

IDST 395-700 Investigative Methods in Interdisciplinary Studies
Course, Spring 2016

Meetings: WEB Class 1/25/16 to 5/13/15

Dr. Susan T. Berry

Phone: (270) 828-3097

Office Hours: Virtual or phone meeting by prior appointment

Email: susan.berry@wku.edu Preferred contact method.

This course is a totally online WEB class that relies heavily on self-initiated research-intensive activity. Class content will be delivered in detailed instructional materials on our Blackboard course site. Part of the course will require assignments and discussions supported by reading and research conducted by the individual student. I hope you will find this class intellectually challenging, interdisciplinarily rewarding, interactive and valuable.

Interdisciplinary Studies (as paraphrased from both Julie Thompson Klein and William H. Newell) is a process or method of integration to answer a significant question, solve a complex problem or address a strategic issue that is too broad or multi-dimensional to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or academic area of study. Your approach to **Interdisciplinarity** should be as unique as you are – utilizing the best aspects of everything you've learned, gained by experience and applied so far in your studies.

Course Description:

In conventional terminology, this course is a comprehensive introduction to different approaches to Interdisciplinary Studies as an academic research process or method. Readings and research projects will allow the student to learn the importance of critical analysis, integration, and cultural relevancy when working in two or more fields or disciplines. The intent of this course is to begin to investigate and apply the issues, ideas, and theories relevant to the student's interdisciplinary study.

While everyone will address the primary requirements and goals for the entire course, the specific concerns regarding each research project will differ based on personal interests and area(s) of study. In respect to each person's emphasis area studied, there will be different research methods, essay topics, and final projects for each student.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn new research techniques specific to their different areas of interest to facilitate original insight in an integrative manner.
- Students will understand and apply the methods of Interdisciplinary Studies.
- Students will demonstrate the concept of interdisciplinarity by challenging traditional approaches to knowledge in the student's different or combined areas of study in a project.
- Each individual will apply their interdisciplinary studies in a transformative manner to address a relevant concern as related to people, ideas, and cultural change in our contemporary global society.

Course Materials:

Required Text *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies* (ISBN: 9781452256603)
By Allen F. Repko with Rick Szostak and Michelle Phillips Buchberger

(Note: For this course read Chps. 1,5, 2, 6, 7, 8, and 9 in that order. You will also need this textbook for the IDST 495 course.)

The course Blackboard site will include this syllabus, instructor information, class schedule of assignments, supporting presentations, assignment submissions, and email to the instructor through WKU email. Class emails will be sent to your student WKU email account, so you must check and use your university registered email account for this class. You also need accessibility to the Internet for images,

web links, articles and media files. Additionally, all information and readings shared via this technology by the professor and for student presentations will be done for educational purposes only (this will maintain copyright laws).

Course Outline:

It is very important that class discussions, presentations, and sharing of processes be submitted according to the course schedule. Because each student makes an important contribution to the class as a whole and to each other member, sharing and collaboration are crucial to course success. The class schedule of assignments will list these dates. If, for any reason an assignment must be submitted late, please notify your instructor. There may be a penalty for late submissions at the instructor's discretion. Attendance and participation (in all class discussion boards and project reviews) will be factored into the final grade.

There are three major sections in this course that when completed will yield a final product designed by the student and resulting from the use of various tools available to interdisciplinary studies.

The first part of the course focuses on each student's disciplines, interests, and preparedness to understand and conduct research, and collaborate with others. It includes working in pairs to identify and evaluate relative research in particular disciplines. The students then share this process with classmates via class discussion boards and with the instructor through gradebook submissions.

The second part of the course will involve conducting a small piece of research based upon the type of research appropriate to the student's chosen topic. Because time is an important factor, the student will submit and the instructor will review a research proposal to make sure the project can be conducted and summarized within the class timeframe. The instructor will move each student through the project in steps. The student will submit assignments and wait for instructor approval before moving to the next step. Timeliness is very important to the success of this process.

The third part of the course will include a written report of the research process, the results, and implications based upon the integration of research by other researchers within the included disciplines. All written materials beside discussion board contributions will be submitted through the assignments link inside the course content.

Each section will contain review material including assignment submissions to insure the necessary concepts and processes are understood by the student before moving into the next phase of the process.

For the course project, research methods appropriate to the individual's disciplines and project topic will determine the parameters of the study. While online investigative measures will be used, the student might need to gather data, research materials or conduct interviews not possible by any other means but in-person. The requirements are difficult to project until both the student and the professor have agreed upon the integration needs of study; so please plan on time for research away from a computer keyboard if possible.

The final product will consist of a detailed essay with visuals or data presented on the chosen interdisciplinary problem or concept. The subject of this project will be derived from the student's areas of study or personal interests. The selected topic must be verified by the professor prior to starting the project and approved after submitting a research proposal. Ultimately, these projects are meant to feature the student's interdisciplinary methods of approach to their chosen subjects and deepen the student's interest in interdisciplinarity by bringing together their various fields of study.

