



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY
CENTRAL TEXAS

LIBS 3300:
Introduction to
Liberal Studies
Section 120 – Fall 2019
2:30 - 3:45 PM Tues/Thurs
Founder's Hall 310



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Office Hours: 4:45 PM – 5:45 PM MWR or by
appointment

Course Description

(WI) Students are introduced to the major issues in interdisciplinary studies. Students research how their academic concentrations emerged as distinct disciplines and produce a research paper and presentation of their findings.

Course Overview

This course is intended to help you take future courses in your disciplinary concentrations. It introduces concepts such as argumentation, scientific reasoning, disciplinary perspectives, interdisciplinary perspectives such as feminism and critical race theory, and then applies those concepts to examples, including substantial treatment of the problems of bullshit and conspiracism. Since the readings are drawn from a wide range of disciplines, they frequently ask different questions using different standards for determining whether an answer is sound. By the end of the course, you should be in a position to both critique those disciplinary standards and also use them to generate scholarship in your disciplines.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

After completing this course, students will be able to...

1. Choose the appropriate library tools for research on a given discipline's problems.
2. Determine the validity of information encountered on the Internet.
3. Distinguish between different modes of valid argumentation, such as hypothesis-testing and standpoint critiques.
4. Identify the paradigms or research programs that characterize their chosen disciplines.
5. Apply a given mode of argumentation to a given discipline, or to work within that discipline.
6. Identify and critique pseudoscience, bullshit, and (unproven) conspiracy theories.
7. Write a research paper using interdisciplinary standards to formulate and address an interdisciplinary problem that is relevant to at least two of each student's disciplinary concentrations.

SLO 1 will be assessed using the Academic Scavenger Hunt, SLO 2 using the Fact-Checking Exercise, SLO 3 using the Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives Exercise, SLO 4 using the Disciplinary Outline Exercise, SLOs 5-6 through in-class exercises, and SLOs 3 and 7 through the multi-stage Interdisciplinary Research Paper.

Modality

This course meets face-to-face, with supplemental materials made available online through the A&M-Central Texas Canvas Learning Management System [<https://tamuct.instructure.com>].

Required Readings

The bulk of the course readings are available on Canvas under the Files tab. The following book is required and available for purchase at the bookstore. You are under no obligation to purchase a textbook from a university-affiliated bookstore. The same textbook may also be available from an independent retailer, including an online retailer.

Allen F. Repko, Rick Szostack, and Michelle Phillips Buchberger. 2017. *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*. 2nd Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing. ISBN: 9781506346892.

Writing-Instructive Course Requirements

This is a writing-instructive course. That means that one objective of the course is to improve student writing. In concrete terms, all assignments for this course should be considered writing assignments as well as substantive ones. Your submissions should always be typed (although diagrams may be hand-drawn) and in the form of full sentences or paragraphs as appropriate. Grammar and spelling errors will reduce the credit you receive, even for otherwise correct answers. See Canvas for my pet grammatical peeves.

Of course, good writing requires more than correct spelling and grammar, and in longer pieces I'm looking for a thesis, for paragraphs to have topic sentences, and for well-cited and evidence-based argumentation. An argument is complete if it contains a claim (something you are trying to prove), evidence (properly-cited, of course), and a warrant (the evidence logically supports the claim). You must use a citation system which is standard in at least one of your disciplines. You will select the system in your first assignment, and should inform me if you need to change it for future work in the course.

Technology Requirements

This course will use the A&M-Central Texas Instructure Canvas learning management system.

Logon to A&M-Central Texas Canvas [<https://tamuct.instructure.com/>] or access Canvas through the TAMUCT Online link in myCT [<https://tamuct.onecampus.com/>]. You will log in through our Microsoft portal.

Username: Your MyCT email address. Password: Your MyCT password

Canvas Support

Use the Canvas Help link, located at the bottom of the left-hand menu, for issues with Canvas. You can select "Chat with Canvas Support," submit a support request through "Report a Problem," or call the Canvas support line: 1-844-757-0953. For issues related to course content and requirements, contact your instructor.

Other Technology Support

For log-in problems, students should contact Help Desk Central 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Email: helpdesk@tamu.edu

Phone: (254) 519-5466

[Web Chat](http://hdc.tamu.edu): [<http://hdc.tamu.edu>]

Please let the support technician know you are a Texas A&M-Central Texas student

Course Requirements and Grading

- Academic Integrity Exercise (1%): This consists of watching a brief lecture in class (also available on Canvas), taking a quiz, seeing where any mistakes on the quiz came from, and signing a statement. Once you successfully complete this exercise, you will no longer need to do so in any of my future courses. If you have successfully completed this exercise in another one of my courses, then you do not need to complete it again in this course.

