

Welcome to the Class of 2013

The Writing Program welcomes you to Haverford and looks forward to your arrival. In the meantime, we need your help as we plan for one of the foundational experiences of your first year: the Writing Seminar. Writing Seminars are integral to a Haverford education and every student (without exception) takes one in the fall or spring of his or her first year. This letter describes policies related to the Writing Seminar and explains what you must do before **August 6** to ensure your placement in a course that matches your interests and level of experience.

Kinds of Writing Seminars

Writing Seminars are organized by academic discipline, topic, or individualized study. While all seminars pair writing instruction with intellectual inquiry, they do so in slightly different ways. As you read the descriptions below, consider which kind of seminar best matches your needs and interests.

- Discipline-based (WSD) sections offer instruction in critical inquiry and writing in the context of a particular academic discipline. These sections, taught by faculty from a variety of departments at the college, meet twice weekly; most also feature additional small group tutorials and/or conferences to discuss student writing. If interested in a particular discipline-based seminar, and if your past performance in courses that have included substantial writing has been consistently strong, these seminars may be for you.
- Topic-based (WST) sections also offer instruction in critical inquiry and writing, meet twice weekly, and feature regular small group tutorials and/or conferences. These sections, taught by Writing Program faculty, explore a thematically interrelated set of readings and tend to devote more attention than do WSD sections to all stages of the composing process. If you have experienced success with writing in the past but would like the chance to spend more time thinking about the elements of the academic essay, this type of seminar may be for you.
- Individualized (WSI) sections also teach critical inquiry and writing, meet twice weekly, and explore a thematically interrelated set of readings. They differ from other seminars in a few ways: they are limited to ten rather than fifteen students; they include more time for individual conferences; and they break down the writing of academic essays into even more manageable and explicit steps. Offered only in the fall semester, WSI sections do not alone satisfy the writing requirement but are intended to prepare students to continue their study of writing in either a WSD or WST section in the spring semester. If you have not had much experience composing academic essays or would like to develop more confidence in your ability to meet the rigors of college-level writing, these seminars may be for you.

When reviewing the course descriptions that accompany this letter, you will see a diverse range of seminar offerings for the coming year. Consider not only those courses that play on your strengths but also those that will stretch your interests in new directions.

How Placement Works

When assigning students to sections, the Writing Program will consider several factors: your

own appraisal of your writing competency; your preferences for particular courses; SAT verbal and SAT II Writing scores; and a placement essay that you will soon submit. We will inform you of your placement during the week you arrive on campus.

What You Need to Do

To help us in the placement process, you need to 1) inform us of your preferences and 2) write a short essay.

- A preference form that you should complete is on-line (see below). Consider your options and let us know both which kind of seminar you think is best for you and which particular sections you find most appealing. You will be asked to rank your top three section preferences.
- Also in this packet you will find instructions for writing and submitting the placement essay. For your own benefit in being matched with an appropriate seminar, and in accord with the Haverford Honor Code, you must write this essay without assistance from anyone (and without consulting outside sources).

[Please submit your preferences and essay online.](#)

These materials are due by **August 6**. If we don't receive them by then, Writing Program faculty will need to place you in a seminar regardless of your preferences, so please do get them in to us.

If you have any questions regarding either Writing Seminars or the placement process or would like paper copies of these materials, please contact Debora Sherman at dsherman@haverford.edu or 610-896-1255 or 1157. All of us at Haverford very much look forward to your arrival.

Best regards,

Debora Sherman
Acting Director of College Writing and Assistant Professor of English

Essay Instructions

Placement essays are one tool (among others) that the Writing Program uses to assign incoming students to appropriate Writing Seminars.

Guidelines

When writing the essay, please observe the following guidelines.

- Limit the length to 500-750 words (which translates to between two and three double-spaced pages).
- Be sure to include an essay title and your name.

- Compose the essay without any assistance, in the form of either other people or outside commentary. Don't use the web or the library for research. You are, however, permitted to use a dictionary (online or hardback) for words which are unfamiliar to you. And you can use reference tools (online or otherwise) to identify names which you don't recognize. Your best interests will be served only if the Writing Program can make an honest appraisal of how you write on your own. This will be your first opportunity to put Haverford's Honor Code into practice.

Assignment

[Read the 1894 Court case *The Queen v. Dudley and Stephens*](#) 

Here's the assignment:

The court felt that there was not sufficient justification for the sailors' killing of the boy. Evaluate the court's decision. In a thoughtful and well-composed essay of 500-700 words, respond to the principle elements of the court's argument or those points which you think are especially important in deciding this case. Do you agree with the court's reasoning, which resulted in its sentencing these soldiers to death? Why or why not?

