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American Public University System

The Ultimate Advantage is an Educated Mind

**School of Arts and Humanities
ENGL322
Personal Essay
Credit Hours: 3
Length of Course: 8 Weeks
Prerequisite: ENGL120**

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Instructor Information

See your classroom for your instructor's contact information.

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Course Description (Catalog)

ENGL322: The Personal Essay (3 hours)

This course will focus on the expression of personal experiences. Students will read personal essays and study the various forms. They will also learn how to be a compelling first-person narrator and use voice, setting, structure, theme, and style to craft their own personal essays.

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Course Scope

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This course will examine the personal essay, its different forms, and the ways in which the writer explores a personal experience and relates it to the human condition or the world at large. Students will read personal essays, write their own, and collaborate with others in writers workshop to revise and improve their essays and writing skills.

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Course Objectives

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- CO 1. Apply interpretations of well-known personal essays to society and the universal human condition
- CO 2. Use literary elements to emphasize of the significance and meaning of a particular personal experience
- CO 3. Employ the craft of storytelling elements, such as theme, voice, setting, style, and structure
- CO 4. Produce personal essays
- CO 5. Appraise each other's work in writers' workshops

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Course Delivery Method

This course delivered via distance learning will enable students to complete academic work in a flexible manner, completely online. Course materials and access to an online learning management system will be made available to each student. Online assignments are due by Sunday evening of the week as noted and include Forum questions (accomplished in groups through a threaded forum), examination, and individual assignments submitted for review by the Faculty Member). Assigned faculty will support the students throughout this eight-week course.

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Course Resources

Required Course Texts

All readings, including the class text, are linked from inside the classroom.

You can download a fulltext copy of the course text from the library and open it using Adobe Digital Editions (the download link will appear the first time you launch the book). You can also access the full text of the book online in the library. If you choose the download, your access will "expire" after a certain period (you choose how long, but no more than 21 days), so you will need to re-download it at some point in the class.

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Hollars, B.J., Ed. *Blurring The Boundaries: Explorations to the Fringes of Nonfiction*. Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 2013. E-book. 7 Feb. 2016
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.ezproxy1.apus.edu/lib/apus/reader.action?docID=1110054>

You will need to login to the library with your student ID and password to access the text.

This class includes assigned reading/viewing materials from the online library and wider web (personal essays, films, and articles). These can be found in the Lessons area of our classroom for each week. All films have full transcripts, and reading the transcript will always substitute for viewing the film.

If you wish, you may acquire a copy of the following older text used in the class, but this is not mandatory:

Miller, Brenda, and Suzanne Paola. *Tell It Slant*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012.

Software Requirements

Microsoft Word. If you don't have MS Word, please save all files as a Rich Text Format (.rtf). All docs must use MS Word or RTF

Adobe Reader -- Go to <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html> to download the latest version. This download is free.

If you download the textbook, you will need Adobe Digital Editions, and the library will provide the link the first time you click "download" beside the text". This is not mandatory, and you may access the text in the library consistently.

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Evaluation Procedures

Students will complete nine (9) forums, three (3) essays, and one (1) final project in the course.

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Graded Items	Points	Weighted Percentage
9 forums	100 points each	25%
2 essays	100 points each	30%
1 blog entry	100 points	15%

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1 blog response assignment	100 points	5%
1 final project	100 points	25%
Final Course Grade		100

Forums, essays, and the final project will be graded according to rubrics. Below are the basic requirements, but please review rubrics in the Forums and Assignments tool for each week to know what your instructor will specifically look for and grade in your work.

Forums:

Seven of the nine forums will require an initial post of 250-words or more in response to the forum prompt. Do this by Thursday 11:55pm ET of the assigned week. Then, to be eligible for a C, complete two (2) reply posts of 100-words or more to others in class. These must be done by Sunday 11:55pm ET of the assigned week. (See the rubric for instructions to being eligible to earn higher grades). To be eligible for a B, complete a total of four posts (1 initial 250 word post + 3 100 word responses), and to be eligible to earn an A, complete a total of five posts (an initial 250 word post + 4 100 word responses). At least 2 responses should address your classmates in their initial posts, and the others can be to any post during the week.

