

EngL 3883V: Honors Thesis

Tuesdays, 9:05-11 a.m.
202 Lind Hall
1-4 credits
Spring 2020
Class #53206
Section 1

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Course Description

EngL 3883V is a workshop that supports students writing summa cum laude theses in the Department of English. While most thesis writing will be done under the direction of your thesis advisor and committee, EngL 3883V provides an overview of the writing and research process, a supportive community of fellow writers, and a structure to help you complete this large-scale, long-term, in-depth project, whether your thesis involves literary analysis or creative writing. The course is designed around the three stages of the thesis-writing process: (1) choosing a topic and formulating a research question and/or creative approach, (2) conducting primary and secondary research and/or developing plot, characters, and themes, and (3) producing a written document that answers your question by drawing on your research and/or expresses your creative vision. In general, the fall semester focuses on questions of method and craft, research and development, and writing as a means of discovery, while the spring semester is devoted to workshopping drafts, solving problems, and creating a coherent and elegant final product.

Writing Intensive: Six characteristics define “Writing Intensive” courses at the University of Minnesota: (1) writing is comprehensively integrated into the course, (2) students must write at least 2,500 words (or the equivalent) of finished writing, (3) writing is a significant part of the course grade, (4) writing is learned through revision, (5) writing is explained and practiced in the course, and (6) instructors should understand the practice of writing instruction. Needless to say, this course counts as “Writing Intensive.” A full definition of these six characteristics is available on the web site of the Campus Writing Board: <http://undergrad.umn.edu/cwb/definition.html>

Objectives

What questions will the course help you to answer? How will you grow in knowledge and understanding? What intellectual abilities will the course help you to develop?

Our course objectives are the same as the evaluation criteria for the honors thesis. By the end of this course you should be able to:

- demonstrate excellent writing skills
- understand your project’s relevance to the field of English and/or to society
- apply theories and methods of research, analysis, or interpretation, or artistic techniques (if writing a creative thesis, in whole or in part)
- cite appropriate sources
- critically examine the work of other scholars or artists and relate that work to the thesis
- contribute original research, ideas, knowledge, interpretations, or creative expression at a level appropriate for undergraduate study, such that the thesis went beyond describing existing work

Student Learning Outcomes: This course also meets five of the University’s seven Student Learning Outcomes by helping you to:

- identify, define, and solve problems, by choosing a topic and formulating a research question and/or creative approach
- locate and critically evaluate information, by conducting primary and secondary research and/or developing plot, characters, and themes

- master a body of knowledge and a mode of inquiry, by gaining expertise in your thesis subject and employing a method to interpret it or a technique to represent and/or understand it
- communicate effectively, by the writing and public presentation of your thesis
- acquire skills for effective citizenship and life-long learning, by learning how to successfully begin and complete a large-scale, long-term, in-depth project

Texts

What reading materials will help you to pursue the goals of this course?

There are no textbooks for this course, but our Moodle site features a number of articles and other resources to help you write the best honors thesis you can.

Three optional books may prove useful for students writing a thesis in literary studies:

- Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. "They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing. 3rd ed. New York: Norton, 2014.
- Turabian, Kate. A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- Brookbank, Elizabeth, and H. Faye Christenberry. MLA Guide to Undergraduate Research in Literature. New York: Modern Language Association, 2019.

One optional book may prove useful for students writing a creative thesis:

- Schneider, Pat. Writing Alone and with Others. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Grades

How will I evaluate the nature, quality, and progress of your learning?

If you are in your first semester of EngL 3883V, you will receive a grade of "continuing" ("X"). If you are in your second semester of EngL 3883V, you will receive a final A-F grade based on two factors: (1) the grade submitted by your thesis adviser and (2) your performance in EngL 3883V. The latter will be a factor only in cases where the requirements of the workshop have not been met. Grades will be awarded according to the University's policy on Grading and Transcripts: <https://policy.umn.edu/education/gradingtranscripts>

Policies and Resources

What University policies and resources exist to help you succeed in this course?

Because the number of policies and resources that apply to this course has become quite large, I have placed these in an appendix to this syllabus. A complete list of policies that apply to all undergraduate students enrolled in courses taught in the English Department is available here: <https://cla.umn.edu/english/undergraduate/advising/classroom-policies>

Requirements

What will you be doing to pursue the goals of this course?

Most assignments will be developed as the course unfolds, based on student needs, but here are a few of the activities in which we will be engaged throughout the semester:

1. Attendance and Participation: A successful writing workshop requires intensive student involvement, with everyone working together to broaden our knowledge and deepen our skills. As a result, your regular attendance and active participation are essential. If you know in advance that you are going to be absent on a particular day, please let me know. I follow the University's policy on "Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences" (see appendix).

