OADI 250 01: McNair Scholars Graduate School Application Seminar

Instructor: Atiera Coleman, Director, McNair Scholars Program
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Time: Mondays 4-5:30pm
Office Hours: By Appointment/Email
Location: Library Learning Studio
Units: .50

Course Description:
The purpose of this course is to help Senior McNair Scholars and SEL students navigate graduate school and post-B.A. applications. Throughout the semester we will focus on developing your personal statement and CV through a series of exercises, along with working on professional development skills. By the end of the course you will each have submitted at MINIMUM of 6 graduate school applications – for McNair Scholars one MUST be to a PhD program.

Course Objectives:
1 – Create a personal statement and CV that can be used for various applications
2 – Hone in on career paths that are suitable for each Scholar
3 – Complete AT LEAST 6 graduate school applications (1 MUST be a PhD program for McNair Scholars)
4 – Learn key professional development skills that will aid in success post-BA.

Class Expectations:
As a student in this course you are expected to show up to ALL classes on time – not one, five, or ten minutes late but be in your seat ready to go at 6:30pm for every scheduled class. Cell phones and headphones are not permitted during class time. All work must be done beforehand. As this class will involve reading each other’s work, it is expected feedback given in class by peers is done from a professional, constructive and helpful standpoint. The instructor will not allow for unprofessional behavior. The class works well when everyone is on the same page and is there to help and support for each other.

Grading:
You are graded for this course. Grading is dependent upon your ability to complete all assignments on time and successful submission of applications by the end of the course. This course is based on a point system. A breakdown of points is listed below:

Attendance (includes being on time): 5pts
GRE – securing date to take test by Sept 30th: 5pts (needs to be reported to Kristin date taking/taken by Sept 30th to obtain points)
GRE – taking the test: 5pts
GRE – submitting your score to the office: 5pts
Submission of Application 1: 10pts
Submission of Application 2: 10pts
Submission of Application 3: 10pts
Submission of Application 4: 10pts
Submission of Application 5: 10pts
Submission of Application 6: 10pts
Application to one external funding opportunity: 5pts
Completion of Weekly Assignments on Time: 15pts
Total points: 100

Note: All items must be turned into the office by the end of the last day of classes on December 5th for full points to be given.

Grading scale:
100-95 pts: 4.0 (A)
94-90 pts: 3.7 (A-)
89-85 pts: 3.3 (B+)
84-80 pts: 3.0 (B)
79-75 pts: 2.7 (B-)
74-70 pts: 2.3 (C+)
69-65 pts: 2.0 (C)
64-60 pts: 1.7 (C-)
Below 60 pts: 1.0 (D)

This class will require you to do work, as the application process is time consuming. As a McNair Scholar/SEL students we expect you all to be applying to programs best suited for you, and therefore expect you to put in the time and effort to have these applications completed and submitted to the best of your ability.

Emails:
Emails sent out need a response within 48 hours. In the past we have waited to hear from Scholars and deadlines have passed. Going forward we expect emails sent out that require a response are answered within 48 hours – this is not unreasonable and goes along with your professional development as future graduate students.

Keeping in line with professional emails, all emails should start with a proper greeting. Emails that start off with “Hey” or no greeting will not be answered. “Hello” or “Dear” are the most appropriate greetings to use. As you move forward and transition away from Beloit College, you must remember that informality is not always welcomed through email, and we will practice this throughout the semester.

Accommodations:
If you have a disability and need accommodations, contact Learning Enrichment and Disability Services (LEADS) located on 2nd floor Pearsons (north side), 608-363-2572, learning@beloit.edu or make an appointment through joydeleon.youcanbook.me. For accommodations in my class, you must bring me an Access Letter from the Director of LEADS and then we will discuss how to implement the accommodations. Contact that office promptly; accommodations are not retroactive.

Free peer tutoring is available for most classes. For a tutor, apply by going to your Portal, to the Student Life tab, and then apply using the Tutoring Forms (on left) and Request a Tutor. If you have any questions, contact LEADS.
**Application and Transcript Fees:**

**McNair Scholars:**
All Scholars are encouraged to apply to schools with McNair Application Fee Waivers (link to list of schools can be found on the Beloit College McNair website). If a school does not offer this, then you are to call and see if they have a low-income waiver (we do not do this for you). We cannot guarantee we can pay for more than 2-3 application fees, and we cannot pay for transcripts – this is due to budget cuts as these costs come out of our limited indirect account. If you must apply to a school that does not have an application waiver you can request funds from McNair, but this is subject to availability of funds, up to the discretion of the Director, and based on your current performance in school and overall participation in the program.

