Roundtable: Pedagogy Proceedings from 2012 College English Association Conference

Service Courses: Forays to Bridge the Gulf and Invite New "Citizens"

Carolyn Sturgeon
West Virginia State University

Teaching service courses such as the first year composition courses and an introduction to literature is often a primary mission for English departments on campuses in the United States. One or two semester courses in English composition and in research writing and documentation are commonly offered, often as part of a general education component, to prepare new students for college writing. An introduction to literature is also commonly offered in the general education foundation at many colleges.

Sometimes specific departments request specialized additional English classes such as Writing for Business, basic grammar courses, composition courses focused for specific colleges such as, on our campus at West Virginia State University (WVSU), English 202: Writing for the Sciences (West Virginia Catalog 132), and Media Studies 502: Graduate Research and Writing (West Virginia Catalog 165). All of these courses mentioned above are written and taught by WVSU English department faculty.

Demonstrating the value of material taught in these service courses is an essential step for active learning. Students often resist instruction in service courses simply because these students

do not understand the need for and the benefits of courses not in their major subjects. Instead of perceiving the benefits of courses such as a First Year / Freshmen Experience course and service course requirements for a basic foundation in, typically, math and English—courses designed both to equip students to successfully take upper level courses and to develop a core foundation of knowledge—students often just see added costs and delays toward the day they graduate from college and begin living the lives they have imagined through all the years of their educations.

Even *without* considering the possibility that a student may also need a developmental/remedial course to prepare for the introductory composition and literature courses, when these possible additional English specialized discipline-dependent service courses such as those mentioned above are added to the two or three common general education service courses in composition and literature, some non-English majors need to successfully complete as many as five or six English courses before they can finally concentrate on their courses in their majors, required general education classes, and electives. The challenges and victories in these undergraduate service and specialized courses are probably familiar to many English or composition faculty, but can you imagine what happens when English department faculty volunteer to write and then teach a graduate research and writing course for students in a media studies MA program?

Dr. Tom Kiddie, an English department colleague, and I created and team teach Media Studies 502: Graduate Research and Writing to the media studies MA students at WVSU, but we never imagined the borders of scholarship, perception, and even basic imagery we were about to breach as we designed and started teaching this course in 2010.

As we started to create this new course, one of the most interesting elements of research we completed was to study the roughly fifty final creative projects or theses from previous graduates of this program. More than 90% of those media studies MA graduates who had completed their programs before we first offered Media Studies 502: Graduate Research and Writing in the fall 2010 semester had chosen to complete creative projects rather than theses. Despite this interesting and illuminating information about how our future media studies students were likely to conceive and communicate ideas, we essentially designed a standard (to us) graduate research methods class. We did not yet understand how our future media studies students were likely to imagine and communicate ideas.

For almost three years now, we have been teaching and constantly re-evaluating our methods, efficacy, and delivery modes for this course as we experimented with when and how to offer the course. Initially, we taught the course in the first semester of the first year of the media studies MA program for each student, but that early scheduling did not allow time for new graduate students to meet media studies graduate faculty or to allow these students time to choose the topics they wanted to pursue. Given that the two major course requirements in Media Studies 502 are a literature review approximately twelve to twenty pages long and a related creative project proposal or thesis proposal approximately thirty to fifty pages long, our students need to have some graduate coursework before taking our research and writing methods class so they can choose wisely about what they want to research and write in this research and writing methods class. After teaching the class the first time in the fall, we were eventually able to reschedule this class from the first semester of the graduate program to the students' second

semester of the program to give them some time to develop an idea of what they want to research

or create.

Another change we have made every semester out of four now is how to best deliver the

course. We have experimented with 100% face-to-face class time (See fall 2010 syllabus

attached.) and as much as 50% web and 50% face-to-face class time (See spring 2012 syllabus

attached.) After having persistent difficulties getting class members in a 50/50 web/in person

class to post their assignments online using an ambitious schedule we designed to allow posting,

peer review, instructor feedback after peer review, and revision in time for the next weekly class,

we realized the students needed more class discussion, practice, and lecture, so we reverted to

100% face-to-face class time in the spring 2013 semester. In hind sight now as I write this paper,

I recognize that our ambitious expectations were another instance of our trying to compare our

graduate school experiences to those of our students' graduate school experiences. Most WVSU

students work at least part-time, and approximately 88% of WVSU students do not live on

campus (West Virginia "Fact…" 34). Classes are on our students' "to do" list as they do what

they need to do every day on campus before they can go home and back to their "regular" non-

student lives.

Over the years, my colleague and I and our students have struggled trying to understand

each other. To them, we are an obstacle they have to get past, an obstacle that is not synthesized

with their work in their other subject-driven media studies courses on campus. To us, these

students are often a puzzle. We have what seems like a breakthrough in one class, but that "aha"

moment that got everyone excited last week is not expanded or, seemingly, even remembered the

next week. They think in pictures, and we think in words. They are trying, and we are trying, but

we are each in foreign lands, lands where we do not express ourselves in a common system, a

lingua franca so to speak.

Just as many faculty members now turn to Beloit College's inestimable annual "Mindset

List" (McBride and Nief) to help us reconcile *our* familiar cultural references to those of our

students, we must be thoughtful and creative as we work to ensure that students in *all* our courses

are approached in terms they can understand and about which they have passion. It is especially

important in these commonly-taken non-major or "foreign" service courses for faculty to show

our students the benefits of not only mastering the course objectives, but understanding and

using the material even after the required courses are successfully completed.

After repeatedly trying to find some common ground in which to practice scholarly

analysis, research, and publication, the *lingua franca* we discovered several weeks into our first

offering of this graduate course to students working on largely visually-oriented projects such as

films, screenplays, graphic novels, and video games was film, and, in later semesters, simple

visuals such as magazine covers.

From our students' own animated discussions with fellow students and friends and in

their content courses taught by media studies faculty, they already knew the value of *orally*

discussing different ideas espoused and used by established and emerging filmmakers.

Unfortunately, in our first few weeks of our first semester offering this course developed by

English faculty, we had, initially, not been able to show our students how these oral discussions

were just that: oral performances for very specific and limited audiences. Our students did not

yet realize writing and sharing their ideas through publication, as they sought to find if their

ideas were even new and where these ideas might fit in the scholarship and work in their fields,

created permanent records and greatly extended their reach to spread their new ideas and their

names.

