Fall 2017 Course Descriptions for EN105, EN105H, and other Expository Writing (EW) Courses

Note: If you have questions about your placement or the Expository Writing Requirement, please see the New Student Advising & Registration Guide (p. 14) and the Placement Information sheet that was mailed to you.

EN 105  
WRITING SEMINAR II
The Department
4 credits
See Sections Below

In this seminar, students will gain experience in writing analytical essays informed by critical reading and careful reasoning. Special attention is given to developing ideas, writing from sources, organizing material, and revising drafts. The class will also focus on grammar, style, and formal conventions of writing. Peer critique sessions and workshops give students a chance to respond to their classmates’ work. Weekly informal writing complements assignments of longer finished papers. This course fulfills the all-college Foundation Requirement in expository writing. Each section of 105 is focused on a particular topic or theme.

EN 105 01  
FOOD FIGHTS
C. Jorgensen
MWF 8:00-8:55

EN 105 002  
FOOD FIGHTS
C. Jorgensen
MWF 9:05-10:00

As I write this, over fifty articles on the Internet debate President Donald Trump’s taste in steaks (30-day dry aged strip steak, well done, with ketchup). Headlines blare: “Trump’s Well-Done Steak Dinner was an Ethical Mess,” “We’re Totally Not Judging Trump’s Well-Done Steak, Ketchup,” and “What Donald Trump’s Love of Well-Done Steak Says About Him.” Really, Internet? But in everything from blog posts to research articles, we talk about food as if we are battling for the soul of America. In this course, we will look not only at the food we eat—good and bad, delicious and disastrous—but also at the rhetoric guiding our food debates.

In this course, you will develop your ability to analyze these food texts and understand their persuasive strategies, and you will learn how to enter into the debate, using the tools of rhetoric. These tools include various types of appeals (in Greek terminology, logos, ethos, and pathos) as well as strategies for invention (coming up with something to say), arrangement (organizing your thoughts), and style (writing clear, graceful, persuasive prose). There will be frequent formal and informal writing, peer review, revision exercises, and small-group workshopping. And at some point in the semester, there will probably be food.

EN 105 03  
FROM ONE ART INTO ANOTHER
J. Rogoff
WF 8:40-10:00

What happens when a memoir or a novel becomes a movie? When a fairy tale or a bible story inspires a ballet? When poems inspire painters and paintings inspire poets? When history or ancient myth provides matter for a theatrical work, or a hit play gets turned into an opera? We will explore the problems and pleasures created by adaptations and transformations of material from one art form to another. We will consider not only questions such as what gets omitted, what gets added, and what changes entirely, but, more important, how these “art transplants” reveal more fully the unique qualities of each art form, as well as some qualities that all the arts seem to share. Required reading, viewing, and listening will include several works of art, both adaptations and their sources, as well as a selection of illuminating secondary readings. One or more assignments might address an art exhibition or live performance at Skidmore. Our investigations of artistic adaptations and transformations will provide the basis for the course’s main task, creating and revising analytical essays. Regular brief writing assignments will prepare students to craft four essays and revise them.
EN 105 04  DIGITAL IDENTITY  P. Benzon
WF 10:10-11:30

The twenty-first century world is a digital culture. The social transformations set in motion by our connection to the web raise far-reaching questions for our identity. How is the rise of digital culture redefining how we understand ourselves as individuals and as social beings? Who do we become when we’re constantly connected to family, friends, and strangers across global space and time? What roles do images, data, and devices play in the construction of our identities? What does it mean to live, work, play, love, and die online?

In this course, we will explore these and other questions of digital identity as a way of developing critical writing and reading skills. Through analysis of a range of texts including fiction, film, blog posts, critical writings, and the everyday objects of the digital world, we’ll explore how digital technology plays a role in reshaping issues such as personality, privacy, gender, race, sexuality, and anonymity. Through an intensive process of drafting, workshopping, and revision, we’ll write critically and reflectively about our own constantly shifting positions and identities within the increasingly complex network of the web. Our ultimate goal will be to become stronger critical readers and writers as well as sharper, more engaged participants in the digital culture around us.

EN 105 05  BEYOND FAVS & TROLLS  O. Dunn
WF 10:10-11:30  READING & WRITING CRITICISM

“Criticism is more creative than creation,” wrote Oscar Wilde. Do you agree? Disagree? In this class, we’ll begin with gut reactions, but we’ll move beyond the easy task of liking or hating into the more complicated task of understanding. Through careful observation of our subject, be it visual art, literature, or American culture, we can work to form critical opinions—and then write about them.

