

**Academic Research Methods**  
**Spring Semester 2012**  
**University of Pristina**  
**Instructor: Dr. Raymond**

**Texts:** Booth, Wayne *et al.* *The Craft of Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Raymond, Rich. *Questioning: Literary and Rhetorical Analysis for Writers*. Fountainhead Press, 2007.

**Objectives:** The following quotations from the Booth text suggest the importance of this course for MA students in literature:

“Those who cannot do reliable research or evaluate the research of others will find themselves sidelined in a world dependent on solid ideas based on good information produced by trustworthy inquiry and then presented clearly and accurately” (9).

“Your project prepares you to join the oldest and most esteemed of human conversations, one conducted for millennia among philosophers, engineers, biologists, social scientists, historians, literary critics, linguists, theologians, not to mention CEOs, lawyers, marketers, and investment managers” (11).

“Experienced researchers first write just to remember what they’ve read....A second reason for writing is to see larger patterns in what you read....A third reason to write is to get your thoughts out of your head and onto paper, where you’ll see what you really *can* think....The deeper your education, the more it will change the ‘you’ that you are or want to be” (12, 13).

As the quotes above suggest, this course will give you the tools that you can use during and after your university career. You will learn

- A. To form questions on issues that interest you.
- B. To find information to answer your questions in
  - Books
  - Journals
  - Newspapers
  - Internet sites
  - Interviews

- C. To present your answers in a clear and persuasive manner for readers who need to know.
- D. To document your answers so that readers can trust your conclusions and recommendations.

To master these research tools, you will learn to

- Write a documented research paper using the Modern Language Association (MLA) style
- Work in a Writing Group (three students) to move from a research proposal, through a rough draft, to completed report
- Present an oral version of your report to your peers.

**Scope:**

More specifically, completing these objectives will engage you in the following work:

- A. **Reading daily:** I will expect you to complete the assigned chapters in *Craft* and to demonstrate your understanding by participating in class discussion and Writing Group work.
- B. **Completing all phases of the research process:** I will expect you to submit your proposal memo, your note card, and your bibliography cards as you progress with your project.
- C. **Completing two rough drafts, participating in your Writing Group, and conferring with your professor:** I will ask you to submit three versions of your research paper—two rough drafts and a final version. You will respond, orally and in writing, to the first draft of your two Writing Group members, and they will respond to yours; you will then confer with your professor after completing your revision of the first draft.
- D. **Completing a final draft:** Only the third (final) draft will receive a grade, **but you will not receive a passing grade in the course unless you submit the two drafts with the final draft.**
- E. **Presenting an extemporaneous (oral) version of your research paper:** Your oral presentation will give you a chance to explain to your peers why you chose your topic (why you care) and how you have supported your primary claims.

- F. **Completing a final examination:** This exam will enable you to re-think your work and to explain what you have learned about the search process, about the revision process, and about making persuasive and interesting oral presentations.

## Evaluation

Grades will be assigned using the standard scale:

90%=A-      80%=B-      70%=C-      60%=D-  
59% or lower=F

Written work will be measured by the standards described in the Guide the professor will provide. Your grades will be weighted as follows:

- Participation in the Research Process (A, B, and C above)—30%
- The Research Paper—40%
- The Oral Presentation—10%
- The Final Examination—20%

At the end of the course, you will evaluate the course and the professor.

## Attendance and Participation

In view of the “Process” grade (30%) above, you should attend and participate in each class session and attend the three required conferences.

If you have more than four **unexcused absences**, you will receive an F in “Process,” regardless of materials you have submitted.

## Office Hours, E-Mail, Website

On the first day of class, I will let you know my office hours. In addition to required conferences (see schedule), you may also request a meeting at other times, as our schedules allow. I look forward to working with you, one-on-one.

You can send an e-mail message to me at rraymond@english.msstate.edu. I will respond as soon as I receive the message.

You may also visit the Department of English website at Mississippi State University if you want to learn more about me and/or my home institution. Just go to <http://www.english.msstate.edu>. You’ll find me under “Our Faculty.”

## Weekly Schedule of Readings, Activities, and Submissions

### Weeks 1-2

- Introduction to course; listing and brainstorming activities on potential research topics; **submit results to professor**
- Read pages 34-65 in *Craft of Research*, focusing on research questions and research problems. We will apply that material by analyzing the “claims” and “evidence” in a model research paper written by your professor.
- **Complete exercise on pages 47-48 in *Craft*, focusing on your limited topic.**

### Weeks 3-4

- Read chapter five in *Questioning*. Class discussion will focus on all the items in chapter five: Flannery O’Connor’s short story “Greenleaf”; Richard Giannone’s article on “Greenleaf”; guidelines on finding sources and taking notes; student research proposal; student research paper on “Greenleaf.”
- **Submit a bibliography card and a note card** on sample article on Ernest Gaines’ novel *A Lesson before Dying*.
- **Prepare a rough draft of your research proposal.** You will share it with members of your Writing Group.

### Week 5

- **Required conferences with professor:** I will prepare a sign-up sheet at the end of week four so that you know when to come to the conference. Each conference will run 10-20 minutes, depending on your needs
- Bring to conference: your **note cards and your research proposal memo** (topic, purpose, organization, articles consulted, task schedule—see model in *Questioning*, pages 210-211).

### Weeks 6-8

- **Released time** for completing note-taking on sources and beginning the rough draft. We will not have class sessions during this period.
- During these three weeks, each of you will attend another **10-minute conference with the professor** (scheduled during regular class period). We will discuss your progress, so bring your rough draft (even if it is not complete) and your questions.

## Week 9

- **Rough draft due:** You will share your draft with members of your Writing Group in order to get their comments on strengths and weaknesses in the draft.
- At the end of the week, **submit your revised rough draft to your professor.** I will read it and comment on it, stressing strengths and areas needing further work, but I will not grade it at this point.

## Week 10

- **Third required conference:** You will sign up for this conference when you submit your revised draft at the end of week nine.
- **Purpose of the conference:** to answer any questions you have as you move from your second draft to your final version.

## Week 11

- In-class workshop on revising and editing
- Discussion of how to convert your written paper into an oral presentation
- **Final Version of Research Paper due at the end of the week**

## Weeks 12-15

- **Oral Presentations.** Each presentation will run 10-15 minutes.
- Each presentation should explain why you picked your topic; it should then highlight your central claim (thesis) and samples of the evidence (from the literary work and from critics) that you used to support your claim. We will discuss this process during week eleven.

## Week 16

- Review for final examination