

March 17, 1998

To: Donald Masterson
Chair, Writing-across-the-Curriculum steering committee

From: Robert Moore
Chair, English Department *R. M.*

Re: proposal for English department writing plans for majors in English Literary Studies and English Writing Arts

The English Department proposes distinct writing plans for students in each of its two major tracks, Literary Studies and Writing Arts. These plans are designed to insure that students majoring in either of the English tracks will write frequently throughout their coursework in each program, developing and practicing their skills in written expression and, in doing so, fulfilling the Advanced Expository Writing component of the revised General Education program.

What follows, then, is a statement of our goals and objectives, a delineation of the way in which we propose that our students will meet those goals, and an explanation of how the plan fulfills the guidelines published by the W-A-C Steering Committee and the spirit of the Advanced Expository Writing requirement in the new Gen. Ed. program.

I. GOALS:

Written expression is central to both tracks of the English major. Writing tasks, formal and informal, are woven into every course the English Department offers in both programs. The goals of writing tasks within our courses include:

- to enable students to use informal writing tasks as a tool to learn course material, that is, to help them understand writing as a technique of visible thinking, a way in which they may explore how ideas connect with one another;
- to develop students' understanding of writing as a process beginning with the stimulus that calls for a written response (the assignment) through stages of invention, drafting, revising, and editing to produce the final piece;
- to develop students' abilities to use writing to communicate ideas, information, and understandings clearly to an audience;
- to give students opportunities to practice various modes of writing characteristic of the professional writing in the respective fields of literary studies and creative writing;
- to demand students write frequently enough so that they can develop a sense of their own voices in writing, a sense of their particular range of styles as writers;
- to improve students' command over the technical features of writing, including the conventions of Edited American English and the conventions of MLA forms of documentation;
- to advance students' research skills in the discipline of literary studies and their abilities to integrate the fruits of their research into their own written expression.

II. OBJECTIVES:

Each course offered by the English Department demands significant writing. That said, the amount of writing, the kinds of writing required, the ways in which that writing is used, and the attention given to the writing process will vary among the courses. English Department courses can broadly be described as falling under three categories:

(1) courses in which the developing of writing skills is a primary focus of the course (courses such as ENG 204 Writing about Literature, ENG 302 Advanced Composition, and any of the EWA writing workshop seminars will fall within this category);

(2) capstone courses in which practicing writing skills in the forms characteristic of the discipline is a primary focus of what students are asked to do (courses such as ENG 366 Literary Criticism and ENG 465 Advanced Literary Seminar fit this category); and

(3) literature courses in which through writing, both formal and informal, students discover what they have to say about what they have read. Such courses give them extensive practice in expressing themselves in writing, and writing is a major component in evaluating students' performance.

The first two categories meet the Writing-across-the-Curriculum Guidelines for *Writing Seminars*. These courses are restricted to 25 or fewer students. Students will be asked to complete several formal writing assignments (formal essays, precis, term papers), requiring them to develop a thesis, support it oftentimes with material gathered from outside sources, and express themselves in ways approximating the standards of Edited American English. Many, if not most, of these formal assignments will go through multiple drafts, sometimes in a workshop format critiqued within the class, other times in a student-teacher conference. Evaluation of students' performance in these seminar classes depends primarily, but not exclusively, on evaluation of written assignments.

The third category fulfills the W-A-C Guidelines for *Writing Courses*. These courses may range in size from 15 to 100 students, though characteristically most are offered with caps of 35 students. Students will be asked to complete several formal writing tasks (these may include formal essays, precis, reviews, term papers, collaborative group reports, and/or essay exams) and several informal writing tasks (reading journals, in-class response/reaction pieces, summaries, capsules, self-reflections, for example), spaced periodically throughout the semester. These courses encourage students to write throughout the semester in order to enhance the learning process. They also encourage students to sharpen their skills in using Edited American English.

III.(a) English Department Writing Plan for Literary Studies majors

- (1) ENG 204 Writing about Literature -- this course will be a writing seminar
- (2) ENG 366 Literary Criticism -- this course will be a writing seminar
- (3) ENG 465 Advanced Literary Seminar -- this course will be a writing seminar
- (4) ENG 3XX any 300-level literature course or ENG 302 Advanced Composition -- these courses would meet the definition of a writing course
- (5) ENG 4XX any 400-level literature course -- these courses would meet the definition of a writing course

ENG 204 Writing about Literature (enrollment 22/section; 5-8 sections/semester). This course is required of majors in both tracks of the English program and concentrates in English from the School of Education. Currently three sections/year are designated for the Honors Program and the course is used by those students to fulfill the General Education Basic Writing requirement. The course requires at least 6 formal essays, including a thesis-centered research paper. Most formal assignments are carried through revisions. Term grades are based primarily on the essays written for class. Majors usually take this course in the second semester of their freshman year or the first semester of their sophomore year.

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Non-majors are welcomed and typically do enroll.

ENG 366 Literary Criticism (enrollment 22-25/section; 2-3 sections/semester). This course is required of majors in both tracks of the English program and minors in the Literary Studies track. The course requires at least 5 formal essays. Students are encouraged to write from the perspectives of different theoretical approaches to literature. Term grades are based primarily on the essays written for class. Majors usually take this course in their junior or first semester of senior year. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites. A few do enroll typically.

ENG 465 Seminar in Advanced Literary Studies (enrollment 15-20/section; 1-2 sections/semester). This course is considered the capstone seminar course required of majors in the Literary Studies track of the English major. The course requires an extensive formal research project and presentation, workshopped in drafts in student/teacher conferences. Frequently, it includes several shorter pieces of formal writing, including such things as reviews, precis, critiques, and capsules. Students are asked to do extensive bibliographical research in preparation of writing a formal essay and presenting orally the conclusion of the project. Majors usually take this in their senior year sometime after they have completed ENG 366. Non-majors are discouraged from enrolling in this course.

