Section 036 | 12:00 - 12:50 MWF | Harris 2117

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

UNIV 200, "Inquiry and the Craft of Argument," is a research and writing process course designed to increase your proficiency in critical reading, analysis, academic research and argumentation—skills necessary for advanced work in every discipline. A central goal of the course is to provide you with the time and opportunity to develop the processes and strategies that characterize confident and successful researchers and writers. Course activities and assignments will allow for practice in critical reading and the research and writing process that will help you to claim your authority as a writer and thinker.

Intellectual curiosity is at the heart of our work together. Thus, you will formulate research inquiries of your own and pursue them through a systematic and sustained research and writing process. Rewriting, rethinking, and revising will be encouraged throughout the semester as you develop your own ways of thinking and your authority about an inquiry you design. Each major course assignment will ask you to present your evolving thinking using a different modality (mode of presentation). Some of these modalities will look familiar (e.g., a "paper") and others will challenge you to think more creatively and expansively about the presentation of research and argument (e.g., an indirect service project). Ultimately, UNIV 200 provides you with the opportunity to develop the skills and strategies you need for success in your upper division research and writing challenges, as well as your professional and civic life.

SERVICE-LEARNING

This section of UNIV 200 is a service-learning class in which you will offer service to a designated program for a total of 20 hours over the course of the term. Service-learning at Virginia Commonwealth University is a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets community-identified needs. Service activities may be direct (e.g., mentoring youth, volunteering with patients, working in community gardens) or indirect (e.g., creating research reports, designing online or print materials); may be individual or group-based; may occur either on- or off-campus; may be scheduled at varying times of the week/day; may be focused in different parts of the city, and may involve a variety of community organizations. Individual service-learning classes do not offer all of these options. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the service activity options that are available in this class and to select from the available options the option that best suits their needs and interests. Students in all VCU service-learning classes participate in

reflection activities that are designed to increase students' understanding and application of course content and to enhance their sense of civic responsibility.

Your activities as a service-learner will contribute to its coordinated efforts to address community-identified needs. You will write reflective responses considering your service experiences in light of course themes and objectives. These reflections will not only help you better understand the course concepts, but they will also shape the arguments you take up in your writing and serve as support for the points you will make. Moreover, your involvement in service learning means you will move outside of VCU's boundaries, meeting new people and gaining knowledge about the communities in which you live and study. It is an experience that you can highlight on your resume as evidence of engagement beyond the walls of the classroom. Contacts you gain through your relationships with community partners will be valuable resources to you beyond the service hours you contribute, perhaps as career mentors or writers of letters of recommendation.

COURSE THEME: "TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGN FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION"

The course will explore three nuanced ways to discuss the past, present, and future of *designed technologies*. *Technology* will be broadly defined as a process or object whereby knowledge is applied to achieve a goal or solve problems, and *designed* taken to mean having an intended purpose, implying designers who plan the process or object and users who take advantage of the resulting technology.

- *"Technology" is a socially and historically relative term*: new technologies are most likely viewed as innovative or disruptive; established technologies are often so integrated in our daily lives that we take little notice of them; and outmoded technologies we tend to discount because they seem effectively replaced by newer technologies.

- *Access to technologies differs by social group*, due to lack of knowledge or lack of resources, which can reflect existing inequalities and create further disadvantages. But there might be some consolation in this: access shapes different life experiences, seeing how exposure to technology revises the meaning of work, leisure, and community.

- *The design of technology favors particular outcomes and certain users*. This is to say that behind any technology resides a particular intention that is subject to real situational limitations. Nonetheless, designs may be inclusive and invite user participation, to the extent that the intention and available resources allow.

In your research and writing, you will approach the subject of your choice as a designed technology and use these considerations to enrich and deepen your exploration.

Your service may take the form of helping your community partner or those it serves *use certain designed technologies to meet their needs*. For example, you could help elderly residents use software such as Skype to place video calls to family members. Or, with your community partner you might *design a technology to achieve a particular goal that benefits the community*. You could, for instance, assist your community partner with organizing its social media campaigns which in turn increase the organization's reach. Alternatively, you will have the opportunity *examine the designed technologies a group*

already uses and explore how or why they use them. If you are, say, tutoring elementary school students, you could investigate why your community partner might privilege face-to-face tutoring sessions or practice math with objects or pen and paper rather than a computer.

