Course Descriptions: Fall 2016

English 1-4, First Year Writing

English 1 Expository Writing

*English 1 fulfills the first half of the college writing requirement for liberal arts students. For School of Engineering students, English 1 fulfills the English requirement.*

English 1 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 for liberal arts students. School of Engineering students are not required to take English 2.*

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. English 1 (or 3) is a prerequisite for this course.

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.

Digital Media Cultures

Is Google making us stupid? Would we all be better off if our brains were directly linked to the web? Should we legalize human-robot marriage? In this writing-intensive course, we will reflect upon, analyze, and argue our way through such questions, as we investigate the increasing presence and power of computers and networked devices in various spheres of daily life—education, commerce, political life, family life, sex, art, entertainment, and war. Course readings and viewings, as well as your own essays, will consider, for example, how digitization has transformed media industries as well as our own deep-seated habits of visual and auditory consumption; the extent to which social media has upended traditional modes of self-presentation, group formation, and civic engagement; and the ways in which notions of artificial intelligence—from the early days of robotics to recent representations of cyborgs and cyberpunks in film, literature, and pop culture—challenge us to reimagine what it means to be human and, even more fundamentally, what it means to be alive. Over the course of the semester, you will produce no fewer than thirty pages of polished, peer-reviewed writing explicating and evaluating the dynamics, stakes, and implications of our ever-evolving digital life.

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?

English 3: Reading, Writing, Research

*English 3 fulfills the first half of the college writing requirement for liberal arts students. For School of Engineering students, English 3 fulfills the English requirement.*

English 3 is designed for international students and for students who speak English as an additional language. 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. English 3 is offered in the fall semester as pass/fail.