

Approaches to Interdisciplinary Writing (AKA Centennial Boilermakers)

HONR 199-03

Professor Bross

T, Th 12:00-1:15

Office Hours W 11:30-12:30 and by appointment

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This course takes the Purdue campus and its history as its archive and laboratory. The class investigates the past of Purdue, which in turn helps us better understand its present and chart a course for the future. This semester we will focus our research and writing on early twentieth century Purdue—capturing our centennial past. We will be translating our investigations through our writing for a variety of audiences.

The aims of this course are threefold, but fairly straightforward. By the end of the semester, I hope that you will

- have honed your skills in researching materials in both digital and “bricks and mortar” archives and in using both primary and secondary sources.
- have become a stronger writer of prose for a variety of audiences.
- have a greater appreciation for the ways that your lived experience of Purdue University is at the intersection of your personal choices and our institutional history.

I will, of course, be evaluating your progress toward these goals in several ways, primarily through assignments designed to develop your research and writing skills. But, importantly, I will expect you periodically to assess your own growth in these three areas (particularly the first two) and to let me know via email or in person if you wish to make deeper or more rapid progress.

Texts

For purchase (at Von’s Books): Wayne C. Booth et al, *The Craft of Research*, 3rd edition.

There will be a wide variety of readings, many available online through our libraries, some that I will provide to you as PDF files on Blackboard or Mixable and some that you will be tracking down in our libraries yourself. Please print these out or make copies of them and collect them in a folder or binder. Please do *not* rely on electronic copies of these texts, and do *not* bring in laptops or other electronic devices unless specifically directed to do so.

Also, please note/bookmark/Sharpie this URL backwards on your forehead: *The Chicago Manual of Style Online*: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>. We’ll be relying on it for citation style this semester. I’d also be perfectly happy (even pleasantly surprised) to have you buy a hard copy.

Outline of readings, discussions and assignments

**** For each of the first eight weeks, expect electronic delivery of 1-3 issues of *The Exponent* through our Mixable account. You should be keeping these in a file (or print them out for a folder), reading them regularly and keeping notes for your research from them.**

August 20-22

T: Introductions

Th: Readings:

- Robert Topping, *Century and Beyond*, “Winthrop E. Stone: The Scholar-President.” You may want to purchase a used copy of this out-of-print book (request it through Von’s), but an electronic copy will be available.
- *The Exponent*, (first issue of 1903), delivered to you via Mixable

ASSIGNMENTS DUE BY 8:30 AM THURSDAY MORNING :

- SUMMARY OF TOPPING CHAPTER
- INDEX OF INTEREST FOR THE EXPONENT ISSUE #1

August 27-29

T: Guest lecture, Professor Curtis, History Department, readings TBA

Th: Introduction to archival research

September 3-5

T: Readings:

- John Kassen, Introduction to *Houdini, Tarzan and the Perfect Man* (Blackboard)
- John Miller scrapbook (accessible digitally, address TBA). You don’t need to read the entire scrapbook closely, but you should examine it thoroughly enough so that you can talk about specific examples that seem to support Kassen’s thesis in his book or that offer counterexamples. Note that in order to prepare this response to the scrapbook, you’ll need to identify Kassen’s main point(s) first.

Th: Research Discussion: We will discuss the results of your archival research scavenger hunt and troubleshoot any research problems that you encountered.

ASSIGNMENT DUE AT START OF CLASS: ACADEMIC RESEARCHER’S SCAVENGER HUNT

September 10-12

T: Scrapbook workshop: in small groups you will examine other Purdue student scrapbooks. Each of you individually should choose an item or a page from the scrapbook as a focus for the “object analysis” assignment.

Th: Scrapbook analysis

Readings: from *Writing with Scissors*, Intro and chapter 6 (Blackboard)

From Harold Holzer, *The Civil War in 50 Objects*, Chapter 17, “Distant Drums” and Chapter 34, “Learning to Read, Dixie Style” (Blackboard)

September 17-19

T: Bross presentation: intro to secondary research.

Readings: Part I and Part II from *Craft of Research* (pp. 1-102).