As a service-learner, you will have opportunities to shape your contributions to the community—what you do, how you do it, and for what purpose. In that sense, you and your community partner are designers and your users are the larger community you serve. These positions will become complicated in many ways, however: service-learners are also participants in the community and thus both users and designers. You will design along with members of the community, who aren't simply the passive recipients of your contributions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Critical Thinking

- ▪ Students will develop, exercise, and sustain a habit of rigorous inquiry
- ▪ Students will increase proficiency in analyzing, understanding, and participating in argumentation
- ▪ Students will engage in critical reflection about work in process, their own and others'

Information Fluency

- ▪ Students will locate topic-relevant information using VCU Libraries' resources and the open web
- ▪ Students will critically evaluate the quality and suitability of information
- ▪ Students will ethically use scholarly and non-scholarly sources
- ▪ Students will explore academically rigorous work in evolving communication platforms

Written Communication

- ▪ Students will engage in writing as a process
- ▪ Students will increase proficiency in communicating the complex arguments of others
- ▪ Students will develop and convey original ideas/contexts/applications using rhetorical strategies appropriate for academic argument

UNITS

UNIV 200 is divided up into four units. These units are:

1. Critical Reading and Evidenced-Based Argument
2. Managing the Research Process
3. The Creation and Craft of Argument

4. Remediation of Inquiry Project

Unit 1: Critical Reading and Evidence-Based Argument

In Unit 1, you will work on further developing your critical thinking skills through close reading. As a class, we will study and discuss a series of texts, along with related material, to examine meaning and the rhetorical strategies and structures that deliver meaning. In particular, we will review the elements of argument and the essential role they play in the process of inquiry and the communication of ideas. Over the course of this unit, we will establish a common vocabulary for discussing arguments, and we will begin establishing a classroom culture of critical thinking by exploring how questioning a particular text can lead to larger academic inquiry and topic development.

> *Major Assignment:* You and your peer group serving the same community partner will select a common theme or research question. Individually, you will need to establish the focus for the inquiry that will be the center of your own research effort and later the subject of your research paper. The major assignment, an argument of 1,300 to 1,600 words (four to five pages), is a defense of your inquiry design where you will make a case that your proposed research project is feasible, well defined, and significant.

> *Service Learning:* Our discussions of the readings will draw from your reflections on your initial service experiences and/or your thoughts on your indirect service projects. This pairing will connect hands-on learning taking place in the community to the course theme, deepening your engagement with both. As a result, your service experience will shape the questions you craft as the motivation for your research and writing.

Unit 2: Managing the Research Process

Unit 2 will provide you the opportunity to use the elements of argument introduced in Unit 1 to focus on a topic of your choice and develop a research question. You will then design a research strategy, attend a library session, and begin locating sources that will address that research question. Unit 2 also emphasizes the importance of information fluency by exploring concepts and skills that will help you to a) locate and assess quality primary and secondary sources, b) practice reading and synthesizing those sources, and c) utilize proper documentation. Your research in Unit 2 will ultimately provide the basis of your work in Unit 3.

> *Major Assignments:* You will design an organized illustration of research (and the research process) that responds to a research question and concludes in a written or visual synthesis. *You must consult fifteen sources at minimum and synthesize at least eight.* The first phase of your research will be collaborative, meant to help your group understand the population you are serving and the community needs your partner targets. The latter phase of your research will be done individually for the most part, though there will be opportunities for sharing sources with your group. Finally, you will bring together the evidence you found and essentially create a plan for the research paper you will write. During the first stages of

writing of the research paper, you will gather a few more sources to fill out your intentions for the essay.

Service Learning: You will be reading your reflections on your service experiences into the sources that you find. Thus your reflections will provide a basis from which to evaluate the relevance and usefulness of the sources in light of the concerns you are exploring in your research and writing. There will also be opportunities to collect information directly from your partner or the community you serve in the form of interviews and surveys, which may serve as evidence in your Unit 3 research paper.

Unit 3: The Creation and Craft of Argument

In Unit 3, you will develop and refine your inquiry project—an argument based on your understanding of the elements of argument from Unit 1 and the research you conducted in Unit 2. You will start by drafting and developing an answer to your research question, which will become your tentative claim. Once you have established a tentative claim, you will begin the writing process by developing a clear plan for the structure of your argument. You will then write a first draft, which you will revise comprehensively in the light of your own critical reflection and feedback from your instructor and peers. Throughout the writing process, you will give and receive feedback on written work.

