

1 **Proposal to Revise the Master of Arts Degree in English, Concentration in Composition**

2
3 **I. Introduction**

4
5 English Department, Masters of Arts Degree, Concentration in Composition
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7 415.338.2240 jstrainor@gmail.com
8

9 The MA in English with a Concentration in Composition is primarily designed to prepare
10 students to teach writing at the community college or college level. Although the program is
11 grounded in theory and research, it has a strong emphasis on pedagogy and teacher training in
12 many of its required courses. Our faculty conduct research in the areas of literacy and
13 composition studies, teacher education, writing across the curriculum, and reading/writing
14 connections. In all their fields of scholarship, composition faculty members share an interest in
15 teaching and learning as reflective practices and serious areas of inquiry.
16

17 The courses in the MA in English with a Concentration in Composition cover two areas of study:
18 the practical aspects of teaching Composition (how to design an effective lesson plan, how to
19 respond to student writing, how to design a syllabus), and developments in research and theory
20 in Composition (including theories about the nature of literacy, research on writing and
21 difference, the impact of digital technology on students' literacy practices, and research on
22 reading/writing connections). The program also offers students the possibility of teaching
23 undergraduate composition courses as graduate teaching assistants. Students have multiple
24 opportunities to observe experienced teachers, and to work as tutors in the writing center.
25

26 All of the changes we are proposing below are based on evidence gathered from a survey of
27 alumni. They are also, more centrally, based on the recommendations of both new and long-term
28 Composition faculty. In the past two years, we have hired four new faculty, and they have
29 helped bring new perspectives and updated information to the program. The proposed changes
30 we are making here draw from these combined sources of evidence, experience, and new
31 expertise. We believe these changes will allow us to serve our graduate students in the best ways
32 possible, providing an updated curriculum and a culminating experience project that draws from
33 and builds on their knowledge of and experiences in the classroom. The changes will also allow
34 our students to progress through the MA degree more quickly and in a more flexible manner, and
35 will allow us to take better advantage of the expertise of our faculty through a series of new
36 elective courses.
37

38
39 **II. Nature of the Request**

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41 The graduate faculty in the MA program propose to update the MA in English with a
42 Concentration in Composition by altering our requirements and revising some of our graduate
43 courses. Specifically, we would like to:

- 44 A. Eliminate redundant or unnecessary requirements and reduce the number of Post-
45 Secondary Reading Certificate courses allowed for the MA

1 We would no longer require English 657: Grammar and Rhetoric of the Sentence.
2 It will be replaced with a revised English 704: Pedagogical Grammar;

3
4 We would no longer offer English 705: Pedagogy in Composition II. Instead, we
5 will require English 710: Integrated Reading and Writing II (this course would
6 also continue to be required in our Post-Secondary Reading Certificate);

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8 We would no longer require English 706: Sociolinguistics of Composition (it will
9 become an elective);

10
11 We would require English 709: Seminar in Teaching Integrated Reading and
12 Writing I (this course would also continue to be required in our Post-Secondary
13 Reading Certificate);

14
15 **B. Eliminate two of the Postsecondary Reading Certificate courses we currently count as**
16 **electives for the MA**

17 We would no longer count English 701: Theoretical Backgrounds in College
18 Reading Instruction or English 715: Pedagogy and Practice of Post-Secondary
19 Reading. These courses will remain as required courses for the Certificate in
20 Post-Secondary Reading;

21
22 **C. Change the title and focus of one of our core courses**

23 English 704: Pedagogy in Composition I will become English 704: Pedagogical
24 Grammar;

25
26 **D. Change the nature of our Culminating Experience course (from 898 to 895);**

27 We would offer 895 twice a year and eliminate English 718: Supervision of
28 Teaching Experience, which is currently offered once a year. In our revised
29 Culminating Experience course (English 895), the supervision of teaching would
30 be folded into and become part of students' "field research."

