Course Information: Spring 2011

English 1-4, First Year Writing

English 1 Expository Writing

English 1, which fulfills the first half of the College Writing Requirement, explores the principles of effective written communication and provides intensive practice in writing various types of expository prose, especially analysis and persuasion. Essays by contemporary and earlier authors will be examined as instances of the range and versatility of standard written English. English 1 is offered both semesters, with substantially fewer sections in the spring.

English 2 First-Year Writing Seminars

English 2 fulfills the second half of the College Writing Requirement. Like English 1, English 2 is a composition course designed to provide a foundation for writing in other courses. Unlike English 1, English 2 offers students the opportunity to choose among several seminar topics, all of which are approached in an interdisciplinary way. While drawing on various materials including fiction, essays, films and other visual and aural texts, English 2 puts the primary emphasis on students' own writing. English 2 is offered both semesters, with substantially fewer sections in the fall.

African American Presence

What have been the experiences of African Americans in the U.S.? How have African Americans attempted to construct their own identities and how have other Americans attempted to define "Blackness"? How have issues of class, gender, sexuality, regionalism, and skin tone impacted the formation of a collective African American identity? In this course, which is primarily devoted to increasing writing proficiency, we will use readings and texts from various disciplines to think about what it means to be African American in the U.S. and how this heterogeneous identity is expressed in different forms.

Asian American Experience

This is a composition course exploring the heterogeneity and multiplicity of Asian American identity construction through close examination of texts by both Asian Americans and non-Asian Americans. How have Asian Americans been represented in films and books? Can only Asian American artists authentically portray Asian Americans? Do Asian American writers and filmmakers have a social responsibility to counter and challenge stereotypical depictions, or can they just tell an "American" story? Students will read stories about "coming of age" in various media, such as the film, Better Luck Tomorrow; the novel, American Son; and Asian American X, the anthology of essays by college-age Asian Americans. Through class discussions students will consider identity formation, but the primary mode of expression will be writing. Students will consistently practice writing and discuss their processes with their colleagues.

Differences

What does it mean to be "different"—politically, religiously, racially or ethnically, sexually, or by reason of class or disability—from the social "norm"? How do those in the social "norm" react when they encounter those who are different? If the social norm is white, Protestant, male, heterosexual, and middle class, how do writers in other categories imagine themselves in relation to this "norm"? What are the special problems and opportunities for writers who are "different"? These are some of the questions to be addressed in this course which is devoted, primarily, to increasing proficiency in writing.

Films About Love, Sex, & Society

Many films deal with romantic relationships and the possibilities for happiness in them, raising questions about male and female social roles and about lovers both heterosexual and homosexual at odds with society or coming to terms with it. We will look at a selection of films, some older and black and white, some more recent, some English-language, some foreign-language (with subtitles); and we will talk about the issues they raise. Readings will be assigned on the films and on the broader issues. Students will be required to attend film screenings on specified
evenings. We will do various types of writing, including formal analytical essays, film reviews, and informal response papers; and students' writing will be central.

Love and Sexuality

In addition to examining love and sexuality both separately and with regard to one another, we will look at related issues such as gender, sex roles, sex, homosexuality, heterosexuality, narcissism, sadism, masochism, affection, marriage, marriage alternatives, divorce, adultery, pornography, prostitution, incest, and violence. Course materials will include some of the following: essays, theoretical writings, fiction, mythology, oral traditions, popular culture, and advertising. Students' ideas, interests, and experience will help guide the class, and students' writing will be the center of it.

Other Worlds

What is real? Who says so? The common theme of this course is the human urge to explore other dimensions of reality and create alternate representations of consciousness. Readings may address myths, the supernatural, fairy tales, medieval romances, underworlds, and futurist visions. We will share our own ideas about boundaries—or lack of boundaries—between worlds. A central concern will be students' writing.

Road Stories

All writing involves exploration, but writing about travel has always provided people with a distinctive opportunity to explore, re-imagine and then represent themselves, other cultures and other natures. This semester, we will be writing about travel in the age of globalization and the information superhighway. How does tourism change tourists and the cultures they visit? Can a quest come from a brochure? Why go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem or Mecca when many of us can see these sites on our computer screens every night? Indeed, why travel at all? To help us answer such questions, we will be reading a variety of texts, both fiction and non-fiction, and we will view at least one road movie. But the focus of the course will remain on our own writing. How do we explore and then represent our own insights into the meaning of travel today?

Conformity and Rebellion

How does one act on discontent? What are its consequences? Does conformity always imply a sacrifice of individuality? Does rebellion always lead to marginalization? We will examine the tensions between conformity and rebellion in a variety of contexts: political, social, familial, and religious. Readings will include novels, short stories, plays and essays, and we may also consider other media such as film or music. Discussion of these materials and the issues raised by them will provide the basis for the student writing that is at the center of the course.

Family Ties

This writing course explores the family as a locus for conflict, alienation and reconciliation, as a center for the formation of identity, and as a source of joy. We will hear the voices of mothers, fathers, daughters, and sons as they speak of the experience of being within a family; and we will ask how families are formed. Strands of shared DNA define some, while legal documents establish others. Often people who are unrelated by biology or law nonetheless consider themselves family. While the work of novelists, essayists, biographers, and filmmakers will be the basis of our inquiry into topics as ancient as sibling rivalry and as contemporary as the ethics of reproductive technology, we will focus most of our attention on students' own writing about family ties.

Nature and Writing (formerly "Environmental Visions")

If we are--according to widely accepted clichés--"natural creatures" and "part of nature," how is it that we have become engineers and agents of a worldwide ecological crisis that threatens the non-human world and human life and society? What actually is our cultural and personal experience of the "natural world," and of our "place" within it? What are the meanings of "wilderness," "preservation," "balance," "ecology," "sustainability"? Beginning by reading and discussing a wide variety of texts, we will write critically and imaginatively about urgent social and political issues such as global climate change; energy production and use; city and land use planning; food production and consumption; air, water, and soil pollution; conservation and wilderness preservation; environmental justice. While
our primary goal is to improve our writing, we will also expand our understanding of the natural world and deepen our ability to explore ideas.

**English 3 Reading, Writing, Research**

Designed for international students and for students who speak English as an additional language, English 3 fulfills the first half of the College Writing Requirement. Like English 1, this course explores the principles of effective written communication and provides intensive practice in writing various types of expository prose, especially analysis and persuasion. Essays by contemporary and earlier writers will be examined as instances of the range and versatility of standard written English. Offered in the fall semester; consent of the instructor is required for admission.

**English 4 Writing Seminar**  
*Lynn Stevens, Director*

Designed for international students and for students who speak English as an additional language, English 4 fulfills the second half of the College Writing Requirement. As in English 2, the seminar topics of English 4 are approached in an interdisciplinary way. While drawing on various materials including fiction, essays, films and other visual and aural texts, English 4 puts the primary emphasis on students' own writing. Offered in the spring semester; prerequisites are English 1 or 3, and consent of the instructor.