Major Assignment: Based on the research conducted during Unit 2, you will write an argumentative essay with a minimum of 3,500 words (roughly 10 pages). For evidence it must use at least eight substantive or scholarly sources and a minimum of three scholarly sources. You will begin the writing process by working from your Unit 2 synthesis, composing a series of drafts—particular parts of your paper, really—using basic frameworks provided for you. These drafts you will expand and revise to fulfill your individual inquiry.

Service Learning: We will explore the role of critical distance in your reflection on your service as a model for working with evidence from scholarly and substantive sources, as you strive to make the process of reasoning visible in your writing. Further reflections on service experience will motivate revisions of your work in progress by enacting the questioning of shared assumptions.

Unit 4: Remediation of the Inquiry Project

In this unit, you will explore the various ways that academic work can be shared in traditional and digital platforms. As a class, we will examine the relationship between form and content and consider the influence a writer's chosen medium may have on the ability to convey an argument.

Major Assignment: In traditional sections of UNIV 200, the Unit 4 project is a "translation" of the research paper argument into a new medium (e.g., an infographic or video). For this service-learning section, the project itself will be your collaborative indirect service project that you designed at the beginning of the course and carried out during the semester. At the end of the course, your group will present your finished project to your community partner and explain how it is informed by your research and tailored to its audience to target a

community need. Individually, you will complete a 1,000-word (three-page) reflection on the experience of creating and presenting the indirect service project.

Service Learning: The indirect service project is a component of your service to your community partner this semester. It is essential that while completing the project you remain mindful of how it will address a community need and let that consideration guide your work. As you get to know your community partner and the population it assists, your project should reflect their distinct priorities and needs.

To integrate service-learning effectively into the course, the units in this section of UNIV 200 will overlap. [Click here for an alternate visual and narrative representation of the course schema.](#)

PARTICIPATION & REFLECTION

In addition to the major unit assignments described above, 20% of your course grade will be reserved for participation and reflection, which covers your work in class as well as your service to your community partner.

Your participation and reflection grade breaks down in this way:

1. Prep Work/Activities: 12 points for each of the four units, making 48 points total
2. Reflections: 18 points for six required reflections
3. Service Hours: 10 points for service hours (a half point for each hour of service)
4. Attendance: base grade of 24 points, less any deductions for absences or lateness

On the course schedule, a handful of prep work assignments and in-class activities each unit will be highlighted in purple. These will be reviewed by the instructor, and the work will earn you points toward your participation and reflection grade. So the 10 points per unit will be a combination of specific assignments or tasks (e.g., a conference), worth a particular number of points, and a general assessment of all your prep work and in-class activities for the unit, which the remaining points will cover.

Regular reflections on your service are essential for connecting the work you do in the community with your UNIV 200 research project. Reflections will be posted to your group's RamPages blog. There will be eight deadlines, always scheduled on Mondays. Each reflection must discuss the service that students performed since their previous reflection. The six highest reflections will count toward the total, meaning that students may skip two reflections without impacting their cumulative grade.

Your service hours also count toward your participation grade, because you will be unable to contribute fully to class discussion and activities if you do not serve the community regularly and reflect on those experiences. For every hour you serve your community partner, you will add a half point to your participation grade, up to 10 points. If you reach the required commitment of 20 hours *before the Unit 3 research paper is due*, you receive an additional 2 points as a bonus. Your service hours must be entered in the Service Log provided, which will be checked weekly.

Students who are absent for more than three classes will lose a participation point for the fourth and every subsequent class they miss. Once you are late three times, you will

lose half a participation point each subsequent time you are late. The instructor may consider excessively late arrivals as absences (i.e., coming to class more than five minutes after the start). (See the section on Class Attendance below.)

GRADING

Your overall course grade consists of the weighted sum of several assessments:

- Unit 1 Inquiry Defense = 10%
- Unit 2 Collaborative and Individual Research, Synthesis Project = 20%
- Unit 3 Research Paper = 35%
- Unit 4 Indirect Service Project = 15%
- Participation and Reflection = 20%

Rubrics specifying grading criteria and point totals will be provided for each major assignment.

The general grading scale will be as follows:

A = 90–100; B = 80–89; C = 70–79; D = 60–69; F = 50–59

Grades will be made available to students via a PDF file shared on their Google Drive folder approximately every two weeks.

