

Dr. Christopher A. Shinn
Georgetown University
Saturdays, 10:00am – 1:25pm
Location TBA
Summer Session 2012

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WRITING IN AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ENVIRONMENT (BLHS 120-40)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will introduce students to academic writing, focusing on the development of critical methods in interdisciplinary research. The class will address the primary aspects of argument, method, organization, evidence gathering, persuasion, mechanics, form and style. To write with precision and care and to persuade others through writing indeed demand the utmost skill of an artisan. As Edmund Morrison writes, “Like stones, words are laborious and unforgiving, and the fitting of them together, like the fitting of stones, demands great patience and strength of purpose and particular skill.” We will identify the primary stages of writing and explain how to express one’s critical ideas, as Joe Williams suggests, with clarity and grace--from settling on a topic to organizing one’s thoughts and presenting them as effectively as possible. Students will learn to identify and select certain analytical questions that pertain to specific fields or disciplines (e.g., literary theory and criticism, cultural studies, media studies, communications, psychology, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, women’s studies, public policy and planning, intellectual history, art history, religion, ethics, and science). Students will be encouraged to examine key methodological relations between two or more fields. We will seek to sharpen and narrow the focus of our investigations, while at the same time examining critical issues from multidisciplinary vantage points. Students will conduct research on historic events, current affairs, and future outcomes, exploring the connections between critical methodologies and interpretation. We will supplement our weekly discussions with articles, essays, fiction, and film screenings from around the world. Students will have the opportunity to discuss and share their writing and ideas in a collaborative and open environment of respectful and positive exchange.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Aaron, Jane E. *The Little, Brown, Compact Handbook*. 7th Edition. NY: Longman, 2009. ISBN-13: 978-0205651702.

Mehta, Gita. *A River Sutra*. NY: Vintage International, 1993.
ISBN-13: 978-0679752479.

Williams, Joe. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. 10th Edition. NY: Longman, 2010.
ISBN-13: 978-0205747467.

**A Selection of scholarly articles, stories, poems and essays have been posted on Blackboard.

Course materials are available for purchase in the Georgetown Bookstore.

RECOMMENDED READINGS FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES:

ART HISTORY

Arnold, Dana. *Art History: A Very Short Introduction*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2004.

D'Alleva, Anne. *Look! The Fundamentals of Art History*. NY: Prentice Hall, 2006.

Hatt, Michael and Charlotte Klonk. *Art History: A Critical Introduction to Its Methods*. Manchester University, 2006.

MEDIA STUDIES

Campbell, Richard, et al. *Media and Culture Fifth Edition: An Introduction to Mass Communication*. 5th edition. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2005.

Long, Paul and Tim Wall. *Media Studies: Texts, Production, Context*. NY: Longman, 2009.

Stokes, Jane. *How to Do Media and Cultural Studies*. NY: Sage Publications, 2003.

Turow, Joseph. *Media Today: An Introduction to Mass Communication*. 3rd Edition. T & F Books US, 2009.

LITERARY STUDIES

Goodman, Lizbeth. *Literature and Gender*. NY: Routledge, 1996.

Whites, James Boyd. *The Legal Imagination*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Ward, Ian. *Law and Literature: Possibilities and Perspectives*. NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Furseth, Inger and Pal Repstad. *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*. UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2006.

Bowie, Fiona. *The Anthropology of Religion: An Introduction*. UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006.

Spilka, Bernard and Daniel N. McIntosh. *The Psychology of Religion: Theoretical Approaches*. UK: Westfield Press, 1997.

See "Writing the Religion Paper":

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/humanities/religion.shtml>

HISTORY

Howell, Martha C. and Walter Prevenier. *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Presnell, Jenny L. *The Information-Literate Historian*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Storey, William Kelleher. *Writing History: A Guide For Students*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1999.

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Marsh, David and Gerry Stoker. *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 1994.

