

## Annual Report on the First-year Composition Program, 2003-04

**Christy Desmet (Director of First-year Composition)**

**Deborah Church Miller (Associate Director)**

**Alexis Hart (Assistant Director)**

**Jane Barroso (Secretary)**

The First-year Composition Committee (FYCC) met twice during the 2003-04 academic year. During this time, its members were Christy Desmet, Director of First-year Composition (Chair), Michelle Ballif, Bob Cummings (graduate student member), Anita DeRouen (graduate student member), Mike Hendrick, Deborah Miller (Associate Director), Elizabeth Kraft, Don McCreary (ESL representative), Mike Moran, David Payne (Director, Writing Center; Coordinator of Technological Resources; Multicultural representative), and Alexis Hart (Assistant Director, ex officio).

During the 2003-04 academic year, the First-year Writing Program taught the following number of sections and students (broken down into Regular, ESOL, ON-LINE, and Oglethorpe House sections of English 1101, 1102, and 1102M).

### Regular Sections (sections/students)

	ENGL 1101	ENGL 1102	ENGL 1102M
Summer 2003	3/63	1/18	2/25
Fall 2003	125/2511	40/869	20/424
Spring 2004	20/415	91/1900	28/577
<b>TOTAL</b>	148/2989	132/2787	50/1026

### ESOL Sections (sections/students)

	ENGL 1101	ENGL 1102	ENGL 1102M
Summer 2003	0/0	0/0	0/0

Fall	2003	2/21	1/7	1/14
Spring	2004	1/13	1/13	2/28
<b>TOTAL</b>		3/34	2/20	3/42

ESOL sections are limited to 15 students. The sections were taught by Karen Bartlett (1 ENGL 1102M in Fall 2003); Signe Wegener (1 ENGL 1101 and 1 ENGL 1102M in Fall 2003, and 1 ENGL 1101 and 1 ENGL 1102M in Spring 2004); Matt Horton (1 ENGL 1101 in Fall 2003), Stephanie Hummer (1 ENGL 1102 in Spring 2004), and Lizz Bernstein (1 1102M in Spring 2004).

#### ON-LINE Sections (sections/students)

	ENGL 1101	ENGL 1102	ENGL 1102M
Summer 2003	0/0	0/0	0/0
Fall 2003	2/30	0/0	0/0
Spring 2004	1/15	4/59	0/0
<b>TOTAL</b>	3/45	4/59	0/0

Like ESOL sections, ON-LINE sections of First-year Composition are limited to 15 students. The ON-LINE classes were taught by Jane Gatewood (2 ENGL 1101 in Fall 2003 and 1 ENGL 1101 in Spring 2004); Valerie Morrison (2 ENGL 1102 in Spring 2004); and Ron Balthazor (2 ENGL 1102 in Spring 2004).

#### First-year Composition in Oglethorpe House (sections/students)

	ENGL 1101	ENGL 1102	ENGL 1102M
Summer 2003	0/0	0/0	0/0
Fall 2003	2/26	0/0	0/0
Spring 2004	0/0	2/26	0/0
<b>TOTAL</b>	2/26	2/26	0/0

Oglethorpe sections of First-year Composition are limited to 13 students. This year, Bob Cummings taught 2 sections of ENGL 1101 in Oglethorpe during Fall semester and two sections of ENGL 1102 during Spring semester.

#### Honors First-year Composition (sections/students)

	ENGL 1050H	ENGL 1060H

Honors First-year Composition classes are also limited to 15 students.

### Totals

- ◆ The total number of sections for First-year Composition in 2003-04 (all varieties, excluding Honors sections) was 330; the total number of students was 6802. (This is approximately 900 students more than the previous year!)
- ◆ The total number of ESOL sections of First-year Composition was 8; the total number of students was 96.
- ◆ The total number of sections of ON-LINE First-year Composition was 7; the total number of students was 104.
- ◆ The total number of sections of Oglethorpe House First-year Composition was 4; the total number of students was 52. Note that because of re-configuration of the lab, the Oglethorpe lab-classroom can now hold a maximum of only 13 students.
- ◆ The total number of sections of Honors First-year Composition was 19; the total number of students was 273.
- ◆ The total number of sections in First-year Composition (including Honors sections) was 368; the total number of students was 7327. Good heavens!
- ◆ The total number of first-semester composition students (ENGL 1101) was 3094; the total number of second-semester students (ENGL 1102, 1102M, 1050H, 1060H) was 4233. The total is 7327.