UNIV 200 is a process course, which means that units are progressive in design and build on material and skills developed in the preceding unit. Because of this, **you must complete all units in order to receive a passing grade** *in any section of UNIV 200.*

Students must earn a C or better in UNIV 200 to exit the course. *Students who do not earn a C or better must repeat the course.*

REQUIRED MATERIALS

These texts can be purchased at Virginia Book Company and Barnes and Noble @VCU.

- Hacker, Diana and Nancy Sommers. *A Writer's Reference*, with Writing in the Disciplines and Multimodal Projects, Seventh Edition (rainbow cover) or Eighth Edition (black and gold cover).
- *The Curious Researcher*. Department of Focused Inquiry, UNIV 200. Pearson 2nd Custom Edition (with black cover).

An e-textbook is available for *The Curious Researcher*. Access can be purchased at the bookstores noted above, or you can purchase instant access with a credit card through the Pearson website: http://www.pearsoncustom.com/va/vcu_univ200/. If you purchase access to the e-textbook, you do not need to purchase the printed edition of *The Curious Researcher* as well.

The class will use Google Drive for storing your work in the course and turning in final assignments. You will access this service on the web using your Google Apps account tied to your VCU email address. You may use the Google Docs platform to work with documents or you may use Word or other word processing software that opens and saves files in Word format. (N.B., VCU provides students with a two-year subscription to

Microsoft Office, which includes Word software, for Windows and Mac, for just $5.95. To download the programs, visit http://ts.vcu.edu/software-center/general-purpose/microsoft-office/.)

In Unit 1 you will join a blog on RamPages (http://rampages.us) which will house your group members' service reflections. RamPages is a VCU-wide platform for online and connected learning across courses. The Focused Inquiry Department requires that all students create an active RamPages account on which they will engage in online learning activities. (You are asked to continue to use an already established RamPages account, if you have one from UNIV 111 and/or 112 or another class, with blogs in this course.) To complete required assignments, it is necessary that your work on the blog is shared with your group and the instructor, though you may blog pseudonymously.

You are encouraged to bring a laptop or tablet to class to use the e-textbook, share drafts with peers, complete in-class activities, and access Google Apps and RamPages. If you do not have a device, do not want to bring it with you, or do not want to check out a laptop or iPad from the library before coming to class, you may opt out of using these tools *for the entire semester*. However, that means that you are responsible for scanning your own documents and uploading them to Google Drive, as you will still need to store and organize your files online to get credit for the work. Also, you must always bring hard copies of worksheets and drafts to class to participate in scheduled activities. Those students who do not opt out are expected to have a laptop or tablet with them *every* class, checking out devices from the library if necessary.

Students using tablets are advised to use dedicated apps for Google Drive, Docs, and Spreadsheets rather than access the tools through a web browser. Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the web browsers recommended for use with Google Apps and RamPages.

SCHEDULE

The working schedule is a Google Doc available through the shared course folder on Google Drive. It features tentative due dates for major unit assignments and a full agenda for the first weeks of class. Detailed day-by-day information will be added to the schedule over the course of the semester.

This section of UNIV 200 is scheduled to conclude on the last day of class for the semester, meaning no work will be assigned for or due during the final exam period. Students will not receive credit for any work not turned in by the end of the day on Monday, May 2.

CLASS ATTENDANCE

UNIV 200 is conducted as a workshop, with in-class writing exercises, writing assignments, and group activities. Therefore, success in the course requires punctual attendance and active participation during class sessions, which in itself depends on adequate preparation. The instructor has the right to lower a student's final course grade as the sole result of his or her repeated absences and tardiness.

Attendance will be taken daily via a sign-in sheet circulated at the beginning of class. (You may contact me to opt-out of this system, if you object to others seeing your signature.)

You will be able to verify the number of classes you missed when you receive PDF grade reports periodically.

By departmental policy, students who miss more than nine classes in a course that meets three times a week cannot pass the course.

Students who are absent for more than three classes will lose a participation point for the fourth and every subsequent class they miss.

You do not need to contact me to report an absence and explain the reason why you cannot come to class. I will not excuse any absence based on the merit of its cause or the persuasiveness of your explanation.

It is your responsibility to ask your peers about the material you missed. I do not provide students with a detailed description of what they missed when absent.

