

## ENGLISH 596: RESEARCH METHODS

Time: Thursday 3:30–6:20 p.m.  
 Classroom: Griffin 202  
 Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.  
 Office: Griffin 250

Instructor: Professor Maria Seger  
 Email: maria.seger@louisiana.edu  
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### COURSE OVERVIEW

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This seminar surveys advanced research methods in literary and cultural studies to enable incoming graduate students to situate their work in relation to the past, present, and future projects of the discipline. To that end, we'll trace the most significant theoretical and methodological developments of literary and cultural studies, and we'll consider how these developments have shaped the interpretive practices and priorities of the discipline today. Additionally, we'll develop the practical research skills required for producing professional scholarship in literary and cultural studies through a series of readings, discussions, and assignments. We'll also discuss pragmatic advice for success in the graduate program and the profession, as well as the general structure and expectations of graduate programs, departments, and universities in the contemporary moment.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

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Parker, Robert Dale. *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2014. Print. ISBN: 9780199331161.

Semenza, Gregory M. Colón. *Graduate Study for the Twenty-First Century: How to Build an Academic Career in the Humanities*. 2nd ed. New York: Palgrave, 2010. Print. ISBN: 9780230100336.

### COURSE COMPONENTS

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*Presentations:* You'll complete two presentations over the course of the term aimed at developing your confidence in leading academic discussion and speaking about your academic work.

*Leading Class Discussion:* During one class this term, you'll lead discussion for roughly twenty minutes. You may draw our attention to a particular passage, introduce supplementary materials via handout or the classroom's multimedia equipment, have us work individually or in small groups—whatever you like—so long as the period culminates in you facilitating a group discussion of the reading assigned for that day. A sign-up sheet will be circulated on the first day of class.

*Research Article Presentation:* During our final class, you'll briefly present the argument of your research essay to the class. You may wish to distribute a handout or use the classroom's multimedia equipment, and you should plan to speak and field questions for roughly five minutes.

*Writing:* You'll undertake a variety of writing assignments over the course of the term aimed at developing your professionalization in the discipline. By the end of the seminar, you'll have a draft abstract, conference paper, and the start of a research article ready to be revised for presentation and

publication in specific venues identified by you. Please use Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines and submit the written assignments in hard copy. A prompt for each assignment will be distributed two weeks in advance of its due date.

*Conference/Journal Selection and Abstract:* In your first assignment, you'll select a conference and journal to which you will submit your conference paper and research article. Write a short rationale of no more than 500 words for why you've chosen each venue. You'll also write a short abstract of no more than 250 words that identifies your research question (and potentially your suspected answer to that question), the critical conversation to which you're responding, and the stakes/implications of your project.

*Annotated Bibliography:* In your second assignment, you'll compile an annotated bibliography with fifteen source entries of roughly 150 words each. For each source, list a complete citation as well as a summary of the source's argument, how its argument relates to your other sources' arguments, and how you plan to position your argument in response. At this time, please also submit a revised abstract.

*Conference Paper:* In your third assignment, you'll complete a roughly 2,000-word conference paper that makes an argument that responds to a critical conversation within your chosen field. At this time, please also submit a revised abstract.

*Research Article Draft:* During Finals Week, you will submit the start of a research article, likely a revision of your conference paper, around 3,000 words in length. It should make an argument that responds to a critical conversation within your chosen field and be accompanied by a cover letter detailing how you have revised this version and how you plan to expand and revise the article moving forward. At this time, please also submit a revised abstract.

## GRADE BREAKDOWN

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Leading Class Discussion	10%
Research Article Presentation	10%
Conference/Journal Selection and Abstract	10%
Annotated Bibliography and Revised Abstract	10%
Conference Paper and Revised Abstract	20%
Research Article, Cover Letter, and Revised Abstract	40%

## GRADE SCALE

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- A: 100%–90%
- B: 89%–80%
- C: 79%–70%
- D: 69%–60%
- F: 59%–0%

While individual assignments may receive half letter grades (pluses or minuses), final grades are calculated according to the above scale.

