

LBST 297: Crossroads Course into Liberal Studies

Overview:

This course, normally taken in a student's final semester before completing the degree, is intended as a two-year capstone experience. It is called a "crossroads" course instead of a capstone since it will encourage students enrolled to make some choices about the future, including whether or not to continue on to a four-year bachelor's degree.

This course is intended to:

- Encourage structured reflection on what has been learned while completing the degree
- Help prospective graduates plan for the immediate future (following graduation), whether pursuing further education, the workplace, or personal endeavors
- Provide insight and resources to explore various short- and long-term career options.

Prerequisites:

- Be in the final semester of the A.A. degree in Liberal Studies of Professional Studies, meaning that all degree requirements either have been met or are concurrently registered for
- Consent of course instructor (through permission number) and assigned advisor (through clearing of advising hold)
- UW-Parkside grade point average of at least 2.00

This course will be taught in hybrid format: half online and half in the classroom (see schedule below). The classroom portion will consist of routine business (announcements, Q&A, etc.), discussion, and guest speakers or other events related to the unit's topics. The online portion will consist of discussion of readings and journal/blog entries, assigned readings, and other topics. The hybrid format is intended to allow a degree of scheduling flexibility for class members as well as benefits from each of the two modes of delivery. The classroom mode, for example, allows for spontaneous discussion, while the online mode allows for more reflective engagement and has been known to draw a wider range of student participation.

Course Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, you are expected to be able to:

1. Identify when, how, and in what context the specific learning outcomes for the A.A. were introduced and subsequently built upon.
2. Reflect critically on the college courses you have taken so far, as well as other learning experiences, to identify skills and knowledge to build on in the future — through career, further education, or both.
3. Demonstrate in depth a sense of self as a learner, building on current and prior learning experiences, to respond to new and challenging personal and professional circumstances.
4. Articulate a nuanced understanding of 21st-century career paths, ways these might differ from career paths of earlier decades, and the implications for personal and professional goals. This includes weighing the relative advantages of continuing on to a bachelor's degree (and possibly beyond) versus seeking immediate full-time employment.

5. Identify the skills and knowledge you would bring to an employer as both an A.A. degree graduate and, more broadly, someone who has lived a life before, during, and outside of college.
6. Write a resume and cover letter, and begin a job search.

Assignments:

- There will be a grade for attendance and participation — based on online and classroom participation as well as non-graded outside class assignments:
 - Online discussion, including discussion of assigned readings as well as commenting on other students' journal/blog posts. The number of posts will be limited and graded using a 5-point rubric.
 - Online posts to report on reading and other non-graded assignments.
 - Live classroom attendance and participation.
- Course participants will maintain an electronic journal/blog throughout the course so that reflections can be shared with and commented on by the instructor and classmates. The journal/blog should also be kept as a future reminder of what was accomplished while earning the A.A. degree and how to explain that to potential employers and others. Journal/blog posts will be graded using a 5-point rubric.
- There will be two medium-length written assignments one in the first half of the course on career exploration plans to be carried out during the course and one during the second half to explain future plans. Both papers will incorporate concrete, detailed plans as well as critical reflection to explain those plans.

Semester Schedule:

Weeks 1 & 2: Overview and introductions; Introduction to campus education and career planning resources

Possible readings: Pannacker, "A Liberal Arts Foundation for Any Career" (NYT); Kristof, "Starving for Wisdom" (NYT); Selection(s) from Curran and Greenwald, *Smart Moves for Liberal Arts Grads*; AAC&U, LEAP info

Journal prompt1: Throughout your lifetime, what has made your education meaningful to you? Provide concrete detail wherever possible. For example, did you have the opportunity to work with a teacher who transformed your view of learning? Was there a particular book you found personally meaningful? Have there been circumstances in your life that your education has helped you to manage?

Assignment due: Meet with a career counselor in the Advising and Career Center (by the end of week 4). Schedule this appointment *as soon as possible during this first unit*.

Weeks 3 & 4: Education in the 21st Century and Your Place in It

Possible readings: selections from Sacks, *Tearing Down the Gates*, and/or Brandt, *Literacy in American Life*, and/or...

Journal prompt 1: What have been the broad social consequences of disparities in access to higher education through recent history (including today)? Can you think of some ways the disparities might be addressed — through public policy or in other ways?

Journal prompt 2: Describe your Advising and Career Center appointment. What did you learn? What surprised you? Post your resume and a draft cover letter.

Assignment due: Advising and Career Center appointment

Weeks 5 & 6: What Is Education: Where Is It Headed and What Is It Headed Toward?

Possible readings: Selections from Kamenetz, *DIY U*, and/or Carey, *The End of College* (or similar — need to read these more)

Journal prompt: What do you think higher education will look like in 15 years? Will there be classes as we know them now? Will student learning be evaluated in the same way(s) that it is now? Will there still be publicly funded institutions of higher education?

Assignment due: Reflection and exploration paper (first draft) — will include a component addressing prior learning and work with program learning outcomes

Weeks 7 & 8: Work in the 21st Century and Your Place in It

Possible readings: selections from Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*; and/or Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*; and/or Moretti, *The New Geography of Jobs*; and/or Pariser, *The Filter Bubble* (or video)

Journal prompt: How do you see the relationship between a liberal arts education and today's workplaces? How will you make the two fit together in your own life?

Assignment due: Reflection and exploration paper (final draft)

Weeks 9 & 10: Planning Your Future

Possible reading: Bolles, *What Color Is Your Parachute?* (most recent edition)

Journal prompt: What insights from *What Color Is Your Parachute?* do you plan to implement in your own short-term and/or long-term future plans? For example, if you plan to continue on to complete a bachelor's degree, what will you be doing to build your resume and skill set while still in college? If you

plan to go on to a career, will you approach your career differently than you might have without reading this book? How so?

Weeks 11 & 12: Reflection on the Course

Possible readings: None

Journal prompt: If you could change anything about the A.A. degree Crossroads course, what would it (or possibly more than one thing) be? Why do you feel the change(s) is/are important? How would you make them? Please be as specific and detailed as possible, as we are sincerely interested in incorporating student feedback in future semesters.

Assignment due: Final essay first draft (due [Friday of Week 12]): What is your plan for life following graduation from the A.A. degree? By this we mean not just work, but your life as a whole. How did you develop this plan? What questions do you still have, and how will you go about answering them?

Post final essay for comments (due [Friday of Week 12])

Weeks 13 & 14: Reviewing, Revising and Completing Thoughts

Possible readings: None

Journal prompt (1): Post comments on the final essays of at least three classmates. Note that if there is one or more that has no comments yet, consider this your first priority.

Journal prompt (2): Go through your previous journal posts and add any subsequent thoughts on what you initially posted.

Assignment due: Final essay final draft (due [Friday of Week 14])