

Chabot College

**Distance Education Curriculum Support Committee**

**Course Proposal Form**

*(Send as an email attachment to DECSC chair)*

2005-2006

These questions are meant to provide you, our faculty colleagues, a framework for your Distance Education Curriculum Proposal. These are *guidelines*, not mandates. Much of this emerged from an Academic Senate for California Community Colleges white paper, available in our resource area. We believe careful and thorough consideration of these issues will improve not just your proposal, but also your entire course design. Please feel free to elaborate where you think most important. Note: Please click on *File, Save As* to save this form as a document, so you can work on it and submit it electronically to the DE Curriculum Support Committee chair.

*Each proposal or existing course, if delivered by distance education, shall be separately reviewed and approved by the curriculum committee prior to being offered. (Ed Code 55378)*

**Course Title & Number: Critical Thinking and Writing Across Disciplines, English 7**

**Faculty Name: Michael Langdon**

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**1. Need/Justification**

- What is the intent in offering the course by distance education?

As a transferable course, English 7 is in high demand, but many of our students have scheduling conflicts that prevent them from signing up for one of the on-campus sections of the course. These students often have busy, complicated lives that make an asynchronous, online course—one that they can participate in as their schedules permit—ideal for them.

But online sections of English 7 are not just offered because they are more convenient for busy students. They can also create a learning environment that better meets many students' needs—particularly those who are shy or have learning disabilities. In on-campus courses, these and other students might be inclined to keep quiet during class discussions, but in online classes, every student not only can but *must* participate. (Otherwise, they are considered absent.)

In many ways, English 7, because of its focus on reading, writing, and critical thinking, is particularly well suited to an asynchronous format. All class discussions will involve written—not spoken—language, so students will be required to practice their reading and writing skills even more than they would in an on-campus class. Furthermore, because an asynchronous format provides students with plenty of time to reflect before responding to discussion questions, an online class can sometimes encourage deeper critical thinking than a traditional on-ground course.

## **2. Course Content Delivery**

- Describe the distance education modalities used to deliver the course content and provide an approximate schedule of the time allocated to each modality. How much of the class will be on-campus lecture, video, email, web, CD-ROM, etc.
- Note that the total number of contact hours should approximate the equivalent number of hours required in an on-campus setting. And, because indicators to date suggest that many community college students do better with some face-to-face contact with their instructors, there should be some provision for on-campus or in-person contact.

This course will meet twice on-campus in the WRAC Center, once at the beginning of the semester and then again at the end of the semester. (Students will write essays at both of these on-ground sessions, providing the instructor with at least two writing samples that are indisputably their own. This should help him detect any plagiarism in the writing students submit online.) Otherwise, the course will take place entirely online. English 7 is a 3-unit course; in a traditional on-campus format, students would spend three hours per week in class, a total of 51 hours over the course of the semester. In an asynchronous format, students should still expect to spend three hours a week—and approximately 51 hours per semester—on the same types of activities that typically comprise on-ground English 7 courses, including class discussions, group work, and peer editing. Course content will be delivered through Blackboard, a course management system that enables teachers to lead class discussions, organize group work, design class activities, give quizzes, and frequently be in contact with students.

## **3. Nature and Frequency of Instructor-Student Interactions**

- Provide examples of course components taught using distance education technology. This will include either or both synchronous—online at the same time and asynchronous—online at different times.
- Describe the number and frequency of interaction for students making satisfactory progress and for intervention when students are at-risk of dropping or failing due to poor performance or participation.
- For each type of interaction listed above, describe why you believe it will be effective for this particular curriculum and delivery model.
- Describe how the interactions will facilitate student learning and how students will benefit from the DE modalities selected.

As its course outline explains, the most common classroom activities in English 7 are “(a) small group activities—which may include brainstorming, enactment, problem solving, role-playing, advocacy, peer evaluation; (b) lecture; and (c) guided discussion.” All of these activities can take place online; in fact, Blackboard comes with many features that help teachers adapt traditional classroom activities to an online environment. Group work—including peer editing—can be designed through the “groups” feature. (In their groups, students can easily post and comment on each other’s essays, just as they would in the classroom.) Similarly, Blackboard’s “discussion forum” enables instructors to guide class discussions. And, if necessary, written lectures can easily be posted for all students to read.

Online courses have many advantages that make them more than a mere substitute for more traditional on-campus courses. Students in all English composition courses are required to read and write outside of class, but in class, they mainly use spoken language. However, in online courses, every class activity requires students to use written language. In addition to reading their classmates' contributions to class discussions, students must write their own, and they have plenty of time to formulate thoughtful responses to discussion questions. All class activities will therefore give students opportunities to practice their reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. Furthermore, in order to attend class, students must be prepared. Unless they do the assigned reading, they cannot participate in class discussions and therefore cannot get credit for attending class. Research has shown that online classes usually require a greater time commitment from students than their on-campus counterparts. (This, in fact, is something that students will be informed of early in the semester. Although there are many advantages to online learning, there can also be some disadvantages, especially for students who do not realize how time-consuming online courses can be. Students will be made aware of the advantages and disadvantages of online learning early in the semester so that they can be sure they have chosen the course that best suits their own learning needs and styles.)

