BLA Capstone Project course
FAHS.4130 Summer I 2018,
May 22nd - July 2nd
Bachelor of Liberal Arts Program
University of Massachusetts Lowell

Instructor: Dr. Susan Thomson Tripathy
Work Group Meetings: Tuesday, 11 AM – 1 PM, O’Leary 300A
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Office Hours: by appointment
Email: Susan_Tripathy@uml.edu

“You put together two things that have not been put together before. And the world is changed.”—Julian Barnes

Course Description:

Students enrolled in the BLA program are required to complete the BLA Capstone course (3 credits). This course features a semester-long interdisciplinary project, which may be an original research study, creative art project (i.e., writing, film, music, drawing, etc.), OR a problem-focused community action project. In some cases, the community action project may also be an internship or practicum. Throughout this course, the following definition of interdisciplinary studies will be used:

Interdisciplinary studies may be defined as a process of answering a question, solving a problem or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession…[and that] draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights . . . (Klein and Newell, 1997, pp. 393-394)

Students will select their project in consultation with the professor of the BLA Capstone course, who may also serve as their primary advisor for this project. They may also choose to work with other faculty members in their BLA concentrations and/or Minor as their primary or additional advisors, as needed. Students who choose to do a community action project must also identify a community partner who will help them choose a mutually beneficial project and is willing to provide on-site supervision for their work.

Prior to beginning work on their project, students are required to submit a project prospectus (2-3 pages) to the BLA Capstone course professor, as well as to any additional faculty advisors or community partners, for review, feedback and approval of their choice. The BLA Capstone Project Declaration Form should accompany this prospectus.

All projects must utilize an interdisciplinary approach, as defined above and discussed in the BLA Foundations course, which is a pre-requisite for the BLA Capstone course. Original research studies should include 20-25 pages of content. As appropriate for their disciplines, students choosing the research study option may use a variety of data collection and analytical techniques, such as ethnography, personal interviews, focus
groups, surveys, quantitative analysis, textual analysis and so forth. Requirements for creative art projects will be discussed on an individual basis, but must include a 10-12 page written explanation of the creative process and interdisciplinary aspects of the work. Community action projects must include at least thirty hours of community service over the course of the semester, and a fieldwork journal and/or portfolio (12-15 pages) explaining the interdisciplinary aspects of the project, especially as this connects with problem-solving strategies. All projects must also include a reference list and utilize appropriate citation methods within their disciplines (note: the reference list is not included in the suggested page numbers above).

The overall purpose of the BLA Capstone project is to give students the opportunity to synthesize past and present learning from both of their BLA concentrations, as well as to integrate interdisciplinary approaches into independent research, art and/or community activism.

To complete this project, students will participate in the BLA Capstone work group, consisting of the professor and all students enrolled in this course. The work group will meet regularly to provide support and feedback on project work. In addition, students will work one-on-one with the professor of the BLA Capstone course and any additional professors from their BLA concentrations, and community partners, as needed.

All projects will be presented orally and visually to the BLA Capstone work group during the final weeks of the semester.

In sum, the following components need to be completed for all BLA Capstone Projects:

1) BLA Capstone Project Declaration Form
2) Prospectus
3) Reference list
4) Written reflections and/or research paper (see BLA Capstone instruction sheet)
5) Any additional required work (i.e., artwork, community action activities, etc.)
6) Final oral/visual presentation in class

Course Objectives:

The BLA Capstone course is designed to create a culminating experience for BLA students. This course provides students with the opportunity to:

1. Create a deeper understanding of interdisciplinary studies by designing and completing their own original research study, creative artwork or community action project.
2. Increase knowledge within and between each of their two BLA concentrations, as well as any Minors.
3. Effectively organize and synthesize information through the completion and presentation of an original research thesis, creative artwork or community action project.
4. Develop writing and communication skills through participation in the BLA Capstone work group and completion of the final project. This group will include regular feedback on writing and culminate in an oral presentation that includes visual communication (i.e., PowerPoint, video, graphs, objects, etc.).

5. Become adept at identifying, locating and evaluating resources and creating appropriate citations and a bibliography.

Essential Learning Outcomes:

This course meets the Essential Learning Outcome of Written and Oral Communication as defined under the Core Curriculum requirements. In particular, by developing an interdisciplinary original research study, or creative artwork or community action project with a written reflective/analytical component, creating an annotated bibliography, participating in a feedback work group, and presenting this project orally and visually, students will demonstrate knowledge and/or skill as follows: Understanding the purpose, context and audience for writing (#1), Selecting compelling and appropriate content (#3), Citing source materials according to appropriate disciplinary style (#5), and Delivering originally composed material in an oral presentation (#6).

This course meets the Essential Learning Outcome of Applied and Integrative Learning as defined under the Core Curriculum requirements. In particular, by developing an interdisciplinary original research study, or creative artwork or community action project with a written reflective/analytical component, creating an annotated bibliography, participating in a feedback work group, and presenting this project orally and visually, students will demonstrate knowledge and/or skill as follows: Connecting examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study (#2), Synthesizing current and past learning in an activity or experience like co-op, internship, practicum or independent research (#3), Integrating communication by choosing a format, language or form of visual communication, to connect content and form, demonstrating an awareness of purpose and audience (#4).

This course meets the Essential Learning Outcome of Information Literacy as defined under the Core Curriculum requirements. In particular, as students work to create their annotated bibliographies for their interdisciplinary projects, and then present their work in a final oral and visual presentation, they will demonstrate knowledge and skill in the use of digital technologies, communication tools and/or networks to define a problem or an information need; devise an effective search strategy; identify, locate, and evaluate appropriate sources; and manage, synthesize, use and effectively communicate information ethically and legally. These activities will satisfy criteria #1, #2, and #4 and #5.
**Assessment:**
Each project will be assessed according to the criteria and instructions on the BLA Capstone Project Instruction sheet (see attached).

**Schedule:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 22</strong></td>
<td>Discussion of project choices, guidelines for prospectus and reference list. Review interdisciplinary approaches as discussed in BLA Foundations</td>
<td>Come to class prepared with some potential ideas for a Capstone project.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>May 29</strong></td>
<td>Share project ideas with each other and check reference lists for appropriate style</td>
<td>Prospectus and reference list with at least 5 references due</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>June 5</strong></td>
<td>Discuss interdisciplinary approaches and applications to your project</td>
<td>2-3 page explanation of your project’s interdisciplinary focus is due</td>
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<td><strong>June 12</strong></td>
<td>Present and discuss work first drafts and outlines of written work. Explain appropriate in-text citation styles for various disciplines.</td>
<td>First draft of written work is due. For research studies, this will include the following: Introduction and an outline of your whole paper. For creative art and community action projects, this will include written reflections on the work you have completed thus far. Expanded reference list is also due – you should have at least 8-10 references.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>June 19</strong></td>
<td>Present and discuss second drafts of written work.</td>
<td>Second draft of written work is due. For research studies, this should include a written draft of the whole paper; for creative art or community action projects,</td>
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<td><strong>June 26</strong></td>
<td>Finalize written projects and discuss guidelines and ideas for oral presentation</td>
<td>Final draft of complete written work is due.</td>
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<td><strong>July 2</strong> (Monday)</td>
<td>Discuss writing and art/community action progress</td>
<td>Final Project Presentations in Class</td>
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**Reference:**