**Guidelines for Choosing a W-Course**

Beginning with the Class of 2016, all Lafayette students are required to take 4 courses designated as "W" or "writing intensive." In all of these courses, students will write at least 20 pages or 5,000 words across the semester, receive feedback on their work, learn to revise in response to that feedback, and also acquire strategies for composing, revising, editing, and proofreading.

Some W courses currently offered introduce students to the conventions of college writing (first year seminars); others focus primarily on writing as a subject of inquiry (e.g., English 202 Writing Seminars); and others teach discipline-specific writing conventions and use writing as a tool for learning a disciplinary subject.

In addition, next spring (2014), the English Department will offer a new 100-level writing course, tentatively titled “Introduction to Academic Writing,” designed specifically for students who want more practice with college-level writing conventions after the FYS.

While one of the four W courses—First Year Seminar—is required, the others are largely the student’s to determine. However, students are expected to take one W in their major department and one W outside of it. Students should also plan their W courses to distribute writing experiences across all four years (this requirement is not one to be completed in the first two years, especially since Lafayette students do not formally declare a major until spring semester of their sophomore year).

Attached are guidelines designed to help students consult with advisers in choosing an appropriate W course (appropriate, that is, to an individual student’s needs and interests).  In making the choice, ***students should consider with advisers*** the aggregate of bulleted items for each course described below. In other words, the attached document is indeed a set of ***guidelines*** and not a checklist.

Finally, please also bear in mind that although the W requirement consists of four courses, students are not limited to that number. The development of writing skills takes time and effort and the new requirement is designed to allow students to choose the courses most relevant to their individual abilities, majors and schedules.

Sincerely,

Bianca Falbo

Director, College Writing Program

I’m thinking of taking a writing course, what are my options, and which one should I take?

Introduction to Academic Writing (to be offered sp’14) is probably best for me if:

* I am a first-year or sophomore student looking for additional practice after my FYS with academic writing conventions.
* In high school, I did not do much writing.
* Generally I don't read unless I have to.
* I am often confused or uncertain about how to organize my ideas--where to begin, how to paragraph, how to conclude, and so forth.
* Surface errors in my writing have interfered with a reader’s ability to follow my ideas.
* I type or retype my papers on a computer, but don't really revise my work.
* I don't think of myself as a strong writer.
* I would benefit from taking a course in which I would write regularly and receive regular feedback on my writing.

A Writing Seminar (English 202) is probably best for me if:

* I want to take a course whose subject is writing and language, a course in which I can expect to write regularly and receive feedback on my writing.
* I read newspapers and magazines regularly.
* In the past year, I read books for my own enjoyment.
* I feel fairly comfortable in planning and organizing an essay--knowing where to begin, how to paragraph, how to conclude, and so forth.
* I have specific strategies I use to draft and revise my writing. There are specific issues I know to look for when I edit my work.
* I haven’t had problems with grammar and punctuation (commas, apostrophes, etc) that interfered with the quality of my work or my ability to complete my assignments successfully.
* I consistently receive positive feedback and grades on my writing from my instructors.
* I consider myself a reasonably good reader and writer.

A “W” course in my major field or another department is probably best for me if:

* I want to take a course in which I will learn more about discipline-specific writing conventions (i.e., writing in English, Philosophy, Biology, etc.) and in which writing is primarily assigned as a tool for learning.
* I feel generally comfortable writing on my own and confident in my ability to revise my writing in response to feedback I receive from professors, classmates and/or WAs.
* I feel comfortable with the expectations and conventions of college level writing.
* I have already done a fair amount of writing at Lafayette College and have received relatively positive feedback on my writing.