***ENG 4500: Senior Project*** (CRN 34236)

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|  | Meeting Days/ Times/ Place: | M/W  2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.  SSB 204 |
| Instructor Contact Information: | Elizabeth Kleinfeld, Ph.D.  she/her/hers  [ekleinfe@msudenver.edu](mailto:ekleinfe@msudenver.edu)  Twitter: @lizkleinfeld  KC 454 /303-615-1316  Cell: 303-915-5895 (texts preferred) |
| Office Hours[[1]](#footnote-1): | M 11:30-2 / W 11:30-12:30 and 1-2 / F 9-10  To make an appointment outside those times, go to <https://calendly.com/elizabethkleinfeld>. |

Welcome to ENG 4500!

Congratulations! If you’ve made it this far, then you are thisclose to graduating and this course is one of the last hurdles you must clear to move on with your life. As the official catalog description says,

This course is the Senior Experience for the English Major, focusing on the production of a capstone project that synthesizes knowledge and skills acquired over the course of the student’s undergraduate studies in English, employing critical analysis and reflection on the diversity (of theoretical approaches, textual forms, authorial identities, orientations, audiences) encountered across the wide field of English and textual studies, considering also the history of the field, underlying philosophical tenets, and current and emergent practices. The extended project requires research, close textual analysis, and application of a specific critical or theoretical perspective; it may include, along with the researched academic essay component, other forms of writing, including multi-modal and creative writing.

An important part of this course is to help you get a “big picture” view of your English major and understand how it fits in with the discipline of English Studies as a whole. English as a major, like many disciplines in the humanities, has been disparaged by the public as lacking practicality and applicability to “real life.” Additionally, English Studies has been often perceived as a “white” discipline (pardon all these scare quotes!); with predictions that the U.S. will cease to be a white-majority country by 2050, how can English Studies remain relevant and useful? How can the skills and sensibilities you’ve developed through your studies serve you in a world that may be very different from the one that shaped your studies? To get at this big picture view and answer these questions, this class foregrounds what might have been in the background during your studies up until this point: theory and disciplinary history.

After completing this course, you should be able to meet the following course learning objectives:

1. Critically reflect on the function of textual studies and the particular English major the student has pursued.
2. Explain and critique philosophical tenets and current practices in English and textual studies.
3. Analyze text(s) chosen for the capstone project, including relevant critical texts, employing close reading strategies.
4. Apply a specific theoretical perspective appropriate to the analytical situation.
5. Write the researched, analytical essay according to the process of project selection, initial research, prospectus development, additional research, and draft production and revision.

This class supports MSU Denver’s mission to “provide a high-quality, accessible, enriching education that prepares students for successful careers, post-graduate education, and lifelong learning in a multicultural, global, and technological society. To fulfill its mission, MSU Denver’s diverse university community engages the community at large in scholarly inquiry, creative activity and the application of knowledge.” In addition to supporting the University’s mission, this class supports the MSU Denver English Department’s stance on diversity: “MSU Denver English Department embraces the University's mission of inclusive excellence and strives to offer courses that value diversity in all its forms: race and ethnicity, gender, gender identities and expressions, sexual orientations, religion, socioeconomic class, national origin and nationality, linguistic diversity, age, disabilities, individual differences, and cultural affiliations.” This means that no matter what your previous schooling experiences, linguistic background, documentation status, (dis)ability, religion, race, sexual identity or orientation, body type, and history are, you belong here, and so do your colleagues. WELCOME. I’m glad you’re here.

To ensure that this classroom is humane, inclusive, and just, I ask us all to practice the following behaviors in class:

* Arrange your chairs in a circle when possible and face the person speaking.
* Make room for others to share their perspectives by inviting them to comment.
* Listen to understand and ask clarifying questions before determining whether or not you agree with someone else.
* Disagree respectfully.
* Acknowledge that we are all works in progress.
* Dare to fail.

Texts:

Required:

Birns, N. (2010). *Theory After Theory: An Intellectual History of Literary Theory from 1950 to the Early 21st Century*. Broadview Press.

Goodson, P. (2013 or 2016). *Becoming an Academic Writer: 50 Exercises for Paced, Productive, and Powerful Writing*. 1st or 2nd ed. Sage.

