

AMST 603  
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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:00 a.m.-Noon and by Appointment

Required book: Wayne Booth, *The Craft of Research*, available at Von's Books

### **January 12**

Introduction to the course and to the syllabus

The purpose of AMST 603 is to provide space within the AMST Ph.D. program of study for students to move from coursework to prelims to dissertation writing as efficiently as possible. It also is designed to guide students in a classroom setting toward learning how to “translate” research interests into course offerings and “reports” to publics beyond the academy. Thus, the course is organized to result in two assignments, a draft of the dissertation prospectus and a course syllabus (outline of lectures, readings, assignments, and learning outcomes) related in some way to the broad area of each student’s dissertation.

**Exercise:** *Individual presentations on research ideas.*

**Assignment:** Every student will be paired with another student. Your assignment is to interview your class mate in order to prepare a one-page statement about that student’s research and a brief bio-sketch. Use the models from next week’s exercise for the form of your report. At the same time, prepare a researcher’s statement and bio-sketch for yourself. Bring both documents to class for next week.

### **January 19**

**Reading:** Booth, “Research, Researchers, and Readers. Prologue: Starting a Research Project” and “Thinking in print: Uses of Research, Public and Private” and “Asking Questions, Finding Answers. Prologue: Planning Your Project.”

All of the material we will read for today’s class is designed to help you think about getting started. While many of you already have a clear idea of your dissertation project, others may need assistance in deciding on a focus

**Exercise:** *Come to class with a public announcement about proposed research or a report on research findings that has appeared in a newspaper, magazine, or university news outlet (hard copy or electronic). Each student will present his/her announcement and identify the key elements that make it of interest to a wider public. Who is served by the research? How are the findings or potential findings articulated? What makes this announcement similar to or different from the kind of research you imagine conducting. We will then turn to your reports on yourselves and on each other. Does your self-report match up with the report made by your classmate? If so, what is not the same and what accounts for the difference? Do you both agree on who will be served by your research?*

## January 26

**Reading:** Booth, “From Topics to Questions,” “From Questions to Problems,” and “From Problems to Sources.”

This cluster of chapters describes a process of “blocking out” a project—what are you trying to learn? How are you framing your project? What is the “problem” to be tackled? What kinds of sources do you need? In this course, students will NOT be writing the dissertation or any part of it, so you will not actually be writing from the sources you identify. But to make an effective prospectus for any large project, you must be able to show that you have located an appropriate archive for your work, and that you are (by the time your prospectus is complete) ready to discuss the location, the nature, and at least some of the contents of your archive.

**Exercise:** *Come to class with a description of your “Topic,” a key “Question” that frames your research, and how that question is or can be translated into a “Research Problem.” Also bring a sheet with the archive you imagine tapping. By using the term “archive,” I am asking for a range of original materials you plan to analyze, and each might be in a separate location—this is to distinguish “archive” from “archives,” which refers to a specific repository. In your list, you should indicate the location of each item of original material (i.e. if you plan to analyze a body of literature that is readily available, location is not necessary, although this will give you a chance to indicate which edition/publisher you will be using if the work(s) have appeared in multiple publications.*

*By no later than Wednesday night, please share your “archive” with members of the seminar. Part of your work in class will involve asking about sources on other students’ lists.*

## February 2

**NO CLASS TODAY.** Read the sections from Booth listed under next week’s class and use it to guide your first effort to articulate the main claim you plan to make, and the argument you intend to deploy in order to substantiate your claim. By Wednesday of next week, send your claim and argument paper to all members of the seminar.

## February 9

**Reading:** Booth, “Making a claim and Supporting It. Prologue: Pulling together your argument,” “Making Good Arguments: An Overview,” and “Claims”

**Exercise:** *In today’s class, you will present your research to the seminar. Your presentation should include:*

- 1) *Your main claim*
  - 2) *The basic argument you make to substantiate your claim*
  - 3) *The kinds of evidence you plan to use to support your argument*
- Bring a draft of the presentation—this will be the kernel of your prospectus.*

## February 16

### **In-class workshop**

At the end of the semester, each student will be making a presentation to the seminar as one element of the syllabus. I am asking that you make a PowerPoint presentation. In anticipation of this assignment, Professor Shannon McMullen will conduct a workshop on visual documentation and visual

evidence. She will provide a hand-out on visual communication, and will outline the expectations for final presentations.

