MALS 601—Introduction to Graduate Liberal Studies

Course description:
A gateway experience for incoming Master of Arts in Liberal Studies students. Students will learn the conventions and expectations of graduate-level reading, writing, research, and critical analysis and explore the concept of interdisciplinarity. Topics include documentation of sources, formulation and development of independent research projects, research methods, and the use of online databases. Students will explore liberal-studies topics typical of those taught in other MALS courses. The content will be interdisciplinary and/or intercultural, and the course methodology will include lecture, discussion, independent research, and varied forms of academic writing.

Course goals:
- Understand the concept of interdisciplinarity in graduate study
- Explore the ways in which an interdisciplinary study of a particular subject fits into the concept of a graduate liberal arts program
- Reflect on the study of the liberal arts and the writing and research skills associated with it
- Become familiar with the expectations and practice of academic writing, including proper documentation and citation of sources
- Understand how to read, evaluate and analyze source material at the graduate level
- Learn to formulate, develop and carry out a research project
- Become familiar with the use of online databases and other library resources
- Practice productive classroom discussion skills
- Hone presentation skills by sharing research findings with the class in the form of an oral and/or multimedia presentation
- Become acquainted with the UD campus and its resources, including the library and the Writing Center, campus activities, MALS students and faculty, and UD policies and procedures

General Guidelines:

Attendance and Emergency Absences
Attendance is crucial because participation in class discussions and activities comprises a large part of your grade. If you have an emergency or will be late, please let me know so that other arrangements can be made.

Writing Center
The Writing Center in 017 Morris Library provides free one-on-one instruction to all students who have writing assignments. You can have 50 minute one-on-one appointments with tutors during the day and in the evening. The Online Scheduler is accessible from www.writingcenter.udel.edu/for-graduate-students/graduate-student-writing-center.

Academic Integrity
Any work that you submit at any stage of the writing process—draft, thesis and outline, bibliography, etc. through the final version—must be your own; in addition, any words, ideas, or data that you borrow from other people and include in your work must be properly documented. Failure to
do either of these things is plagiarism. The University of Delaware protects the rights of all students by insisting that individual students act with integrity. Accordingly, the University severely penalizes plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty.

**Students with Disabilities**

Let me know if you have a documented disability that affects your performance in this class, and we will find a way to work together. Sit up front if you need to see or hear better. Ask me to repeat if you have trouble understanding. If your situation means you need extra time to complete written work, we can make adjustments as necessary.

**E-Mail**

Please check your email regularly because you might miss important information, such as a change in assignments. The instructors check their emails several times a day on weekdays.

**Grading**

Part 1: Writing 30% (see below for details)
Part 2: Research 30% (see below for details)
Part 3: Interdisciplinary Study 20% (see below for details)
Final paper: 20% (see below for details)
Part 1: Writing in the MALS Program

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Required:
3. *Verdict of Twelve* by Raymond Postgate
5. An online subscription to the *New York Times* (free to UD students)
6. The 1957 movie *12 Angry Men*, available on YouTube and Amazon Prime
7. A package of 5x8 index cards—these are the large ones. They can be lined or unlined, any color. Bring to every class.
8. A package of lined notebook paper. Bring to every class.

Description
This section of the course is designed to introduce you to writing in the MALS program and the University of Delaware. Among other things, you will read one book, one play, view a movie, and do research about long-ago murders in the *New York Times* online. In addition, you will write several papers in which you support your points with data from the assigned sources as well as informed personal opinions.

We will review the skills of summarizing, evaluating, and synthesizing source material. We will review various writing forms including description, evaluation, argument, and persuasion. In addition, we will brush up on the characteristics of all effective writing clarity, unity, coherence, organization, support, and audience awareness. I will also go over troublesome or confusing grammar and punctuation issues so that you can get your ideas across clearly and accurately.

Format
To make this class successful, much of our time will be spent wallowing complexity as we discuss the readings. In addition, you will also be doing in-class and group writing activities as well as evaluating and revising not only your own writing but also that of your classmates. Also—because we all improve our writing skills by revising our written work—you will have a chance to revise all your papers except the last one. The revised paper will count or 75% of each paper’s grade.

Grading
For this section, papers will count for 60% of your grade and class participation will count for 40%.

Papers
All papers must be typed, double-spaced with 1-inch margins in 12-point font using Times New Roman, Calibri, or Cambria. The response papers should be 1 or 2 pages, the long paper between 4 and 6 pages. If you need a little extra space, that’s okay.

**Week 1**
Introduction to course, grammar, punctuation, sources, and clear and interesting writing
Read *Verdict of 12*.
Read *Style* pp 1-17
Writing Assignments:
1. Evaluate the book, using criteria of your choice. No more than two pages; you may use the first person. Citations not necessary.
2. Write a two-page paper discussing a juror who interested you, evaluating his/her impartiality and contribution to the final verdict. Do not use the first person. Citations not necessary.

