

Course Outline

ARTS503 (W2022): Multidisciplinary Capstone

Faculty of Arts, University of Calgary

- **Instructor:** Dr Michael Ullyot
- **Classroom:** Taylor Institute Studio A
- **Office Hours** ([Zoom](#); password: Ullyot): Thursdays, 1-2 pm (Jan 13 to Apr 7) or by appointment
- **Phone:** 403.220.4656
- **E-mail:** ullyot@ucalgary.ca
- **Web:** j.mp/ullyot
- **Podcast:** anchor.fm/ullyot

Description & Goals

According to the University Calendar, this seminar focuses on “completing and presenting individual research projects that integrate the primary and secondary focus within a student’s multidisciplinary degree program.” In practice, we’re going to solve — or at least address — the world’s most pressing problems: food systems, climate change, and Indigenous reconciliation. Problems like these need scholars like you, poised to bring multiple disciplinary approaches and methods to address them. But they also rely on the pursuit of pure knowledge, decoupled from applications.

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- articulate your disciplines’ ontologies and epistemologies (Response Paper);
- evaluate the relative benefits of pure and applied knowledge (Response Paper);
- describe the multidisciplinary nature of three core problems (Roundtable, Unessay);
- plan your future (Unessay, Closing Reflection); and
- collaborate with others to build cross-disciplinary knowledge (Participation Report, Closing Reflection).

Required Textbooks

Using other editions of these four books will complicate your life in various ways — so I recommend that you buy these editions, ideally used copies.

- Abraham Flexner and Robbert Dijkgraaf, *The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge* (1939, 2017)

- Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (2006)
- Ayana Elizabeth Johnson & Katharine K. Wilkinson, eds. *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis* (2020)
- Clayton Thomas-Müller, *Life in the City of Dirty Water: A Memoir of Healing* (2021)

Recommended Reference Books

Occasionally students ask which books are worthwhile resources for expository writers. My [guide to Effective Critical Writing](#) has detailed advice, but here are some more recommendations:

1. Your prime imperative is to choose the right words, so consult the *Oxford English Dictionary* ([link](#)) and the *Oxford Thesaurus* ([link](#)) through the library website. Bookmark both, and consult them as you write.
2. Your next imperative is to use words correctly. For this I recommend *Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage* ([link](#)), to resolve questions like that/which, who/whom, and other stumbling blocks.
3. Your ultimate imperative is to write clearly and succinctly; Verlyn Klinkenborg's *Several Short Sentences About Writing* ([link](#)) is a wise and readable guide to writing better sentences.

Evaluation

- Response Paper (20%)
- Roundtable (15%)
- Unessay (35%)
- Exit Interview (15%)
- Participation Report (15%)

You must complete these 4 assignments to pass this course: Response Paper, Unessay, Participation Report, and Exit Interview. Detailed descriptions of each assignment are below. There is no Registrar-scheduled exam in this course.

I use percentages to grade every assignment, and use D2L to convert them to these letter-grade equivalents:

90+%: A+ (4.0); 85-89%: A (4.0); 80-84%: A- (3.7); 77-79%: B+ (3.3); 74-76%: B (3.0); 70-73%: B- (2.7); 67-69%: C+ (2.3); 64-66%: C (2.0); 60-63%: C- (1.7); 55-59%: D+ (1.3); 50-54%: D (1.0); 0-49%: F (0).

Only at the end of the course do I convert your final percentage grades into letters or GPA scores. As per the University Calendar, instructors may use their discretion when rounding upwards or downwards when the average of term work and exams is between two letter grades.

Policies

Submission & Due Dates

Please include your name and ID number on all written assignments and upload them to the D2L dropbox.

Due dates are always midnight of the day indicated in the Course Schedule. Each student is permitted **1** free extension of 1 day without penalty, on **either** the Response Paper or the Unessay. **You do not need to ask permission for these extensions.**

I penalize late assignments — i.e. those submitted after midnight on the due date — at a rate of 5% daily for the first two days, and 1% daily thereafter. You must submit all assignments no later than one calendar week after the due date. Any later, and you will receive a zero grade on that assignment. Extraordinary cases of medical emergencies and other domestic afflictions may be subject to extensions, but only at my discretion.

