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Department of English
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23 June 1981

MEMORANDUM

To: English Department Teaching Staff
From: Joseph J. Moldenhauer, Chairman *JJM*
Subject: E346K: Writing in Different Disciplines

First, a status report on the Department's English degree requirements and composition plan. Following its passage by the University Council, it was distributed as major legislation to all members of the General Faculty on 14 May. Only two protests were tendered; therefore, the legislation has been forwarded to the Office of the President.

Sample course outlines for the three variants of the required upper-division writing course, E346K, were given to all members of the departmental teaching staff prior to the 1 May department meeting. Only one of those variants, "Writing in the Natural Sciences and Technologies," was discussed (see Minutes). I enclose herewith additional copies of the three outlines, plus a copy of the "Writing in Different Disciplines" part of the legislation passed by a large majority in a mail ballot, May, 1980.

The course outlines were developed this year by sub-groups of the E346K curriculum planning committee, and were discussed by the parent committee. They are still, however, sample outlines, chiefly designed for the running of pilot sections next year and for the information of faculty who may be teaching one or another E346K variant. It is expected that faculty members will develop their own outlines prior to a semester in which they teach E346K. The only binding considerations will be (1) conformity with the broad catalogue description of the course, (2) agreement with the course description in last year's departmental legislation, and (3) a uniform textbook in each variant course for at least the opening weeks of the semester -- this last constraint for obvious pragmatic reasons.

The E346K committee solicits your responses to the Arts and Humanities variant and the Social and Behavioral Sciences variant outlines, plus such responses to the outline for Writing in the Natural Sciences and Technologies as you were not able to give at the last departmental meeting. If you feel inclined to develop a different outlines, the committee will be most interested in seeing it. Any suggestions consistent with the departmental legislation on this course will be

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welcome. If you can suggest other possible uniform texts than those proposed in the three course outlines, please do so. Address any responses on Arts/Humanities to Alan Gribben, on Social/Behavioral Sciences to Horace Newcomb, and on Natural Sciences/Technologies to Elizabeth Harris, please.

I expect that by September 1982 there will be a departmental committee charged with managing the machinery of E346K: some 4,000-4,500 students per year will take the course when the new requirements are fully in effect.

JJM:psw
Attachments

E346K: Writing in Different Disciplines

Prerequisites: 54 hours (junior standing), including E306 and E316K by course, transfer credit, or placement exemption.

Content: to be offered in three versions, Writing in the Arts and Humanities, Writing in the Social and Behavioral Sciences, Writing in the Natural Sciences and Technology. Readings to include classic and contemporary expository essays and books in these disciplines, and some selections which concern the social, ethical, and philosophical aspects of the disciplines. Sample course outlines to be developed by committee; syllabus for AI sections.

Exemptions: SAT Verbal 600 (credit with B), 625 (credit with A) cutting scores; will exempt top ca. 10% by 1979-80 figures. Transfer credit for a composition course beyond E306 satisfies this requirement.

Nature and amount of writing: ca. 6 major themes, chiefly analytical; experimentation encouraged. Panel grading to be investigated.

Class size and format: normal sections with maximum of 25 students; alternative formats possible, under supervision of course committee.

Foreign students: Q sections of one or more of the three versions to be devised by committee.

E346K: WRITING IN THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

An upper-division course in writing skills, particularly those involving analysis, with readings drawn from classic and contemporary essays and books. More than half of the readings should have been written originally in English (i.e., not be translations), so that students can imitate effective styles for discussing art, philosophy, literature, popular culture, and related topics. A standard grammar and style book should be assigned. Readings will average one major essay or chapter per class meeting for sections meeting three times per week.

The course is intended for all students in the arts and humanities, not merely those majoring in English. Therefore its format and subject matter can explore a range of questions concerning Western art, ideas, history, and languages (European and American civilization, in other words, will be the primary "content" stress of the course). The instructor leads discussions of the techniques of effective writing and investigations of the history of music, painting, sculpture, philosophy, and literature.

No more than three weeks should be devoted to the study of any individual literary text or primary author, however important that work or figure may seem to the instructor; in the other weeks the class studies other products of creative and intellectual endeavor, as well as the writing skills expected of students who have majored in the arts and humanities by employers and graduate schools. Variant sections can only be accommodated if they offer practice in standard procedures of written communication and close analytical reading of a wide range of creative and humanistic works.

The possibilities under consideration as uniform textbooks include: The Humanities: Cultural Roots and Continuities, ed. Witt et al. (2 vols., Heath, 1980); The Conscious Reader, ed. Shrodes et al., 2nd ed., Macmillan, 1978); The Riverside Reader, ed. Trimmer and Hairston, Houghton Mifflin, 1981); Joseph M. Williams, Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace (Scott, Foresman, 1981); and Maimon et al., Writing in the Arts and Sciences (Winthrop, 1981). Probably each section will use three textbooks: a rhetoric, a book chiefly of primary materials (like The Humanities), and a book of expository matter (either an anthology of essays or a supplementary single-author expository text).