The same holds true for additional GRE scores. We can pay for up to 4 additional scores. If you need additional scores sent to schools funds from the McNair program are limited and is subject to availability of funds, up to the discretion of the Director, and based on your current performance in school and overall participation in the program.

**Local Grad School Visits:**
We encourage all seniors to do a LOCAL graduate school visit during the first part of the semester. This means the Madison-Milwaukee-Chicago areas. If you plan to apply to a school and want to go on a visit the McNair office will pay for the bus ticket and lunch only. To request these funds you must contact Kristin Frey at least **TWO WEEKS** ahead of when you want to go so that arrangements can be made. The form for graduate school visits can be found online on the McNair website under Resources – Travel – Grad School Visit. Each Scholar is limited to ONE visit during this time unless you make a compelling case for more than one. Again, this is only for local graduate school visits – once you are accepted into programs we will fund you to visit a school that is further away.

**McNair National Conference:**
If you have not gone to a national McNair conference to present then you will be required to present at the National McNair Conference in Delavan. This typically is held over Halloween weekend. This is fully funded by the McNair program. More details will follow once the announcement is made.

**Office Visits (MANDATORY):**
Each Scholar/Fellow is required to stop by the office and talk with either Kristin Frey or myself at least **ONCE A MONTH.** This is not asking a lot of you, but keeping in contact is important throughout this process, and we want to make sure everything is going okay with you. You can schedule an appointment with me using the link below my email signature.

**Grad School Lock-In:**
Each year we have a graduate school “lock ins” on a Sunday nights for juniors/seniors to take some time to pump out applications and get advice. This year we are scheduled to have one tentatively November 6th and January 29th. We will provide food and you come ready to work and get feedback. The Director and Kristin Frey will be there to help.

**Grants**
If you plan to apply to any fellowships or other types of graduate school grants then you need to indicate that to me by the **FIRST day** of class (August 31st) so that we can prepare properly for them. Three well-known fellowships are Ford, NSF, and Fulbright. Below are the deadlines for each along with the application essays for Ford and NSF.
(Also see pages 11-13 in your text book for additional funding options.)

**Important Deadlines:**
- Ford Foundation Pre-doctoral Fellowship: Application opens in September - Due November 17th, 2016 - [http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/FordFellowships/PGA_047958.htm](http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/FordFellowships/PGA_047958.htm)
- NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program: Due October 24, 2015 (Life Sciences); October 28th (Social Sciences) - [http://www.nsfgrfp.org/applicants/application_components](http://www.nsfgrfp.org/applicants/application_components)
- Graduate School Application Deadlines: Vary by school but most common deadlines are Nov 15th, Dec 1st, Dec 15th, Jan 15th, Jan 30th. If the deadline says rolling you need to still submit by end of January for funding consideration. BUT, again 6 applications must be submitted by December 10th for the course.

**Ford Essays (refer to website for more information):**
There are three essays for the Ford application:
1. Statement of previous research (two-page limit, double-spaced)
2. Essay describing proposed plan of graduate study and research and the applicant's long-range career goals (two-page limit, double-spaced, avoid technical jargon)
3. Personal statement (not to exceed two pages, double-spaced) that describes the applicant’s background and experience and commitment to the goals of the Ford Foundation Fellowship Program by addressing all of the following that apply:
   - the applicant’s capacity to respond in pedagogically productive ways to the learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds
   - the applicant’s sustained personal engagement with communities that are underrepresented in the academy and ability to bring this asset to learning, teaching and scholarship at the college or university level
   - the applicant’s likelihood of using the diversity of human experience as an educational resource in teaching and scholarship, and
   - Membership in one or more of the following groups whose underrepresentation in the American professoriate has been severe and longstanding:
     - Alaska Natives (Aleut, Eskimo or other Indigenous People of Alaska)
     - Black/African Americans
     - Mexican American/Chicanas/Chicanos
     - Native American Indians
     - Native Pacific Islanders (Hawaiian/Polynesian/Micronesian)
     - Puerto Ricans

You also will need 3 letters of recommendation.

