English 102 Topics—Fall 2015

This list is current as of 7/10/2015. If the description of a 102 section in the Timetable of Classes is not listed below, please contact the English Department at 865/974-5401 to get it.

Each instructor’s section of English 102 is organized around a distinctive topic; please choose one that appeals to you and your interests. All English 102 sections teach archival, qualitative, and secondary source research and writing.

All English 102 sections require 2 textbooks, *Rhetoric of Inquiry*, 3rd edition, and *The Writer’s Harbrace Handbook*, 5th edition. Each section may have additional required texts; please check with the Bookstore to see whether additional texts are required for your section.

The day/time for each instructor’s section is listed in the online Timetable of Classes.

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**Akers**  
Inquiry into Monsters

In this section of English 102 we will explore a selection of monsters from popular legends, literature, film, television, and other cultural texts. Using the term “monster” expansively to include such examples as zombies, witches, vampires, dragons, literary creations like Frankenstein’s monster, and legends like the Loch Ness monster, Bigfoot, and Sasquatch, we will consider what these creations represent in our culture. What makes each figure “monstrous”? What do these entities have in common? Are they signposts of a possible future that we should beware of? In what ways might they embody qualities that we disown in ourselves? What might we learn from these monsters, if we allowed them to speak for themselves?

The point of this course is to develop your academic research, writing, and communication skills. We’ll learn about our course topic through each other’s research and writing. You’ll be able to investigate the topic from academic perspectives that interest you, including your major. You’ll learn how to conduct archival, qualitative, and secondary-source research and will present what you’ve learned to academic audiences in traditional discipline-appropriate papers and a poster presentation.

**Barrow**  
Inquiry into the Future

Examination of various visions of the future in order to discover how the values of the creators are illustrated through these images. Consideration of the values we project when imagining our own futures and of the way various disciplines engage with futurity. Texts include *Yesterday’s Tomorrows: Past Visions of the American Future*, *V for Vendetta*, and H.G. Wells’ *The Time Machine*.

**Brouwers**  
Inquiry into Love

This course will attempt to generate ‘universal’ understandings of the term through the examination of historical representations of love in literature, art, and culture. The subject of love is ancient and each age, let alone each individual, lays claim to its most profound secrets. At the same time, most will admit a certain ignorance to its inner workings. In addition to historical underpinnings of love, we will consider contemporary conceptions of the term. Included in these considerations will be an examination of popular representations of love in music, film, and advertising (i.e. Valentine’s Day).
Greene  Inquiry into Memoir

In this section, we will launch an investigation of the memoir, and, through research and close analysis, develop skills that will enable us to look closer at ourselves through the lens of history and place. We will seek to establish preliminary definitions of what it means to write about ourselves and will pursue those definitions through different media and contexts. By the end of the course, we will be able to compare our original definitions with the more nuanced perceptions developed over the semester via our archival, qualitative, and secondary-source research projects. Our work should enable us to develop and demonstrate the critical reading, thinking, and writing skills that will serve us well in academic and other future pursuits.

Hess  Inquiry into Appalachia

The Appalachian mountains of the United States offer a region rich in culture and controversy, making them an ideal topic for all types of research. It is a region of incredible biodiversity, enchanting story-telling, and hearty cuisine, yet riddled with poverty, environmental dispute, and personal tragedies. In this course students will learn important research methods through their attempts to uncover the mystery of Appalachia, first examining popular cultural stereotypes of the region through qualitative research methods and then exploring the history and complexity of the region through primary and secondary source research.

Hewitson  Inquiry into History, Memory and Reality in Words and Pictures

This course explores how ideas about reality are constructed and understood in different narrative forms. Fiction, memoir, film, documentary, photography and historical record are considered in order to investigate how such information is used as a vehicle for self-examination and rational understanding and, conversely, for manipulation and self-delusion. The capacity of these texts and images to communicate ideas and their facility to provide legitimate knowledge is also considered. Related issues to be addressed include how memory and anecdote are used as evidence; how the selection and omission of different kinds of evidence and information shape historical records; how narratives produced through these means create identities and contribute to ideas about the world in general; and how stories are deliberately manipulated in personal, legal and historical contexts. Students are encouraged to explore topics of specific interest and relevance to themselves within the broader parameters of the course. Like all 102 sections, we will engage in archival, qualitative, and secondary source research to investigate the course topic.

Hilberg, J.: Inquiry into Childhood

Childhood seems to be a universal experience—everyone goes through it, but this apparent universality can impede us from thinking critically about it as a historically and culturally contingent experience. What can we learn about childhood by considering it from different historical and cultural vantage points? How “universal” is the experience of childhood? How do such intersecting categories as race, class, and gender influence the experience and representation of childhood?

The aim of English 102 is to develop students’ academic research, writing, and communication skills. This section will ask students to consider evolving historical and cultural conceptions and representations of childhood as the class conducts a series of research-focused writing projects, culminating in three formal academic papers: an archival research paper, a qualitative research paper, and a secondary source research paper.

Jarvis  Inquiry into How We Relate to Animals

We relate to other animals intellectually, physically, and emotionally. They variously instill in us pleasure, fear, disgust, irritation, and love. As individuals and cultural participants, we categorize animals, identifying some as food, some as producers of food, some as workers, some as pests, and some as pets. We ardently protect the lives of certain animals and eagerly destroy others. Our representations of animals help sell our products and tell our stories. In this section of 102, we will investigate the complexity of human relationships with other animals through a series of writing projects, each introducing and utilizing a different method of research.

