



## St. Olaf College General Education Curriculum First-Year Writing (FYW) Requirement

### Description:

A course, taken in the first year, that equips students for effective writing in the liberal arts and introduces writing as a means of learning.

### Intended learning outcomes:

*Students will demonstrate:*

1. the ability to write effectively in a variety of forms for the generally-educated reader.
2. the ability to engage in writing as a systematic, interactive process, using flexible strategies for generating drafts, responding to feedback, revising, editing, and proofreading.
3. proficiency in using research to support critical inquiry, including the ability to identify, evaluate, analyze, synthesize, and document appropriate sources.

### Course guidelines with Curriculum Committee comments:

1. A first-year writing course helps students write effective prose for the generally-educated reader.

*Comment:* A first-year writing course may be taught from any disciplinary perspective, or from an interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary perspective. However, it must not be designed as a survey of a discipline or as an introduction to a major or a concentration. It does not emphasize disciplinary writing, which employs distinctive vocabulary, concepts, and intellectual frames of reference, and is based upon an assumption of specialized knowledge shared between writer and reader. Rather, it emphasizes writing addressed to the general reader, which employs no such distinctive language and makes no such assumptions about shared, specialized knowledge.

2. A first-year writing course gives sustained attention to writing as an ongoing process. Students must write and revise frequently, and must confer at least twice with the instructor during the course of the semester.

*Comment:* A first-year writing course aims at the integration of learning and writing, in part through frequent writing and revision. However, not all of the writing need be of a finished or formal nature. The Curriculum Committee recommends that instructors allow for a variety of different kinds of writing, both formal and informal-journals, response papers, reports, personal essays, analytic or argumentative papers, creative non-fiction, journalistic or op-ed pieces-whatever best enables the students to write frequently and engage the subject matter of the course most effectively. Though all of the writing might be read by the instructor, and much of it commented upon or discussed, not all of it need be graded. The Curriculum Committee recommends that students complete at least six finished pieces of writing in a first-year writing course.

Reading and other assignments set for a first-year writing course must be consistent with the quantity of writing required, and should also be examples of good writing.

To meet the demands of reading students' writing and scheduling individual conferences, instructors should feel free to arrange their weekly class meetings in a way that best suits the purposes of the course. This might mean, for instance, occasionally not holding class in order to make time for individual conferences.

3. A first-year writing course introduces essential tools for research, including library and internet resources.

*Comment:* Among the ways writing can serve as a means of inquiry is through library research. This guideline requires that first-year writing courses introduce students to the organization of knowledge and resources, assist them in formulating strategies for research, and lay the foundation for more advanced use of print and electronic research resources in later course work. First-year writing courses should also introduce students to the differences between original and derivative knowledge, and to the conventions of distinguishing the two in their writing or discourse (footnotes or endnotes, acknowledgments, works cited, references, etc.). Instructors are encouraged to make use of the library's bibliographic instruction program in meeting these objectives.

4. A first-year writing course may include a topical focus.

*Comment:* The subject matter of a first-year writing course may be a significant human issue deriving from the disciplinary interests of the instructor, or it may be the process and practice of writing itself. The College's first-year writing program will be strongest if it includes instructors from a wide variety of disciplines engaging a wide variety of topics. Examples of previous WRIT 111 courses include:

- *Cases of Conscience*
- *What is the Good of Being Good?*
- *Life in Motion*
- *Authority and Freedom in Modern Russia*
- *Does Liberal Education Have to be Liberal?*
- *Self, Society, and Advertising*
- *Writing the Truth About Ourselves*

Instructors wishing to teach a First-year Writing course are urged to take a faculty development workshop providing a practical introduction to the teaching of writing. These workshops deal with such matters as designing a course, using class time productively, developing a variety of writing assignments, responding to and assessing written assignments, and integrating reading, learning, and writing.

**Information for instructors proposing a First-Year Writing course:**

Faculty interested in proposing a First-Year Writing course should contact the Director of Writing.

*August 2011*