

**Cort Basham****Instructor, Interdisciplinary Studies**

Office: Gary Ransdell Hall 2015

Office Hours: MWF 8:30am-12pm, 2pm-3pm; TR 8:30am-9:30am (also by appointment)

Email: [cortney.basham@wku.edu](mailto:cortney.basham@wku.edu) (Preferred contact method. I check this quite often daily.)

Phone: 270-745-6343 (please use email if at all possible)

This course is a reading-based and research-intensive course. This research is not for the sake of simply doing research, but aims to foster better thinking for all facets of life through engaging with various types of facts, data, and evidence.

One of my core convictions is that **all thinking has purpose and generates questions**. Teaching and learning help us to become better thinkers by engaging in the questioning/answering/thinking process daily. It also affords us boundless opportunities to practice the vital process of critical thinking. In the end, the primary goal here as in all IDST courses is to foster adaptive, flexible, curious minds which appreciate the complexity of life and various perspectives on complex phenomena.

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

This course introduces the different methods of Interdisciplinary Studies (IDST) as an academic research method. Several different research assignments and projects will allow us to explore the importance of critical analysis, integration, and cultural relevancy when working in two or more fields or disciplines. The student will

- acquire new research techniques specific to her/his areas of interest to facilitate original insight in various interdisciplinary subjects of their own choosing
- practice and challenge traditional approaches to knowledge in the pursuit of new perspectives.
- integrate various investigative measures in the pursuit of innovative results

**Course Description:**

Students in this course will investigate, discuss, and critique the issues, ideas, and theories relevant to interdisciplinary study. This is a research-intensive class that requires students to read, write, and orally participate in and out of class. Especially important will be demonstrating the questioning, answering, and thinking process through the integration of multiple disciplines.

While everyone will address the primary requirements and objective for this course, individual research projects will differ based on personal interests and area(s) of emphasis. In respect to each person's area(s) of emphasis or discipline(s) studied, there will be different research methods, essay topics, and projects for each student. There will also be various readings and in-class reflective writings throughout the semester. This base of study will introduce the student to the connective or integrative approaches required to work in Interdisciplinary Studies.

**Readings Include:**

*REQUIRED TEXTBOOK: Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies* (2<sup>nd</sup>. Edition) by Allen F. Repko  
Excerpts from the book *Beyond Feelings: A Guide to Critical Thinking* by Vincent R. Ruggiero  
Excerpts from the book *Food: The Key Concepts* by Warren Belasco  
Excerpts from the book *Friedman's Fables* by Edwin Friedman  
Various other readings as time/necessity dictates and/or allows

Except for Repko (again: **REQUIRED!**), the other required readings are posted as PDF files, handouts, or links on the Blackboard website for the course.

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING POLICY

The course consists of 1000 total points comprised of:

### **Ten (10) Graded Class Discussion Boards (DB) - 250 points**

These ten occur in Week 2 through Week 14 of the semester. There will not be a graded reflective writing on weeks when a major essay is due, though ungraded ones will be open to converse about writing questions in the days leading up to essay submission. So, no graded DB in WEEK 1 (the first week) or WEEK 2 (the last week), and no graded DBs during weeks when a major essay is due.

Consistent participation and class contribution are vital to course success. Students should be prepared to discuss assigned readings and create questions in our weekly DBs.

### **Ten (10) Short Reflective Writings (RW) - 250 points**

These ten occur in Week 2 through Week 14 of the semester. There will not be a reflective writing on weeks when a major essay is due. So, no RW in WEEK 1 (the first week) or WEEK 2 (the last week), and no RWs during weeks when a major essay is due.

### **ESSAY 1: Thick Description: Food Analysis – 150 points (DUE 11:59pm Sunday, 3/1)**

### **ESSAY 2: Direct Observation – 150 points (DUE 11:59pm Sunday, 4/12)**

### **ESSAY 3: Disciplinary Insights Integration Project – 150 points (DUE 11:59pm Sunday, 5/3)**

### **FINAL RESEARCH REFLECTION – 50 points (DUE 11:59pm Thursday, 5/14)**

**Class Discussion Boards and Participation.** Consistent participation and class contribution are vital to course success. Students should be prepared to discuss assigned readings and create questions in class. **No usage of phones or other technological devices are permitted during class unless otherwise instructed.** If you must use your phone or surf the web, please do it outside the room. Students should not work on other coursework during class. Putting your head down or sleeping is considered absent, as is wearing ear buds during class or engaging in any of the behaviors above. You should be fully engaged and contribute often. There is no extra credit or make up for lost class time and in-class assignments. Each unexcused absence results in a reduction of the 100 points allotted to this component of the course. **(250 points)**

**Reflective Writings.** These may relate to readings or videos; reflections on prompt questions; or other relevant items as determined by the instructor. **(250 points).**

**All three major essays will likely be 5-6 pages in length. Each essay has three graded pieces: 1) a proposal (25 points), 2) an initial, annotated source list (25 points), and 3) the final draft (150 points).**

**ESSAY 1: Thick Description: Food Analysis. 150 points total.** For the first project, a food item must be chosen by the student for research. The selected food item must be verified by the instructor prior to starting the project as the object chosen will determine the focus of the research methods and critical analysis undertaken. Examples of “thick description” will be provided in the course readings.