The average number of students per section of FYC during the year was:

- ◆ 20.61/22 in regular sections (94% occupancy rate in classes limited to 22 students);
- ◆ 12/15 in ESOL sections (80% occupancy rate in classes limited to 15 students). This number is a lower than last year but may be a bit misleading, as an uncounted number of students were moved to ESOL sections in the first four weeks of the semester. Thus, the teachers probably taught more students than this snapshot, taken at the end of add-drop period, indicates;
- ◆ 14.86/15 in ON-LINE sections (99% occupancy rate in classes limited to 15). It is interesting

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now well these on-line sections fill up and retain their students. Teacher quality plus small class size probably accounts for the retention rate, as a forthcoming essay by Christy Desmet, William Finlay, and Lorraine Pearce argues;

- ◆ 13/13 in Oglethorpe sections (100% occupancy rate in classes limited to 13 students). This is the best retention rate posted by the FYC Program ever, as far as we know;
- ◆ 14.36/15 students in Honors First-year Composition (96% occupancy rate in classes limited to 15 students).

Our ◆ occupancy rates ◆ remain strong, which is a good thing for a program whose funding is now based on performance-based budgeting. We still have some difficulty filling classes at periods 08 and 09, and in 2004-05, will attempt to restrict the number of classes offered at these late periods. (So far, for instance, we are offering only one class at period 09.) To retain our current level of funding, we need to fill every seat possible, but when

we add sections late in the summer and fall, it is difficult to find rooms available at the more popular hours. We would like to note the strong numbers posted by the on-line and dorm teachers. Finally, we note with some surprise that the Honors FYC classes account for only 273 of the 7327 students served by our Program.

## Teacher Demographics

- ◆ 59 Teaching Assistants taught 175 sections of FYC (these numbers do not include Honors sections of FYC, T. A. units assigned to the Writing Center, for Computer Support, for sophomore support, for ENGL 3000 support, or for teaching sophomore sections, creative writing and upper-division classes);
- ◆ 1 tenured professor taught 1 section of FYC (exclusive of Honors courses);
- ◆ 48 instructors taught 152 sections of FYC (exclusive of Honors courses).

We hired 5 more T.A.s last year than in the previous one, but 14 more instructors, for a total of 108 FYC teaching persons. Most of our instructors are still M.A. and Ph.D students who have graduated from the University of Georgia English Department, but we offered 184 sections of FYC last Fall (27 units above our normal baseline), and this phenomenon may account for the sudden upswing in numbers of instructors. More M.A.s are also staying on as instructors to gain some teaching experience in our department. We are still not sure whether this is a good or a bad thing.

## Program Development

### I. Administration and Program Supervision

**A. Office Events:** We are very happy to report a harmonious year in the First-year Composition Office. Our Assistant Director, Alexis Hart, had a whopping 29 job interviews (MLA and phone interviews combined). She will leave us next year for a tenure-track position at the Virginia Military Institute. We will miss Lex (and her husband Mike Crowley, a veteran frog). Succeeding Alexis as Assistant Director of First-year Composition and head ◆frog◆ will be Bob Cummings, who like Alexis, is a founding member of the <emma> Working Group. Bob◆s move to our office marks a profound shift in gender dynamics for the FYC Office. Welcome Bob! Former Assistant Director Kathy Houff is teaching at Temple University and joined members of the FYC cohort in a panel at the CCCC convention in San Antonio.

