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## WCSC 325 Career and Vocation: Strategies and Values

Summer 2023 | Tuesdays, 7:00pm - 9:00pm  
Washington Community Scholars' Center  
Eastern Mennonite University  
Professor: Ryan M. Good, Ph.D. ([ryan.good@emu.edu](mailto:ryan.good@emu.edu))

### Course description and outcomes

This course supports and builds on the WCSC internship experience. Together, students discuss goals and orienting values for their careers and vocational identities, engage with guest speakers who share about their own career trajectories, and build nuts-and-bolts professional development skills, including conducting an informational interview and developing a cover letter and resume. This course is required for all students enrolled in the WCSC summer program.

- 1) Students will leave the WCSC program having processed and reflected critically on challenges, learning, and personal growth in the context of their internships and the WCSC house.
- 2) Students will be able to articulate the meaning of work, what makes work meaningful, and the roles that they hope professional or vocational work will play in their lives.
- 3) Students will develop confidence, experience, and skills for networking and informational interviewing to advance their career and vocational goals.
- 4) Students will learn to craft an effective cover letter and resume.
- 5) Students will learn to develop and articulate personal and professional goals, both near term and longer term.

### *EMU Core Community Learning objectives*

In achieving the following objectives, this course satisfies the Community Learning requirement of the EMU Core.

- 1) Students will demonstrate community involvement.
- 2) Students will reflect on issues encountered in their involvement and integrate those reflections into further learning in that course.

## Course outline

Week	Date	Topic and due dates
1	6/5 - 6/11	[Orientation]
2	6/13	Career, vocation, and the pursuit of meaningful work <i>Mon: Response blog #1</i>
3	6/20	Internship goals, informational interviewing, and professional communication <i>Sun: Reflective journal #1</i> <i>Mon: Response blog #2</i>
4	6/27	Speaker: <b>Aaron Butler</b> ; Resumes and cover letters; Introduction to mission statements <i>Sun: Reflective journal #2</i> <i>Mon: Informational interview plan</i>
5	Mon 7/3	Playing to our strengths <i>Sun: Reflective journal #3</i> <i>Sun: Target job opening and description</i> <i>Sun: Response blog #3 (including CliftonStrengths Assessment)</i>
	Fri-Sun 7/7-9	WCSC Retreat in West Virginia
6	7/11	Checking in on internship goals <i>Mon: Community life self-reflection and assessment</i>
7	7/18	Job documents workshop <i>Sun: Reflective journal #4</i> <i>Mon: Cover letter and resume</i>
8	7/25	Speaker: <b>Bianca Ward</b> ; Communicating with and around power <i>Sun: Journal #5</i> <i>Mon: Response blog #4</i>
9	8/1	Personal mission statements and reporting on informational interviews <i>Sun: Journal #6 (letter to your future self)</i> <i>Mon: Informational interview report</i>
10	Wed 8/9	The Final Feast and debriefing the summer <i>Due: Final reflection paper (Sun)</i>

## Course requirements

*Note: The points an assignment is worth correspond directly to a percentage of your final grade.*

**Attendance and participation (24%)** – Attendance and active engagement in class meetings and on retreat—through discussion and engagement with guest speakers—is expected of all students. I recognize that different ones of us find it easier to participate in different ways and that active listening is just as important as talking in any discussion. I will do my best to facilitate

a variety of types of engagement. For full credit, however, I expect that your body language will communicate that you are present and engaged, and that you will make a diligent effort to respond to guest speakers and to participate in discussion. Please note that completion of community roles and engagement in community life are also included in your participation grade in this class. You will complete a self-reflection and assessment of community life and a subsequent 1:1 check-in meeting with me during Week 6. A grading rubric is posted on Moodle.

**Weekly reflective journals** (24%) – You will write and submit weekly journals from week 3 through week 9 (excluding the week we go on retreat), for a total of six journals. Your journal submissions are due on Moodle by **midnight on Sunday evenings**. For full credit, journal entries should demonstrate careful observation and thoughtful reflection about your WCSC experience. Journals should be a minimum of 300 words and should reflect the mechanics of proper writing. Journals are evaluated on a four-point scale. A grading rubric is posted on Moodle. You are invited (but not required) to consider engaging one of the suggested prompts at the end of the syllabus.