When evaluating your essay, Writing Program faculty will attend to the following criteria:

- Engagement and reasoning: How well do you demonstrate a grasp of the court's argument while still establishing and supporting your own position?
- Structure and style: Does the organization help or hinder readers? Is there sufficient control of particular sentences to allow us to follow your reasoning?

THE QUEEN v. DUDLEY AND STEPHENS.

[DIVISIONAL COURT]

Dec. 9, 1884

LORD COLERIDGE, C.J.

The two prisoners, Thomas Dudley and Edwin Stephens, were indicted for the murder of Richard Parker on the high seas on the 25th of July in the present year. They were tried before my Brother Huddleston at Exeter on the 6th of November [1884], and, under the direction of my learned Brother, the jury returned a special verdict, the legal effect of which

has been argued before us, and on which we are now to pronounce judgment. [At the trial the jury, at the suggestion of the learned judge, found the facts of the case in a special verdict which stated "that on July 5, 1884, the prisoners, Thomas Dudley and Edward Stephens, with one Brooks, all able-bodied English seamen, and the deceased also an English boy, between seventeen and eighteen years of age, the crew of an English yacht, a registered English vessel, were cast away in a storm on the high seas 1600 miles from the Cape of Good Hope, and were compelled to put into an open boat belonging to the said yacht. That in this boat they had no supply of water and no supply of food, except two 11b. tins of turnips, and for three days they had nothing else to subsist upon. That on the fourth day they caught a small turtle, upon which they subsisted for a few days, and this was the only food they had up to the twentieth day when the act now in question was committed. That on the twelfth day the remains of the turtle were entirely consumed, and for the next eight days they had nothing to eat. That they had no fresh water, except such rain as they from time to time caught in their oilskin capes.

That the boat was drifting on the ocean, and was probably more than 1000 miles away from land. That on the eighteenth day, when they had been seven days without food and five without water, the prisoners spoke to Brooks as to what should be done if no succour came, and suggested that some one should be sacrificed to save the rest, but Brooks dissented, and the boy, to whom they were understood to refer, was not consulted. That on the 24th of July, the day before the act now in question, the prisoner Dudley proposed to Stephens and Brooks that lots should be cast who should be put to death to save the rest, but Brooks refused to consent, and it was not put to the boy, and in point of fact there was no drawing of lots.

That on that day the prisoners spoke of their having families, and suggested it would be better to kill the boy that their lives should be saved, and Dudley proposed that if there was no vessel in sight by the morrow morning the boy should be killed. That next day, the 25th of July, no vessel appearing, Dudley told Brooks that he had better go and have a sleep, and made signs to Stephens and Brooks that the boy had better be killed. The prisoner Stephens agreed to the act, but Brooks dissented from it. That the boy was then lying at the bottom of the boat quite helpless, and extremely weakened by famine and by drinking sea water, and unable to make any resistance, nor did he ever assent to his being killed. The prisoner Dudley offered a prayer asking forgiveness for them all if either of them should be tempted to commit a rash act, and that their souls might be saved. That Dudley, with the assent of Stephens, went to the boy, and telling him that his time was come, put a knife into his throat and killed him then and there; that the three men fed upon the body and blood of the boy for four days; that on the fourth day after the act had been committed the boat was picked up by a passing vessel, and the prisoners were rescued, still alive, but in the lowest state of prostration. That they were carried to the port of Falmouth, and committed for trial at Exeter. That if the men had not fed upon the body of the boy they would probably not have survived to be so picked up and rescued, but would within the four days have died of famine. That the boy, being in a much weaker condition, was likely to have died before them. That at the time of

the act in question there was no sail in sight, nor any reasonable prospect of relief. That under these circumstances there appeared to the prisoners every probability that unless they then fed or very soon fed upon the boy or one of themselves they would die of starvation. That there was no appreciable chance of saving life except by killing some one for the others to eat. That assuming any necessity to kill anybody, there was no greater necessity for killing the boy than any of the other three men." But whether upon the whole matter by the jurors found the killing of Richard Parker by Dudley and Stephens be felony

and murder the jurors are ignorant, and pray the advice of the Court thereupon, and if upon the whole matter

