



MERCER
COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

COURSE OUTLINE

Course Number LAS-101	Course Title Introduction to Liberal Arts Studies	Credits 1
Hours: 1 Lecture	Co- or Pre-requisite: None	Implementation Semester & Year: Fall 2022

Catalog description:

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.

General Education Category:
Not GenEd

Course coordinator:
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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 ENG-033 or -034, reflecting an exciting nexus of ideas from across the Liberal Arts, and available to analysis from all humanities and social science disciplines. Individual instructors are encouraged to add short articles as supplemental reading.

Sample Central Texts:

- Jeanette Walls. *The Glass Castle*. ISBN: 9780743247542 (used 2019-20)
- John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powel, *March*, Books 1 & 2. ISBN: 9781603093002/9781603094009 (used 2020-2021)
- Jose Antonio Vargas, *Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Immigrant*. ISBN: 9780062851345 (used 2021-2023)
- Gene Luen Yang. *Level Up*.
- Hanif Abdurraqib, *They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us*
- Mira Jacobs, *Good Talk: A Memoir in Conversations*
- Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*
- Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (Book 1)
- J. Drew Lanham, *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature*

Sample Supplemental Reading:

- Ken Bain. Excerpt from *What the Best College Students Do*, chapter 7.
- Farid Zakaria, excerpt from *In Defense of a Liberal Education*
- George Anders, "The Unexpected Value of the Liberal Arts"

Course Student Learning Outcomes (SLO):

Upon successful completion of this course the student will be able to:

1. describe the values underlying study and inquiry in the Liberal Arts. (ILG 1; PLO 1, 2)
2. question a text from the perspectives of different Liberal Arts disciplines. (ILG 1, 5-9, 11; PLO 1,3)
3. demonstrate independent thinking by choosing passages as textual evidence to construct an interpretation of a whole text. (ILG 1, 4, 6, 11; PLO 1, 3)
4. articulate independent thinking in writing. (ILG 1, 4, 6, 11; PLO 1, 2, 3)
5. gain confidence in small- and large-group participation. (ILG 1, 6, 8, 11; PLO 2)
6. recognize the benefit of building knowledge through sharing and valuing diverse perspectives across a wide spectrum of difference. (ILG 1, 6, 8, 11; PLO 1, 2, 3)

Course-specific Institutional Learning Goals (ILG):

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

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 9. Ethical Reasoning and Action. Students will understand ethical frameworks, issues, and situations.

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

Program Learning Outcomes for Liberal Arts (PLO)

1. **Concept Knowledge:** Understand the vocabulary, methods, and major concepts presented in the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences.
2. **Communication:** Articulate complex ideas clearly and effectively, both verbally and in writing.
3. **Critical Thinking:** Perform a series of thinking tasks including speculations, analysis, and synthesis (i.e., abstract reasoning).

Units of study in detail – Unit Student Learning Outcomes:

Note: All units are thematic rather than sequential; they cannot be disaggregated. Students will work in all areas simultaneously throughout the entire course. Each unit ends at the end of the semester.

Unit I: Introduction to the “Liberal Arts” concept [Supports Course SLO 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 into a reading. Accessing and connecting prior knowledge; building schema and background knowledge; annotating [Supports Course SLO 3, 4, 5, 6]

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. [Supports Course SLO 1-6]

Learning Objectives

The student will be able to...

- differentiate between skimming for facts and reading critically: demonstrate reading for meaning and ideas, not for information.
- 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 passage.

Unit IV : Interdisciplinary Thinking. Using multiple approaches and perspectives.

[Supports Course SLO 1-6]

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 in three areas:

- 30-35% Participation, including small- and large-group work, and at least one group presentation and/or discussion leadership opportunity.
- 35% Annotation and Reading Notes
- 30-35% Written responses to the reading, including both short in-class responses and longer responses that students draft and revise outside of class; however, there are no formal essays. Written work is a means of evaluating students' developing critical reading and inquiry abilities.