English 7 Online Proposal
From: Danielle Maze
To: Distance Education Curriculum Support Committee

Critical Reading, Writing and Thinking (non-fiction)

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1. Need/Justification

English 7 is a required course for all Chabot students wishing to transfer to a four-year college or university. Along with English 4, which may alternatively be taken to fulfill this transfer requirement, it is the most advanced of the required English courses Chabot offers. Ideally, English 7 builds on the skills students should have acquired in English 1A and introduce them to thinking even more critically about texts that, generally, should be more challenging than those studied in English 1A. English 7 students should therefore also demonstrate more polished and in-depth analytical writing than was required to pass English 1A. Finally, as opposed to English 4, in which students may study poetry, novels, plays, etc., English 7 is supposed to focus primarily on non-fictional texts. Therefore, it is often recommended for those students who intend to pursue degrees in the sciences or business, as opposed to the arts and humanities, upon transferring.

Offering sections of English 7 online enables Chabot's Language Arts department to meet the needs of potential students who might not otherwise come to campus to take courses: single parents, people with disabilities, full-time employees, etc. It may be merely coincidental, but I have noticed that many of the students who enrolled in my current online section of English 7 are in Chabot's nursing program, and many of those already work full-time in addition to taking the very time-intensive life science classes and labs required for their major. Although my class also requires a considerable amount of time and effort of students are to succeed in passing, the flexibility of being able to take the course online is undoubtedly what has attracted most of these students to the class.

While I cannot offer any hard numbers, I would have to say that demand for online sections of English 7 is considerable. Over 15 students showed up at the in-person orientation wanting to add the course (of approximately 17 who showed up to add, 15 decided to do so after the orientation). In addition, I have received numerous emails from students since the orientation, asking if it is still possible to add. (Because the section is already over-enrolled, I have had to turn them away.)

2. Course Content Delivery

Except for the class orientation and an in-person meeting to take the final exam, the online English 7 course is offered completely online. The traditional English 7 course is a

3-unit lecture course that meets on campus for approximately 51 hours during a semester. The online class will include the same number of hours with the following approximate schedule of the time allocated for each modality:

- Online research and assignments: 22 hours
- Online discussions and lectures: 23 hours
- Communication via e-mail: 4 hours

I hold online "office hours" in a special area called "Virtual Office Hour" in Blackboard; students also email me directly (not via Blackboard) when they have questions or concerns they feel are too personal to post in a Blackboard forum, such as queries about a grade. In addition, they know they may schedule times to meet with me face-to-face on campus, if necessary.

3. Nature and Frequency of Instructor-Student Interactions

The instruction for English 7 online is completely asynchronous, with the students and I online at different times. Following are the various methods I am using/will be using to teach students and to evaluate their progress in the course:

- Each chapter of the two main texts we are reading features a discussion board with several questions I have created to spur discussion, links to additional resources, and writing assignments. To earn the discussion board points, each student is required to post responses **of substantial quality** not only in content but also in use of college-level English (grammar, syntax, spelling, etc.). to at least two questions. To discourage students from "piggybacking" on their classmates' work, several of the questions may be responded to by a maximum of four students. After that, while another student or students may also respond to the same question, they will not receive credit for that response. They must pick a new question to answer. One of the two questions students respond to each week may also come from other questions which are denoted as being ones any number of students may answer. In addition, I strongly encourage students to post thoughtful responses to their peers' comments.

- Via e-mail and/or phone, I will contact students who do not participate in the activities, and/or attempt to submit late assignments. Students will be asked to fill out mid-point and exit surveys about the course. I encourage students to contact me via e-mail and, if necessary, to request an in-person appointment to discuss any concerns or problems they may have.

- The course requires 7-10 writing assignments that will be completed and submitted by students individually via either the Digital Drop Box or Assignment feature in Blackboard (each assignment will indicate clearly which feature to use). I will e-mail each graded assignment to each student with comments about his or her work. Also, these assignments will serve as an additional foundation for online discussions, where feedback will be obtained from peers. These

assignments are designed to develop students' critical reading, college-level writing, and critical thinking skills, as set forth in the "Expected Outcomes" for English 7 students provided by the Language Arts division.

