

English 496 - Capstone: Senior Thesis

Prof. Gwen Bergner * T/Th 11:30-12:45 * WDB--D109 * Spring 2013
Office: 239 Colson Hours: T/Th 1:00-2:30, & by appt. gbergner@wvu.edu 304.293.9705

Mentor: Mike Buso M/W 10:15-11:15 Colson G19 mbuso@mix.wvu.edu

In the major capstone course you get to delve into a literary subject of your choosing in order to write an original, creative, and meaningful research paper. The 20-page research paper is the end goal, and this course will help you reach it by breaking the process into manageable chunks. 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. In the latter part of the semester we will address how to organize your ideas, select the best sources, check your documentation style, and revise drafts. Toward the end of the semester, you will present your research to the class. The course will strengthen your ability to analyze materials, compose compelling essays, and present your ideas effectively.



Required Text

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers

This course helps you meet the Program Goals for the English major through a series of assignments linked to a set of Learning Outcomes:

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

Interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts:

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

Demonstrate a general knowledge of the social and structural aspects of the English language.

Demonstrate a range of contextually effective writing strategies.

Learning Outcomes—By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- demonstrate awareness of academic discourse and research on a particular topic.
- conduct, analyze, and synthesize research on a topic.
- compose academic prose using appropriate tone, style, and sentence structure.
- quote, cite, and document research according to conventions of academic writing.
- construct a unified, coherent, supported, and critically thoughtful original essay.
- present orally the results of research and argument with clear proficiency.

Requirements

Attendance	3 absences allowed; additional absence triggers failing grade
Initial prospectus	5 points
Annotated bibliography	5 points
Summary of critical sources	5 points
10-page research paper	30 points
Oral presentation	10 points
Revised prospectus	5 points
20-page research paper	40 points

Grade 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 (61-70); F (60 or below)

Note: You must complete all assignments and attend class regularly for a passing grade.

Grading 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.
- Helpful information from secondary sources to locate your primary text within literary, cultural, and/or political history.
- Appropriate (balanced, comprehensive, concise) use of secondary sources to locate your argument within a larger critical context or academic conversation.
- 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.

Criteria for grading annotated bibliographies, summaries of critical sources, and oral presentations will be based on assignment guidelines handed out separately.

Writing Resources

- WVU Library Guide for Engl 496: <http://libguides.wvu.edu/english496>
- Purdue's fabulous Online Writing Guide (OWL) on MLA style: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/11/>
- "Basic in-text citation": <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/>
- "Basic Works Cited": <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/05/>
- The Writing Center in Colson G02 is available for writing assistance. You can drop in or call for an appointment: **304.293.5788.**

Policies

Attendance Policy

Consistent class attendance helps students succeed academically and enriches our class dynamics. Therefore, attendance is required. **You are granted three absences without penalty.** Use these for school trips, illness, family emergencies, etc. You do not need to clear these absences with me. If you miss more than three classes, you will fail the course.

If you have an emergency or serious health problem during the semester, please 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.

Late Work

One full letter grade will be deducted per day for late submissions unless you make **prior** arrangements with me. Assignments will not be accepted by email without prior permission or unless specified on the syllabus or in assignment guidelines. You must complete all assignments and attend class regularly for a passing grade.

Electronic “Handouts,” Assignment Guidelines, and Supplementary Course Materials

I will often distribute assignment guidelines and other materials by email and on eCampus. You **MUST** have access to these materials **in class**, in either electronic or hard copy format.

E-Mail

Please check your MIX e-mail account regularly for course news and announcements. Although email etiquette has relaxed with the advent of smart phones, please be courteous and clear in your communication so that I can help you. No texting in class, please.

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, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. 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 Student Conduct Code at

http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code.

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 me *before* the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

Social Justice Policy

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

Schedule

Week 1

- Tue., Jan 15 What is a senior thesis? And why write one anyway?
- Thur., Jan 17 How do you create a topic?
Bring to class: Two typed paragraphs reflecting on meaningful courses or literary works.

Week 2

- Tue., Jan 22 Discussion of topics. What is a research prospectus?
Bring to class: List of possible topics (minimum of three topics).
- Thur., Jan 24 Research workshop: Annotated bibliographies

Week 3

- Tue., Jan 29 Research workshop: **Meet in the Downtown Library, Room 136**
- Thur., Jan 31 Library Research Day

Week 4

- Tue., Feb 5 **Due: Annotated bibliography (7 sources minimum)**
- Thur., Feb 7 **Due: Summary of two sources**

Week 5

- Tue., Feb 12 **Due: Initial Prospectus**
 Writing Workshop: theses, introductions, paragraph structure
- Thur., Feb 14 **Due: Draft of intro. & body par. for 10pp. essay (2 copies)**
 Writing Workshop: quotations and peer editing with Mike Buso

Week 6

- Tue., Feb 19 No class: Writing Day
- Thur., Feb 21 **Due: Draft of 10-page research paper**
 Oral presentation strategies

Week 7

- Tue., Feb 26 No class—individual conferences
- Thur., Feb 28 No class—individual conferences

Week 8

- Tue., Mar 5 No class—individual conferences
- Thur., Mar 7 No class—individual conferences

Week 9

Tue., Mar 12 **Due: 10-page research paper**

Thur., Mar 14 Oral presentations

Week 10

Tue., Mar 19 Oral presentations

Thur., Mar 21 Oral presentations

Spring Break**Week 11**

Tue., Apr. 2 **Due: Revised prospectus**

Thur., Apr. 4 **Due: Rough draft of introduction & outline of 20pp. paper**

Week 12

Tue., Apr. 9 No class: Writing Day/Optional Office Hours
(Required individual conferences with Mike Buso)

Thur., Apr 11 Writing Workshop—Bring to class 2 copies of paper draft
(Required individual conferences with Mike Buso)

Week 13

Tue., Apr 16 No class: Writing Day/Optional Office Hours
(Required individual conferences with Mike Buso)

Thur., Apr 18 Writing Workshop—bring to class 2 copies of paper draft
(Required individual conferences with Mike Buso)

Week 14

Tue., Apr 23 **Due: Rough draft of 20-page paper**

Thur., Apr 25 No class: Individual conferences with instructor and mentor

Week 15

Tue., Apr 30 No class: Individual conferences with instructor and mentor

Thur., May 2 No class: Individual conferences with instructor and mentor

Due: Senior Thesis on Tuesday, May 7, Noon, my mailbox in Colson Hall