Throughout the semester, we will also get to know each other's ideas, personalities, and foibles—both in writing and in person. To make the most of our time together, therefore, I expect only the best of what you have to offer. Your mind, your courtesy, and your sense of humor should all be operating in top form. In return, I will always begin and end class on time, will place any course materials online as soon as possible, and will make myself available to answer your questions and discuss your concerns before and after class, whenever possible, in addition to by appointment.

You are welcome to use a laptop or tablet computer for course-related activities. Please respect me and your fellow students by not using your computer for other purposes (such as email, Facebook, or web surfing) and by not using your cellphone for texting. Disrespectful use of technology interferes with learning and is considered a violation of the Student Conduct Code.

2. Workshops and Peer Editing Groups: The main requirement of this course is your participation in workshops and peer-editing groups, in which you will read and comment on the writing of other students, as well as receive valuable feedback about your own writing. You may also need to meet one or more writing partners outside of class, either in addition to or in place of one or more class sessions.

3. Submitting Drafts: Recognizing that this course will function as a writing workshop, I nonetheless expect your writing to be as thoughtful, deliberate, and intentional as you can make it. You should strive for originality over cliché and clarity over confusion. Your work should also be free of errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. When you submit drafts of your writing, please double-space them with one-inch margins, and be sure to number your pages in the upper right-hand corner. Your name, the course number, my name, and the date should appear at the top left of the first page, and the title should be centered on the next line. Do not include a separate title page. **When you submit drafts and other materials online, please use the following file-naming convention: "lastname_uniquetitle.docx" (e.g. "philippon_seconddraft.docx").**

4. Other Writing: From time to time, I will ask you to submit other kinds of writing as part of our course. These will likely include research questions, abstracts, bibliographies, summaries, progress reports, reflections, and reading responses.

Summa Requirements

What do you have to do to graduate summa cum laude?

Remember that to graduate summa cum laude you will need to fulfill several other requirements, in addition to completing your summa thesis in the English Department:

1. complete at least 60 graded (A–F) credits at the UMTC campus
2. maintain successful, continuous participation in the University Honors Program
3. fulfill all Honors Experience requirements
4. obtain a GPA of 3.750 or higher in your last 60 graded (A–F) UMTC credits

Contact Me

How can you contact me to help you learn?

The easiest way to contact me is immediately after class; I would be happy to meet with you briefly to answer a question or elaborate on a point made in class. To contact me at other times, or to arrange to meet at another time, email is the best way to reach me. Even if you do not have a specific question, I encourage you to meet with me at some point during the semester, so that I can get to know you better as a person and so that we can talk in more detail about the subjects that interest you. The main reason I am here is to help you learn and grow, so please take advantage of this opportunity to talk with me. **My contact information appears at the top of this syllabus.**

Course Schedule

How is this course structured to develop your knowledge, understanding, and abilities?

This schedule is subject to change, based on the needs of the group, so watch your email for updates as the semester unfolds. For weeks when we do not meet, we will stay in touch via email as needed.

Tu	1/21	<i>Half draft due (25 pp.)</i>
Tu	1/28	Individual conferences as needed
Tu	2/4	<i>Three-quarter draft due (35 pp.)</i>
Tu	2/11 - 2/25	Individual conferences as needed
Tu	3/3	<i>Complete draft due (40-50 pp.)</i>
Tu	3/10	No class (Spring Break)
Tu	3/17 - 4/14	Individual conferences as needed
Tu	4/14	<i>Revised draft due to readers</i> (this allows four weeks for them to read it and sign your form)
Th-F	4/16-17	Senior Showcase (thesis presentations) – tentative date
Tu	4/21	Individual conferences as needed
Tu	4/28	<i>Last class and course evaluations</i>
Th	4/30	Honors Recognition Ceremony, 7 pm, Northrop Memorial Auditorium
W	5/13	<i>Thesis completion form (signed by readers) and final thesis due</i>

Policy Appendix

University Policies

How does the University ensure that you have a safe, productive, and fair environment for learning?

Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences

University policy recognizes that there are a variety of legitimate circumstances in which students will miss coursework, and that accommodations for makeup work will be made. Such circumstances include illness, physical or mental, of you or your dependent; medical conditions related to pregnancy; participation in intercollegiate athletic events; subpoenas; jury duty; military service; bereavement, including travel related to bereavement; religious observances; participation in formal University system governance, including the University Senate, Student Senate, and Board of Regents meetings, by students selected as representatives to those bodies; and activities sponsored by the University if identified by the senior academic officer for the campus or the officer's designee as the basis for excused absences. Such circumstances do not include voting in regional, state, or national elections. For more information, please see the University policy: <https://policy.umn.edu/education/makeupwork>

Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action

The University provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For more information, please consult Board of Regents Policy:

http://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Equity_Diversity_EO_AA.pdf