SERVICE CONDUCT AND ATTENDANCE

Your behavior shapes the relationship that you have with your community partner's staff and its clients and in turn the quality of your service. Follow all conduct guidelines outlined by your community partner, respect the privacy of those the organization serves, and represent the university positively in your interactions.

It is also crucial that you communicate regularly and professionally with you community partner throughout the semester. *Any time that you are unable to volunteer when your organization is expecting you to, you must email or call your contact well in advance to notify him/her of your schedule conflict and arrange an alternative time to serve.* Your community partner is counting on you to carry out the schedule you establish.

You will log the hours that you serve your community partner in the Service Log provided, a Google Drive spreadsheet which will be shared with your professor, the teaching assistants, and an organization representative. *Complete the Service Log in addition to any sign-in procedures required by your community partner for its own records.* The Log will be checked regularly (at minimum before the assessment of every reflection) and used in the calculation of your participation grade. Your hours are subject to confirmation by your community partner.

LATE WORK

Prep work and activities

Prep work consists of short assignments used as starting points for or references during class activities. Activities almost always involve a worksheet and usually require peer collaboration. Activity worksheets are not designed for you to complete at your own leisure, as they often depend on instructions or information given in class and/or involve multiple steps completed in a given timeframe. **You are expected to complete prep work and activities at the appropriate time and store the documents on Google Drive.** Some prep work assignments and activities will be assessed for participation points; it is necessary that these are turned in on time. Late submissions will not be accepted.

You may be asked to leave class if you have not completed the necessary preparation for the day's activity. This includes not bringing drafts or readings to class. Some peer reviews require several steps that must be completed in order: failing to complete a particular step by the deadline stated will not allow you to participate further.

Service reflections

Reflections on your service must be posted to your group blog by the deadlines specified to receive comments and credit. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Unit assignments

Major unit assignments will automatically lose points corresponding to half a letter grade for each day they are late (including weekends). All unit assignments must be completed—and tackled in proper order—to pass the course.

Difficulties with technology and/or printing troubles do not excuse late work or unpreparedness. You should anticipate problems technology may create and have alternate strategies ready for times that technology fails.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

Arriving late to class or leaving early

It is important that you be on time for every class. If you arrive fewer than five minutes late up to three times over the course of the term, there will be no penalty. However, **once you are late three times, you will lose half a participation point each subsequent time you are late**. The instructor may consider excessively late arrivals as absences (i.e., coming to class more than five minutes after the start).

Notify Dr. Vechinski at the start of class if you need to leave early for a legitimate reason. However, your participation points may be impacted if you miss activities or are unable to complete them in full. Please make your exit quietly so that you do not disturb other students.

The use of cell phones, laptops, and other technologies in class

You are encouraged to use laptops and tablets during appropriate class activities. It is expected that they are used as resources for your work in the course. You will receive a warning the first time the professor notices you using laptops or tablets for unrelated purposes; subsequent times this will be noted in the attendance record and may impact your participation grade for the unit. Whenever you are asked not to use technology by the instructor, so as to focus on tasks at hand that do not require the use of devices, students unwilling to comply may not receive full participation points for the unit.

During class, cell phones must be silenced and kept out of view at all times. You will lose weekly participation points for failing to observe this rule and may be asked to leave your phone in a designated area of the classroom to ensure it will remain out of your reach. **Cell phones (even smartphones) are <u>never</u> to be used as a substitute for tablets and laptops.** It is time consuming to use phones to type and read documents, plus it is difficult to share small screens with peers when collaborating.

If you absolutely have to have your cell phone available during class because you need to be able to take a *call*, it should be on vibrate, and you should leave the room discreetly to talk.

Unprepared students' participation in group activities

If you arrive unprepared for a group activity, you also put your peers at a disadvantage, as the group will need to find a way to complete the activity nonetheless. In certain cases, they may need to carry on without your involvement. This can affect your group's performance as well as your own, which may be reflected in your participation points and/or your peers'.

When students complete tasks early

Be mindful of your classmates if you complete a task before others do. Keep talking to a minimum. Please do not leave the classroom unless you have a legitimate reason, because the next activity may start without you. Wait until the professor dismisses you if you happen to finish the last activity before the period ends.

COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY POLICIES

You are expected to check your vcu.edu email account regularly. Crucial time-sensitive announcements will be sent to your VCU email. I may email you comments on certain assignments, too.

