SCHOOL OF ARTS

2015

ART503
HONOURS SEMINAR IN ARTS

UNIT INFORMATION

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Preamble

ART503 is a 3-point seminar-based unit suitable for students undertaking the following Honours degrees:

- Asian Studies
- Australian Indigenous Studies
- Communication & Media Studies
- Community Development
- English & Creative Writing
- Games Art & Design
- Graphic Design
- History
- Journalism
- Philosophy
- Photography
- Public Relations
- Radio
- Religion
- Screen Production
- Sociology
- Sound
- Theatre & Drama
- Tourism & Events
- Web Communication

Students in other Honours programs may enrol in the unit on advice from their supervisors.

Aims

The aim of the seminar is to help Honours students attain a degree of cohesion and the sense of a research culture, with students working together towards a similar end, despite differences of research interest. In past years, students have also arranged their own reading groups where the work of, for example, particular critical theorists has been discussed. Again, how and whether this occurs will depend on the degree of overlap in research areas and the level of interest within the group.

Structure

The seminar is split into two parts:

Part A: The transition to Honours (4 weeks).
In this part of the unit we discuss the move from undergraduate essay writing to doing a research degree. The topics covered are: the degree structure, supervision, timetables and deadlines, doing research, use of the library and relevant technologies, the nature of the dissertation, assessment
and grading — as well as any other matters which students wish to raise. A brief outline of Part A is provided below.

**Part B:** Seminar discussions (8 weeks).
This part of the seminar is an opportunity to discuss your research topic with your peers and gain their insights and feedback. It can assist you to develop your research focus, approach and method, and thesis argument.

By the **end of week 3**, each student will be expected to have selected an article, chapter or other related piece of writing, sourced from a book or research journal, and which they see as being central to their field of study. This can be a theoretical article, a piece of empirical research or a summary of a particular field within your discipline of study.

When the articles are collected, students will form an editorial collective to produce the *Honours Seminar Reader*.

It is very important that this article should include, on its first page, a full bibliographical reference. This is so that it can be re-cited by other readers; and also because Murdoch Print is required to record this data for multiple copies. Articles submitted without full bibliographical details will not be included in the *Reader* and students will have to circulate these by their own efforts.

Each week the whole group will read one or more of these readings in preparation for a group discussion led by the student who submitted the paper. This student will normally introduce the reading to the whole group, providing the context for its selection in relation to their Honours project. Following the discussion, the paper giver will write up the seminar and submit it for assessment. The nature of this writing will be discussed in the first week and confirmed for the whole class – the options are preparing a formal written paper, in the technical form (and up to the technical standards) of a dissertation chapter, or preparing a draft level, work-in-progress piece which begins to develop the thesis argument, “spinning off” from the chosen article.

**Assessment requirements**

- Submission of an important article/chapter with full bibliographic details, to serve as a basic reading for the seminar. Due week 3; and participation as a member of the editorial collective for the *Honours Seminar Reader*.
- Active participation in seminar discussions. There is a strongly implied need for regular attendance and significant preparation for each session. Failure to participate in 3 of the 12 Honours seminar sessions will result in additional work and risks a Fail for the seminar.
- Seminar presentation and leading discussion on own article.
- Written paper (approx. 1,500-2,000 words). Due by the Friday of Week 15 (assessment period).

**Note:** The seminar is assessed on an ungraded pass basis. Students who pass the unit will receive the grade of UP (ungraded pass). The effect of this is that the seminar grade is “neutral” with respect to calculating the final overall grade for Honours. It
also means that the Honours degree cannot be completed unless the seminar is passed.
Seminar Part A

Outline of weeks 1-4

The first four weeks of the Seminar involve a “guided tour” of the transition to Honours. Honours study is very different and distinct from undergraduate coursework. It involves students taking much more initiative for their course of study and showing much more independence in both organisational and content matters. As a way of easing this transition, we use the first four weeks to set the basic foundations for a process of independent and self-initiated research which will lead to each student’s first piece of research production: the Honours dissertation.

- **Week 1: What is Honours?**
  - The nature of the Honours year — getting your head around the shift from undergraduate work.
  - What is research?
  - What are the basic formal requirements for Honours?
  - Planning the year’s study — assessment, deadlines and related matters.
  - How the coursework and dissertation fit together.
  - The focal point — your dissertation.
  - **Exercise** to be prepared for Week 2: Go to the Library and find an Honours dissertation that overlaps with your own area of research interest. Read it. Make notes. Be prepared to talk about what you have read.

**BY THE END OF WEEK ONE YOU MUST SUBMIT YOUR HONOURS PROGRAM OF STUDY FORM TO THE STUDENT CENTRE.**

- **Week 2: Dissertation genre(s)**
  - What kind of a text were you reading for last week’s exercise?
  - Can you do something like that — and, if not, what do you need in order to be able to do so in your dissertation semester(s)?
  - Is there a single genre called “the dissertation”?
  - What are the permitted or expected kinds of dissertation?
  - Of these kinds, which does yours most closely resemble?
  - **Exercise** to be prepared for Week 3: Go back to the Library and use it to search for a list of the 10 most important references in your field, excluding books. That is, you have to find journal articles and chapters in edited collections (or their equivalents for your field of research). Bring the list, using full bibliographical conventions, to the Seminar in Week 3. Be prepared to talk about what you found and how you found it.
Week 3: Using the facilities

- General information session on the facilities available to you — computing, money, etc.
- Discussion of last week’s exercise.
- Example-based and hands-on session on using the Library as a research tool — by Helen Gibson, who will walk you through the Library research facilities. (You may think you know how to use the Library, but this tour may surprise you.)
- Exercise to be prepared for Week 4: Don’t go to the Library. Arrange a session with your supervisor(s). Have a discussion with them about what they think is involved in supervision. Make a recording of the conversation (with permission, of course) or take notes. Be prepared to talk about the discussion and what you have learned from it.

BY THE END OF WEEK THREE YOU MUST SUBMIT YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE HONOURS READER FOR PART B OF THE SEMINAR.

Week 4: Supervisors and related important persons

- Discussion of last week’s exercise — what is supervision?
- A look at some different supervisory styles.
- What is the supervisor formally obliged to do? — and what are your responsibilities in return?
- The administrative structure — and how to avoid hassles with admin.
- Examiners. The process that your completed dissertation will go through — examination; how the marking is done; how you get a final grade.