Wolff, Jonathan. *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2006.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students will be asked to attend each class meeting promptly and participate actively. Active participation requires completion of the assigned readings before they are to be reviewed in class and joining in small and larger group discussions on the materials. Attendance and participation are required. **Please note that three absences will be grounds to be involuntarily dropped from the course.** The student's success depends upon the level of engagement one brings to the course, and one's grade will subsequently reflect the quality and effort each student demonstrates throughout the

semester and the proficiency of one's comprehension of the materials. The student will be asked to complete a series of short writing exercises, deliver two class presentations, submit a formal outline and draft, write two analytical essays and complete a final research paper (the topic will be selected by the student and will be approved by the instructor). The total percentage of your grade will be determined according to the following scale:

- 5% short writing exercises
- 10% short film analysis
- 20% critical essay #1
- 20% critical essay #2
- 15% class presentations (style and critical methods)
- 30% final research project
(approximately 10-15 pages, not including "Works Cited"
and notes**)

**The documentation for your research papers must follow the MLA, APA or the Chicago (Turabian) format. The choice of format and documentation depends on the methods and topic of your paper (see *The Little, Brown, Compact Handbook* for a brief explanation on the rules of proper documentation).

FINAL LETTER GRADES:

Based on the scores and percentages above, your point totals will determine your final grade according to the following criteria:

93% and above	A
90% - 92%	A-
87% - 89%	B+
83% - 86%	B
80% - 82%	B-
77% - 79%	C+
73% - 76%	C
70% - 72%	C-
67% - 69%	D+
63% - 60%	D
59% and below	F

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Design detailed and sophisticated arguments that use precise rhetorical strategies in academic writing.
- Apply specific types of critical methodologies in the Humanities and the Arts and the Social Sciences.
- Learn the basis for interdisciplinary research and the meta-reflexive nature of academic inquiry.
- Conduct field research that draw upon ethnographies, oral histories, evidence gathering, description, analysis, statistics and the interpretation of data and information.
- Correct informal fallacies in argument and explain why they fail to have proper internal coherence.
- Define the six basic organizational schemes (arguments that are based on category; definition; causality; resemblance; evaluation and ethics; and proposal) in relation to stasis theory.
- Develop an understanding of classical argument by identifying the exordium, narratio, propositio, partitio, the enthymeme, the warrant, grounding, backing, the confutatio, qualifier, concession, confirmatio and peroratio, which impact the assumptions and beliefs of readers and audience.
- Identify and apply rhetorical strategies from Stephen Toulmin's system.
- Avoid mechanical errors in one's writing and to document sources correctly according to MLA, Chicago and APA formats.
- Apply concrete techniques that pertain to the elements of style in writing.
- Broaden one's understanding of world literature, film, and culture through the study of acclaimed works by Homer, Jhumpa Lahiri, Gita Mehta, Ang Lee, Richard Wright and Zora Neale Hurston.
- Use a range of scholarly works in critical thinking and written analysis.
- Determine credible and authoritative sources in library research, including computer-related sources, e.g. search engines and Internet websites, to use and avoid.
- Think historically and diachronically in order to understand how concepts develop over time in order to establish an intellectual framework for arguments.
- Be able to compose several drafts in consultation with students in peer-reviewed workshops.
- Write well-crafted sentences and paragraphs.
- Be able to transition smoothly from one idea to the next.
- Be able to synthesize materials and write about them cogently.
- Develop a sense of diction and the appropriate uses of language.
- Establish a foundation for academic writing across disciplines.

WRITING CENTER — Students that would benefit from additional assistance in their writing should visit the Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu>) in the second floor of Lauinger Library. Please take advantage of this service in developing your analytical writing skills.

INCOMPLETE POLICY — No incomplete grades will be given for the course. In the event of an extreme circumstance such as a death in the family, serious illness or other major problem, you may request special consideration to the general rule above.

LATE POLICY — Students are expected to turn in all class assignments by the specified due date. You must bring the professor a hard copy of the assignment; do not send your paper electronically, or the paper will not be counted. The student's grade will be lowered one full step for each day that the assignment has not been received after the due date. Should you experience any difficulties in meeting a deadline, it is your responsibility to contact the professor before the due date to make arrangements for an extension so that you will not be penalized. Once a new due date has been set, the student must abide by the agreement that has been made.

GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM —The university community seeks to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity, and students should be apprised of the consequences of violating these honor codes. **Should the student be found guilty of plagiarism or cheating, he or she will be given an automatic "F" for the course and will receive further university disciplinary action.** For information on the university's policy on academic integrity, please consult the Academic Honor System, which can be found on the Georgetown University website: <http://library.georgetown.edu/odyssey/plagiarism.htm>.