**NSF Grant (refer to website for more information):**
There are two essays for the NSF GRFP:
1. Personal Statement, Relevant Background and Future Goals: Please outline your educational and professional development plans and career goals. How do you envision graduate school preparing you for a career that allows you to contribute to expanding scientific understanding as well as broadly benefit society?
Describe your personal, educational and/or professional experiences that motivate your decision to pursue advanced study in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM). Include specific examples of any research and/or professional activities in which you have participated. Present a concise description of the activities, highlight the results and discuss how these activities have prepared you to seek a graduate degree. Specify your role in the activity including the extent to which you worked independently and/or as part of a team. Describe the contributions of your activity to advancing knowledge in STEM fields as well as the potential for broader societal impacts (See Solicitation, Section VI, for more information about Broader Impacts).

NSF Fellows are expected to become globally engaged knowledge experts and leaders who can contribute significantly to research, education, and innovations in science and engineering. The purpose of this statement is to demonstrate your potential to satisfy this requirement. Your ideas and examples do not have to be confined necessarily to the discipline that you have chosen to pursue.

Important questions to ask yourself before starting the essay:

1. Why are you fascinated by your research area?
2. What examples of leadership skills and unique characteristics do you bring to your chosen field?
3. What personal and individual strengths do you have that make you a qualified applicant?
4. How will receiving the fellowship contribute to your career goals?
5. What are all of your applicable experiences?
6. For each experience, what were the key questions, methodology, findings, and conclusions?
7. Did you work in a team and/or independently?
8. How did you assist in the analysis of results?
9. How did your activities address the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts criteria?

2- Graduate Research Statement: Present an original research topic that you would like to pursue in graduate school. Describe the research idea, your general approach, as well as any unique resources that may be needed for accomplishing the research goal (i.e., access to national facilities or collections, collaborations, overseas work, etc.) You may choose to include important literature citations. Address the potential of the research to advance knowledge and understanding within science as well as the potential for broader impacts on society. The research discussed must be in a field listed in the Solicitation (Section X, Fields of Study).

Important questions to ask yourself before starting the essay:

1. What issues in the scientific community are you most passionate about?
2. Do you possess the technical knowledge and skills necessary for conducting this work, or will you have sufficient mentoring and training to complete the study?
3. Is this plan feasible for the allotted time and institutional resources?
4. How will your research contribute to the "big picture" outside the academic context?
5. How can you draft a plan using the guidelines presented in the essay instructions?
6. How does your proposed research address the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts criteria?

You also will need 3 letters of recommendation
Class Time:
Each class will be 90 minutes. Roughly, one hour will be devoted to specific aspects of the application process and the second will be devoted to professional development.

Course Materials: (McNair provides)

Asher, Donald et al. 2010. The Best Scholarships For The Best Students. Peterson’s Publishing: NJ

Assignments: All assignments should be completed before the start of the next class and turned at the BEGINNING of class time. You are to include your name, date, assignment title, and page numbers on all assignments.

Outline of Course:
August 29th – Select at LEAST 6 schools/programs you intend to apply for. Have this emailed to me by NOON, if not beforehand, in an Excel worksheet that has your name, data and assignment as a heading. For each school selection include the following:

- Name of school and department (need at least 6 and for McNair Scholars one MUST be a PhD program)
- Degree (MA/PhD/both/MPh/etc)
- List of 2-3 professors at that department you would want to work with, including why
- Who you will ask for recommendation letters (3 people)
- Due dates of deadlines
- Is there funding?
- If you are interested in any other service programs (Peace Corp/Americorp/etc..) or Fulbright list there as well with due date, application requirements
- At the end in 2-3 sentences explain what your end goal is.

September 5th – Introductions. Topics covered: the graduate application time line, picking the right program for you, taking the GRE, creating a Graduate School/Post BA Programs Application Folder, asking for recommendations, filling out fee waivers (McNair Scholars) and signing the syllabus.

Assignment: Chapters 1-3 Graduate Admission Essays. Start to compile your graduate school/post BA program packet that you will hand out to faculty you are asking for recommendation letters from in a few weeks. Revise your list of schools, making sure you have an equal number of reach schools, middle tier schools, and shoe-in schools. Bring to individual meetings this list along with a copy of your most current CV. Start to look over the Ford and NSF and other fellowships and grants – let me know if you decide to write one or both (refer to syllabus and website for each). In one page sketch out why you want to go to graduate school and what you want to do AFTER you finish your graduate degree.