The other two forums will be in a writers workshop format. **These forums will be open for a week and a half starting the Wednesday prior to a major essay deadline and ending the Friday before the essay is due.** You'll post a rough draft of your essay for others to worksho and give suggestions for revision and improvement. You'll in turn workshop the essays of two other students. In order to be eligible to earn an A on the writer's workshops, you will only need to make a total of three posts, a full draft of the essay (meeting the minimum length requirements for the final version), and 100 word responses to at least two classmates that follow the appropriate format.

Please note: Quality is an important consideration when it comes to participation in the Forums. A post that says simply, "I agree" or "good job," for example, does not constitute participation because it does not add anything of substance to the discussion. Substantial additions consist of providing new ideas, sharing your perspectives, asking questions, giving specific examples to support what you're saying, relating the discussion content to the assigned reading and to real life, politely disagreeing, and justifying your reasons. Merely posting a certain number of times, on specific days, using a predetermined number of words is *not* sufficient to guarantee a grade. You need to make complex, thoughtful contributions to the class.

Assignments:

Each of the two essays should be 750- to 1,000-words and use MLA formatting. The blog post should be no more than 500 words. One of the challenges of blog

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writing is achieving brevity. You want to catch and retain the attention of readers with short attention spans. The topic for any of the three may be chosen from the textbook's Writing Exercises, from the weekly writing prompts, or through consultation with your instructor.

The final project should be between 750 and 1500 words. Upload the essays as attached files to the Assignments tool. Preface each essay with a reflection letter to your instructor (either in the same file or a separate one). Post the blog in the class blog *and* submit it as an attachment in the assignments area. (The menu is under the "forums" menu.) Respond to at least two classmates in the class blog area *and* submit your responses as attachments in the assignments area. (Each response should be at least 100 words.)

Final Project (Towards Publication):

The final project is to develop some skill necessary for publication. Instructions can be found in the Final Project Assignment and week 7 and 8 lessons (when they become available). **The cover letters you will write for the Final Project do not count towards the required word length.**

About Feedback:

Always read your instructor's feedback each week and apply what you've learned to the next assignments. Make a concerted effort to improve your work and show steady progress from week to week. If your work remains at the same level throughout the class, your grades will suffer. An essay that can earn a "C" in week 2 is not likely to earn a "C" if it doesn't change significantly when used for the final project in week 8.

About the Readings:

Blurring the Boundaries doesn't pull any punches. It tackles creative nonfiction by showing a style, then it gives an essay discussing the underlying methodology and philosophy. Sometimes, an essay will end on a heartbreaking note, and it is only in the analysis after that you find out how everything turned out. Sometimes, you *won't* find out how things turn out. **Don't complete all the textbook's writing exercises!** You'll use some for your essays, and you should **read** them all, but you aren't expected to use every one!

A week 1 reading is labelled with a trigger warning, and it is optional. Academia should *not* be a sheltered paradise. Indeed, school should challenge student preconceptions. However, this is week one, and our class is about personal experience and its presentation. As adults, I trust you to make your own judgments.

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Course Outline

Please see the [Student Handbook](#) to reference the University's [grading scale](#).