31
32 **III. Reasons for the Changes**

33
34 **A. Eliminate redundant or unnecessary requirements**

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36 *We would no longer require English 657: Grammar and Rhetoric of the Sentence. It will*
37 *be replaced with a revised English 704: Pedagogical Grammar;*

38
39 English 657 has occupied a central place in our program. In this course, future teachers
40 learn how to untangle grammar problems in student sentences, to recognize patterns of
41 student grammar errors, and to think critically about how best to teach writing at the
42 sentence level. But in its current form and position, the course is both over-emphasized
43 in our program, and marginalized. It is over-emphasized in that it has been the first
44 course that all students must take, before they can move on in the program. This gives
45 students the potentially problematic idea that sentence-level concerns are the most
46 important or dominant concerns for teachers of writing. Much current research in the

1 field rejects this point of view. It also makes it difficult for students to place grammar
2 instruction and sentence-level concerns in a larger pedagogical context, as much recent
3 scholarship and practice in the field suggests. We would like to move this course so that
4 students take it slightly later in their program of study. We hope that this move will allow
5 students to better conceptualize and prioritize the place of sentence-level instruction in
6 the teaching of writing, as something important but not necessarily central or a priori to
7 successful literacy education.

8
9 At the same time, because the course is currently an undergraduate-level pre-requisite, it
10 cannot count on students' GAP forms and does not earn them credit toward their degree.
11 By moving the content of the course into the 700 range, students can count the course on
12 their GAP forms. This signals to students that the course is a legitimate part of, not a pre-
13 requisite to, literacy instruction at the post-secondary level.

14
15 In addition, the content of English 657 and English 704: Pedagogy in Composition I
16 overlap in some significant areas. Traditionally, English 704 has served, in part, as a
17 review of material covered in 657, providing students with additional practice identifying
18 errors and patterns of errors in student writing. We plan to move the subject matter taught
19 currently in English 657 to English 704 in order to eliminate this redundancy, and to
20 rename the course "Pedagogical Grammar." We hope to continue to offer English 657 or
21 a similar course to undergraduates interested in understanding sentence-level issues in
22 more depth, and will develop an elective graduate seminar for those who would like more
23 depth of knowledge in the subject.

24
25 Finally, English 657 is currently a hidden requirement for our program. It is a
26 requirement in addition to the 30 units students must fulfill, and thus brings our actual
27 total unit requirements to 33. This understandably makes it difficult for students, who
28 come in with the understanding that our program is 30 units, to plan a new program of
29 study.

30
31 The new English 704: Pedagogical Grammar that we are proposing would continue to
32 focus on understanding student writing at the sentence-level, on teaching grammar in the
33 context of student writing, and on rhetorical use of sentence structures. Topics may
34 include: current research on pedagogical strategies for addressing sentence-level errors
35 in student writing; current theories about the place and efficacy of grammar instruction in
36 writing classrooms; current research on linguistic diversity and the teaching of grammar.

37
38 *We would no longer offer English 705: Pedagogy in Composition II. Instead, we will*
39 *require English 710: Integrated Reading and Writing II*

40
41 Currently, English 705 and 710 both serve as teaching practica – that is, they prepare
42 students for the nuts and bolts of teaching. In both courses, students design lesson plans
43 and learn how to create daily classroom activities. In both courses, students write a
44 syllabus for a lower-division writing course. In both courses, students read scholarship
45 about best practices in literacy instruction. The difference between the two is that English
46 705 focuses specifically on composition courses such as English 114, where as English

1 710 focuses on integrated reading and writing courses, such as English 104, 105, and 106.
2 Because all composition courses actually involve, or should involve, an integration of
3 reading and writing, we are proposing to eliminate English 705 and require English 710
4 of all of our students.

5
6 This move allows us to accomplish several things: first, as stated above, it reinforces in
7 our curriculum the idea that reading and writing are interrelated processes that cannot be
8 taught in isolation from each other. Teaching reading and writing as integrated processes
9 brings our program more solidly in line with best practices and current research in the
10 field of Composition. Secondly, it helps eliminate redundancy in our program and opens
11 up space in the curriculum for students to take other courses on important topics in the
12 field.

13
14 *We would no longer require English 706: Sociolinguistics of Composition (it will become*
15 *an elective)*

16
17 We plan to continue to offer this course regularly, and will advise students to take it. But
18 our vision for our program involves core courses (English 700, 704, 709, 710) and a host
19 of electives covering a variety of issues and topics in the field. Because this course is not
20 part of the core, we would like to change it to an elective.

