Writing 100 F: Does God Choose Sides?
American Politics and the Bible
Spring 2010   Tues, Thurs  10:20- 11:30   SHILL 209

Dr. Deborah Appler
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office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-12:30 or by appointment

Course Description:
Exit polls following the 2004 presidential election indicated that religious beliefs and issues greatly influenced its outcome. In 2008 similar polls illustrated a shift in the foci of American evangelicals who in 2000 and 2004 helped to elect George W. Bush but in 2008 helped Barak Obama win the presidency. Regardless, the 2008 election was steeped in religious rhetoric that mobilized religious voters to choose based on religious beliefs. Articles and interviews abound about the faith of John McCain and Barack Obama. Youtube flourished with videos of Sarah Palin’s exorcism, Obama’s renegade pastor Jeremiah Wright, and McCain’s association with Reverend John Hagee. Matters such as healthcare, war, abortion, gay marriage, the death penalty, and euthanasia set off conversations, often heated, about where God stands on these issues. People of faith continue to read the same Bible yet often draw opposite conclusions concerning what these sacred texts say about social and political issues. This course will provide opportunities to read, discuss, and write about how politics and religious rhetoric are interwoven in today’s American society.

By the end of this course you should have obtained the following:

- A sampling of the Bible’s influence in American Politics and Policies
- An understanding of the various ways religious traditions, particularly Christians (because 85-90% of US Citizens identify themselves as such) use the Bible to make their decisions on social and moral issues
- A taste of how biblical scholars across the spectrum read the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures
- A review of Writing and language skills
- An ability to communicate using several voices through written and oral means
- Practice in using technology for research and writing and citing them in an academic style

Required Texts:
Course Requirements:
Each assignment except the portfolio and the group presentation will go through the following process (drafts before the final work that will be work-shopped with a peer group and in consultation with me). Below is the workshop process:

Writing Workshop Process
You will be a member of a group with two or three other students who will serve as your peer mentors and reviewers throughout the semester. Following a paper’s draft deadline you will have class time to work with your group on each others’ papers. Therefore every student must have his/her draft ready to exchange with his/her group by class time on the draft due date. These should be uploaded on the group pages on BlackBoard for your group. Each reader will prepare IN WRITING comments and HELPFUL critiques to be shared individually with the writer and handed in to the instructor during the workshop by the day of the workshop on blackboard in the group pages. I will provide rubrics for each paper to help you focus comments to your groups. You will be graded on your personal participation (turning in draft on time 5 points, participating in the workshop 5 points, and thoughtful response to your peer group members 5 points). Remember, writing is a process. Please be respectful and helpful. If your drafts or final papers are late, it impacts the entire group and writing process. Lateness not approved by the instructor (abduction by aliens is not a valid excuse unless you can show proof), your grade will be penalized. Sharing work is a very vulnerable thing to do. Please inform me immediately of any concerns that arise from this process. Collegiality will also be reflected in the overall course grade. Drafts will not receive a letter grade (but your hard work will be reflected in your final writing assignment grade. The Research Paper draft will receive point value). At the end of the semester you will evaluate your group members as well as yourself in a peer evaluation, which will be explained and distributed later in the semester and will be considered in the grade.

For every paper turned in, I want you to add a paragraph that evaluates your paper. Where do you think that the strengths are? What do you think that professor will say about it? This counts for 5 points each paper.

Submitting Papers:
- All papers to the instructor must be submitted electronically on the BlackBoard Assignment page by the due date.
- Please place your names on the document itself and save it as follows (an example):
last name reflection paper draft

- Please submit in a format that I can open. If you are not using Microsoft Office, then please save as an RTF.

**Writing Deadlines:**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Draft Due</th>
<th>Workshop Date</th>
<th>Final to Deborah</th>
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<td>Personal Voice</td>
<td>January 28</td>
<td>February 2</td>
<td>February 4</td>
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<td>Letter to Official</td>
<td>February 11</td>
<td>February 16</td>
<td>February 18</td>
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<td>Critique Paper</td>
<td>March 4</td>
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<td>Research Paper Proposal and Annotated bibliography</td>
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<td>March 25</td>
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<td>Group Writing Presentation</td>
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<td>Weeks of March 29 and April 5</td>
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<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>April 20</td>
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<td>Portfolio</td>
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<td>Lebensfeld Paper</td>
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10% **Class Participation** (total of 250 possible points)

This grade will also be based on the following:

- **Individual meetings with the instructor** (15-30 minutes) at least 1 time this semester if not more. (25 points first meeting, 5 after this)
- **Class attendance and participation (with all assignments on time):** Each class is worth 5 points total prorated on a scale of 1-5 points a class based on class involvement—a total possible 140 points.
- **Active involvement in class writing workshops** (see above for details) Total of 15 points a workshop (60 possible)
- **Writing Center:** Each student must provide evidence that she/he has worked with the writing tutor and that the feedback was integrated into the written project **NO LATER THAN October 20th**. Those who visit the writing center more than once during the semester will receive the following (forgiveness on a missed class, or forgiveness of a late paper-one time deal, or 5 more points- your choice). You may take a paper from ANY CLASS to the tutor. (25 points for one visit)

10% **Double Entry Journal** (Total of 250 Points).