**Response blogging** (12%) – On **June 12, June 19, July 2, and July 24**, you will submit written responses to reflective prompts in preparation for our class discussions those weeks. Each submission is worth up to three points.

**Cover letter and resume** (15%) – Find a current job opening that interests you and prepare a cover letter and resume that you could use to apply for that position. You will submit the job description of the position you have identified (copy and paste it into a document) by midnight on **July 2**, along with an explanation of why you are interested in the position and why you are a strong candidate (250 words beyond the job description). Submit your cover letter and resume through Moodle by midnight on **July 17** and bring two hard copies of each document to class on **July 18**. We will workshop your job documents during class. A grading rubric is posted on Moodle.

**Informational interview** (10%) – Identify a professional contact who you respect, whose position or career path interests you, and/or who you would like to know better (or who you would like to have know *you* better). Submit a paragraph by midnight on **June 26** explaining who this person is and why you would like to interview them (250 words). Then set up and conduct the informational interview. You will submit a paragraph reflecting on the interview by midnight on **July 31**, including your assessment of how it went, the individual's name, why their experience is of relevance to you, and the date of your interview (250 words). We will discuss your interviews during class that week. A grading rubric is posted on Moodle.

**Final reflection paper** (15%) – At the end of the semester, you will submit a final reflection paper that is an opportunity for stepping back and reflecting on your WCSC experience. **Assignment details are at the end of the syllabus.** Your paper is **due on Moodle by midnight on Sunday, August 6**. A grading rubric is posted on Moodle.

## Texts

You will engage with one physical text during this class (Isay, 2016), which WCSC will loan to you. All other assigned readings, podcasts, and videos can be accessed electronically through Moodle. Additional readings may be added over the course of the semester.

Isay, D. (2016). *Callings: The purpose and passion of work*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.  
Marsh, C. D. (2017). *Nowhere Else I Want to Be*. San Francisco, CA: Inkshares.

## Policies and expectations

### Respect for each other

I will do my best to facilitate a space where all voices and perspectives are respected. I expect the same from you. You do not have to agree with other people's opinions, but you do need to practice respectful listening and constructive dialogue. If at any point you feel that you have been disrespected or are uncomfortable with something that happened during class, please come and talk to me about it.

### Electronics in the classroom

The goal of this class is to be present to and engaged with what (and who!) is going on right around us. Thus, I ask that phones be on silent and put away during class meetings. Laptops and tablets may be used to refer to readings or notes during our discussion, but—for the sake of our time together—unless I specifically ask you to do so, internet or social media browsing are not allowed. *It goes without saying that all electronic devices are put away when we are with a guest speaker.* I will hold myself similarly accountable.

### Academic integrity

I take plagiarism, cheating, and other violations of academic integrity extremely seriously. They will not be tolerated. In accordance with EMU policy, unacknowledged use of AI text generators in the development or completion of written assignments will be considered plagiarism. If you have any questions, review the *EMU Academic Accountability Policy* at <https://emuhelpdesk.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/PP/pages/4577165742/Academic+Accountability>.

### Late assignments

Late assignment submissions will be penalized 10% per day.

### Grading scale

A (93-100); A- (90-92); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D+ (67-69); D (60-66); F (59 or below)

### Disability accommodations

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your work in this course, it is your responsibility to contact the Office of Academic Access (<http://www.emu.edu/academics/access/>) on the third floor of the Hartzler library. This office

will work with you to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. All information and documentation is treated confidentially.

