

**The VMI Core Curriculum:
The Nucleus of Citizenship and Leadership**

EN 101-102 – English Composition I and II

A. Course Information

1. Department: *English and Fine Arts*
2. Course Number: *EN 101 and 102* 3. Credit Hours: *3 credit hours each*
4. Full Course Title: *English Composition I & II*
5. Course Description(s):

EN 101

In EN 101, you will study the fundamental principles of rhetoric, develop the ability to think, read, and write critically, and refine your writing strategies and behaviors. You will be introduced to writing as a process, including such essential practices as invention, arrangement, and revision. You will write primarily expository essays to practice advancing ideas logically to a particular audience for a specific occasion to achieve a clear purpose. By defining these elements of the rhetorical situation for writing, you will cultivate a clear voice and presence in your writing as you strive to communicate your ideas to others.

As part of the core curriculum, first-year composition courses encourage active learning and are conducted as writing workshops in which you will regularly meet in small groups to discuss and respond in writing to challenging readings, as well as drafts of one another's essays. In addition to participating in these workshops, you will frequently meet with the instructor in individual conferences to discuss your writing at various stages of the drafting process. Such training helps prepare you not only for successful academic and professional lives but also for full participation in your lives as educated citizens.

EN 102

Having completed EN 101, you should have a clear understanding of the fundamental principles of rhetoric, the expository essay, and writing as a process. EN 102 will build on that foundation by helping you learn to craft a defensible argumentative thesis and to synthesize and integrate the ideas of others into your own writing. This course will introduce methods and strategies of conducting research, including how to identify, locate, and evaluate secondary sources of information, as well as how to ethically incorporate and document material from secondary sources.

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essays. In addition to participating in these workshops, you will frequently meet with the instructor in individual conferences to discuss your writing at various stages of the drafting process. Such training helps prepare you not only for successful academic and professional lives but also for full participation in your lives as educated citizens.

6. Prerequisite(s):

EN 101: no prerequisite

EN 102: minimum grade of C in EN 101

7. Indicate whether this is

A new course

An existing course with less than 75% content revision

An existing course with greater than 75% content revision

8. When do you expect to offer the course first? *Fall 2007*

And on what schedule thereafter? *Every semester*

9. Expected enrollment per section: 16

10. Provide the following information for each faculty member who will teach the course. (Department heads may update this list as needed.)

Full-time Faculty members:

LTC Kurt Ayau

COL Gordon Ball

COL Alan Baragona

COL Meredith Bedell

LCDR Alexis Hart

COL John Leland

COL Christina McDonald

COL Emily Miller

COL David Rachels

LTC Roger Thompson

LTC Pennie Ticen

Part-time Faculty Members:

Ms. Sue Coleman-Croushorn

Dr. Michael Crowley

Ms. Lynne McCombs

See http://www1.vmi.edu/faculty/Dep_Faculty.asp?DC=ENFA for the SACS qualifications of all instructors except Michael Dimmick, who began teaching first-year composition at VMI in spring 2007. Mr. Dimmick is qualified by his graduate degree: M.A. English, Virginia Polytechnic Institute (2003). He previously taught freshman writing courses at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (2004-2006), Ferrum College (2006), and New River Community College (2006).

11. Resources (existing or new) required to offer the course for the Core Curriculum:
None except annual assessment expenses: \$3,125

B. Core Curriculum Contributions

1. Primary Core Curriculum Component for which the approval for the course is proposed:
Written Communication.
2. Indicate any meta-competencies that the proposed course will address and will assess formally. *NA*

C. Syllabus

[Click here.](#)

D. Discussion

1. **Briefly describe how the department views the contribution of the course to the overall goal of the Core Curriculum.**

The Department views EN 101-102 English Composition I and II as courses that aim to develop one of the key competencies included in the Core Curriculum—written communication. In this two-course sequence, cadets are introduced to writing the essay—focused, purposeful, logical, informed, fully developed, and well-edited prose. Those who complete the two-course sequence more clearly understand the method by which writers analyze the particular circumstances for writing, whether for an academic audience or a professional one. They not only have learned to recognize the characteristics of effective writing but also have developed a broad repertoire of strategies to produce their best prose. The writing instruction cadets receive in these early writing courses prepares them for the writing-intensive courses they are required to take as one of the Integrative Experiences in the Core Curriculum. Together, the first-year composition courses and the writing-intensive courses seek to equip cadets for both academic success and participation in the full range of rhetorical occasions they will encounter in their lives as citizens and professionals.

