

ENG 496--Senior Thesis

Katy Ryan, Associate Professor of English

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Office Hours: T/Th: 11:30-12:30

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 materials, to compose compelling essays, and to present your ideas effectively.

The key will be to work consistently throughout the semester. This is not a sprint. It's a marathon.

Required Text (available at Mountainlair Bookstore and Book Exchange)

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

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, you should have a solid understanding of a topic within literary studies.

Through the assignments, you should be able to demonstrate

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

Requirements

- Attendance. You are allowed three absences. If you miss more than three classes, you will fail the class. See emergency policy below.
- Initial prospectus and revised prospectus
- 5-page exploratory essay
- Annotated bibliography
- 10-page version of research paper
- 20-page research paper
- Oral presentation

Grade Breakdown

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| 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 | 20 points |
| Final research essay | 40 points |

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

- A five-page, ten-page, and twenty-page draft that engages with a difficult, original, or complex question
- A final revision that clearly demonstrates a reworking of the drafts 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. **Proofread several times.**
- Consistent use of MLA style for documentation.

Writing Tips

- Check out our Library Guide at <http://libguides.wvu.edu/english496land>
- Read your work aloud. You will *hear* mistakes that you do not see.
- 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.

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 nondiscrimination on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. I will do my best to foster a learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination.

Disabilities. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation, please let me know. You may also want to make arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700).

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 for you. Please reserve the Dean's services for emergencies.

Note about Schedule. Because this class is based on individual research and writing—and that process is somewhat unpredictable—I may need to make adjustments to the schedule below. Please be patient and stay on top of any changes.

Schedule

- Tues. Aug 23 Introductions
- Thurs. Aug 25 “An Open Letter” by Gregory Petsko. What are literary and cultural studies?
- Tues. Aug 30 How do you choose a topic? What are viable questions to pursue?
Bring to class: two typed paragraphs on your experience as an English major.
Reflect especially on courses or literary works that meant a lot to you.
- Thurs. Sept 1 Discussion of topics. What is a research prospectus?
Bring to class: list of possible topics (at least three)
- Tues. Sept 6 **Meet in the Wise Library room 136 (lower level):** How do you do research?
- Thurs. Sept 8 **Initial Prospectus due.** Discussion of research.
The prospectus should include a concise summary of your project; research questions you intend to pursue; main scholarly arguments about your subject (refer in the prospectus to at least **two** scholarly sources).
- Tues. Sept 13 Research methods; creating an annotated bibliography
- Thurs. Sept 15 **Five-page exploratory essay due**
- Announcement:** September 15 – Reading by Ellesa High and Glenn Taylor, 7:30 p.m., Colson 130
- Tues. Sept 20 **Article analysis and summary due**
- Thurs. Sept 22 Writing Workshop—analyses; introductions and conclusions
- Tues. Sept 27 **Annotated bibliography due**
- Thurs. Sept 29 Writing Workshop—basic editing

(Rosh Hashanah)
- Tues. Oct 4 No class--Writing Day
- Thurs. Oct 6 **10-page draft of research paper due**
Oral presentation strategies
- Announcement: Reading** October 10 -- Sturm Writer-in-Residence (poet) Carol Frost, 7:30 p.m., Gold Ballroom, Mountainlair
- Tues. Oct 11 No class—individual conferences
- Thurs. Oct 13 No class—individual conferences
- Announcement: Reading** October 14 -- Novelist and short story writer Valerie Nieman, noon, Colson 130

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| Tues. Oct 18 | No class—individual conferences |
| Thurs. Oct 20 | No class—individual conferences |
| Tues. Oct 25 | 10-page final research paper due. Preparing for the oral presentation |
| Thurs. Oct 27 | Oral presentations (15 – 20 min) |
| Tues. Nov. 1 | Oral presentations |
| Thurs. Nov. 3 | Oral presentations |
| Tues. Nov 8 | Oral presentations |
| Thurs. Nov 10 | Revised prospectus due |
| Tues. Nov 15 | Writing Workshop |
| Thurs. Nov 17 | Writing Workshop |
| <u>Thanksgiving Break</u> | |
| Tues. Nov 29 | Rough drafts of 20-page paper due |
| Thurs. Dec 1 | Workshop on rough drafts |
| Tues. Dec 6 | Workshop on rough drafts |
| Thurs. Dec 8 | Final thoughts |

Research Paper due date will be announced.