*****Completing the Academic Integrity Exercise is a prerequisite to passing this course. It must be completed before you hand in your first assignment.*****

- **Rubric: You will automatically fail the course if you do not complete the Academic Integrity Exercise!**
- Participation (19%): This will be graded on a simple system that expects students to earn 25 points per session for full credit and allows room for a few points of extra credit per session as well. A student who attends and does little else in a session will receive 10 points (40% credit). A student who constructively participates once will receive 20 points (80% credit). A student who constructively participates two or more times in a session will receive 30 points (120% credit, a modest extra credit opportunity).
 - Constructive participation means making comments or asking questions that **demonstrate familiarity with the assigned readings for the session**. It also means actively engaging in any in-class exercises. On presentation days, it means asking relevant questions about others' presentations.
 - As the amount of class time devoted to lecture increases, the amount of participation expected from students decreases proportionally.
 - Lateness/leaving early reduces your credit by 20% per 15 minutes, rounding to the nearest 10%.
- Homework Exercises (30%): Each homework exercise is worth 10% of the course grade. These assignments are attached at the end of the syllabus.
- Interdisciplinary Research Paper (40%):
 - The course requires a relatively short (2500-3500 words) research paper that approaches a problem that implicates at least two disciplines that interest you using one of the following perspectives:
 - Feminism
 - Critical Race Theory
 - The STEPS approach of the textbook
 - Some other interdisciplinary perspective approved by the professor in advance. To be approved, a perspective must be more than a normative standpoint (e.g. most political ideologies); it also needs to contain an epistemic methodology (set of rules for determining what constitutes a good answer to a research question). It must also be interdisciplinary rather than a resident of only one discipline.
 - Stage Requirements
 - Stage I Requirements (5% of course grade):
 - A cover page with the title of your paper (something other than a generic "IRP Stage I" type of name), your name, the date, and the word count. These should be centered both vertically and horizontally. (5% of stage grade)

- A paragraph introducing your puzzle, why it is important, and why an interdisciplinary approach is likely to prove more successful at addressing it than a monodisciplinary approach. (15%)
- A paragraph describing the perspective being applied to the problem – its focus, methods, normative orientation (if any), and epistemology (standards for determining when we can finally say we know the answer to the puzzle). (10%)
- A paragraph describing the origins and interdisciplinarity of your perspective. (10%)
- An 500-800 word application of your perspective using at least one academic source (peer-reviewed articles, scholarly books, or the other sources that qualify in your disciplines) each, from at least two different disciplines. (40%)
- A conclusion which describes your current thesis about the problem you selected (given your perspective and the evidence you have described) and how you intend to expand the scope of that thesis or test it using additional academic sources. What are you looking for? What kinds of scholarship would tend to support or undermine your thesis? (20%)
- Proper citation throughout, along with a works cited or bibliography page. (up to 20% deduction if not consistently in the chosen citation style)
- Page numbers on all but the cover page. (up to 5% deduction if missing)
- Stage II Requirements (5% of course grade):
 - A cover page with the title of your paper (something other than a generic “IRP Stage II” type of name), your name, the date, and the word count. These should be centered both vertically and horizontally. (5% of stage grade)
 - A revised paragraph or two introducing your puzzle, why it is important, what your thesis about the puzzle or problem is, and justifying your interdisciplinary approach to it. (10% for thesis + 10% for other elements)
 - A page or two describing the perspective being applied to the problem in detail – its origins and development, focus, methods, normative orientation (if any), and epistemology (standards for determining when we can finally say we know the answer to the puzzle). (20%)
 - An 1000-1600 word application of your perspective using at least three academic sources (peer-reviewed articles, scholarly books, or the other sources that qualify in your disciplines) from each of at least two different disciplines. (50%)
 - A conclusion which describes how well your thesis explains the information you have gathered, and where you should go from here. (5%)
 - Proper citation throughout, along with a works cited or bibliography page. (up to 20% deduction if not consistently in the chosen citation style)
 - Page numbers on all but the cover page. (up to 5% deduction if missing)
- Stage III Requirements (10% of course grade):
 - A cover page with the title of your paper (something other than a generic “IRP Stage III” type of name), your name, the date, and the word count. These should be centered both vertically and horizontally. (5% of stage grade)
 - Revisions throughout as suggested or directed by the instructor. (up to 50% deduction if everything is left unrevised)
 - A 1500-2000 word application of your perspective using at least eight academic sources (peer-reviewed articles, scholarly books, or the other sources that qualify in your disciplines) spanning at least two different disciplines. (50%)

- A conclusion which describes how well your thesis explains the information you have gathered, and where scholars in the field should go from here. (5%)
 - Proper citation throughout, along with a works cited or bibliography page. (up to 25% deduction if not consistently in the chosen citation style)
 - Page numbers on all but the cover page. (up to 5% deduction if missing)
 - Your graded and marked Stage II IRP, so I can check to see what revisions you made.
- Stage IV Requirements (20% of course grade): As for Stage III, but revised and with a 100-200 word abstract added – either at the bottom of the title page, or on a separate sheet between the title page and the first page of the paper proper.
- Rubric: Your papers will be evaluated using both the system listed under each stage and the following writing rubric. The two grades will be averaged to get your overall grade for a given stage.

