

Report on UNIV 2600 Individualized Study Across Academic Disciplines

2600. Individualized Study Across Academic Disciplines

One credit. Consent of instructor is required.

Introduction to disciplinarity, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinarity. Recommended for students exploring an application to the Individualized Major Program.

UNIV 2600 is taught every semester. It was first approved by UICC in February 2014.

Instructors remain the same as those at the time of approval:

- Michael Cunningham, Ph.D., Academic Advisor, Individualized Major Program
- Monica van Beusekom, Ph.D., Director, Individualized Major Program

Changes since the course was approved:

- The mode of instruction has changed. This course was initially taught online. The course is now taught face-to-face. We have found it easier to build community, include group activities, and promote peer review in a face-to-face class. Since almost all our students are Storrs students and we teach the class at an “off-peak” time, changing the mode of instruction has not prevented students from enrolling in the course. (Note that the course is highly recommended for students considering an individualized major application, not required.)
- Some content and assignments have been modified.
 - Increased coverage of research methodologies as they relate to epistemologies
 - Introduced new use of TED Talks in research methodologies
 - Assignments and percentage grades accorded to different assignments have been modified; statement of purpose and plan of study are now part of participation grade; two shorter essays replace them. Statement of purpose and Plan of study are evaluated by the IMJR Committee. Instead we are measuring engagement with advisors; engagement with peers during peer review process.
 - Bringing in Individualized Major peer advisors as resources for preparing an application

UNIV 2600 Individualized Study across Academic Disciplines

Fall 2015

Wed. 4:40 – 5:30, Chemistry Building, Room T 309

Instructor: Monica van Beusekom

E-mail: monica.vanbeusekom@uconn.edu

Office hours: I schedule appointments through <http://advapp.uconn.edu> where I am listed under Enrichment Programs

Office: Rowe 403

Phone: 860-486-0324

This course serves as a gateway to the Individualized Major Program. It is designed to promote the skills you need to create your own interdisciplinary major and provide a venue in which you can prepare your proposal. Along the way we will explore the history of the academic disciplines, examine the differences between disciplines, including their research methods and epistemologies, and discuss some strategies for integrating knowledge across disciplinary boundaries.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Explain the different ways in which academic knowledge can be organized.
- Describe the key features of the disciplines relevant to your major.
- Develop a plan of study and statement of purpose.
- Formulate strategies for integrating knowledge across disciplines.

ACTIVITIES

Reading and Viewing

In this course you will be reading a number of scholarly articles about academic disciplines and interdisciplinary thinking. You will also be viewing several TED Talks.

- Joe Moran, "The Rise of Disciplines," in *Interdisciplinarity*, 2nd ed., (London: Routledge, 2010), 1-16.
- Jerome Kagan, "Characterizing the Three Cultures," in *The Three Cultures: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and the Humanities in the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1-5.
- Matthew Miller and Veronica Boix-Mansilla, "Thinking Across Perspectives and Disciplines," *GoodWork Project Report Series*, No. 27 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2004).
- Selected TED Talks
- Adaptation of "Salem's Secrets," a case study from the National Center for Case Study Teaching in Science (<http://sciencecases.lib.buffalo.edu/cs/>)

Writing

In this course you will be doing the following writing:

- Reading Responses (5x)
- Disciplines Worksheet

- Statement of Purpose and Plan of Study
- Salem Essay

EVALUATION

You can earn 100 points in the course. Your letter grade for the course corresponds to the number of points that you earn:

100-93: A	89-88: B+	79-78: C+	69-68: D+	59-0: F
92-90: A-	87-83: B	77-73: C	67-63: D	
	82-80: B-	72-70: C-	62-60: D-	

Your grade will be based on participation, reading responses, statement of purpose and plan of study and a final essay (Salem essay).

Participation (20 points)

I will use the following criteria when evaluating participation.

- *Insightfulness*: Were your comments relevant and thoughtful?
- *Civility*: Were your comments civil and constructive?

Reading Responses and Worksheet (20 points)

I will use the following criteria when evaluating the weekly reading responses and worksheets.

- *Completeness*: Did you complete the assignment?
- *Insightfulness*: Did your responses reflect careful consideration of the course material?

Statement of Purpose and Plan of Study (30 points)

I will use the following criteria when evaluating the Statement of Purpose.