**ESSAY 2: Direct Observation. 150 points total.** For the second project, the student will need to observe a social phenomenon or event that occurs over time. Planning the project will require the student to have access to the same public event or place in which the public is easily surveyed. So again, personal (away from a computer) data collection will be required. Examples of direct observation will be provided in the course readings.

**ESSAY 3: Disciplinary Insights Integration Project. 150 points total.** For the third project, research methods from the individual’s BIS major concentration will determine the perimeters of the project. Students will select a minimum of two disciplinary perspectives through which insights on a selected phenomenon will be

gathered and integrated in a three to four page essay. A minimum of four scholarly sources must be properly cited and present on a bibliography page. This will be a highly individualized assignment.

**FINAL RESEARCH REFLECTION: Assessing and Consolidating Learning. 50 points.** This course reflection requires students to consider the entire semester in total and communicate how their learning informs current and future thinking about the nature of knowledge, disciplines, and interdisciplinary study. This section will summarize and consolidate the various methods of study present in IDST and in the course.

### **Grading Policy:**

**LATE WORK: Assignments that miss a deadline but are submitted within 24 hours of the due date will be accepted with a penalty of 20%, and assignments submitted later than 24 hours but less than 48 hours late will incur a 40% penalty. Any assignment missing the deadline by more than 48 hours will not be accepted and will receive a grade of zero unless other consult with the instructor has set an alternative deadline (this is rare). There are no make-up assignments for in-class work missed for unexcused absences. Excused absences must be discussed with the instructor beforehand. Third-party documentation may be needed for excused absences.**

Each student will be responsible for completing all of the assigned materials to be able to actively participate (in a well-informed manner) in class discussions. Specific instructions and due dates will be given for each graded assignment.

Student participation is directly related to the success in this course (both individually and collectively). Success in this course consists of in-class contribution, written work, and various other assessments. Since the class is a building process, there are various costs related to missing any one reading, class meeting, or assignment. "Life happens" and sometimes people miss class (it could happen to me, too). However, circumstances will only be considered at the discretion of the professor with fairness to all being the intent. Moreover, "patterns" of behavior often prove most telling regarding a student's level of engagement in any given course. Therefore, strive to establish a pattern of proactive communication and consistency regarding all course components.

Grading will be based on the assessment of the student's performance in completing each of the course requirements. Furthermore, **all activity and submissions done via electronic technology are the sole responsibility of the student.** That is, if you post something without the submission/text being recorded (like posting a document that cannot be opened or is empty), it is **NOT** a credit toward handing it in on time. **Always re-check and make sure it posted correctly.** Of course, your accessibility to Blackboard for course requirements and your navigation of the Internet for research, images, web links, articles, and media files are all mandatory. Do not wait to check on accessibility to important course files or downloadable files from library or internet sites until the last minute.

### **Blackboard, Net-iquette (Etiquette for Online Activities), and Online Policies**

**Class emails will be sent via Blackboard to students – you must check and use your university registered email account and course Blackboard site for this class on a daily basis.** Please use proper headings (I.E., be specific in the subject line) 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. Additionally, unless requested by the professor, do not send email submissions in place of Blackboard assignments.

All information and readings shared via Blackboard by the professor and for student coursework will be "done for educational purposes only" to maintain copyright laws. However, the professor retains the rights to all personally created pedagogical materials for this course.

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). Even their Helpdesk has a live 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. For writing help, the Purdue OWL is a fantastic resource for basic writing, citation, and format questions (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>).

## Writing Requirements:

For your coursework, you will be expected to demonstrate a clear understanding of your research projects and make apparent the degree of progress toward the project's goals. All coursework will then be graded on intellectual merit, interpretation of the project specifics, context, and achievement beyond requirements as outlined in the grading rubrics for each assignment. In each instance, all components will be combined for a single grade. This grade will be given at the discretion of the professor.

When working on the essays or the final project, think about how your writing 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. **Do not use non-adjudicated sources for any information in this course** – this includes websites like Wikipedia or Ask.com and the like.

Additionally, you will be expected to maintain professional attitudes regarding all aspects of your readings, written assignments, and outside research throughout the semester. In addition, I must remind you that **academic dishonesty of any sort will not be tolerated**. 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**. If you have questions or concerns on writing or citing sources, ASK me. As we are working with the Internet for research on a regular basis – **always keep track of your sources** – by including the website addresses with saved downloaded files or referenced material. You must practice becoming meticulous in documentation of your sources.

If you have questions concerning writing at the college level, I suggest contacting the WKU Writing Center or consult the website for all students at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/> for more information. 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 learning outcomes 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. 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 Student Accessibility Resource Center in DSU 1074. The phone number is 745-5004 or email [sarc.connect@wku.edu](mailto:sarc.connect@wku.edu). Per university policy, please do not request accommodations directly from the professor without a letter from the SARC. You may also contact them for questions and concerns.