Moraga, C. and G. Anzaldua. (2015). *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. 4th ed. SUNY Press.

Royster, J. J., & Kirsch, G. E. (2012). *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies*. SIU Press.

HIGHLY Recommended:

*Getting Things Done* by David Allen, *Time Management from the Inside Out* by Julie Morgenstern, or another book on time/action management. Time management and the discipline to revise laboriously are two of the most overlooked and sorely lacking skills in writers. Do not underestimate the importance of these things. YOU WILL NOT MAKE IT ON SHEER TALENT AND INSPIRATION. Trust me.

*You Majored in What?* By Katharine Brooks. This is an excellent book for anyone majoring in the liberal arts or sciences, disciplines that are not generally mapped to specific careers.

Another helpful resource for folks majoring in the liberal arts or sciences is the Career Services Office. Their website has information on careers for folks with different majors.

Blackboard:

Class handouts, answers to frequently asked questions, and online resources will be on Blackboard. Please commit to checking Blackboard regularly.

Evaluation:

Grade Contract. Instead of grading the traditional way, I use a grading contract[[2]](#footnote-2). This means that instead of getting a percentage of points possible on each assignment, you will simply get credit for doing it or no credit for not doing it. Contract grading allows you to make mistakes and learn from them without being penalized, and making mistakes is a very important part of learning. The premise of the contract is simple: *If you turn in every single assignment on time (or use late tickets) and miss no more than three classes, you will earn at least a B in the class.* Turning in incomplete assignments, skipping assignments, and missing more than three classes will result in grades of less than B, as the chart below shows. In other words, grades of B or lower are wholly dependent upon the quantity of work done.

If you turn in work that is complete and on time (or with late tickets) but is not of passing quality, you will receive a revise and resubmit request (R&R). This means you have one calendar week from the time of the R&R to revise and resubmit the work for credit. If the resubmitted work is of passing quality, you will get full credit for the assignment; if the resubmitted work is not of passing quality, you will receive another R&R and have another week to revise. If you choose not to resubmit the work, you will get no credit for the assignment. You can (and should) consult me and/or a Writing Center consultant during your revision process.

The grade of “A” is the only grade dependent upon the quality of work. An A grade in the course is earned by doing everything required for the B—turning in every single assignment on time and missing no more than three classes—and completing a final capstone project that is of exceptional in quality, as judged by colleagues in class.

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|  | **# of absences** | **# of late assignments (not including use of late tickets)** | **# of skipped assignments (never turned in)** | **# of incomplete assignments (missing a required component)** | **additional criteria** |
| A | ≤ 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | quality of final capstone project |
| B | ≤ 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |  |
| C | ≤ 3 | 1+ | 1 | 1 |  |
| D | 4+ | 1+ | 2 | 2 |  |
| F | 4+ | 1+ | 3+ | 3+ |  |

Assignments. Many of the assignments have flexible parameters that allow you to choose how you want to demonstrate to me that you have met the assignment outcomes. Note that in terms of credit for assignments in fulfilling the contract, every assignment carries equal weight. For something to be considered complete, it must meet length and source requirements, follow basic instructions, reflect class discussions and readings as appropriate to the assignment, and include all components.

Each assignment is described in more detail on Blackboard.

* Reading responses
* Participation in the class co-gens
* Writing practice log and reflections
* Writing activities building toward capstone project
* Critical analysis of the English Major in the 21st Century
* Project prospectus and annotated bib
* Peer review report
* Capstone project
* Flash talk
* Scores and comments

Class Policies, Three Habits of Highly Successful Students, and Frequently Asked Questions are on Blackboard and considered part of the syllabus.