- *Cohesion*: Does the statement offer a cohesive theme for the major? Is the statement consistent with the Plan of Study? Are the disciplines and courses included in the statement consistent with the theme? Is the major theme consistent with the stated long-term goals and professional interests?
- *Grounding*: Is there a well-argued rationale for the inclusion of each of the disciplines and courses?
- *Style*: Is the statement well written and easy to read? Do paragraphs have clear topic sentences and are they connected by smooth transitions? Is the statement free of grammatical and spelling errors?

Salem Essay (30 points)

I will use the following criteria when evaluating the Salem Essay.

- *Purposefulness*: Is the argument clearly expressed and sustained? Does the introduction include a clear thesis statement or argument? Does the essay offer insights and connections that demonstrate full understanding of the topic?
- *Grounding*: Does the essay include well-chosen, credible evidence from the disciplines? Are the disciplinary insights understood and explained clearly?
- *Integration*: Does the essay include an explanation for the phenomenon that integrates insights from the disciplines?

- *Style*: Is the essay well written and easy to read? Do paragraphs have clear topic sentences and are they connected by smooth transitions? Is the essay free of grammatical and spelling errors?

Late Work

Late work will be downgraded by a letter grade per week past the deadline. Please contact me **ahead** of the deadline, if you are unable to meet it.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

In this course we aim to conduct ourselves as a community of scholars, recognizing that academic study is both an intellectual and ethical enterprise. You are encouraged to build on the ideas of others; that is a vital part of academic life. When you use another's ideas or language, however, whether through direct quotation, summary, or paraphrase, you must formally acknowledge that debt by signaling it with a standard form of academic citation. Neglecting to do this is a serious breach of academic integrity and may result in failure for the course. Please see the [Student Code](#) for more detailed information.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Please contact me early in the semester to discuss academic accommodations that you may need during the semester due to a documented disability. If you have not already, you should also contact the Center for Students with Disabilities. The CSD is located in Wilbur Cross, Room 204 and can be reached at (860) 486-2020 or at csd@uconn.edu. For more information, please go to <http://www.csd.uconn.edu/>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Part One: Individualized Study

1. Introductions (Sept 2)

Introductions and course objectives

Overview of the application for the Individualized Major Program

2. Complex Public Issues (Sept 9)

In this class session we will examine how different disciplines might contribute to the analysis of a complex public issue. Then we will discuss the process of writing a proposal for the IMJR.

Viewing (pick one):

- Sonia Shah, "3 reasons we still haven't gotten rid of malaria," TED Talk, June 2013
- Marla Spivak, "Why bees are disappearing," TED Talk, June 2013

Due:

- Response sheet (in class)

3. Proposal Writing (Sept. 16) (*No class meeting this week*)

This week you will write your preliminary statement of purpose and plan of study.

Due Sept. 16:

Preliminary Statement of Purpose and Plan of Study (via HuskyCT 11:59)

4. Meet an Advisor (Week of Sept 21-25) (*No class meeting this week*)

This week you will meet with either Monica van Beusekom or Michael Cunningham to discuss your Statement of Purpose and Plan of Study. Please make an appointment on AdvApp (<http://advapp.uconn.edu/>); we are listed under "Enrichment Programs."

Due:

- Meet an Advisor

Part Two: Disciplinary Perspectives

5. The Organization of Knowledge (Sept 30)

In this class session, we will discuss the history of academic disciplines and the organization of knowledge in the modern American university.

Reading:

- Joe Moran, "The Rise of Disciplines," pp. 1-16 (Library Resources in HuskyCT)
- Jerome Kagan, "Characterizing the Three Cultures," pp. 1-5 (Library Resources in HuskyCT)

Due:

- Reading Response (due in class)

6. Disciplines Comparison (Oct 7)

This week you will select three disciplines from your plan of study and compare their core concepts and research questions. In class we will discuss some examples of interdisciplinary issues and how different disciplines might provide insights on them.

Reading:

- Information about the disciplines (links are in HuskyCT)

Due:

- Disciplines Worksheet (due in class)

7. Research Methodologies (Oct 14)

Among and within disciplines there are often deep divisions regarding research methodologies. In this class session, we will examine the debates surrounding quantitative and qualitative methods.

Viewing:

- Michael Green, "What the Social Progress Index can reveal about your country," TED Talk, Oct 2014

Reading:

- Research Methodologies
- "Social Progress Index Methodological Report," Chapter 1, Parts 1 and 2

Due:

- Reading Response (due in class)

8. Revised Proposal (Oct 21) (No class meeting this week)

This week you will revise your statement of purpose and plan of study based on your work in the course.

