

ENGLISH 321: INTERMEDIATE COMPOSITION

Cr. 3

Schuetz-Hoffman: Many young writers are given the advice, "Write what you know." While this is undoubtedly sound advice, one of the most powerful aspects of writing is how it can help you discover what you do not yet know. In this course, we will do both. We will begin with the familiar and move out, through research methods, toward the not yet known.

I've loosely divided the class into two components—experience and social discourse. While these two components are ultimately inseparable, the focus on one and then the other allows us to explore different kinds of composition. The first writing assignments will ask you to reflect on the nitty-gritty details of lived experience (through examining education and then identity) while the last two writing assignments will ask you to enter the ongoing public conversation about some contemporary issue. Narrative will help you negotiate the first assignments; the essay will help you with the latter. This does not mean ideas are absent from narrative nor that story is absent from the essay—in fact you will be attempting both—but the emphasis of each will be different.

Writing is both an art and a skill. Art requires imagination and can be approached through exercises (for example, free writing). Skill requires knowledge of conventions and can be approached through strategies (for example, grammar and style). Both art and skill improve with practice. This class is designed to give you practice.

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