The instructor will interact with students in the discussion forum, responding to their individual posts, and he will monitor all of the small group work his students are doing. As a full-time instructor, he will keep five on-ground office hours per week, and all of his students will have access to him then, either in person or by phone. In addition, he will use Blackboard's virtual office, which will allow students to post questions that he will answer in a timely manner (within 24 hours).

In order to get credit for attendance, students will be required to participate in class activities throughout the week. There will generally be two deadlines per week, one in the middle of the week and one at the end, by which time students must have participated in class activities. Students who do not meet these deadlines—or whose posts reveal that they have spent very little time on required activities—will be contacted by the instructor via email (or if necessary by phone). Students who are keeping up with the class will also regularly receive feedback by email from the instructor.

#### **4. Assignments & Methods of Evaluation**

- List the criteria that will be used to substantiate student learning, and describe the methods of evaluating student progress.
- Describe planned interactions and evaluations to ensure participation and verification of student learning that permit timely instructor intervention.

As they would in its on-ground counterpart, the students in this online English 7 will read several book-length works from different disciplines (along with a number of essays) and write five essays of their own, including one that will be written in an on-campus meeting at the end of the semester. At least one of the essays will require students to do independent research.

This particular class will explore the theme of gender and sexuality. Books for the course may include *Self-Made Man*, by Norah Vincent, *The Zuni Man-Woman*, by Will Roscoe, *Evolution's Rainbow*, by Joan Roughgarden, and *The Awakening*, by Kate Chopin.

Students will regularly take online reading quizzes that test their understanding of key concepts in the texts they are reading. Their contributions to class discussions will also be evaluated for completeness and for the degree to which they reflect genuine engagement with the assigned readings. Their essays will be evaluated for the following criteria:

(1) Responsiveness to the assignment: Does the student's essay meet all of the requirements of the assignment?

(2) Quality of critical thinking: Does the student's essay reflect a thorough understanding of the subject matter, an evaluation of all relevant evidence, consideration of opposing viewpoints, and effective analysis and synthesis of ideas?

(3) Unity and coherence: Is the essay organized around a clearly stated central idea? Is all of the content of the essay relevant to an exploration of this central idea?

(4) Organization: Has the essay been organized so that a typical reader can easily follow the ideas? Are paragraphs coherent? Are adequate transitions used?

(5) Support/Development: Has the student provided adequate support for his/her ideas, including specific examples and clear explanations? Has the student incorporated information and quotations from the assigned readings? Has the student properly cited sources using MLA style?

(6) Use of Language: Is the essay clearly written? Does it use accurate diction, a variety of sentence structures, and an appropriate tone and style? Has the student adhered to standard rules of usage?

## **5. Technical Support**

- Describe the technology necessary to carry out your proposal for an effective DE course. Include an assessment of the adequacy of support personnel required to maintain hardware & software, for both faculty and students.

In order to participate in this course, students will need a computer with an Internet connection, a web browser, and a word-processing program (ideally a post-1997 version of Microsoft Word). Students who are facing any technical difficulties can seek assistance either by filling out the online help form or by coming to campus for face-to-face help in the Library Computer Lab. They are also welcome to contact their instructor, who will do everything he can to get them the assistance they need.

## **6. Student Services**

- Describe how students might access services such as tutoring, counseling, financial aid, and supporting course materials, library materials, learning resources, etc.

Students enrolled in online courses can take advantage of all of the services that are available to students in on-campus courses, though of course, many online students are not able to come to campus during business hours. Still, they can contact any campus employee via email or

telephone. (The Blackboard site for this course will contain information about and links to the most important campus resources. Students can always contact their instructor for additional information about how to access campus services.) The library is perhaps the most important campus service for students in an English 7 course; fortunately, students can search the library's catalogue and many of its databases over the Internet.

## **7. Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

- Describe how you will accommodate students with disabilities. For a telecourse, is the video close-captioned? If you plan to use Blackboard, please review the accessibility information at <http://www.blackboard.com/products/access/faqs.htm>. For online accessibility, please email your web site to the DSRC Alternative Media Specialist or coordinator. For more information on accessibility resources, visit <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>.

According to blackboard.com, Blackboard is in compliance with all federal accessibility requirements. For example, screen readers for the blind (such as JAWS) can be used with Blackboard, as can alt tags, which convert images to text. Blackboard also offers training in its accessibility features to any teachers who are using its products.

The syllabus will request that any students needing accommodations for disabilities contact their instructor, and the instructor will make every possible effort to meet the needs of those students.

## **8. Class Size & First Term to be offered**

- Indicate the standard limit for the class and the first term you plan to offer this course.

This class will be offered in the fall of 2006 with a maximum enrollment of 27 students.