the Court shall be of opinion that the killing of Richard Parker be felony and murder, then the jurors say that Dudley and Stephens were each guilty of felony and murder as alleged in the indictment."] From these facts, stated with the cold precision of a special verdict, it appears sufficiently that the prisoners were subject to terrible temptation, to sufferings which might break down the bodily power of the strongest man, and try the conscience of the best. Other details yet more harrowing, facts still more loathsome and appalling, were presented to the jury, and are to be found recorded in my learned Brother's notes. But nevertheless this is clear, that the prisoners put to death a weak and unoffending boy upon the chance of preserving their own lives by feeding upon his flesh and blood after he was killed, and with the certainty of depriving *him* of any possible chance of survival. The verdict finds in terms that "if the men had not fed upon the body of the boy they would *probably* not have survived," and that "the boy being in a much weaker condition was *likely* to have died before them." They might possibly have been picked up next day by a passing ship; they might possibly not have been picked up at all; in either case it is obvious that the killing of the boy would have been an unnecessary and profitless act. It is found by the verdict that the boy was incapable of resistance, and, in fact, made none; and it is not even suggested that his death was due to any violence on his part attempted against, or even so much as feared by, those who killed him. Under these circumstances the jury say that they are ignorant whether those who killed him were guilty of murder, and have referred it to this Court to determine what is the legal consequence which follows from the facts which they have found. . . .

Now it is admitted that the deliberate killing of this unoffending and unresisting boy was clearly murder, unless the killing can be justified by some well-recognised excuse admitted by the law. It is further admitted that there was in this case no such excuse, unless the killing was justified by what has been called "necessity." But the temptation to the act which existed here was not what the law has ever called necessity. Nor is this to be regretted. Though law and morality are not the same, and many things may be immoral which are not necessarily illegal, yet the absolute divorce of law from morality would be of fatal consequence; and such divorce would follow if the temptation to murder in this case were to be held by law an absolute defence of it. It is not so. To preserve one's life is generally speaking a duty, but it may be the plainest and the highest duty to sacrifice it. War is full of instances in which it is a man's duty not to live, but to die. The duty, in case of shipwreck, of a captain to his crew, of the crew to the passengers, of soldiers to women and children, as in the noble case of the *Birkenhead*; these duties impose on men the moral necessity, not of the preservation, but of the sacrifice of their lives for others, from which in no country, least of all, it is to be hoped, in England, will men ever shrink, as indeed, they have not shrunk. It is not correct, therefore, to say that there is any absolute or unqualified necessity to preserve one's life. "Necesse est at eam, non at vivam," [It is necessary that I go on, It is not necessary that I live] is a saying of a Roman officer quoted by Lord Bacon himself with high eulogy in the very chapter on necessity to which so much reference has been made. It would be a very easy and cheap display of commonplace learning to quote from Greek and Latin authors,

from Horace, from Juvenal, from Cicero, from Euripides, passage after passage, in which the duty of dying for others has been laid down in glowing and emphatic language as resulting from the principles of heathen ethics; it is enough in a Christian country to remind ourselves of the Great Example whom we profess to follow. It is not needful to point out the awful danger of admitting the principle which has been contended for. Who is to be the judge of

this sort of necessity? By what measure is the comparative value of lives to be measured? Is it to be strength, or intellect, or what? It is plain that the principle leaves to him who is to profit by it to determine the necessity which will justify him in deliberately taking another's life to save his own. In this case the weakest, the youngest, the most unresisting, was chosen. Was it more necessary to kill him than one of the grown men? The answer must be "No"-

"So spake the Fiend, and with necessity,

The tyrant's plea, excused his devilish deeds.¹

* * *

It is not suggested that in this particular case the deeds were "devilish," but it is quite plain that such a principle once admitted might be made the legal cloak for unbridled passion and atrocious crime. There is no safe path for judges to tread but to ascertain the law to the best of their ability and to declare it according to their judgment; and if in any case the law appears to be too severe on individuals, to leave it to the Sovereign to exercise that prerogative of mercy which the Constitution has intrusted to the hands fittest to dispense it. It must not be supposed that in refusing to admit temptation to be an excuse for crime it is forgotten how terrible the temptation was; how awful the suffering; how hard in such trials to keep the judgment straight and the conduct pure. We are often compelled to set up standards we cannot reach ourselves, and to lay down rules which we could not ourselves satisfy. But a man has no right to declare temptation to be an excuse, though he might himself have yielded to it, nor allow compassion for the criminal to change or weaken in any manner the legal definition of the crime. It is therefore our duty to declare that the

¹ Editor's note: see *Milton, Paradise Lost*, Book IV, lines 393-394.

prisoners' act in this case was wilful murder, that the facts as stated in the verdict are no legal justification of the homicide; and to say that in our unanimous opinion the prisoners are upon this special verdict guilty of murder.²

THE COURT then proceeded to pass sentence of death upon the prisoners.³

² My brother Grove has furnished me with the following suggestion, too late to be embodied in the judgment but well worth preserving: "If the two accused men were justified in killing Parker, then if not rescued in time, two of the three survivors would be justified in killing the third, and of the two who remained the stronger would be justified in killing the weaker, so that three men might be justifiably killed to give the fourth a chance of surviving." - C.

³ This sentence was afterwards commuted by the Crown to six months' imprisonment.