September 12th: Creating the CV and learning how to tell your story.
Assignment: Chapter 3 in The Best Scholarships for the Best Students. Revise your list of schools as needed, revise spreadsheet of due dates/requirements/materials for each school or program. If working on Ford, NSF, or other funding opportunities complete draft of 1st essay
September 16th - Don Asher Saturday Workshop
Assignment: Work on draft of CV and Personal Statement

September 19th – NO CLASS

September 26th - The Statement of Purpose/Research Statement; revising the second draft: feedback from students; why you should go right into school/lifestyle of grad school
Assignment: Chapters 7 and 8 in Don Asher. Revise personal statements and CV. Update list of schools with appropriate information. If working on grants and fellowships keeping revising essays 1 and 2. If working on Ford draft of essay 3

October 3rd – The Statement of Purpose/Research Statement/Fellowships
Assignment: Revise again personal statements for applications and fellowships

Week of October 10th – Individual Meetings
Assignment: Have your completed grad school application folder ready for review. Create a spreadsheet for your letter writers that have the schools, programs, advisers you are applying to, and deadlines that act as a cover letter for your application packet. Make sure the deadlines are TWO weeks earlier than posted. If working on Ford and NSF revision of essays continuing – show essays to letter writers for feedback.

October 17th – FALL BREAK. If you plan to go on a local graduate school visit you must inform Kristin ahead of time so that we can secure a bus ticket. We will pay for one meal that will be reimbursed up to $15.00 (with receipt). A reflection on whom you met with and what you learned will be due the following week by October 19th at noon. If working on Ford or NSF revise essays based on feedback.

October 24th – Feedback on graduate school visits, updates on applications, using social media
Assignment: Complete revisions on personal statements and research statements for grants and/or applications. Have copies to give out in class. Create LinkedIn page – once created ask to friend me so I can look at your page and offer feedback.

October 31st - Choosing the right writing sample, putting it all together, creating a document for your letter writers: feedback on materials and tips on succeeding in graduate school. Work shopping of essays.
Assignment: Chapters 7 and 8 in Don Asher. Send out your grad school packet to recommenders if you have not done so already. Revise personal statement, statement of purpose, and CVs over break – still provide the latest drafts of each to your letter writers. Open up online applications to all schools over break and enter in your basic information so that when you are ready you just have to upload required documents and submit.

November 5th – LOCK IN

November 7th – NO CLASS, INDIVIUDAL MEETINGS –
Work shopping of essays; Graduate school interviews, and how to deal with failure/set backs
Assignment: Continue revision of essays, focusing on those applications that are due first. In one page write out/sketch out some of your coping mechanisms for dealing with set-backs

November 14th – Budgeting for life after Beloit
Assignment: Create a budget for each of the top 3 places you want to go for graduate school in an Excel sheet. For each location find out the following:

- Cost of an apartment/rent
- Food
- Utilities
- Cable/internet
- Car insurance (if you have a car)
- Gas/transportation
- Miscellaneous (Cost to furnish an apartment, going out, etc.)
- Fees for grad school not covered

Then write up in 1-2 paragraphs what you see. Can you afford your top locations? What do you need to be making each month to live? How will you sustain this? Bring this to class next week for discussion.

November 21st – Budgeting Part II and making a plan B

Assignment: Keep on working on applications – remember 6 SUBMITTED applications are due by the last day of classes. In one-page sketch out what your Plan B and Plan C are. What do you need to do make those plans happen?

November 28th – Checking in with graduate school applications; what to do with a higher degree, what to expect in grad school

Assignment: Continue to work on applications and make sure you are turning things into Kristin in the office to receive your points.

December 5th – Continue to work on graduate school applications and plan b & c applications.

December 12th - LAST DAY OF CLASS. Assessment of course, next steps – How do you want to live your life? All applications and GRE scores need to be submitted to the office for final grades. Failure to do so will result in a lower grade for the course.

Syllabus Contract

NOTE:
1) This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

By signing this syllabus you agree to the expectations and grading of the course.

Signature of Student: ______________________________________

Date: __________________