WRITING PROGRAM

Director, Stacey Sheriff

Program Affiliated Faculty: Assistant Professors Ghada Gherwash (Farnham Writers’ Center Director, Writing Program, and English), Carl Schliachte (Writing Program), Stacey Sheriff (Writing Program and English), and Chaoran Wang (Multilingual Writing Specialist, Writing Program); Senior Lecturers Elizabeth Ketner (Writing Program), Carolyn Megan (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. The Writing Program 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

[WP111] 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.

WP112fs 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. GHERWASH, SHERIFF

WP113f Conversation Hour for International Students This one-credit course is designed for students who wish to practice/hone their oral academic English. Discussion based, which uses different texts and visual materials to prompt oral discussion. Students are expected to prepare for class discussion by reading texts, writing reflections, and viewing visual materials ahead of time. International students, and others with multilingual backgrounds are especially welcome. This course may be repeated twice for credit. Non-graded. One credit hour. GHERWASH

[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.

WP115Af 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. Four credit hours. W1. SHERIFF

WP115Cfs 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 reimage 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. Four credit hours. W1. KETNER
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.  Four credit hours.  W1.  STOKES

WP115Ef  First-Year Writing: Writing through the Multilingual Lens  This course focuses on the global status of English as a lingua franca and as a de facto language of the U.S. and attempts to answer the question: who owns global English? We will take a sociolinguistic approach to investigate language and how language users adopt language for different purposes, such as writing and speaking. It covers topics related to language variation (e.g., Konglish, China English, etc.). The primary goal of the course is to encourage students to interrogate issues related to language use, such as accents and linguistic profiling. Students will read and reflect on non-fiction texts by writers from a variety of cultural/linguistic backgrounds. Students will write four papers, with drafts. Students from underrepresented contexts, domestically and globally, as well as those with a functional knowledge of an additional language(s) are especially welcome.  Four credit hours.  W1.  GHERWASH

[WP115G]  First-Year Writing: The Face of Poverty in American Literature  Invites students to explore American writing (fiction and narrative non-fiction) through the lens of poverty, with a special focus on depictions of homes and homelessness. We will investigate how writers construct "the face of poverty" in such works as Jacob Ril's How the Other Half Lives, Stephen Crane's Maggie: A Girl of the Streets, John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath, Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye, and Matthew Desmond's Evicted, and reflect critically on notions of class in today's era of income inequality. Assignments will include short essays, a Colby Museums writing assignment, a research project, and a reflective blog.  Four credit hours.  W1.

[WP115H]  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.  Four credit hours.  W1.

WP115If  First-Year Writing: Landscape and Place  Reading fiction, essays, and poetry, we will explore the nature of place and landscape as physical, social, and intellectual and consider what it suggests about American culture and ideas. We will consider how place and landscape, both real and imagined, influence writers as well as how these concerns influence our own lives as readers, writers, thinkers, and dreamers. In this first-year writing course, students will write personal narratives, argument, and synthesis as well as develop their critical reading skills.  Four credit hours.  W1.  MEGAN

WP115Js  First-Year Writing: Non-fiction and the Imagination  The focus for our reading and writing will be the creative non-fiction essay. This form draws upon the skills of fiction, poetry and expository writing to arrive to the writer's unique perspective of the world. Incorporating diverse elements such as research, dialogue, description, characterization, rhythm and sound, the writer imagines, questions, contradicts and complicates subject matter. Students will write personal narratives, argument, and synthesis as well as develop their critical reading skills. This course does not count as a workshop for the English: Creative Writing major.  Four credit hours.  W1.  MEGAN

WP115Kfs  First-Year Writing: Writing and Public Space (in a Socially-Distanced Age)  This writing-intensive course examines how people use writing to build and sustain communities through activism, advocacy, and affiliation. Especially at a time when public spaces are less available, we will explore how people use writing to create and shape physical, virtual, and imagined community spaces, such as debates over monuments and statues or activism in social media to organize efforts like the 2018 March for Our Lives. Students will draft and revise text and multimedia to write for a variety of publics and communities. Major assignments include an analytical essay; a longer, collaboratively-written essay for which students choose a public space to reimagine; and a multimodal project.  Four credit hours.  W1.  SCHLACHTE

WP115Lf  First-Year Writing: Cross-Cultural Ideas of Family  Students will examine, through text and image, historical and current notions of family structures across different cultures, all the while drawing upon their own cultural/linguistic backgrounds and those of classmates. The course aims to foster critical thinking and digital literacies, as well as to hone reading and writing skills to aid students in becoming more rhetorically sophisticated readers and writers — in the classroom and in a multicultural world. Students will complete four major writing projects, all revised, designed to improve their abilities to analyze and write about textual, visual, and multimodal texts for various audiences and purposes. Students from underrepresented contexts, domestically and globally, as well as those with a functional knowledge of an additional language(s) are especially welcome.  Four credit hours.  W1.  WANG

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.  Four credit hours.  W1.  KETNER

[WP151A]  Reading and Writing about Literature: Dark and Stormy Nights  Why do we love ghost stories? Why do haunted houses and castles and secrets and scary things fascinate and thrill us? We will trace the origins and patterns of the Gothic in literature and explore the human appetite for the sublime and the supernatural. This peer-review and process-oriented course combines reading across genres with the development of writing skills that can be applied in all disciplines.  Four credit hours.  W1.

WP214s  Tutoring Writing in Theory and Practice  Listed as English 214.  Four credit hours.  GHERWASH

[WP221]  Public Speaking: Building Confidence and Passion  Communicating ideas effectively is one of life's most valuable skills. In this course, you'll learn to create and deliver powerful messages using acting skills (physical, vocal, intellectual and emotional expression) while receiving intensive and specific coaching from both peers and the instructor. For many people, public speaking is reported to be one of the most stressful activities. Using breath control and mental imagery, you'll learn to channel your nervous energy and build your confidence. In a small group, you'll have plenty of time to practice in a safe environment or, as Samuel Beckett wrote: Try again. Fail again. Fail better. Previously offered as Writing Program 297 (Jan Plan 2021).  Three credit hours.

[WP226]  Situating the Essay: The Tradition and the Craft  Situates the literary and rhetorical traditions of the essay through a study of its history beginning with Michel De Montaigne to contemporary essayists such as Rebecca Solnit and Claudia Rankine. We will read well-known essays and analyze their rhetorical approaches and conventions to deepen our understanding of the form. Students will write their own expository, narrative, experimental and personal essays. Previously offered as Writing Program 298 (Spring 2021).  Prerequisite: Any W1 course.  Four credit hours.

WP310s  Professional Writing  How to respond to rhetorical situations in the professional world. Emphasizes principles that can be adapted to any professional context. Students will learn how to assess the needs of rhetorical situations in the professional world, how to develop an understanding of the purposes and audiences of professional genres, how to prepare for the complexities of working in group settings, and how interrogation of issues of privilege, prejudice, and access to information allows us to design professional documents that are more inclusive.  Prerequisite: W1 course.  Four credit hours.  W2, U.  SCHLACHT

WP320s  Introduction to Rhetoric and Writing Studies  This course will introduce you to rhetorical theory and the writings of major figures in history of rhetoric, such as Aristotle, Isocrates, St. Augustine, and Kenneth Burke. We will learn about persuasion and what's essential for using rhetoric to change the opinions of others. Writing assignments will be varied and include rhetorical analysis, voice essays, and formal proposals. The course will be conducted in a seminar style that emphasizes close reading and active participation.  Prerequisite: Any W1 course.  Four credit hours.  SHERIFF