

Liberal Arts in Prison Program Information for Designing and Teaching a Course

The following is an introductory guide for Grinnell Students thinking about designing and teaching a course either at Newton Correctional Facility (NCF), the Correctional Release Center (CRC), or at the Iowa Correctional Institute for Women (ICIW).

When looking over this document, please bear in mind that the time and effort you invest in your course will be the most important determinant of its success. The information provided here is meant to spark creativity, not substitute for it. Once the course is approved, it becomes your own arena.

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Possible Course Topics:

This list is not exhaustive. Be creative. Send us an e-mail if you aren't sure whether your course will work in the prison, or if you'd like to run your ideas by us.

NCF or CRC:

- Creative arts courses: can cover a variety of topics including dance, playwriting, acting, creative writing, art, poetry, fiction, etc.
- Other liberal arts courses (reading, writing, history, social studies; discussion courses from almost any discipline; math, public speaking, etc)
- *General interest courses* like conflict resolution, meditation, etc.

ICIW:

- ICIW will only accept applications courses on the following topics: gender and women's studies, piano, stress management and conflict resolution, or quilting/

Example Syllabus/Course Outline

The Graphic Novel
Fall 2011

Course Description:

The purpose of this class is to give students an introduction to the genre of graphic novels through reading and discussion of key works in this relatively new medium. The ability to understand, discuss and write about what we read is a critical skill for anyone aspiring to pursue employment or college classes as well as those of us who seek to enjoy lifelong learning. We will discuss graphic novels from a variety of time periods, geographical locations, and styles in order to convey the richness and complexity of the genre. With this framework for the course in place, students will be introduced to the basics of composition and scholarly writing and learn how to construct their own literary arguments. We will begin by exploring the particularities of graphic novels and defining critical ideas such as the thesis, claims, evidence, and analysis before culminating the semester in a full-length writing assignment that integrates all of these principles.

Course Goals: It is our hope that by the end of this class, students will be able to:

- Gain a basic knowledge of literary devices and their functions.
- Read and interpret a wide variety of graphic novels with confidence.
- Improve their skills in critical thinking, writing and discussion.
- Become better prepared for college-level academic work.
- Enhance their enjoyment of the graphic novel as a genre and literature in general.

Assignments:

Each week, students are responsible for reading the assigned material and preparing the related writing homework. These writing exercises are intended to help students prepare for discussion and receive help with their writing skills. With the exception of the final paper (which must be typed), homework may be typed or handwritten, but must be reviewed by Ms. Mimi Leonard before they can be submitted. You must turn in homework on days when Ms. Leonard is present. Homework will be returned with comments the following week. Please always refer to the attached course schedule to remind yourself when assignments are due.

Students in this class will receive no formal letter grades or scores on their written work or class participation. Since this class is voluntary, we think that feedback works better than grades. We will provide written comments for responses as well as general comments on each student's discussion skills and written work at throughout the course.

Expectations:

By enrolling in this class, you are agreeing to take all assigned work seriously and to respect your peers and instructors. Our expectation is that students will be prepared for class by completing assigned work and will participate fully in each class session. We are also more than willing to answer questions, offer extra help, and adapt the class to each student's needs. Please let us know how we can help you to be most successful!

Week One 9/22: Introduction to the Class

- Introductions
- Read over the syllabus
- Discuss class outline and expectations

- Fundamentals of writing and basics of MLA citation
- HOMEWORK: Read: Excerpts from Scott McCloud's Understanding Comics
Write: Tell us what you would like to learn and why you are taking this class

Week Two 9/29: Graphic Novels

- Discussion of Understanding Comics
- What are graphic novels?
- HOMEWORK: Read: the first half of Maus I
Write: a response to first half of Maus I, what questions do you have? Do you agree that comics can be understood as a literary or artistic genre?

Week Three 10/6: Argument

- Discussion of the first half of Maus I
- What is a literary argument? Formulating claims
- HOMEWORK: Read: Finish Maus I
Write: Come up with two or more claims about Maus I

Week Four 10/13: Evidence

- Discussion of Maus I
- How to select and use evidence
- HOMEWORK: Read: first half of Maus II
Write: Come up with a claim and find related evidence

10/20: NO CLASS -- FALL BREAK

Week Five 10/27: Analysis

- Discussion of Maus II
- What is analysis? How do we connect claims and evidence?
- HOMEWORK: Read: Finish Maus II
Write: List a claim and one piece of related evidence. Also write a few sentences about how the evidence you chose supports your claim.