In 2003-04, we continued to monitor the number and kind of administrative problems handled by the First-year Composition, a task facilitated by Ron Balthazor◆s handy ◆FYC Complaint/Concern◆ database. In Fall 2003, the database records 121 complaints or concerns requiring a substantial number of woman-hours. In Spring 2004, we recorded 66 complaints/concerns. This disparity in numbers may reflect the unusually large numbers of FYC sections offered in Fall semester or the relatively volatile state of the First-year population in Fall. In Spring, some incidents may have gone unreported due to sheer fatigue. In any case, we recorded 22 more incidents than in the previous academic year. Given the increased size of the FYC student body, this increase makes sense.

**B. CAI in Freshman English and the ◆Frogs◆:** In Fall 2003, the computer-assisted classroom assistants (aka ◆frogs◆) were Alexis Hart (◆head frog◆ for two units), Marlene Allen, Mike Crowley, Winter Elliott, Sandy Hughes, and Dan Shaw. The ◆frogs◆ taught 185 orientations lasting 50-75 minutes each over a two-week period using the new orientation website they helped to design ([http://www.english.uga.edu/freshcomp/Computer\\_Lab\\_Orientation\\_03/welcome.html](http://www.english.uga.edu/freshcomp/Computer_Lab_Orientation_03/welcome.html)). The updated orientation included the general lab rules, a library virtual tour (a PowerPoint presentation that was collaboratively designed

received <emma> training and uploaded at least one <emma> document during their second computer lab rotation. They also spent the final week of the Spring semester reviewing the online <emma> process.

**C. <emma> Developments:** This year we continued to develop <emma> and to increase the numbers of teachers, students, and classes using this computer application. Improvements were made to the upload and the Infoviewer (an internal web browser that includes help files and tutorials for teachers and students); FYC teachers constructed many more imaginative DTDs (Document Type Definitions) to help students see their writing in new and exciting ways and to make explicit their composing and revision practices. As reported in the section on CAI, in Spring semester every student in the FYC Program received an introduction to <emma> and uploaded at least one document to the <emma> database. We will continue this practice in 2004-05. During Summer 2004, in collaboration with OISD (Office of Instructional Support and Development), the <emma> Working Group and friends produced an <emma> training CD complete with introductory video, tutorial and other materials, and the application itself that will be distributed next Fall to all FYC students as part of their lab fee. Thanks to those who participated in the CD production, especially Michelle Estes, John Vance, and Sujata Iyengar. In Summer semester as well, Teggien Chamberlain is doing an independent study with Christy Desmet and Ron Balthazor, in which she will produce the online documentation for <emma>. Through these activities, we continue to work to incorporate <emma> ever more thoroughly into the composition curriculum of our department. (For <emma> presentations, see below.)

**D. New Grading Rubric:** As the FYC Program grading rubric had not been revised in at least fifteen years, in Spring 2004 an ad hoc committee met throughout the semester to study available rubrics and to develop a new departmental rubric that reflects our current ethos, standards, and desired grading practices. In this major program undertaking, the committee fashioned a unique rubric that combines the best of analytic with the best of holistic grading practices and allows teachers to modify the standard rubric to reflect their individual pedagogy.

Members of the Rubric Committee, to whom are due heartfelt thanks, were: Christy Desmet (Chair), Deborah Miller (Administrative Chair), Alexis Hart (ex officio), Michelle Ballif, Bob Cummings, Jane Gatewood, Parker Luchte, Gay McCommons, Valerie Morrison, Catherine Skaggs, and Ondra Thomas-Krouse. The new rubric can be accessed from the FYC Home Page (under Programs on the UGA English Department Home Page menu) or directly at: <http://www.english.uga.edu/freshcomp/Rubric04-05.rtf>

**E. First-year Composition Handbook:** Changes to the departmental grading rubric necessitate changes to the *Handbook*. In Summer 2004, the members of the FYC administration will work together to revise the handbook section on evaluating essays. Next AY, if energy permits, we may tackle the program mission statement and other aspects of the *Handbook*.