If you are unable to lead a Roundtable you must inform me as soon as possible. I may request documentary evidence for the reason you give for your absence. For details on possible forms of documentation, including statutory declarations, see [here](#). If I deem your evidence to be acceptable, I may decide that alternate arrangements can take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. (For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.)

E-mail

Use your @ucalgary e-mail for course communications. I will respond to e-mails sent via @ucalgary accounts within 48 hours. Do not follow up before 48 hours have elapsed.

Expectations

When writing an e-mail to a professor, follow these five conventions:

1. Include a short, informative subject line that explains what the email is about.
2. Include a greeting in your email, like “Dear Professor [last name]” or “Hi Professor [last name].”
Not “Hey you.”
3. Be clear and concise. Write short messages and making direct requests. Say what you need in 2-4 sentences and ideally ask for simple answers (like yes or no).
4. Sign the email with your full name and the course number. For example: Jane Doe, ENGL 123.
5. Before hitting the send button, reread your message for punctuation and spelling.

Assignment Descriptions

Further details of all assignments, including my evaluation criteria, will be released closer to their due dates.

Response Paper

This is a brief (1000-word) paper comparing how our first two readings (Johnson and Flexner) address the nature and purpose of knowledge, both pure and applied. You will respond to their arguments through the lens of your particular disciplines.

Roundtable

This is an in-class exercise in which you introduce one of the readings from Johnson & Wilkinson and lead a discussion on its multidisciplinary approach to the problem of anthropogenic climate change.

Unessay

This is an opportunity to make a critical argument in any format *except* a conventional essay (e.g. podcast, artifact, screenplay, poster, mixtape, ...). Respond either to Problem 2 or Problem 3. First articulate a more precise question that your Unessay addresses, and then propose the format that best addresses it. Finally, address the problem(s) that you anticipate working on after graduation, and how your disciplines approach it.

Exit Interview

What have you learned from this course, both its formal materials and requirements and its informal, interpersonal exchanges with your peers? Which models do you have for your future multidisciplinary work? This is a self-reflection based on an interview with an expert either in one of your disciplines, or in the field of social or capitalist entrepreneurship.

Participation

Your participation grade depends on your engagement with every facet of this course: with our in-person meetings; and with all of the reading, annotating, writing, reflecting, researching, recording, revising, and other activities related to our texts and assignments. That means you make regular, substantive contributions to class discussions; and you attend classes with an annotated copy of the assigned texts, ready to discuss them. When you have questions about the course material and assignments, you pose them directly to me (in office hours, before or after class, or in separate appointments) rather than sending e-mails or direct messages. And you never (seriously, *never*) ask us a question you can answer by reading this course outline.

Participation is a self-reporting exercise. That means on April 15th you submit to the designated D2L Dropbox a 1-page account of how you engaged with the course, our readings, and our assignments. In other words, what evidence can you offer that you were present in both body and spirit during our meetings; that you did more than the required minimum to read, analyze, annotate, and think about our readings; that you reflected thoughtfully on your individual assignments; that you attended Zoom office hours?

Finally, on the basis on this evidence, award yourself a grade out of 15. Break down your score into components: 10 marks for synchronous activities in our meetings and 5 for asynchronous activities including

your preparations for class and work on assignments. If I agree with your self-assessment and evidence, I will award you that grade.