ASSIGNMENT DUE AT START OF CLASS: 1-2 PAGE DESCRIPTION OF YOUR OBJECT (SEE “DESCRIPTION#1” UNDER THE “OBJECT ANALYSIS” ASSIGNMENT FOR DETAILS)

Th: Research workshop: you will have this class period to work on your object analysis and research proposal. Please come to class with at least some of your bibliography completed and any questions you might have about the process.

ASSIGNMENT DUE AT START OF CLASS: “DESCRIPTION #2”

September 24-26

T: Peer writing/writing workshop; bring 4 copies of the draft of your proposal for the Object Analysis to class. Do not put a title at the top of these copies, but bring in a single print out of your title as well.

Readings: *Craft of Research*, Chapter 16 (pp. 232-248)

Th: Centennial Purdue

Readings:

- Ryan K. Anderson, “The Law of College Customs is [as] Inexorable as the Laws of Chemistry or Physics”: The Transition to a Modern Purdue University, 1900-1924. *Indiana Magazine of History*, 99.2 (June 2003): 97-128.

ASSIGNMENT DUE BY NOON ON FRIDAY: OBJECT ANALYSIS; RESEARCH PROPOSAL WITH BIBLIOGRAPHY

October 1-3

T: Readings: anthology of biography excerpts (Blackboard)

- *Radioactive: Marie and Pierre Curie*, Lauren Redniss
- *Divided Paths, Common Ground*, Angie Klink
- *Van Gogh*, Steven Naifeh
- *Steve Jobs*, Walter Isaacson
- *All We Know*, Lisa Cohen

Also, read these lists of “best biographies,” paying particular attention to any mention of the biographers’ main argument or intervention in our common understanding of their subjects:

- “The 11 Best Biographies and Memoirs of 2011” by Maria Popova:
<http://www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2011/12/27/best-biographies-and-memoirs-of-2011/>

- “The Lives of Geniuses: Five brilliant Biographies”:
<http://www.npr.org/2011/12/20/143160045/the-lives-of-geniuses-five-brilliant-biographies>

Th: Readings:

- Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts” (online here:
<http://artsci.wustl.edu/~ymiki/49YM/course-readings/hartman-venus-in-two-acts.pdf>)
- Nicholas Felton, *2010 Annual Report* www.feltron.com/ar10_01.html

October 8-10

T: *Debris*, 1904 discussion. By the end of class, you should have identified the subject of your biography.

Th: Research day workshop, in library computer lab. By the end of class you should have your requests for physical archives ready to give to the archives staff

October 15-17

T: *Exponent*, 1903-1904 discussion

Th: Research day, Karnes archives

October 22-24

T: Discussion of research plans for biographies; research time if possible.

ASSIGNMENT DUE AT START OF CLASS: *EXPONENT* INDEX

Th: TBA: depending on how our discussions and research are going, this class period will either be given over to individual consultations and research or to a plenary discussion.

October 29-November 1

ASSIGNMENT DUE MONDAY BY 3:00: BIOGRAPHICAL SUBJECT PROPOSAL

T: Biographical subject research workshop

Th: Biographical subject research workshop

November 5-7

T: Biographical subject research workshop

Readings: *Craft of Research*, chapters 12 and 13 (pp. 171-200)

Th: Roundtable discussion: Writing biographies

November 12-14

T: Biographical subject research workshop

ASSIGNMENT DUE WEDNESDAY, 3:00: BIOGRAPHY DRAFT FOR YOUR PEER GROUP

Th: Peer review workshop

Readings: your peer group drafts; have written comments/marginalia ready to go for all members of your group—you should give these comments to your group members.

ASSIGNMENT DUE AT THE START OF CLASS: PEER REVIEW OF CLASSMATE'S DRAFT. BRING IN TWO COPIES, OR GIVE ONE TO ME ELECTRONICALLY

November 19-21

During this week class will be highly experimental—both in form and content. We will conduct a “history of science recreation”—where we will engage in a hydraulics experiment inspired by the curriculum of the classes of early twentieth-century Purdue!

T: Hydraulics lab prep

Readings: Mansfield Merriman, *Treatise on Hydraulics* (1903), Chapter X, “The Flow of Rivers” (Blackboard). Read the problem set at the end of the chapter carefully and compare to the PDF of *Treatise*, 1914 (Blackboard). Attempt any problem you so choose, but everyone should attempt problem 133.c.