## COURSE POLICIES

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*Cancellations/Weather:* Please check your email regularly in case of class cancellations. If class is canceled, I will send alternate directions via email.

*Disabilities:* I am committed to ensuring that students have access to the conditions that they need to succeed in my course. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please contact me as well as the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. More information can be found at <https://disability.louisiana.edu>.

*Late Assignments:* I don't generally accept late assignments. That being said, life happens. If you have a situation, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can make alternate arrangements.

*Participation/Class Behavior:* This course will be conducted in a seminar style, meaning that participation from each student will be vital to everyone's success. Class discussion is a collective enterprise from which we all grow and from which we individually benefit on class assignments, so I expect that you will strive to be on time to and present in class, meaningfully contribute to our communal inquires and discussions, comport yourself with appropriate behavior and mutual respect for your classmates, and come to class with the assigned materials and having done the assigned reading. If electronic devices are fundamental to your learning process, please feel free to use them in seminar. That being said, please be mindful of your ability to distract yourself and others when using electronics for other purposes during class time.

*Plagiarism:* Because academic writing purports to create new knowledge, plagiarism is considered a serious ethical violation. For this reason, plagiarism of any kind will result in, at a minimum, a failing grade for the assignment, and, at a maximum, dismissal from the University. The University's official definition of plagiarism is as follows: "Plagiarism is a specific type of cheating. It occurs when a student claims originality for the ideas or words of another person, when the student presents as a new and original idea or product anything which in fact is derived from an existing work, or when the student makes use of any work or production already created by someone else without giving credit to the source. In short, plagiarism is the use of unacknowledged materials in the preparation of assignments." If you have any questions or concerns about plagiarism, please contact me.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

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DATE	READINGS	DEADLINES
Thursday 8/29	Syllabus, Parker, <i>How to Interpret Literature</i> (1–10), and Semenza, <i>Graduate Study in the Twenty-First Century</i> (1–17)	
Thursday 9/5	Parker, <i>How to Interpret Literature</i> (11–42) and Semenza, <i>Graduate Study in the Twenty-First Century</i> (18–38)	
Thursday 9/12	Parker, <i>How to Interpret Literature</i> (43–84) and Semenza, <i>Graduate Study in the Twenty-First Century</i> (39–53)	Conference/Journal Selection and Abstract
Thursday 9/19	Parker, <i>How to Interpret Literature</i> (85–110) and Semenza, <i>Graduate Study in the Twenty-First Century</i> (54–	

	75)	
Thursday 9/26	Parker, <i>How to Interpret Literature</i> (111–47) and Semenza, <i>Graduate Study in the Twenty-First Century</i> (76–89)	
Thursday 10/10	Parker, <i>How to Interpret Literature</i> (148–84) and Semenza, <i>Graduate Study in the Twenty-First Century</i> (90–115)	
Thursday 10/17	Parker, <i>How to Interpret Literature</i> (185–219) and Semenza, <i>Graduate Study in the Twenty-First Century</i> (149–66)	Annotated Bibliography and Revised Abstract
Thursday 10/24	Parker, <i>How to Interpret Literature</i> (220–58) and Semenza, <i>Graduate Study in the Twenty-First Century</i> (167–94)	
Thursday 10/31	Parker, <i>How to Interpret Literature</i> (259–84) and Semenza, <i>Graduate Study in the Twenty-First Century</i> (195–213)	
Thursday 11/7	No class meeting	Conference Paper and Revised Abstract
Thursday 11/14	Parker, <i>How to Interpret Literature</i> (285–329) and Semenza, <i>Graduate Study in the Twenty-First Century</i> (214–37)	
Thursday 11/21	Parker, <i>How to Interpret Literature</i> (354–80) and Semenza, <i>Graduate Study in the Twenty-First Century</i> (255–87)	Research Article Presentation
Thursday 12/5	No class meeting	
Monday 12/9 by 8 p.m.		Research Article Draft, Cover Letter, and Revised Abstract