

GEOC Program Plan for Information Literacy

Major Program: English

Information Literacy: *the ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use that information for the issue or problem at hand.* (<http://www.infolit.org/>)

For English majors, Information Literacy will be the special focus of a range of the following upper-division courses, each of which emphasizes the collective nature of creating knowledge and the technological means of its transmission.

- **Engl 265W. Seminar in American Studies:** An in-depth study of an event, historical period, or cultural production from an interdisciplinary perspective.
- **Engl 268W. Seminars in Literature:** Intensive study of various limited topics, such as a particular literary theme, form, or movement, to be announced from semester to semester.
- **Engl 279W. Advanced Study: Drama:** Intensive study of particular topics in dramatic literature.
- **Engl 280W. Advanced Study: Poetry:** Intensive study of particular topics in poetry.
- **Engl 281W. Advanced Study: Prose:** Intensive study of particular topics in literary prose.
- **Engl 282W. Advanced Study: Literary Criticism and Theory:** Intensive study of particular topics in literary criticism and theory.
- **Engl 283W. Advanced Study: British Literature:** Intensive study of particular topics in the literature of the British Isles.
- **Engl 284W. Advanced Study: American Literature:** Intensive study of particular topics in the literature of the United States.
- **Engl 287W. Advanced Study: Ethnic Literature:** Intensive study of particular topics in British or American literature written by ethnic writers.
- **Engl 288W. Advanced Study: Anglophone Literature:** Intensive study of particular topics in the English literature of one or more regions, such as South Asia, Africa, or the Caribbean.
- **Engl 290W. Advanced Study: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Literature:** Intensive study of particular topics in the literary expression of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered identity.

Each of the above eleven courses is a designated “capstone” experience, fulfilling both the Information Literacy and the Writing in the Major requirements for the English major. In capstone courses, English majors develop sophisticated reading, writing, and technological skills by consulting with professors, librarians, and sometimes fellow students. This work guides the student in compiling an annotated bibliography, surveying archival holdings when appropriate, analyzing research websites and databases, and attending library instruction sessions and workshops.

Standard One

*“The information-literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed.”** In the capstone courses, the students are assigned to write a research paper of 15-20 pages or, where appropriate, a series of shorter research assignments, using critical methodologies specific to the course. Students learn to interrogate their chosen topic so as to generate the questions that need to be asked and answered in the course of their research. Creating annotated bibliographies give students an appreciation of the wide varieties of scholarly discussion. In developing their research products, students learn to identify and access information from primary texts and from secondary sources pertinent to literary analysis (for example, source-studies, interviews, scholarly databases, and archival papers).

Standard Two

“The information-literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.” In the capstone courses, English majors will be trained in advanced research methods in literary analysis, including the use of a variety of field-specific scholarly books and journals (in either print or electronic format), specialized internet search engines, and electronic databases (for example, the MLA Bibliography, LexisNexis Academic, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, and so forth). They will also attend library workshops and information sessions that explore the development and structure of scholarly information.

Standard Three

“The information-literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his/her knowledge base and value system.” In the capstone courses, all students are assigned secondary reading as well as the primary texts; they may also be expected to evaluate each other’s writing through such venues as WebCT. Exploring relevant secondary sources may require using ILL, archival sources, interviews, and so forth. English majors learn to trace information to its original source, establish which sources are most authoritative and suitable for scholarly discussion, and to identify political and cultural biases, logical fallacies, and inconsistencies in arguments. They learn how to adjust their own knowledge base and value systems to accommodate new information and concepts that they find persuasive, but also gain strength as critical thinkers by learning to draw on their own cognitive systems to articulate reasons for rejecting misinformation and conceptual error.

Standard Four

“The information-literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.” In the capstone courses, the English majors learn the research process by pursuing research projects as noted above (see Standard One). Throughout the research process, students will be aware of the needs and purposes of their audience. They learn to narrow the scope of their research topic, formulate a viable thesis, organize their argument, and in addressing a scholarly reader, produce a paper that contributes to a specific debate. As they evaluate previous scholarly work on their topic, they learn to discover how their understanding of and approach toward a literary text may differ from prevailing views.

Standard Five

“The information-literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.” The capstone courses emphasize rigorously ethical research; the principles of academic honesty are prominent in each course. Part of the research assignment is to learn the proper method of citation according to the MLA Style Manual or The Chicago Manual of Style. In this way, the English major learns that acknowledging earlier sources not only gives credit to another scholar but also furthers the critical debate.

To satisfy the general education requirement for information literacy in the major, students must pass at least one capstone course as listed above.

***The first sentence of each section is quoted from the document distributed by Association of College and Research Libraries: “Faculty Guidelines: Information Literacy Standards for Higher Education.”**