Our first effort to use visual texts in the fall 2010 semester immediately helped students

informally share their creative ideas and their analyses. Because they were knowledgeable and

comfortable sharing their observations about these disparate visual texts, they started to gain

confidence, and they started to analyze these visuals and worked to clearly articulate their

conclusions in class discussions and informal assignments. To help our students develop the kind

of research, analysis, synthesis, and documentation they would need to research and write a

literature review, we chose to show about 10-12 minutes for each of three different film clips

from the opening credits and early action in three *Frankenstein* films: James Whale's 1931

Frankenstein, Mel Brooks's 1974 *Young Frankenstein*, and Kenneth Branagh's 1994 *Mary*

Shelley's Frankenstein. We instructed our students to take notes so they could each write

between one to two pages in which they analyzed and shared their perspectives about a single

production element of interest from a list of title credits, lighting, and story elements to

consistently use for all three *Frankenstein* films.

Everyone in the room, students and professors alike, shared orally her or his written

interpretation about the selected production element and the three disparate film texts of the same

classic story during that class. We all listened to each other, and we all analyzed how each

person's ideas fit in the bank of ideas we had that day in class. This oral sharing and comparing,

this oral publication of ideas, was a key element in helping those first students understand and

appreciate the value of a literature review. Our students finally saw how the literature review is,

of course, the way they could enter the scholarly or working professionals' conversations and the

way they could leave a permanent and retrievable record of their individual ideas that fit into or altered the current published bank of knowledge and performances in each specific field.

Over the years, we have continued using films, and we have also sometimes used simpler graphics such as magazine covers. In our most recent fourth offering of this course in the spring 2013 semester, we used magazine covers to teach analysis and to show students that not everyone sees the same message in a visual publication just as audiences of one common written text often comprehend a variety of messages. Sometimes, we used multiple magazine covers that addressed the same or related issues. We then used those disparate covers to help transition from learning how to write an abstract to practicing the weaving of disparate and similar ideas that is the core of a literature review.

Sometimes, if we discover our students are struggling with simple analysis and are not yet able to synthesize multiple ideas, we take a step backwards and work on a simpler analysis of one idea. We borrow texts from many places including the magazine covers mentioned above and simple, short literary pieces using familiar ideas and concepts such as first love. Gray Soto's short poem "Oranges," a demonstration of young love, or a combination of a poem and a graphic of the poem's imagery or theme have been helpful for some of our students. Charles Henry Demuth's glorious close-up painting of a many layered series of golden fives in *I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold* is often elusive until we supplement it with the poem "The Great Figure" William Carlos Williams wrote to illuminate Demuth's art depicting these layers of superimposed number fives on the back of a fire engine.

Over the four semesters we have taught this course, our students have had a diverse undergraduate preparation in their majors. These students' nationalities and undergraduate

degree types (BS, BA, and RBA) are also varied. Some of our graduate students earned

bachelor's degrees at WVSU, and some are new to our campus for this graduate program. Most

of our students who completed undergraduate degrees at WVSU majored in communications

(even though they sometimes started in another major) and then segued to WVSU's media

studies graduate program.

Now that we have taught this research writing methodology course since the fall semester

of 2010, most of our students are recently admitted students and, therefore, required to

successfully complete this course. The spring 2013 semester's class of eleven students was, by

far, the largest we have had, and dividing our time between the roughly eight or nine students

who came to any class session was far more difficult than it had been in the past with roughly

three to four students per class.

In trying to both strengthen our students' analytical writing skills and provide early

feedback for homework during the class it is submitted, we use peer review and discussion as

much as possible. Peer comments about content can certainly be helpful, and we do elicit peer

responses in this course where both instructors are holders of Ph.D. degrees in English rather

than in a more typical preparation for media studies such as communications. Unfortunately,

there are typically few, if any, students in our classes who can offer constructive *writing* advice

about this so unfamiliar to them writing style. Therefore, we struggled a bit this most recent

semester to offer feedback in class to *every* student and to guide our students' efforts to look

again, to write again, and to focus and articulate their ideas.

Instead of always having time to read and respond to everyone's weekly drafts in the

spring 2013 semester's class, we sometimes had to pick papers that offered a range from

challenged to superior or that demonstrated a problem several students in the class were

experiencing and hoped students read our notes on their papers and understood that they, too,

were struggling with the same issue even though we didn't talk about their specific papers.

During our second offering of Media Studies 502 in the spring 2011 semester, I asked

Josh Martin, a student from the first class in fall 2010, if he would be comfortable sharing his

class literature review with the members of the second class. Josh expressed his own pride in his

work, work so strong that we wanted to use it to model the assignment for our subsequent

students, and he enthusiastically agreed to let us use his literature review classwork as a model as

we teach Media Studies 502 every year. Having a successful former student's sample of work, a

former student who is now a member of the media studies faculty at WVSU, provides a current

and strong model for new students in this class, students who are now completing the same

major assignments as Josh Martin did about three years ago.

Because this type of writing and analysis of words rather than images is so foreign to

many of our students, they need repetition, time, and a variety of approaches to understand our

suggestions on how to review the existing research and performances related to their theses or

project ideas. These students are often so excited about their research or projects that they don't

understand they will need to clearly articulate their ideas to others working in their fields. Our

students need to understand that their work in this class is only the beginning of their written

sharing of their ideas and work. These new MA students still often demonstrate the common

undergraduate frustrations with coursework which I mentioned early in my article. These young

and eager students just want to get on with the exciting ideas they have without the necessary

foundation to understand how to articulate their ideas and how to use what they are learning in

this obscure—to them—graduate research and writing course taught, oddly, by two English

faculty members.

Explaining to these students how they will need to develop a short precise explanation or

"pitch" of their work so they can attract supporters for their current and future projects has been

helpful. Assigning a poster presentation to them has also been helpful and fun for most of our

students. It is also a publication link we can share with our students as we describe how poster

presentations, long a major delivery method in business, have now become common at many

scholarly conferences including recent conferences at which both of us have presented. We

discuss how to create a poster that will draw in audience members to read on their own or to use

to support a face-to-face meeting between the poster creator and her or his audience, and then we

assign each student to make and present his or her idea to the class via a poster presentation.

