WRITING PROGRAM

Director, Stacey Sheriff
Program Affiliated Faculty: Assistant Professors Ghada Gherwash (Multilingual Writing Specialist, Writing Program), Meghan Hancock (Writing Program), Paula Harrington (Farnham Writers’ Center Director, Writing Program, and English), and Stacey Sheriff (Writing Program and English); Visiting Assistant Professors James Barrett (Writing Program and Classics), Elizabeth Ketner (Writing Program), and Elisabeth Stokes (Writing Program)

Writing is a crucial component of a liberal arts education. Accordingly, the mission of the Colby Writing Program is to support a culture of writing that ensures Colby students develop their writing and research abilities to become successful communicators in academic, personal, and, ultimately, professional environments after college.

The Writing Program is an academic program that draws on many disciplines, most notably the field of rhetoric and composition studies, which brings together writing and communications pedagogy, rhetorical theory, and research in writing across disciplines. It is responsible for coordinating and assessing first-year writing (W1); helping faculty develop upper-level writing in the majors and across the curriculum; offering faculty development around writing-related pedagogy and research; providing support for multilingual students through individual consultations and work with faculty; and, through the Farnham Writers’ Center, providing student peer-to-peer writing tutoring and faculty support.

Colby Writing Program faculty teach writing courses at varied levels, with a particular focus on first-year writing. For more information, please see the “Colby Writing Program” and “Farnham Writers’ Center” sections of the catalogue or visit the program website, colby.edu/writingprogram.

Course Offerings

WP111f Communication in Context Offered in the fall for international students who are not yet taking their first-year writing (W1) course. Introduces students to the needs and expectations for written and oral communication in American academic English. Students will read and reflect on a variety of nonfiction texts. Includes classroom discussions, reflective journals, essays, and an oral presentation. Students will write three multi-draft papers that focus on different topics. Thus, the primary goal is to hone students' communicative skills in English — both spoken and written. Previously listed as "Expository Writing Workshop." Three credit hours. GHERWASH

WP112f Writers’ Workshop An individualized, weekly tutorial session with a trained peer writing tutor from the Farnham Writers’ Center. Meets weekly for 1 hour during the time of your choice for a total of (at least) 10 hours per semester. Open to students from first-years to seniors. Students usually take WP112 with a W1 (first-year writing), senior thesis, or other writing-intensive courses. Meetings may focus on writing assignments, reading assignments, grammar, professors’ feedback or anything else related to writing or research for any courses. May be repeated for credit. Nongraded. One credit hour. HARRINGTON, SHERIFF

[WP114] Global English: Contemporary Expository Writing across Media An examination of "global English" to gain a better understanding of successful written communication, especially expository writing. We will review grammar, with a focus on the most common linguistic differences from other language groups; examine traditional rhetorical forms, from argument to advertising and from polemic to parody; study new media forms such as blogs, websites, Facebook, tweets, and graphic narratives; and explore these questions: How does language construct, reflect, limit, and transcend cultural meaning? How does usage change and why? What are the arguments for and against such changes? Students with working knowledge of more than one language especially welcome. Four credit hours. W1.

[WP115] First-Year Writing Frequent practice in expository writing to foster clarity of organization and expression in the development of ideas. The assigned reading varies, but all Writing Program 115 courses discuss student writing. Students should select their first-choice course and submit alternate preferences via the Web page provided. Four credit hours. W1.

