

LAR 201: Introduction to Studies in the Disciplines
Online, Fall 2008
Dr. Jen Riley

Note: This course is a required course for the Liberal Arts major.

Course Description: This foundation course for the major in Liberal Arts prepares students to understand the ways in which the disciplines of the Humanities and the Social Sciences define themselves, approach their subjects, and create knowledge about the world and human experience. It asks students to consider ideas and information not only within individual disciplines, but also across them, looking at what can be learned from taking different disciplinary perspectives, comparing and synthesizing them.

The course begins by situating the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences in the context of the modern American academy—considering what the “liberal arts” are and how American universities teach and practice them—and by asking students to consider why they are pursuing this study and what they expect to learn from, and to do with, it.

Course Objectives:

- Identify features of content, principle, and practice that characterize humanities and social sciences disciplines and that distinguish them from one another
- Identify concerns and methods that these disciplines have in common and ways in which bringing multiple perspectives to bear can increase knowledge about a subject, inquiry, or field of study
- Compare disciplinary perspectives by addressing subjects and inquiries through multiple disciplines in sequence
- Identify and use the basic text, graphic, and material research tools of these disciplines, including print and online databases, scholarship, and collections
- Use a wide range of electronic resources to explore subjects, ideas and arguments, and supporting data and materials
- Write an entry-level academic research paper that uses two distinct disciplinary perspectives, one social science and one humanities, in a parallel discussion investigating what can be learned through each

Course Texts (subject to change):

Identities: Race, Class, Gender, and Nationality, eds. Eduardo Mendieta and Linda Alcoff
A Research Paper Handbook to be announced
And handouts in the course site

The course assignments include (subject to change):

- 8-10 discussion board activities (discussion board activities involve each student responding to prompts provided by the instructor and then engaging with classmate postings)
- Response papers to full length texts (2)
- Wiki Page Project
- Annotated Bibliography
- Final Paper (5-7 pages)
- More questions? Email Professor Jen Riley: jriley@umassd.edu