



COURSE OUTLINE

Course Number
LAS 201

Course Title
Liberal Arts Special Topics

Credits
1

Hours: 1 lecture

Co- or Pre-requisite: ENG101

Implementation
Fall 2023

Catalog description (as it appears in 2022-2023 edition):

Investigation of a specialized liberal arts topic chosen by individual instructors, allowing students to delve into a focused interest. Recommended for second-year students who need one credit and wish to engage in close study. Upcoming topics available in the Liberal Arts Division office each semester before class registration begins.

General Education Category:
Not General Education

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Required texts/other materials:

It is up to the individual professor to choose the readings for the class depending on the specific topic of investigation. The amount of material, which can be drawn from a short book, short stories, scholarly and popular articles, government documents, podcasts, videos, films, and other sources found by the students should be the equivalent of about 200-250 pages of reading/listening.

Sample topics:

Mental Health on College Campuses

Justice: Social Science and the Law

Privilege in America

Author- or Thinker-Based Topics such as Nietzsche, Toni Morrison, or James Joyce

Genre-Based Topics such as The Quest Motif and Western Individualism, The Gothic,

or Science Fiction Now

Fake News vs. Real Journalism

Using Tools of Journalism to Reduce Social Anxiety

Film Studies, with a revolving section focus on prejudice, crime, capitalism, the individual/state, or war

The U.S. Electoral System and Democracy

American Subcultures (e.g. Music Subcultures)

Literacy for Baccalaureate Studies and Workplace Success

Information resources: Describe the primary information resources that support the course, including books, videos, journals, electronic databases, websites, etc. To request new materials for your course, use the library request form at: www.mccc.edu/student_library_course_form.shtml)

The information resources related to the course will depend highly on the topic chosen by the professor and will vary each semester. Individual instructors will be responsible for contacting the library and bookstore during the previous semester about any required texts or multi-media sources. Access to the library research databases will be crucial.

Other learning resources: (Describe any other student learning resources that are specific to this course, including any special tutoring or study group support, learning system software, etc.)

No extra support from Mercer is needed other than freely-available library resources.

Course Competencies/Goals (SLOs): [List the most important 5-8 overall student learning outcomes for your course. Course-level student learning outcomes (or Course Competencies/Goals) are statements that describe the specific, measurable knowledge, skills, and/or values that the student is expected to demonstrate, perform or exhibit after completion of the course. Student learning outcomes should focus on what the students will learn (rather than what the instructor will teach) and must include verbs (explain..., demonstrate..., analyze...) that reflect lower-order and higher-order learning goals.]

The student will be able to:

1. apply multi-disciplinary, critical thinking gained through Liberal Arts coursework to investigate a specific topic. (ILG 1, 4-9, 11; PLO 1, 3, 4). *[Methods of assessment: research assignments, discussion, presentation and/or written work]*
2. demonstrate ability to find credible and applicable research sources (ILG 1, 4, 10, 11; PLO 4). *[Methods of assessment: discussion-leading, annotations and/or research journal, group or individual presentation]*
3. articulate independent thinking in writing and speaking. (ILG 1, 4, 11; PLO 1, 2, 3). *[Methods of assessment: participation in discussion, discussion-leading, individual or group presentation, paper or other written response]*
4. gain confidence in small- and large-group participation. (ILG 1,11; PLO 1). *[Methods of assessment: small- and large-group work; focus group, survey, or course evaluation]*
5. recognize the benefit of building knowledge through sharing and valuing diverse perspectives across a wide spectrum of difference. (ILG 1, 6, 8, 11; PLO 1, 2). *[Methods of assessment: small- and large-group work, written responses, or course evaluation]*

Course-specific Institutional Learning Goals (ILGs)/General Education Goals

Institutional Learning Goal 1. Written and Oral Communication in English. Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing.

Institutional Learning Goal 4. Technology. Students will use computer systems or other appropriate forms of technology to achieve educational and personal goals.

Institutional Learning Goal 5. Social Science. Students will use social science theories and concepts to analyze human behavior and social and political institutions and to act as responsible citizens.

Institutional Learning Goal 6. Humanities. Students will analyze works in the fields of art, music, or theater; literature; philosophy and/or religious studies; and/or will gain competence in the use of a foreign language.