One on one communication between the student and professor can take place in a variety of formats including phone, virtual meeting, or through email. Before actually proceeding with the final project both the process and the topic must be approved. This communication will be for the student to discuss the class project. The professor will give suggestions on articles and texts for the student's research in response to the focus of the project. Further research will be required for the purposes of gathering all

components of the personal interdisciplinary project.

Grading Policy:

- 20% Active Participation in weekly discussion boards
- 10% Assignments related to readings and viewings
- 10% Collaborative Exercise (discussion, integration methods, and results)
- 20% Five-page Research Project Proposal
- 10% Final Project ten-page draft submitted for Review
- 30% Revised Research Project ten-page paper

Each student is responsible for completing all of the assigned materials in order to actively participate (in a well-informed manner) in weekly discussion boards. Specific due dates are given for each assigned reading, written work and essays. Each student will be expected to demonstrate a clear understanding of the research and the degree of progress toward the project's goals. All aspects of grading will be combined for a numerical percentage or letter grade given at the discretion of the professor.

This course follows the standard grading scale of:

- A = Excellent (90 – 100)
- B = Good (80 – 89)
- C = Average (70 –79)
- D = Poor (60 –69)
- F = Not Acceptable (less than 60)

Criteria for grading all assigned coursework:

1. intellectual merit (demonstrating knowledge and accurate information related to topic)
2. interpretation of the project specifics (presenting a coherent result of requirements)
3. context within areas of study (applying critical thinking and integration method)
4. achievement beyond requirements

For all written work, including any online discussions, your responses should be done in a college level writing style (proper spelling and grammar) and clearly address the issues being discussed.

For any individual written assignments, please attach documents and not paste essays into the Blackboard section itself. I recommend that you write your answers or essays in a word processing program, such as Microsoft Word, then save in a Word, Rich Text or PDF format so that you have a copy of the file. Often, students that type directly into Blackboard rather than cut/paste from a word processing program can lose the typed responses and have less opportunity to revise and correct. Also, having a back-up file is important if technical issues arise.

Class emails will be sent via WKU email to students – you must check and use your university registered email account for this class. Emails to the professor or other students can also be done via technology. You should use proper headings (Subject line, Name of intended person for email) and your name at the end for all emails. If you utilize an email address other than your WKU account, be aware that the professor's university required filter for spam might not allow the receipt of your email. The university requires that I only send emails to student accounts. Additionally, unless requested by the professor, do not send email submissions in place of online assignments due for class.

For ALL difficulties or problems with Blackboard, library access, software issues or hardware problems, you must pursue every avenue at hand before contacting the professor. Blackboard has a terrific "Help" section to assist you with this course and concerning the different technical issues or procedures.

WKU's Informational Technology website, <http://www.wku.edu/it/> offers online help and video tutorials (there are videos just for helping you with Blackboard). If you are experiencing any issues, please contact

the Helpdesk. They have a live online chat or phone option (270) 745-7000. Additionally, the WKU Library site, <http://www.wku.edu/library/> has different help sections, including an online ask-a- librarian, to assist you with the location of materials.

Writing Requirements:

Written essay projects will be evaluated with the above listed criteria on three separate levels:

- a. methods of research and extent of investigation throughout the project
- b. depth of argument and interdisciplinary approach
- c. application of expertise and/or new knowledge gained

When working on a research project, think about how your writing or application exhibits your understanding of the material covered in the readings or research materials. Use your critical thinking and observation skills to draw your own conclusions about the disciplines or concepts but base your argument or evaluation on proper research. Proper research means accurate and fair use of appropriate academic (rather than popular) sources. Do not use non-adjudicated sources for any information in this course – this includes websites like Wikipedia or Ask.com.

You will be expected to maintain professional attitudes regarding all aspects of your readings, written assignments and outside research throughout the semester. In addition, keep in mind that academic dishonesty of any sort will not be tolerated IN ANY FORM. Please consult the WKU student code for references to academic dishonesty and disciplinary measures. If you take another person's work or ideas and represent them as your own it is considered plagiarism and grounds for automatic dismissal from this class. If you have questions or concerns on writing or citing sources, ASK. I also suggest contacting the WKU Writing Center or consult the website www.owl.english.purdue.edu for more information if needed. In this class, and most all courses, student work will be checked by plagiarism detection software. Please think about how you utilize information in every course and never misrepresent or fail to give credit to outside sources in all of your writing. In other words, it must be your work..

Other Concerns:

The professor reserves the right to make any changes to the course or syllabus when necessary for attaining the course objectives within the semester timeline. All students will be notified in writing of all changes within a reasonable timeframe.

Reasonable accommodation will be provided for all persons with disabilities and those individuals with university mandated attendance forms. For calendar and scheduling purposes, any necessary adaptation should be identified within the first week of the course. In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the WKU Office of Student Disability Services at the Student Success Center (DUC A200). The phone number is 745-5004; TTY is 745-3030. Per university policy, please do not request accommodations directly from the professor without a letter from the OFSDS. You may also contact them for questions and concerns.