Course Description: LBA 398 is the capstone course for all students pursuing the BA in Liberal Studies degree. In order to enter this program, each student was required to write an essay defining why s/he chose to pursue a degree in Liberal Studies as opposed to a traditional track offered by the university, a “definition” of the program that s/he would like to create and how that program would be beneficial to future endeavors, and, finally, to sketch out those areas that s/he thought would best fit the program. Now, after having been accepted into the program, completing the majority of your coursework, and preparing to graduate, in this capstone you will return to many of those ideas explored in your application essay, but with a greater understanding of the direct benefits, outcomes, and interconnections of your studies.

Overall, the goal of this course will be to prepare a final project that will include the collection of materials written during your studies, the completion of new writing assignments, and the completion of an oral defense. As you can thus see, the semester will be spent constructing this larger product, tightening our ability to write and speak about the value and purpose of interdisciplinary study, and, finally, exiting our college career with an understanding of our academic and future career.

PLOs and SLOs: As this course is required of all students completing the BA in Liberal Studies degree, the following Program Learning Outcomes will be achieved:

1) Students will demonstrate an ability to articulate the goals and objectives of interdisciplinary study both orally and in writing.
2) Students will demonstrate writing proficiency.
3) Students will judge the effectiveness of interdisciplinary learning as a means of professional and intellectual preparation.

Required Texts:
--Assigned topic readings.
--Research assigned by capstone paper committee

Course Requirements:
1) Students enrolled in LBA 398 will complete a series of readings that focus on the understanding and value of interdisciplinary learning.
2) Students enrolled in the capstone seminar will write an essay that articulates the goals and objectives of interdisciplinary study.
3) Students will make an oral presentation to a faculty panel demonstrating the ability to articulate goals and objectives of interdisciplinary study.

4) Students enrolled in LBA 398 will write an essay evaluating the effectiveness of interdisciplinary learning in preparing them professionally and as members of a global society.

5) Students enrolled in the capstone will develop a seminar paper of 10 -12 pages that is interdisciplinary in nature. This paper will require the student to incorporate all three areas of study into a single discussion of a chosen topic.

6) Post-Graduation: Graduates of the Liberal Studies program will be surveyed and asked to evaluate the effectiveness of interdisciplinary study as it applies to their profession and their role as a member of society.

Course Policies:

Attendance and Late Work:
All deadlines for work must be followed. As much of our early writing will prepare you for the development for your portfolio, feedback will be necessary. Also, as other faculty will be giving time to read your portfolio and attend your oral defense, deadlines will be set in stone.

Major Assignments and grading:

At the end of the semester, you will complete three new assignments. Two of these essays will focus on the academic and professional aspects of your degree. The final project will be an academic research paper.

Class meetings: 10% of grade. You are expected to meet with your class per calendar dates and to have completed all assigned readings, if applicable. This will be the basis of discussion.

Essay One: 25% of grade - 4-5 pages in length. This essay will be a definitional essay. The purpose of this essay will be for the author to define what is the meaning of an interdisciplinary degree. This essay will work to answer such questions as: What is an interdisciplinary education? Why is it a valuable degree in the academic community? What value does the degree have outside the academic community? Etc.

Essay Two: 15% of grade – 1-2 pages in length. This will be an application essay. Whereas in your first essay you will work with the broad issue of what is the defining the purpose and value of an interdisciplinary education in terms of the academic community, this second essay will be an analytical essay of your own degree and why you believe it is valuable. In this essay, you will want to offer a clear definition of your degree, explain why you chose the design that you did, and, finally, offer a full discussion of exactly how you believe that this degree has made you most prepared for your professional future. This will be due to Dr. Johnston by 5pm Monday of finals week.
Research essay: 50% of grade - 10-12 pages. This will be a topic based research paper and, in most cases, be argumentatively driven. The goal here will be to devise a topic (question) that you wish to answer that will require you to make use of research and discussion from your areas of study. In other words, you will develop an interdisciplinary final project. For this project, you will choose three faculty members who will become committee members. One of these individuals will chair your project. With the help and guidance of this individual, you will choose your topic and complete your paper. Upon completion, you will complete an oral defense of this project. The individuals at this defense will be the three faculty members that you have chosen and a representative from the Office of Interdisciplinary Programs. During your defense, the committee members present will engage you in a conversation about your argument, the different areas of study employed, and the conclusions that you reach.

Notes about your essays: Each of these essays is to be typed, use 12 point font, and ONLY the essay should be double-spaced (DO NOT DOUBLE SPACE THE HEADER).

In the case of each essay, you will be expected to make use of outside resources. When writing your essay, you are to display correct citation of any and all sources that are used. This means, you are to recognize outside sources when either using direct quotes or summarizing the ideas of another. Furthermore, since you will show in-text citation, your essays must also include a Works Cited page.

Finally, each of your essays should be viewed as academic writing. As such, it should be written in the academic voice (avoid the use of the first person unless instructed otherwise, avoid contractions, colloquialisms, text speak, etc.), be clean of stigmatized errors, display a clear thesis/supporting paragraphs/conclusion, and recognize all sources. Essays that do not comply with such standards will be graded accordingly.

Academic Integrity (A-9.1):
Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Stephen F. Austin State University defines academic dishonesty as:
Definition of Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.
Please read the complete policy at:  http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

In terms of this class, any student caught blatantly and purposely plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive 0 points for the assignment. Instructor may opt to gibe the student an automatic F in the class for severe cases of academic dishonesty. Furthermore, the incident will be reported.

Withheld Grades:
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.”

For the complete policy, http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/semester_grds.asp

Students with Disabilities:
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building Room 325, 468-3004/468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices.

COURSE CALENDAR

Jan. 19 – Introduction to class

Jan. 26 – Discussion of first readings packet (distributed class prior)

Feb. 2 – No class meeting. Essay #1 due in Dropbox by 5pm. By this date you should report your confirmed committee to Dr. Johnston by email.

Feb. 9 – Discussion of second readings packet (distributed class prior)

Feb. 16 – Discussion of research plans. You must come to class with a one page outline of what you plan to research for your final paper. Dr. Johnston will provide a questionnaire you must complete for class with your primary research advisor.

Feb. 23 - Mar. 9 – No class meetings. You should be working on your papers with your advisors and accumulating a bibliography.

Mar. 23 – Meeting to discuss progress on research.
Mar. 30 – No class/Easter Holiday

April 13 – Final papers due. These must be sent or given to all committee members including Dr. Johnston no later than 5pm. No class meeting.

Apr. 20 – No class

Defense meetings will be arranged for the week of April 23-27

Apr. 27 – Final class meeting. Essay #2 due in dropbox by 5pm