### Title IX

It is important for you to know that all faculty members are required to report known or alleged incidents of sexual violence (including sexual assault, domestic/relationship violence, stalking). That means that I cannot keep information about sexual violence confidential if you share that information with me. For example, if you inform me of an issue of sexual harassment, sexual assault, or discrimination I will keep the information as private as I can, but I am required to bring it to the attention of the institution's Title IX Coordinator. Incidents that have occurred on campus, at a campus event, and/or while a student at EMU require follow up by the Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to talk to the Title IX Coordinator directly, Kimberly Anderson can be reached at 540-432-4849 or [titleixcoordinator@emu.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@emu.edu). Additionally, you can also report incidents or complaints through our online portal at <http://emu.edu/safecampus/>. You may report, confidentially, incidents of sexual violence if you speak to Counseling Services counselors, Campus Ministries pastors, and Health Services personnel providing clinical care. These individuals, as well as the Title IX Coordinator, can provide you with information on both internal and external support resources.

Please refer to the Student Handbook which can be found at <https://emu.edu/studentlife/> for additional policies, information, and resources available to you.

## Course schedule

June 5 – June 11    **Week 1 – [Orientation]**

June 13                **Week 2 – Career, vocation, and the pursuit of meaningful work**

**Read:**

*Callings: The purpose and passion of work*, by Dave Isay (2016). (*Select and read 10 conversations from this book.*)

**Submit:**

*(Mon) Response blog #1: (1) List the 10 conversations you read (name and career from the table of contents). (2) What takeaways stand out to you about what meaningful work looks like? (250 words)*

June 20                **Week 3 – Internship goals, informational interviewing, and professional communication**

**Read:**

Tactics for Effective Informational Interviewing – Definitive Guide (2022). *Get Five*.

3 Steps to a Perfect Informational Interview, by Lily Zhang (2020). *The Muse*.

**Submit:**

*(Sun) Reflective journal #1*

*(Mon) Response blog #2: In preparation for setting goals for your internship, respond to the following questions:*

- 1) *What technical skills do you want to build through your internship?*
- 2) *What background knowledge would help you perform better?*
- 3) *What soft skills (i.e., interpersonal skills) would help you in this work?*
- 4) *Who are two people at your internship that you'd like to know better?*

June 27                **Week 4 – Speaker: Aaron Butler (Private chef); Resumes and cover letters; Introduction to mission statements**

**Read:**

Your Complete Guide to Writing a Cover Letter. *The Muse*.

How to write a resume. *Glassdoor*.

How to Make a Resume in 2023 | Beginner's Guide. *Novoresume*.

**Submit:**

*(Sun) Reflective journal #2*

*(Mon) Informational interview plan: Submit a paragraph explaining who you will interview for your informational interview and why you would like to interview them (250 words).*

**MONDAY**  
**July 3**

**Week 5 – Playing to our strengths**

**Complete:**

Take the CliftonStrengths Assessment, using the provided access code.

**Submit:**

*(Sun) Reflective journal #3*

*(Sun) Target job opening and description: Submit the job description of the position you have identified (copy and paste it into a document), along with an explanation of why you are interested in the position and why you are a strong candidate (250 words beyond the job description).*

*(Sun) Response blog #3: After taking the CliftonStrengths Assessment with the provided access code, read about the five strengths the assessment identified for you and write a reflection responding to these results (250 words).*

**FRI - SUN**  
**July 7-9**

**WCSC Retreat in West Virginia**

**July 11**

**Week 6 – Checking in on internship goals**

**Submit:**

*(Mon) Community life self-reflection and assessment: Submit completed response on Moodle and sign up for a 1:1 meeting with Ryan.*

**July 18**

**Week 7 – Job documents workshop**

**Submit:**

*(Sun) Reflective journal #4*

*(Mon) Cover letter and resume: Submit your cover letter and resume through Moodle and bring two hard copies of each document to class. We will workshop your job documents during class.*

**July 25**

**Week 8 – Speaker: Bianca Ward (External Affairs Community Liaison, ViiV Healthcare); Communicating with and around power**

**Listen:**

Knock Knock! Who's th— MANTERRUPTING COWORKER (2018). *Battle Tactics For Your Sexist Workplace* [Audio podcast].

