

## DISC 1313: The Daily Grind: An Exploration of the World of Work May Term 2016

In this seminar course, we will read both classic and contemporary examinations, critiques, and representations of the workplace. Why is the working world a worthy subject to consider? It merits our time and attention because the workplace becomes, outside of our homes, the setting where we spend most of our time and energy. Finding meaning in work plays an enormous role in life satisfaction; and the conditions we meet with on the job impact us financially, psychologically, intellectually, and even physically—every day.

From classic films like Chaplin's *Modern Times* to the cult classic *Office Space*, we will have some fun as we work our way through the truncated May term semester. But we will also read very serious critiques of labor issues, such as the *Communist Manifesto*. We will look at contemporary writing on the workplace, as well as enjoy a few guest speakers, who will share their knowledge of this complicated, multi-faceted topic.

Of course, much of our time will be devoted to the writing process and honing students' skills in crafting well-supported essays that are both mechanically and grammatically correct as well as written in students' individual voices. This is a laptop-required class, and we will be drafting each day in class. The course culminates in a research project for which students will investigate and write about a question or problem in the world of work.

### Benefits to Students:

- Interesting, topical, timely subject matter
- Class visitors from a variety of fields who share about their career paths and offer motivation and vision to students
- An introduction to the good people at the Hegi Career Center, and thus info on internships and jobs
- An opportunity to read, study, and learn some classic texts with which all college-educated students should be aware
- An instructor who is passionate about this topic and weaves in her own educational and career experiences



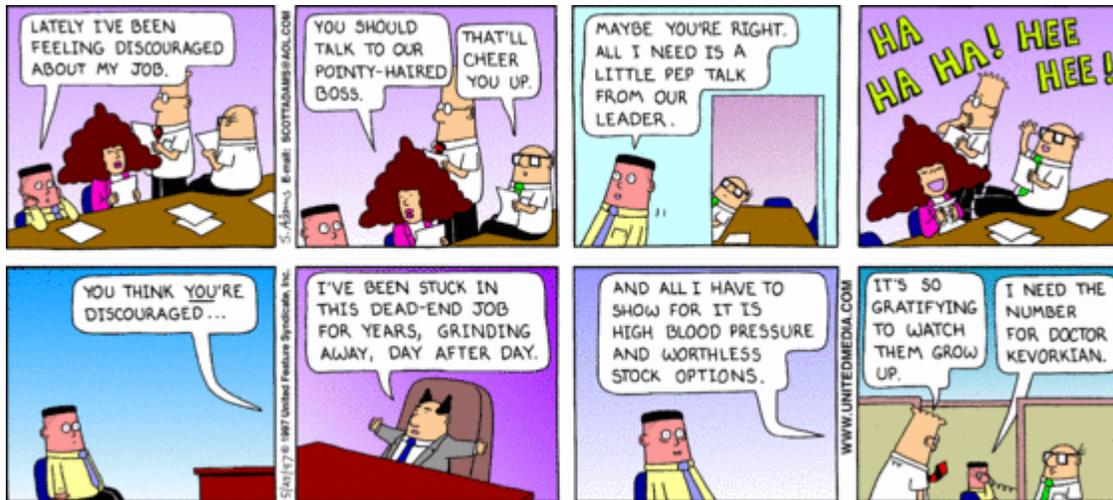
The instructor is Diana Blackman, Director of the DISC program, SMU alum, and 20+ -year member of the English Department. This course allows her to unite her interests in psychological wellness, the world of work, and of course writing and analysis of texts. Her plan is for students to enjoy looking at the world that comes after college—work!—while completing their DISC credit. What a great way to go into summer!

DISC 1313—May Term 2016

Prof. Diana C. Blackman

108 Clements Hall

Inquiry Seminar  
The Daily Grind: A Consideration of the World of Work



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**Course outcomes**—By the end of this course:

- Students will continue to be able to meet the Student Learning Outcomes from Foundations of Written Discourse and from the Introduction to Academic Discourse (1311 and 1312)
- Students will be able to produce significant research texts, utilizing all aspects of the research process from rough draft to edited product
- Students will be able to research topics following the stated research protocols of the discipline or various disciplines represented in the course, including analysis, evaluation, synthesis, and/or integration of the students' own ideas

