Course Outline

Course Number: LAS101
Course Title: Introduction to Liberal Arts Studies
Credits: 1

Hours: 1 lecture
Co- or Pre-requisite: none
Implementation: Fall 2019

Catalog description (as it appears in 2019-2020 edition):

Introduction to reading and inquiry in the social sciences and humanities. By exploring a common book-length reading, students build interdisciplinary knowledge and skill in critical reading and response, including discussion, interpretation, and writing. For first-year Liberal Arts majors needing one credit for full-time status; often paired with CSW 100.

Is course New, Revised, or Modified? New

Required texts/other materials:

One common book-length reading chosen annually by an alternating discipline within the Liberal Arts. The book should be 200-300 pages, written for the general public at a slightly challenging but accessible reading level for students placing into ENG033 or 034, reflecting an exciting nexus of ideas from across the Liberal Arts.

Sample texts:


Revision date: Course coordinator: Carol Bork, x3890, borkc@mccc.edu

MCCC Course Outline; Approved by the Curriculum Committee 12/6/07
Information resources: Describe the primary information resources that support the course, including books, videos, journals, electronic databases, websites, etc. To request new materials for your course, use the library request form at: www.mccc.edu/studentlibrary_course_form.shtml

Liberal Arts:
https://cola.siu.edu/languages/undergraduate/language-programs/classics/why-classics/class-liberal-arts.php

https://www.topuniversities.com/blog/what-liberal-arts-education

https://www.forbes.com/sites/emsli/2016/10/19/what-can-you-do-with-that-useless-liberal-arts-degree/#1fa4379741b8

Critical Reading:
https://www.american.edu/provost/academic-access/Skills-and-Workshops-for-Academic-Success-Reading.cfm

https://students.dartmouth.edu/academic-skills/learning-resources/learning-strategies/reading-techniques

https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/tutorial-and-academic-skills-center/additional-resources/reading-strategies

Other learning resources: (Describe any other student learning resources that are specific to this course, including any special tutoring or study group support, learning system software, etc.) None

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

The student will be able to:

1. describe the values underlying study and inquiry in the Liberal Arts. (ILG 1) [Methods of assessment: discussions and written responses]

2. question a text from the perspective of different Liberal Arts disciplines. (ILG 1, 5-9, 11) [Methods of assessment: discussions, annotations, and written responses]

3. demonstrate independent thinking by choosing passages as textual evidence to construct an interpretation of a whole text. (ILG 1, 4, 6, 11) [Methods of assessment: discussion-leading, written responses, group presentation]

4. articulate independent thinking in writing. (ILG 1, 4, 6, 11) [Methods of assessment: annotations, written responses, and group presentation]

5. gain confidence in small- and large-group participation. (ILG 1, 6, 8, 11) [Method of assessment: small- and large-group work; focus group, survey, or course evaluation]

6. recognize the benefit of building knowledge through sharing and valuing diverse perspectives across a wide spectrum of difference. (ILG 1, 6, 8, 11) [Methods of assessment: small- and large-group work, written responses, or course evaluation]

Course-specific Institutional Learning Goals (ILGs)/General Education Goals. [To an extent consistent with its primary purposes, each course in every program is expected to reflect the college's commitment to general education, as affirmed in the 2005 General Education Policy. A General Education Course is one whose primary purposes and overall design coincide strongly with one or more of the approved general education goals and objectives. For any approved (or proposed) General Education Course, the General Education Goals and Objectives form (the form identified as the "Gen Ed Attachment") should be completed and
attached to the course outline. Below is a complete list of Mercer's General Education Knowledge Goals and Core Skills. Retain on this course outline the Goals and Skills that pertain to your course and delete those that are not a central part of the course.]