Dos & Don'ts for Participation Reports

- Do define what 'engagement' means to you, and cite evidence of yours.
- Do be fair to yourself.
- Don't claim to have done more than you really did.
- Do address the terms of the assignment. It asks you for evidence that you did more than the bare minimum, so don't focus too much on how you met basic course requirements by attending class, doing readings, or working on assignments. How did you *exceed* these requirements?
- Don't start at a perfect score and deduct points; **start at zero and make a case for every point you earn.**
- Do put some effort into your report. The best ones tell an interesting story of your engagement through time. They confess your shortcomings without making excuses for them. They conclude by summarizing why engagement is worthwhile, and what you learned about yourself through your engagement with the course.
- Don't try to flatter me into giving you a grade higher than you deserve. I appreciate constructive criticism more than hollow praise.
- Do be credible; tell me not only what you did, but what more you could have done to earn a higher grade. For instance, did you always complete your assigned readings before class? (Be honest.) There is far more credibility in an honest, explicit report than in an overconfident, vague one.
- Do compare your engagement with this class to your engagement with other classes.

Schedule

W1: Why are we here? Where do we come from?

- **Jan 11:** Course Overview; Disciplinary Self-introductions

W2: How does knowledge emerge?

- **Jan 18:** Foundations: Steven Johnson, *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation* (excerpts posted to D2L: "The Adjacent Possible," "Liquid Networks," "Exaptation")

W3: What is knowledge for?

- **Jan 25:** Pure Knowledge: Flexner, *The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge* (1939, 2017)

W4: Who benefits from knowledge?

- **Feb 1:** Applied Knowledge; Problematizing Problem-Solving & Entrepreneurship; **Response Papers due**

W5: How can we mitigate the climate crisis?

- **Feb 8:** Problem 1, Anthropogenic Climate Change: Johnson & Wilkinson, eds. *All We Can Save* (2020)
 - Mitchell, “Indigenous Prophecy and Mother Earth”
 - Pierre-Louis, “Wakanda Doesn’t Have Suburbs”
 - Stokes, “A Field Guide for Transformation”
 - Johnson & Wilkinson, “Onward”

W6

- **Feb 15: Roundtables** on *All We Can Save*
 - Marvel, “A Handful of Dust”
 - Gunn-Wright, “A Green New Deal for All of Us”
 - Rodriguez, “Harnessing Cultural Power”
 - Miller, “Heaven or High Water”

READING WEEK

W7

- **Mar 1: Roundtables** on *All We Can Save*; **Unessay Proposals** due
 - Prakash, “We Are Sunrise”
 - Houska, “Sacred Resistance”
 - Stengel, “Solutions at Sea”
 - Hopper, “Did It Ever Occur to You...” & Ray, “The Seed Underground”

W8: How can Canadians and First Nations reconcile?

- **Mar 8:** Problem 2, Reconciliation after Colonialism: Thomas-Müller, *Life in the City of Dirty Water* (2021)

W9

- **Mar 15:** *City of Dirty Water* continued

W10: What should we have for dinner?

- **Mar 22:** Problem 3, Food Systems: Pollan, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* (2006)

W11

- **Mar 29:** *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* continued; **Unessays** due

W12: Can I make a living *and* a better world?

- **Apr 5:** No class: Disciplinary and Hunter Hub meetings / interviews

W13

- **Apr 12: Closing Reflections** on your research & future plans
- **Apr 15: Participation Reports** due

Academic Integrity

While scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

Plagiarism occurs when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, or when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. Citing your sources in a bibliography is not enough, because a bibliography does not establish which parts of a student's work are taken from other sources. MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose.

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offence. If you submit an assignment that includes material (even a very small amount) that you did not write, but that is presented as your own work, you are guilty of plagiarism. **The consequences include failure on the assignment or in the course, and suspension or expulsion from the university.** For details, see [here](#).

Please read the following information carefully. The penalty routinely recommended by the English Department for documented plagiarism is failure of the course in which the offence occurred; academic probation is also routinely applied at the Faculty level. Suspension or expulsion can result from severe or repeated plagiarism.

The University Calendar states:

Essentially plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

(a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),

(b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,

(c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,

(d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

Advice on adequate documentation can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Student Conduct

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, [see here](#).