Class members will post to the Journal page **each Tuesday** (January 25, February 1, 8, 15, 22; March 1, 15, 22, 29; April 5, 12, 19). Choose one of the readings for the week and create a two sided entry as follows:
Outline:  
10 points the reading makes  
A brief summary of the article/book  

Comments:  
Why do you agree or disagree with the author?  
What are your thoughts? Critiques?

While this assignment is required and will significantly impact your participation grade, it will not receive a letter grade but points for posting it on time and completing the assignment. **Keep in mind to not post these entries will severely lower your class participation grade.** (20 points a posting and 5 points off for lateness—total 250 points- you get 10 free points)

**20% Portfolio: total of 500 points and** should contain:
- Bedford selected handbook exercises (these should be completed on line or handwritten) – 50 points
- A third draft of one of your shorter papers that includes the instructor’s feedback. Include with this copies of your peers’ feedback, writing center feedback, and your drafts of the paper. 100 points
- A final draft of your academic paper that includes the feedback of both your peers and your instructor. Include your first draft and the feedback. 250 points
- Peer review sheets (evaluate each group member including yourself) 100 points

The final portfolio is due **No later than April 30 by 6:00 PM in the assignment section on BlackBoard for Portfolio.**

**10% Personal Voice Paper: (250 points; 50 draft 200 final)** This 3-4 page paper (double spaced) should respond to the following:
- If I were an elected official religion would or would not impact my votes and/or policies (clarify what your office is—congress person, senator, mayor, president, etc.). Back up your response with some concrete examples that have helped to form your opinions. Include reflections of class readings.
  **Draft Due Jan 28; Workshop Feb 2; final due Feb 4**

**10% Letter to an Elected Official – 3-4 pages (double spaced; 250 pts; 50 draft 200 final)** (Audience: Government Official. Make certain that this official has jurisdiction over your issue)
- Write a letter to a Senator or member of Congress (worthy to be sent to him/her) with your views on how he/she should vote on a “moral issue” (e.g. the environment, education, poverty, health care, gay marriage). Research some of the legislation that is in the works or that you believe should be written and supported by the official. Tie this together with issues of Bible and politics. A rubric will be distributed with more specifics.
  **Draft Due Feb 11, workshop Feb 16, Final due Feb 18**

**10% Critique Paper (250 points; 4-5 pages; 50 draft 200 final)** (audience-Academic Journal)
Choose one of the following:

- Vandana Shiva, *Biopiracy* (you may focus on a section of the book)
- Jacques Berlinerblau, *Thumpin It* (you may focus on a section)
- Jim Wallis, *God’s Politics* (you may focus on a section of the book)

and offer a critique of its argument (or thesis) keeping in mind the following:

- What are the major arguments addressed in the book/chapter?
- On what evidence or logic does this argument rely? (How does he/she make a case?)
- How is or isn’t the argument convincing? Feel free to offer a counter argument.

Make certain to consult the *Bedford Handbook*, Part IX on Critical Thinking

**Draft due March 4, Workshop March 16, Final due March 18**

10% **Group Writing Presentation** (Audience: this class; 20-25 minutes; 250 points). Prepare a presentation based on a section of the syllabus material that interests you and has not been covered. Use some form of multimedia (Power Point; Music; Poetry, Film, Video, Create a blog or Wiki—feel free to create your own; integration of technology media is key here!)

**Presentations will take place the weeks of March 29, April 5.**

20% **Research Paper** (Academic Voice: 7-9 pages; 500 points)

Points broken down as follows:

- **Research Proposal** (200 points). This should include the following:
  - A statement of the question that you want to explore in your research paper and what you hope to find. This should be at least a paragraph or two.
  - A statement of what it is that interests you about this topic and why.
  - Include a preliminary Annotated bibliography that contains at least 5 sources that you will use to answer your question. These bibliographies must be properly formatted. See the following to help with Annotated Bibliography:

  **How to Write an Annotated Bibliography:** An annotated bibliography¹ is a summary and an evaluation of each of the sources (books, journals, websites, periodicals, etc.) that one has used for researching a topic. You should write three to five sentences for each source. Each annotation should contain enough information for a reader to gain a comprehensive understanding of the source's content, purpose and value.