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Learning Objectives</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
1	The Personal Essay and Basics of Writing	CO 1 CO 2 CO 3	<p>From <i>Blurring the Boundaries</i> p. 1-33, 247-248</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction (p. 1) • "The Structure of Trouble" (p. 7) • <i>On</i> "The Structure of Trouble" (p. 20) • <i>Writing Exercise</i> from "The Structure of Trouble" (p. 247) • "The Eighteenth Week" (p.24) OPTIONAL – Trigger warning – this piece is about an expectant mother's traumatic experience after a prenatal ultrasound. • <i>On</i> "The Eighteenth Week": On Point of View (p.30) • <i>Writing Exercise</i> from "The Eighteenth Week" (p. 248) <p>Outside essays and articles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Picturing the Personal Essay: A Visual Guide" by Tim Bascom • "The Personal Essay: A Form of Discovery" by Joesph Epstein. 	<p>Week 1A Forum: Introductions</p> <p>Week 1B Forum: Personal Essay Readings</p>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “E.B. White, the Art of the Essay No. 1” by George Plimpton • “Fourth State of Matter” by Jo Ann Beard • “Mickey Mantle Koan” by David James Duncan • “The Drama Bug” by David Sedaris Listen to it here: http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/23/drama-bug?act=1#play Transcript (scroll down to and read Act One): http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/23/transcript 	
2	Memory and Family	CO 2 CO 3 CO 4 CO 5	<p>From <i>Blurring the Boundaries</i>, Pages 34-59, 248-250</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Time and Distance Overcome” (p.34) • On “Time and Distance Overcome: The Rewards of Research (p. 42) • Writing Exercise from “Time and Distance Overcome” (p. 248) • “An Essay and a Story About Mötley Crüe” (p. 44) • On “An Essay and a Story About Mötley 	<p>Week 2 Forum: Film Discussion</p> <p>Assignment: Essay 1</p>