Suggested supplementary titles include books as diverse as the Bible, film criticism by James Agee or Pauline Kael, The Norton Reader, Edith Hamilton's Greek Mythology, Gombrich on art and perception, Kenneth Clarke's Civilisation, Leslie Fiedler on archetypes in literature, Ernest Becker's Birth and Death of Meaning, and the books titled Learning to Look and Learning to Listen.

E346K: WRITING IN THE NATURAL SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGIES

This is an upper-division course in the kinds of writing used in pure and applied sciences. The basic purpose of E346K: Writing in Natural Sciences and Technologies is to enable students to do the kinds of writing those fields require. In addition, the course aims to increase students' critical awareness of the intellectual models and value-dimension of those fields.

To write effectively in the sciences and technologies, students must master general writing skills and some special ones, must learn to research the professional literature in those fields, and must become familiar with the formats in which scientific and technological writing commonly appears.

This course is organized primarily to review and strengthen general writing skills, to introduce appropriate special skills and formats, and to give students practice in library research in their professional fields. Individual units of the course focus on developing skills such as writing with particular scientific and technological aims, writing for particular scientific and technological audiences, using specialized vocabularies, organizing various kinds of scientific and technological writing, avoiding stylistic problems characteristic of scientific and technological writing, and researching professional literature.

The writing assignment in each unit is an exercise of the particular skills the unit focuses on, as well as an exercise of basic writing skills. During the course, students will produce about six pieces of writing in various formats, including a library research report. While instructors may sometimes assign writing topics, they will also encourage students to choose topics from their own fields -- to write as professionals in their fields.

Readings in classical and contemporary scientific and technological literature provide, among other things, models of some particular skills and/or occasions for their use by the student. Readings to include classic and contemporary essays and books in these disciplines, and some selections which concern the social, ethical, and philosophical aspects of the discipline.

Our current thinking is that required texts for the course will include Mills, Gordon H. and John A. Walter, Technical Writing, fourth edition, plus one book of readings, plus the further option of The Structure of Scientific Revolutions by Thomas Kuhn. Current candidates for the readings include Writing About Science (an anthology by Mary Elizabeth Bowen and Joseph A. Mazzeo), and single longer works such as James Watson's The Double Helix, The Norton Critical Edition of Darwin, Theory of Relativity by Bertrand Russel, The Tacit Dimension by Karl Polyani, and The Way Things Are by Percy Bridgeman. The choice of a book of readings and the option of The Structure of Scientific Revolutions will depend somewhat on the individual instructor's approach to developing students' critical awareness of value-dimensions of their fields.

E.346K: Writing in the Social and Behavioral Sciences

Course Description.

An upper-division writing course based on the kinds of writing found in the social sciences: anthropology, economics, education, history, government, linguistics, psychology, and sociology. Students will analyze essays in these disciplines and focus on the conceptual bases for formulating and solving problems, asking and answering questions. The emphasis on certain subject matter areas may vary from section to section. Primary emphasis is on writing practice, on rhetorical strategy rather than on the disciplinary theories involved in the various subject matter areas. Requirements include several (4-6) short essays and at least one longer paper. Students will model their own writing on high quality examples of writing in the various disciplines and will practice writing for the educated nonspecialist rather than for the advanced specialist.

Rationale.

Writing in the different disciplines is surface expression of deeper variation. Writing is different across disciplines because of what practitioners of the disciplines believe about what they know, how they know it, and how it can best be presented to their audience. Students involved in advanced study of various disciplines may accept most of these distinctions, may already have internalized the assumptions in their field of study. They may or may not be aware of how those assumptions relate to writing.

Writing for the Social Sciences begins by exposing students to different viewpoints among the disciplines on similar subject matters. It is important that students begin to discover how different patterns of thinking produce different patterns of writing. From these discoveries students should become more self-conscious about their own writing, about how their own approach to fundamental human questions relates to others, and about what knowledge and expectations an educated nonspecialist is likely to hold. These insights, along with continuous attention to the traditional concerns of effective writing, should lead to better writing.

Texts.

Elaine Maimon and others. Writing in the Arts and Sciences (Minthrop, 1981).

Bert Hoselitz and others. A Reader's Guide to the Social Sciences. (Free Press, 1970).

Victor Finkler and Herbert Graves, eds. Social Science and Urban Crisis, 2nd ed. (Macmillan, 1978). [While this text is not perfect, it fits the design of the course. Supplemental readings in anthropology and linguistics will be provided. Instructors are encouraged to discover and use other interdisciplinary readers.]

Other Possible Texts: Hulon, Willis. Writing Term Papers (Harcourt, 1977).
Joseph Williams. Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace
(Scott Foresman, 1981).