ENG 3XX any 300-level literature course or ENG 302 Advanced Composition (enrollment will vary from 15-100 with most courses capped at 35; typically the department offers approximately 20 such courses/semester plus 5 sections of ENG 302). These courses meet the W-A-C Guidelines for *Writing Courses* (see II. above). Majors begin taking these courses usually in the second semester of their sophomore year and will take 8-13 of these courses in the completion of the major. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites, and many do enroll each semester. ENG 302 Advanced Composition (enrollment capped at 22 students/section; 4-6 sections/semester) fits the requirements of a *Writing Seminar*. English majors do not frequently enroll in this course but are free to elect the course; rather, it is a requirement for English concentrates in both Elementary and Secondary Education. Other non-majors enroll frequently as well.

ENG 4XX any 400-level literature course (enrollment will vary from 15-35; typically the department will offer 2-3 such courses/semester). These courses meet the W-A-C Guidelines for *Writing Courses* (see sec. II above). Majors begin taking these courses in the second semester of their junior year or the first semester of their senior year and may take more than one of these courses in the completion of the major. These courses frequently will be dual-listed as undergraduate-graduate courses. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites. A few, mostly education concentrates, will enroll.

III.(b) English Department Writing Plan for Writing Arts majors

- (1) ENG 204 Writing about Literature*
- (2) ENG 366 Literary Criticism*
- (3) EWA 20X any of the selection of writing arts courses at the 200 level*
- (4) EWA 30X any of the selection of writing arts courses at the 300 level taught in a writing seminar format (thus excluding EWA 300)*
- (5) EWA 395 or EWA 40X any of the selection of specialty writing arts courses offered at the 395 or higher level and taught in a writing seminar format*

* All 5 courses in the Writing Arts majors' plan would meet the W-A-C definition of a writing seminar.

ENG 204 Writing about Literature (enrollment 22/section; 5-8 sections/semester). This course is required of majors in both tracks of the English program and concentrates in English from the School of Education. Currently three sections/year are designated for the Honors Program and the course is used by those students to fulfill the General Education Basic Writing requirement. The course requires at least 6 formal essays, including a thesis-centered research paper. Most formal assignments are carried through revisions. Term grades are based primarily on the essays written for class. Majors usually take this course in the second semester of their freshman year or the first semester of their sophomore year. Non-majors are welcomed and typically do enroll.

ENG 366 Literary Criticism (enrollment 22-25/section; 2-3 sections/semester). This course is required of majors in both tracks of the English program and minors in the Literary Studies track. The course requires at least 5 formal essays. Students are encouraged to write from the perspectives of different theoretical approaches to literature. Term grades are based primarily on the essays written for class. Majors usually take this course in their junior or first semester of senior year. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites. A few do enroll typically.

EWA 205/6/7/8/9 Nature of Poetry/Fiction/Drama/Non-Fiction/Journalism (enrollment capped at 22/section; 4-7 sections/semester). Writing Arts majors are required to take at least two of these introductory seminars. Each course requires extensive writing by students in the genre as well as study of models by professional writers in that genre. Drafts are workshopped by the class and student/teacher conferences are required. Term grades are based primarily on written work. Majors usually begin taking these courses as early as second semester of the freshman year. Non-majors are welcomed and typically do enroll.

EWA 304/5/6/7/8/9 Writing for Children, Creative Writing: Poetry/Fiction/Drama/Non-Fiction, Journalism (enrollment capped at 22/section; 4-5 sections/semester). Writing Arts majors are required to take at least two of these seminars. Each course requires extensive writing by students in the genre. Drafts are workshopped by the class and student/teacher conferences are required. Term grades are based primarily on written work. Majors usually begin taking these courses in the second semester of their sophomore year. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites and a few typically do enroll.

EWA 395 or 405/6/7/8 Advanced Writing: Poetry/Fiction/Drama/Non-Fiction (enrollment is capped at 22/section; 2-3 sections/semester). Writing Arts majors are required to take at least one of these seminars. Each course requires extensive writing by students in the genre. Drafts are workshopped by the class and student/teacher conferences are required. Term grades are based primarily on written work. Majors usually begin taking these courses in the second semester of their junior year. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites and a few typically do enroll.

IV. Special Circumstances

(a) Transfer students coming into the Literary Studies or the Writing Arts majors with a two-year degree will be exempted from the lower-division requirement of ENG 204. These students will be expected to meet each of the other requirements, but this should prove no additional burden since they would be naturally moving through these courses in the completion of the major. Students transferring to SUNY-Oswego from another institution without a two-year degree will need to present their previous transcript(s) for evaluation. In the case of Literary Studies majors, a determination will be made as to whether they have fulfilled the ENG 204

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requirement. In the case of Writing Arts majors, a determination will be made as to whether they have fulfilled the ENG 204 and the EWA 20X requirements. This represents no additional burden; these same transcript evaluations are currently made for all entering transfer students.

(b) Double majors will be expected to meet all the writing plan requirements in English. This presents no additional burden since these courses are also requirements to complete the majors in each of the programs.

(c) Undeclared majors or students switching majors to English will also be expected to take each of the courses in the writing plan requirement. This presents no additional burden since these courses are also requirements to complete the majors in each of the programs.

cc: Douglas Deal, Director of General Education
Jim Molinari, Chair, Board of General Education