

Exploring the Liberal Arts

Bridge Program: Summer 2024

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Course Time: Tuesdays- Fridays 4-5 p.m.

Office Hours: Office hours will be offered by appointment. Please email us to request a time to meet.

Course Description:

Throughout this course, we will work to understand what the liberal arts represent broadly. We will also explore how majoring or minoring in the liberal arts can enrich your graduation education and we will practice designing research proposals based on liberal arts research topics. The course will consist of two main components: 1) **guest lectures** by Northwestern faculty from various departments who will share their journeys that led to a career in the liberal arts, and how majoring or minoring in the liberal arts enriched their critical thinking skills and understanding of the world; and 2) **class discussions** that will consist of a reflection of what you learned from engaging with weekly speakers, brief lectures and practice with the skills of presenting and providing feedback to your peers, and working to design a group research proposal and an oral presentation about the value of a liberal arts education.

Course Objective:

In this class, students will draw from various speakers' experiences to develop a multifaceted and comprehensive understanding of the importance of a liberal arts education and explore the various ways the liberal arts can enrich your scholastic journey and Northwestern via coursework, research opportunities, and more. By the end of this course, our goal is that you will have learned:

1. To critically analyze and evaluate the experience of others who have pursued a liberal arts education to help cultivate and clarify your own passions and interests.
2. To develop a robust understanding of what a liberal arts education has to offer in terms of developing your critical thinking, communication, writing, and research skills.
3. To describe the ways in which a liberal arts education can foster our understanding of how political, socioeconomic, historical, and cultural processes inform our lived experiences.

Course Expectations:

Attendance - As mentioned above, the course meets T, W, Th (guest lectures) and F (class discussions). Students are expected to attend every class meeting. If you will be absent due to illness, please let the instructors know before class via email and we will create a plan for what can be done in lieu of the submission of the speaker sheet (assignment described below) that is

due that day. If a student is absent on a Friday, it is your responsibility to reach out to your group members to see what you missed and may need to contribute to the team.

Participation – This course is structured as a collective learning space, rooted in critical teaching practices in order to have open and honest conversations that we hope will lead to vibrant and enriching ideas and projects. With this in mind, we are asking that students not only come to class meetings, but that you also come prepared to actively listen and support your peers' thoughts and share your own thoughts.

Assignments:

Speaker sheets – For each guest speaker, you will be expected to complete a “speaker sheet” that consists of the following elements: three facts about the guest speaker, three questions for the guest speaker, a reflection of how the speaker's experiences relate to your own, and any additional notes you would like to take. On Friday of each week, students will submit these sheets to the instructors at the end of class. Instructors will review the sheets and return the physical copies to students early the following week. The expectation for the speaker sheet is that the three questions about the guest speaker be completed as homework, while the other components are completed during the guest speaker's presentation.

Final project – Students will be assigned to groups the first week of class. Each group is responsible for developing a research pitch and oral presentation.

1. Research pitch: The research pitch will be addressed to a faculty member in the form of a letter. It will be 4-6 pages double spaced. Components of the letter will include personal interest in the topic, research proposal, and broader implications of the proposed research. One group member should submit an initial draft of the proposal on Canvas no later than **Friday, September 6th at 11:59 pm**. You will be given feedback by the instructors and provided the opportunity to make any changes prior to the final presentation. The final pitch should be submitted on Canvas no later than **Wednesday, September 11th at 11:59pm**.
2. Oral presentation: The first half of the presentation will include a brief overview of the proposed research pitch that the group developed. The second half of the presentation will address the following questions related to what students have learned about the value of a liberal arts education:
 - How do you define a liberal arts education?
 - What have you gained from your courses?
 - What have you gained from listening to different speakers?
 - How do you think liberal arts education can help you achieve your goals and pursue your interests?
 - How do you think you will utilize the information you have learned this summer in the fall quarter?

Presentation drafts should be submitted on Canvas no later than **Friday, September 6th at 11:59 pm**. You will be given feedback by the instructors and provided the opportunity to make any changes prior to the final presentation. The final presentation should be submitted on Canvas no later than **Wednesday, September 11th at 11:59pm**.

Presentations will be held on Thursday, September 12th at TBD. Final presentations should be 10-15 minutes per group.

Course evaluation:

Students will receive a letter grade (i.e., A, B, C, D or F) based on the completion of your course attendance, in-class participation, submission of speaker sheets, and work completed in your group research proposal and presentation.

Grading:

Attendance and in-class participation: 15 points total (15% of grade)

Speaker sheets: 25 points total (25% of grade)

Final presentation: 30 points total (30% of grade)

Research pitch: 30 points total (30% of grade)

Course Schedule:

Please note that this is a tentative schedule and is subject to change as needed.

Date	Topic	Meeting Room
Tuesday, 8/13	Introductions, Syllabus review, Course expectations	Tech L251
Wednesday, 8/14	Guest lecture: Vilna Bashi	Tech L251
Thursday, 8/15	Guest lecture: Tony Chen	Tech L251
Friday, 8/16	Class discussion: -Generate research pitch ideas -Group assignments -Uncommon commonalities icebreaker	Tech L251
Tuesday, 8/20	Guest lecture: Lina Britto	Tech L251
Wednesday, 8/21	Guest lecture: Marquis Bey	Tech L251
Thursday, 8/22	Guest lecture: Sarah Rodriguez	Tech L251
Friday, 8/23	Class discussion: -How to give feedback on written and oral work lecture -Answer oral presentation questions in your group	Tech L251
Tuesday, 8/27	Guest lecture: Kelly Wisecup	Tech L251
Wednesday, 8/28	Guest lecture: Elvía Mendoza	Tech L251
Thursday, 8/29	Guest lecture: Jesse Yeh	Tech L251
Friday, 8/30	Class discussion: -Practice oral presentation and share research pitch updates with the class -Practice giving feedback to your peers	Tech L251
Tuesday, 9/3	Guest lecture: KB Dennis Meade	Frances Searle 2407
Wednesday, 9/4	Guest lecture: Abigail Barefoot	Frances Searle 2407
Thursday, 9/5	Guest lecture: Zach Nissen	Frances Searle 2407
Friday, 9/6	Class discussion: -How to present lecture	Frances Searle 2407

	-Work on finetuning presentations	
Thursday, 9/12	Project presentations and program Banquet	TBD