Langendorfer  Inquiry into Secrets and Lies

Why are we so fascinated by secrets? How do we know if someone is telling the truth? This class will focus on narratives—both fiction and nonfiction—that expose secrets and lies. As a part of this course’s mode of inquiry, we will ask: how do narratives about secrets and lies work? What kinds of evidence do they provide? By examining secrets and lies, students will learn more about how we communicate with one another. In this composition class, students will develop their research and argumentative skills by analyzing a wide variety of narratives that tell secrets and lies.
MacCarte Inquiry into The Natural World

In this section of 102, students will have the opportunity to explore differing views of the environment through poems, novels, essays, case studies, film clips, audio recordings, and photographs. Through critical examinations of issues such as wise use, sustainability, and conservation, to name a few, students will broaden their knowledge of the complex relationship between humans and the natural world and will consider how different forms of communication enrich the environmental debates of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. In turn, their views of the environment and their place within it will hopefully be challenged. Students will be encouraged to explore each course topic as it relates to their particular interests or chosen major, thus enriching the diversity of viewpoints expressed in seminars. Like all sections of English 102, students will conduct archival, qualitative, and secondary source research to investigate the course topic.

Massey Inquiry into the Heroic

In this section of 102, students will conduct and present research related to the concept of the hero and how it has changed through time. We shall focus upon the epic hero in traditional literature as well as modern characterizations in popular culture. Through the study of epics such as the Iliad and Beowulf, folklore (including African American folktales), modern fantasy literature (The Hobbit and Harry Potter), and contemporary films (such as Troy and Kingdom of Heaven), we shall consider how images of the hero show continuity as well as transformation through different time periods, cultures, and media. We shall use qualitative, archival, and secondary source research to explore our topic through various essay assignments. Each student will also lead one class discussion and present research pertaining to the reading or film discussion for that day. A reading assignment of 20-30 pages or watching a film will be required before most class meetings.

Meredith Inquiry into Popular Culture

This section will investigate conceptions of popular culture and its role in our (and possibly others’) culture, both historical and contemporary. Students will read a variety of popular culture mediums, including argumentative essays concerning the topic of popular culture itself. The course will draw from a variety of written texts as well as visual, musical, technological, and other non-written forms. Like all sections of 102, students will conduct archival, qualitative, and secondary source research.

Potmesil Inquiry into Animals

Animals play an immense variety of roles within society—they serve as companions, laborers, sources of food, and symbols of those human qualities we most revere and revile. However, their ubiquitous nature and inability to speak for themselves often causes us to ignore just how integral they are to our lives. In "Inquiry into Animals,” we will explore the different ways in which animals and humans interact. Students will conduct archival research into the historical roles animals have played, explore people’s experiences with animals through qualitative research, and engage with academic secondary sources to explore a modern question about human/animal interaction.

Powers Inquiry into “TBA”

Robida Inquiry into Film and Popular Culture

“Inquiry into Film and Popular Culture” addresses the relationship of popular movies to popular American culture. We will be taking a look at several well-known movies, placing our emphasis on what they tell us about our own attitudes to a variety of cultural, historical, and intellectual issues. Your coursework will include qualitative methods of inquiry, such as field research and data analysis, historical inquiry, and traditional secondary source research. We will be paying close attention to how movies are representative of popular culture in addition to producing our responses toward it.

Sheffield Inquiry into American Culture Through Graphic Narratives

In this section of English 102, students will investigate the underpinnings of American culture through the lens of graphic narratives. What can graphic narratives tell us about particular moments in American history? What can comic books such as Superman teach us about American fears and desires in the ‘50s? The ‘60s? Who reads them and why? What do people get out of reading them? How are people who read them perceived by others and why? What can we learn about American attitudes toward race, gender, and American fears by reading graphic narratives? We will begin with a secondary source research paper in which students will investigate a specific aspect of American culture revealed through contemporary graphic narratives and...
discussed by scholars. We will then move into a qualitative research paper in which we will investigate why and how people read and interact with graphic narratives. We will then finish with an archival research project that investigates what graphic narratives can teach us about American cultural history.

Shultz “TBA”

Smith, E.: Inquiry into Disney

Children today are growing up with nearly limitless access to information, communication, and entertainment. From the various multimodal means of education such as Leapfrog and the Nintendo DS to the numerous ways in which young people can amuse themselves through television, the internet, video games, music, etc., the notion of what “childhood” is in crisis. Likewise, we have politicians squabbling over what films, music, or games are appropriate for what age groups and pundits discussing the influence that our president has in what they call his “indoctrination” of children.

With this notion of childhood as a time of innocence and freedom, we are becoming more and more concerned with the ways in which the media in particular can manipulate children. Yet this same culture which bans children’s books that portray non-heterosexual couples (whether that be parents or penguins) stockpiles Disney cinema, which has very often been protested and boycotted for its various racial problems and its limitation of the roles for women in society. In this section of 102, we will look at the historical shifts in what we define as childhood as well as the ways that our notion of childhood has changed in as recently as the last twenty years, specifically through the eyes of Disney. We will examine the films themselves, original fairy tale texts, scholarly articles on the topics, as well as archival documents to view the ways in which childhood was conceived of prior to our contemporary time. Like all sections of English 102, we will conduct archival, qualitative, and secondary source research to investigate the course topic.

Todd Inquiry into Dreams

Dreaming has long been common material for cultural production. Despite attempts to explain their nature psychologically, spiritually, or supernaturally, dreams remain mysterious and entice largely though their open-ended possibilities. “Inquiry into Dreams” will explore the use and representation of dreams in popular culture, in relation to people’s real-world experiences of them and the different perspectives that have attempted to understand and explain those experiences. The course will move from historical research of first-hand, archival accounts into qualitative study of social trends in dreaming, and finally into secondary source research of cultural depictions of dreaming in art, literature, and film.