WP115As First-Year Writing: Rhetoric, Writing, and Social Change Focuses on effective writing, rhetorical analysis, and communicating with different audiences—including the Colby community. Writing projects will include three analytical essays and a final, public writing project in which each student identifies an issue in the Colby community, researches the situation, and develops a realistic proposal to improve it. Each week, we focus on a different aspect of college-level academic writing (e.g., paragraph development, sentence-level editing, analyzing research sources, making sound arguments, etc.) Readings are diverse and include non-fiction essays, newspaper journalism, videos, and scholarly writing on rhetoric, identity, and literacy. Previously listed as English 115. Four credit hours. W1. SHERIFF

[WP115B] First-Year Writing: Truths and Fictions Poem. Short Story. Essay. As we read materials from these domains, we will ask what kinds of truths fiction can tell and what sorts of fictions may pass as truth. Ongoing and sustained focus on writing forms the backbone
of the course. Closely tied to the readings, frequent writing assignments—formal, informal, and creative—are directed toward developing critical thinking, persuasive argumentation, and a mastery of grammar and style. Previously listed as English 115.  

WP115Cs  First-Year Writing: Reimagining the Essay  Reconsiders the essay's potential for self-expression and analytical argumentation. Students read powerful essays of the past 70 years, write five essays, and reimagine their relationship to the genre. Of particular emphasis are clarity of expression, development of ideas, logical organization, and effective and correct use of research to support claims—both to prepare for future writing assignments and to appreciate the form as a means to express ideas complexly, gracefully, and persuasively. Previously listed as English 115.  

WP115Ds  First-Year Writing: Food for Thought  The food we interact with is an expression of our humanity, our many cultures, our selves. This peer-review and process-oriented course combines reading across genres with the development of writing skills that can be applied in all disciplines. Students will practice personal narrative, argument, synthesis, and research-based writing and read work by both new and established authors.  

WP115Es  First-Year Writing: Writing through the Multicultural Lens  We will use the theme of multiculturalism/multilingualism as our framework to analyze a multitude of non-fictional texts that are composed by writers from a variety of cultural/linguistic backgrounds. The primary goal is to encourage students to question, interrogate, and challenge the stereotypes that have prevailed in the news and social media, aiming to foster cross-cultural communication. Students will write four papers that center around a topic of their choice. Students from underrepresented contexts, domestically and globally, as well as those with a functional knowledge of an additional language(s) are especially welcome.  

WP115Fs  First-Year Writing: Origin Stories and Graphic Novels  TBD.  

WP115Gs  First-Year Writing: Rich and Poor in American Fiction  Invites you to examine an American literary movement—social realism—through the lens of class extremes, looking at how fiction has helped create and reinforce cultural notions of “rich” and “poor.” We will read canonical works as well as contemporary popular literature with an eye toward fictional representation of class division. We will also apply class theory, such as that of Thorstein Veblen, to narrative and will contextualize texts through New Historicism. In the process, we will explore, even deconstruct, our own views of class identities. Assignments will include a short position paper, a longer research paper, a blog, a group project, and a midterm.  

WP115Hs  First-Year Writing: Writing about Writing  Covers writing theory by inviting students to explore their own and scholars’ conceptions of how writing gets things done, what “good” writing is, and how writing tasks and genres are defined by specific contexts, rhetorical situations, and communities. Students will think about themselves as composers—what processes work best and how their past experiences shape their writerly identities. Major assignments include a definition paper on a writing concept, an autoethnography exploring students’ writing processes, a research paper on the ways in which a discipline of interest circulates knowledge through writing, and a remediation project that transforms a previous work into a digital medium for a new audience.  

WP120As  Language, Thought, and Writing: Literary Conversations  Individual works of literature take part in a larger literary conversation that transcends time and space. Writers join the conversation by replicating existing literary forms and conventions. They also respond to perennial themes that have sparked writers’ imaginations. Literary scholars also engage in ongoing conversations about the purpose and meaning of literary texts. We will enter these conversations by reading, writing about, and discussing literary texts. We will have regular opportunities to respond creatively and analytically, in speech and writing, to some amazing poems, plays, and novels. Previously listed as English 120.  

WP151A  Reading and Writing about Literature: Gothic Literature  We will trace the origins of the Gothic in literature and explore the human appetite for the sublime and the supernatural, reading poetry, short stories, and novel-length works. Previously listed as English 151.