To: Peter Law and HUCC
From: Maurice Lee, English
Date: 11/2/16
Re: Team Teaching CAS EN 538/SED EN 538

I'm writing about my EN538/SED538 course ("Teaching American Literature"), a fully-collaborative, team-taught course I teach with Asst. Prof. Christina Dobbs of SED. We're currently in the second iteration of the course, having made some changes to the first version in F15, and we'd like to team-teach the course again in F17, though to do so I would need to get full course credit, which requires "special consideration" under the CAS team teaching policy. (Dobbs has already arranged for full course credit in SED.)

The course enrolled 18 students in F15 and 15 students this semester, most of whom are MA students (who count for 2 seats under the new enrollment guidelines). The course was quite successful last year as indicated by student performances and evaluations (qualitative and quantitative) and seems to be going well this year. EN538/SED538 is in high demand for SED students (who need 500-level EN courses for their BA and MAT programs) and fills a necessary gap in the EN curriculum (our APR emphasized that we should work harder to link our programs to potential career paths). We’re hoping to grow the number of CAS students through better promotion.

Prof. Dobbs and I come from very different fields and perspectives. Her research involves fieldwork in high schools and empirical studies of English Language Arts, particularly literacy and basic writing skills. I'm a textually based critic who focuses on literary history, form, and interpretation. Our interests intersect in synergistic ways, but because our knowledge and skills do not overlap much, we could not offer the course except as a fully collaborative endeavor.

A few more details: We both attend and co-lead all classes, meet weekly to lesson plan, “assign” each other reading from our respective fields, and share office hour and grading responsibilities (sometimes one of us will grade all the work for a specific assignment; sometimes we divide an assignment between us). One of us tends to “lead” certain components of a class based on our specialties, but we’ve also developed a more dialectical style in which we participate together in classroom activities (that is, we both circulate during group work, direct discussions, handle questions, debate issues, ask questions of each other). Much of our classroom time involves student-based discussion, so classes flow freely between literary content and English Language Arts pedagogy, critical histories and current events. Prof. Dobbs and I have learned a lot from each other, but our knowledge bases remain different enough that we would not be able to mount the course successfully without each other.

In terms of policy, it seems to me that EN538/SED EN538 meets at least three of the four requirements for "special consideration" for full course credit beyond the second year as indicated by CAS team teaching policy. The course has a “substantial interdisciplinary aspect.” We teach the course for “special intellectual or pedagogical reasons.” And the course has shown that team-teaching “demonstrably improves the quality of students’ learning.” Our current syllabus is attached, and I’m happy to provide further information.
CAS EN 538/SED EN 535: Teaching American Literature (Fall 2016)

Classroom: B27 (CAS)  
Time: T TH, 12:30-2pm

Prof. Christina Dobbs  
Email: cdobbs@bu.edu
Office: SED #241 (2 Silber Way)  
Office Hours: By appointment

Prof. Maurice Lee  
Email: molee@bu.edu
Office: #414 EN Dept. (236 Bay State Rd.)  
Office Hours: T TH 11-noon, or by appointment

Overview of Course
This course focuses on teaching American literature at the high school level. Primary goals are to build a broad knowledge base in American literary history, model deep learning with selected texts, address theoretical questions in English Language Arts pedagogy, and learn practical classroom skills. In addition to reading works of fiction, poetry, drama, and autobiography from the perspective of literary criticism, we will address issues of course design, skill development, curriculum, and assessment. The class will be team-taught by Christina Dobbs (SED) and Maurice Lee (CAS English Department). Assignments include short writing exercises, collaborative projects, assessment design, curriculum evaluation, and a literary critical essay. Active participation, including group work, required. Some key questions and topics include:

Framing:
- What skills are fundamental to a successful English Language Arts (ELA) course in American literature, and how might we teach them?
- How do we choose the texts for a well-rounded ELA course in American literature?
- How do we navigate questions of tradition and representation in choosing curricula?
- How do we organize the texts we’ve chosen to maximize skill development?