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			<p>Crüe: Knowing One's Audience and Making Your Dreams Come True" (p. 52)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Exercise From "An Essay and a Story About Mötley Crüe" (p. 249) • "Dazzle" (p. 54) • On "Dazzle: The Fluidity of Boundaries" (p. 57) • Writing Exercise From "Dazzle" (p. 250) <p>Additional Reading and Viewing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aristotle's "On Memory and Reminiscence." • How Your Working Memory Makes Sense of the World. – by Peter Doolittle (interactive transcript) • <i>10 Million Books: An Introduction to Farley Mowat</i> (access film and transcript via link in Lessons area for Week 2) • "Lost in the Barrens" by Farley Mowat (<i>The Walrus</i>) • Excerpt from The Gastronomical Me by M.F.K. Fisher • "Buckeye" by Scott Russell Sanders • "A Father, a Son and a Fighting Chance" by Dominick Zarrillo • "Mother Tongue" by Amy Tan (access the PDF reading via link 	
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			<p>in Lessons area for Week 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excerpt from Speak, Memory by Vladimir Nabakov (access the PDF reading via link in Lessons area for Week 2) • "The Night the Bed Fell" by James Thurber 	
3	Physical World and Spirituality	CO 1 CO 2 CO 3	<p>From <i>Blurring the Boundaries</i> 60-95, 250-51</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Thirty Minutes to the End" (p. 60) • "On Thirty Minutes to the End: Rethinking Genre" (p. 68) • Writing Exercise "Thirty Minutes to the End" (p. 250) • "Bait" (p. 72) • "On Bait: The Hybridity of Form" (p.76) • Writing Exercises on "Bait" (p. 250) • "Salvos Into the World of Hummers" (p. 79) • "On Salvos Into the World of Hummers: The Convergence of Subject and Style" (p. 94) • Writing Exercises "Salvos Into the World of Hummers" (p. 250) <p>Personal essays and articles:</p>	<p>Week 3 Forum: Challenges in Writing About Real Life</p> <p>Writer's Workshop – the essay two writer's workshop will open on Wednesday of week 3.</p>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Fresh Air Fail" by Martha Bayne. NB: Please note that Bayne's earlier essay is a charged account of a miscarriage. She links to that essay from "Fresh Air Fail", but only "Fresh Air Fail" is assigned. • Excerpt from Travels with Charley by John Steinbeck • "Shooting an Elephant" by George Orwell (access the PDF reading via link in Lessons area for Week 3) • "How To Tell a True War Story" by Tim O'Brien • "The Invisible Made Visible" by David Rakoff http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldqjM7x6NhE (watch author reading) http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/464/transcript (transcript - scroll down to "Act 3. Stiff as a Board, Light as a Feather") • "Death of the Moth" by Virginia Woolf • "NPR: What are the Limits of Literary License?" (listen to podcast or read transcript) 	
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4	<p>The Writing Process, Revision, and the Writers Workshop</p>	<p>CO 2 CO 3 CO 4 CO 5</p>	<p>From <i>Blurring the Boundaries</i>: pages 96-133, 251-252</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Flagpole Wedding, Coshocton, Ohio, 1946: An Essay on Process” (p. 97) • “On Flagpole Wedding, Coshocton, Ohio, 1946: An Essay on Process Transitioning From Notes to Novel” (p. 102) • Writing Exercise from “Flagpole Wedding” (p. 251) • “Whistling in the Dark” (p. 105) • “On Whistling in the Dark: When Telling Lies Reveals the Truth” (p. 117) • Writing Exercise from “Whistling in the Dark” (p. 251) • “Fragments for a Chronology of Possibility” (p. 120) • “On Fragments For a Chronology of Possibility. An Eight Fragment, Five Paragraph Essay.” (p. 132) • “Writing Exercise from Fragments for a Chronology of Possibility” (p. 252) <p>No essays outside of the lecture and textbook this week.</p>	<p>Week 4 Forum: Writers Workshop</p> <p>Assignment: Essay 2</p> <p>NB: This forum will be open starting on Wednesday of Week 3. Post 1 is due by Tuesday of week 4 and you must finish posting by Friday! Workshop feedback is worthless if it comes after the deadline for the actual essay.</p>
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5	The Arts and History	CO 1 CO 2 CO 3	<p>From <i>Blurring the Boundaries</i> 135-164, 253</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Headaches" (p. 135) • "On 'Headaches': Articulating the Inexplicable" (p. 145) • Writing Exercises From "Headaches" (p. 252) • "Asymmetry" (p. 148) • "On 'Asymmetry': The Typewriter Is Not a Typewriter" (p. 162) • Writing Exercises From "Asymmetry" (p. 253) <p>Additional essays and articles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of a Eur-asian" by Sui Sin Far • "Mister Lytle: An Essay" by John Jeremiah Sullivan • "A Short Essay on Being" by Jenny Bouilly • "A Letter to My Children" by Earl Hammer • "A Giant Step" by Henry Louis Gates • "She: Portrait of the Essay as a Warm Body" by Cynthia Ozick 	Week 5 Forum: Use of Storytelling Elements
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6	Lyric and Media	CO 2 CO 3 CO 4 CO 5	<p>From <i>Blurring the Boundaries</i> 165-197, 254</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Outline toward a Theory of the Mine Versus the Mind and the Harvard Outline" (p.165) • "Outline toward a Reflection on the Outline and the Splitting of the Atom, I Mean the Colorado River, I Mean Our Collective Attentions, or Maybe I Mean the Brain, Which Is Mostly Forks, You Know" (p.176) • Writing Exercises From "Outline Toward a Theory" (p. 253) • "Four Essential Tips for Telling the Truth in Personal Memoir and Securing That Blockbuster Book Deal" (p. 186) • "On 'Four Essential Tips for Telling the Truth': Implementing Exaggeration and Humor" (p. 196) • Writing Exercises From "Four Essential Tips": (p. 254) <p>Personal essays and articles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Pine Point" by the Goggles: Paul Shoebridge and Michael Simons (interactive online) 	<p>Week 6 Forum: New Forms of the Personal Essay</p> <p>Assignment:</p> <p>Blog post NB: This must be submitted to the class blog. You'll find the "blog" link under the "forum" link in the menu on the left side of your screen.</p>
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			<p>essay) (you may need to download Adobe Flash or flip over to a browser other than Chrome)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "My Body: A Wunderkammer" by Shelley Jackson (hypertext essay, click on "Begin" on the far right of the screen) • "Mr. Plimpton's Revenge: A Google Map Essay" by Dinty Moore (hypertext essay) (NB: George Plimpton was a famous journalist) • "She Felt Like Cheering" by Molly Wizenberg (blog post) 	
7	The World and Research	CO 1 CO 2 CO 3 CO 4	<p>From <i>Blurring the Boundaries</i> 198-216, 254-5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "A Visit to the Doctor" (p. 198) • "On 'A Visit to the Doctor': The Omission of I" (p. 207) • Writing Exercises From "A Visit to the Doctor" (p. 254) • "Contra" (p. 209) • "On 'Contra': Nostalgia and the Shared Experience" (p. 211) 	<p>Week 7 Forum: The World and Research</p> <p>Quiz: Choose your final project</p> <p>Assignment: Blog follow-up. Comment on at least two classmates' blog entries to be eligible for an A. Your comment</p>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Exercises From "Contra" (p. 255) • "Squirrel: An Ars Poetica" (p. 213) • "On 'Squirrel: An Ars Poetica ': Starting in One Place and Ending in Another" (p. 215) • Writing Exercises From "Squirrel" (p. 255) • Personal essays and articles: • "The Knife" by Richard Selzer (access the PDF reading via link in Lessons area for Week 7) • "Clan of One-Breasted Women" by Terry Tempest Williams (access the PDF reading via link in Lessons area for Week 7) • "Paper Wasps" by Lee Martin 	<p>posts should appear under the appropriate blog entry and be at least 100 words each.</p> <p>Writer's Workshop – the final project writer's workshop will open on Wednesday of week 7.</p>
8	Publishing and Course Wrap-up	CO 1 CO 2 CO 3 CO 4 CO 5	<p>From <i>Blurring the Boundaries</i>, 217-246, 256</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Why I Hope My Soap Opera Will Outlive Me and Other Confessions about a Dying Art" (p. 217) • "On 'Why I Hope My Soap Opera Will Outlive Me and Other Confessions about a Dying Art': Breaking 	<p>Week 8 Forum: Writers Workshop</p> <p>Assignments: Final Project (See the assignments area for your options)</p>

