

North Carolina A&T State University
University Studies

UNST 110: Critical Writing
“Noir”

The Course Theme: Noir (Dark/Black)

The theme for this course focuses on “noir,” or “dark,” in all its variegation. “Darkness” as a concentration permeates all aspects of life, often as a reflection of a particular culture at a particular time. We will focus on “darkness,” as it relates to the human experience in general and the African-American experience in particular. The term “noir,” while originally applied to literature and movies, is also reflective of aspects of society, behaviors and actions that affect each of us.

The overriding theme of “noir” will be connected to four modules of concentration during the term: *slavery; human rights; HIV/AIDS; and globalization*. Through writing, viewing, listening and collaboration, we will focus on the “darkness” of these themes, and ways that that “darkness” can be critically explored. Aspects of noir, rather than depressing, often reveal and illuminate the core of the human spirit as it struggles for survival in a harsh world with its imposing landscapes.

You will be provided with a tentative schedule of general readings for each module by the end of week one. Along with required reading from the main text, we will be heavily dependent on internet connections to articles, poems, essays, etc.

Required Texts

Barnet and Bedau, *Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing*
Oral Presentations in Composition

University Studies is a bold, new approach to general education. Until now, general education utilized distribution requirements, which asked students to choose fairly randomly among a list of introductory courses in the humanities, social and natural sciences. Exposing students to a wide variety of subject matter and critical approaches was the primary objective of this educational tradition. Thus, little attention was paid to the ways students might synthesize or profit from the learning objectives and outcomes of different disciplines. As a result, students proceeded into their major studies with few identifiable skills and abilities gleaned from their general education experience. University Studies was conceived to redress these problems.

The rationale for an interdisciplinary approach to general education stems from the acknowledged complexities of the contemporary world. The problems facing modern humanity are rarely if ever understood using the perspectives and tools of a single discipline. Given that, University Studies maintains that critical thinking, logic, writing, humanistic and artistic inquiry, as well as the social and natural sciences are best understood via interdisciplinary methods. Indeed many interdisciplinary fields, such as African American Studies, Science and Technology Studies, Cultural Studies, and Women’s Studies developed due to either the unwillingness or the inability of the traditional disciplines to address the issues posed in these bodies of scholarship.

All University Studies [UNST] courses are interdisciplinary. This means that they combine the intellectual methods and subject matter from a variety of disciplines in order to help students learn critical thinking and problem solving. UNST courses are interconnected in such a manner that they can guarantee that a student will be exposed to specified learning objectives that address real-life concerns. During the first year, students will learn skills for critical engagement; during the second and third years, students will apply these newly honed skills in theme-based courses; in the senior year, students will exercise the skills and knowledge they have gained in a capstone experience and service-learning activity. If undertaken seriously and with intentionality, UNST students can expect to emerge with a set of useful intellectual tools that will allow them to engage effectively a dynamic and complex world.

Academic Integrity

Academic honesty is absolutely essential. Cheating, plagiarism, sharing of clickers or other academic misconduct will not be tolerated. If you are caught cheating, you will not pass this course and will be subject to any and all penalties specified in the student honor code.

Attendance

University Studies strives to professionalize its students; therefore, regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory in all UNST courses. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Tardiness will not be tolerated. *Doors to the classroom will be closed ten minutes after class begins. Students arriving after that point will have been marked absent.*

Students having four unexcused absences will automatically receive an “F” for the course.

Absent or tardy students are responsible for any missed class work, including any changes to the syllabus or assignments announced in class. In short, absences and tardiness can/will diminish your grade. If your course schedule is such that you could be consistently late (ie: walking from one end of the campus to the other), you should consider dropping the course or rescheduling during a better time slot. If you suffer prolonged illness or misfortune, you should consider dropping the course. Persistent tardiness and failure to observe established classroom etiquette will lead to failure of the course. Student athletes must submit a schedule of days they will be absent within the first week of classes.

Courses that follow a MWF schedule will meet on Friday as required.

Appropriate documentation for an excused absence must be provided to the instructor within one week of the missed class.

Course Materials

Books

Serious scholarship requires procurement of essential course materials. Students will purchase all books and materials required for UNST courses within the first two weeks of the semester. Sharing of books thereafter is prohibited.

Stapler

All students should own one. They are not expensive; most can be purchased for around six dollars and should last you for your entire college career.

Clickers

Sharing of clickers is never appropriate and constitutes academic dishonesty. Students must replace lost or stolen clickers for class use. Replacements may be purchased at the university bookstore for \$35.00.

Educational Etiquette

Students will demonstrate collegial respect for their professors and peers. Any behavior that distracts (e.g. eating, talking while others are talking, etc.) or is disrespectful (inattention, personal attacks, studying for other courses during class, etc.) is unacceptable. Differences of opinion should be met with intellectual curiosity and rigor rather than insult, contumely, or discord.

All cell phones, pagers, and personal communication devices must be turned off for the duration of the class period. Bluetooth cell phones must be removed from the ear during class. Students who fail to comply with this rule will be asked to leave the class and will be marked absent. Campus security will be asked to escort those students from of the classroom who fail to leave as requested.