Planning:
- How do we think about unit planning around a long text or long texts?
- How do we break the text down into pieces that work for adolescents?
- How do we choose what to focus on given all the possibilities?

Assessment:
- How do we assess student learning?
- How do we assess high-level discussion of texts?
- How do we determine growth in student skill over time?
- How do we know if students are ‘ready’ for college in terms of analytic skill?

Course Materials
Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass AND Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Modern Library 978-0-345-47823-8
Gene Luen Yang, American Born Chinese: Square Fish 978-0-312-38448-7
Junot Diaz, Drown: Riverhead 978-1-573-22606-6
Course Reader (blackboard)
Assignment Descriptions

Personal Memo (10%): Consider your own experience with English curricula before high school graduation and then in higher education. How did you experience each? How do you think your K-12 experiences prepared you for higher education (or didn’t)? Length: 2-3 double-spaced pages. Prof. Dobbs will grade.

Explication Exercise (10%): A few paragraphs close reading a passage from Douglass’s *Narrative*. The emphasis here is on in-depth analysis and interpretation of specific examples of complex language. Length: 2 double-spaced pages. Prof. Lee will grade.

Feedback on Curriculum Unit (10%): Our course includes a curriculum unit on Douglass’s *Narrative* and Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Using a reflective questionnaire (provided), assess the unit’s strengths and weaknesses and how well it will work for students. Then recommend key changes you might want to make if you were teaching it. Length: 2-3 double-spaced pages. Prof. Dobbs will grade.

Assessment Design and Feedback (10%): In assigned groups, design a summative assessment of *American Born Chinese*. Use any means that will give you an accurate indication of students’ understanding of the text, and assess the skills they have developed. You could assign a test, a writing assignment, or some sort of project. As a group, write up your expectations for the task and how you plan to assess it. Each group will present their assessment to the class and receive feedback using a protocol (provided). Finally, individuals will write a one-page reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of their group’s assessment design. Prof. Dobbs and/or Lee will grade.

Text Case Study (10%): Using a sample text from class and a case study description of a classroom of adolescents, what skills might you want to focus on as you read that text? Consider at least 3 skills that could be well developed using a particular text and discuss how you will choose a focus given the case study students described. Prof. Dobbs will grade.

Literary Critical Essay (35%): Essays of literary criticism focused on course readings (specific prompts will be handed out well in advance of the essay’s due date). Essays should be 6-8 pages long, single sided, double-spaced, fully cited (MLA or Chicago style), carefully proofread, stapled, and include a title and page numbers. Prof. Lee will grade.

Peer Review of Literary Critical Essay (5%): Each student will peer review 2-3 student essays using rubrics (provided). Grades based on quality of feedback. Prof. Lee will grade.

Participation (10%): Attendance, punctuality, preparation, attention, quality of comments, teamwork, and occasional in-class writing. Profs. Dobbs and Lee will determine.

Class Policies
--All late papers will drop one grade (e.g. B to B-) per class day late.
--Missed in-class assignments cannot be made up and will be graded as an F.
--Plagiarism will be defined and dealt with according to the BU student handbook:
  http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/undergrad-resources/code/#Plagarism
Schedule of Reading and Assignments

Tues., Sept. 6  Introduction

Unit 1: Close Reading

Thurs., Sept. 8  Fiction
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892)—Reader

Tues., Sept. 13  Drama
Kate Snodgrass, “Haiku” (1988)—Reader

Personal Memo due at start of class

Thurs., Sept. 15  Poetry
Emily Dickinson, “I Taste a Liquor Never Brewed” (1861)—Reader
William Cullen Bryant, “To a Waterfowl” (1818)—Reader
Edgar Allen Poe, “The Raven” (1845)—Reader
Dickinson, “A Bird Came Down the Walk” (1862)—Reader

Tues., Sept. 20  Poetry (cont.)
Robert Frost, “The Oven Bird” (1920)—Reader
Elinor Wylie, “The Eagle and the Mole” (1921)—Reader
Langston Hughes, “Dreams” (1951)—Reader