Helping our students develop an even quicker one or two minute oral "blurb" describing

their specific foci and products and how those new ideas might interest or attract another student

to participate as cast or crew for a film project; a faculty member for consultation, support, or

equipment loan; or a prospective grant resource has been very effective over the years in making

these students frustrated with yet another service course see value in the course and in what we

are teaching them to do.

Our students' research to discover innovative and timely ideas to share with working

professionals and scholars in specific areas of media studies, of course, also broadens our

knowledge about current issues in media studies. Showing students ways to understand and to

join the *recorded* (written) conversations in their fields invites them to imagine where their

creative research ideas fit and impact their respective fields. These young professionals'

experiences and interests span a broad range of possible theses or projects in media studies

fields, so we also invite all the media studies faculty and students to the last Media Studies 502

class session in which each student in our class presents her or his idea to the class and invited

guests. Teaching and work schedules for our invited guests sometimes conflict, but, sometimes,

we have a dozen guests including faculty and students in many areas of our media studies

program, faculty who can mentor these new media studies MA students in ways my colleague

and I cannot and students who can serve as cast or crew on film productions. On these occasions,

the presentations and subsequent conversations are animated and very productive. As our

students connect with WVSU's graduate media studies' students and faculty who are creating

their own performances and researching ideas, our students often begin to immerse their own

voices into the canon of ideas and expertise under discussion. Our students' literature reviews

and theses or project proposals become real and important as these students bounce ideas around

the room with interested and interesting faculty with decades of related work, experience, and

knowledge.

Much of the work I have discussed above *is* very familiar to teachers of the traditional

English 101 and 102 first year composition and other service courses. Students in the standard

collegiate first year writing courses sometimes arrive with a plethora of misconceptions and

inconsistencies. These confusions are usually born out of the students' efforts to understand

standard research methodology but, unfortunately, are also occasionally caused by an inability to

make a connection, to find a common language, between teachers and their students.

My extended media studies example above is an extreme version of the initial

disconnection often experienced in service courses. However, this disconnect is a common

element whether teaching developmental courses to prepare students for college and university

work, basic composition to all students, business writing to accounting students for their reports,

clear prose to science students for their lab reports, or research methods and writing to all

undergraduate and graduate students. These service courses, general education courses, and

specialized writing and research methods classes for students in specific fields or programs are

designed to develop our students' academic and professional voices so that our students may

convey their unique ideas and expressions of those ideas in a way that our students' audiences

may understand and respond to. The communication borders can be crossed by teaching and

learning about each other's discourse systems and helping students explore their content specific

ideas in universally clear analytical and scholarly writing in a genuine effort to connect with

others interested in these media.

Appendix

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West Virginia State University

MS 502: Graduate Research and Writing

Fall 2010

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Instructors: Dr. Carolyn Sturgeon   Office: 220 Hill Hall   Phone: 304 766-3101
                Dr. Tom Kiddie   Office: 227 Hill Hall   Phone: 304 766-4116

Sturgeon's office hours: **M/W** 2:00-4:00 PM, 5:15-5:30 PM;
 T 8:30-9:30 AM, 12:15- 1:45 PM, 6:00-7:00 PM;   **R** 8:30-9:30 AM, 12:15-1:15 PM

Kiddie's office hours: **M/W** 2:15 – 5:30 pm; **T** 2:45 – 7:00 pm

Course Description: (3 credit hours) An entry-level graduate course designed to familiarize students with the basic tools and techniques to do acceptable graduate work. Emphasis will be given to critical methods of research, study, and writing.

Objectives:
During the semester, students will

- Study the discourse patterns of academic English;
- Research and select an original topic to research or create a relevant Media Studies final project for the graduate program.
- Practice critical reading skills researching their topics and offering feedback to other students in the class about their classmates' ideas and writing;
- Improve critical writing skills by working with their own and classmates' writing;
- Study various types of literature reviews for projects and theses and begin determining the bank of research relevant to their topics;
- Develop proofreading and editing skills;
- Study and practice MLA documentation and citation established practices using the current (7th edition) *MLA Handbook*.

Outcomes:
By the end of the course, successful students will be able to

- Develop an awareness of and ability to use effectively the discourse patterns of academic English;

- Use strategies to start working on the thesis/project proposal. Students will organize their introductions, literature review, and methods sections and will analyze their own work and integrate classmates' and instructors' feedback to narrow their focus and test research question/project relevancy and originality.
- Develop critical reading skills to think and write more clearly and incisively;
- Practice and develop the writing process through generating ideas, drafting, peer and individual writing evaluations, and instructors' feedback;
- Choose the appropriate style and topic to draft, refine, and polish a literature review relevant to the student's interests in the field of Media Studies; (Depending on the student's preparation and readiness to work on a thesis/project, this topic may not be the student's final focus for the graduate Media studies program.)
- Use proofreading and editing skills to refine, edit, and proofread written work without the help of others;
- Learn and use correct citation and documentation following current MLA protocols.

Textbooks:

Clark, Irene L. *Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation: Entering the Conversation*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2007.

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th ed. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2009.

Strunk,Willam, and E[lwyn] B[rooks] White. *The Elements of Style*. Fiftieth Anniversary Edition. New York: Pearson Longman, 2009.

BRING YOUR TEXTBOOKS TO EVERY CLASS.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance for every class for the entire period is the best goal. There are three major foci for instruction in this course: lecture, practice, and offering and receiving feedback from students and instructors.

Discussion, developing and testing ideas and methodology, and offering and receiving feedback on ideas and texts are the primary classroom activities. All these activities require your presence so you can ask questions about the lectures and work collaboratively on the latter two activities.

However, we know problems and date conflicts sometimes arise and that students may need to miss all or part of a class. Students may miss 2 classes without consequences to their class participation grade for the course. After 2 absences, 20 points will be deducted for each absence.

If you come in to class after attendance has been taken, make sure you remind us that you were in class. We will not stop what we're doing when you arrive late and may well not remember who came in late.

