

COURSES (June 29, 2021)

Dear English Majors, Minors, and Intended Students,

This will be my last message to you about the new curriculum, and it will specifically discuss the revised slate of courses that the English department will be introducing this Fall, including new and modified courses, prerequisite changes, and so forth. Along with the previous two messages I sent, this discussion of the course-level changes coming this Fall should help you feel ready for Fall registration and beyond. If you do have any further questions, please feel free to get in touch with me as the new term approaches.

Before I get into the details, let me remind you of our two remaining information sessions, on **Tuesday, July 6, at 2:00** and **Wednesday, August 4, at 10:00**. The sessions will be about 45 minutes long and will include plenty of time for questions. I'll send a Zoom link for each session as it approaches. We've also posted a video recording of the first information session on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJ3wILMzXOk>.

So, on to those details. As you know, the English curriculum is divided up by level: introductory courses at the 100-level; broad survey courses at the 200-level; more rigorous and specified courses at the 300-level; and advanced seminars at the 400-level. In revising our curriculum, we've maintained that rough breakdown, but we've made significant changes *within* each level, not only to the courses but to the prerequisite structures as well. What I'd like to do here is walk through each level and explain the changes to it. Please note that all our new courses are now up on SFU's course calendar, available at: <http://www.sfu.ca/students/calendar/2021/fall/courses/engl.html>. For a list of the courses on offer in the Fall along with their course outlines, see: <http://www.sfu.ca/english/undergraduate-studies/programs-courses/1217Courses.html>.

100-level courses

This is the easy part: our six 100-level classes haven't changed at all. "Literary Classics"; "Literature Now"; "Literature and Performance"; "Language and Purpose"; "Literature and Culture"; and "Writing to Persuade"—all are still an active part of our curriculum, all will still fill a lower-division W requirement, and all will do a good job both preparing you for more advanced English courses and for the kinds of writing, reading, and analysis you're likely to do at SFU.

200-level courses

Unlike our 100-level courses, our 200-level courses have undergone a sea change. With a few exceptions ("Metrics and Prosody," "Creative Reading," "History and Principles of Rhetoric," and "History and Principles of Literary Criticism"), our 200-level courses used to be defined by traditional, Anglo-centric periods: "Introduction to Medieval Literature," "Introduction to Early Modern Literature," and so on up to the 21st century. Those periods represent *one* way to organize knowledge of our field, but it's not the only way, it's not the most comprehensive way,

and it's not necessarily the most interesting was for our students (or, frankly, for our faculty). With that in mind, we've replaced our traditional period-based courses with innovative topical courses that can be taught within a variety of time periods and even across time periods. Those courses are ENGL 202, "The Environmental Imagination"; ENGL 204, "Reading Sexuality and Gender"; ENGL 209, "Race, Borders, Empire"; ENGL 210 "Reading and Writing Identities"; ENGL 211, "The Place of the Past," and ENGL 213, "Reading Across Media."

One of the things that's exciting about these new courses is that they will offer, for professors and students alike, brand new ways of engaging with the field. And while the classes will obviously be focused around their specific topics, each version of each class will be very different depending on the instructor teaching it. As many of you know, I am a medievalist, and so if I were to teach ENGL 202 (something I really look forward to doing!), I would very likely use medieval literature to address environmental theories, issues, and concerns. I would thus teach a very different course than, say, my colleague Dr. Collis, who works in 21st century poetics, or Dr. Lesjak, who works on the nineteenth century novel. I might also teach *across* time periods, looking at the environmental consciousness of literary expression from Chaucer through to Octavia Butler, or something like that. The point here—and this is something that you'll hear me say a lot in this message—is that you should **look carefully at the course description and outline on the English Department's website** as you're registering, not just the title in the SFU course calendar. There are lots of exciting ways that we might teach any one of these courses, but you'll want to know what you're going to get when you sign up.

Along with the change in course numbers and topics, we've also made important changes to the prerequisites for our 200-level courses. Currently, in order to get into a 200-level course, you would need to have two 100-level courses under your belt. Starting in the Fall, **the prerequisite for all of our 200-level courses will be 12 units or any one 100-division English course**. What that means is that you'll be able to get into 200-level courses more quickly and without worrying about specific course-level prerequisites. Equally important, this new structure will open up our courses to interested students in other schools and programs, allowing for a more diverse and polyvocal classroom. We feel strongly that this new prerequisite structure will allow students to advance more efficiently and more effectively through our programs.

300-level courses

You will also see a significant shift in the structure and organization of our 300-level courses. As with our 200-level courses, our 300-levels used to be dominated by courses in traditional, Anglo-centric periods: "Studies in Medieval Literature," "Studies in Victorian Literature," and so forth. In redeveloping our 300-level courses, we haven't done away with those time periods completely, but we have reduced their number, and we've redeveloped them so that they are more flexible and open to different teaching possibilities. Again using my own medieval period as an example, we used to offer both ENGL 304, "Studies in Medieval Literature," and ENGL 306, "Chaucer." Starting in the Fall, we will only have ENGL 304, which has been redeveloped as "The Medieval World." Within that single course, we will still be able to offer a course on Chaucer *and* on the other courses that have been offered under ENGL 304, as well as new courses that the redeveloped number makes possible. We have made similar moves across the periods covered by the 300-level classes: we've gone from four Early Modern courses to two

("Early Modern Words and Worlds" and "Shakespeare and the Stage"); we've combined eighteenth-century literature and Romantic literature; we've brought Victorian and nineteenth-century literature together into a class called "The Long Nineteenth Century"; and we've joined the 20th and 21st centuries into "Modern and Contemporary British Literature." We've also combined our two 300-level American literature courses (pre- and post-1900) into a single course, and we've also collapsed our early and late Canadian literature courses into one another.