To guide our writing, we’ll read the work of many different critics, writing on many different subjects: Claudia Rankine on racism, Teju Cole on photography, Chuck Klosterman on Britney Spears, Lynne Trusse on grammar, and Miranda July on Rihanna, just to name a few. We’ll work to understand what makes criticism good—must it be serious? Outrageous? Even-tempered? Can criticism be as creative as creation? We’ll pay special attention to how each critic we read crafts her argument, how each writer persuades you to see things her way. Using these tools, you’ll create criticism of your own, from short reviews to longer, sustained works of critical thought. By the end of the semester, after drafting and revision, you’ll have a portfolio of polished writing.

EN 105 06  THIRSTY BOOTS: TRAVEL WRITERS HIT THE ROAD  S. Welter
TTh 2:10-3:30

EN 105 07  THIRSTY BOOTS: TRAVEL WRITERS HIT THE ROAD  S. Welter
TTh 3:40-5:00

EN 105 08  THIRSTY BOOTS: TRAVEL WRITERS HIT THE ROAD  S. Welter
TTh 6:30-7:50

Writer Mary Oliver asks, “Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?” For many, the answer would be immediate: travel! Students in this seminar will read a wide variety of writers, ancient and modern, women and men, Eastern and Western, highlighting the power of travel to spark self-discovery, nurture friendship, change world views, and draw connections across geographic and cultural landscapes. As William Least Heat-Moon wrote, “On the road, where change is continuous and visible, time is not; rather it is something the rider infers. Time is not the traveler’s fourth dimension – change is.” Through reading, discussion, and analytic writing, this course will trace the nature of this change, ultimately offering students the opportunity to write a travel essay of their own.
An interdisciplinary exploration of love as explained and represented by thinkers and artists over the centuries. From Plato to Kundera, Erich Fromm to Colette, perspectives of philosophy, psychology, anthropology, and myth studies will be featured along with drama, fiction, and film.

En 105 012  TRUE/FALSE: EXPERIMENTS IN DOCUMENT WRITING  C. Aldarondo
MW 4:00-5:20

John Grierson famously described documentary film as ‘the creative treatment of actuality.’ So what does it mean to get creative with the truth? This course will tackle the trickiness of documentary truth as an opportunity for inquiry and experimentation. This ‘creative’ act of shaping the world in which we live will stoke our writing about a wide range of documentaries that you will screen each week. We will explore various ways to write about and in documentary from multiple critical and creative angles, including film reviews, scholarly research, and voice-over scripts.

En 105 013  TRIBE  B. Black
TTh 9:40-11:00

As humans, we long to belong. Gangs, squads, memes, the in-group, our posse, social networks…community is something we crave. It is human nature to connect, to have contact and to form social bonds. Indeed, we have been called the social species. In this course, we will examine the kinds of belonging that help to construct communities of all kinds: nations, generations, homes, occupy movements, the politics of war, even the culture of the cool with its strong delineations of insiders and outsiders. And our questions will be many: How much must we have in common in order to feel a sense of belonging? How do we know when we belong? What are the circumstances necessary for a sense of belonging? In the age of Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat, are we losing our ability to connect? Among the works we’ll discuss are J.D. Vance’s Hillbilly Elegy, the Academy Award-winning film Moonlight, Marina Keegan’s “The Opposite of Loneliness,” Ta-Nehisi Coates’s “My President Was Black,” and Sebastian Junger’s Tribe. We will also consider the antithesis of belonging: loneliness.

En 105 014  SUMMER READING, FALL WRITING  M. Marx
TTh 11:10-12:30

Can a book change a nation? That’s a bold claim. Perhaps more modestly, we should ask whether a book can change how you engage in your college education and the learning you are about to pursue over the next four years at Skidmore. For the past twenty years, Skidmore has embraced this belief by introducing students to the academic and intellectual life of the College by having them read a single book over the summer. Books have ranged from Seamus Heaney’s The Burial At Thebes to Ta-Nehisi Coates’s Between the World and Me.

For the class of 2021, the FYE has selected Randall Fuller’s The Book That Changed America: How Darwin’s Theory of Evolution Ignited a Nation. “Summer Reading, Fall Writing” maintains a spotlight on the 2021 summer reading by making it the centerpiece for this writing seminar. We will use writing to explore the text and use the text to develop our skills as writers. We will examine The Book That Changed America to understand the value of interdisciplinary learning; the intersections among individual lives, powerful ideas, and history; and the challenge of bold claims supported by thorough and captivating research. The summer reading will provide topics for our discussions, lessons for our writing, and jumping-off
points for issues beyond the pages of the book. Concentrating on critical thinking, analytical writing, and revision, our course work includes four formal papers, peer critiques, a class blog, and a writing-across-the-curriculum portfolio.

