

Getting Started in English

Here's a quick guide to the array of English courses especially suited to first year students. (If your high school preparation, such as a high score on AP courses, or your own strong interests lead you there, you're eligible to register for our intermediate, 200-level courses, but it's a good idea to check with the professor before or at the first meeting of the course.) You can find fuller descriptions of all of the courses mentioned here by using the "Course Search" tab on the Smith College Catalog site; just click on the course title to find out more.

If you love literature and enjoy the intellectual work of interpretation . . .

- First Year Seminars, offered by members of the English department or other literature faculty, are a great option. All of these courses will invite you to encounter a rich, exciting set of texts—and, like all First Year Seminars, they meet the College's Writing Intensive requirement and are designed to introduce you to the kind of intellectual work you'll be encountering at Smith. In these seminars, literary texts, linked by a particular theme or question, provide the intellectual terrain that you'll explore in class discussions and a sequence of writing projects. This year's seminars, taught by English department faculty:
 - FYS 115, "Reading the Civil War," Michael Gorra
 - FYS 122, "Eden and Other Gardens," Nancy Bradbury
 - FYS 123, "Horse-Lords of the Ancient Steppes," Craig Davis
 - FYS 128, "Ghosts," Cornelia Pearsall
 - FYS 132, "Girls Leaving Home," Ambreen Hai
 - FYS 191, "Pandemics in Fact and Fiction," Gillian Kendall

- English 199, English 200, English 231. If you're seriously considering a major in English, these courses are another good option. (No need to hurry, though: both 199 and 200 are offered every semester, and 231 is offered every fall.) Together, English 199 and either 200 or 231 form the foundation for the English major, and for your future coursework in the discipline. ENG 199, "Methods of Literary Study," (taught this fall by Lily Gurton-Wachter) focuses on the work of interpretation itself, exploring texts written in a variety of genres and eras; it's also Writing Intensive and, like the First Year Seminars, helps you to think hard and write well in a particular discipline. ENG 200, "The English Literary Tradition I," (fall section offered by Douglas Patey) introduces you to key British texts from earlier historical periods—texts that have been crucial to later writers as they've developed their own art. This course is also Writing Intensive, but its focus is on providing a compelling encounter with these texts in their historical contexts. English 231 (taught

this fall by Rick Millington) introduces you to key American texts from the United States' founding to the crisis of the Civil War and explores the role of literature in the new nation as it sought to establish a culture of its own.

- Another good entry point: ENG/WLT 202, "Western Classics in Translation, from Homer to Dante" (taught by Nancy Shumate). A classic liberal arts course, also Writing Intensive.

If you're a creative writer—or wish to become one . . .

The Smith English major now has a Creative Writing emphasis (along with our Literary Studies emphasis)—and a growing set of courses designed to enable students to begin or continue their work as poets, fiction writers, or essayists. Here are our introductory Creative Writing courses; note that, though there's lots of writing involved, these Creative Writing courses don't satisfy the College's WI (Writing Intensive) requirement.

- English 125, "Introduction to Creative Writing." Three sections are offered, taught by Sara London, Arda Collins, and Naomi Miller. Each section emphasizes drafting, work-shopping, and revising; students will work in fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. (Currently full, but more sections will be offered in the spring.)
- English 136, "Journalism: Principles and Practice." Taught by the journalist Nancy Cohen (often heard on our local NPR station), this is a demanding introduction to journalism's genres, standards, and values. Best taken a bit later in your time at Smith—since it has a WI course as a prerequisite.
- And check out English112, a two-credit, Tuesday evening course linked to the Poetry Center's spectacular reading series.

What about English 118, "Colloquia in Writing"?

These are terrific courses, all Writing Intensive, designed not to explore a set of literary texts but to prepare students to do well at the kinds of writing they will be assigned in courses across Smith's curriculum. Like the First Year Seminars, they explore a particular theme or topic—but pay even more sustained attention to the skills and strategies that make for effective academic writing. These are taught by members of the Jacobson Writing Center, professionals trained in the teaching of writing. Two sections of 118 ("Language and Gender," both taught by Miranda McCarvel) are specifically designed for students who are bilingual or who speak a language other than English as their first language. (Note: ENG 118 does not count towards the English major.)