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			<p><i>the Fourth Wall</i>" (p. 228)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Writing Exercises From "Why I Hope"</i> (p. 256) • <i>"Monster"</i> (p. 230) • <i>"On 'Monster': The Immersion Effect"</i> (p. 242) • <i>Writing Exercises From "Monster"</i> (p. 256) <p>No readings outside of the textbook this week.</p>	<p>NB: You should workshop your final project submission here. The draft you post must at least meet the minimum length requirements. As in the previous writer's workshop, this is open midway through week 7, and it closes on Friday of week 8.</p>
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Policies

Please see the [Student Handbook](#) to reference all University policies. Quick links to frequently asked question about policies are listed below.

- [Drop/Withdrawal Policy](#)
- [Plagiarism Policy](#)
- [Extension Process and Policy](#)
- [Disability Accommodations](#)

Writing Expectations

Students are expected to have the background in grammar and mechanics necessary to complete the course. Please see the rubrics for detailed information regarding writing evaluation.

Citation and Reference Style

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Attention: Please follow the MLA Format as the sole citation and reference style used in written work submitted as part of coursework to the University. Assignments completed in a narrative essay or composition format must follow the citation style cited in the MLA Format.

Late Assignments

Students are expected to submit classroom assignments by the posted due date and to complete the course according to the published class schedule. As adults, students, and working professionals, I understand you must manage competing demands on your time. Should you need additional time to complete an assignment, please contact me before the due date so we can discuss the situation and determine an acceptable resolution. Routine submission of late assignments is unacceptable and may result in points deducted from your final course grade.