**EN 105 015  WRITING BETWEEN THE GLOBAL AND THE SINGULAR  J. Cermatori**

WF 12:20-1:40

This course aims to prepare you for undergraduate study at Skidmore College by developing your abilities for academic writing and reading. Our theme for Fall 2017 will be “Writing Between the Global and the Singular,” and together we will raise questions about what it means to write in an increasingly interconnected society. Throughout the term, we will read and respond to non-fiction essays from a variety of disciplines that consider the importance of cosmopolitanism, technology, economics, urbanism, literature, and identity (among other topics) for inhabiting and living consciously within our contemporary world. At the same time, we will focus on various skills and habits of mind that are essential to the writer’s craft—critical analysis, developing a writing process, research, using source material, and revision. Paying special attention to the dialogic nature of academic writing, students will read and respond to one another’s drafts during in-class workshop sessions. Our readings will include work by: Susan Sontag, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Joseph Stiglitz, Zadie Smith, Jonathan Lethem, and others.

**EN 105 016  WRITING ON DEMAND  L. Hall**

TTh 11:10-12:30

When the essayist Joan Didion was in her twenties, she wrote editorial copy for Vogue magazine on a wide range of subjects. In her forties, she noted that it is “easy to make light of this kind of ‘writing,’ [but] I do not make light of it at all: it was at Vogue that I learned a kind of ease with words... a way of regarding words not as mirrors of my own inadequacy but as tools, toys, weapons to be deployed strategically on a page.”

Inspired by Didion’s on-the-job apprenticeship, this course will ask you to undertake the work of a professional copywriter or ghostwriter. What might you be asked to compose? The introduction to the documentary “extras” on a Mad Men DVD (e.g., “The 1964 Presidential Campaign”). The “Our Story” blurb for the website of a local restaurant. A capsule biography for a mayoral candidate. A C.E.O.’s response to a request from Forbes: “Tell us about the biggest mistake you ever made as a leader.” The instructor will furnish you with material; with her guidance, you will shape it into publishable or, as the case may be, presentable prose.

Expect frequent short assignments. Your grade will be based on those assignments, your class participation, and a final exam.

**EN 105 017  DIGITAL IDENTITY  P. Benzon**

MW 2:30-3:50

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Whether or not we always realize it, gender constantly, quietly shapes our experiences—from determining which bathroom we use at a gas station, to framing others’ responses if we start to cry in public, to influencing the way we speak and write. But what is gender, actually? How is it constructed and maintained? In this class, we will analyze the way that biological and social definitions of gender compete with and inform each other, as well as the way that gender identities and expressions have varied historically and culturally. We will read and write about practices like drag and cross-dressing that play with normative expectations, as well as about nonbinary and transgender identities that reject the reduction of gender to the biological sex assigned on a birth certificate. Above all, we will write and talk about writing—in essays, short assignments, and peer review sessions—and we will explore how writing reflects gender and shapes our understanding of what gender is.

The honors sections of EN 105 offer highly motivated students with strong verbal skills the opportunity to refine their ability to analyze sophisticated ideas, to hone their rhetorical strategies, and to develop cogent arguments. Toward these goals, students write and revise essays drawing upon a variety of challenging readings and critique each other’s work for depth and complexity of thought, logic of supporting evidence, and subtleties of style.

Students must have an EW placement of EN105H to enroll in the class.

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Expect frequent short assignments. Your grade will be based on those assignments, your class participation, and a final exam.

The genre of Fantasy Film has prevailed for decades as an unpredictable source of pleasure and escape; as exploration of our anxieties and fears; as an adventure into the subconscious, or back through childhood memories; as a moral and ethical guide for the societies we inhabit; as a call to explore those realms that we may otherwise see only in dreams. The delights of fantasy cinema are endless and for their followers, they may inspire the composition of lively college level essays and stories.

In this essay-writing seminar, you will watch eleven fantasy films with the goal of interpreting them in well-structured essays.
The course is divided into three Units, with 3-4 films assigned per Unit. You will read relevant stories, craft short written responses, and then draft and revise a longer essay at the end of each course Unit. You will practice elements of essay craft, using primary and secondary source materials in study and research. You will consider: in what ways do fantasy film-makers re-envision familiar 19th century fairytales? What are the intersections of fantasy with its historical partner, realism? How are fantasy and memory entwined? How do science fiction fantasies about the evolution of the human mind condemn or defend that process? What is the cause of a human being’s need for fantasy? How do adventures through time or space express notions of family, inheritance, and destiny?