**Week 2**
Discuss *Verdict of 12*
*Little Penguin*: pp.58-71 using sources
*Style* pp.18-39, do exercise on page 34. You can do it in the book, you won’t be handing it in.
Read *The Night of January 16*
Writing Assignment
1. After reading the play, in a one-or-two-page paper, tell me how you would have voted. Be sure to provide support. First person is acceptable; please provide citations.
2. In a one-or-two-page paper, pick one or two of the jurors from *Verdict of 12*, and tell me how he or she would have voted in this case. Be sure to provide support for your point of view. Please use the third person, and provide citations.

**Week 3**
Assignment: watch 1957 Version of *12 Angry Men* (available on YouTube or Amazon Prime)
Paper: In a two-or-three-page paper, explore how this jury would have one of the cases we have studied. Citations not needed.
*Style* Chapters 7 and 9.
Helpful information: Chapter 9 discusses metadiscourse.
Here a good definition from Johns Hopkins Peabody Institute:
“We use metadiscourse when we filter our ideas through a concern with how our reader will take them. Though metadiscourse does not refer to what we are primarily saying about our subject, we need some metadiscourse in everything we write. Metadiscourse is the language we use when we refer to our own thinking and writing as we think and write—to summarize, on the contrary, I believe; to the structure of what we write—first, second, more importantly; and to our reader’s act of reading—note that, consider now, in order to understand.
(www.peabody.jhu.edu/conservatory/humanities/writing/metadiscourse.html)

*If you have a laptop, bring it to next class*
Week 4
*Style* chapter 12, pp. 188-94, exercises 12.1 and 12.2
Murders Cases assigned, prosecution or defense
Writing Assignment—write a chronological history of the murder, citations necessary.
Work on strategies for writing an argument.

Week 5
*Style* chapter 8
Group work
progress report
Inclass essay on murder arguing the other side

Week 6
Part 1 final paper due
Note: Complete the homework assignment listed in Part 2 below for class on October 11. You will receive more information about this assignment and the next part of the course in class today.
Part 2: Interdisciplinary Graduate Research

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Homework due week 7:

Reflective Writing (1-2 pages): In class on week 6, you will be given an example research topic. Think about the topic from your professional or academic background (for example, as a lawyer or a historian). If you were starting research on the sample topic from this perspective, what kinds of questions would you ask? What types of evidence would you want to find? Why would these questions and evidence be valuable? How would your perspective be limited? Write a brief (1-2 pages, double-spaced), informal reflection on these questions. Complete this assignment before you read the following texts!


Week 7: Disciplinarity and Interdisciplinarity

Activities: Share reflective writing responses, discuss definitions of interdisciplinarity

Homework due week 8:

Reading (Available on Canvas): “Introducing the Disciplines and their Perspectives,” Repko and Szoztak

Reflective Writing (1-2 pages): Respond to the Repko and Szoztak reading. Consider questions such as: What is your academic disciplinary background? What initially attracted you to this discipline, and how did your studies (as an undergraduate and/or graduate student) impact your life?

Week 8: Scholarly Conversations Inside and Outside the Disciplines

Note: If you have a laptop, bring it to class today

Activities: Use library resources to investigate issues of journals and individual researchers, compare features of interdisciplinary and discipline-based research, identify sources in a literature review and discuss how they work together

Homework due week 9:


Think about a potential interdisciplinary research project. Be ready to share your idea(s) with the class and use library resources to research your topic.
**Week 9: Doing Interdisciplinary Research**
Note: If you have a laptop, bring it to class today

Activities: Use UD databases and catalog to start research on a potential topic, discuss strategies for evaluating the usefulness of a source, set up a Refworks account and begin saving and organizing sources

*Homework for week 10:*

Continue searching for sources on your topic, evaluating usefulness, collecting useful sources in Refworks, and reading sources

Reading: [Conducting a Literature Review](#)

Reflective Writing (1-2 pages): What was a research challenge you encountered? What was a successful strategy you used? Be ready to share your ideas with the class and demonstrate a search you did.

**Week 10: Integrating Research and Writing**
Note: If you have a laptop, bring it to class today

Activities: Share research strategies and challenges, additional instruction on using library resources, how to write a research prospectus
Part 3: Interdisciplinary Study
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Weeks 11-13
In class, we will have guest lecturers who are doing exemplary interdisciplinary work at UD. They will discuss with the class the opportunities and challenges of interdisciplinarity from the perspective of their respective disciplines and tell us about the interdisciplinary projects they are working on. These will be informal sessions with lots of time for us to ask questions and interact.

Homework for these classes will be to come prepared with questions for each of the speakers. Do some Internet research on each person and the centers and initiatives I’ve listed above so you can be ready to ask probing questions.

Assignment: Write a one-page reflection on the session you found most interesting. What intrigued you? What surprised you? Can you draw parallels to any work you’ve done? Due week 14.

Week 15
The last class on 12/6 will be a panel of MALS alumni who will offer their perspectives on getting the most out of the MALS program. They will tell you what they wish they had known when they started the program, how they chose their thesis/project topic, what was most helpful to them, etc. Ask them whatever you want!

Final Paper
Homework and preparation for the last four classes is intentionally light so that you can be preparing your final paper. This is a prospectus of a research paper. Instead of actually writing a research paper, you will lay out how you would go about doing so. Full details about the assignment will be provided by mid-semester. Length: 5-7 pages. Due last night of class.