LIBS 3300 -- Writing Rubric for Interdisciplinary Research Papers

Grade	Thesis (20%)	Argument Structure (20%)	Evidence (50%)	Counter-Evidence (10%)
A	Addresses problem/ solves puzzle and drives the rest of the essay	The thesis is built from and supported by a series of arguments about each element of the problem or puzzle examined	Each element of the argument is supported by scholarly evidence and no major source of evidence is ignored. In general, consistent (e.g. statistical) findings are better evidence than isolated examples, where such evidence is available and appropriate for the perspective used.	Addressed, with flaws spotlighted.
B	Addresses problem/ solves puzzle, but much of the paper ignores it	Some elements of the thesis do not correspond to sections of the paper – often the case when students proceed by source instead of crafting an integrated argument	Each element of the argument is supported by evidence, but either major sources of evidence available to the student are ignored or the evidence used is simply insufficient to support one or more of the claims in the paper.	Addressed, with mixed results.
C	Addresses problem/ solves puzzle, but in such a vague manner as to be almost useless	The paper is a set of mostly-valid arguments that proceed without logical order	The evidence, when taken as a whole, fails to support the paper’s thesis, with necessary steps in the argument being assumed instead of demonstrated. Much relevant evidence is omitted and much of the support consists of direct quotes or “naked” claims (i.e. those unsupported by evidence). The paper fails to convincingly synthesize the research.	Some addressed, with mixed results.

Grade	Thesis (20%)	Argument Structure (20%)	Evidence (50%)	Counter-Evidence (10%)
D	Does not really offer a solution to the puzzle or problem motivating the research	Most of the paper is devoid of actual argument, instead following a stream-of-consciousness or "data dump" strategy	At least one major element of the paper's argument has substantial evidence that supports it. However, the other elements are supported by generally vague, irrelevant, or naked claims.	Most unmentioned; remainder are dismissed with vague statements or similar avoidance strategies
F	None	The paper is devoid of structure	The evidence is so vague or scant as to be useless for establishing the thesis.	Not addressed

- Interdisciplinary Research Presentation (10%). Prepare a 7-12 minute summary of your puzzle, model, and most interesting hypotheses. Do not use a full script, although notes are fine. Some prepared visual aid (a handout for everyone in the class and the instructor, a PowerPoint presentation, etc) is required. You will be graded on preparation, professionalism, content, and how you address questions about your work from other students or the instructor.
 - (Your own questions of the other presenters form the participation grade for this portion of the session).
 - Rubric: You will be scored on these criteria.
 - Preparation (structure, notes, use of visual aids): 0 to 100
 - Professionalism (dress, conduct, language): 0 to 100
 - Content (puzzle, perspective, thesis, evidence, most interesting arguments/findings): 0 to 100
 - Question handling: 0 to 100
 - Over/under time limits: -10 per minute over/under
 - TOTAL = _____ /400

LIBS 3300 Course Rubric

Item	Points	Percent
Academic Integrity Exercise	50, required to pass	1% *
Participation (30 sessions' worth)	750 (25 per session)	19%
Homework Assignments	1200 (400 each)	30%
Interdisciplinary Research Paper	1600 (divided between stages)	40%
Interdisciplinary Research Presentation	400	10%
TOTAL POSSIBLE	4000	100%
<i>3580+ = A 3180-3579 = B 2780-3179 = C 2380-2779 = D 2379 or lower = F</i>		

Course Policies

Attendance and Excused Absences

Attendance is required, as per Participation above. In the case of foreseeable absences, students must inform the instructor *prior to the absence*. Send me an email stating the dates(s) you will be missing and the reason(s). You should also hand me a written note with this information in class. Failure to contact the

instructor *prior to class* will normally rule out any sort of make-up, but in the case of documented emergencies, the absence may be excused if the emergency is reported as soon as is reasonably possible.

Make-Up Work, Late Work, and Incompletes

- No late work will be accepted without an excused absence. For every excused absence, the missed participation must be made up. Unless otherwise instructed, the make-up work is to write a 2-3 page (about 500-1000 words) critical essay responding to the readings for that session. Probe for weaknesses in the steps of the authors' arguments. This makes up for the missed participation. Cite your sources, although you may dispense with a Works Cited page if you only use the assigned readings from the course.
- There will be no incompletes in this class, barring actual hospitalization or unforeseen deployment after the withdrawal deadline has passed. By university policy, incompletes must be finished in the subsequent semester.

Regrades

The instructor is not perfect, and if you believe part or all of a written assignment has been graded incorrectly, you need only return it **within one week** of receiving it back from the instructor with a *brief* note specifying the part(s) to be regraded. The specified parts will be compared to the key again. After a week has passed, I can no longer be sure that you will be graded to the same standards as those used for all the other students, so work will not be regraded after this period. For participation regrades, I make my participation data available during the break and after the class so you can see how you are doing. If I failed to credit you with some or all of your participation, point it out to me after class (knowing what you said or asked would be helpful). Assuming it meets the requirements for constructive participation, the participation grade will be changed on the spot. Requests for regrades of participation must be made on the day we have class so I can still remember what you said.

Academic Integrity

University Code of Academic Honesty: Texas A&M University - Central Texas values the integrity of the academic enterprise and strives for the highest standards of academic conduct. Texas A&M-Central Texas expects its students, faculty, and staff to support the adherence to high standards of personal and scholarly conduct to preserve the honor and integrity of the creative community. Academic integrity is defined as a commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Any deviation by students from this expectation may result in a failing grade for the assignment and potentially a failing grade for the course. Academic misconduct is any act that improperly affects a true and honest evaluation of a student's academic performance and includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism and improper citation of sources, using another student's work, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. All academic misconduct concerns will be reported to the university's Office of Student Conduct. Ignorance of the university's standards and expectations is never an excuse to act with a lack of integrity. When in doubt on collaboration, citation, or any issue, please contact your instructor before taking a course of action.