**F. First-year Composition Placement and Diagnosis:** As interim Provost and then as Provost, Arthur Mace made streamlining English and Math Placement a priority for his administration. An ad hoc committee chaired by Rebecca White (interim VP for Instruction) and including Christy Desmet (FYWP), Denise Mewborn (Math Education), Ed Azoff (Math), Hugh Ruppensburg (A&S), Sherrie Nist (Academic Enhancement) and others met throughout Spring Semester. The committee concluded that for English Placement, students with an SAT Verbal score of 580 or lower who do not post other scores for exemption, as listed in the *FYC Handbook*, would take the English Placement test. Most radically, English Placement became a

[grading rubric](#)

[grammar quiz](#)

papers, commit plagiarism, have family problems, or cannot establish healthy work habits. 29% of our population failed for behavioral reasons. This year for the first time, students who went through the entire placement process could choose to ignore the university's placement recommendation (#2). (The Placement procedure goes like this: Students with an SATV score of 580 or below take a morning choice test in rhetoric and mechanics; those who receive a score of less than 13/13 on that test produce an afternoon writing sample of one-hour duration; students who score a 1 or 2 (out of 3) on the writing sample are

placement's UNIV 1115 as preparation for ENGL 1101. Students who score a 3 are counseled to take ENGL 1101.) In category #2 (ignored placement recommendations), we find 13 students, or 16.25% of the body of failures. The next category, earned SATV or placement test scores close to the cutoff point (#3), accounts for 10 students or 12.5% of failures. Category #4 took the afternoon writing sample and scored a 3 accounts for 15 students, or 18.75% of failures. Category #5 those students whose teacher comments indicated none of the reasons listed above, accounts for 11 students, or 13.75% of failures. Finally, there were 12 students whose records indicate no placement test scores or incomplete testing (#6), accounting for 15% of failures.

The data we have is somewhat subjective, dependent on teachers' characterizations of student failure and on the FYC Director's interpretation of that data. But from what we have found, we can tentatively conclude that roughly 30% of students failed to succeed in FYC for behavioral and life reasons; 16.25% of failures ignored placement advice, 15% failed to complete their testing, and 31.25% had iffy scores of one kind or another that would suggest they were on the borderline. If this trend continues, we should reconsider mandatory placement and raising the bar for the Departmental Placement test to a SATV of 600 or higher. We might also consider raising the standards for a "3" on the afternoon writing sample. Why so many students failed to take

There is a strong correlation between SAT/ACT or other test scores and failure to complete assignments in the composition I class. Anecdotal evidence suggests as well that the students with the most marginal skills do have the least realistic view of their standing among the population of UGA writers. In either event, the people most likely to succeed in AE classes were not those who were most in need of extra time and instruction.

So the good news is: We had more students this year who "never" finished. The bad news is that a rougher high proportion of those failures can be linked at least in part to the change in placement procedures.

We also want to note that the new grading rubric eliminates the "edit" failure (an automatic grade of 200 and of 1000-sorry-very bad control of the major editing process) in any combination. While this does not preclude the possibility that students may receive failing grades on essays due to poor execution of grammatical rules, we will be interested to see if the number of student failures due to failing essay grades decreases next year as a result of this change in grading procedure.

**G. ENGL 1101 and 1102M Book Searches:** In addition to revising the grading rubric, we conducted two (count them!) books searches this year. The ENGL 1102M, multicultural literature-and-composition reader had not been changed in a number of years. In particular, members of the multicultural teaching cadre expressed a desire for more historical context. After an exhaustive but exhilarating search, the committee decided to keep the current text -- *New Worlds of Literature*, ed. Jerome Beaty and J. Paul Hunter (Norton) -- but constructed for the program a supplementary text to supply historical context. The members of the ENGL 1102M Book Search Committee were: Christy Desmet (Chair), Alexis Hart, Deborah Miller (ex officio), Keely Byars (Administrative Chair), Mike Crowley, Stephanie Downie-Hummer, Fara Sneddon, Laura Weaver, and Stacy Wright. Many thanks to the committee members and especially to Keely Byars.