I will reply to messages you send directly to me (mjvechinski@vcu.edu) within 24 hours—excluding weekends, when it may take me slightly longer to respond. I usually only set aside time to handle email a few times daily, so do not expect instant replies.

I do not accept any assignment sent to me via email. Use only Google Drive for submitting work.

I use will use the features in Google Drive to leave you comments on your work. Please take time to review returned files that contain my comments. My feedback does not merely justify the grades I give; it is meant to help you improve your performance on later assignments as well.

VCU students have the opportunity to narrate, curate, and share the story of their learning and achievements with the world. Universities such as Penn State, the University of Oklahoma, Emory University, and the University of Mary Washington have offered this opportunity to their students with great success, and we anticipate VCU's experience will be just as beneficial.

While we in the Department of Focused Inquiry encourage you to participate in the full experience of "connected learning," we also want you to know that you have rights and responsibilities when posting course work online:

- As part of this course, students may be asked to create work that will be retained on platforms accessible online. We recommend platforms that allow students to control the visibility of their work. At a minimum, students must allow their instructor to view their work. Please consult with your instructor if you would like more information on restricting the visibility of your work.

- Students must be in compliance with the end user licenses, platform policies, and applicable laws for any open- or protected-access sites that they choose to use in support of their work for VCU. This includes sites such as Blackboard, YouTube, Google Drive, Slideshare, or any cloud storage students choose to use. Please familiarize yourself with any user licensing agreements and applicable laws that may apply.

- Students have intellectual property rights to work they generate in support of their studies at VCU as described in the VCU Intellectual Property Policy. If a class project uses a site that requires users to waive intellectual property rights to posted content, you may choose an alternate, comparable platform for submission of materials. Please consult with your instructor for more information.

- Students are responsible for the work they share online. No collaboratively created work may be posted online without full consent of all group members.

- VCU policies and regulations regarding the network and resources are also applicable.

PLAGIARISM & ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own. In your work for this class, it is essential that you properly cite the outside sources that you use in your writing. Plagiarism is plagiarism: it is not more or less serious depending on the source of the plagiarism (e.g., a published text rather than another student's writing), the perceived importance of the assignment, or the amount of material plagiarized.

Please understand that plagiarism is a serious violation and is punished by the university. As a matter of policy, a student found to have plagiarized any piece of writing in this class will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity and will receive zero points for the assignment.

Plagiarism is one form of academic dishonesty but not its only form. Misrepresenting group collaborations is another. It is also a violation of the VCU Honor Code to hand in the same work (complete and unrevised) for credit in multiple classes. Potentially dishonest and unethical practices will be investigated on a case by case basis. Please refer to the section on the Honor Code in the University Policies section for additional information on academic dishonesty.

OUR CLASS AS A COMMUNITY & COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Because of the highly collaborative nature of the class, I expect that students will be active participants in a strong class community where individuals learn from each other. I hope that students will come to see the value of group work and peer and instructor feedback for the writing process, often thought of as simply a solitary activity. In order for this to happen, students must be willing to share their work, sometimes unpolished and tentative, and so we will work to build trust while remaining critical enough to challenge each other to improve.

I appreciate all contributions to class discussion. Often I ask students to explain the ideas they share or ask them to push those ideas further. In those cases I am hoping that

students can share the thinking behind their ideas or extend their thinking, since in your writing for this course you will need to do just that. I know that this is a challenge to do on the spot; at any time during a discussion, feel free to pass or take some time to reflect. By questioning or pushing students in class discussion, I am not rejecting their ideas. Likewise, students are entitled to question my ideas or ask for further explanations during class discussions, and I will try my best to justify my methods and point of view.

Respect for diversity of all kinds is vital to creating a safe, inclusive, and stimulating intellectual environment. In discussion and when writing, treat others with respect despite our differences—in race, religion or belief system, age, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, class, ability and disability, political beliefs, national or cultural identity, and so on. It is possible that class discussion, class readings, or students' research may take up topics that some may find objectionable or uncomfortable to explore because they accentuate the differences just named. However, I maintain that, by building a critical awareness of our identities and group affiliations, such topics may be examined without making anyone feel threatened, excluded, or persecuted, which will be our goal.