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¹ Information adapted from the following websites: [http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/annotated.html](http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/annotated.html) and [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/)
Describe:

• Complete bibliographical citation. (Use APA, MLA or Chicago. If you don’t know how, see this website: http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/citex.html )
• Briefly describe or summarize the content. What are the main arguments? What is the point of this book or article? What topics are covered?
• Indicate the possible audience for the work. Is this intended for the general public, students or a more scholarly readership?

Evaluate:

• Evaluate and access the source. Warn readers of any defect, weakness, or bias in the article. For example, it is a useful source? How does it compare with other sources in your bibliography? Is the information reliable? Is it this source biased or objective?

The proposal and Annotated Bibliography due Mar 25

Final Paper First Draft (300 points): This draft will be rewritten for the portfolio) and should contain
  o A complete draft of the paper with a clear thesis a set up of the problem
  o A clearly written and argued draft (check grammar, spelling, flow of argument, etc.)
  o A completed bibliography and properly cited

The draft is due April 15

Please set up a meeting with the instructor to fine-tune your research question. You may choose a topic that you are interested in but it must be approved.

Possible types of questions to research:

• How did the issue(s) of abortion and/or same-sex marriage impact the 2008 presidential election? Why do these issues motivate religious voters?
• How has religious rhetoric been utilized in today’s healthcare debate?
• Hillary Clinton called gender the glass ceiling yet to be broken in American politics. Do you think that there were gender differences in the ways that Hillary Clinton and/or Sarah Palin were handled by the media? Do you think that biblical teachings about women have impacted gender attitudes for US voters?
• Substitute race for gender in the above question.
• Access to Health insurance for all Americans (even Universal Healthcare) has become a hot button issue in the United States especially in the 2008 election. Do you think that this is or should be a biblical/political issue especially in light of the call for justice found in biblical texts?
• How has Barack Obama’s faith background impacted his political policies and rhetoric (images and words that he uses to persuade voters)?
• How has biblical rhetoric been used by politicians, especially George W. Bush, to make a case for the war in Iraq? You may want to consider issues
of imperialism and Manifest Destiny. (see God’s Politics)

- Much of the political rhetoric in the last three elections centered on concern for the Middle Class in America rather than on the poor who are often ignored. How is or isn’t our national budget a moral document? (See God’s Politicst). The focus of this paper can be domestic or foreign.

- A topic of your choice that deals with religion and politics and their intersection. These must be approved by me beforehand.

**Research Paper Proposal Due: March 25**

**Draft due April 15 ; Workshop April 20 ; Final paper due April 30**

**My Expectations for all research papers---I want:**

- A clear thesis statement that lays out the primary issue including the position that will be argued throughout the paper.

- Support for this position through a good integration of primary and secondary source material (articles, books). Use 8-10 legitimate sources (discussed in class and in the library meeting) and only 2 from internet sites (articles taken from Library online journals do not count as internet sources)

- A well written paper with careful attention to grammar, sentence structure, flow of argument, use of footnotes and bibliographical notation.

- **DO NOT USE WIKIPEDIA ONLINE- USE LEGITIMATE SOURCES!!! WITH AUTHORS AND REPUTABILITY**

**Make certain to consult the Bedford Handbook, Part X on Research Writing**

**Extra Credit Opportunities:** Moravian College and Seminary hosts amazing speakers and several of them relate to our class topic. The following lectures are announced and eligible for extra credit of 5 points:

- **Tuesday, Jan 26**  Veronica Eady, “Moving Toward Environmental Justice” (7:30 PM Prosser)

- **Wednesday, January 27** Round Table Discussion United Nations Climate Conference (Snyder Room, HUB 7:30 PM)

- **Thursday, January 28** Jose Rosado Director, Community and Student Services, Allentown School District (UBC Room, HUB 7-8:30)

- **Wednesday, Feb 17, Kathy Mattea, “My Coal Journey,” 7:30 Foy Concert Hall.**

- If there is a community lecture that deals with politics and religion, you may attend it if you get it approved by Deborah. Each event is worth 5 points, which will be added to your grade once a one page response to the lecture is turned in to me no later than one week after the event.
Outline

Jan 18  Introduction to the Class
Readings:
• Moravian Best Writing Booklet - Choose 2 essays
Answer the following for Thursday’s discussion: What makes these essays good writing?
• Wallis, God’s Politics, xiii-xxiv
• View or Read Obama’s Inaugural Speech. Listen for use of religion:
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjnygQ02aW4

