

II. INTRODUCING DAVIDSON'S FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS TO CRITICAL THINKING, WRITING, AND DISCUSSION

The faculty of Davidson College believes that critical thinking, writing, and discussion are essential elements of a strong liberal arts education. Regardless of major or eventual career choice, Davidson College graduates should be able to express themselves logically and clearly. To this end, each first-year student must pass one of the courses designated by the faculty as meeting the goal of emphasizing writing and discussion.

Each of these courses, limited to 16 students, provides a small-group setting for focused study and critical discussion. Successfully completing one of these courses will satisfy the College's composition requirement. The designation W after the course number in the schedule and on the transcript will indicate that the course emphasizes writing and discussion, and that the course satisfies the composition requirement. Some of these courses will also satisfy one or more core requirements.

The courses fall into two broad options: i) departmental offerings restricted to first-year students and ii) the Humanities sequence. Each department will be encouraged, but not required, to offer these first-year courses. Many of these departmental offerings will be theme based and interdisciplinary in nature. In addition to its theme-based offerings, the Department of English may offer some more traditional, non-theme based composition courses. The four-semester Humanities sequence is, by its design, an interdisciplinary program that combines lectures with discussion groups. Successful completion of the Humanities program satisfies the composition requirement and awards four core curriculum credits.

The VPAA will designate a coordinator of first-year composition courses, who will be responsible for working with departments and faculty to encourage W-course offerings. The Chair of the Humanities program will continue to be responsible for recruiting faculty to the Humanities program and for coordinating the work of participating faculty in the curricular design of the program.

A College Composition Committee will be responsible for assessing the writing requirements in any course proposed for a W designation. The committee will comprise the Chair of the Department of English, the Chair of the Humanities Program, the Director of the Writing Center, the coordinator of first-year composition courses, and the VPAA (chair), who may appoint additional faculty as needed. Departments will submit to the College Composition Committee those courses that they would like to have designated as satisfying the composition requirement. By early January the College Composition Committee will submit a recommended list of courses for the following academic year to the EPC for its recommendation to the faculty, which needs to approve this list at its February meeting. The approved list of courses will be mailed to incoming first-year students in their summer registration packets.

The College Composition Committee will operate under the following general guidelines for first-year composition courses. Each writing course normally requires students to complete five to seven writing assignments of two to four pages each, logically sequenced to develop different

approaches to composition, as well as a research paper of greater length. Readings for each course span and exemplify different approaches to writing. Detailed and substantive professional evaluation, peer review by other students, and encouragement of basic word-processing skills help students revise and improve their writing. Students also learn to use the library as a research and writing tool, to explore electronic sources judiciously, to document sources accurately and professionally, and to use appropriate manuals of style and formats of citation. For students electing Humanities 150 and 151W, an equivalent amount of writing is done over two semesters.

The faculty believes that requiring this type of curricular experience will help students discover the joy and excitement of learning, as well as instill in them the discipline required for critical thinking and clear communication.

[To implement this new composition requirement, the faculty should pass the following two resolutions.]

RESOLUTION A:

V.C. Requirements for Graduation. [selected]:

Candidates for the Bachelor's degree shall:

4. [College composition requirement.] Complete successfully by the end of the first year at Davidson College a course designated as W, indicating that it satisfies the College's composition requirement. All courses meeting the College composition requirement must be approved by the College Composition Committee, the Educational Policy Committee, and the Faculty. Students using the Humanities Program for the composition requirement must pass HUM 151W.

Students with Advanced Placement Credit in English must still pass a W-designated course during their first year.

OMIT: [Some students, even though passing Humanities, may be directed by the College Composition Committee of the Humanities Program to take English 101, which they must pass to satisfy the composition requirement. For those students who have a combined score of 1420 or above on the CEEB verbal section of the Scholastic Aptitude Test I and the CEEB SAT II Test in English, the composition requirement will be waived.]

RESOLUTION B:

Establish the College Composition Committee with the following ex officio members: the Chair of the Department of English, the Chair of the Humanities Program, the Director of the Writing Center, the coordinator of first-year composition courses, and the VPAA (chair). The VPAA may appoint additional faculty as needed.

NOTES

1. The new composition requirement will apply to the entering Class of 2003 and subsequent classes.
2. The coordinator of first-year composition courses is appointed by the VPAA to serve a specified term. The coordinator serves on the College Composition Committee. Department chairs forward new course proposals to the College Composition Committee for consideration and approval prior to submission to the Educational Policy Committee and the Faculty. The coordinator is responsible for advertising the program to prospective students, collating brief course descriptions to go out in registration packets, designing an annual summer workshop for participating faculty, setting up small groups of faculty to discuss their experiences during the year, and organizing periodic evaluations of the program.
3. The Chair of the Humanities Program recruits faculty from departments to teach in the Program, coordinates the work of the four semester teams and team leaders, and reviews annually the performance of Humanities faculty. The chair will work with the College Composition Committee to ensure that HUM 150-151W meets the College composition requirement.
4. We imagine the following balance among Humanities sections, ENG 101W sections (both theme-based and more traditional composition courses), and other departmental first-year composition courses based on an entering class of 480 students and 16 students per course (30 courses needed): 6 or 7 Humanities sections, approximately 14 sections of ENG 101W, and 10 other departmental offerings that satisfy the composition requirement.

For comparison, for those entering in 1997 we offered 18 sections of ENG 101 (often with 17 students per section) with approximately 300 students and 7 sections of Humanities (16 students per section) with 112 students from the 470 students in the class of 2001. One hundred and four students in this class were exempt from ENG 101 because of test scores or AP credit. However, many of these students chose to take Humanities or ENG 101.

5. The following departmental offerings (in addition to those that will be offered by the Department of English) that would satisfy the composition requirement have been proposed for 1998-2001: "The Nature of Justice" (Thornberry); "Anthropology of the Body" (Zumwalt); "Alienation and American Politics" (Kazee); "Darwin's Dangerous Idea" (Kimmel); "Historical Writing" (Williams); "Friendship" (O'Neill); "African Voices" (Yoder); "Religion, Magic, and Science in Renaissance Europe" (Barnes); "Biblical Narrative and the Imagination of Faith" (Plank); "War Stories" (Denham); "God, Science, and Logic" (Maydole); "Writing the Absurd" (Singerman); "The Trial of Jesus" (Krentz); "Religion and Murder" (Foley); "Feasts and Fasting" (Berkey); "Theories of the Self" (McCarthy); "The Masks of Ideology" (Dockery); "Environmental Economics" (Martin), "The Great Depression" (Ross).
6. Only first-year students may enroll in a W-designated course. Transfer students may satisfy the composition requirement with transfer credit, as approved by the Registrar.