Your learning here at VCU is not limited to what goes on in your classrooms; in fact, part of a full and rich college experience is tapping into as many different kinds of learning as possible. Learning happens as a result of being exposed to different ideas and different experiences, both in the classroom and beyond, in the larger University community. It often takes other people's perspectives and opinions to spark in us new and deeper ways of seeing something. Think, for example, when you listen to other people in class or in general conversation, how many times you have said to yourself, "Gee. I never thought of it that way before." Thus, we learn and think through social exchange. Be a social learner while you are here. There are a number of social learning communities that should be of particular interest to you.

Campus Learning Center • Hibbs Hall, 1st Floor • 827-8108

The Campus Learning Center offers a variety of community learning opportunities to support your work in most 100 and 200 level courses. You can receive one-on-one or group based learning support at no charge. Study skills assistance is also available. Check out the CLC website for complete information.

VCU Libraries • Cabell Library Research & Instructional Services

VCU Libraries are one of the largest research libraries in Virginia – with nearly two million volumes; almost 24,000 journal and other serial titles; more than 3.18 million microforms; film, video, sound, comic, manuscript and book art collections; and the largest health sciences library in Virginia. James Branch Cabell Library is the university's center for study and research in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences.

Consult the Focused Inquiry Guides, curated by Cabell Library Research & Instructional Services.

Academic Advising • Hibbs Hall, 1st Floor • 827-8648

The Division of Strategic Enrollment Management provides academic advising for all first-year students and for those who are not yet admitted into a professional school or academic program. Your advisor can help you find your way around the university, especially in helping you understand academic requirements and policies, choosing an appropriate program of study, and identifying educational and career goals.

The Writing Center • Academic Learning Commons, 4th Floor, Room 4203 • 828-4851

The Writing Center offers support for currently enrolled VCU students and faculty. Services for students include one-on-one consultations and workshops on a wide variety of topics associated with academic writing, reading,

and critical thinking. As you work on your writing assignments, you will benefit the most if you plan multiple visits to the Writing Center – for brainstorming and planning, for developing and organizing, and then for revising.

Students are now able to schedule appointments online. They can do this via UCMe, or they can also click "Advising Appointments" in the my.vcu.edu portal.

English Language Resources @ the Writing Center • Academic Learning Commons, 4th Floor, Room 4203 • 828-4851

English Language Resources @ the Writing Center provides specialized support to English Language Learners at VCU. This service encourages success by helping students develop their vocabulary and reading comprehension, fluency in composition, oral communication, and understanding of American academic rhetorical expectations. Stop by the Writing Center or call to ask for an ELR consultation!

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Campus emergency information

What to know and do to be prepared for emergencies at VCU:

- Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts. Keep your information up-to-date. Within the classroom, the professor will keep his or her phone on to receive any emergency transmissions.
- Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
- Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities. Within the classroom, follow your professor's instructions.
- Know where to go for additional emergency information.
- Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234).
- Report suspicious activities and objects.
- Keep your permanent address and emergency contact information current in eServices.

Class registration required for attendance

Students may attend only those classes for which they have registered. Faculty may not add students to class rosters or Blackboard. Therefore, if students are attending a class for which they have not registered, they must stop attending.

Honor System: Upholding academic integrity

The VCU Honor System policy describes the responsibilities of students, faculty and administration in upholding academic integrity, while at the same time respecting the rights of individuals to the due process offered by administrative hearings and appeals. According to this policy, "Members of the academic community are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity." In addition, "All members of the VCU community are presumed to have an understanding of the VCU Honor System and are required to:

- Agree to be bound by the Honor System policy and its procedures;
- Report suspicion or knowledge of possible violations of the Honor System;
- Support an environment that reflects a commitment to academic integrity;
- Answer truthfully when called upon to do so regarding Honor System cases;
- Maintain confidentiality regarding specific information in Honor System cases."

In this class, because coursework will be at times collaborative, particular issues of integrity arise. You should not copy or print another student's work without permission. Any material (this includes ideas and language) from another source must be credited, whether that material is quoted directly, summarized, or paraphrased. In other words, you should respect the work of others and in no way present it as your own.

Handing in the same work for credit in multiple classes is an honor offense. This includes papers you wrote in other classes or for a class you are currently repeating as well as papers written for high school classes or for college admissions.

Students who believe they may have committed acts of academic misconduct may report themselves in writing to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity. An individual reporting his or her own Honor System violation will be considered both the Reporting Party and Respondent.

For more details please see [VCU's Interim Honor Policy](#).

Important dates

You can view important dates for the semester in the [academic calendar](#).