For more [information regarding the Student Conduct process](https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct.html), see [https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct.html].

If you know of potential honor violations by other students, you may [submit a report](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?TAMUCentralTexas&layout_id=0), [https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?TAMUCentralTexas&layout_id=0].

Specific guidelines for this course, which supplement and do not replace University policy:

- *Violations:* There are many forms of academic misconduct. Some common violations of academic

integrity that I have observed while teaching similar classes at TAMUCT are

- Copying another student's homework. I encourage study groups, but copying must be avoided. Discuss the readings as long as you wish, but don't "share" the contents of your assignments before they are due. You may not "jointly" complete any of the homework exercises in this course unless otherwise indicated on the assignment; these are to be completed by yourself alone. If you provide another student with a copy of your homework and they copy it, both you and the copier will be deemed to have violated the policy.
- Using direct quotes without quotation marks. Even if you are just using three- or four-word phrases, you need to surround them with quotation marks if you didn't create them yourself. This is true even if you cite the source! Remember that changing a few words in a sentence does not transform a direct quote into a paraphrase; instead, it transforms one long direct quote into several shorter direct quotes with a word of your own between each. A true paraphrase is the expression of the cited source's ideas in your own words.
- Paraphrasing another person's words without citing the source.
- *Penalties:*
 - The normal penalty for a violation of academic integrity (whether or not it is specifically listed above) in any of my classes is a grade of zero for the work or a deduction of 20% (two letter grades) from your course grade, whichever is **greater**. The infraction will be reported to the TAMUCT administration, with a recommendation for probation in the case of deliberate violation or remediation in the case of clearly inadvertent violation.
 - The (a) outright purchase, download, or completion by others of an exam/IRP element, or (b) second or subsequent violation of academic integrity (in this course or other courses) display such serious disregard for academic integrity that either one of them will result in course failure **and** recommendation for the strongest possible sanctions to the TAMUCT administration.

Drop Policy

If you discover that you need to drop this class, you must complete a [Drop Request Form](https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/docs/Drop_Request_Form.pdf) [https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/docs/Drop_Request_Form.pdf].

Professors cannot drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The Registrar's Office will provide a deadline on the Academic Calendar for which the form must be completed, signed and returned. Once you return the signed form to the Registrar's Office, you must go into Warrior Web and confirm that you are no longer enrolled. If you still show as enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the Registrar's Office immediately. You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the drop deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course, which may affect your financial aid and/or VA educational benefits.

Professors are Mandatory Reporters

Texas State Law S.B. 212 (Effective September 1, 2019) states that:

- "An employee of a postsecondary educational institution who, in the course and scope of employment, witnesses or receives information regarding the occurrence of an incident that the employee reasonably believes constitutes **sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking** and is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who was a student enrolled at or an employee of the institution at the time of the incident shall promptly report the incident to the institution's Title IX coordinator or deputy Title IX coordinator."
- Further: "A person commits an offense if the person is required to make a report...and knowingly fails to make the report. ... A postsecondary educational institution shall terminate the employment of an

employee whom the institution determines in accordance with the institution's disciplinary procedure to have committed [such] an offense.”

Student Resources

- **Warrior Shield (Emergency Warning System for Texas A&M University-Central Texas)**
 - Warrior Shield is an emergency notification service that gives Texas A&M University-Central Texas the ability to communicate health and safety emergency information quickly via email, text message, and social media. All students are automatically enrolled in Warrior Shield through their myCT email account.
 - Connect to Warrior Shield by 911Cellular [<https://portal.publicsafetycloud.net/Account/Login>] to change where you receive your alerts or to opt out. By staying enrolled in Warrior Shield, university officials can quickly pass on safety-related information, regardless of your location.
- **University Library:** The University Library provides many services in support of research across campus and at a distance. We offer over 200 electronic databases containing approximately 250,000 eBooks and 82,000 journals, in addition to the 85,000 items in our print collection, which can be mailed to students who live more than 50 miles from campus. Research guides for each subject taught at Texas A&M-Central Texas are available through our website to help students navigate these resources. On campus, the library offers technology including cameras, laptops, microphones, webcams, and digital sound recorders.
 - Research assistance from a librarian is also available 24 hours a day through our online chat service, and at the reference desk when the library is open. Research sessions can be scheduled for more comprehensive assistance and may take place on Skype or in-person at the library. Assistance may cover many topics, including how to find articles in peer-reviewed journals, how to cite resources, and how to piece together research for written assignments.
 - Our 27,000-square-foot facility on the Texas A&M-Central Texas main campus includes student lounges, private study rooms, group work spaces, computer labs, family areas suitable for all ages, and many other features. Services such as interlibrary loan, TexShare, binding, and laminating are available. The library frequently offers workshops, tours, readings, and other events. For more information, please visit our [Library website](http://tamuct.libguides.com/index) [<http://tamuct.libguides.com/index>].
- **Access & Inclusion:** At Texas A&M University-Central Texas, we value an inclusive learning environment where every student has an equal chance to succeed and has the right to a barrier-free education. The Office of Access and Inclusion is responsible for ensuring that students with a disability receive equal access to the university's programs, services and activities. If you believe you have a disability requiring reasonable accommodations please contact the Office of Access and Inclusion in Warrior Hall 212; or call (254) 501-5836. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.
- For more information please visit our [Access & Inclusion](https://tamuct.instructure.com/courses/717) Canvas page (log-in required) [<https://tamuct.instructure.com/courses/717>]
 - **Important information for Pregnant and/or Parenting Students:**
 - Texas A&M University-Central Texas supports students who are pregnant and/or parenting. In accordance with requirements of Title IX and related guidance from US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, the Dean of Student Affairs' Office can assist students who are pregnant and/or parenting in seeking accommodations related to pregnancy and/or parenting. Students should seek out assistance as early in the pregnancy as possible. For more information, please visit [Student Affairs](https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/index.html) [<https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/index.html>]. Students may also contact the institution's Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to read more about these [requirements and guidelines](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf) online, please visit the website [<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf>].

- Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and gender—including pregnancy, parenting, and all related conditions. A&M-Central Texas is able to provide flexible and individualized reasonable accommodation to pregnant and parenting students. All pregnant and parenting students should contact the Associate Dean in the Division of Student Affairs at (254) 501-5909 to seek out assistance. Students may also contact the University’s Title IX Coordinator.
- **Tutoring:** Tutoring is available to all Texas A&M-Central Texas students, both on-campus and online. Subjects tutored on campus include Accounting, Advanced Math, Biology, Finance, Statistics, Mathematics, and Study Skills. Tutors are available at the Tutoring Center located in Warrior Hall 111.
 - If you have a question regarding tutor schedules, need to schedule a tutoring session, are interested in becoming a tutor, or have any other question, contact Academic Support Programs at (254) 519-5796, or by emailing Dr. DeEadra Albert-Green at deeadra.albertgreen@tamuct.edu.
 - Chat live with a tutor 24/7 for almost any subject from on your computer! Tutor.com is an online tutoring platform that enables Texas A&M-Central Texas students to log in and receive online tutoring support at no additional cost. This tool provides tutoring in over 40 subject areas. Access Tutor.com through Canvas. Tutor.com tutoring **will not offer writing support** beginning August 1, 2019 but will continue to offer other tutoring support.
- **University Writing Center:** Located in Warrior Hall 416, the University Writing Center (UWC) at Texas A&M University–Central Texas (TAMUCT) is a free workspace open to all TAMUCT students from 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Monday thru Thursday with satellite hours in the University Library Monday thru Thursday from 6:00-9:00 p.m. This semester, the UWC is also offering online only hours from 12:00-3:00 p.m. on Saturdays.
 - Tutors are prepared to help writers of all levels and abilities at any stage of the writing process. While tutors will not write, edit, or grade papers, they will assist students in developing more effective composing practices. By providing a practice audience for students’ ideas and writing, our tutors highlight the ways in which they read and interpret students’ texts, offering guidance and support throughout the various stages of the writing process. In addition, students may work independently in the UWC by checking out a laptop that runs the Microsoft Office suite and connects to WIFI, or by consulting our resources on writing, including all of the relevant style guides. Whether you need help brainstorming ideas, organizing an essay, proofreading, understanding proper citation practices, or just want a quiet place to work, the UWC is here to help!
 - Students may arrange a one-to-one session with a trained and experienced writing tutor by visiting the UWC during normal operating hours (both half-hour and hour sessions are available) or by making an appointment via [WOnline](https://tamuct.mywconline.com/) [https://tamuct.mywconline.com/]. In addition, you can email Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu if you have any questions about the UWC and/or need any assistance with scheduling.

Amendments

Not all exigencies can be foreseen. I reserve the right to amend the syllabus at any time. Any such amendment will be provided to the students in writing by uploading a revised syllabus to the course on Canvas.

Instructor's Personal Statement (not required reading, but may be of interest)

I strive to provide my students with a liberal arts education. Such an education is intended to expand human potential by emphasizing critical thinking skills, strong writing and oral communication skills, and perceptive responses to others' arguments. These goals enable students to become lifelong learners, community members, and ultimately to lead rewarding lives. Therefore, under the broad rubric of a liberal arts approach to teaching, I emphasize four objectives in my teaching: development of critical thinking skills, advancement of writing and speaking skills, moral development, and mastery of what in my judgment constitutes the "core" of the area under study. These goals determine how I construct course syllabi, which materials I use, and how I manage the classroom.

Critical Thinking Skills

I divide critical thinking skills into three components. First, students must be perceptive readers and listeners. In nearly all courses, there are either sections of the readings, lectures, or class handouts which we discuss and debate, nearly line by line. The point of these exercises is to draw students' attention to the multiple ways in which one might read a phrase or argument. Even where the course readings consist largely of a standard textbook, I try to model this skill in class discussions by initially responding to many questions with "Are you asking X, Y, or Z?" Understanding the nuances of an argument is a prerequisite to analyzing it.