Due:

- Revised Statement of Purpose and Plan of Study on HuskyCT on 10/21 at 11:59 pm

9. Meet an Advisor (Week of Oct 26-30) (No class meeting this week)

This week you will meet with either Monica van Beusekom or Michael Cunningham to discuss your revised Statement of Purpose and Plan of Study. Please make an appointment on AdvApp (<http://advapp.uconn.edu/>); we are listed under "Enrichment Programs."

Due:

- Meet an Advisor

10. Case Study: Salem (Nov 4)

In this class session we will examine a variety of data related to Salem during the era of the witch trials, and consider different disciplinary interpretations of the event.

Reading:

- "Salem's Secrets"
- "Salem: Interdisciplinary Perspectives"

Due:

- Salem Response sheet (due in class)

Part Three: Interdisciplinary Perspectives

11. Interdisciplinary Thought (Nov 11)

In this class session, we will explore the question of what it means to take a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approach. You will also read about some of the strategies that you can adopt when thinking across disciplines.

Reading:

- Matthew Miller and Veronica Boix-Mansilla, "Thinking Across Perspectives and Disciplines"

Viewing:

- Deborah Gordon, "What ants teach us about the brain, cancer and the Internet," TED Talk, Mar 2014
- Gary Slutkin, "Let's treat violence like an infectious disease," TED Talk, Apr 2013

Due:

- Reading Response (in class)

12. Salem Essay (Nov 18) (No class meeting this week)

This week you will write an essay in which you explore the disciplinary insights on the Salem witch trials and consider an interdisciplinary explanation for the phenomenon.

Due:

Salem Essay (1000 words): Nov. 18, 11:59 pm via HuskyCT.

13. Wrap Up (Dec 2)

Review of the semester and feedback

UNIV 2600

Individualized Study across Academic Disciplines

Mondays at 4:40 pm in Rowe 130

Instructor: Michael Cunningham, Rowe 426B

michael.cunningham@uconn.edu

INTRODUCTION

This course serves as a gateway to the Individualized Major Program. It is designed to promote the skills that you will need to create and pursue an interdisciplinary major. During the course of the semester we will examine the organization of knowledge and differences between disciplines, discuss some strategies for integrating knowledge across disciplinary boundaries, and develop an integrated plan of study and statement of purpose.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Explain the different ways in which academic knowledge can be organized.
- Describe the key features of the disciplines relevant to your major.
- Understand the characteristics of inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary knowledge.
- Formulate strategies for integrating knowledge across disciplines.
- Develop a plan of study and statement of purpose.

ACTIVITIES

In this course activities out of class will include: reading, writing, and watching streaming video. In class activities will include: discussions, debates, short presentations, and peer review sessions.

Reading and Viewing

You will be reading a number of scholarly articles about academic disciplines and interdisciplinary thinking and viewing several TED Talks.

- Jerome Kagan, "Characterizing the Three Cultures," in *The Three Cultures: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and the Humanities in the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1-5.
- Matthew Miller and Veronica Boix-Mansilla, "Thinking Across Perspectives and Disciplines," *GoodWork Project Report Series*, No. 27 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2004).
- Selected TED Talks (www.ted.com/talks)
- "Social Progress Index 2015" (www.socialprogressimperative.org)
- Adaptation of "Salem's Secrets," a case study from the National Center for Case Study Teaching in Science (<http://sciencecases.lib.buffalo.edu/cs/>)

Writing

You will be doing the following writing:

- Reflections (3x)
- Short Essays (2x)
- Individualized Major Proposal
- Salem Essay

EVALUATION

As you will see from the listing of activities and assignments below, you can earn 100 points in the course.

100-93: A	89-88: B+	79-78: C+	69-68: D+	59-0: F
92-90: A-	87-83: B	77-73: C	67-63: D	
	82-80: B-	72-70: C-	62-60: D-	

Participation (25 points)

Participation will include classroom discussion (I will consider the insightfulness and civility of your contributions), your meetings with advisors, and completion of the individualized major proposal.

Reflections (5 points each)

For the Reflections, I will consider your understanding of the material and the supporting evidence that you incorporate into them.

Short Essays (15 points each)

I will use the following criteria when evaluating the short essays.

- *Purposefulness*: Is the argument clearly expressed and sustained? Does the introduction include a clear thesis statement or argument? Does the essay offer insights and connections that demonstrate full understanding of the topic?
- *Grounding*: Does the essay include well-chosen, credible evidence? Is the evidence understood and explained clearly?
- *Style*: Is the essay well written and easy to read? Do paragraphs have clear topic sentences and are they connected by smooth transitions? Is the essay free of grammatical and spelling errors?