YOU NEED TO ARRIVE ON TIME AND RETURN FROM BREAK ONTIME. IT IS DISTRACTING FOR STUDENTS TO COME IN AND OUT OF CLASS AND SHOULDN'T BE NECESSARY GIVEN THE STANDARD BREAK TAKEN MID-CLASS. Attendance will be taken again after the break.
 For any absence, get notes from a classmate and check with a reliable student or one of the instructors that the homework listed on the schedule has not been changed.

Late Work Policy:
Work is due the assigned date even if you must be absent. Work will be accepted late (with a 15% penalty) up to noon Thursday of the week the work is due. Assignments can always be turned in early if you know you'll be absent for the next class. Assignments requiring paper copies cannot be turned in late via an electronic submission—they should be submitted as assigned.

Make-up Policy:
Points lost from absence or lateness for daily activities such as quizzes or writing exercises cannot be made up. Even worse, you'll lose valuable support from classmates and instructors as you work to develop ideas to pursue.

Plagiarism Policy:
Plagiarism is the uncited, unacknowledged use of someone else's words and ideas. If you borrow a unique concept or even a unique phrase from another author without naming the writer and identifying the text quoted, you have plagiarized.   Copying text from a print or online source—even if you identify the author—is plagiarism unless you show what is quoted with standard quotation marks. **Deliberate or persistent plagiarism will be penalized by a failing grade on that assignment or a failure for the course.** See standard WVSU policies attached to this syllabus.

Source Use:
Even when borrowed ideas or text are clearly indicated, cited, and documented, source use should be selective to ensure that your voice is the strongest in any writing you produce. Minimize quotation by paraphrasing texts ensuring your voice is primary and that your

understanding of the borrowed text is clear to your reader. If you feel you must quote, make sure your interpretation of the quote is clearly expressed in your analysis. Paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting will all be discussed in class. Overuse of any or all of the above will also be discussed.

Manuscript Format:

All out of class work and work in the specified computer lab must be typed. Some in-class writing steps and feedback will be handwritten as the situation requires. When peer reviews are scheduled in class, ALWAYS BRING 4 COPIES. If you fail to have the required number of copies, your feedback will be reduced and your grade for the peer review lowered.

Grade Distribution:

Written Abstract & Oral Presentation of Abstract	50 pts
Editing Exercise – Week #4	25 pts
Pre-literature Review Activity I (Essay analyzing 5-7 articles)	100 pts
Peer Review – Week #5	25 pts
Finalized Research Question	25 pts
Pre-literature Review Activity II (Essay comparing 3 articles)	50 pts
Organizing a Badly Written Text	25 pts
Draft Literature Review	50 pts
Peer Review – Week #8	50 pts
Final Literature Review	150 pts
Poster/Oral Presentation of Literature Review	100 pts
Draft Proposal	100 pts
Final Proposal	150 pts
Peer Review – Week #14	50 pts
Oral Defense of Thesis Proposal	50 pts

Class Schedule

Readings assigned for a given week are to be completed prior to the start of the week's class.

Week #1	**August 24**
Class Topics:	Review syllabus
	What is "Graduate" writing?
	Formulating Research Ideas and Assessing Sources
	What is a peer-reviewed article?

In-Class Assignment: Free writing:
                              - exploring Media Studies (MS) ideas interesting to you
                              - write 3-5 paragraphs about free writing idea

Homework: Review pp. 2-8 and 14-15 on MS Graduate Program DVD.
                            Be prepared to discuss and to write on material in class #2.

                            Note: The DVD is based on the 6th edition of MLA; the 7th
                            edition is the current edition and does revise some
                            elements such as the use of italics.

Week #2   **August 31**

Class Topics: Conducting a literature search
                            Writing an abstract
                            Customizing searches on databases such as EBSCO Host.
                            MLA Documentation vs. Citation; MLA Basics; Review
                            relevant sections for book, article, film, and web text
                            documentation and citation

Readings: MS Graduate Program DVD, pp. 2-8; 14-15
                            Clark: Chapter 1, "Getting Started"
                            Clark: Pages 177-183
                            MLA Handbook: pp. 129-62, 184-204

In-Class Assignment: Group discussion about ideas generated from free writing
                            Work in pairs to summarize the purpose of a literature
                            review in 2-3 paragraphs.
                            Practice documentation on class textbooks.
                            Discuss DVD assigned pages

Homework: Look for an interesting MS topic that you want to research
                            this semester. (This idea may become the topic you want to
                            pursue for your graduate work.)
                            Select a peer-reviewed article about that topic.

Write an abstract of that article.
Analyze the article for the specific research question it poses, the author's research methodology, and the key findings in the study.
Start a working bibliography using the MLA formatting.

Week #3   **September 7**

Class Topics: Guidelines for Critical Reading
                               Developing a Research Question
                               Strunk & White: Commas and Sentence Structure

Readings: Clark: Chapter 2, "So What? Discovering Possibilities."
                               Clark: Chapter 4, "Mapping Texts."
                               Strunk and White: items 3-7 on pages 2-8.

In-Class Assignment: Individual presentation of written abstract

Homework: Read 5-7 articles related to your topic.
                               Analyze the research you have conducted on your topic thus far discussing major themes of the topic, areas of debate among researchers, and points for additional research in a 3-5 page cited and documented essay with an annotated bibliography.
                               Draft the research question that you would like to investigate this term, and list 3-5 related subtopics.
                               Bring 4 copies of essay to share. **Due Week #5.**

Week #4   **September 14**

Class Topics: Strunk & White: Organizing and Tightening Prose

Readings: Strunk & White: items 9-11 pages 9-14; item 13 pages 15-19; items 17-21 pages 23-32.

In-Class Assignment: Discuss research idea and related questions with instructor.
                               Brainstorming and responding to each others' ideas in groups.

Edit and reformat a badly written document using MLA
formatting.

Homework: Assignment from Week #3 due next class.

Week #5   **September 21**

Class Topics: The proposal as an argument
                             Components of the proposal: research or creative?
                             Discuss creative elements such as a script, press pack, or
                             film production

Readings: Clark: Chapter 3, "The Proposal as an Argument."