Second, students should have the ability to challenge and dissect arguments made by the course materials, fellow students, or myself. There are some students who are looking for "the way it is" to be handed to them from "on high." While informing students is part of my responsibilities, I also aim to challenge those students by presenting concrete, unsolved puzzles, and then presenting a number of possible solutions, requiring them to compare the evidence for each. Since the questions I ask in class are usually open questions within the discipline of political science, there are no easy answers. When I open a class discussion, engage with students doing discussion exercises, or even grade homework assignments, I play "devil's advocate" for each student or group, taking a different position as I interact with each student. It is therefore disappointing when students simply parrot back what they believe the professor wants to hear. Their own thoughts count.

Just as important as the ability to analyze an argument is the ability to construct and defend one, choosing one among several imperfect explanations as the "best bet" for explaining a phenomenon or the superior normative framework for evaluating its ethical implications. There are some students who are very good at critiquing existing explanations, but who then use this skill as an excuse to avoid argument altogether: "None of these explanations are perfect, so it's all just a matter of opinion." This is illustrated by Russian dissident Gary Kasparov (2017):

*"The point of modern propaganda isn't only to misinform or push an agenda. It is to exhaust your critical thinking, to annihilate truth. Modern dictatorships have become far more sophisticated still in how to achieve their ends. They learned that by constant bombardment, your senses become overwhelmed. You start to doubt, to shrug your shoulders, to tune out, and that makes you vulnerable. Instead of pushing one lie, one fake, they can push a dozen, or a hundred, and that's pretty good odds against one lonely truth. **They win when you say: 'Who can be sure what really happened?'**"*

I press students to weigh the strengths and flaws of each competing explanation and identify the one which is most likely to be correct. For empirical questions, I require them to devise some way in which their preferred explanation could be tested. For normative questions, I require them to apply their framework to difficult moral questions. In sum, I try to combine the focus on argument dissection that one finds in debate with the focus on puzzle-solving that one finds in science and philosophy.

Writing Skills

As a former debater and debate coach, I appreciate the importance of being able to write and speak clearly. Of course, one of the most important ways to accomplish this is by assigning writing and speaking activities that require effective argument. In order to help students proofread their work, I post a document on Canvas illustrating the most common student grammatical errors: word mix-ups, sentence fragments, agreement of subject and verb, and improper comma or apostrophe usage.

Moral Development

One goal of a liberal arts education is to render students more capable of self-reflection and positive development. Moral education is essential to this process, yet may be the most difficult task facing an educator. Students must first be convinced that the ethical life is the best life. Fortunately, most students already have a set of values, albeit sometimes under-examined and often inconsistent ones. The task of the professor is to challenge their moral beliefs in such a manner that students have to choose between competing values and become more consistent in their moral judgments. It is not the task of the professor to ensure that students adhere to a particular value system or ideology; instead, the ideal professor will challenge students of any ideology and make them more consistent in their judgments.

For this to be possible, students need to recognize their own underlying assumptions (often their religious faith, combined with a cynical view of “human nature”) that make a system of values possible. They must then be able to defend the connections between those assumptions and their value choices. In short, political science needs to be seen as part of a broader liberal arts curriculum which prepares students to do justice (as students understand it) in the world. Otherwise, we risk training sophists who simply use their skills to manipulate others.

Subject Mastery

Finally, each class I teach has a certain “core” of material I expect students to master. This material is the necessary data for intelligent discussion of the questions posed by the course. Mastery is different than memorization; it means being able to apply the material to an unanticipated question or situation. The learning outcomes of the course reflect the knowledge of the subject I expect students to have by the end of the course.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings	Homework Due
Aug 27	Finding and Retrieving Academic Sources	– None	
Aug 29	Evaluating Evidence Through Fact-Checking	– Caulfield, “Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers”	
Sept 3	Claims, Premises, and Arguments	– Foresman, Fosl, and Watson, <u>The Critical Thinking Toolkit</u> , Excerpts (Canvas)	Academic Scavenger Hunt
Sept 5	Critically Evaluating Disciplinary Work	– Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, Chapter 8	
Sept 10	Is There a Distinction Between Facts and Values?	– Reiss, “Fact-Value Entanglement in Positive Economics” (Canvas)	Fact-Checking Exercise
Sept 12	Is Science a Method? Theories and Hypotheses	– Donovan and Hoover, “The Elements of Science” (Canvas)	
Sept 17	Is Science Special? The Demarcation Problem	– Carnap, “Inductive Logic and Science” (Canvas) – Popper, “Science as Falsification” (Canvas)	
Sept 19	The Emergence of Disciplinarity	– Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, Chapter 2	
Sept 24	Paradigms, Anomalies, and Revolutions	– Godfrey-Smith, <u>Theory and Reality</u> , Excerpts (Canvas)	
Sept 26	Research Programs as Units of Analysis	– Larvor, <u>Lakatos: An Introduction</u> , Excerpt (Canvas)	
Oct 1	Methodology or Ideology?	– Feyerabend, “How to Defend Society Against Science” (Canvas) – Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, Chapter 9	
Oct 3	The Inevitability of Perspective	– Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, Chapter 5	
Oct 8	Interdisciplinarity and Methodological Pluralism	– Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, Chapters 6-7	
Oct 10	Introducing Feminist Approaches	– Kohli and Burbules, “What is Feminism?” (Canvas)	Disciplinary Outline
Oct 15	Delineating Feminist Perspectives	– Intemann, “Feminist Standpoint” (Canvas) – Langton, “Feminism in Epistemology” (Canvas)	
Oct 17	Applications: Feminism in Law and Warfare	– Levit and Verchick, “Feminist Legal Theories” (Canvas) – Frey, “The Gender Implications of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Conflict Situations” (Canvas)	
Oct 22	The Perspective of Critical Race Theory	– Bell, “The Space Traders” (Canvas) – Delgado and Stefancic, <u>Critical Race Theory</u> , Excerpts	
Oct 24	Critical Race Theory as a Political Perspective	– Mills, <u>The Racial Contract</u> , Excerpt (Canvas)	

