

WRIT 103: WRITING IN COLLEGE
SECTION DESCRIPTIONS
FIRST SEMESTER, 2019-2020

All first-year students are required to complete Writing 103 in the first semester of the first year unless they have received equivalent credit or exemption.

Option A: “Art, Not Chance”

In his 1709 poem, “An Essay on Criticism,” Alexander Pope declared, “True ease in writing comes from art, not chance / as those move easiest who have learned to dance.” This section will familiarize you with the structure and organization of several kinds of expository essay, the form of writing upon which much of your success in college is likely to depend. Through practice, analysis of your own work as well as the work of others, and revision, you will develop your writing and critical skills.

Option B: “Banned Books”

This section will explore the power of written words, especially in social and political contexts. Texts will include *Burn This Book*, a recent anthology of essays on censorship edited by Toni Morrison; J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, one of America's most banned books; Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, both the masterpiece from 1953 and the recent graphic novel illustrated by Tim Hamilton. Writing assignments will include various expository strategies, as well as formalist explication.

Option C: “How Did We Get Here?”

We will be exploring, via research, written prose and class conversation, the ever shifting concept of necessity and if, especially in today's technologically driven age, the lines are indeed distinguishable between wants and needs for “modernized” societies. We will look at and discuss the urgency of basic human needs (food, shelter, etc.), how different societies around the world prioritize and procure these things and if, indeed, technology is creating new necessities on the part of individuals and societies that utilize it. We will be exploring the sliding scale of human perceptions of life and priorities and how they apply to you and the world around you...and we will learn to write solid college level prose along the way.

Option D: “Gods and Monsters”

This section will investigate selected myths and legends. Beginning with *Gilgamesh* and the *Bull of Heaven* and working up to modern American myths, this section will focus on the way in which stories of the supernatural and the fantastic both reflect and help shape what we believe about the nature of human existence; it will also focus on how our relationship with our gods, monsters, and heroes change as our understanding of the world evolves. Students will compose a series of essays that demonstrate their ability with narrative, explication, analysis, argument, and well-documented research.

Option E: “Outsiders, Freaks, and Misfits”

Our class will examine the bygone American tradition of the freak show and its lasting impact on our culture. What can the history of the freak show teach us about the kinds of behaviors, abilities, and identities that American society considers abnormal? How has the freak show influenced how we think about disability, race, and difference today? In what forms does the freak show persist? Our course texts will cover a range of genres, including academic research on sideshow culture; contemporary photographs and posters of freaks; Lynchburg’s own local “freak” history; short fiction; and Tod Browning’s 1930’s film *Freaks*. Through a variety of written assignments, we will develop the skills necessary for producing excellent college writing.

By the end of the semester you will be able to read complex academic texts, summarize and critique others’ assignments, and advance your own unique and interesting analytical claims

Option F: “To Tell You the Truth”

If I want to tell the truth, can I trust my memory to do it? How might my truth be important to anyone?

Is it possible to get creative with the truth without lying? What do I mean by “truth”? These are questions memoirists—and students in this section of Writing 103—should consider. Through reading, writing, and research assignments featuring various rhetorical modes, students in this class explore aspects of crafting “truth,” possibilities and limitations related to memoir, and myriad debates that often plague memoirists and the genre. Students write their own memoir essays, their own analyses of memoir pieces, and arguments that engage in the ongoing memoir debate.