Unit 2: Planning a Unit—Slave Narratives

Thurs., Sept. 22  Slavery and Anti-Slavery Documents—All on Blackboard
Thomas Jefferson, from Notes on the State of Virginia (1785)
David Walker, from “Walker’s Appeal” (1829)
William Lloyd Garrison, “To the Public” (1831)
Henry Clay, from “African Colonization” (1827)
Thomas Dew, “Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature” (1832)
Josiah Nott and George Gliddon, from Types of Mankind (1854)

Tues., Sept. 27  Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life (1845)—prefatory materials
through chapter 8

Thurs., Sept. 29  Douglass, Narrative—finish

Tues., Oct. 4  More Douglass—All on Blackboard
Douglass, “Colorphobia in New York!” (1849)
Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (1852)
Douglass, from My Bondage and My Freedom (1855)
Three reviews of Douglass’s Narrative, plus a response from Douglass
Thurs., Oct. 6  Female Abolitionism and Women’s Rights—All on Blackboard  
Lydia Maria Child, from *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833)  
Angelina Grimke, *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South* (1836)  
Frederick Douglass, “The Rights of Women” (1848)  
Sojourner Truth, “I Am a Woman’s Rights” (1851)  
Harriet Beecher Stowe, from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852)  
Caroline Lee Hentz, from *The Planter’s Northern Bride* (1854)

Tues., Oct. 11  **SUBSTITUTE MONDAY SCHEDULE**


Tues., Oct. 18  Jacobs, *Incidents*—chapters 14-28

Thurs., Oct. 20  Jacobs, *Incidents*—finish

**Unit 3: After Reading—Assessment**

Tues., Oct. 25  James Baldwin, “Sonny’s Blues” (1957)—Reader


Tues., Nov. 1  Yang, *American Born Chinese*—finish the book

Thurs., Nov. 3  **Assessment presentations: Groups 1, 2, and 3**

Tues., Nov. 8  **Assessment presentations: Groups 4, 5, and 6**

**Unit 4: The Big Picture—Curriculum, Canons, and Literary History**

Thurs., Nov. 10  Christopher Columbus, two letters (1493, 1503)—Reader  
Bartolomé Las Casas, “A Very Brief Relation of the Devastation of the Indies” (1552)—Reader  
Hernán Cortés, “Description of Tenochtitlan” (1522)—Reader  
Walt Whitman, “Prayer of Columbus” (1874)—Reader

Tues., Nov. 15  Allen Ginsberg, “Supermarket in California” (1956)—Reader  
Sherman Alexie, “Postcards to Columbus” (1991)—Reader  
Alexie, “Defending Walt Whitman” (1996)—Reader

Thurs., Nov. 17  Alice Walker, “Everyday Use” (1973)—Reader  
Maxine Hong Kinston, “No Name Woman” (1976)—Reader
Text Case Study due at start of class


Thurs., Nov. 24  THANKSGIVING BREAK

Tues., Nov. 29  Junot Diaz, “Ysrael” (1996) and “No Face” (1996)
   Bring full draft of literary critical essay to class (4 copies total)

Thurs., Dec. 1  Peer review of literary critical essays
   Bring completed peer review rubrics (4 copies total)

Tues., Dec. 6  TBA / flex day

Thurs., Dec. 8  Last day of class
   Literary critical essays due at start of class
Other Possible Readings—To Be Determined (and provided in class)

Unit 1: Close Reading
--Waldman, K. (2016). The canon is sexist, racist, colonialist, and totally gross. Yes, you have to read it anyway. *Slate.*
--*Other tools:* Common Core State Standards

Unit 2: Planning a unit
--Neary, L. (2013). What kids are reading, in school and out. *NPR.*
--*Other tools:* Sample Douglass unit

Unit 3: After Reading – Assessment
--*Other tools:* Annenberg Making Meaning in Literature video workshop; Sample assessments

Unit 4: The Big Picture – Curriculum, Canons, and Literary History
--*Other tools:* Sample school syllabi