of Disability Services (<http://disabilityservices.wvu.edu>) is available to assist you.

Contact:

I encourage you to take advantage of my office hours (information above), and feel free to email/call me at any time. Make sure that your MIX email address is operational; I will frequently notify you about how to prepare for a given day, and I will occasionally post documents online.

Schedule (subject to change):

Week One

M 1/14 Introductions
W 1/16 Selecting a topic
F 1/18 Selecting a topic

Week Two

M 1/21 No class: Martin Luther King's birthday
W 1/23 Formulating research questions
F 1/25 Discussion of texts/topics

Week Three

M 1/28 Genre studies; contextual histories
W 1/30 Theoretical approaches
F 2/1 **Research proposal due**; text and author studies

Week Four

M 2/4 Finding secondary sources
W 2/6 Finding secondary sources
F 2/8 Finding secondary sources

Week Five

M 2/11 Paraphrasing and summarizing
W 2/13 Bibliography and citation
F 2/15 Optional individual conferences (re: secondary sources)

Week Six

M 2/18 **Secondary source assignment due**; effective quotation
W 2/20 Optional individual conferences (re: bibliography)
F 2/22 Optional individual conferences (re: bibliography)

Week Seven

M 2/25 **Annotated bibliography due**; outlining
W 2/27 Paragraph organization
F 3/1 Introductions and conclusions

Week Eight

M 3/4 Optional individual conferences (re: thesis and argument)
W 3/6 Optional individual conferences (re: thesis and argument)
F 3/8 **Outline due**; peer conference

Week Nine

M 3/11 **Ten-page essay due**; peer editing
W 3/13 Strategies for oral presentation
F 3/15 Expansion and revision

Week Ten

M 3/18 Presentations
W 3/20 Presentations
F 3/22 Presentations

Week Eleven: Spring Recess

Week Twelve

M 4/1 Optional peer workshop
W 4/3 Optional peer workshop
F 4/5 **Twenty-page essay draft due**; no class

Week Thirteen

M 4/8 Sentence-level revision; grammar clinic
W 4/10 Sentence-level revision; grammar clinic
F 4/12 Sentence-level revision; grammar clinic

Week Fourteen

M 4/15 Individual conferences
W 4/17 Individual conferences
F 4/19 Individual conferences

Week Fifteen

M 4/22 Individual conferences
W 4/24 Individual conferences
F 4/26 No class

Week Sixteen

M 4/29 Individual conferences
W 5/1 Individual conferences
F 5/3 **Revised twenty-page essay due**; discussion