

ENGLISH HONORS COLLOQUIUM

English 409-01, AY 2015–16, roughly every other Wednesday evening (dates listed below),
6–8 p.m. in Fenwick 208

EHP Director: Christine Coch
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Office hours: T 2–3, W 1–2:15, Th 11–11:45, & by appointment, in Fenwick 224

Goals:

This colloquium primarily supports English Honors Program students who are writing critical or research-based honors theses during their senior year. It also welcomes the participation of EHP students writing other types of theses and College Honors students writing on literary topics. The colloquium meets in addition to each student's individual meetings with his or her thesis advisor and does not replace other courses required of English Honors students (i.e., a metacritical course in literary theory and a seminar).

The colloquium assists members in adapting and developing the skills they will use to research, write, and revise a 60–100-page manuscript and to present their work orally to a broader audience. In addition, it aims to alleviate the isolation of the thesis-writing process by offering both formal and informal opportunities for peer support and editing.

Although the colloquium asks you to complete specific assignments, the content of the assignments will always be related to your own thesis topic. The goal is for your work in the colloquium to facilitate and enhance the process of developing a thesis that you will be undertaking on an individual basis with an English faculty advisor. Throughout the year we will also be honing oral presentation skills, culminating first in December at a Midwinter Celebration, at which students present their work to an audience of their peers and English Department faculty, and eventually at the Academic Conference in April.

Texts:

- Joan Bolker, *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day* (Owl Books)
- William M. Doll, *Speak: How to Talk to Classmates and Others, A Primer on Oral Presentation* (Oxford UP)
- Recommended: *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th edition*

Expectations:

The colloquium thrives on regular attendance, spirited engagement, and frank talk. Thesis writers who are not regular members of the colloquium but wish to participate in particular meetings are asked to notify Pr. Coch well in advance to facilitate integration.

By the end of the fall semester, regular members will have worked with their individual thesis advisors, Pr. Coch, and peer reviewers to produce and present two formal pieces of written work: a thesis prospectus and a polished draft of a thesis chapter. Feedback provided during spring semester contributes to completion of additional chapters, front- and end-matter, and a 15-minute oral presentation of the project at the Academic Conference.

Evaluation:

English Honors students receive a grade of “IP” (in progress) at the end of the fall semester for the thesis and a P/NP grade for the colloquium; each student’s primary advisor assigns a cumulative, two-semester grade for the thesis upon its completion in May. While students are not directly evaluated for their work in the colloquium, my ongoing communications with advisors about that work factor into the advisor’s final evaluation.

Fall Schedule:

Wed. 9/9: Introductions of all sorts: to each other, to the projects, and to the thesis-writing process

The analytical components of a thesis

- ☛ Close reading: old techniques, new applications
- ☛ Research questions: problems as opportunities
- ☛ Argumentation: persuading a reader to share your perspective for 60–100 pages, engaging with other critics’ thinking

Due: Re-acquaintance essay, 2–3 pp: “Why this Topic?” a.k.a. “What was I Thinking?” Please email your essay to Pr. Coch by Tues. 9/8 and bring a hard copy with you to the first meeting of the colloquium.

Wed. 9/23: Choosing and working with critical sources

Class meets in the Scalia Electronic Classroom in Dinand Library with Research Librarian Alicia Hansen

- ☛ Review of how to use MLA bibliography, electronic databases, interlibrary loan, etc.
- ☛ New reference resources
- ☛ Good old-fashioned ways to find sources (footnotes, index, browsing, etc.)
- ☛ Strategies for assessing critical sources
- ☛ Identifying and defining your own key words

In-class work on individual topics: What are the best key words for *you* to use in searching? What are the best resources for *your* project?

- Due:**
1. Thesis review, 1–2 pp: go to the shelves in the English Common Room and find a former EHP thesis you like. Read it and write a concise review. What is the thesis trying to do? How is it organized and does that work well? What seem to be its strengths and weaknesses for you as a reader? What can you learn from it for your own thesis?
 2. Read Bolker on “Choosing a Thesis Topic,” *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day* pp. 9-14

**Wed 10/7: Writing strategies: when to write, where to write, knowing yourself, tricks
Writing your prospectus: purpose and format**

- Due:**
1. Detailed outlines or diagrams of two different, possible ways of organizing your thesis (Venn diagrams, clustering, stacks of index cards, or any other formats that work for you are welcome. Be adventurous!)
 2. Read Bolker on “Getting Started Writing,” *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day* pp 32–48. Identify two new writing strategies to try this week.

