

MLS 601 Introduction to Liberal Studies: Creativity and Imagination

(Sample readings are grouped into three headings and are representative. In the final syllabus, the course will be 15 weeks and the units balanced.)

MLS 601 Introduction to Liberal Studies (3)

This foundational course is designed as an introduction to liberal studies, focused on the theme of Creativity and Imagination, and is organized on the presentation and seminar model. Students will be expected to read, summarize, critique, and analyze works from a wide variety of disciplines including the Arts, the Humanities, the Social Sciences and the Sciences; discussion will be based largely upon student presentations. Frequent written and oral presentations will help students explore confidently current issues of importance in such interdisciplinary areas of interest as Identity and the Self, Community and Behaviors, Nature and Environmentalism, and Science and Technology. Each student will write a substantial independent seminar paper to be presented in the final class meeting.

Identity

Week 1: My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey by Jill Bolte Taylor (Hardcover - May 14, 2008)

Week 2: The Last Lecture by Randy Pausch and Jeffrey Zaslow (Hardcover - April 8, 2008) – Roughcut

Week 3: Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place by Terry Tempest Williams (Paperback - Sep 1, 1992)

Week 4: The Widening Stream: The Seven Stages of Creativity by David Ulrich (Hardcover - Jun 15, 2002)

Week 5: Home: American Writers Remember Rooms of Their Own - Paperback (Oct 1, 1996) by Sharon Sloan Fiffer and Steven Fiffer

Week 6: Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain, Revised and Expanded Edition by Oliver Sacks (Paperback - Sep 23, 2008)

Community

Week 7: Dakota: A Spiritual Geography by Kathleen Norris (Paperback - April 6, 2001)

Week 8: The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan (Paperback - Aug 28, 2007)

Week 9: Alone in the Kitchen with an Eggplant - Kindle Edition - Kindle Book (Jul 19, 2007) by Jenni Ferrari-Adler

Week 10: Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood by Marjane Satrapi (Paperback - Jun 1, 2004) Graphic novel of Iran

Week 11: Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life (P.S.) by Barbara Kingsolver, Camille Kingsolver, and Steven L. Hopp (Paperback - April 29, 2008)

Week 12: A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812 by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (Paperback - Jun 4, 1991)

Nature and Technology

Week 13: Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth by Lauren Artress (Paperback - Jun 1, 1996)

Week 14: The Last Flight of the Scarlet Macaw: One Woman's Fight to Save the World's Most Beautiful Bird by Bruce Barcott (Paperback - Jan 13, 2009)

Week 15: The Way We Work by David Macaulay (Hardcover - Oct 3, 2008) Human body explained

Week 16: Descartes' Bones: A Skeletal History of the Conflict between Faith and Reason (Hardcover) by Russell Shorto

Week 17: Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder by Richard Louv (Paperback - April 10, 2008)

Final Class: Seminar Presentations in Final Class

Course Goals and Objectives:

1) Cultural History and Disciplinary Inquiry

The student will recognize different historical periods of cultural development and different disciplinary approaches to creativity and imagination.

The student can identify the characteristics of one or more major historical and cultural periods.

The student can distinguish among various disciplinary approaches to organizing information and methods of inquiry.

The student can show how a single event or movement contributes to understanding of social, political, and economic complexity in an interdisciplinary framework.

2) Scholarly Writing

The student can compose a short essay on a specific topic appropriate to the discipline.

The student can analyze a specific problem in a cultural context.

The student can write longer essays that interact with secondary sources relevant to an interdisciplinary topic.

The student will be able to locate own argument in relation to scholarly sources relevant to an interdisciplinary topic.

3) Critical Analysis

The student can apply terms of disciplinary analysis to primary texts in the service of a coherent argument.

The student is able to make connections among the different disciplinary approaches to inquiry presented, and to choose appropriate models for the analysis.

The student is able to apply terms of disciplinary analysis in conjunction with a broader perspective of interdisciplinary theory in the service of a coherent argument.

4) Information Literacy

The student can frame a research question.

The student will locate and evaluate scholarly sources.

The student can evaluate theoretical position of sources including bias.

The student is able to locate and define own theoretical position in relation to scholarly sources.

5) Oral Communication

The student will give informal presentation of critical positions.

The student will give formal presentation of critical positions.

The student can present and defend own critical position in formal arenas.

6) Professional Development

The student will be encouraged to participate in larger academic community (e.g., campus lectures and readings, attendance at local events).

The student will develop a professional identity in & out of classroom through attending conferences and completing internships.

The student will be able to write letters of application for grants, jobs, and create a professional resume.

REQUIREMENTS

In this seminar, each student will be responsible for a series of formal class presentations and an extensive academic seminar paper (15-20 pp. with bibliography).

Each student will do a series of formal presentations for the class on a more or less volunteer basis. Beginning next week, everyone will get to choose 3 presentations of author/book on a first come, first served basis; and every student will present her seminar paper research in the final class to the whole group. That is a final total of 4 presentations. As these will be professional in nature (more formal than informal--no "winging it"), I will expect you to think about the topic and to write up in several pages your conclusions. These you will read to the class and then be prepared to discuss. I am open to almost anything that will illuminate the text and increase our understanding. Please confirm your topic with me in advance in person or by email or phone. You do not need to present an answer in your presentation; I am interested in your presentation starting discussion, so a paper that presents a problem in reading or a difficulty in interpretation may be most suggestive and most effective. We will begin each week with your presentations and use them as the basis for our discussion.

Early volunteers will of course receive extra consideration. Plan for about 10 minutes (or 2-4 double-spaced pages). I will not grade these individually in the hope of encouraging you to take some intellectual chances with these presentations. They will form the starting point each week for our class discussions. (Feel free to use these short presentations to test the waters for your final project.) Trust me. I have used this technique successfully for many years. Your fear is natural.

GRADING POLICY

In this seminar, each student will be responsible for a series of formal class presentations and an extensive academic seminar paper (15-20 pp. with bibliography).

20% Attendance, Blackboard participation, & class participation

20% Class presentations

60% Final seminar paper/project (15-20 pages)