Sexual Harassment

“Sexual harassment” means unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature under either of the following conditions: (a) when it is stated or implied that an individual needs to submit to, or participate in, conduct of a sexual nature in order to maintain their employment or educational standing or advance in their employment or education (quid pro quo sexual harassment); (b) when the conduct: (1) is severe, persistent or pervasive; and (2) unreasonably interferes with an individual’s employment or educational performance or creates a work or educational environment that the individual finds, and a reasonable person would find, to be intimidating, hostile or offensive (hostile environment sexual harassment). Sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, relationship violence and related retaliation are all prohibited conduct at the University of Minnesota. For additional information, please consult Board of Regents Policy:

https://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Sexual_Harassment_Sexual_Assault_Stalking_Relationship_Violence.pdf

I want to let you know that, in my role as a University employee, I am required to share information that I learn about possible sexual misconduct with the campus Title IX office that addresses these concerns. This allows a Title IX staff member to reach out to those who have experienced sexual misconduct to provide information about the personal support resources and options for investigation that they can choose to access.

You are welcome to talk with me about concerns related to sexual misconduct. You can also or alternately choose to talk with a confidential resource; the University offers victim-advocacy support professionals, health services professionals and counselors that will not share information that they learn about sexual misconduct.

Disability Accommodations

The University of Minnesota views disability as an important aspect of diversity, and is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations.

- If you have, or you think you have, a disability in any area such as mental health, attention, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical, please contact the DRC office on your campus (612-626-1333) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

- Students with short-term disabilities, such as a broken arm, can often work with instructors to minimize classroom barriers. In situations where additional assistance is needed, students should contact the DRC as noted above.
- If you are registered with the DRC and have a disability accommodation letter dated for this semester or this year, please contact your instructor early in the semester to review how the accommodations will be applied in the course.
- If you are registered with the DRC and have questions or concerns about your accommodations please contact your access consultant/disability specialist.

Additional information is available on the DRC website: diversity.umn.edu/disability or e-mail drc@umn.edu with questions.

Names and Pronouns

Please tell me how you would like to be referred to in class. I will happily address you by the name and gender pronoun you use, or by any other form of reference, and I would be glad to inform class members to do the same. Note that class rosters will list your legal name unless you enter a different one through your OneStop account. For more information, see: <https://onestop.umn.edu/how-guides/set-preferred-name-or-degree-name>

University Resources

What University resources exist to help you succeed in this course?

Mental Health and Stress Management

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health Website: <http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu>

Academic Learning Support Services

The University provides a wide range of resources to support your learning. These include:

- **SMART Learning Commons:** An all-in-one undergraduate academic support center located in the three main libraries—Wilson, Walter, and Magrath. The SMART Learning Commons offers support through peer tutoring (tutoring for over 200 undergraduate courses), peer-assisted learning groups (weekly facilitated study sessions connected to specific courses), peer research consultants (one-on-one assistance in conducting research), and media consultants (individual help with media projects). <https://www.lib.umn.edu/smart>
- **Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence:** Group and individual tutoring and skill-building workshops where students can take their time to learn, study together, develop support groups, and build lasting friendships. <https://diversity.umn.edu/multicultural/instructionalcenter>
- **Student Academic Success Services:** One-on-one academic counseling and online self-help materials focusing on academic skills. <http://www.sass.umn.edu>
- **Student Technology Peer Tutoring:** One-on-one assistance in developing technical skills needed to complete coursework. <https://it.umn.edu/student-technology-peer-tutoring>

Student Writing Support

Student Writing Support (SWS) offers free writing instruction for all University of Minnesota students—graduate and undergraduate—at all stages of the writing process. In face-to-face and online collaborative consultations, SWS consultants from across the disciplines help students develop productive writing habits and revision strategies. Consulting is available by appointment online and in Nicholson Hall, and on a walk-in basis in Appleby Hall. For more information, go to writing.umn.edu/sws or call 612-625-1893. In addition, SWS offers a number of web-based resources on topics such as avoiding plagiarism, documenting sources, and planning and completing a writing project.

Classroom Conduct

Why are honesty, respect, and academic freedom the bedrock values of University life?

Student Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as: plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask. To review the Student Conduct Code, please see: http://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf

Student Conduct Code

The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that protects free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University. Similarly, the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that respects the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community. As a student at the University you are expected adhere to Board of Regents Policy: Student Conduct Code. Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means "engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities." To review the Student Conduct Code, please see: http://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf

Academic Freedom and Responsibility

Academic freedom is a cornerstone of the University. Within the scope and content of the course as defined by the instructor, it includes the freedom to discuss relevant matters in the classroom. Along with this freedom comes responsibility. Students are encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained and independent search for truth. Students are free to take reasoned exception to the views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled. Reports of concerns about academic freedom are taken seriously, and there are individuals and offices available for help. Contact the instructor, the Department Chair, your adviser, the associate dean of the college, or the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs in the Office of the Provost.