Wed 10/21: Presentation and peer review of prospectus

- ☛ Problems and stakes
- ☛ Oral vs. written exposition

- Due:**
1. Prospectus, 5 pp
 2. Read Doll on “The Three Rules of Public Speaking,” *Speak* pp. 2–6
 3. Prepare 5-minute oral presentation of your prospectus

**Wed 11/4: Faculty presentations on creative processes, critical approaches,
and research methods**

- ☛ inspirations and passions
- ☛ ways and means
- ☛ broader contexts for literary analysis – theoretical, historical, philosophical, and formal

- Due:**
1. Read texts provided by faculty presenters – usually either an article of their own or an essay that has been important to them at some point in their research/writing career (Moodle)
 2. Work on writing thesis chapter. Full draft to be ready for peer review 11/18.

Wed 11/18: Peer review of chapter draft

- Due:** 1. Read Bolker on “Interruptions from Outside and Inside,” *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day* pp 80–98.
2. Complete draft of first chapter

Wed 12/2: Presentation Clinic: oral presentation of chapter-in-progress

- ☛ strategies for presentation format & content
- ☛ situating the chapter within the larger project
- ☛ feedback from listeners: what’s working? what’s not?

- Due:** 1. Read Doll on “Writing the Talk” and “Presenting the Talk,” *Speak* pp. 7–27
2. Prepare a 7-minute oral presentation of your chapter

Wed 12/9: Midwinter Celebration (time & location TBD): presentations of work-in-progress to the broader English Department faculty and invited guests

- Due:** Prepare your 10-minute oral presentation. Remember to practice out loud and to time yourself!

Tentative Spring Schedule: meeting dates are set, although topics and assignments may shift in response to interests and needs of colloquium members

Wed 2/3: Faculty presentations on approaches to revising and the evolution of a multi-part manuscript

- Due:** 1. Read any texts provided by faculty presenters (Moodle)
2. Work on writing second chapter. Full draft due to be ready for peer review 2/17.

Wed 2/17: Peer review of second chapter draft

- Due:** Complete draft of second chapter

Wed 3/2: Strategies for revision

- Due:** 1. Read Bolker on “Revising: The Second Draft and Beyond,” *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day* pp 116–126.
2. Reassessment essay, 2 pp: What has your thesis ended up trying to do?

What questions have you answered, and what questions have you not yet answered? Step back and assess where your project is now. (Some of the thinking and writing you do for this exercise will likely make its way into your project's introduction.)

3. Please bring two MLA-formatted copies of the introduction to one of your chapters to our meeting for an editing exercise.

Wed 3/16: Presentation Clinic: the close reading

- ☛ strategies for leading listeners through a literary example
- ☛ PowerPoint vs. handouts

- Due:**
1. Continue drafting third chapter and/or introduction. Full draft due to your peer reviewer 3/28.
 2. Prepare a 5-minute oral presentation of a close reading you could use in your Academic Conference presentation

Wed 3/30: Peer review of third piece of thesis

Due: Complete draft of third chapter and/or introduction.

Wed 4/13: Presentation Clinic: structuring your 15 minutes, approaching the Q&A

- ☛ strategies for effectively asking and answering questions
- ☛ round-robin practice question & answer sessions

- Due:**
1. Re-read *Speak*
 2. Prepare a preliminary version of your 15-minute Academic Conference presentation

Wed 4/27: Presentation Rehearsal: 15-minute Academic Conference Presentations and Q&A sessions

Again, remember to practice out loud and to time yourself as you prepare.

Fri 4/29: English Honors presentations at the Academic Conference

Mon 5/9: Bound thesis due. Turn in one copy to your advisor and one to the EHP Director. Celebrate!

5/9 – 5/18: Schedule a 30-minute **culminating conversation** with your advisor and second reader to discuss both the final work you produced and the process of writing the thesis this year.