Course Proposal: English Department
English 2001: Creative Writing: Nonfiction

1. Catalog Description:
   a. English 2001
   b. Creative Writing: Nonfiction
   c. (3-0-3)
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   e. CREAT WRIT NONF
   f. A creative writing course focusing on the essay. Extensive reading, aimed at developing a critical vocabulary and background knowledge of the genre, will be integrated with extensive writing and workshop discussions. (Writing-centered.)
   g. Prerequisites: English 1002G

2. Course Objectives

   English 2001 is a writing-centered course designed to meet the following objectives:
   a. To develop the student’s overall writing ability through a concentration on the writing of creative nonfiction;
   b. To develop critical reading skills through extensive, disciplined study of the craft of the essay;
   c. To enhance understanding and appreciation of the creative essay as a distinct literary form;
   d. To promote personal growth through the student’s discovery and development of essay subjects and styles;
   e. To promote interpersonal skills and intellectual development through vigorous workshop interactions.

3. Course Outline: There are 15 units in this course. Equal distribution would allow for one unit per week in a 15-week/50-minute class (forty-five classes), and one unit per week in a 15-week/75-minute class (thirty classes).

   **Units 1-2/Weeks 1-2:** The first weeks of the course will be devoted to developing a critical vocabulary for discussing nonfiction prose. Students will read and analyze essays in order to understand the craft of essay writing: What is the nonfiction writer's relation to fact? How is nonfiction different from fiction? from journalism? How is meaning produced in nonfiction? How does the essayist structure his/her work? How does the essayist sustain interest? use time? use metaphor? use point of view? Students will read works by such twentieth-century essayists as Alice Walker, E.B. White, Phillip Lopate, and Patricia Hampl.

   **Units 3-5/Weeks 3-5:** Students will submit original essays to workshop discussion.

   **Unit 6-7/Week 6-7:** Students will be introduced to a variety of essay genres, including especially nature writing, travel writing, and the interview essay. Students will read the work of
such essayists as Annie Dillard, Pico Iyer, Mary Gordon, Scott Russell Sanders, and Mary Swander.

Units 8-10/Weeks 8-10: Students will submit a second round of original essays to workshop discussion.

Units 11-12/Weeks 11-12: The students will introduce an essayist to their classmates. Each student will briefly explore the biography and bibliography of the chosen essayist, then analyze a short essay or portion of an essay for the class. Students will also write a short analytical paper about one of their writer’s essays.

Units 13-15/Weeks 13-15: Students will submit a third round of original essays to workshop discussion.

Evaluation:

- In-class discussion (including workshops): 20%
- Journal (at least four pages per week): 25%
- Analytical paper (3-5 pages): 15%
- Final portfolio (including daily writings, all drafts, and at least 25 pages of finished writing): 40%

4. Implementation

a. The course will be assigned initially to Dr. Lauren Smith. Other English Department faculty who may eventually teach the course are Abella, Carpenter, Guernsey, Guzlowski, Kilgore, Martone, and Radavich.

b. No special projects, laboratory experiences, or additional costs will be required.

c. Texts and supplementary materials:


d. Term to be first offered: Spring 2002

5. Rationale:

a. **Purpose and Need**

   Recent years have seen an emerging awareness of the creative nonfiction essay as a serious genre of contemporary literature, distinct from poetry, fiction, and drama. Formerly seen under the rubric of nature writing or autobiography, the work of particular essay writers, such as E.B. White or Annie Dillard, has now been more generally appreciated for its value as literature. In the last fifteen years, a number of English departments have opened up essay-writing programs or offered undergraduate course work focusing on the literary nonfiction essay. Likewise, more literary journals devoted
completely or partially to literary nonfiction have become available. Such nonfiction writers as Maya Angelou, Lewis Thomas, Annie Dillard, and Virginia Woolf have received increasing attention as practitioners of the genre in writing and literature classes and elsewhere. Poetry and fiction writing courses do not and cannot explore the specific challenges of literary nonfiction. Courses in expository writing are increasingly devoted to writing in the disciplines. We need a course devoted specifically to the essay genre.

b. **Justification of the level of the course and its prerequisites:**

Offering English 2001 at the 2000-level allows the course to be consistent with, and to complement, our other creative writing courses in terms of scope and content.

c. **Similarity to existing course:**

This course does not resemble other English offerings.

d. **Required or elective:**

English 2001 will count in the major or minor as a Group 5 elective.

6. A community college course may be judged equivalent to this course, in accordance with procedures of the Illinois Articulation Agreement.

7. **Date approved by the English Department** 7 March 2001

8. **Date approved by CAHCC** 4 April 2001

9. **Date approved by CAA** 19 April 2001

10. **Department contact:** B. Irwin (x6304), D. Ringuette (x2428) or L. Smith (x6294).