Th: Hydraulics lab prep. We'll meet for class to discuss the science and the experiment. We'll conduct the experiment Thursday night. Please meet at the co-rec pool at 8:00 (you'll need your Purdue ID to get into the building). If you want to swim after we conduct the experiment, bring your suit/towel.

ASSIGNMENT DUE FRIDAY, 3:00 DRAFTS OF BIOGRAPHIES FOR BROSS.

November 26-28

Tuesday: Lab write-up day. A member of Professor Wereley's lab group will be available for consults on the lab write up due next week. Come prepared with a draft of the report.

Th: THANKSGIVING

December 4-6

ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS ON TUESDAY: HYDRAULICS EXPERIMENT RESULTS AND REFLECTION

As a group we'll decide how to use our class time this final week of the term. We will be planning some kind of presentation of your biographical work—perhaps a public forum, perhaps an in-house publication, but be prepared to present the fruits of your research labor to a wider audience than just your peer review group!

Finals week: final presentations of Biographies due, celebration! Time and place to be announced

Description of Assignments

*Note: I will open a shared Dropbox folder for each of you, and you may keep any of your work that you want me to see or that I am requiring for the class in that folder. You may use that folder to share your final drafts with me or hand in final drafts as a hard copy.

Summary of Topping chapter (5 points). Due Thursday, August 22

Read the assigned chapter for class discussion on August 20 and write a one-page summary of the chapter. Consider as your audience a Purdue undergraduate student enrolled in a future offering of my class “The Idea of the University” (you can find a description of that class here, if it’s helpful: <http://kristinabross.weebly.com>).

Exponent Index (10 points). Final version due Tuesday, October 22 in your Dropbox folder
Over the course of the semester we will be reading all of the issues of *The Exponent* from 1903-1904. In order to make this primary source more useful to you when you begin writing your biographies, as you read you should construct and keep and index to the paper. You may keep this index in any form (e.g. a Word file, Excel spreadsheet, even pen-and-ink that you scan into your Dropbox folder), so long as it is *usable/legible* by another reader. You might imagine that in the future when you become a world-renowned academic scholar, students will comb through your student papers to see how you got your start. This index will give them a sense of how you imagined your research process. I will give you feedback on your index after the first issue (index due Thursday, August 22 for issue #1).

Academic Researcher’s Scavenger Hunt (5 points). Due Thursday, September 5

To help familiarize you with archives, archival research and the Purdue/Karnes’s resources in particular, you will go on a “scavenger hunt” to track down information related to our topic and approach. Handouts detailing the hunt will be distributed in class.

Object Analysis (20 points). Various due dates.

The first major project of the semester, this assignment basically asks you to perform all the prep work for a full research paper, but not to write that paper. There are three elements to this assignment, and the final grade will reflect how well you inhabit the developmental writing genres (the summary and the proposal) and the depth of your bibliographic research.

Descriptions (5 points), due Sept. 17 and September 19: You will be writing two descriptions of your chosen object (the material culture version of a textual summary). For description #1, write a 1-3 page description of your chosen object for a reader interested either in the history of education, turn-of-the century U.S. history or the scrapbook as a practice and tradition. Details for description #2 will be handed out in class.

Proposal (5 points), due Sept. 26: Write a 1-page proposal to an undergraduate research funding agency. This agency will give successful grant applications a small research budget and will commit to publishing your work in their research journal.

Bibliography (10 points), due Sept. 26: Create a properly formatted bibliography of primary and secondary materials pertinent to your research proposal. Please use categories for each type of resource: archival, primary and secondary.

Biography (35 points):

The second major project of the semester, this assignment will ask you to plan, research and execute a written biography of any member of the graduating class of 1904. Once again, there are three elements to this assignment, and the final grade will reflect how well you inhabit the developmental writing moments (proposal, draft/peer review and full draft) as well as the excellence in executing your research and write up of your work.