In-class Assignment: Peer reviews of Week #3 assignment

Homework: Finalize research question in written format

Week #6   **September 28**

Class Topics: What is a literature review?
                             Various types of literature reviews
                             Guidelines for writing a literature review

Readings: Clark: Chapter 6, "Writing the Literature Review."

In-Class Assignment: Peer reviews of final research question

Homework: Choose 3 peer-reviewed articles related to your research
                             question. Compare the articles asking
                                 ~ what approach the authors used in defining the problem
                                 ~ what methodology the authors used
                                 ~ what contributions the article makes to the discipline
                             Introduce the review by familiarizing your readers with
                             your research question.

Week #7   **October 5**

Class Topics: Analyzing your research
                              Identifying emerging themes, patterns, and trends
                              Conducting Effective Peer Reviews

Readings: Clark: Chapter 5, "Writing and Revising."

In-Class Assignment: Work in pairs organizing a badly written text

Homework: Write the first draft of your full literature review
                              Bring 4 copies to class. Due **Class #8**

Week #8   **October 12**

In-Class Assignment: Peer reviews of draft literature review

Week #9   **October 19**

Class Topics: Design of a Media Studies thesis proposal
                              Plagiarism, Audiences, and IRBs
                              Strunk & White: Advanced Usage

Readings: Clark: pages 183-197; pages 190-192
                              Handout: **SAMPLE PROPOSAL**

In-Class Assignment: Discussion about contribution to scholarship on subject
                              Strunk and White: section 4, pages 39-65.
.
Homework: Final version of full literature review. **Due Class #10.**

Week #10   **October 26**

Class Topics: Strategies for organizing a thesis proposal

Readings: MLA Handbook: Chapter 2, pp. 51-61
                                            Chapter 3, pp. 66-92

In-Class Assignment: Brainstorm ideas as a whole group
                            MLA Handbook punctuation and style conventions. MLA
                            illustrations of plagiarism. (Chapters 2 & 3)

Homework: Start developing a full thesis proposal based on the topic you
                            developed for the literature review.
                            Bring 4 copies of draft to share in class on **11/16**.   Final thesis
                            proposal is due **11/30**.

Week #11   **November 2**

Class Topics: Creating a poster presentation

Readings: Handout on Poster Presentations

In-Class: Brainstorm key concepts to highlight on poster. Discuss
                            layout elements to make scanning easy and direct the
                            reader's eye as desired. Simplify design.

Homework: Create a poster presentation of your literature review. Due **11/9.**

Week #12   **November 9**

In-Class Assignment: Oral Presentations of Literature Reviews
                            Brief whole class discussion after each presentation

Week #13   **November 16**

In-Class Assignment: Read part of early work on thesis proposal (intro or outline
                                  or body paragraphs) in whole group for class feedback.
                                  Discuss with instructor and continue drafting in class.

Homework: Finalize thesis proposal

THANKSGIVING BREAK November 23

Week #14   **November 30**

In-Class Assignment: Peer reviews of thesis proposals
                                  Discuss polishing, responsible source use, citation,
                                  documentation, and authority.
                                  Submit final version of thesis proposal

Week #15   **December 7**

In-Class Assignment: 10-15 minute practice defense of thesis proposal

West Virginia State University

MS 502: Graduate Research and Writing

Spring 2012

Instructors: Dr. Tom Kiddie   Office: 227 Hill Hall   Phone: 304 766-4116

Dr. Carolyn Sturgeon   Office: 220 Hill Hall   Phone: 304 766-3101

Kiddie's office hours:
M/W 1-2; 3:15 – 5:30 pm; **T** 2 – 5:30 pm

Sturgeon's office hours: **M/W** 3:00-4:00 pm, 5:15-5:30 pm;
 T 9:00-9:30 am, 12:15- 5:30 pm, 6:45-7:00 pm;   **R** 9:00-9:30 am, 12:15-1:15 pm

Course Description: (3 credit hours) An entry-level graduate course designed to familiarize students with the basic tools and techniques to do acceptable graduate work. Emphasis will be given to critical methods of research, study, and writing.

Objectives:
During the semester, students will

- Study the discourse patterns of academic English;
- Research and select an original topic to research or create a relevant Media Studies final project for the graduate program if possible. If students are not yet sure of their final theses or project topics, they will research and write about preliminary topics and submit full practice proposals on those topics;
- Practice critical reading skills researching their topics and offering feedback to other students in the class about their classmates' ideas and writing;
- Improve critical writing skills by working with their own and classmates' writing;
- Study various types of literature reviews for projects and theses and begin determining the bank of research relevant to their topics;
- Develop revision, editing, and proofreading skills; and
- Study and correctly use APA documentation and citation established practices following the current (6th edition) *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

Outcomes:
By the end of the course, successful students will be able to

- Develop an awareness of and ability to use effectively the discourse patterns of academic English;
- Use strategies to start working on the thesis/project proposal. Students will organize their introductions, literature review, methods, and other required sections of the proposal as stipulated online in the Media Studies graduate program documents. Students will also analyze their own work and integrate classmates' and instructors' feedback to narrow their focus and test research question/project relevancy and originality;
- Develop critical reading skills to think and write more clearly and incisively;
- Practice and develop the writing process through generating ideas, drafting, peer and individual writing evaluations, and instructors' feedback;
- Choose the appropriate style and topic to draft, refine, and polish a literature review relevant to the student's interests in the field of Media Studies (Depending on the student's preparation and readiness to work on a thesis/project, this topic may not be the student's final focus for the graduate Media Studies program.);
- Revise work to reflect synthesized ideas and knowledge developed through research and class discourse from peers and instructors;
- Use proofreading and editing skills to refine, edit, and proofread written work effectively without the help of others; and
- Learn and use correct citation and documentation following current APA protocols.

Textbooks:
American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association.*

BRING YOUR TEXTBOOK TO EVERY CLASS.

Attendance Policy:
Attendance for every <u>face-to-face</u> class on campus for the entire period is the best goal.
There are three major foci for instruction in this course: lecture, practice, and offering and receiving feedback from students and instructors. Because you will miss so much lecture, practice, and discussion every time you are absent or late, 20 points will be deducted for each absence OVER two. Late arrivals of more than a few minutes are partial absences.