Institutional Learning Goal 7. History. Students will understand historical events and movements in World, Western, non-Western or American societies and assess their subsequent significance.

Institutional Learning Goal 8. Diversity and Global Perspective. Students will understand the importance of a global perspective and culturally diverse peoples

Institutional Learning Goal 9. Ethical Reasoning and Action. Students will understand ethical frameworks, issues, and situations.

Institutional Learning Goal 10. Information Literacy. Students will recognize when information is needed and have the knowledge and skills to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information for college level work.

Institutional Learning Goal 11. Critical Thinking. Students will use critical thinking skills understand, analyze, or apply information or solve problems.

Course-Specific Program Learning Outcomes for Liberal Arts (PLOs)

1. **Concept Knowledge.** Understand the vocabulary, methods, and major concepts presented in the humanities, social sciences, and the natural sciences.
2. **Communication.** Articulate complex ideas clearly and effectively, both verbally and in writing.
3. **Critical Thinking.** Perform a series of thinking tasks including speculation, analysis, and synthesis [i.e., abstract reasoning.
4. **Research Methods.** Utilize research materials and methodologies.

Units of study in detail.

Note: All units are thematic rather than sequential; we will be working on these concepts throughout the course as they overlap and flow together. Each unit ends at the end of the semester.

Unit I **Icebreaker; Introduction to the specific topic and its relevance to today's world; exploration of how various Liberal Arts disciplines can be brought to bear upon it. [Supports Course SLO 1, 5]**

Learning Objectives

The student will be able to...

- demonstrate necessary background knowledge on the special topic
- identify multi-disciplinary ways to gather information and ask questions about the special topic
- explain broad social implications of the topic and how it impacts a wide range of people
- employ discipline-specific methods to investigate the topic

Unit II **Individuals/small groups conduct research [Supports Course SLO 1, 4]**

Learning Objectives

The student will be able to...

- find a variety of credible and applicable research sources, with the option of also conducting some form of primary research (survey, observation, interview with an expert)
- annotate their research sources to focus on the key findings rather than side issues
- employ critical thinking to apply that research to the special topic in an original way, considering wider implications of their claims

Unit III **Individual/small group discussion-leading/presentation of their research [Supports Course SLO 1-5]**

Learning Objectives

The student will be able to...

- accurately articulate the key findings of their research.

- ask independently-derived questions of their research and its ramifications.
- interrogate the topic using the disciplinary methods of a particular branch of the Liberal Arts—such history, psychology, sociology, philosophy, literary studies.
- explain their positions regarding the topic in a clear, research-based manner
- engage the group in a spirited discussion of their research and findings

**Unit IV Interdisciplinary Thinking. Using multiple approaches and perspectives.
[Supports Course SLO 1-5]**

Learning Objectives

The student will be able to...

- articulate the way disciplinary inquiry can overlap and interconnect to form interdisciplinary, collaborative approaches to problem-solving and interpretation.
- relate the work of the course back to the concept of Liberal Arts as a way to both broaden the self and improve life for all.

Evaluation of student learning. Students will be evaluated by the following:

Note: As a 1-credit, 2-hour per week, half-semester seminar course, much of the work should be collaborative and participatory rather than based on individual testing and essay-writing.

40-60% (400-600 points) Group discussion-leading or presentation, participation, attendance, small- and large-group work.

40-60% (400-600 points) Annotations and notes/journaling on the research, optional written responses to research assignments. Final project such as group presentation, podcast, video, short essay (4-5 pages), or essay-based 1-hour final exam.

Academic Integrity: Students should be familiar with Mercer's Academic Integrity Policy, found [here](#). Claiming another's work as one's own is **one of the most serious academic crimes**. Students plagiarize when they submit another person's writing or ideas as their own in online or onsite discussion, presentation slides, or written responses to the reading. This includes both intentional (copy/pasting ideas from the web, another student, or any other source without citation) and unintentional plagiarism (providing a citation but not using quotation marks around exact borrowed wording, for instance). Students in doubt as to whether or not to cite an idea or words they borrow from someone else should always provide citation to be safe. We will review how to ethically and legally use other people's ideas and words, and students will be graded on how carefully they do this. Except when students are clearly and intentionally substituting another's work for their own, most cases of plagiarism can be avoided by careful citation.