New Certificate in Professional Writing Offered Next Fall

Next fall semester, students in all majors can pursue a Certificate in Professional Writing. This career-oriented program, designed for anyone whose job will involve writing, features four courses focused on writing across the disciplines and in the workplace. Building on 06-300: “Introduction to Professional Writing” and 06-301: “Rhetoric for Writers,” students will choose two electives from among many courses, including 06-302: “Writing in the Disciplines.” Currently the English Department offers a version of this course entitled “Writing for Law Enforcement,” and sections concentrating on other fields are planned.

Dr. Jamil Mustafa, the Chair of the Department, is enthusiastic about the new program. “We are excited to offer a Certificate in Professional Writing. Both the workplace in particular and our society as a whole need well-prepared writers—particularly writers who are sensitive to the rhetorical and ethical aspects of writing.”

Dr. White Returns from Sabbatical

Dr. Jackie White returns this semester after being on a sabbatical leave for the fall. In addition to her work in Latino/a and Young Adult Literature, White originally planned to use her time on sabbatical to focus on a new poetry project, but in the course of her sabbatical, opportunities for other projects came her way. White traveled to Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic to meet with a co-translator and with the writer Sherezada Vicoso. White worked with Vicoso to finalize the translation of Vicoso’s book of feminist essays. Translation was a major part of White’s sabbatical, as she also began translating a book of poems. She brought much of her experience back to Lewis. She has developed “Literary Translation,” a new focus for 06-309: “Topics in Writing.” White’s sabbatical offers a new component to the Professional Writing concentration of the English Department. Look for the “Translations in Literature” course to be offered next spring!
Freewriting...

Gathers Our Thoughts

Freewriting gives us the opportunity to put our thoughts to paper without worrying about the rules of grammar and punctuation. The task invites us to write whatever we please in a thorough examination of a subject. Often when we write, we stop and censor ourselves, we worry about how something sounds or where the comma goes in a particular sentence, but freewriting encourages us to break these rules and expand upon our thoughts openly. Dr. Jennifer Consilio, Associate Professor of English and Director of the University Writing Center, has her students freewrite as a means of focusing themselves before starting their papers. "I often will ask my students to do a focused freewrite on their paper topic to help them figure out where to go." This practice allows her students to overcome early obstacles in the writing process such as the infamous case of writer's block. Freewriting not only centers us as writers but also creates connections between the words in our mind and the paper on our desk.

Makes Us Better Writers

Freewriting is the act of writing free from the constraints of the rules of grammar, punctuation, and syntax. It's a no-holds-barred method of seeing where the pen can take you. What does this mean exactly? That freewriting is the perfect tool for non-English majors and those hoping to develop their writing. By sitting down and putting our thoughts into words we are doing more than preserving our ideas, we are becoming better communicators. We learn how to express ourselves more clearly through reflection, introspection, and of course through writing. Dr. Sheila Kennedy, Associate Professor of English, free writes with her students before every class. Her goal is to have her students form a relationship with writing, a relationship that is free of evaluation and one that fosters the practice of writing.

Writing is a form of communication that we will encounter in every career choice, every day. The easiest way to become a better writer? Practice. "Writing improves writing," says Kennedy. For her and many others who freewrite regularly, the goal of freewriting isn't just to practice writing, it's to practice the act of being. Through our writing, we discover more about ourselves and the world we live in. We reflect on our experiences and become engaged in the act of creation.
New Media Recharge English Classrooms

A new phenomenon is revitalizing English classrooms at Lewis, as a “New Media” teaching style is becoming more popular among professors in the English Department. Whether by posting homework assignments on a blog or encouraging students to converse on Twitter as they read, professors are moving away from the traditional ways of teaching literature and writing.

Blogs are one element that many professors are utilizing within the classroom. Dr. Bonnie Kyburz uses a blog in many of her classes, and many of her assignments are posted to the blog for peer evaluation. A blog makes collaboration between students very easy. Following one another’s blogs, students read and respond to posts from the rest of the class, thereby forming a community that goes beyond the classroom.

Twitter is another useful tool that enables students to discuss topics in the classroom as well as readings for class. Dr. Christopher Wielgos incorporates Twitter into his literature classes as a way for his students to communicate about their reading. Wielgos has students Tweet questions, comments, and thoughts about what they read. Through Twitter, students share their impressions of the material as they experience it, thereby forming an interactive and collaborative “interpretive community” in cyberspace. The world is moving toward technology, and the English Department is keeping up!

End-of-the-Year Event: ePortfolio Presentations and Sigma Tau Delta Inductions

The English Department recently hosted its semi-annual ePortfolio presentations. Graduating seniors Ashley Castillo, Monique Cruz, Sabrina Hill, Brock Massie, Stephanie Raga, Michelle Staie and Justin Van shared their electronic writing portfolios, which show their progression as writers during their time at Lewis. Before the ePortfolio presentations, Sigma Tau Delta, the honor society in English, inducted new members and introduced new officers. Next year the group will be led by Bianca Apato and Delia Ercoli, who will serve as co-presidents. Theresa Marten will fill the role of Communications and Event Specialist. Ercoli anticipates taking a more active role in the honor society. “I am excited for next year, and I hope to get some new recruits so more people are involved within the English Department.” Under the leadership of these three, Sigma Tau Delta looks to become more active in the Lewis community.
The English Department offers a number of classes, from 400-level theory and composition courses to entry-level literature and writing classes. The Department prides itself on a multidisciplinary approach that fosters critical thinking, textual analysis, and written communication. Offering three Bachelor programs and five minors, the Department is among the largest in the College of Arts and Sciences.

This newsletter was created, composed, and compiled by the English Department interns David DeSchepper (Junior) and Justin Van (Senior).