This policy may seem difficult, but it is consistent with both the university attendance policy and common practices of other Media Studies faculty at WVSU based on several discussions we've had exploring this and other common class practices used in our Media Studies program. Lecture, discussion, practicing new writing methodologies, developing and testing ideas and

research methodology, and offering and receiving feedback on ideas and texts are the primary classroom activities. All these activities require your presence so you can ask questions about the lectures and work collaboratively on the latter two activities.

Because we know problems and date conflicts sometimes arise and that students may need to miss all or part of a class, students may miss 2 classes without consequences to their class participation grade for the course. Students are still responsible to turn in a paper copy of their work NO LATER than noon on the Thursday immediately after their absence to EACH of Dr. Sturgeon and Dr. Kiddie Missing class to work on a student's project (in kind work) is NOT acceptable

If you come in to class after attendance has been taken, make sure you remind us after class that you were in class. We will not stop what we're doing when you arrive late and may well not remember who came in late.

For any absence, get notes from a classmate and check with a reliable student or one of the instructors that the homework listed on the schedule has not been changed.

Internet Requirement Web50:
This course has a WebCT companion site that you will need to access at least two hours every week. The course is designed to meet face-to-face in our regularly scheduled classroom on Tuesdays. On Thursdays, the class will not meet face-to-face but will be replaced by activities on WebCT. You will be given assignments to supplement the in-class activities. In addition, there will be discussion threads on specific topics that you will be required to post to. You will also be sharing documents online with fellow students and participating in on-line peer reviews. To produce the best results for these activities, you will log into the on-line classroom at least **four times per week** to read and comment on your classmates' posts in the discussion threads. You are required to post to the on-line classroom **on two separate days during the week to meet the minimum attendance requirement for the on-line portion of the class.**

Peer Reviews require **substantive** comments. The following are tips for substantive comments on your peers' initial postings of their responses to the discussion topic:

- Reiterate the points that stuck out to you, and then comment on those points.
- Ask follow-up questions.
- Challenge your peers' thinking by (nicely and respectfully, of course!) playing devil's advocate.
- Create developed and informed responses that are no fewer than 5 sentences.

- Connect ideas—seek out places to make comparisons between posts.
- Answer follow-up questions and keep the conversation going.

For our virtual (online) meetings, we will validate at the end of each week that you have participated on-line for the required two hours, that you have posted in the discussion threads on at least two different days, and that you have submitted the required assignments for that work period. Your grades for these activities will reflect your participation and contributions.

Late Work Policy:
Work is due the assigned date even if you must be absent. Work will be accepted late (with a 15% penalty) up to noon Thursday of the week the work is due. Assignments can always be turned in early if you know you'll be absent for the next class. Assignments requiring paper copies cannot be turned in late via an electronic submission—they should be submitted as assigned.

Make-up Policy:
Points lost from absence or lateness for in-class activities such as quizzes or writing exercises cannot be made up. Even worse, you'll lose valuable support from classmates and instructors as you work to develop ideas to pursue.

Plagiarism Policy:
Plagiarism is the uncited, unacknowledged use of someone else's words and ideas. If you borrow a unique concept or a unique phrase from another author without naming the writer and identifying the text quoted, you have plagiarized.   Copying text from a print or online source—even if you identify the author—is plagiarism unless you show what is quoted with standard quotation marks. **Deliberate or persistent plagiarism will be penalized by a failing grade on that assignment or a failure for the course.** See standard WVSU policies attached to this syllabus.

Source Use:
Even when borrowed ideas or text are clearly indicated, cited, and documented, quoting should be selective to ensure that your voice is the strongest in any writing you produce. Minimize quotation by paraphrasing texts ensuring your voice is primary and that your understanding of the borrowed text is clear to your reader. If you feel you must quote, make sure your interpretation of the quote is clearly expressed in your analysis. Paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting will all be discussed in class. Overuse of any or all of the above will also be discussed.

Manuscript Format:
All out of class work and work in the specified computer lab must be typed. Some in-class writing steps and feedback will be handwritten as the situation requires. When peer reviews are scheduled in class, <u>ALWAYS BRING 4 COPIES</u>. If you fail to have the required number of copies, your feedback will be reduced and your grade for the peer review lowered.

Grade Distribution:

Weekly WebCT Discussion Threads	200 pts
Written Abstract of a Scholarly Article	25 pts
Proofreading Exercise	25 pts
Pre-Literature Review Exercise (Comparison of 3 articles exploring your draft research question)	100 pts
Finalized Research Question	25 pts
Outline of a Literature Review (incorporating 10 – 15 sources)	50 pts
Revision Exercise Written Text	25 pts
Draft Literature Review (using 10 – 15 sources)	50 pts
Final Literature Review (using 10 – 15 sources)	150 pts
Poster Presentation of Literature Review	100 pts
Draft Media Studies Thesis/Project Proposal	50 pts
Final Media Studies Thesis/Project Proposal	150 pts
Oral Defense of Media Studies Thesis/Project Proposal	50 pts
Total	1000 pts

WVSU Policy on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a form of cheating; it is using someone else's words or ideas as if they were your own. If you are borrowing words or ideas from a published source, you must indicate the source in some way, usually a brief reference to the author or title. If you use the exact words of the source, you must put these words in quotation marks and also mention the source. Copying an article from an encyclopedia or a page from a book and submitting it as your own work is obviously plagiarism, but so is using a sentence or paragraph from a published source, even if you have changed it slightly or rewritten it--unless you identify the source. The special techniques for referring to published sources, called documentation, are taught in English 102, among other courses.

However, the source does not have to be published or written for the offense to be labeled plagiarism. It is also possible to plagiarize in an oral presentation as well as written work. Copying another student's work is sometimes called plagiarism. This form of cheating is subject to the same penalties as copying from published sources.

Penalties associated with plagiarism

If a student is discovered to have plagiarized the material for an essay or research paper, the student is subject to penalties similar to those for any form of cheating. These penalties will be imposed at the discretion of the instructor, who will take care to produce the evidence of plagiarism and see that the penalty is in proportion to the offense.

a. Any instance of plagiarism discovered in the student's work may result in a lower grade on the assignment.

b. If substantial portions of a document are plagiarized, that is, copied from one or more published sources, then a grade of "F" for that assignment would be appropriate.

c. If substantial portions of a research paper are plagiarized, then a grade of "F" would be appropriate. Since the research paper is often the most important assignment in a course, a failing grade caused by plagiarism may also result in failure of the course.

