

TO: EPC

FROM: Catherine Burroughs, Chair

RE: ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

DATE: May 31, 2017

I. PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT:

The English Department plays a key role in any liberal arts education, as our courses develop the fundamental liberal arts skills: critical reading, critical thinking, and argumentation. The mission of Wells begins with a mandate “to educate students to think critically, reason wisely, and act humanely as they cultivate meaningful lives,” and the courses offered in the English department actively promote each of those goals.

Further, the empathy generated by a deep engagement with literature is invaluable in our efforts to encourage our students to “appreciate complexity and difference,” and our creative writing offerings cultivate the aesthetic awareness and dedication required to “be creative” in considered, ethical, interpersonally engaged ways.

Wells’ mission includes teaching students to “learn and practice the ideals of the liberal arts,” and what we do in the English department is fundamental to that goal.

II. PROGRAM GOALS:

- A. Critical Reading: Students will learn to engage meaningfully and thoughtfully with complex texts of all kinds.
- B. Writing: Students will learn to write, both critically and creatively, in clear, compelling, rigorous, and appropriate ways.
- C. Technology: Students will develop facility with the technologies available to assist in modern research, scholarship, and writing.
- D. Mastery of Materials: Students will develop a firm grounding in the intertwined disciplines of English and Creative Writing. They will be familiar with canonical texts from the conventional American literary tradition along with texts from both marginalized and foreign literary traditions.

III. LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

A. Critical Reading

- a. Students will become excellent close readers of a variety of texts, including not just written texts but also film and new media.
- b. Students will be able to approach texts from a variety of perspectives.

B. Writing

- a. Students will be able to create sustained, independent essays that indicate an understanding of rhetoric and a mastery of MLA style.
- b. Students will exhibit proficiency with the fundamentals at least one genre of creative writing.

C. Technology

- a. Students will master the library's resources, including online databases, in support of their critical and creative work.
- b. Students will exhibit proficiency in word-processing software, enabling them to abide by MLA formatting guidelines.

D. Mastery of Materials

- a. Students will be familiar with the foundational and canonical texts discussed in our three literature survey courses (two British and one American).
- b. Students will study texts in a variety of genres in pursuit of an education in literature that is not just broad, but deep.
- c. Students will learn to engage with texts not merely as consumers, but also as creators.
- d. Students will graduate prepared for either advanced graduate study or professional experiences in a related field.

IV. MEASURABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

A. Critical Reading

- a. Close Reading
 - i. Writing assignments, including both short responses and long, sustained arguments, will reinforce this skill throughout students' careers.
- b. Variety of Perspectives
 - i. Writing assignments in several classes will require diverse approaches to texts. Theory courses require the application of different theoretical lenses, while creative writing courses use imitation to foster diverse tools of engagement in our students.

B. Writing

- a. Students will be able to create sustained, independent essays that indicate an understanding of rhetoric and a mastery of MLA style.
 - i. Literature concentration students will create senior theses
 - ii. All students will write midterm and final essays in several courses.
- b. Students will exhibit proficiency with the fundamentals at least one genre of creative writing.
 - i. Creative Writing concentration students will create senior theses
 - ii. All students will create at least one final portfolio for a creative writing course

C. Technology

- a. Students will master the library's resources, including online databases, in support of their critical and creative work.
 - i. Critical essays will require extensive research
 - ii. ENGL 104 will include a unit on using these resources.
- b. Students will exhibit proficiency in word-processing software, enabling them to abide by MLA formatting guidelines.
 - i. ENGL 104 will include a unit on using these resources
 - ii. Formatting will be graded on essays

D. Mastery of Materials

- a. Students will be familiar with the foundational and canonical texts discussed in our three literature survey courses (two British and one American).
 - i. Assignments completed throughout the survey courses will measure engagement with these texts.
- b. Students will study texts in a variety of genres in pursuit of an education in literature that is not just broad, but deep.
 - i. The major requirements mandate successful completion of courses in several genres.
- c. Students will learn to engage with texts not merely as consumers, but also as creators.
 - i. The major requirements mandate successful completion of at least one creative writing course.
- d. Students will graduate prepared for either advanced graduate study or professional experiences in a related field.
 - i. ENGL 401 includes units on professional development, potential career paths, resumes, and writing applications.