21
22 *We would require English 709: Seminar in Teaching Integrated Reading and Writing I.*

23
24 Requiring this course, which is currently part of the required courses for the Certificate in
25 Post-Secondary Reading, reinforces in our curriculum the idea that reading and writing
26 are interrelated processes that cannot be taught in isolation from each other. Teaching
27 reading and writing as integrated processes brings our program more solidly in line with
28 best practices and current research in the field of Composition. In addition, this is the
29 only course in our curriculum that focuses on Basic Writing, which is a central aspect of
30 the field of Composition, particularly for our students, who plan to teach at the
31 community college level, where much Basic Writing instruction occurs.

32
33
34 **B. Eliminate two of the courses in the Certificate in Post-Secondary Reading we currently**
35 **count as electives toward the MA**

36
37 *We would no longer count English 701: Theoretical Backgrounds in College Reading*
38 *Instruction or English 715: Pedagogy and Practice of Post-Secondary Reading as*
39 *electives in the MA program.*

40
41 These courses will both still be offered as part of the Certificate in Post-Secondary
42 Reading, and we plan to continue to encourage students to take them. However, in our
43 current system, graduate students in Composition can count up to as many as 12 units of
44 the Post-Secondary Reading Certificate toward their degree. This makes it difficult to
45 offer electives on other topics central to the field of Composition. But more importantly,
46 it also means that students essentially earn two certifications (the Post-Secondary

1 Reading Certificate and the MA in Composition) without having to take additional
2 courses. We recognize that we are adding six units of additional coursework for students
3 who want to pursue both the MA and the Post-Secondary Reading Certificate, but we feel
4 this is appropriate, given that students are earning two separate certifications. Because
5 we have hired four new faculty in Composition in the past two years, we feel confident
6 that we have the resources to manage these additional units.
7

8 In addition, since most of our MA students also pursue the Post-Secondary Reading
9 Certificate, their entire elective schedule is taken up by these courses. We fully support
10 our students who want the Post-Secondary Reading Certificate (and are proposing to
11 require two of the PSR Certificate courses as part of our MA core courses) but we would
12 also like to create some room in our program for electives in the form of special topics
13 courses that would cover other important content areas in the field of composition. We
14 believe that this change will not discourage students from pursuing the PSR certificate,
15 and that students will gladly add six units to their program, because the PSR certificate is
16 widely perceived to be highly valuable on the community college job market.
17

18 **C. Change the title and focus of one of our core courses**

19
20 *English 704: Pedagogy in Composition I will become English 704: Pedagogical*
21 *Grammar. See Item A above for rationale.*
22
23

24 **D. Change the nature of our Culminating Experience course (from 898 to 895)**

25
26 *We would offer 895 twice a year and eliminate English 718: Supervision of Teaching*
27 *Experience. In our revised Culminating Experience course (English 895), the*
28 *supervision of teaching would be folded into and become part of students' "field*
29 *research."*
30

31 In our current program, students take several courses focused on how to teach (English 657,
32 English 704, English 705). If they are also pursuing the Post-Secondary Reading Certificate, this
33 list of courses with a pedagogical focus grows even longer. Yet in our current culminating
34 experience course (English 898), students are expected to define an area of research, write a
35 literature review of relevant scholarship in their area, conduct original qualitative research on
36 their topic, and write a thesis that can be as long as 100 pages. Part of our rationale for all of the
37 revisions we are proposing here is to bring more balance to this situation for students. It doesn't
38 make sense to require several pedagogy courses, and then ask students to complete a research
39 project as their culminating experience. We would like students to take slightly fewer pedagogy
40 courses (hence the elimination and combining of courses above), and more elective courses
41 focused on research and theory on current issues in the field. At the same time, we would like
42 our culminating experience to reflect not just students' abilities as researchers but also their
43 learning about teaching. We believe that English 895, which involves students in a field study or
44 research project that incorporates the application of knowledge and techniques acquired in the
45 student's program of study, would best accomplish this. **Our goal here is to achieve balance in**

1 **both the coursework and the culminating experience, so that both include a central focus**
2 **on pedagogy and on theory and research.**

3
4 We currently staff ten freshman composition sections per semester with graduate students from
5 our program. We believe this is a central piece of students' educations as future teachers. While
6 they teach in our program, they are carefully mentored by faculty, and they take English 718:
7 Supervision of teaching. But, despite the importance of this part of students' education, we don't
8 currently have a way to integrate the learning they do in our program with their experiences "in
9 the field" – e.g., in the classroom.