**February 23**

**No Class**

**March 1**

**No Class**

**March 8**

**First draft of your research prospectus is due**

As of February 9, you will have identified 1) your research problem; 2) an archive; 3) your main claim; and 4) the argument you plan to make in order to support your claim. By today, you should have a 20-25-page draft of the prospectus. It should be organized around a statement of the problem, your thesis, a discussion of how your thesis differs from previous work, and an articulation of the main argument. Every draft should include at least a list of chapter titles, if not a brief discussion of how each chapter will contribute to the larger project. Circulate your draft to the seminar no later than Wednesday night.

***Exercise:** In-class workshop of prospecti. Be prepared to discuss your work and that of your classmates. We will use the seminar time to indicate where more work is needed*

**March 15—NO CLASS SPRING BREAK**

**March 22**

**No Class**

**March 29**

**Final Draft of the Prospectus is due.**

**Reading:** Booth, "Connecting with your Reader: (Re)Creating Your Self and Your Audience"

While Booth here is discussing the researcher's relationship with her/his audience in print, let's use his chapter as a way of thinking about how we connect with imagined students in organizing our research into syllabi. The last part of this course will focus on your developing a syllabus that is related to your research. In class we will discuss the process of developing a syllabus.

- 1) What do you want your students to learn—content and skills?
- 2) How much background will your students need?
- 3) What opportunities do you wish to provide your students to have the joy of discovery that you had?
- 4) How do you plan to assess your students' work?
- 5) What are the ways that course material can be organized—themes, chronology, exercises in discovery, etc.?

***Exercise:** The seminar will determine the requirements for the first syllabus assignment.*

**April 5**  
**No Class**

**April 12**  
**First Draft of Syllabus is due**

**April 19**  
**No Class**

**April 26**  
**Guinea Pig Day!**

Members of the seminar will try out either 1) a part of a lecture presentation or PowerPoint or 2) a learning exercise you plan to use in your class.

**May 2-6 = Finals Week (Due Date for Final Projects TBD)**

**Assignments:**

**Prospectus (40%)**

This is the centerpiece of the first half of the course. By March 8, you will be expected to have developed a solid draft of the prospectus and by March 29 a final draft that is nearly ready to defend. The draft will get comments from the instructor and from classmates, but it will not be graded. Only the final, revised draft from March 29 will be graded.

**Syllabus (40%)**

Every student must figure out how to translate his/her research for an audience other than readers of the dissertation. One way is to present research in a larger context such as a course on the field within which the dissertation subject is located. The syllabus in this case will be defined partly by the class, but it likely will include such elements as course readings and assignments, weekly outline of lectures and in-class exercises. This syllabus does *not* require a lengthy justification/rationale. The grade for the syllabus will include an evaluation of the sample presentation in class—both for content and for visual effectiveness.

**Participation (20%)**

The success of this course depends upon your active participation in discussions of your and your fellow students' work.

**Academic Honesty**

Citing the work of other scholars shows that you have done your homework, so to speak. Even if you do provide a citation, remember to enclose in quotation marks all passages composed by another writer and provide information about your source that will lead your readers directly to that passage; some readers like to see the quoted material in its larger context.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course—it is considered a form of academic dishonesty. All scholars depend on the work of others before them, and it is a sign of academic honesty that you

credit those on whom you have relied for information. Often plagiarism happens when a student inadvertently fails to enclose the words of others in quotation marks or paraphrases another author's ideas without giving him/her credit. When it happens purposefully, it means that you are taking someone else's work and passing it off as your own; such intellectual thievery is unacceptable. Penalties for intentional plagiarism may range from the failure of an assignment to failure of the class and notification of the dean.

If you have a question about how to use the work of others, when to quote, when to paraphrase, or how to cite previous scholarship, please consult one of the professors in the course.