

Colby College
English 115 Section Descriptions – Spring 2010

*The English Department offers two majors, English and English-Creative Writing, as well as a minor in Creative Writing. The course catalogue lists the requirements for each. **Appropriate first-year courses in our majors are EN172 (the English Seminar), EN271 (Critical Theory), or any of the 200-level surveys.** Highly motivated students can take 300 and 400-level courses, but most of these courses assume that the students have taken the English Seminar and/or Critical Theory. For the English-Creative Writing major or the Creative Writing Minor, EN278 and EN279 are the introductory courses, but sophomores have priority for enrolment. If you are interested in the CW minor or English-CW major, you should register for a 200-level CW course for the fall of your sophomore year. Declaring a CW minor or an English-Creative Writing major does not improve your chances of getting into these very popular courses.*

A: MW 8:00-9:15 am “The Art of the Personal Essay”

Instructor: T. Mazzeo

This course focuses on how prose style shapes the articulation of personal voice and persona in writing essays. Students will learn to shape personal voice more actively in their writing through the analysis and imitation of essays written by a range of essayists. Class exercise and assignments will include: the study of rhetoric and implied argument; exercises in prose analysis, expository writing, and imitation; an intensive review of grammar and syntax in standard American English; and strategies of successful academic writing across the College. Assessment is based on daily quizzes, an examination, the completion of several short essays, and the completion of a final and more substantial “personal essay.”

B: MW 11:00am -12:15pm “The Art of the Personal Essay”

Instructor: T. Mazzeo

See description above

C: TR 9:30-10:45 “Writing about Literature”

Instructor: Narin van Court

The primary purpose of this course is to develop your critical and interpretive skills as readers, and your persuasive, analytical, and rhetorical strategies as writers. The ways in which we will go about achieving these related goals of reading and writing will vary over the course of the term, yet the emphasis will always be on the development of critical thinking and the translation of this critical thinking into clear and well-written essays. We will focus on writing about literature, and draw on the novels for the course as the inspiration for a variety of writing exercises that will encourage you to write clear, cogent, and rhetorically persuasive essays. The books for this course are modern novels, all of which share a concern with community and self-fashioning, and most of which use a variety of writing forms and genres to structure their narratives. We will become a community of readers and writers, and through class discussion of literature and contemporary issues, the writing process, and strategies for revision, we will encourage one another to listen attentively, speak confidently, and write eloquently.

D: TR 9:30-10:45 “Models of Voice”

Instructor: K. Stubbs

“A writer must be in command of a variety of styles, in order to draw on the style that is most appropriate to the situation” (Corbett and Connors, 3). What rhetorical strategies have worked well

for writers in the past? How can you refine your own critical voice by examining these models?

Through study of grammar and the principles of effective writing, and then through close readings, analyses, and imitations of a range of rhetorical strategies, you will build a repertory of skills upon which you will be able to draw for the forms of academic writing in which you will engage during your college career.

E: TR 1:00-2:15 "Thinking About Language"

Instructor: Suchoff, D.

How is a language different from a dialect? How are proper grammar rules formed, and what do they have to do with the way people actually talk? How do the rules change? How is our language different from foreign languages? Why is language mixture necessary (as in restaurant, the English word) and why is it despised ("a bad accent")? Reading and the writing of essays in this class will work on developing analytical, argumentative (college) writing, while we read about the history of language, style, and stories and essays by writers who open up questions of high and low language, assimilation to linguistic norms, and the way forms of speech and writing reflect larger social divisions and opportunities. Only students interested in reading about language and its history, and students willing to practice different styles of writing, should take this section. Take a look at John McWhorter, *The Power of Babel: A Natural History of Language* to get a feel for what some of the reading will be like.

F: TR 2:30-3:45 "Truths and Fictions"

Instructor: Barrett

Drama. Fiction. Film. Drawing on a range of materials from these three domains, we will explore the scope and limits of the literary and the peculiar talents of film. As we do so, we will ask what kinds of truths fiction can tell and what sorts of fictions may pass as truth. Ongoing and sustained attention to writing will form the backbone of the course. Closely tied to the readings and the films, frequent writing assignments—both formal and informal—will be directed toward developing critical thinking and persuasive argumentation. Attendance is required at occasional evening film screenings.

G. MW 11:00-12:15 "Food for Thought"

Instructor: Stokes

We will examine our cultural relationships with food through both canonical and contemporary food writing. Possible tangents include intersections with environmental literature, questions concerning sustainable consumption, and the industrialization of organic food.

H. MW 1:00-2:15 "Literature of the Memoir"

Instructor: C. Megan

Late twentieth century American literature saw the burgeoning of the memoir as a form of literary biography. Writers embraced the memoir as a forum to express values, heritage and to address social covenants and taboos. Though the memoir varies in its forms and styles, it narrates a history of the self and offers an understanding of cultural assumptions. In this section of EN115, students will study the origins of the memoir and its role in contemporary cultures. The course will consider the links between memoir and fiction and between memoir and autobiography with specific focus on how imagination, literary license and language distinguish memoir as its own genre. Students will interpret and analyze texts and learn to write critically about complex issues.