10
11 Going forward, we hope to be able to offer all of our MA Comp students an opportunity to teach
12 for at least one semester in our program. During this semester, they would also enroll in English
13 895, and they would use their experiences as new classroom teachers as the basis for the creation
14 of a teaching portfolio or dossier. The portfolio will include a range of teaching materials,
15 including syllabi, assignments, lesson plans, reflections on teaching, and representative student
16 work. In addition, during the 895 course, students would also be working with the instructor to
17 revise and polish an article-length piece of scholarship that they had drafted in one of their earlier
18 research-based courses.

19
20 The English 895 instructor would be responsible for supervising the students' field work in the
21 classroom, helping them assemble their culminating experience teaching portfolio, and guiding
22 them as they revise a piece of scholarship with an eye toward publication or conference
23 presentation.

24
25 **IV. Descriptions of the Changes**

26
27 See the following page.

1

Current	Proposed
CORE COURSES IN THE MA COMPOSITION PROGRAM <i>Units</i>	CORE COURSES IN THE MA COMPOSITION PROGRAM <i>Units</i>
ENG 657 Grammar and Rhetoric of the Sentence ¹ 3	ENG 700 Introduction to Composition Theory 3
ENG 700 Introduction to Composition Theory 3	ENG 704 Pedagogical Grammar 3
ENG 704 Pedagogy in Composition I 3	ENG 709 Seminar in Teaching Integrated Reading and Writing I 3
ENG 705 Pedagogy in Composition II 3	ENG 710 Seminar in Teaching Integrated Reading and Writing II 3
ENG 706 Seminar in Sociolinguistics of Composition 3	ENG 890 Seminar in Research in Composition (prereq is 700) 3
ENG 890 Seminar in Research in Composition 3	ENG 895 Field Study or Applied Research Project (prereq is 700 and 890) 3
ENG 898 Master's Thesis <i>and</i> Oral Defense 3	
TOTAL CORE UNITS FOR MA COMPOSITION 21 ²	TOTAL CORE UNITS FOR MA COMPOSITION 18

¹ This is an undergraduate-level prerequisite currently required of all MA students.

² Only 18 of these units count on GAP.

**ELECTIVE COURSES
IN THE MA COMPOSITION PROGRAM**
Units

Teaching Requirement

ENG 718
Supervision of Teaching Experience
3

Electives

ENG 429
Stylistics
3

ENG 555
Short Story
3

ENG 635
Coming of Age in America
3

ENG 707
Current Issues in Composition
3

ENG 708
Computers and the Teaching of Writing
3

ENG 717
Projects in Teaching Literature
3

ENG 651
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
3

ENG 730
Introduction to Graduate Study: TESOL
3

ENG 800
Special Topics in the Study of Composition and Reading
3

Or other approved courses within or outside the English Department
3

MINIMUM TOTAL ELECTIVES
12

**ELECTIVE COURSES
IN THE MA COMPOSITION PROGRAM**
Units

ENG 706
Seminar in Sociolinguistics of Composition
3

ENG 707
Current Issues in Composition
3

ENG 708
Computers and the Teaching of Writing
3

ENG 717
Projects in Teaching Literature
3

ENG 800
Special Topics in the Study of Composition and Reading (note that three new special topics courses have already been developed; please see attached.)
3

Other approved courses within or outside the English Department
3

MINIMUM TOTAL ELECTIVES
12

Minimum total for students who earn the PSR Certificate and the MA in Composition
36

Minimum total for students who earn only the MA in Composition
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October 15, 2009

Minimum total for students who earn the PSR Certificate
and the MA in Composition

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Minimum total for students who earn only the MA in
Composition

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V. Consultations

- 1. English Advisory Board**
- 2. Ann Hallum, Dean Division of Graduate Studies**
- 3. Library**

The changes do not have any implications for other departments or programs beyond our own composition certificate program, which we have revised in accordance with the proposed changes to the MA. We do not anticipate that these changes will result in decreased enrollment or a need for additional sections.