Principles

According to [the University Calendar](#), “The University of Calgary community has undertaken to be guided by the following statements of purpose and values: to promote free inquiry and debate, to act as a community of scholars [...], to respect, appreciate, and encourage diversity, [and] to display care and concern for community”. The Department of English, like the university as a whole, is committed to a “positive and productive learning and working environment.” This environment is characterized by appreciation and encouragement of diversity and respect for the dignity of all persons: students, support staff, and faculty. The department will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, such as threatening gestures, threatening or abusive verbal or written communication (including e-mails), or any conduct that “seriously disrupts the lawful education and related activities of students and/or university staff.” Report any cases of such misconduct immediately to the department Head, who, depending on the nature and severity of the incident, may then take further appropriate action.

Sexual Violence Policy

The University recognizes that all members of our community should be able to learn, work, teach and live in an environment where they are free from harassment, discrimination, and violence. The [University of Calgary’s sexual violence policy](#) guides us in how we respond to incidents of sexual violence, including supports available to those who have experienced or witnessed sexual violence, or those who are alleged to have committed sexual violence. It provides clear response procedures and timelines, defines complex concepts, and addresses incidents that occur off-campus in certain circumstances.

Classroom Conduct

All students, employees, and academic staff in the university community are expected to demonstrate behaviour in class that promotes and maintains a positive and productive learning environment, and to conduct themselves in accordance with the University of Calgary Calendar, the Code of Conduct and Non-Academic Misconduct policy and procedures, which can be found [here](#).

Internet & Electronic Communication Devices

Use laptops and mobile devices in a manner appropriate to the course and classroom activities. Do not access websites and resources during class that are distracting to you or to other learners. You are expected to know and to follow [the University's Internet and email use policies](#).

Online Conduct

The use of video conferencing programs relies on participants to act ethically, honestly and with integrity; and in accordance with the principles of fairness, good faith, and respect (as per [the Code of Conduct](#)). When entering Zoom, you play a role in helping create an effective, safe and respectful learning environment. Please be mindful of how your behaviour in these sessions may affect others. You are required to use names officially associated with your UCID (legal or preferred names listed in the Student Centre) when engaging in these activities. Instructors/moderators can remove those whose names do not appear on class rosters. Non-compliance may be investigated under relevant University of Calgary conduct policies (e.g. [Student Non-Academic Misconduct Policy](#)). If you have difficulties complying with this requirement, email the instructor explaining why, so the instructor may consider whether to grant an exception, and on what terms.

Instructor's Intellectual Property

Course materials created by instructors (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may **not** be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the course at the same time may be allowed under fair dealing.

Copyright

All students are required to read [the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright](#) and [requirements of the copyright act](#) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the [Non-Academic Misconduct Policy](#).

Other Important Information

Please visit [the Registrar's website](#) for additional important information on the following:

- Wellness and Mental Health Resources
- Student Success
- Student Ombuds Office

- Student Union (SU) Information
- Graduate Students' Association (GSA) Information
- Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points
- Safewalk

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

Student information will be collected in accordance with typical (or usual) classroom practice. Students' assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty. Private information related to the individual student is treated with the utmost regard by the faculty at the University of Calgary.

Writing Support

The [Student Success Centre](#) offers both online and workshop writing support for University of Calgary students.

Academic Regulations & Schedules

Consult the Calendar for course information, university and faculty regulations, dates, deadlines and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the University Calendar is [here](#).

Grade Appeals

Consult [this University Calendar link](#) and request advice from the English Department office, SS 1152. Please note that “mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision.”

Deferral of Term Work & Final Examinations

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see [these sections in the University Calendar](#).

Student Accommodations

The student accommodation policy can be found [here](#). Students needing an accommodation because of a disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the [Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#). Students needing an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available [here](#).

Program Advising & Information Resources

Have a question, but not sure where to start? The Arts Students' Centre (ASC) is your information resource for everything in Arts. Drop in at SS102, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at ascarts@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit [the Faculty of Arts website](#) which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (formerly the Undergraduate programs Office) at (403) 220-5881 or visit them on the 3rd Floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK (7625) or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI)

Feedback provided by students through the [Universal Student Ratings of Instruction](#) (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses. Your responses make a difference; please participate in USRI Surveys.