



Department of English Language and Literature

### ***Student Teacher Screening Process and Portfolio Guidelines***

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#### ***Timing & Process for final three semesters in program***

1. Screening Semester—Portfolio and Interview
2. Observation Semester—CI 315A and final semester of academic coursework
3. Student Teaching Semester—CI 315B/352F: full-time, 15-week student teaching

One year before the student teaching semester, candidates must successfully pass through the student teacher screening process. During the first week of the semester in which a candidate intends to screen, applicants must submit *six copies* of their screening portfolios to the chair of SIUE's English education committee. Committee members will evaluate candidates' submissions, and then—on two Fridays during the fourth and fifth weeks of the semester—the committee will meet to conduct 30- to 40-minute screening interviews with each of the candidates. Dr. Anderson is the current chair of the English education committee.

This portfolio submission and professional interview is a candidate's first step toward entering into student teaching. Upon successful completion, he or she will be permitted to register for the following semester's CI 315a (student teacher observation), which leads to the student teaching experience in the final semester at SIUE (CI 315b and CI 352f). Candidates should bring their completed applications for CI 315a to their interviews. Ask for the appropriate CI 315a application form at the School of Education's Office of Clinical Experiences, Certification, and Advisement (OCECA) in Founders Hall, Room 1110.

#### ***Information Session***

At the end of the semester before the screening portfolio is due, Dr. Anderson conducts an information session for screening candidates. We typically meet late in the afternoon on the Wednesday of SIUE's exam week. Contact Dr. Anderson for details.

#### ***Assessment***

Candidates should take this process very seriously. The screening portfolio is ultimately an examination of the candidate's ability to write with purpose, focus, and style according to the conventions of edited standard English and the professional standards of the Modern Language Association. Moreover, the screening interview will test a candidate's capacity for proficient oral communication and professional comportment. If a candidate's portfolio is sloppy or premature, if the candidate does not demonstrate skill in oral communication, or if the candidate does not exhibit an understanding of basic pedagogy, then the committee will ask the student to screen again the following semester. In extreme cases, the committee chair may suggest that the student withdraw from the program in secondary English education.

### ***Required Contents***

To begin the student teacher screening process, you must have a clean academic record with an overall cumulative grade point average of 2.5 (4.0 scale), including a 3.0 cumulative GPA in your English major **and** a 3.0 cumulative GPA in your speech minor (no incomplete grades on SIUE transcript). English and speech courses taken at all institutions count when we assess your cumulative GPA. All of your coursework (general education, English major, speech minor, and professional education) must be complete before the full-time student teaching semester.

1. ***Reflective Self-Assessment***

short narrative, which gives the screening committee context and reasoning for why the applicant has chosen his/her representative pieces (1-2 pages; MLA style); see p. 3 of this document for Dr. Johnson's advice for writing a letter of reflection for a portfolio

2. ***Teaching Philosophy***

concise statement of the applicant's attitudes and beliefs about teaching (1 page s/s or 2 pages d/s); see p. 4 of this document for information about writing a teaching philosophy

3. ***Literary Analysis***

short essay, which analyzes a work of literature (~4 pages; MLA style)

4. ***Essay with Research***

longer paper, which includes research (~10 pages; MLA style)

5. ***Optional Work***

additional piece of writing—only because the applicant wants to show the committee some other aspect of his/her personal writing style and ability (truly optional!)

### ***Professional Standards***

Dr. Johnson has created a document entitled "Evaluation Criteria for Literary Criticism and Research Papers," which I have included at the end of this document (see p. 6). In addition, I have created a substantial packet, entitled *Useful Information about Academic Writing*, which offers advice about writing with research. That packet also discusses some of the professional standards of the Modern Language Association, and it has a section on mechanics that might be a helpful review of the conventions of edited standard English. Contact me for a copy of this supplemental document: [jjander@siue.edu](mailto:jjander@siue.edu).

### ***Portfolio Submission***

Applicant must collate the portfolio contents into six standard manila file folders with his or her last name written on the side tab of each folder. Submit the materials to Dr. Anderson, current chair of the English Education Committee, during the first week of the screening semester.

### ***CI 315a Application***

Candidates should bring their completed applications for CI 315a placements to their interviews. Ask for the appropriate CI 315a application form at the School of Education's Office of Clinical Experiences, Certification, and Advisement (OCECA) in Founders Hall, Room 1110. If the candidate passes the screening evaluation, then an English education advisor will sign the application at the end of the screening session. Once the form is signed, the candidate should deliver it immediately to OCECA. This application is important because OCECA uses it to place candidates in schools within our region. These applications are shared with your potential placement school, so be professional (and very neat).

### ***Letter of Reflection (Self-Assessment Letter)***

Prof. Matthew S. S. Johnson / [matjohn@siue.edu](mailto:matjohn@siue.edu)

From the English Education Screening Portfolio materials:

“***Reflective Self-Assessment***: a short narrative, which gives the screening committee context and reasoning for why the applicant has chosen his/her representative pieces (1-2 pages; MLA style)”

Some additional information:

#### **Letter of Reflection (Self-Assessment Letter)**

Your letter of reflection should accomplish two main goals. First, it should introduce your portfolio and its contents to its readers. Second, it should serve as a brief analysis of your experiences as an English Education major at SIUE. There are a number of ways to complete these tasks (and the following list is certainly not exhaustive): You might . . .