- The interactions described above will facilitate student learning through switching the course emphasis from teacher-centered lectures to student-centered research, web browsing, written assignments, and discussions. The course's design will encourage students to take responsibility in their learning, to develop better communication skills (including writing, debating, evaluating, critical-thinking). The online modality will actually allow the instructor to contact students individually more frequently (to provide feedback on their assignments and general progress) than usually happens in a traditional class.

4. Assignments and Methods of Evaluation

Student progress will be evaluated as follows:

- an initial short essay that was submitted in-person by each student at the course orientation (this is not graded but used partially to measure student progress and partially to help guard against cheating on future assignments).
- 16 discussion boards as described above.
- 7-10 short writing assignments as described above, which are graded according to the same criteria as described above for discussion board posts. Short writing assignments must be two to five pages (two **full** pages minimum), double-spaced, using 12-point font.
- a final exam (in-person) consisting of essay questions
- a long research paper (in addition, the shorter writing assignments for this course are also research assignments to a degree, as I always require students to quote from their course texts and outside sources). The long research paper must be six to ten pages (six **full** pages minimum), double-spaced, using 12-point font.
- interim and final anonymous course evaluations/surveys (two extra credit points each) will require students to reflect on their learning and provide valuable feedback to the instructor for course improvement. It will also provide data on students' characteristics, such as demographics, education and professional goals.
- Reading and understanding the course texts. Students must read and have a clear understanding of the material presented in the course texts in order to answer most Discussion questions and to complete any of the writing assignments (which all involve at least some degree of research and citation using the course texts).
- Except for the initial short essay submitted during the course orientation, all of the above assignments, including Discussion board posts, are graded on thoughtfulness and originality of content as well as proper use of college-level grammar, spelling, syntax, etc.

5. Technical Support

I have included the following technical specifications required for students to use Blackboard on the course site, and I also went over these briefly with students during the on-campus orientation.

The following hardware and software are **minimum** specifications to work with the Blackboard application. **Platform:** Windows 95, 98, 2000, NT, or ME; MacOS 9 or MacOS X.

- **Hardware:** 64 MB of RAM, 1 G of free disk space.
- **Software:** (This depends on what files your instructor posts, but common ones include) Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Adobe Acrobat Reader.
- **Browser:** Blackboard typically recommends Internet Explorer 6.0 or higher. Java and cookies must be enabled.
- **Modem:** 56K, But DSL or cable modem preferred.

If students require more detailed information, I have provided links on the Blackboard site to the Browser and Operating System Requirements and to the Las Positas College Distance Education website.

I have also informed students that depending on what type of file I instructor post,(Word, PowerPoint, PDF, Quicktime movie clip, etc.) they may need to download a software Plug-in, Reader, or Converter in order to view a document or enhanced content.

The online components of this course will be managed through Blackboard. An overview of Blackboard and the first week's course content was provided to all students during the first class session. All writing assignments may be submitted via RTF for those students who do not have access to Microsoft Word. Students must have an email account to participate in the course. Students who have any difficulties are able, and encouraged, to contact me via email or by posting messages in my Virtual Office Hour on Blackboard.

6. Student Services

I have included a links in the External Links area of the course site to Chabot College services and programs such as the Health Center, Disabled Students Services, Counseling, the college library, CHARLIE, the WRAC Center, etc., in case any student requires such assistance. I am very familiar with most student resources available on-campus and am always proactive in guiding students to resources if I feel they may benefit from them. I also have included links to non-college resources such as the Alameda County Library, grammar and writing resources offered by other institutions, books I recommend for English practice, and so on. Throughout the semester, I also will provide links to additional course readings (in addition to the required course texts) so that students will not have to purchase these readings or go to a library to find them.

7.   Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

I met with all enrolled students for this term's section at the in-person orientation, and none of them has a disability that would require special accommodations for this course. However, in case I teach this course again in the future, I plan to email the course web site to the DSRC Alternative Media Specialist before the end of the semester, to ensure that any future issues of accessibility are addressed.

8. Class Size and First Term to be offered

Class size is limited to 32 students (the normal full load for an English 7 course is 27 students). I am teaching the class for the first time this semester (Fall 2006).