Jan 20  What Is The Bible? Why Do Politicians Care?
Readings:

Jan 25, 27  Is God Political? Do Politics and Faith Mix?
Readings:
• Bedford xxi-xxviii (do tutorials 1, 2, 4)
• Wallis, God’s Politics, 3-42; 72-86
• Berlinerblau, Thumpin It, 1-32

Feb 1, 3  Intelligent Design and Darwin
Readings:
• Genesis 1-4
• Intelligent Design Network, “Intelligent Design for Dummies,
  http://www.intelligentdesignnetwork.org/ID%20for%20Dummies.pdf
• http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=114 candidates on evolution
• Review Bedford Chapter 3

Feb 8, 10  Food, Agriculture and the Environment: Part I
Readings:
• Gen 1:26-28; Psalm 24; Col 1:16
• Vandana Shiva, Biopiracy (start reading)
  http://www.democracynow.org/2007/12/11/it_is_time_to_make_peace
• Berlinerblau, *Thumpin It*, 33-45

Optional:
• View “An Inconvenient Truth” or any other film on the environment.
• Wallis, 307-320

**Feb 15, 17** Food, Agriculture and the Environment: Part II

Readings:
• Shiva, Vandana, *Biopiracy*. (finish reading)

**Feb 22, 24** A Consistent Ethic of Life: Abortion

Readings:
• Numbers 5
• Berlinerblau, *Thumpin It*, 46-59
• **Bedford, Chapter 53 (review)**

Recommended:
• History of Abortion in Religious groups
• [http://www.religioustolerance.org/abo_hist.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/abo_hist.htm)
• [http://womenshistory.about.com/od/abortionuslegal/a/abortion.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/abortionuslegal/a/abortion.htm)

**Mar 1, 3** A Consistent Ethic of Life: Capital Punishment

Readings:
• Wallis 297-306

**Mar 8, 10** Spring Break: Enjoy!!!!

**Mar 15, 17** Make Love not War?

Readings:
• Wallis 108-36; 159-171.

Recommended:

**Mar 22, 24** Economics and Justice: Part I

Readings:
- The Book of Amos
- Wallis, 209-269

Recommended:
- “From Poverty to Opportunity. A Covenant for a New America” Sojourners (see BB)

**Mar 29, 31** Economics and Justice: Part II

Readings:
- The Book of Hosea
- Berlinerblau, Thumpin It, 60-142
- Wallis, 270-296
- **Bedford, Chapter 49**

**Apr 5, 7** Health Care: Part I

Readings:
- Jesus Healing Texts; Elijah and Elisha Cycle
- Paul Farmer, Pathologies of Power, 23-134

**Apr 12, 14** Health Care: Part II

Readings:
- Paul Farmer, Pathologies of Power, 135-246
- [http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/hivaids/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/hivaids/)

**Apr 19, 21** Gender, Race and Bible in American Politics

Readings:
• Michael Eric Dyson. Come Hell or High Water. Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster, 178-212 BB

Recommended:
• Democracy Now, Michael Eric Dyson, Racism, the N Word, July 2007 [online] http://www.democracynow.org/2007/7/18/professor_and_preacher_michael_eric_dyson

Apr 26, 28 Homosexuality, Gay Marriage and Politics
Readings:
• 2 Sam 1:26; Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10 (some of these are the “clobber texts.”)
• Wallis, 321-74
• [online] http://hrc.org (A comprehensive site on these issues)
• Bedford, Research and Documentation

Recommended:
• [online] http://pewforum.org/gay-marriage/

Evaluation:
A student’s final grade will be determined by the level of commitment he or she has to the writing process. A grade of B will be awarded to every student who meets all deadlines, fully participates in the workshops, attends class, and completes all of the other assignments listed above. This means that those who find writing difficult will be rewarded for working hard to improve their skills even if their writing continues to need improvement. In addition, many past writing students have asked to be graded on individual assignments in order to see how their work would be graded in regular classes. Therefore I will give letter grades on final papers and not drafts (with the exception of the Research Paper draft that will get points). Those who are concerned about the A range will have a better feel for where their grade stands overall on PAPERS ALONE. Attendance, deadlines, workshops, and so forth are factored into the final grade. If you have questions about your performance, do not hesitate to ask me!! I will grade each FINAL PAPER based on the following:
General Grading Rubric