Bulk submissions are not accepted during the course or during an extension.

- Cognitive learning is accomplished by receiving consistent and incremental feedback that creates a positive change in performance (Untanir, 2012). Feedback is structured so students increase their cognitive learning and skill sets.
- Thus, submitting bulk-loaded late work (more than one assignment at a time) is highly discouraged and may even result in assignment(s) being returned for revision if the instructor feels his or her feedback from any submission would have improved the student's assessment of any assignment. Building feedback is essential to your success.

Works Cited: Ultanir, E. (2012). An epistemological glance at the constructivist approach: Constructivist learning in dewey, piaget, and montessori. Online Submission.

Netiquette

Online universities promote the advancement of knowledge through positive and constructive debate – both inside and outside the classroom. Forums on the Internet, however, can occasionally degenerate into needless insults and “flaming.” Such activity and the loss of good manners are not acceptable in a university setting – basic academic rules of good behavior and proper “Netiquette” must persist. Remember that you are in a place for the rewards and excitement of learning which does not include descent to personal attacks or student attempts to stifle the Forum of others.

- **Technology Limitations:** While you should feel free to explore the full-range of creative composition in your formal papers, keep e-mail layouts simple. The Sakai classroom may not fully support MIME or HTML encoded messages, which means that bold face, italics, underlining, and a variety of color-coding or other visual effects will not translate in your e-mail messages.

STUDENT WARNING: This course syllabus is from a previous semester archive and serves only as a preparatory reference. Please use this syllabus as a reference only until the professor opens the classroom and you have access to the updated course syllabus. Please do NOT purchase any books or start any work based on this syllabus; this syllabus may NOT be the one that your individual instructor uses for a course that has not yet started. If you need to verify course textbooks, please refer to the online course description through your student portal. This syllabus is proprietary material of APUS.

- **Humor Note:** Despite the best of intentions, jokes and especially satire can easily get lost or taken seriously. If you feel the need for humor, you may wish to add “emoticons” to help alert your readers: ;-), :), ☺

Disclaimer Statement

Course content may vary from the outline to meet the needs of this particular group.

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Online Library

The Online Library is available to enrolled students and faculty from inside the electronic campus. This is your starting point for access to online books, subscription periodicals, and Web resources that are designed to support your classes and generally not available through search engines on the open Web. In addition, the Online Library provides access to special learning resources, which the University has contracted to assist with your studies. Questions can be directed to librarian@apus.edu.

- **Charles Town Library and Inter Library Loan:** The University maintains a special library with a limited number of supporting volumes, collection of our professors' publication, and services to search and borrow research books and articles from other libraries.
- **Electronic Books:** You can use the online library to uncover and download over 50,000 titles, which have been scanned and made available in electronic format.
- **Electronic Journals:** The University provides access to over 12,000 journals, which are available in electronic form and only through limited subscription services.
- **Tutor.com:** AMU and APU Civilian & Coast Guard students are eligible for 10 free hours of tutoring provided by APUS. [Tutor.com](#) connects you with a professional tutor online 24/7 to provide help with assignments, studying, test prep, resume writing, and more. Tutor.com is tutoring the way it was meant to be. You get expert tutoring whenever you need help, and you work one-to-one with your tutor in your online classroom on your specific problem until it is done.

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Turnitin.com

Turnitin is our School's plagiarism checker. When you upload an essay to the Assignments tool, your work will automatically be run through Turnitin. Your

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essay's report will generate after a short while and will be visible to both you and the instructor.

Your instructor will also manually run forum posts through Turnitin.com every week. He or she has the right to regrade assignments during the course if suspicion of plagiarism or any other misleading events present themselves.

The final project has the potential to light Turnitin Up like a Christmas tree. Please include the disclaimer, "As directed by the assignment, this essay reuses portions of my week X essay"

Selected Bibliography

Additional resources are found in the Lessons area of class for each week.

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