Mandatory responsibility of faculty members to report incidents of sexual misconduct

It is important for students to know that all faculty members are mandated reporters of any incidents of sexual misconduct/violence (e.g., sexual assault, sexual exploitation and partner or relationship violence). This means that faculty cannot keep information about sexual misconduct/violence confidential if you share that information with them and they must report this information immediately to the university's Title IX Coordinator. In addition, department chairs, deans, and other unit administrators are required to report incidents of sex or gender-based discrimination to the university's Title IX Coordinator.

Confidential reporting sources include staff in Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence at the Wellness Resource Center, University Counseling Services and University Student Health Services. The Policy on Sexual Miscondcut/Violence and Sex/Gender Discrimination - Interim, can be found in the [VCU Policy Library](#).

Military short-term training or deployment

If military students receive orders for short-term training or for deployment/mobilization, they should inform and present their orders to Military Student Services and to their professor(s). For further information on policies and procedures contact Military Student Services at 828-5993 or access the corresponding policies.

Student conduct in the classroom

According to the [Faculty Guide to Student Conduct in Instructional Settings](#), "The university is a community of learners. Students, as well as faculty, have a responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment that supports effective instruction. In order for faculty members (including graduate teaching assistants) to provide and students to receive effective instruction in classrooms, laboratories, studios, online courses, and other learning areas, the university expects students to conduct themselves in an orderly and cooperative manner." Among other things, cell phones should be turned off while in the classroom. The Student Code of Conduct also prohibits the possession of or carrying of any weapon. For more information see http://register.dls.virginia.gov/details.aspx?id=3436.

Student email policy

Email is considered an official method for communication at VCU because it delivers information in a convenient, timely, cost-effective, and environmentally aware manner. Students are expected to check their official VCU email on a frequent and consistent basis in order to remain informed of university-related communications. The university recommends checking email daily. Students are responsible for the consequences of not reading, in a timely fashion, university-related communications sent to their official VCU student email account. This policy ensures that all students have access to this important form of communication. It ensures students can be reached through a standardized channel by faculty and other staff of the university as needed. Mail sent to the VCU email address may include notification of university-related actions, including disciplinary action. Please read [the policy in its entirety](#) at the [VCU Policy Library](#) under the Education and Student Life tab.

Student financial responsibility

Students assume the responsibility of full payment of tuition and fees generated from their registration and all charges for housing and dining services, and other applicable miscellaneous charges. Students are ultimately responsible for any unpaid balance on their account as a result of the University Financial Aid Office or their

third party sponsor canceling or reducing their award(s).

Students representing the university – excused absences

Students who represent the university (athletes and others) do not choose their schedules. Student athletes are required to attend games and/or meets. All student athletes should provide their schedules to their instructors at the beginning of the semester. The Intercollegiate Athletic Council strongly encourages faculty to treat missed classes or exams (because of a scheduling conflict) as excused absences and urges faculty to work with the students to make up the work or exam.

Students with disabilities

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, require that VCU provide "academic adjustments" or "reasonable accommodations" to any student who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. To receive accommodations, students must register with the Disability Support Services Office on the Monroe Park Campus (828-2253) or the Division for Academic Success on the MCV campus (828-9782). Please also visit the Disability Support Services website and/or the Division for Academic Success website for additional information.

Once students have completed the DSS registration process, they should schedule a meeting with their instructor (s) and provide their instructor (s) with an official DSS accommodation letter. Accommodation letters will outline the required classroom accommodations. Additionally, if coursework requires the student to work in a lab environment, the student should advise the instructor or a department chairperson of any concerns that the student may have regarding safety issues related to a disability. Students should follow this procedure for all courses in the academic semester.

VCU Mobile

The VCU Mobile application is a valuable tool to get the latest VCU information on the go. The application contains helpful information including the VCU directory, events, course schedules, campus maps, athletics and general VCU news, emergency information, library resources, Blackboard and more. To download the application on your smart phone or for more information, please visit http://m.vcu.edu.

Withdrawal from classes

Before withdrawing from classes, students should consult their instructor as well as other appropriate university offices. Withdrawing from classes may negatively impact a student's financial aid award and his or her semester charges. To discuss financial aid and the student bill, visit the Student Services Center at 1015 Floyd Avenue (Harris Hall) and/or contact your financial aid counselor regarding the impact on your financial aid.