Georgetown Honor System: Students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. You will need to read the honor code material that can be found at www.georgetown.edu/honor. In particular, please read the following documents: *Honor Council Pamphlet*, "What is Plagiarism?"; "Sanctioning Guidelines"; and "Expedited Sanctioning Process."

Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you will abide by the Georgetown honor pledge:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

AMERICAN WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA): Georgetown University complies fully with the ADA requirements and encourages students with disabilities to receive the extra time and/or assistance needed to complete their courses. Please see the instructor about your specific needs and take advantage of the University Services for Students with Disabilities (see <http://ldss.georgetown.edu>). If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 (arc@georgetown.edu) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining

reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

Week One: Sat., May 26th

INTRODUCTION TO COURSE:
WRITING IN AN INTERDISCIPLINARY
ENVIRONMENT

Case Studies: Homer, selections from *The Iliad*
(Blackboard)
A Selection of Paintings and
Documentary Photographs
Richard Wright, "The Library Card."
(See <http://www.is.wayne.edu/mnissani/Fall2003/library.HTM>)

Week Two: Sat., June 2nd

STRATEGIES OF ARGUMENT:
LOGOS, ETHOS AND PATHOS
John Lukacs, "Seventy Years Later." (Blackboard)
Read: *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook*, Ch. 2: "Writing in and Out of College," pp. 68-137.
Blackboard Readings: Michelle Malkin, "Racial Profiling: A Matter of Survival"; Arsalan Iftikhar, "Losing Liberties"; Michelle Levin, "The Case for Torture"; McQ, "Situational Ethics and the Argument for Torture."

Week Three: Sat., June 9th

STRATEGIES OF ARGUMENT:
THE ART OF PERSUASION

Blackboard Reading: Jhumpa Lahiri, "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" and "A Temporary Matter" (Blackboard); *Style*, 1-2.

Week Four: Sat., June 16th

WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES
METHODOLOGIES IN THE ARTS &
HUMANITIES

Class Presentations

Read: *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook*, Ch. 8: "Writing in the Disciplines," pp. 381-402; Ch. 3-4, *Style*; Gita Mehta, *A River Sutra*, pp. 1-161.

Week Five: Sat., June 23rd

METHODOLOGIES IN THE ARTS & HUMANITIES, continued.

****Class Presentations****

Read: *A River Sutra*, pp. 162-282; Ch. 5-6, *Style*.

Short Writing Assignment (Analytical Paper) Due

Week Six: Sat., June 30th

METHODOLOGY IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

****Class Presentations****

Read: Ch. 7-8, *Style*.

Week Seven: Sat., July 7th

METHODOLOGY IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND/OR THE NATURAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES

****Class Presentation****

Film Screening: Ang Lee's *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994)

Week Eight: Sat., July 14th

ORGANIZATION & DEVELOPMENT

Categorical & Definitional; Cause/Consequence; Resemblance; Evaluation; Ethical; Proposal.

Read: *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook*, Ch. 1: "The Writing Process," pp. 3-68; and Ch. 7: "Research Writing," pp. 316-77; Ch. 9-12, *Style*.

Short Writing Assignment Due

Week Nine: Sat., July 21st

EVIDENCE GATHERING

Readings:

Gerri-Ann Galanti, "How to Do Ethnographic Research." For a copy of the article, see:

<http://www.ggalanti.com/articles/ehtnoresearch.pdf>

"An Ethnography Primer":

http://www.nus.edu.sg/nec/InnoAge/documents/ethnography_primer.pdf

Reading on Blackboard:

Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History*;
Selections from Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road*

Introduction to Field Research Project

Week Ten: Sat., July 28th

EVIDENCE GATHERING
Library and Online Research

Week Eleven: Sat., Aug. 4th

MECHANICS, FORM AND DOCUMENTATION

Read: *The Little, Brown Compact*

Handbook, Ch. 4-6: "Sentence Parts and Patterns,"
"Punctuation," "Spelling and Mechanics," pp. 143-
179; "MLA Documentation and Format," "APA
Documentation & Format," "Chicago/CSE," pp.
403-508.

