

November 5, 2008

To: St. Olaf Faculty  
From: Curriculum Committee  
Re: Changes to the English Major

At the November Faculty Meeting the Curriculum Committee will move that the faculty adopt the following revisions to the English major.

Catalog Description:

### **Requirements for the Graduation Major:**

Ten English courses including English 185, one course in Cross-Cultural studies, one Literary History course, one course from either Cross-Disciplinary studies or Genre, plus six electives (two of which must be at Level III). In addition, at least one Level II course must be in literature before 1800 and one in literature after 1800.

#### **1. CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES**

Cross-cultural courses treat literature as a human expression that embraces both commonality and differences within and across cultures. They may focus on global literatures in English and/or multicultural literatures within a single nation. Such courses also employ critical approaches designed to address cross-cultural literary issues [e.g., 245 Amer. Racial/Multicult.; 209 Colonialism/ Novel; 247 Post-colonial; 270 Lit of Eastern Caribbean; 215 Fiction Down Under; 200 Topics in Cross-Cultural].

#### **2. LITERARY HISTORY**

Courses satisfying the Literary History requirement are designed to trace the process of literary change, examining the development of literary styles, conventions, and forms. They may focus on one national literary tradition or examine literature from two or more nations. While not limited to traditional "period" surveys, these courses present an approach to literature that emphasizes generic variety and chronological breadth [e.g., 221; 222; 220 Topics in Lit History; 283 Modern/Postmodern Lit].

#### **3. CROSS-DISCIPLINARY STUDIES**

Cross-disciplinary courses approach a topic, author, genre, or period from at least one disciplinary perspective in addition to that of literary study. These courses teach students to recognize disciplinary perspectives as distinct ways of knowing, and to compare and combine such perspectives in literary analysis [e.g., 238 Literature and History; 263 Ethics in Narrative; 265 Performing Arts/ NY; 275 Lit and Film].

#### **4. GENRE**

Genre refers to a group of works united primarily by a specific form or shared formal elements rather than by theme, topic, historical period, or country. The genre studied may be broad, such as narrative fiction, or narrow, such as the elegy. Genre courses address form through writing,

the study of literature, or both, and require students to think critically and creatively about the formal qualities of literature [e.g., 281 Studies/Poetry; 282 Studies/Drama; 283 Studies/ Fiction; 257 Creative Writing; 255 Journalistic Writing; 251 Creative Nonfiction].

Rationale:

*History and Context:* In the spring of 2007, the English department began a process of revisiting its curriculum, which has been in place since 1993. The reasons for this decision were both pedagogical and logistical. At Level II, the current curriculum is centered around team-taught literary history survey courses (221, 222) and one course addressing Global Literatures in English. In revising the major, the department seeks to retain the strengths of the current curriculum while incorporating the diversity of literary approaches in the field of literary study today.

*Changes to the Existing Requirements:* In lieu of the current requirements of 221,222, and Global Literatures in English (GLE), students will be required to take three courses from the following categories: one Cross-Cultural course, one course in Literary History, and one course emphasizing either Cross-Disciplinary approaches to literature or Genre (a category that includes creative writing). In addition, to ensure some historical breadth, every student is required to take at least one course in literature before 1800 and one in literature after 1800. No changes have been made to the introductory course, English 185, or to the Level III requirements.

The new major will make efficient use of department resources. Because the requirements are based on categories of courses, the new major will continue many current courses, and in fact, allow many of them to count toward one of the required categories. In moving away from the current team-taught historical survey courses, the department will be able to expand the number of level II offerings. These courses will serve both English majors and offer General Education credit to non-majors. The increased number of Level II offerings, in turn, allows the department to strengthen the major by moving from nine to ten courses. Finally, these changes will foster faculty development as teachers devise new courses within the four categories.

Specifically, the new requirements intend

1. To strike a balance between flexibility that allows students to pursue specialized areas of study and requirements that expose students to important approaches within the field.
2. To retain the current major's emphasis on global literature and cross-cultural literary exchanges and issues.
3. To retain the current major's commitment to literary history as one of the primary categories of analysis.
4. To expand students' opportunities to examine relationships between literary studies and other disciplines.
5. To integrate creative writing more explicitly into the curriculum, recognizing the writer's craft as an important way of understanding literature.