Proposal (5 points), due Oct. 28: Write a 1-2 page proposal for a biographical study that identifies your subject, explains your critical interest in the subject and details your plans for researching and your expectations of the kind of biography that may result from that research. You may also include a postscript to the proposal that talks about any other reasons (personal, sentimental, political, aesthetic) that led you to choose your subject. I won't evaluate that statement for grade, but I'll be mighty interested, and it may help me to steer your research.

Draft (5 points) and Peer Review (5 points total), due Nov. 13 and Nov. 14: My focus will be on your written review of a peer's work, but I will be checking the depth of your draft as well. This 1-3 page response to a member of your group's work should include your summary of the biography's argument, an assessment of the draft's strengths, comments on elements that should be strengthened, and any critical questions you have for the approach or research plus any suggestions you have for continued research.

Full Draft (25 points), due Nov. 22: Report your findings in a full, polished, correctly formatted, and closely proofread 6-8 page paper.

Hydraulics Experiment (10 points):

Details TBA, but we know that the elements of this project will include helping to conduct a fluids dynamic experiment with Professor Steve Wereley (ME), reading a chapter from a 1904 Hydraulics text book, and writing up the results of your lab/experience with a short reflection.

Participation and Final presentation (15 points):

To earn an A in participation, you must make regular, prepared contributions to class discussion. I expect that you will come to class with the appropriate text in hand, having read and digested the assigned reading for the day. I expect that you will have both thoughtful queries and thoughtful responses to the readings. If you are a shy participant, please come to talk with me about strategies for a more active presence in the class. I will take your collaborative work on the final presentation of our biographies to a wider audience into serious consideration as I calculate this grade.

You **MUST** attend class. You will be responsible for everything covered in class and any announcements I make whether or not you are present. If you have to miss class, be sure that you arrange beforehand with someone in the class to provide you with notes and announcements. I don't plan to have a formal attendance policy in this class (though I reserve the right to institute one mid-way through), but I will ask you to sign in at the beginning of each class period, and you will not get credit for participation if you are regularly absent. I will not accept late assignments unless you have cleared the delay with me in advance. In case of emergency, it is your responsibility to contact me as soon as possible if you have a legitimate reason (illness, for instance) for missing class or a due date. Also, I place an extra emphasis on informed participation in the last couple of weeks in the semester.

Course Policy on Honesty and Plagiarism: I believe that striving to understand and appreciate (with fair-minded criticism) our Purdue forbears through our research and share our understanding through our writing is a noble enterprise. I believe that you will best achieve such understanding and appreciation by reading regularly (even doggedly) through the assigned texts, participating in open discussions inside and outside of class and—most of all—by wrestling with Purdue’s history and our ideas in written work created expressly for this class. I expect that in doing so (and indeed, this is the expectation of the university community as a whole), you will use your own intuition, building on your own research for proof, and sometimes, relying on other peoples’ ideas as scaffolding, building blocks, skeletons, frames, etc. When you turn to this latter strategy, which is itself a perfectly respectable and noble academic practice, you should give these other people credit for having gone before you and having made your ideas possible.

The problem is, of course, that not everyone has had the kind of introduction to research and citation practices that I assume. How many of us take the time to read through Purdue’s Code of Conduct or to wade through a standard handbook’s explanation of plagiarism and proper citation? (If you lack such a handbook, see the OWL’s nifty page: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResearchW/plag.html>).

As a professor, I routinely direct students to the OWL for information about staying on the side of truth and light for assignments in my class—I hope you’ll take the time to remind yourself of its contents up front. I assume that you’ve had an introduction to basic research and citation techniques (though we’ll be going over them again in this class!). I evaluate assignments and grade accordingly. If I find plagiarized material in your work, I will forward the details of the problem to the Dean’s Office, no matter what the circumstances, and I will assign penalties ranging from a redo on the assignment, a grade of F on the assignment, to an F in the class. Please come and see me if you are a) unsure about how to make proper citations—bring in a past paper if you like, and we can work through it—or b) overwhelmed by an assignment and are starting to get panicky about its completion; the temptation to plagiarize can be overwhelming at such times. If class discussion isn’t enough to orient you, I am very happy to help you figure these things out on your own, in small groups, or in office hours.

Campus Emergencies

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. Here are ways to get information about changes in this course: my website (<http://kristinabross.weebly.com/>), our Mixable account or Dropbox folder.