Short Writing Assignment (In-Class Work)

**Short Writing Assignment (Paper on
Ethnography and/or Oral History)**

Due

**Final Research Project Due Date – Tuesday,
August 14th, 1pm, in New North 306.**

BLHS 120-40
Georgetown University
Dr. Shinn

CLASS PRESENTATIONS

Instructions:

Each student will be required to complete two class presentations, which will help to enhance our study of: 1) specific disciplines, critical issues or field methods; and 2) the art and technique of writing. The first class presentation noted above will be an in-depth and expanded study of a disciplinary field or fields, while the second presentation is intended to be a short, discussion-oriented summation and highlighting of key aspects in a chapter, or group of chapters, in Joe Williams' *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. Each class presentation will be graded on: 1) accuracy, quality and usefulness of the information; 2) the effectiveness of building on our course materials or expanding on them significantly; 3) creativity and thought; and 4) the ability to engage and involve other students in class participation.

CLASS PRESENTATION ON CRITICAL METHODS

The class presentation on critical methods will be either an individual or a group presentation, depending on your individual preference and the number of students that express shared interest in a given field. However, since there may be more than one student that signs up for a particular topic on a field (e.g. art history), you may need to consult with your fellow students that wish to present on the same topic so that there is not significant overlap. You may decide to work as a group in which case you can each present on different aspects of a field (e.g. concepts or key terms in art history; general methods in art history; the study of specific artists or periods; the major art historians; or an interdisciplinary approach to art history and media studies). The purpose of this assignment is, first of all, to provide you with some background and information on how you might write your final research paper based on applied methods in specific disciplines. The research that you find will thus assist you in reflecting on how you might approach your final research paper topic. Studying what social scientists do, for example, will aid you in how you collect, interpret and analyze your data. Secondly, the class presentation will introduce other students to creative and analytical ways of approaching their final paper topics. Students may not have a basic knowledge or foundation of a particular discipline, so your explanation will help to teach others and to spark their own critical imaginations about how historians, literary critics, anthropologists, and philosophers often approach their object of study.

You will want to present information in an orderly, clear and concise manner, avoiding excessive technical jargon. Although you may be very knowledgeable about your subject matter, keep in mind that your class presentation will serve as a basic introduction to a field or set of fields. Presenting information on a discipline and its

methodologies can quickly become overly detailed and confusing, so strike a good balance between giving us a substantive, in-depth study of the field and a simple, straightforward account of how one might develop his or her approach to a topic by means of your chosen discipline. Be sure to include in the individual or group presentation critical tools (key concepts, questions and ideas) and concrete examples (case studies, applied methods, close readings, and so on).

The general guidelines for the class presentation are as follows:

1. Each student will be given approximately 7-10 minutes to present his or her research and class presentation. Please be mindful of other students, and be sure to keep within this time frame.
2. You will need to provide a handout for the class that is informative and that complements your research and analysis. Do not simply cut-and-paste information from your PowerPoint presentation, though you may directly use some parts in the handout.
3. Use visual aides (film clips or interviews, for instance). A PowerPoint presentation would satisfy this requirement.
4. Encourage active participation. You might offer some possible discussion questions or give a questionnaire or ask students to read and perform certain passages. Be imaginative in how you present the materials and think about what would be of interest to your peers.
5. You will not be required to present on all aspects of a field but select only what is most critical and useful and expand on it for the value of the students in the class.

CLASS PRESENTATION ON *STYLE*

Each student will have the opportunity to lead discussion on one of the chapters in our common textbook, Joe Williams' *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. The class presentation should give a brief overview of the chapter or chapters. You do not need to give a PowerPoint presentation, though you may opt to do so if you so choose. However, you should provide a class handout that summarizes the chapter or chapters in an organized and clear manner. You will select certain parts of a chapter to be discussed in greater detail. Select what might be of interest to yourself and others in the class and expand on the significance of the technique or style. What is the lesson that the book suggests, and how might the specific technique, element of style, and writer's advice, contribute to our own academic and professional writing? What stands out as being unique and singular in Williams' approach to writing? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? It might be helpful to give a short exercise of some kind to generate discussion and participation and to apply certain approaches to our writing. The basic formal requirements of this class presentation are as follows: 1) a handout; 2) a 5-7 minute presentation; and 3) group activity or participation.