Schedule:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week | Date | Topics & Reading to be discussed in class –  \*\*Do a reading response for all readings in Birns, Royster & Kirsch, and Moraga & Anzaldua. Reading responses must be shared with me ([liz.kleinfeld@gmail.com](mailto:liz.kleinfeld@gmail.com)) by midnight the day before class.\*\*  \*\*Do a writing log entry for all readings in Goodson. Writing logs must be shared with me ([liz.kleinfeld@gmail.com](mailto:liz.kleinfeld@gmail.com)) by midnight the day before class.\*\* | Other |
| 1 | 1/23 | Introductions | Put your contact info on the Class Member Info sheet on BlackBoard |
| 2 | 1/28 | Goodson preface – no writing log entry necessary  The entire syllabus, including this document, FAQs, Policies, and Three Habits of Highly Successful Students | Syllabus Quiz – bring a device to take the syllabus quiz on  Bring a list of all the ENG courses you took – look up your transcript, if necessary to make sure you have the course #s and titles accurate |
|  | 1/30 | Birns preface and chapter 1: Foucault – no reading response due (we’ll do it in class) | Reflective Summary of Your English Major due |
| 3 | 2/4 | Birns chapter 2: Derrida |  |
|  | 2/6 | Goodson chapter 1: Get Ready to Practice | Critical Summary/Synthesis of 3 Compelling Readings due |
| 4 | 2/11 | Birns chapter 3: Deconstructing Gender |  |
|  | 2/13 | Goodson chapter 2: Establish and Maintain the “Write” Habit |  |
| 5 | 2/18 | Birns chapter 4: Deconstructing Privilege | Reflection on 3 Compelling Readings due |
|  | 2/20 | Birns chapter 5: Deconstructing Centrality |  |
| 6 | 2/25 | Goodson chapter 3: Practice Building Academic Vocabulary |  |
|  | 2/27 | Birns chapter 6: Deconstructing Normativity | Critical Summary of 3 Compelling Assignments due |
| 7 | 3/4 | Birns chapter 7: Theory in the 21st Century |  |
|  | 3/6 | Royster & Kirsch foreword, chapters 1-3 |  |
| 8 | 3/11 | Take a breather | Reflection on 3 Compelling Ideas due |
|  | 3/13 | Goodson chapter 4: Polish the Grammar |  |
| 9 | 3/18 | Royster & Kirsch, chapters 4-6 |  |
|  | 3/20 |  | Critical analysis due |
| Spring Break  **\*\*I cannot overemphasize how much I want you to actually take a break!\*\*** | | | |
| 10 | 4/1 | Royster & Kirsch chapters 7-9 |  |
|  | 4/3 | Workshop prospectus and bib |  |
| 11 | 4/8 |  | Project Prospectus & Annotated Bibliography Due |
|  | 4/10 | Goodson chapter 5: Get Feedback |  |
| 12 | 4/15 | Moraga & Anzaldua, sections I-II |  |
|  | 4/17 | Moraga & Anzaldua, sections III-IV |  |
| 13 | 4/22 | Goodson chapter 6: Edit and Proofread |  |
|  | 4/24 | Moraga & Anzaldua, sections V-VI |  |
| 14 | 4/29 | Project workshopping and norming |  |
|  | 5/1 | Project workshopping |  |
| 15 | 5/6 | Project workshopping | Peer review reports due |
|  | 5/8 | Project workshopping | Capstone project due by midnight |
| Finals Week |  | Flash talks | Project scores due |

1. You should come by during my office hours to ask questions about class readings or content; explore writing and/or writing center ideas or theories that interest you; bounce ideas around related to writing and/or writing centers; get advising related to courses, degree plans, graduation, and beyond; to get feedback on assignments and drafts; get moral support when you have hit an obstacle in your education; or you want my input on something for any reason. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Asao Inoue is a writing assessment scholar who has researched the effectiveness of grade contracts versus conventional grading. He observes that,

   Most courses that have writing in them ask us to write something, turn it in to the professor, and get back a grade . . . We are writing for grades, not for feedback, not for developing the ideas we find most valuable, not for expressing those ideas in ways that we see as important. If we get comments from our teacher on our writing, typically, we are likely to read those comments so that we can figure out what the teacher wants, what will get a better grade. If we get comments or feedback from our colleagues in class, we may feel conflicted about listening to them or taking their advice. If they suggest something, would the teacher agree? What if we took their advice but the teacher did not agree with that advice? Furthermore, using conventional grading systems to compute course grades often leads us to think more about our grade than about our writing, to worry more about pleasing a teacher or fooling one than about figuring out what we really want to learn, or how we want to communicate something to someone for some purpose. Additionally, conventional grading may cause us to be reluctant to take risks with our writing or ideas. It doesn’t allow writers to fail at writing, which many suggest is a primary way in which people learn from their practices. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)