

## ENGLISH DEPARTMENT GUIDELINES ON DIRECTED READINGS

Approved by the Department on April 13, 2011

Directed Reading courses (ENG 778) exist to accommodate extended or more specialized research in a particular area. Students seeking Directed Readings are expected to have a pre-existing relationship with the faculty member who will direct their work in ENG 778. Directed Reading courses are not intended to provide substitutes for existing graduate courses.

In a Directed Reading course, the graduate student is expected to work independently, pursuing a specific project (or group of projects) with the participating professor, who serves principally as guide and consultant. The professor and the graduate student are expected to agree in advance upon specific projects to be undertaken, a specific arrangement regarding consultations, and a specific set of expectations regarding the work to be accomplished.

The following scenarios for Directed Readings describe three possible approaches that faculty and graduate students may choose to structure their work together:

1) At the beginning of the semester, the faculty member and student will agree on a substantial reading list, complete with secondary sources. This list should be compiled entirely by the student but will be subject to the professor's revisions and suggestions. A reading schedule should also be determined that plots the activity over the course of the semester and lets the professor know what, at any point, the student is working on. Minimal face-to-face hours would be required; instead correspondence might consist of two or three email "check-ins" or other brief assignments over the course of the semester. A final paper (which might run 10-20 pages) would be due at the end of the semester. Students would need to be entirely responsible for the conception, research, and drafting and completion of the essay; the professor's role would be limited to reading the paper and commenting upon it. This scenario emphasizes product over process and is designed to give students the opportunity to refine and distill the semester's reading into a focused argument, perhaps feeding into the dissertation project.

2) At the beginning of the semester, the faculty member and student will decide on a set of readings (approximately a book a week). The faculty member and student meet every 2 to 3 weeks for one to two hours to discuss the readings, the readings' relationship to each other, and their connection to the student's broader area of interest. Before each meeting, the student submits a 5 page paper addressing the readings, whose purpose is to serve as a launching point for conversation. The faculty member may or may not offer written comments on these papers. Over the course of the semester, the student writes 25-35 pages, but in the form of shorter pieces, rather than a single final paper. The primary pedagogical engagement comes through discussion, which can allow for a less argument-driven investigation of the student's field of choice than a final essay. Such exploration can help provide a contextualizing sense of a field or specific area of study before the student seeks to hone his/her interests into a more focused argument for the dissertation prospectus.

3) Similar to paradigm #1 in its emphasis on the production of standard academic forms of writing and a minimal number of face-to-face hours during the semester, this model would be centered not on a single research paper but on either a) the production of one or two papers for an academic conference or b) the development of a detailed syllabus, series of lesson plans, assignments, lecture notes, and other materials pertaining to an area of specialization related to the student's doctoral exams or field of research.

NOTE: For more information about Directed Readings as they relate to faculty workload, please see the English Department Workload Policy, Appendix B.