Appealing a failing grade

If a student wishes to appeal the failing grade given on the basis of plagiarism, both the student and the instructor should present, as soon as possible, all relevant evidence to the English Department Chairperson, who may then rule on the merits of the case, or select a committee of three Department members to review the evidence.

From Policy Bulletin #57, the West Virginia Board of Directors of the State College System, Policies, Rules, and Regulations Regarding Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct in West Virginia State Universities and Colleges 7.05c. Procedures related to academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, falsifying records, etc.). Charges of academic dishonesty on the part of a student may be filed by any member of the academic community. Such charges shall be reviewed first at the department level by the chairperson, faculty member, and student involved. A written admission of guilt at this level may be resolved with a maximum penalty of "F" in the course.

If the student denies guilt, or the department chairperson feels the penalties at this step are insufficient for a specific act, the case shall be forwarded in writing to a presidentially designed academic officer with the rank of dean or equivalent. The case may be resolved at this level, or if thought warranted by the designated academic officer or requested by the student, the case shall be forwarded to be heard by an academic appeals committee.

The academic appeals committee shall present to the accused student and the person making the accusation written notification of the charges, which shall include at least:

I. A statement that a hearing will be held before an academic appeals committee, together with the notice of the date, time, and place of the hearing. A recommendation by an academic appeals committee for imposition of sanctions in a case of academic dishonesty is final.

II. A clear statement of the facts and evidence to be presented in support of the charges made.

The academic appeals committee may also recommend that the imposition of sanctions be held in abeyance where appropriate.

Tentative Course Schedule - Subject to change based on the pace of the class and our discretion

Date	In-class Activities & Assignments Due
Week #1 **Tuesday 1/17/2012** – **Thursday 1/19/2012**	**Tuesday: Analyzing visual texts (magazine covers, comics, or theatre programs)** 1) Review syllabus, class design, and policies; 2) Analyze visual texts (magazine covers) and discuss as a group. **WebCT:** 1) By Friday find and post a copy or a link to a visual text (such as a magazine cover) not already discussed in class. 2) Accompany your image or link with a 2-3 paragraph written rhetorical analysis of your chosen visual text following the format we discussed in class. 3) **Peer Reviews:** Between Friday and Monday, read and post substantive comments on your classmates' images and rhetorical analyses. Respond to any questions or comments that are posted to your initial post. (15 points)
Week #2 **Tuesday 1/24/2012** – **Thursday 1/26/2012**	**Tuesday: Comparing and synthesizing visual texts (film)** 1) Analyze and discuss clips from three visual texts on a related topic. (We will supply the film clips in class.) 2) Outline a comparative synthesis of one aspect of the films and discuss in class. **WebCT:** 1) By Friday write a 2-3 paragraph synthesis of the three films into a unified analysis of one common element present in all three films. 2) **Peer Reviews:** Between Friday and Monday, read and post comments on your classmates' analyses. Respond to any questions or comments that are posted to your initial post. (15

	points)
Week #3 **Tuesday 1/31/2012** – **Thursday 2/2/2012**	**Tuesday: Comparing and synthesizing print texts** 1) Analyze and discuss three printed texts on a related topic. (We will supply the texts in class.) 2) Outline a comparative synthesis of those three texts focusing on one common element in the three articles. **WebCT:** 1) By Friday write a 2-3 paragraph synthesis of the three texts into a unified analysis of one common element discussed in all three articles. 2) **Peer Reviews:** Between Friday and Monday, read and post comments on your classmates' analyses. Respond to any questions or comments that are posted to your initial post. (15 points)
Week #4 **Tuesday 2/7/2012** – **Thursday 2/9/2012**	**Tuesday: Writing an Abstract** 1) Prior to class on Tuesday Week #4, begin to brainstorm about a potential topic for your final thesis/project proposal or for the work you want to pursue in this class if you are not yet ready to pick a final proposal topic. 2) Research your topic and locate **2** articles related to your topic 3) Bring **4** hard copies of your two articles to class for discussion. **WebCT:** 1) By Thursday write a 1 paragraph abstract of one of the two articles that you brought to class. Post the abstract to WebCT for peer review. 2) **Peer Reviews:** By Saturday, read and post comments on your

	classmates' abstracts. Respond to any questions or comments that are posted to your initial abstract. (15 points) 3) Before class on Tuesday Week #5, revise your abstract based on the feedback that you received in the WebCT discussion thread. **Bring in two hard copies of your revised abstract to class on Tuesday to hand in for a grade.**
Week #5 **Tuesday 2/14/2012 –** **Thursday 2/16/2012**	**Tuesday: APA citation and documentation; Proofreading** 1) Review formatting for APA citation and documentation in class. 2) Complete the in-class proofreading exercise and submit it in class today for a grade. **WebCT:** 1) Continue researching your topic finding at least 2 more articles that are relevant to your topic building towards your 10-15 source literature review. 2) By Friday write a 3-5 paragraph comparison reviewing 3-5 articles related to your draft research questions. (Pre-lit review exercise) 3) Practice writing APA documentation for all of the sources you have located thus far for your literature review by attaching your APA reference list to the end of the pre-lit review exercise. If you use documentation software to create your Reference page entries, make sure it correctly follows APA documentation illustrated in the current APA guide (our only class textbook). 4) By Saturday read and post comments on your classmates' pre-lit review exercise. Respond to any questions or comments that are posted to your initial draft review. (15 points) 5) By Tuesday revise your pre-lit review exercise and bring in a

	hard copy to class for a grade.
Week #6 **Tuesday 2/21/2012** – **Thursday 2/23/2012**	**Tuesday: Finalizing Your Research Question** 1) Present and discuss your draft research questions. 2) Bring in 1 hard copy of all articles you have found thus far for your literature review. **WebCT:** 1) By Thursday post your proposed research questions for your literature review. Discuss how the articles you have read thus far help answer those questions. Identify gaps in your research for questions that you have not yet found researched answers. 2) By Saturday comment on your classmates' draft research questions. Respond to any questions or comments that are posted to your discussion thread. (15 points) 3) For Tuesday Week #7, bring to class **4 hard copies** of your revised research questions for discussion and to hand in for a grade. 4) Continue reading and researching your topic to build your bibliography to 10 – 15 relevant and scholarly or professional sources.
Week #7 **Tuesday 2/28/2012** – **Thursday 3/1/2012**	**Tuesday: Writing a Literature Review** 1) Discuss the required elements of a literature review in Media Studies. 2) Draft an outline of your literature review. **WebCT:** 1) By Thursday post your draft outline for your literature review. Discuss how the articles you have read thus far help support your thesis. Identify gaps in your research for questions that you have not yet found researched answers.