There will be no eating or drinking in class (other than bottled water).

Student success in this course depends upon the development of scholarly and collegial habits. Active participation in class discussion and group work is mandatory. Collegial responsibility and respect are also compulsory.

Email Policy

Instructors will reply to student email within 48 hours, Monday through Friday. In order to insure a reply, students must use NCAT email accounts and include student name (no nicknames, please), course number and section in the subject line. All messages must be conveyed using standard English.

Turnitin.com

All written assignments in UNST courses will be turned in electronically via Turnitin.com. Access to this web site will be given to you by the instructor. Turnitin.com compares your writing with virtually every reference that exists on the internet as well as a bank of student papers that has been submitted from all over the world. Its purpose is to help students learn the difference between proper citation and quotation of other authors' work and plagiarism (copying others writing without citation.) Students who do not own a PC will submit their work via one of the computer labs on campus.

The URL for Turnitin.com is: <http://www.turnitin.com>
Create a user profile using the following information:

class ID:	
password	

Timely Submission of Work

All assignments are due on the dates indicated in your syllabus. **No late work will be accepted in any UNST courses.** Exceptions will be made only in cases of documented medical or family emergency or religious observance. Please notify your professor by email *before the assignment is due* should an acceptable absence occur. Employment, child care or other academic pressures do not constitute a valid excuse for late work. There is no provision for additional papers or extra credit to substitute for missed course requirements.

Disabilities and Differences

Students with documented learning disabilities or differences should identify themselves to their professor and present appropriate documentation during the first week of classes. No accommodations will be made later in the semester for students who do not self-identify at the beginning of the course.

Students who need developmental support should ask their professors for extra help or referral. All students should seek the support services of the Writing Center (A-309 GCB; 334-7764) and the Center for Student Success (312 Hodgin Hall; 334-7855).

Student-athletes (and other school group participants)

Students participating in school athletics are held to the same attendance and performance expectation as non-athletes. Hence, they should coordinate their course schedules so that team practices and games do not conflict with class meetings and group work. Student-athletes should identify themselves to their instructors, submit a schedule of days you will miss class as well as the name and contact information for their coach within the first week of classes. The University Studies Department will follow the Department of Athletics Class attendance policy, which states:

1st Unexcused Absence: The student-athlete's coach will be notified.

2nd Unexcused Absence: Ms. Dee Todd, Director of Intercollegiate Athletics will be notified. The student athlete will be required to have a conference with Ms. Todd or her designee.

3rd Unexcused Absence: The student athlete will be suspended for one contest. If the student athlete is not currently in season, the suspension will apply to the following season.

4th Unexcused Absence: The student athlete's scholarship is subject to non-renewal.

Course Overview

This course introduces students to reading comprehension, writing processes, and writing strategies adaptable to multiple disciplines. Students will explore a course theme, problem, or issue from an interdisciplinary perspective in order to develop skills of critical engagement which will allow them to solve complex, real world problems. Over the course of the semester, they will learn to find, evaluate, and use appropriate learning resources; to demonstrate effective verbal and written communication skills; to develop habits of self-assessment; to work collaboratively in teams and small groups; and to use content knowledge and intellectual skills to become life-long learners. Students will produce at least five pages of written work each week in formal and informal writing assignments, many of which will be submitted electronically. Each student will submit a writing portfolio that demonstrates their intellectual development, skills acquisition, and habits of self-assessment.

University Studies Learning Objectives

Critical Writing meets the following UNST objectives:

Communication

- Effectively use information technology to find, interpret, and evaluate, and use information discerningly
- Effectively communicate in diverse settings and groups using written, oral, and visual means
- Effectively employ critical thinking skills in written and oral communication
- Effectively relate ideas and concepts, as well as modes of inquiry, across disciplines

Analytical Reasoning

- Use analytical thinking skills to evaluate information critically

Critical Writing Course Objectives

- **Critical Writing Skills:** Students will use a writing portfolio to demonstrate proficiency in writing across disciplines
- **Communication:** Students will demonstrate their ability to communicate effectively and informatively (in writing, orally, and through visuals materials)
- **Research:** Students will identify, evaluate, and secure pertinent information on course themes for class distribution
- **Technology:** Students will use technology prescribed by the instructor (i.e., Blackboard, Turnitin.com; Track Changes, Criterion, etc.) to demonstrate competency in writing technologies
- **Assessment:** Students will use revision, peer-editing, and the reflective essay to demonstrate habits of self- and summative-assessment
- **Collaboration:** Students will demonstrate their ability to work individually and collaboratively by producing a group project

Grades

Essay 1	10%
Essay 2	10%
Essay 3	15%
Final Portfolio & Essay 4	15%
Group Work & Presentation	15%
Mini-presentation	5%
Learning Skills	10%
Other Graded Work & Assignments	20%

(i.e.: responses, event review, interviews, quizzes, class participation, etc.)