Consultation within the English Department

Before putting these proposals up for a vote, we consulted with faculty in the English department, both tenure-track and part-time, along with graduates of the programs.

While in the process of formulating the proposals, the graduate faculty consulted with a number of graduates of the M.A. program in Composition. Since many, if not most, of the lecturers in Composition do not hold the MA degree in Composition (most have completed the Certificate), they were not a part of that survey. Elise Wormuth, then the Interim Coordinator of Composition, shared the proposals with the two lecturers who represented their colleagues on the various Composition-related committees. Their response was positive.

During last Spring semester -- again, during the development of the proposals -- a meeting was held for the lecturers in Composition to discuss a number of matters, one of which was the proposed changes to the MA and Certificate programs. That meeting was very well attended (close to 30 lecturers came to the meeting), and the response to the proposed changes, both during and after the meeting, was positive. Following the meeting, since all could not attend, notes were sent out to all lecturers that included details of the proposed changes. We did not receive any negative response.

At the end of Spring semester, the proposals went to the English Advisory Board, which comprises the Chair; the three program coordinators from the programs in Literature, Composition, and Language Studies; four elected members from the t/tt faculty; and one elected representative of the lecturers, who has always had a full voice and vote on that committee. When the proposal was presented, Gayle Davies, the lecturer representative, responded following the meeting with a written statement of her questions and concerns about the proposals. The graduate faculty in Composition responded to her concerns in writing and revised the proposal in response to some of those concerns.

At the beginning of the Fall 09 semester, all faculty in the English department received electronic copies of the proposals prior to their going to the faculty for a vote. Since historically the lecturers in English have played a strong role in the work of the department, they are included in any vote that goes to the whole department. The faculty had the proposals for two weeks before the voting was closed.

October 15, 2009

1 **Library Consultation**

2 The email for the library consultation appears below.

3
4 ----- Forwarded message -----

5 From: <ladarkwa@sfsu.edu>

6 Date: Wed, Mar 25, 2009 at 2:03 PM

7 Subject: Re: CRAC proposals for English MA in Composition

8 To: jennifer trainor <jstrainor@gmail.com>

9 Cc: hellman@sfsu.edu

10
11
12 Hi Jennifer:

13
14 Both I and David Hellman, Head of Collections, have read the two proposals for the MA
15 in Compositions. We agree that the proposed changes will not affect the library's
16 holdings or acquisitions for English. If you need a more formal letter, please let me
17 know.

18
19 Sincerely,

20
21 Linda Bowles Adarkwa
22 Subject Librarian for English

23
24
25 Quoting jennifer trainor <jstrainor@gmail.com>:

26 Dear Linda,

27 Attached are two CRAC proposals for changes we hope to make in our MA --
28 Composition curriculum in the English department.

29
30 If you could take a moment to read over them and then send me a statement
31 explaining the extent to which these changes will affect library holdings,
32 we would really appreciate it. We would like to include you in our list of
33 consultations, once we get the proposals finalized and ready to send to
34 CRAC.

35
36 If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me --
37 650 575 6288, or email is fine too.

38
39 Thank you for your time,

40
41 Jennifer Seibel Trainor
42 Associate Professor of English
43 San Francisco State University

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1 **VI. Resource Implications**

2 The proposed changes will not affect FTE, the numbers or types of students expected to enroll in
3 the revised program. No additional resources will be required to implement and sustain the
4 revised program. We currently have eleven faculty teaching in the program.

5
6 **VII. Provisions for Program Assessment**

7
8 The goals of our program include helping students develop into reflective classroom practitioners
9 and teachers of writing.

10
11 At the end of our program, students should be

- 12 1. conversant in recent theories and research in the field of composition;
13 2. aware of the most up-to-date classroom strategies and principles of effective teaching;
14 3. able to reflect on their own practice in order to continue growing, changing, and learning
15 throughout their teaching careers.

