

Dr. Christopher A. Shinn  
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Saturdays, 10:30am – 1:00pm  
Location: 640 Mass Ave. TBA

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**WRITING IN AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ENVIRONMENT (BLHS 120-01)  
(Spring Semester 2017)**

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*. 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. NY: Longman, 2011. ISBN-13: 978-0205236602.

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

Williams, Joe. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. 11<sup>th</sup> Edition. NY: Longman, 2013.  
ISBN-13: 978-0321898685.

\*\*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*. 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 constitute grounds to fail 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-
79% - 70%	C
67% - 69%	D+
60% - 66%	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.

TURNITIN.COM—Students acknowledge that by taking this course all required papers must be submitted for a Textual Similarity Review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be added as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers in the future. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

DISABILITIES—If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu).

EXTREME WEATHER, EMERGENCIES, AND INSTRUCTIONAL CONTINUITY—During inclement weather or other emergencies on a day when we are scheduled to meet face-to-face, check the university's Web site or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open. If the university is open, this class will meet. If the university is closed, this class will meet through distance means such as online videoconferencing; check your e-mail for a message from me on how we will proceed in that situation. Due dates for written assignments submitted through Blackboard will not be changed due to campus closings.

The university recently has acquired the capability to send text messages and recorded messages about emergencies to cell phones and other mobile devices. Sign up on MyAccess.

GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM—All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at [www.georgetown.edu/honor](http://www.georgetown.edu/honor), and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, What is Plagiarism, Sanctioning Guidelines, and Expedited Sanctioning Process. Papers in this course will all be submitted to turnitin.com for checking.

Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided 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.*

PLAGIARISM—The sources for all information and ideas in your assignments must be documented, following the style rules of the American Psychological Association. In addition, all quotations must be identified as quotations, using quotation marks and indicating the source of the quotation, as mandated by APA style. Anything less than these standards is plagiarism.

APA style is not taught in this course; a summary of APA style is available at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

In accord with university policy, all incidents of suspected plagiarism or other Honor Code violations will be reported to the Honor Council without fail.

If the Honor Council finds that a student has plagiarized or has violated the Honor Code in any other way, the student will receive a grade of F for the course.

## POLICY ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES—

The following is university policy: Georgetown University promotes respect for all religions. Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the observance of a major religious holiday or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work. Students will remain responsible for all assigned work. Students should notify professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with their classes.

### **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:**

Week One: Sat., Jan. 14<sup>th</sup>

INTRODUCTION TO COURSE:  
WRITING IN AN INTERDISCIPLINARY  
ENVIRONMENT

Case Studies: Homer, selections from *The Iliad*  
(Blackboard)  
A Selection of Paintings and  
Documentary Photographs

Week Two: Sat., Jan. 21<sup>st</sup>

STRATEGIES OF ARGUMENT  
John Lukacs, "Seventy Years Later." (Blackboard)  
Charles Johnson, "Dr. King's Refrigerator"  
**Thesis Exercise Assignment Due**

Week Three: Sat., Jan. 28<sup>th</sup>

STRATEGIES OF ARGUMENT:  
LOGOS, ETHOS AND PATHOS

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 Four: Sat., Feb. 4<sup>th</sup>

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 Five: Sat., Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>

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 Six: Sat., Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>

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 Seven: Sat., Feb. 18<sup>th</sup>

NO CLASS

Week Eight: Sat., Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>

METHODOLOGY IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

**\*\*Class Presentations\*\***

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

Week Nine: Sat., Mar. 4<sup>th</sup>

**SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS**

Week Ten: Sat., Mar. 11<sup>th</sup>

**SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS**

Week Eleven: Sat. Mar. 18<sup>th</sup>

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 Twelve: Sat., Mar. 25<sup>th</sup>

## ORGANIZATION & DEVELOPMENT

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

Week Thirteen: Sat., Apr. 1<sup>st</sup>

## 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 Fourteen: Sat., Apr. 8<sup>th</sup>

## EVIDENCE GATHERING

Readings:

Geri-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/ethnograph  
y\\_primer.pdf](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 Fifteen: Sat., April 15<sup>th</sup>

## EASTER BREAK – NO CLASS

Week Sixteen: Sat., Apr. 22<sup>nd</sup>

Library and Online Research

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

Week Seventeen: Sat., Apr. 29<sup>th</sup>

## 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)**

Special Session: TBA

Writing Workshop: Final Research Paper (150 minutes)

**Final Research Project Due Date – Thursday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 5pm. Please make sure to send an electronic copy to my e-mail address at [cas262@georgetown.edu](mailto:cas262@georgetown.edu). I will then confirm receipt of your paper. No late papers will be accepted.**