

Writing in the Arts and Humanities

(Draft of Course Description)

Possible textbooks:

The Humanities: Cultural Roots and Continuities, ed. Mary Ann Frese Witt et al. 2 vols. Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Co., 1980. ISBN 0-669-01450-8, 0-669-01451-6. [Combines historical narrative about Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian, and African cultural roots with texts from significant works of literature, philosophy, and political theory--Lysistrata, "The Miller's Tale," Othello, The Communist Manifesto, Civilization and Its Discontents.]

The Conscious Reader: Readings Past and Present, ed. Caroline Shrodes et al. Second edition. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1978. ISBN 0-02-410320-9. [Draws together selections from the essays, fiction, and poetry of the past two centuries to demonstrate major modes of writing; essays predominate.]

The Riverside Reader, ed. Joseph Trimmer and Maxine Hairston. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1981. ISBN 0-395-28940-8. [Collects fifty-one exemplary essays by Orwell, Talese, McPhee, Kingston, Didion, and other masters of prose.]

Joseph M. Williams, Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1981. ISBN 0-673-15393-2. [A concise discussion of students' most common problems with wordiness, grammar, and usage.]

The Practice of Writing, ed. Robert Scholes and Nancy R. Comley. NY: St. Martin's Press, 1981. ISBN: 0-312-63544-3. [Rhetorical approaches, with brief examples.]

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 of discussing art, philosophy, literature, popular culture, and other topics. A standard grammar and style book should be assigned. Readings will average one essay or chapter per class meeting for sections meeting three times a 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 history, art, ideas, and languages (European and American civilization, in other words). The instructor leads investigations of the history of music, painting, sculpture, philosophy, and literature--but not simply or primarily literature.

intel. Only three weeks should be devoted to the study of specific literary texts and authors; in the other weeks the class studies other areas of 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 writing procedures (not simply journal-keeping, for example) and close analytical reading.

Supplementary textbooks could 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, 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.

Formalized rhetorical approaches
Body of writings (imitative).