16
17 We are proposing to change our culminating experience to an 895, where we would ask students
18 to create a teaching portfolio and a scholarly article in the discipline. The scholarly article will
19 reflect students' knowledge of and fluency in current research in the field, hence meeting goal #1
20 above. The teaching portfolio will speak to students' emerging practice of teaching; it will
21 include documents such as classroom assignments and syllabi (meeting goal #2 above), and
22 pieces that demonstrate their ability to reflect on their own teaching practices and engage with
23 current issues in the field, including a statement of teaching philosophy (meeting goal #3 above).
24 We believe that this change offers us multiple avenues for ongoing formal and informal program
25 assessment. Students enrolled in 895 will be assigned two committee members who will
26 evaluate the portfolios and scholarship formally. The work students do in 895 will provide
27 ample feedback to us as faculty about how well our students are meeting the above goals.

28
29 **Level One and Level Two Writing Proficiency**

30 Currently, our students meet Level One Writing Proficiency by submitting a writing sample with
31 their admissions file to our admissions committee, who assesses their writing using program-
32 approved criteria. Students cannot be admitted to our program if their writing sample does not
33 meet these standards. Students who are rejected because of problems with their writing will be
34 encouraged to take appropriate coursework and seek tutoring if they wish to reapply. We would
35 like to continue to meet Level One Writing in this way.

36 Currently, our students meet Level Two Writing Proficiency by earning a grade of B or better in
37 all of our Core courses that require a seminar paper (English 700 and English 890) as well as
38 satisfactorily completing ENG 898: Master's Thesis. We would like to continue to meet Level
39 Two Writing in this way. Because we are replacing 898 with 895, we will evaluate the writing
40 students do in 895 for Level Two Writing Proficiency. In 895, students will substantively revise
41 and polish a scholarly article that will be assessed by their Culminating Experience committees,
42 using professional journal standards in our field.

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1 **VIII. Advising / Transition Guidelines**

2 We will accommodate all students so that they may follow the path laid out in the bulletin that
3 they came in under. Because we are a small program, we anticipate being able to advise and
4 accommodate such students individually based on courses they have already completed. For
5 example, if a student has already taken English 657 when we implement the changes, we will
6 allow English 657 to count for English 704. We will offer courses or alternative courses for as
7 long as necessary so that students who came in under an earlier bulletin will be able to make
8 progress toward their degree.

9

10 IX. Bulletin Copy for Revised Program Upon Approval

11

12 **MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH: CONCENTRATION IN**
13 **COMPOSITION**

14 **General Information**

15 Prerequisites: Applicants without an undergraduate major in English or related field may be
16 admitted conditionally but must, upon advisement, complete 3 - 12 units (upper division or
17 graduate) in literature, language studies, education or related approved field before being
18 advanced to classified standing and filing the Graduate Approved Program. All applicants,
19 regardless of their undergraduate major, must also complete 3 units, on advisement, in the area of
20 language studies. Courses taken to meet admission requirements for non-English major
21 applicants will not be accepted as part of the GAP.

22 ENG 700 should be completed in the first semester for students beginning in fall and in the
23 second semester for students admitted in spring and must be passed with a grade of B or better.

24 The master's program permits students to include on their GAP only courses in which they have
25 received grades of B or better.

26 ***Written English Proficiency Requirement***

27 **Level One:** Students must demonstrate proficiency in written English prior to admissions by
28 submitting a writing sample with their application. The writing sample will be assessed by the
29 admissions committee using program-approved criteria. **Level Two:** Students must earn a grade
30 of B or better in English 700 and English 890 as well as satisfactorily complete ENG 895: Field
31 Work. The writing students do in 895 for Level Two Writing Proficiency will be assessed by
32 their Culminating Experience committees, using professional journal standards in our field.

33 Courses are 3 units unless otherwise indicated. [On-line course descriptions](#) are available.

34 ***Culminating Experience.*** A field study or research project must be successfully completed by all
35 candidates for the degree. The field study or research project, which investigates and/or applies
36 knowledge acquired in the student's program of study, must have the recommendation and
37 approval of two faculty thesis advisers. All SFSU specifications for completion of a field study
38 or research project must be met. Students may take ENG 895 twice and, if failing both times,
39 will be recommended for declassification.