**Submit:**

*(Sun) Reflective journal #5*

*(Mon) Response blog #4: What is your response to the podcast? Does it describe dynamics that you have witnessed or experienced? Whose responsibility is it to change assumptions and behaviors shaping whose voice is given greater authority in a group?*

**August 1**

**Week 9 – Personal mission statements and reporting on informational interviews**

Come to class prepared to share your personal mission statement and to report on your informational interview.

**Submit:**

*(Sun) Reflective journal #6: Write a letter to yourself in which you tell your future self the top 10 things you have learned this summer—insights that you don't want to forget. Be sure to include your persona mission statement in this letter. I will be printing out what you turn in and physically mailing this to you via USPS five months from now, so please include in your journal entry the address you want me to send it to (where you will be in mid-January 2024).*

*(Mon) Informational interview report: Submit a paragraph reflecting on your informational interview, including your assessment of how it went, the individual's name, why their experience is of relevance to you, and the date of your interview (250 words).*

**WEDNESDAY  
August 9**

**Week 10 – The Final Feast**

**Submit:**

*(Sun) Final reflection paper: Assignment details at the end of the syllabus.*



## Journal prompts to consider...

### Internship

- What is something you feel you've learned about yourself at your internship (e.g., the way you interact with others, the way you like to work, or the kind of place you'd like to work)?
- What at your internship challenges you the most? What gives you the most energy?
- What is most meaningful about working at your internship? Why?
- What areas of personal or professional growth are you working on right now?
- How has your internship affirmed, challenged, or created new ideas about where you would like to go with your career?
- Who at your internship is somebody you would like to emulate in your own career and vocation? Why? (Conversely: are there people whose examples you don't want to follow?)
- Has your internship (or moving around the city) created any dilemmas for you that you are wrestling with? Are there questions or issues you'd like to discuss with the group?

### Group life

- What goals do you have for yourself in the context of group life? How will you (or how have you) worked toward achieving those goals?
- What are you learning about living with other people?
- What role(s) would you say you play in the context of this group house? How do you feel about this? Why?
- What dynamics or situations in the house are most challenging for you? How do you work with these challenges?
- Are there things going on outside of this house or outside of DC that are affecting you?
- What are you, as a group, doing well? What could you be doing better? What needs to happen (and what steps can you take) for the house to do those things better?

### Integrating your WCSC experience

- What are some things you'd be excited to say you had a chance to do while you were in DC? (Or, what exciting things *have* you done that you'd recommend to others?)
- What are you thinking about your future? What things will be important to you in your future jobs, your future lifestyle, your future housemates or partners?
- What has surprised you most this semester?
- What stands out to you as a key learning or area of growth that you've experienced while you're in DC?

## Final reflection paper

Your final assignment asks you to step back and reflect on your WCSC experience. Please write a reflective essay in response to each of the following prompts:

- 1) **What have you learned about what you value and what you want to do?** How has this WCSC term affected your thoughts and plans about your goals and the type of work you want to do?
- 2) **What does good leadership look like?** What characteristics of good leadership are most important to you? In what ways would you like to grow as a leader? How has your WCSC experience affected your vision for effective leadership?
- 3) **How did your group do?** Evaluate how your WCSC group functioned as a community house this term? Give your group a rating on a five-star scale and explain why you rated it the way you did. What did the group do well? What did the group do not as well? What roles did you play in these contexts?
- 4) **What was challenging for you?** Describe something that was challenging for you during your time in Washington, DC. How did you engage this challenge? How do you feel about it now?
- 5) **Tweeting a takeaway.** What's the most important thing you learned while you were in DC? In 280 characters and spaces, capture a key learning or takeaway that will go with you as you leave WCSC. Write the tweet, and then explain what it means, describe the experiences that shaped what you learned, and reflect on why it matters.

Include the questions as headings within your paper, separating the five essays. In total, your paper should be between 1,800 and 3,000 words (approximately 6 to 10 pages, double spaced) and should follow proper rules of style and grammar.

Submit your final reflection paper on Moodle **by midnight on Sunday, August 6.**