Week Six 11/3: Synthesizing Claims, Evidence, and Analysis

- Discussion of Maus II
- Moving from a list to a paragraph. Transitions, signposting, structure
- HOMEWORK: Read: First half of Persepolis
Write: Come up with a claim, evidence, and analysis properly formatted into a paragraph.

Week Seven 11/10: Thesis

- Discussion of the first half of Persepolis
- Creating multiple paragraphs. Related claims and writing a thesis
- HOMEWORK: Read: Finish Persepolis
Write: Come up with two or more full paragraphs, each containing a claim, evidence, and analysis. Write a thesis statement that connects your paragraphs together.

Week Eight 11/17: Introductions and Conclusions

- Discussion of Persepolis
- Bringing it all together. Introductions and Conclusions
- HOMEWORK: Read: First half of Swamp Thing
 - Write: An introduction (including a thesis) and conclusion about Swamp Thing

11/24: NO CLASS -- Thanksgiving Break

Week Nine 12/1: Writing a full essay

- Discuss first half of Swamp Thing
- What challenges do we face writing a longer work? Structuring a longer piece of writing
- Homework: Read: Finish Swamp Thing
 - Write: Complete your final writing assignment: Include three or more full paragraphs, an introduction, and a conclusion

Week Ten 12/8: Final Class!

- Discuss Swamp Thing
- Collect Final Papers
 - Discuss: How did they go?
- Course Evaluations

Example Lesson Plan

Note: This class was taught for credit as an independent study.

Evolutionary Ethics

Lesson Plan 11/9, Day 1

Objective: Students will be able to have a basic understanding of evolution, and the conceptual relationship between evolution and human cooperative behavior.

- Do Now: Eric: Begin with the question: “what, if anything, makes human beings special?” (three minute journals and share)
 - Eric: Point out the answer of our social behavior as the point of this course, and state our guiding question: *What is the relationship between our evolutionary past and human cooperative behavior?*
 (5 minutes)
- Ashur, Eric: Transition to an outline of our course. Hand out syllabus. (10 minutes)
- Ashur: Transition to an understanding of evolution:
 - “where did earth’s organisms come from? Why are there so many different kinds? How did humans come to be so apparently well designed?”

- Ashur: Begin with a biological definition of evolution: The preservation of random genetic *mutations* over time that, in particular environments, are advantageous to the survival of an organism's genes. (Eric writes this definition on board.)
 - Ashur: In order to understand what this definition means, we are going to use and analyze the real life example of *finches* from the Galapagos Islands.
- Breakdown of this definition; students following along in reading, pg 80:
 - Eric: What does it mean to talk about a "random genetic mutation?" How does mutation happen (briefly)? How often does mutation happen?
 - Ashur: In the example of the finches, what are the genetic mutations mentioned? (write in journal)
 - Eric: A small number of these mutations are helpful. In other words, some of these mutations help an animal to survive, to reproduce, or to allow similar organisms to survive.
 - Ashur: Again, in the example of the finches: what is the mutation that helped an organism to survive? -- Differences in beak size of finches (81)
 - Eric: Some of these helpful mutations are passed down to an animal's offspring. Thus these mutations are said to be "preserved."
 - Ashur: This is what is popularly referred to as an "evolutionary adaptation." In the case of the finches, what are the evolutionary adaptations?

(20 minutes)

Check in. 1-5, fingers.

Other important notes to be made about evolution from the example of the finches:

- A: The environment is what makes an adaptation helpful.
 - A: In a different environment, the same once-adaptive trait can become maladaptive, even to the point of extinction. (pair/share: how is this demonstrated in the example of the finches?)
 - E: The end goal of evolution is survival, not a "better" organism. (Is a big beaked finch a "better" or "more advanced" bird? Why or why not?)
- Darwinian evolution
 - A: Driven by natural selection, the classic idea of the "survival of the fittest."
 - There is competition between organisms competing for the same resource.
 - E: Definition of the word "fit" as *not* bigger, faster, stronger. What does *fit* mean in our example of the finches? (journal)
 - E: Sexual selection as another example of what is "fit"

(20 minutes)

Check in with students.

What is meant by “cooperative behavior”?