- offer a *brief* summary of your experiences as an English Education major
- discuss activities that you do outside of class that are related to English Education/teaching
- “teach” your portfolio readers how to read your papers: that is, explain what the original assignment was and how you completed it and how you’ve revised it; show what improvements (in analytical thinking, writing, etc.) your papers signify
- discuss explicitly how your papers (each of your papers?) fulfills the objective of the screening portfolio: to quote Dr. Jill Anderson, “The screening portfolio is ultimately an examination of the candidate’s ability to write with purpose, focus, and style according to the conventions of edited standard English and the professional standards of the Modern Language Association.” (What is your purpose? What is your focus? How has your style changed? Why has it changed?)
- (if you are a transfer student and if applicable) compare your pedagogical experiences at SIUE and other institution(s) you attended.

The best self-assessment letters will probably include a combination of these suggestions (among other possibilities).

To help give you an idea of the “tone” of the reflective letter or the “rhetoric” you should consider, remember that you are *writing a letter* to your portfolio readers, who consist of English department faculty members and high school teachers.

Ultimately:

***Teach*** your readers how to read the papers in your portfolio. You may want to communicate what precisely your instructor was originally asking you to do for your papers; then again, this is a *different* audience, so we may have *different* expectations, which means that you should already have revised your papers for this specific writing context (which means that perhaps what your instructor originally asked you to do is still important, but only in terms of how you chose to revise your papers for this portfolio, which is also a way to self-reflect!). *Consciously* show how you have ***reflected*** on your writing, your teaching, your learning – and how that reflection benefits you as writer/teacher. Think of your letter of reflection as an “argument” that makes a claim in answer to the following question: Why/how does this portfolio reveal my abilities/strengths as writer (or development as writer), future teacher, and thinker? (An impossible genre, perhaps: that’s why the letter is so difficult, so important, why it takes so much time and effort. It is the first impression that you give. It colors the rest of the portfolio reading. It shapes your readers’ assessments.)

### *Writing a Teaching Philosophy*<sup>1</sup>

Your teaching philosophy should give the reader a solid sense of why you are (or want to be) a teacher, the kind of teacher you are (or want to be), what kind of preparation for and experience in teaching you've had, and what goals and ideals you hold. A good teaching philosophy will succinctly and sufficiently address three specific areas: **personality**, **philosophy**, and **pedagogy**.

**Personality:** Because teaching philosophy statements are of necessity short and all have the same focus, and because teachers who were students at about the same time—wherever they might have studied—have probably been exposed to similar trends in pedagogy and learned many of the same “catch words” and ideas, teaching philosophies can all sound very much alike. Your task is to make yours stand apart from the scores of similar documents administrators will get from all the applicants for a teaching position. Really, the only unique element of the philosophy is you, so you need to be very clearly present throughout the document. If you don't already write with a distinctive, “authentic” personal voice, you need to work on developing one. Although a teaching philosophy statement is a formal document and must be in academic prose, infuse yours with as much of your personality as you can.

**Philosophy:** It's called a “teaching philosophy” because you are explaining your philosophy of teaching (in this case, teaching English). This means you should explain why you think education is important, what, exactly, you believe is the primary responsibility of education, and with what in your own experience and education has brought you to these ideas. If you can knowledgeably reference influential education scholars and theorists, you should—but don't drop names gratuitously.

**Pedagogy:** Okay, then, how do you plan to make your philosophy work in your classroom? If you say you're a proponent of the democratic classroom, of process writing, and of teaching literature in a socio-cultural context, for example, how would that be apparent to an observer in one of your classes? You need to give—BRIEF!—examples of ideas you have for future classes or experiences you've already had teaching that demonstrate the way you turn your philosophy into practice.

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<sup>1</sup> This advice comes directly from Prof. Susan Fanetti—formerly of SIUE, now a member of the English Department at California State University, Sacramento: <http://www.csus.edu/engl/index.htm>.

### *Evaluation Criteria for Literary Criticism and Research Papers*

Prof. Matthew S. S. Johnson / [matjohn@siue.edu](mailto:matjohn@siue.edu)

- 1) Paper must present and develop a strong main claim or thesis that is an actual argument (that is, the main claim is NOT merely an opinion or a description). Think of the thesis in two parts: First, the claim itself. Second, commentary on the *significance* of that claim (this latter element could be addressed in the conclusion, rather than the introduction, of the essay). Some notion of why the claim is important, what we learn from it, or how it inspires us to think differently will serve these papers well.
- 2) Paper must provide evidence from outside sources that is than *used* and/or *interpreted* by the paper's author and clearly shown to develop and (ideally) complicate the overall argument/main claim. The source material can be used to support claims, certainly, but also can be used to complicate, counterargue, challenge, shape, illustrate, show by metaphor/example, prove, etc. Source material cannot stand on its own, but rather must be "dealt with" in some way. Research papers in particular are NOT "data dumps" nor are they mere "reports" of information. Literary criticism and research papers must be written with purpose, and that purpose must be communicated in some way in the paper.
- 3) Papers must be logically and effectively organized – well developed paragraphs and smooth transitions between them. General rule of thumb: if paragraphs can be taken out or put in multiple positions without changing the argument flow substantially or requiring major and careful revision, then the structure of the paper has not been considered carefully enough.
- 4) The essays must do MORE than merely summarize literary or other outside sources (research). The essays must do MORE than compare different texts (compare and contrast is fine, but it must, again, be done with *purpose*). The essays must move beyond the integrated source material – they must communicate the essay-author's own idea(s).
- 5) The prose must maintain good diction and proper mechanics (readability). The sentence structure must be varied.
- 6) The essays should have interesting and/or catchy titles that somehow relate to the paper's main claim or content in general.
- 7) The integrated source material and the works cited page must be in a proper documentation format (for example, MLA or APA).
- 8) Remember:
  - The research paper must present a plausible case that is based on careful argument-making (thesis development, main claim development) that uses evidence and support to some defined purpose.
  - The literary criticism paper must have some claim; it must do more than summarize. It can contain biographical elements of the authors involved, of course, but such information must be pertinent to the argument that the paper is making.