

ARTSC 0550
Humanities Proseminar 1

Spring 2022
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Welcome to ARTSC 0550!

And congratulations on being the inaugural class of Humanities Center Undergraduate Fellows. In this proseminar, we will work together to help you to develop and refine a humanities research project and plan, to connect you with a research mentor at Pitt, and to send you off into your summer research work prepared to make the most of the experience. It will be faaaaaaaaaabulous.

On the pandemic and course meetings.

For at least the first 2.5 weeks of classes, we will be meeting online (Tuesdays from 10 am – 12.25 pm) via the following Zoom link: [Zoom link redacted]

After that, we will keep abreast of the pandemic situation and make a decision about how to proceed (online or in-person in the Humanities Center space in 602CL) in order to maximally care for the collective and individual safety and wellbeing of the members of our class community. If and when we move to in-person meetings, please put your health first: if you're feeling ill or have been exposed to COVID, please stay home and rest and we'll find ways to keep you caught up remotely.

On office hours.

Contact me any time to set up an office hour appointment! The schedules of my students tend to be so different from one another that I find it best to schedule office hours by appointment rather than setting aside a specific hour or two for that purpose each week. Email me any time you'd like to chat. And in any case, we'll have a chance to talk one-on-one 3 times over the term.

On grades.

Grading for the course is Credit/No Credit. Please put all concern about grades out of your mind. If you show up and do the work to the best of your ability, you'll pass the course. If Life gets in the way of your being able to do that, at any point during the term, don't panic: please just reach out - don't hesitate! - and we'll work it out together. Be kind and compassionate to yourselves and to each other: we're still living and working in a pandemic, and this semester we'll hold space for that fact and adapt and adjust as necessary.

On the readings and other course materials.

In order to provide ample opportunity for adaptation and adjustment - which will be especially important in a seminar like this, as we'll be tailoring our experience to the particular needs of this specific community of colleagues - we will operate according to a system of weekly guides to supplement this syllabus. While the syllabus you have before you contains the basic architecture of the course, the weekly guides will add texture and flesh to those bones: they will contain information

on the readings, assignments, and suggestions for how to approach them each week. I will post the weekly guides and other materials on Canvas for you the week before we meet, and will let you know when they're up.

Weekly Plan

Over the course of the semester, we'll be gradually moving through some basic categories that you'll find (versions of) in most research proposals: (a) an introduction to the topic and field of inquiry; (b) a major question or questions (or the equivalent) that will orient the research; (c) an explanation of the source base for the work; (d) a basic intro to the secondary literature with which the project is engaged and the major conversations within that literature that the research is contributing to; (e) a bibliography; and (f) a schedule or plan for research. By the end of the term, having all of this drafted - even if it's rough! - will help you to dive into the summer. We'll do that by exploring three major stages in the life of a research proposal. The following is a sketch of the architecture of our semester together, but The Management reserves the right to adjust it as we go, in order to maximize general awesomeness.

I. Motivations

In which we will ask some key motivating questions - what do you love? what matters to you? – and we will explore how to identify a topic that helps you to keep those motivations at the center of your humanities research; we will talk about how to find and work with primary sources of all sorts as evidence for your explorations; and we will dive into close and inspired reading as a way to bring life, creativity, and energy to your work

Week 1 (Tues Jan 11): On beginning

Week 2 (Tues Jan 18): On matter and care

Week 3 (Tues Jan 25): On the importance of pleasure

Week 4 (Tues Feb 01): On finding sources, finding an anchor

Week 5 (Tues Feb 08): On finding your question(s)

One-on-one meetings with Nappi: Weeks 4-5

Assignment due Friday Feb 11: Draft the first part of your research proposal: (a) Introduction; (b) Major question motivating your research; (c) Sources

II. Conversations

In which we will learn to refine your motivations into a project that locates yourself and your work in a larger research conversation, explore the secondary literature

around your topic, ask who you'd like to be in conversation with, and connect with a research mentor

Week 6 (Tues Feb 15): On collaboration

Week 7 (Tues Feb 22): On peers

Week 8 (Tues Mar 01): On mentorship

Week 9 (Tues Mar 15): On setting boundaries, and...

Week 10 (Tues Mar 22): On breaking them

One-on-one meetings with Nappi: Weeks 9-10

Assignment due Friday Mar 25: Revise the first part of your research proposal and draft the next sections: (d) Literature review (a sketch), and (e) Working bibliography-so-far

III. Intentions

In which we will move into research design, make a clear but flexible plan for your summer research, and talk about how to adapt when the plan goes out the window

Week 11 (Tues Mar 29): On design and flow

Week 12 (Tues Apr 05): On making plans

Week 13 (Tues Apr 12): On adapting

Week 14 (Tues Apr 19): On concluding

One-on-one meetings with Nappi: Weeks 13-14

Assignment due Friday Apr 22: Revise your research proposal and draft the final sections: (f) Schedule