So what are the practical considerations of this course compression at the 300-level? First, combining and broadening courses has allowed us to streamline a somewhat unwieldy schedule, which previously included some classes that we seldom if ever actually taught. Second, the new courses will allow us more flexibility and creativity in our teaching, opening up conversations within and around traditional periods that might not have been possible under the earlier course structure. Without worrying about the 1900 division in the American literature course, for instance, we might imagine a course on African American literature from its earliest moments up to the contemporary period. Or we might imagine a course that considers the short but vibrant Romantic period not in isolation but rather in the broader contexts of an extended historical moment. These and other possibilities will be available in ways that they haven't in the past. Finally, reducing the number of traditional-period courses has allowed us to add a few new classes and to revamp others, including ENGL 361, "Diaspora Literatures in English"; "ENGL 362, "Transnational Literatures in English"; and ENGL 363, "Studies in Media Cultures."

I want to make two additional important points regarding the 300-level courses. First, because they are broader and can be taught in many different ways, **the 300-level courses are repeatable for credit when a different topic is offered.** If, for instance, you take ENGL 320, "The Long 18th Century and the Romantic Era" with Dr. Levy, and she teaches it through the lens of Romanticism, you can take it again when Dr. Solomon offers it as a Restoration Drama course. Likewise, if you want to take the American Literature course when it's offered by Dr. Everton and then again when Dr. Smith offers it, you can do that as well, even if the two courses are offered in the exact same term. Just as we instructors want to be able to teach creative and idiosyncratic courses that reflect the diversity of interest within our fields, we want you students to have the latitude to pursue the areas that you're interested in. Second, with a few exceptions like Creative Writing, we have once again simplified the prerequisites for our 300-level courses: **the prerequisite for our 300-level courses will be 30 units or any two 200-division English courses.**

400-level courses

The 400-level seminars combine aspects of the 200-level courses and aspects of the 300-level courses. Like the 200-level courses, we have opened our 400-level seminars up to increasingly topical organizing principles. To that end, we have gotten rid of the traditional period-based courses ("Topics in the Medieval Literature," "Topics in Early Modern English Non-Dramatic Literature," "Topics in Eighteenth Century Literature") in favour of courses like "Seminar in Literature and Race," "Seminar in Literature and Environment," "Seminar in Literature and History," as well as geographically and culturally oriented courses such as "Seminar in American Literature," "Seminar in Canadian Literature," "Seminar in British Literature," and "Seminar in Indigenous Literature." Once again, those courses will naturally be taught differently depending

on the instructor (the British literature I'll cover in my "Seminar in British Literature" will be quite different than the British literature Dr. Gilles covers in hers), so please do make sure that you **refer to the course outlines, and not just the course calendar, when you're registering.** And don't worry: **like the 300-level courses, we've ensured that all of the 400-level courses are repeatable if a different topic is being covered.** That means you can still take British Literature (or Canadian, or American, or Indigenous) to your heart's content if that's what you're interested in.

To make the 400-level easier to navigate, we've also renumbered many courses and grouped them into informal clusters. (We're still trying to figure out how to get these clusters up on our webpage, so bear with us!). ENGL 410 – 419 represent the "**Approaches, Theories, Ideas**" cluster, which contains courses like "Seminar in Literature and Race," "Seminar in Literature and Environment," "Seminar in Literature and History," and more. ENGL 430 – 449 is the "**Places, Spaces, and Ideas**" cluster, containing "Seminar in Indigenous Literature," "Seminar in British Literature," "Seminar in Canadian Literature," and others. ENGL 470 – 479 is the "**Language and Writing**" cluster, which is made up of our creative writing, writing and rhetoric, and poetics courses. Finally ENGL 490-499 is a cluster of "**Special Seminars**": the honours research and methods seminar, directed readings, and so forth. These designations don't have any *official* bearing on your transcript or your progress in the program, but they will help you see at a glance what you might be interested in and also what's on offer in any given term.

Finally, as with the earlier levels, we have simplified the prerequisites for most of our 400-level classes to **45 units or two 300 division English courses.** There are, of course, a few exceptions to this rule (you can't take ENGL 400W, "Seminar in Advanced Old English," until you've passed ENGL 300, "Old English"), but for the most part, we've loosened the requirements across the board. That means fewer hurdles for you to clear as you plan your course schedule, and it also means that interested non-majors and minors might take some of our upper-level courses as electives, bringing a more diverse set of voices into the seminar room.

Once again, I feel like I've packed a lot of information into this one document, but my hope is that after this message (and my messages of June 14 and May 31), you have a good sense of what changes you'll see in the Department's curriculum starting this Fall and what they mean for you. As I've emphasized in the past, **everything you've done so far—whatever English courses, prerequisites, and requirements you've taken with us—will still count toward your degree.** We hope, though, that these shifts and revisions to our course schedule will make that degree more exciting, more salient, and more meaningful. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to email me at david_coley@sfu.ca or to contact our undergraduate advisor, Kathryn Ward, at engladv@sfu.ca.

Good luck with course registration, and as always, please take care. We look forward to seeing you back—and in person!—in September.

Best,
David