Date	Topic	Readings	Homework Due
Oct 29	Interdisciplinary Writing: A Process Model?	– Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger, Chapters 10-12	
Oct 31	Interdisciplinary Writing: An Example for Discussion	– Dixon, “Political Theory, Political Myth, Political Science? The Domestic Politics of <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> ” (Canvas) – <i>Optional: For a plot summary of <u>The Lord of the Rings</u>, see Ruane and James (Canvas)</i>	Interdisciplinary Research Paper (ISP) – Stage I
Nov 5	The Interdisciplinary Problem of Bullshit	– Frankfurt, “On Bullshit” (Canvas) – Cohen, “Deeper Into Bullshit” (Canvas)	
Nov 7	Pseudo-Profound Bullshit	– Pennycook et al, “On the Reception and Detection of Pseudo-Profound Bullshit” (Canvas) – Dalton, “Bullshit for You, Transcendence for Me” (Canvas) – Pennycook et al, “It’s Still Bullshit: Reply to Dalton” (Canvas) – <i>Optional: For examples of pseudo-profound BS, see also http://wisdomofchopra.com/</i>	
Nov 12	Bullshit in Education and Business	– Gaztambide-Fernández, “Bullshit as Resistance: Justifying Unearned Privilege Among Students at an Elite Boarding School” (Canvas) – Christensen, Kärreman, and Rasche, “Bullshit and Organization Studies” (Canvas)	
Nov 14	Conspiratorial Thinking as an Interdisciplinary Problem	– Uscinski, “Down the Rabbit-Hole We Go!” (Canvas)	
Nov 19	Who Believes in Conspiracy Theories?	– Uscinski and Parent, “Conspiracy Theories are for Losers” (Canvas) – Goertzel, “The Conspiracy Theory Pyramid Scheme” (Canvas) – Räikkä and Basham, “Conspiracy Theory Phobia” (Canvas)	IRP – Stage II
Nov 21	Why Do People Accept or Reject Conspiracy Theories?	– Douglas et al, “Understanding Conspiracy Theories” (Canvas)	
Nov 26	Linkages: Pseudoscience, Bullshit Receptivity, and Conspiracism	– Konda, “The Attack on Science” (Canvas) – Bensley et al, “The Generality of Belief in Unsubstantiated Claims” (Canvas)	
Nov 28	No Class – Thanksgiving	– No Class	No Class
Dec 3	Application: Leadership Studies	– Alvesson and Einola, “Warning for Excessive Positivity: Authentic Leadership and other Traps in Leadership Studies” (Canvas)	IRP – Stage III

Date	Topic	Readings	Homework Due
Dec 5	Application: Climate Change	– Lewandowsky, Cook, and Lloyd, “The ‘Alice in Wonderland’ Mechanics of the Rejection of (Climate) Science: Simulating Coherence by Conspiracism” (Canvas)	
Dec 10	Integration: Interdisciplinary	– None	Presentations
Dec 12	Explanations	– None	IRP – Stage IV

Overview: The research required for this Academic Scavenger Hunt and the paper in the course may seem intimidating. Luckily, there are a number of databases that can help you out. The following table simply organizes them by task –i.e. what are you looking for? To access the non-public databases (i.e. most of them), look on the left-hand side of the TAMUCT Library home page (<http://tamuct.libguides.com/index>) and click either the database (if listed as one of the top five) or A-Z Databases and then pick the one you want to use. If you are working from home you will need to use your myCT username and password (the same ones you use to access other resources such as email) to log in when prompted.

Purpose	Database	Notes
Find a peer-reviewed article more than a few years old	JSTOR	It's often best to only check the relevant discipline's box; of course, your topic will often involve more than one discipline.
Find a recent peer-reviewed article	Academic Search Complete	Be sure to check the "peer-reviewed" box.
Find information about an event or particular time in history	America: History and Life (US) or Historical Abstracts (Outside US)	You can select a particular time range to search.
Find information from or about scientific and medical journals, including impact factors.	Web of Science	Use the Core Collection for most purposes.
Find a specific article from a particular journal	eJournals	If we don't have the journal for the year needed, try interlibrary loan. Articles are usually sent quickly (within a few days) as pdf files.
Find a news article from more than a month ago	Nexis Uni	Be sure to specify your date range. Remember to search a day before and a day after the event you're looking for.
Find a recent news article	Google News (public)	Be sure to check the reliability of the source, since Google News includes blogs and such.
Find a law review article	Nexis Uni	Just be sure to use Advanced Search and check only the Law Reviews box.
Find a book	WarriorCat or WorldCat or Google Books (public)	If you find something good that we don't have while using WorldCat or Google Books, interlibrary loan it. It takes 1-3 weeks for an ILL book to show up.
Find a statistic	Wolfram Alpha (public)	Example: I want to find US GDP growth in 2009.
Find a thesis or dissertation	Dissertations and Theses Global	While dissertations aren't technically peer-reviewed, they can be used in the IRP.