In 2003-04, for ENGL 1101 we switched from *The Presence of Others* (Lunsford and Ruskiewicz), supplemented by *Everything's An Argument* (also by Lunsford and Ruskiewicz, published by Bedford/St. Martin's) to *Everything's An Argument with Readings*, mostly for reasons of economy and convenience. This change proved controversial, as the book's cultural studies emphasis produced real fans, but also adamant opponents. So in Spring 2004, we launched a full-scale book search for ENGL 1101. When the dust cleared and the piles of texts were removed from Park 128, we had two choices. The default departmental text is *Motives for Writing*, ed. Robert K. Miller (McGraw Hill). The committee liked especially the quality of the book's readings and its emphasis on motives for rather than modes of writing. The official alternative text for ENGL 1101 is *The Brief Arlington Reader*, ed. Lynn Z. Bloom and Louise Z. Smith (Bedford/St. Martin's), supplemented by *Everything's An Argument* (sans readings). We think it healthy to have a range of texts from which instructors may choose, particularly since in this economic climate, we sometimes hire teachers late in the recruitment season. Members of the ENGL 1101 Textbook Search Committee were: Christy Desmet (Chair), Alexis Hart (Administrative Chair), Deborah Miller (ex officio), Anita DeRouen, Nathan Gilmour, Nathanael Myers, Mary Ann O'Neal, Dorine Preston, Wesley Venus, and Miranda Yaggi.

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## Transition to Development

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Desmet, Christy, Alexis Hart, Bob Cummings, Anita De Rouen, and Ron Balthazor. "From Analysis and Composing to Publication with EMMA (English Markup and Management Application)," 6th Annual Student Success in First-Year Composition Conference, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, February 2004.

Houff, Kathy, Deborah Miller, and Parker Luchte. ♡Evaluators as Advocate: Grading Matters in Composition.♡  
CCCC, San Antonio, March 2004.

Moran, Michael. ♦ Rhetorical Approaches to the History of Professional Communication. ♦ Panel: Research Methodologies in the History of Professional and Technical Communication That Matter. CCCC, San Antonio, March 2004.

Desmet, Christy. "Bringing up EMMA: Developing Writing Software with XML at the University of Georgia." *EIT Review* (Winter 2003): 2-3.

Desmet, Christy. "EMMA: Re-forming Composition with XML." *ALLC/ACH 2003 Conference Abstracts* (2003): 23-25.

## D's and F's: 1 D

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one apprentice called the madness in her method. Several years ago at the Town and Gown Theater, Monica played Julie Cavendish, a character modeled on the great actress Ethel Barrymore, in George Kaufman and Edna Ferber's *The Royal Family*. In the play, Julie is a witty, vibrant presence standing at the heart of and barely holding together her famous, but dysfunctionally histrionic, family. We like to think of Monica Smith as a Julie Cavendish in our department: firing up undergraduates to produce well-researched, stylish web projects; urging on apprentice teachers; organizing the British Women Writers Conference; generating lesson plans and paper topics; meeting with students in her office; and in her down time, reorganizing Sigma Tau Delta and refurbishing all those departmental web sites. But she does it all with such grace, good humor, and intelligence that we cannot help but love and honor her.

Bob Cummings won the *Kairos/Lore* T.A.-Adjunct Award for Excellence in Teaching Writing with Computers, which was awarded during the Computers and Writing Conference in Honolulu in June 2004. Bob won for his ENGL 1101 course entitled Learning to Write for College and a Machine: XML and First-Year Composition. To visit the course, point your browser to <http://www.english.uga.edu/~cummings/EN1101FALL03/home.htm>. This marks the third year in a row that a UGA Teaching Assistant has won the *Kairos/Lore* Award for Teaching.

The following Teaching Assistants were nominated by the Department for the Outstanding Teaching Assistant Awards given by the Office of Instructional Support and Development (OISD): Tiffany Adams, Marlene Allen, Bob Cummings, Jamie McClung, Chris McDermott, and Valerie Morrison. All of our nominees received the award, and we are very proud of them.

## Student Events

The Donald E. Barnett Awards for 2003-04 are: ENGL 1101, Melissa Light Trendy or Health (Instructor Greg Timmons); ENGL 1102, Sean Hill Chopin's Other Awakenings (Instructor Mary Ann O'Neal); and ENGL 1102M, Cameron Dye Allusions to Bob Dylan and the Folk Music Revival in Toni Morrison's Recitatif (Instructor Billie Bennett).