**Course texts:**

Caro, *North Country*\*

Chandor, *Margin Call*\*

Chaplin, *Modern Times*\* (clips)

Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed* (chapters; on Blackboard)

Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

Miller, *Death of a Salesman*

Stone, *Office Space*\*

Terkel, *Working*

Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (excerpt; on Bb)

Plus several short essays, articles, and poems that I will post on Blackboard

\*designates a film; these will be on reserve in library

**Grading:** Your grade will be based on four essays (one will be written in class but will count as a formal essay); an oral presentation; and such shorter writings as the professor deems appropriate. **Because this course is being offered in the May term, please be aware that you cannot afford to get behind; and part of the class requirement will be to have completed reading/viewing of certain texts before the term commences.**

**Grade break-down:**

Essay 1: 10%

Essay 2: 20%

Essay 3 (an in-class essay): 20%

Essay 4 (research project): 30%

Quizzes/Participation/Attendance/Presentation: 20%

**Course Drop Policy:** This is a required course, and it cannot be dropped. Students must pass the course with a grade of C- or better to complete their D & D requirements.

**Laptops:** The nature of this class is one of interactive discussion, not lecture and note-taking. To that end, focusing on your laptop screen, trying to get down every word uttered in class, will work detrimentally to the course's design and intention. At the same time, because of the compressed nature of the May term, it is my intention that we will work on short assignments and drafts in class, both independently and collaboratively, every day. **Please plan to bring your laptop, charged, to every class meeting. This is a course requirement.**

**Disability accommodations:** Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact the DASS office (214-768-4557) to verify the disability and establish eligibility for accommodations. They should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements. (University Policy No. 2.4).

**Religious Observance:** Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and they should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence (University Policy No. 1.9).

**Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities:** Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity will be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of each student to make arrangements with the instructor for making up the work prior to any missed, scheduled examination or other missed assignment (University Undergraduate Catalog).

## Course Reading and Assignment Schedule

**\*\*\*Always bring texts and printed copies of readings with you to class.\*\*\***

### Unit I Topic: Working for “the Man”

Writing Concern: “Boot camp”-style review of 1312 material, including the thesis sentence, paragraphing, elements of good style, audience, and the rhetorical situation

TH, May 12: Introduction to the course; diagnostic writing; clips from *Modern Times* and discussion; *Communist Manifesto* (chapters 1 & 2)

FRI, May 13: Short writing on *CM*; Blake’s “The Chimney Sweeper”; discussion of *Office Space*; receive essay #1 topic and begin note-taking and drafting

M, May 16: View and discuss portions of Studs Terkel’s *Working*; draft review and time to work on drafts independently

TU, May 17: Student conferences in my office

### Unit II Topic: The Glass Ceiling and Other Roadblocks in the Workplace

Writing Concern: The big picture—organization, evidence, citation

W, May 18: Essay 1 full draft due; Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (excerpt); Slaughter, “Yes, You Can.”; Miller, “An Elusive Jackpot”; short writing in class

TH, May 19: Library visit to gather research materials; discuss *North Country*; Perry, “Hiring Blacks: Does it Make a Difference?”; Berman, “Breaking the Pink Ceiling”; receive Essay #2 topic

FRI, May 20: *Death of a Salesman*, watch portions and discuss; Draft work on Essay #2 in class; out-of-class individual conferences

### Unit III Topic: Modern Problems in Today’s Workplace

Writing Concern: Honing Your Writing Craft

MON, May 23: Ehrenreich’s *Nickel and Dimed* (chapters); Johnson, “Seattle Approves \$15 Minimum Wage,” and Medina, “Hardship Makes a New Home in the Suburbs; research paper work—bring all materials

TU, May 24: *Outliers* (excerpt); Swarns, “Degree? Check. Enthusiasm? Check. Job? Not So Fast”; research paper presentations

W, May 25: Prep for in-class essay (Essay #3); research presentations

TH, May 26: In-class essay; individual conferences on research paper draft

MON, May 30: Optional conferences in my office re: research paper  
TU, May 31: Research projects due at my office by 5pm.

**\*\*\*Please note: You will note your initials next two 2 class meetings. What does this mean? This means that on those days, you will come to class “especially prepared” for that day’s discussion. You will come to class with 3 observations/questions/points of interest about the texts for that day. This will be part of your participation grade. Be creative! Have fun with this....**