

# The GUILFORDIAN

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## The write stuff: Guilford adopts "w" course system

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Judging from many students' reaction to the new "w" marked on their schedules, one might think the letter stood for "what?!"

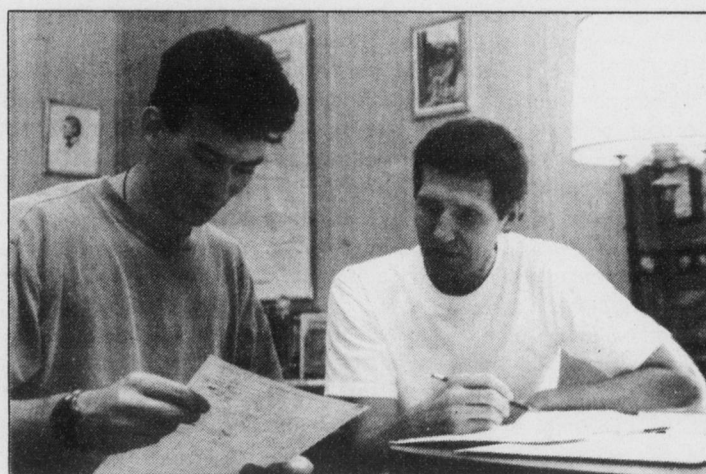
Actually, the "w" denotes that a course includes a significant writing component which features certain identifiable characteristics. There are 12 such courses this semester, with more planned for the spring. They are spread throughout the departments.

Director of Composition Jeff Jeske spearheaded the three-year effort to institute a "Writing Across the Curriculum" program. While acknowledging that there is already a strong emphasis placed on writing at Guilford, he believes that the new voluntary system will further heighten the caliber of writing instruction and raise campus-wide awareness of the benefits and significance of quality writing.

"It's trying to raise consciousness about writing throughout campus...multiplying opportunities for students," explained Jeske. "The program is a response to campus-wide faculty interest. The faculty by and large are committed to good writing — much more so than at many other institutions."

Workshops and support meetings for professors of "w" courses are included in the program.

Students can expect four basic features from a "w" course:



Bruce James

Jeff Jeske, author of Guilford's Writing Across the Curriculum proposal, works with a student on his writing.

- the use of writing text in addition to the regular course texts

- both formal and informal writing

- a specified number of papers, each of which goes through a drafting process

- comments by the instructor and/or peer editors on preliminary drafts

"I hope it will challenge [students] and inspire them to appreciate the power of the word and language," remarked History Professor Tim Kircher, whose Medieval Civilization class is listed as a "w" course.

Jeske stresses that few professors altered

their syllabi substantially to create a "w" course.

Kircher commented that he welcomed the listing but that his classes were basically unchanged.

"I was glad we were able to institute it on a campus-wide level, but my classes were always writing-intensive," said Kircher.

Fundamentally, according to Jeske, the rationale behind the concept of a "w" course includes:

- keeping student ability to write strong even after freshman English

- taking advantage of writing as an instrument of learning in any discipline

- recognizing the importance of writing not being limited to any single discipline

- noting that writing improves most when it "becomes part of the focus of instruction"

Essentially, the "w" courses approach writing as a process, taking students stage

by stage through the writing and revising of papers.

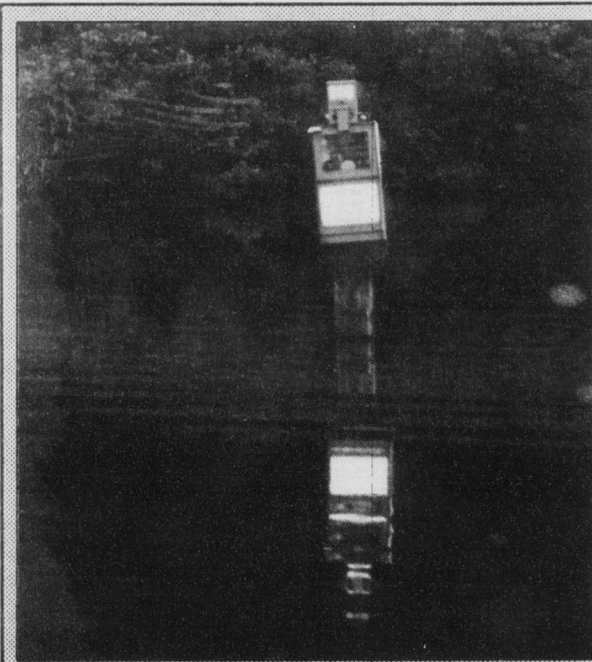
According to Jeske, graduate schools and employers look for applicants who possess solid critical thinking and writing skills and that these skills should be improved by "w" courses. Yet, Jeske does concede that students may not always be attracted to the idea of a writing course.

"There are people who are frightened or concerned about their lack of writing ability," said Jeske. "It is possible that they might be intimidated by [a "w" course]. Those are exactly the kind of people we want to be there."

However, Jeske added that students shouldn't shy away from "w" courses. Because of their focus on process, he claims, the courses should reduce the inevitable stress associated with paper-writing, and result in better final drafts.

The "w" courses will also train students to write within a given discipline, whereas freshman English focuses on more general areas of composition.

Originally faculty and administrators contemplated making the "w" course a core requirement. After much discussion, though, they decided that both students and the program would benefit more if the "w" course was viewed as an opportunity rather than as a restriction on the Guilford students' already-busy course schedule.



College Relations

### Fishing for news?

Late last week, a rescue attempt was made to save the Greensboro News and Record dispenser. [The rescuers were concerned that the paper might go under.] The efforts of Guilford College maintenance crews were unsuccessful.