V. MEANS OF ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES:

A. Critical Reading

a. Close Reading

- i. Writing assignments, including both short responses and long, sustained arguments, will reinforce this skill repeatedly.
 1. These assignments will be evaluated throughout the students' careers using both standard rubrics and informal checks. Success criteria for final essays: 100% of students at a C or above; 70% at a B or above, 30% at an A.

b. Variety of Perspectives

- i. Writing assignments in several classes will require diverse approaches to texts. Theory courses require the application of different theoretical lenses, while creative writing courses use imitation to foster diverse tools of engagement in our students.
 1. These assignments will be evaluated throughout the students' careers using both standard rubrics and informal checks. Success criteria for final essays: 100% of students at a C or above; 70% at a B or above, 30% at an A.

B. Writing

- a. Students will be able to create sustained, independent essays that indicate an understanding of rhetoric and a mastery of MLA style.
 - i. Literature concentration students will create senior theses
 1. These theses are evaluated holistically by two faculty members. Success criteria: 100% of students at a C or above; 80% at a B or above; 50% at an A.
 - ii. All students will write midterm and final essays in several courses.
 1. These essays will be evaluated using a standard rubric. Success criteria: 100% of students at a C or above; 70% at a B or above, 30% at an A.
- b. Students will exhibit proficiency with the fundamentals at least one genre of creative writing.
 - i. Creative Writing concentration students will create senior theses

1. These theses are evaluated holistically by two faculty members. Success criteria: 100% of students at a C or above; 80% at a B or above; 50% at an A.
- ii. All students will create at least one final portfolio for a creative writing course
 1. These final portfolios are evaluated holistically by the instructor. Success criteria: 100% of students at a C or above; 70% at a B or above; 30% at an A.

C. Technology

- a. Students will master the library's resources, including online databases, in support of their critical and creative work.
 - i. Critical essays will require extensive research
 1. These essays will be evaluated using a standard rubric with a section on Evidence/Support. Success criteria: 100% of students earn 12 points in that category; 70% earn 16, 30% earn 20.
 - ii. ENGL 104 will include a unit on using these resources.
 1. Final papers in ENGL 104 will be evaluated using a standard rubric with a section on Evidence/Support. Success criteria: 100% of students earn 12 points in that category; 70% earn 16, 30% earn 20.
- b. Students will exhibit proficiency in word-processing software, enabling them to abide by MLA formatting guidelines.
 - i. ENGL 104 will include a unit on using these resources
 1. These essays will be evaluated using a standard rubric with a section on Formatting. Success criteria: 100% of students earn 3 points in that category; 70% earn 4, 30% earn 5.
 - ii. Formatting will be graded on essays
 1. These essays will be evaluated using a standard rubric with a section on Formatting. Success criteria: 100% of students earn 3 points in that category; 70% earn 4, 30% earn 5.

D. Mastery of Materials

- a. Students will be familiar with the foundational and canonical texts discussed in our three literature survey courses (two British and one American).
 - i. Assignments completed throughout the survey courses will measure engagement with these texts.
 1. These assignments will be evaluated both formally and informally throughout the survey courses.

Success criteria: 90% of students earn at least a C on their homework grades in the courses; 70% earn at least a B, 25% earn an A.

- b. Students will study texts in a variety of genres in pursuit of an education in literature that is not just broad, but deep.
 - i. The major requirements mandate successful completion of courses in several genres.
 - 1. Senior Exit Interviews ask students to name their best courses/experiences as well as their most successful projects. Success criteria: At least three different genres are represented in the responses to these questions.
- c. Students will learn to engage with texts not merely as consumers, but also as creators.
 - i. The major requirements mandate successful completion of at least one creative writing course.
 - 1. Senior Exit Interviews ask students to name their best courses/experiences as well as their most successful projects. Success criteria: At least 50% of creative writing concentration students list a literature course/project in these categories, and at least 50% of literature concentration students list a creative writing course/project.
- d. Students will graduate prepared for either advanced graduate study or professional experiences in a related field.
 - i. ENGL 401 includes units on professional development, potential career paths, resumes, and writing applications.
 - 1. Senior Exit Interviews ask students about their plans after graduation and if they feel equipped to pursue those plans. Success criteria: 100% of graduating seniors indicate that they feel equipped, and at least 70% indicate that they have a clear plan for the next two years after graduation.

VI. HOW ASSESSMENT DATA WILL BE UTILIZED

We are still developing the shared rubrics and collecting the baseline data (including the Senior Exit Interviews), and thus we do not have specific changes in mind at this time.

However, for the 2017-2018 year, we intend to modify our approaches to various courses, and our entire curriculum, based in part on the feedback we have

already received from our Senior Exit Interviews, as outlined in our Assessment Report.

Further, we intend to focus on sharing both the quantifiable and the unquantifiable elements of assessment in our department through more regular meetings, discussion of specific student needs, and an exchange of grades and evaluations.