Salem Essay (30 points)

I will use the following criteria when evaluating the Salem Essay.

- *Purposefulness*: Is the argument clearly expressed and sustained? Does the introduction include a clear thesis statement or argument? Does the essay offer insights and connections that demonstrate full understanding of the topic?
- *Grounding*: Does the essay include well-chosen, credible evidence from the disciplines? Are the disciplinary insights understood and explained clearly?

- *Integration*: Does the essay include an explanation for the phenomenon that integrates insights from the disciplines?
- *Style*: Is the essay well written and easy to read? Do paragraphs have clear topic sentences and are they connected by smooth transitions? Is the essay free of grammatical and spelling errors?

LATE WORK

Please contact me **ahead** of the deadline if you will not be able to submit an assignment on time. Otherwise, to be fair to those who submitted at the deadline, I will reduce the grade for the assignment by a third of a letter grade (A- to B+, for example) for each day it is late.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

When you use another's ideas or language you must formally acknowledge that debt by signaling it with a standard form of academic citation. Neglecting to do this is a serious breach of academic integrity and may result in failure for the course. Please see the [Student Code](#) for more detailed information.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Please contact me early in the semester to discuss academic accommodations that you may need due to a documented disability.

COURSE SCHEDULE

1. Introductions (Jan 25)

Introductions and a discussion of the syllabus and course objectives.

2. Complex Public Issues (Feb 1)

An examination of how different disciplines might contribute to the analysis of a complex public issue.

Viewing:

- Marla Spivak, "Why bees are disappearing," TED Talk, June 2013

Due:

- Reflection One

3. Proposal Writing (Feb 8)

An overview of the application process for the Individualized Major (IMJR) and a discussion of how to formulate a plan of study and statement of purpose.

4. Proposal Review (Feb 15)

Peer review of the proposal and discussion of next steps.

Due:

- Plan of Study and Statement of Purpose
- Meet an Advisor (sometime during the week). Bring your proposal.

5. The Organization of Knowledge (Feb 22)

A discussion of the organization of knowledge in the modern American university.

Reading:

- Jerome Kagan, "Characterizing the Three Cultures," pp. 1-5
- Organization of Knowledge

Viewing:

- Elizabeth Pisani, "Sex, drugs, and HIV – let's get rational," TED Talk, Feb 2010

6. Disciplines Comparison (Feb 29)

This week you will compare the core concepts from three disciplines that are part of your major. In class, we will discuss how different disciplines address certain issues.

Reading:

- Information about the disciplines (links are in HuskyCT)

Due:

- Short Essay: Disciplines Comparison

7. Proposal Review II (Mar 7)

A second peer review of the proposal.

Due:

- Statement of Purpose and Plan of Study
- Meet an Advisor (sometime during the week). Bring your revised proposal.

8. Research Methodologies (Mar 21)

An introduction to research methods and the qualitative versus quantitative debate, with a lecture on epistemologies.

Reading:

- Research Methodologies

9. Research Methodologies in Action (Mar 28)

A discussion of the Social Progress Index and its methodologies.

Viewing:

- Michael Green, "What the Social Progress Index can reveal about your country," TED Talk, Oct 2014

Reading:

- "Social Progress Index 2015," pp. 29-35

Due:

- Short Essay on the SPI

10. Case Study: Salem (April 4)

An examination of a variety of data related to Salem during the era of the witch trials, with a consideration of different disciplinary interpretations of the event.

Reading:

- "Salem's Secrets"
- "Salem: Interdisciplinary Perspectives"

Due:

- Reflection Two

11. Interdisciplinary Thought (April 11)

An exploration of the multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approach, and a discussion of some strategies for thinking across disciplines.

Reading:

- Matthew Miller and Veronica Boix-Mansilla, "Thinking Across Perspectives and Disciplines"

Viewing:

- Gary Slutkin, "Let's treat violence like an infectious disease," TED Talk, Apr 2013

Due:

- Reflection Three

12. Salem Essay (April 18)

A review of the Salem Essay.

Due:

- Salem Essay Preliminary Draft

13. Wrap Up (April 25)

Review of the semester and discussion of what comes next for Individualized Majors.

Due:

- Salem Essay Final Draft (May 1, 11:59 pm)