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-93</td>
<td>Signifies an exceptional and sophisticated level of achievement with a superb command of the course material that is creatively applied to oral and written class assignments; given to students who present insightful and novel views of subject matter whose arguments are critical, well-written, inventive and fully supported.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>92-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>89-87</td>
<td>Indicates high achievement; given for work that examines issues thoroughly and critically and that demonstrates a good grasp of the material while creatively applying it at most levels; arguments are well written, well supported and display some novel thinking; work includes correct citation and an accurate bibliography.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>86-83</td>
<td>Indicates high achievement; given for work that examines issues thoroughly and critically and that demonstrates a good grasp of the material while creatively applying it at most levels; arguments are well written, well supported and display some novel thinking; work includes correct citation and an accurate bibliography.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>82-80</td>
<td>Indicates high achievement; given for work that examines issues thoroughly and critically and that demonstrates a good grasp of the material while creatively applying it at most levels; arguments are well written, well supported and display some novel thinking; work includes correct citation and an accurate bibliography.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>79-77</td>
<td>Represents an adequate level of achievement and only a narrow mastery of the material; uncritical about tacit assumptions; arguments reflect the subject matter but evidence is sometimes insufficient, inadequate, or poorly written.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>76-73</td>
<td>Represents an adequate level of achievement and only a narrow mastery of the material; uncritical about tacit assumptions; arguments reflect the subject matter but evidence is sometimes insufficient, inadequate, or poorly written.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>72-70</td>
<td>Represents an adequate level of achievement and only a narrow mastery of the material; uncritical about tacit assumptions; arguments reflect the subject matter but evidence is sometimes insufficient, inadequate, or poorly written.</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>69-67</td>
<td>Indicates little understanding of the subject matter and lack of awareness of critical and differing views; arguments are superficial and merely descriptive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>68-63</td>
<td>Indicates little understanding of the subject matter and lack of awareness of critical and differing views; arguments are superficial and merely descriptive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>62-60</td>
<td>Indicates little understanding of the subject matter and lack of awareness of critical and differing views; arguments are superficial and merely descriptive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59-0</td>
<td>Represents no comprehension of the material and a lack of ability or willingness to engage in the class. May also be given in cases of plagiarism</td>
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**Cheating, plagiarism, disruptive classroom behavior and all that other ugly stuff:** I encourage you to study in groups with other students, as well as to do additional research on your own. There is a wealth of material available about religion and politics. You may use any books, websites, and other resources to facilitate your learning. **However, all work you turn in must be your own.** You may not take things off the internet or from other sources without properly citing these or you will be charged with plagiarism. When citing someone else’s idea, please use proper documentation (see *Bedford Handbook*). Please consult the student handbook for more information concerning what constitutes plagiarism. **There are severe consequences for such activities.** As religious beliefs are often at the core of one’s values and outlook on life, some of the topics dealt with in class may be sensitive issues to you or your classmates and may evoke strong opinions. We will most likely encounter a wide range of differences of viewpoints. Questioning and disagreeing is fine, but hostile behavior and intolerance is not. It is essential, therefore, for us to respect the opinions and viewpoints of one
another. Anyone who is disrespectful and disrupts the learning process will not be tolerated and may incur disciplinary action and/or removal from class.

Need Assistance?

• If you have questions or problems in terms of doing research or writing a research paper, consult with me and the writing center
• If you have learning disabilities, you need to let the professor know about your situation and to follow the following procedures:

  **Special Learning Needs**

  It is the responsibility of students with disabilities to identify themselves and request accommodations through the appropriate office. For health, physical, mobility, hearing, visual, mental health/psychiatric, or drug and alcohol disabilities, contact the director of counseling, 1307 Main Street; 610 861-1510. For disabilities that affect cognition (learning disabilities and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder or ADHD), contact the director of learning services, 1307 Main Street; 610 861-1510.

  The student must provide documentation of a disability and a rationale for the requested accommodations from a professional with expertise in the condition. The documentation must include a specific diagnosis and thorough report. Required documentation for learning disabilities and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder must include the results of a comprehensive psychoeducational assessment (including all subtest scores) that evaluates the intellectual functioning, achievement, and information-processing domains of cognitive functioning. The diagnosis must be based on DSM-IV diagnostic criteria. In addition, documentation for ADHD should include evidence of both early and current impairment, a diagnostic interview with third-party input (teachers or parents), and an interpretive summary that explains how the disability is a substantial limitation to learning. Testing should be recent (administered within the past three years prior to enrollment) for learning disabilities and ADHD.

  It is the responsibility of the student to request accommodations well in advance of need in order to give the College a reasonable amount of time to evaluate the documentation and implement the accommodation.

  <For further information, see the Student Handbook>