2. **Briefly describe how the course will address each of the intended learning outcomes required by the core curriculum component for which approval is sought.**

Through both informal and formal writing assignments, students will practice making all of the rhetorical choices listed below, receiving feedback from both peer readers and the

instructor on multiple drafts of their essays in order to guide the development of the abilities represented in these learning outcomes.

- *Analyze the audience, occasion, and purpose of a rhetorical situation in order to formulate a response to an idea or problem.*
 - *Generate ideas through both discovery and consultation of a variety of sources.*
 - *Develop ideas fully, offering compelling support and evidence for assertions or conclusions.*
 - *Organize ideas coherently, integrating sources effectively and documenting them appropriately.*
 - *Edit writing for clarity, precision, and stylistic effectiveness.*
 - *Proofread writing to ensure grammatical and mechanical correctness.*
3. Briefly describe how the course will address any of the meta-competencies identified in B.2. *N/A.*
4. **Describe the plan for assessing the outcomes identified in D.2 and, when appropriate, D.3.**

The professional standard in the field of rhetoric and composition for assessing students' competency in written communication is the portfolio. A Stage (or Phase) Two portfolio, which includes a holistically rated common reflective essay, is endorsed by Professor Edward M. White, Professor of English, University of Arizona, and the nation's leading expert in the assessment of writing. The discipline supports this view, stating that "assessment of written literacy . . . should elicit from student writers a variety of pieces, preferably over a period of time; should encourage and reinforce good teaching practices; and should be solidly grounded in the latest research on language learning."

The method of holistic rating used to assess communication treats the choices that writers make in composing an effective piece of writing as inherently interdependent. For instance, the writer's or speaker's selection of a particular target audience may influence both the kind of evidence used to develop a point as well as the style of language that he or she chooses. As a result, each of the ratings in the holistic rubrics includes all of the learning outcomes for either written or spoken communication, rather than treating them as discrete skills.

To assess students' written communication ability, all EN 102 students submit portfolios with a common reflective essay. The portfolio essays are randomly sampled and rated independently by two faculty members who have been trained to use the holistic rating rubric, which corresponds to the COM Learning Outcomes. The final score for a

portfolio is determined by adding the two independent scores. Should more than two points separate the two independent readings, a third reader scores the portfolio.

The EN 102 portfolios provide not only summative data but formative as well. Moreover, there are numerous additional methods of gathering formative information. Students in EN 102 receive feedback from both peer readers and the instructor on multiple drafts of their formal essays in order to guide the development of the abilities represented in the learning outcomes.

- 5. Core curriculum courses must be taught with an explicit effort to stimulate students' intellectual curiosity and awareness of why these requirements have been established as the core academic contribution to the Institute's mission to develop citizen-soldiers. The Core Curriculum Oversight Committee therefore encourages instruction that promotes active, engaged learning. Describe how the pedagogy for this course addresses the issue of relevance and routinely engages students as active learners.**

EN 101 and 102 are conducted as writing workshops in which cadets regularly meet in small groups to discuss and respond in writing to challenging readings, as well as drafts of one another's essays. In addition to participating in these workshops, cadets frequently meet with their instructors in individual conferences to discuss their writing at various stages of the drafting process. Such training helps to prepare cadets not only for successful academic and professional lives but also for full participation in their lives as educated citizens.

- 6. If this is a multi-section course, what faculty development plans does the department have for ensuring consistency and effectiveness across the various sections? Please note any resource requirements for faculty development in A.11.**

To ensure consistency and effectiveness of instruction across sections, instructors are required to attend faculty development workshops at least once each semester to participate in discussions of such topics as crafting effective assignments, responding to student writing, teaching the common portfolio essay, and establishing clear benchmark essays for portfolio rating, among others. In addition, the first-year composition portfolio assessment is conducted each May. Instructors participate in a norming workshop prior to the portfolio rating session as well as an after-action meeting during which instructors often identify useful topics for faculty development workshops the following year. Finally, during the summer, the Director of Writing is invited by the English and Fine Arts Department Head to review faculty members' EN 101 and 102 materials included in their teaching portfolios, which were submitted as part of their annual performance evaluations. The Director writes a response to each instructor's materials, offering specific guidance and recommended areas of focus. These recommendations are incorporated into the faculty members' teaching goals for the coming year. Then, the Director of Writing and Department Head meet with instructors

individually in August and September to facilitate progress toward their respective goals for EN 101 and 102.

E. Component-Specific Requirements:

N/A

Submitted by:

Colonel Christina McDonald, Course Coordinator and Institute Director of Writing
Colonel Emily Miller, Department Head

June 15, 2007