	2) By Saturday comment on your classmates' draft outlines. Respond to any questions or comments that are posted to your discussion thread. (15 points)
	3) For Tuesday Class #8, bring to class **4 hard copies** of your revised outline for discussion and to hand in for a grade.
	4) Continue reading and researching your topic to build your bibliography to 10 – 15 relevant sources.
Week #8 **Tuesday 3/6/2012** – **Thursday 3/8/2012**	**Tuesday: Writing the First Draft of the Lit Review** 1) Discuss final outlines in class. 2) Discuss ideas for organizing the literature review. **WebCT:** 1) By Thursday post your first draft of your literature review. 2) By Saturday, comment on your classmates' drafts. Respond to any questions or comments that are posted to your discussion thread. (15 points) 3) For Tuesday Week #9, bring to class **4 hard copies** of your revised draft for discussion and to hand in for a grade. 4) Continue reading and researching your topic to build your bibliography to 10 – 15 relevant sources.
Week #9 **Tuesday 3/13/2012** – **Thursday 3/15/2012**	**Tuesday: Writing Revisions** 1) Discuss techniques for revision. 2) Do in-class revision exercise. **WebCT:** 1) By Thursday post a revised draft of your literature review based on the revision feedback received in class on Tuesday. 2) By Saturday, comment on your classmates' drafts. Respond to any questions or comments that are posted to your discussion thread. (15 points)

	3) Bring to class **on Tuesday after the break 2 hard copies of your final, polished literature review for a grade.**
3/19/2012 – 3/23/2012	**Spring Break**
Week #10 **Tuesday 3/27/2012 –** **Thursday 3/29/2012**	**Tuesday: Creating a Poster Presentation** 1) Discuss the elements of a poster presentation. 2) Hand in your final literature review. 3) Discuss projects in class. **WebCT:** 1) Open discussion online about ideas for poster presentation.
Week #11 **Tuesday 4/3/2012 –** **Thursday 4/5/2012**	**Tuesday: Poster Presentation** 1) Present your poster to the class. **WebCT:** 1) By Thursday post a first draft of the introduction to your thesis/project proposal. 2) By Saturday post peer comments on your classmates' proposal introductions. (15 points) 3) After peer comments, **revise the draft of your 4-6 page introduction to** your thesis or project proposal to share in class on Tuesday Week #12. **Bring 4 hard copies to class.**
Week #12 **Tuesday 4/10/2012 –** **Thursday 4/12/2012**	**Tuesday: The Parts of a Thesis or Project Proposal** 1) Discuss the required components for a thesis or project proposal. 2) Discuss drafts of introductions to your proposal. **WebCT:** 1) By Thursday post a revision of the introduction to your proposal. 2) By Saturday post peer comments on your classmates' proposal introductions. (15 points) 3) After peer comments, **revise and polish** your proposal introduction to share in class on Tuesday Week #13. **Bring 4 hard**

	copies to class.
Week #13 **Tuesday 4/17/2012** – **Thursday 4/19/2012**	**Tuesday: Strategies for Organizing a Proposal** 1) Discuss strategies for organizing and completing the first draft of your thesis proposal. 2) Discuss revised introductions in class. **WebCT:** 1) Integrate your revised thesis or project introduction and literature review into a full draft of your proposal. 2) Add the other components required for your type of thesis/project proposal (minus the production schedules if you are producing a film) based on the topic you developed for the literature review. 3) Post a complete first draft by Thursday to the discussion thread. 4) By Saturday post at least 1 clear and helpful paragraph about each of 2 classmates' full thesis proposals (20 points). 5) For class on Tuesday Week #14, revise and polish your ENTIRE final proposal to share in class. **Bring 4 hard copies to share.**
Week #14 **Tuesday 4/24/2012** – **Thursday 4/26/2012**	**Tuesday: Draft Thesis or Project Proposals** 1) Discuss draft thesis/project proposals in class. 2) Hand in drafts for a grade. **WebCT:** 1) Post your revised and polished proposals for peer reviews by Thursday. 2) Finish and post peer reviews of 1-2 paragraphs for each of 2 classmates' proposals by Saturday (15 points) 3) Revise your thesis/project proposal based on the feedback you

	receive, and bring **two** hard copies to class on Tuesday Week #15 for grading.
Week #15 **Tuesday 5/1/2012 –** **Thursday 5/3/2012**	**Tuesday: Final Proposal** Present your final proposal to faculty and students in Media Studies in class. **Please be on time. Class will start promptly at 5:30 so everyone has time to present.** Our 75 minute class period will be divided by the number of students present at the start of class to determine a fair time allotment for each student. **WebCT: No on-line component this week.**

Important Assignment Milestones

Assignment	Due Date
Written Abstract of a Scholarly Article	Feb 14
Proofreading Exercise	Feb 14
Pre-Literature Review Exercise (Comparison of 3 articles exploring your draft research question)	Feb 21
Finalized Research Question	Feb 28
Outline of a Literature Review (incorporating 10 – 15 sources)	Mar 6
Revision Exercise Written Text	Mar 13
Draft Literature Review (using 10 – 15 sources)	Mar 13
Final Literature Review (using 10 – 15 sources)	Mar 27
Poster Presentation of Literature Review	Apr 3
Draft Media Studies Thesis/Project Proposal	Apr 24
Final Media Studies Thesis/Project Proposal	May 1
Oral Defense of Media Studies Thesis/Project Proposal	May 1

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