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

Units of study in detail. Each unit should center around a topic, theme or skill that supports the Course Competencies/Goals (the course-level student learning outcomes [SLOs]) and general education student learning outcomes. For each unit, identify specific student learning outcomes that focus on content knowledge or process skills. Units of study are not simply the chapters of the textbook; they are independent of the selected textbook. Unit-level student learning outcomes should state (in terms that can serve as the frame of reference for ongoing assessment of both student achievement and of the course's effectiveness) what successful students will be able to demonstrate, perform or exhibit at the end of the unit. Connect the unit-level SLOs back to the course-level SLOs and the General Education and Core Skills SLOs either by cross-referencing them by number or by explaining the connections in a brief narrative. It is not expected that every unit-level SLO will connect to the General Education and Core Skills SLOs; each unit-level SLO, however, must connect to at least one course-level SLO. See the attached examples.]

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

Unit I  Icebreaker; brief introduction to the concept of "Liberal Arts" [SLO 1; ILG 1]

Learning Objectives
The student will be able to...

• understand the historical concept of Liberal Arts thinking as necessary toward building a fulfilled, engaged, examined, "good life" based on the Latin roots liber (free, as in not enslaved) and ars (expertise, skill).
• differentiate between the Liberal Arts and a liberal political stance.
• explain the purpose of the Liberal Arts program, and name the primary disciplines included within Liberal Arts at Mercer.

Unit II  Building ways in to a reading. Accessing and connecting prior knowledge; building schema and background knowledge; annotating [SLO 3-6; ILG 1, 6, 11]

Learning Objectives
The student will be able to...

• respond orally and in writing to questions about experiences that will forge a connection and sense of relevance regarding the reading.
• practice gaining necessary background knowledge in order to get the full scope of a reading.
• practice using different models of annotating and develop their own style of effective annotation.
• refer to their annotations and notes to explain what they found significant in a reading.

Unit III Critical Reading. Asking questions from multiple perspectives to build an interpretation. [SLO 1-6; ILG 1, 4-9, 11]

Learning Objectives
The student will be able to...

• differentiate between skimming for facts and reading critically/reading for meaning and ideas.
• ask independently-derived questions of the text rather than accepting the face value of words.
• practice asking questions used by different practitioners of the Liberal Arts—such as historians, psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, writers, and literary critics—to create meaning.
• use their annotations in group work to share reactions and questions, engaging in creative discussion.
• recognize emerging patterns in a reading and consider their connection to an overall interpretation.
• focus on specific passages to infer meaning, articulating insights in written and oral responses.
• notice strategies writers use to create a response such as satisfaction, empathy, anger, or frustration.
• work together to create a group presentation, which may involve a set of questions to open large-group discussion of a certain passage, or presenting an explanation of how they arrived at an interpretation of a certain incident or character.

Unit IV Interdisciplinary Thinking. Using multiple approaches and perspectives. [SLO 1-6; ILG 1, 5-9, 11]

Learning Objectives
The student will be able to...

• explain the value of reading, questioning, listening, and thinking critically to create understanding.
• recognize the role of books to encapsulate social concerns in ways that encourage empathy, attention to problems, and desire for change.
• working in small and large groups, recognize the way disciplinary inquiry can overlap and interconnect to form interdisciplinary approaches to problem-solving and interpretation.
• relate the work of the course back to the concept of "work that a free person can do" to broaden the self and improve life for all.

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

30-35% (300-350 points) Discussion-leading, participation, small- and large-group work, including a group presentation.

35% (350 points) Annotations and notes on the reading

30-35% (300-350 points) Written responses to the reading
**Academic Integrity:** Students should be familiar with Mercer's Academic Integrity Policy, found [here](#). Claiming another's work as one's own is **one of the most serious academic crimes.** Students plagiarize when they submit another person's writing or ideas as their own in online or onsite discussion, presentation slides, or written responses to the reading. This includes both intentional (copy/pasting ideas from the web, another student, or any other source without citation) and unintentional plagiarism (providing a citation but not using quotation marks around exact borrowed wording, for instance). Students in doubt as to whether or not to cite an idea or words they borrow from someone else should always provide citation to be safe. We will review how to ethically and legally use other people's ideas and words, and students will be graded on how carefully they do this. Except when students are clearly and intentionally substituting another's work for their own, most cases of plagiarism can be avoided by careful citation.