- E: Our overall question focuses on the relationship between two elements: our evolutionary past and human cooperative behavior.
 - Referring to behavior that is supportive of communal living.
- E: Ask the question: what are examples of cooperative behavior? What might be a simple evolutionary explanation of cooperative behavior? Journal, share

Exit slip? K-W-L chart? (5 minutes)

Credit for Teaching

It may be possible for you to teach in the prison as part of a project for academic credit by using the college’s existing structures for individual study. *If you decide to pursue credit for prison teaching, you must get approval from the professor you work with, and the dean’s office. The prison program does grant approval for individual study.*

Partial List of Grinnell students who have taught for credit in prison:

Natalie Eisenberg and Prof. Todd Armstrong, *The Brothers Karamazov*
 Eric Ritter, Ashur Bratt, and Prof. Jackie Brown, *Evolutionary Ethics*
 Sam Bowhay and Prof. Jean Ketter, *How Do We Educate Children in America?*
 Caitlin Deutsch, Helen Lewandowski, and Leslie Wright, *Identity in Contemporary American Art*
 Liting Cong, Jake Mcveigh, and Prof. Erickson *Sociology of Work* (Plus 2)
 Katie Jares and Prof. Tyler Roberts, *World Religions* (Plus 2)
 Scott Hoag, Clara Montague, Practicum for the course “Teaching Writing”

Here are the guidelines for Plus-2, according to the college catalog:

“Plus-2”

Note: Courses are eligible for “Plus-2” are shown with a + after the number of credits in the course catalog.

A course-related independent study option referred to as the "Plus-2" permits a student to choose an independent study component that adds two credits to a regular course. With the approval of the instructor, this option is available in some courses above the introductory (100) level. The Plus-2 provides opportunities for more extensive work in some aspect of a course, for more extensive exploration of general literature of a course, for additional studio or laboratory activity, or for other corollary work.

Looking ahead, you may want to teach in prison as part of a project for independent study.

(Applications are due the semester before you complete an independent study.) Below is the description of and requirements for independent study from the college catalog:

397 Independent Study 2 or 4 credits

Independent Study is intended for select students who are competent to participate in a program of study under faculty supervision. Independent Study culminates in at least one product (a paper, laboratory report, work of art, etc.). A student is expected to meet at least once a week with the faculty director. Prerequisite: second-year standing; proposals must be approved by the faculty director, the academic adviser, and the dean of the College.

An application for Independent Study (397) or Directed Research (299 or 399) requires a thesis statement or equivalent, an outline of the project, and a bibliography. After consultation with the potential faculty director, a student submits an application first to his/her academic adviser for approval, and then to the proposed faculty director, who will decide whether or not to accept the application. The registration process is completed when the application is accepted by the faculty director and is approved by the dean of the College.

Booklist

Below is an inventory of the books currently owned by the Liberal Arts in Prison Program. Please survey this list in order to use books the program already owns.

Title	Quantity Available
A People's History of the US	11
A poetry Handbook	1
Changes in the Land	10
Curious Incidents of the dog in the night-time	10
Down to Earth	10
English Fundamentals	12
Facing East from Indian Country	11
Fire from the Mountain	6
Flight to Canada	10
From Kaaramzin to Bunin	1
Gilead	12
Going to the Source	3
Going to the Source vol 2	1
Greek Tragedies	9
Home	3
Housekeeping	1
Illiad	8
Intro to Poetry	14
Jazz	5
Lies my Teacher Told Me	11
Maus I	1

Maus II	1
Of Mice and Men	2
Othello	6
Out of Many	26
Persepolis	11
Poems, Poets, Poetry	9
Possum Trot	3
Rivers of Empire	9
Romeo and Juliet	1
Swampthing	14
The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin	17
The Brothers Karamazov	2
The Bulldozer in the Countryside	7
The communist Manifesto	6
The Companion to Latin American Studies	1
The Devil's Highway	1
The Economic Naturalist	1
The Elements of Style	1
The Last days of Socrates	8
The Little English Handbook	1
The Life of Olaudah Equiano	10
The Merchant of Venice	9
The Misanthrope and Tartuffe	1
The Nazi Seizure of Power	11
The Odyssey	7
The Peloponnesian War	3
The Rest is Noise	4
The Symposium	8
The Tao of Pooh	15
They Say I Say	1
Tinkers	5
To Kill a Mockingbird	6
Understanding Comics	1
Waiting for Godot	11
Western Civilization	25
What to Listen for in Music	8
Wuthering Heights	19