Some films in previous semesters have included: Pan’s Labyrinth, Spirited Away, Village of the Damned, Ex Machina, Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, Solaris, The Curious Case of Benjamin Button. Honors students will also study some foreign fantasy films.

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**EN 110  INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY STUDIES**

4 credits

**Section 01**  
MWF 10:10-11:05  
T. Wientzen

**Section 02**  
WF 10:10-11:30  
S. Goodwin

**Section 03**  
TTh 12:40-2:00  
K. Greenspan

**Section 04**  
TTh 8:10-9:30  
N. Junkerman

This course introduces students to the practice of literary studies, with a particular emphasis on the skills involved in close reading. The course aims to foster a way of thinking critically and with sophistication about language, texts, and literary production. We will ask such questions as how and why we read, what it means to read as students of literature, what writing can teach us about reading, and what reading can teach us about writing. The goal overall is to make the words on the page thrillingly rich and complicated, while also recognizing the ways in which those words have been informed by their social, political, aesthetic, psychological, and religious contexts. This course is writing intensive and will include some attention to critical perspective and appropriate research skills. (Fulfills the all-college Foundation Requirement in expository writing; prospective English majors are encouraged to take EN 110 prior to enrolling in 200-level courses.)

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**Anticipated English majors and minors:** If your English placement is at the EN-105 or EN-105H level and you plan on becoming an English major or minor, you should enroll in EN-110 (Introduction to Literary Studies) instead of EN-105 or EN-105H. EN-110 is required for the English major and minor, and it also will fulfill the EW requirement. EN-103, EN-105 and EN-105H do not count toward an English major. Consult the master schedule for the sections and times.

For a list of English Department Faculty, including contact information and web pages please visit the English Department Webpage at: [http://www.skidmore.edu/english/faculty/hours.php](http://www.skidmore.edu/english/faculty/hours.php)

For the English course listings and the complete Fall 2017 full prospectus of English courses see: [http://www.skidmore.edu/english/courses/index.php](http://www.skidmore.edu/english/courses/index.php)

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For a list of non-English Department courses that fulfill the Expository Writing Requirement see: [https://www2.skidmore.edu/studentsystem/allCollegeReq/index.cfm](https://www2.skidmore.edu/studentsystem/allCollegeReq/index.cfm) and descriptions below.
For Fall 2017 those courses include American Studies (AM) 101W, Sections 001 and 02 and Music (MU) 208W

**AM-101W 001 The Wizard of Oz**  
*G. Pfitzer*  
*MWF 9:05-10:00*

An interdisciplinary analysis of The Wizard of Oz, this course will examine the numerous adaptations of L. Frank Baum's classic tale to introduce students to the study of American culture, past and present. Students will read critically, think historically, practice interdisciplinarity, and acknowledge the intersections of race, class, and gender in order to analyze the ways that The Wizard of Oz, in its many versions, has reflected and shaped American culture. Students will consider primary and secondary sources that explore Oz through a range of media (fiction, film, theater, television, and music) and from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. In addition to reading Baum's The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (1900), students will consider MGM's The Wizard of Oz (1939); the "super soul" Broadway musical, The Wiz (1975), and its 1978 film adaptation; Pink Floyd's The Dark Side of the Moon (1973); Gregory Maguire's Wicked (1996); Stephen Schwartz's 2003 Broadway musical version of the Maguire novel; ABC television's The Muppets' Wizard of Oz (2005); and the television mini-series Tin Man (2007). (Fulfills expository writing requirement; fulfills social sciences requirement.)

**AM-101W 002 The City**  
*A. Wiley*  
*TTh 9:40-11:00*

Introduction to the interdisciplinary study of American culture, past and present. Emphasizes reading critically, thinking historically, practicing interdisciplinarity, and acknowledging diversity. Students will analyze and synthesize multiple kinds of primary sources (such as fiction, film, music, art) and disciplinary perspectives (sociology, economics, media criticism) to appreciate better the complexity of American life and culture. (Fulfills expository writing requirement; fulfills social sciences requirement.)

**MU-208W 001 Music and Culture**  
*G. Thompson*  
*MW 4:30 -05:50*

An intercultural introduction to music as culture. Topics include voice types, instrument categorizations, pitch and time systems, musical structure, transcription/notation, and ethnomusicology. (Fulfills expository writing requirement; fulfills humanities requirement.)