If the above don't generate what you need	WarriorQuest or Google Scholar	Warning: Tend to produce <u>lots</u> of results, but often finds things when other searches fail. You can narrow the search by date, etc.
If all else fails...	Office hours, JeffreyDixon@tamuct.edu , or "Chat with a Librarian"	You can always email me for help. There's also a 24-hour "Chat with a Librarian" feature on the Research page of the TAMUCT library web site.

Instructions:

- A. In a brief paragraph, list your disciplinary concentrations and the standard citation system used in each of them. Then indicate which of those you will be using on this assignment and why you selected it over the alternatives, if any (10%).
- B. Answer the following questions with the best, most recent information you can find. Answers should be typed and in the form of full sentences or paragraphs with correct source citations using the format you selected (10% each).
 1. What was the first full sentence on the second page (numbered *p.10*) of the first full article in the first issue of *Sociometry*?
 2. How did the global simulation GLOBUS (used chiefly in the 1980s) differ from earlier world simulations? Note that there is more than one model called GLOBUS out there; you are looking for the one used to forecast world politics over time.
 3. What were the most recently available violent crime rates (per 100,000 people) in Chicago and Killeen?
 4. What's something Donald Trump said in a speech on April 2, 2019 – and from where was he speaking?
 5. Find a 2017-2019 peer-reviewed, *quantitative* (i.e. presenting some statistical analysis) journal article that claims that "racist resentment" or "racial resentment" increased the likelihood that whites voted for or currently support Donald Trump. How do the author or authors of the article *measure* the "racial resentment" variable? Include not only the range of the variable but also what determines where a person falls within that range.
 6. Using the two Gallup polls measuring Franklin Delano Roosevelt's job approval rating closest to Pearl Harbor, what was the net change in his approval rating after the attack (positive numbers mean an increase in approval and negative numbers mean a decrease in approval)?
 7. Which member of the UN had the highest GDP per capita in 2018?
 8. A 2016 article reviewed the literature on the number of academic citations that psychology and other medical papers receive. One of the authors was Iman Tahamtan. Into what three types did the authors divide the 28 covered factors?
- C. Attach a works cited or bibliography page (properly formatted as per part A). (10%)

Instructions: For this exercise, students will view alleged factual statements taken from a list of five websites linked on Canvas (see the Pages tab).

- A. For each of the five statements, the student should type a brief summary, containing the following information:
1. What types of evidence does the website use to support the statement? Examples might include research studies, polls and other statistics, statements of opinion or “naked claims,” analogies, interviews, and visual documentation (2% each)
 2. Trace the evidence provided for the statement. Where does the evidence ultimately come from, and are these sources reliable? (2% each)
 3. What kind of political or other agendas might lie behind the website reporting the claim and the ultimate source of the evidence for the claim? (2% each)
 4. Is the claim correct? Specify how you know, emphasizing external evidence. (2% each)
 - If yes: Is the claim incomplete or misleading? What is omitted but relevant to the discussion of the claim? (2% each)
 - If no: What is the purpose of the false claim – or is it merely a mistake? (2% each)
- B. Attach a complete, properly-formatted works cited page for the web pages themselves, the other pages and sources you used to fact-check their claims, and any other resources requiring citation in the text. (-10% if missing)

LIBS 3300
Disciplinary Outline

For any two disciplines that interest you, answer the following questions. Note that if you can interview a professor in one or both of the disciplines you choose, the questions may be easier to answer (be sure to take notes and attach them to your assignment if you interview anyone). Other obvious sources include textbooks – especially upper-level and graduate-level textbooks – and recent literature reviews on topics in the disciplines. As always, cite your sources (including any interviews) using a system preferred by one of the disciplines you choose to cover.

Questions:

1. Is the discipline a science? What leads you to either apply or not apply this term to the discipline?
2. What are the major subfields of this discipline?
3. How would you characterize the activity of scholars in the discipline – applying one or more competing paradigms to gain new insights into problems, or organizing themselves by the different kinds of puzzles or problems they are trying to solve?
4. Given your answer to question 1, what are the (Kuhnian) paradigms or (Lakatosian) research programs that account for the work of most scholars in the field? Include a brief description of each paradigm or program.
5. What are the three to five most influential journals in the discipline? Or does this discipline prepare its scholarship in some other way (books or creative activities, for example)? If so, which of those are most influential?
6. In what ways are your two disciplines distinct from one another or similar to one another in terms of what “counts” as good scholarship – that is, what gets published in the top journals?

Rubric: Each question (twelve in all – six for each discipline) is worth up to 7% of the assignment grade. The remaining 16% is based on your writing technique (6%) and proper use of citations (10%).