

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT: English
May 30, 2019
Prepared by Professors McGiff, Myers, and Rosenberg

I. Program Assessment Meetings:

The Department of English met for assessment on:

June 11, 2018 for 2 hours

August 18, 2018 for 2 hours

January 8, 2019 for 2 hours

May 21, 2019 for 3 hours

May 22, 2019 for 3 hours

May 28, 2019 for 4 hours

May 29, 2019 for 4 hours

and regularly throughout the year.

Attending: Shilo McGiff; Rebecca Myers; Dan Rosenberg (Chair).

Topics discussed:

- Reevaluating the standard critical essay grading rubric;
- Adopting a series of other rubrics (for prospectuses, drafts, etc.)
- Adopting a standard glossary text for vocabulary-building across courses;
- Considering the adoption of comprehensive exams for the major;
- Discussing and sharing student evaluations from fall courses;
- Collaborating on creating handouts to support student critical writing;
- Aligning the workloads of the British and American literature surveys;
- Sharing successful teaching materials (e.g. slides, assignments) across courses;
- Completing the assessment documents.

II. Closing the Loop: Changes implemented in 2018-2019:

- A. The Senior Seminar continues to be a challenge. Professor Myers organized the course to focus on both their capstone projects and professional development. Issues of bias and skill with both giving and receiving criticism led Professor Myers to invite a mediator, Jennifer Mitchell, recommended and hosted by Director of Campus Life for Diversity and Inclusion Latesha Fussell, into the course. The fact that only one of ten students was writing a critical thesis, while the other nine wrote creative theses, led our one critical-thesis student to work independently with Professor McGiff outside of the class structure. The foundational workshop structure that organizes the course seems to be part of the problem, given the disparate nature of the senior projects, and we anticipate changing our approach next year.
- B. Addressing the continuing student interest in diverse voices, our new focus on international literature continues: Professor McGiff taught the first International

Drama course, which was overenrolled with nineteen students, and Professor Rosenberg taught International Prose. International Drama covered material from Ancient Greece to the modern Caribbean, while International Prose began in Ancient Egypt and concluded in the 21st century. Further, Professor Myers' American Novel course focused on five authors from diverse backgrounds whose work explores issues of immigration and raises difficult questions about outsider status.

- C. The Visiting Writers Series' Master Classes continue to enrich our students' writing education. Master Classes from this year include "On Speculative Fiction," "On Love and Lack: Generating Tension in Love Poems," "On Great Titles," "The Sensationally Short Poem," "On Sestinas and Stories: Writing Across Genres," and "Writing Other People's Lives."
- D. Connecting students to the broader community: Professor Rosenberg's poetry writing courses continue to collaborate with the Book Arts Center to create books, and his introductory class collaborated with Professor Cummins' computer science students to create digital poems. Professor McGiff's ENGL 385 students also collaborated with the Books Arts Center to create 18th century pamphlets using period-appropriate tools. We will further develop these connections between English and related fields. We have not pursued student attendance at national conferences due to limited time and resources.
- E. We have used the standard grading rubric for all major critical essays across the department this year. We have found the consistent expectations to be beneficial, but we are not yet fully satisfied with the details of the rubric itself. We will retool it for the fall.
- F. We revised our approach to ENGL 104, which Professor Rosenberg taught this year, to focus far more heavily on argumentative and analytical writing. Though some students succeeded with this college-level writing course, several struggled throughout the semester to master the fundamental writing and thinking skills assumed by the course as structured. In the future, ENGL 104 will include vocabulary quizzes to hold students accountable for knowing the specific concepts most central to mastering these skills.
- G. Our plan from last year to tier the writing support in our classes (reducing the emphasis from 100 to 200 to 300-level courses) proved not to be viable. Because students don't progress through these tiers linearly, it is impossible to scaffold their experience in the way we'd envisioned.
- H. Professor McGiff, in collaboration with Research Librarian Tiffany Raymond, developed Library Guide assignments in order to help students develop, sustain, and showcase upper-level research skills. Library Guides are publicly hosted on the Wells Library website and accessible to scholars outside of our community. See an example here: <http://libguides.wells.edu/c.php?g=906233&p=6648382>. We will be developing this popular and effective process in future classes.

III. Examination of data collected for this year's targeted learning outcomes:

A. Facility with technology:

- i. Through repeated presentation assignments across courses, students acquired familiarity with PowerPoint and other relevant software. One student very clearly brought the presentation skills he'd learned from Professor Rosenberg into his presentation in Professor McGiff's class. Professor Myers participated in the PowerNotes pilot to allow her students in ENGL 215 to organize their research and notes in their web browsers. Professor McGiff worked with Tiffany Raymond to have her students create online library guides as research tools that are publicly available and hosted on the library website.
- ii. Based on anecdotal conversations within the department and with students, we believe that our increased collaboration as a department has helped reinforce these skills with technology, and we anticipate this positive trend will continue.

B. Research skills:

- i. Similarly, we have been focusing on mutual reinforcement of skills. One student applied the thoughtful use of the OED, which he learned from Professor McGiff, in Professor Rosenberg's class. Professor McGiff also brought several classes to the Cornell library for archival research. All three English professors worked with Tiffany Raymond to implement Library Days in various classes, and all three also offered extensive guidance and feedback on the research process. Please see section III.C. for the grades on their research papers.
- ii. It is too early, given all the changes, to evaluate the impact of our research pedagogy, but anecdotally, we find the students to be integrating more creative research more effectively than in years past.

C. Critical writing skills:

- i. Paper grade averages:
 1. American Novel (6 students): 79
 2. American Lit Survey (17 students): 77
 3. Intro. to Lit (17 students [14 included]): 75
 4. International Prose (19 students [18 submitted]): 83
 5. Reading Translations (9 students): 83
 6. American Poetry (6 students): 82
 7. Brit Lit 2 Survey (9 students [8 included]): 79
 8. Shakespeare (19 students): 82
 9. Coffeehouse Convos (9 students [8 included]): 92
 10. Brit Lit 1 Survey (8 students [7 included]): 80
 11. International Drama (19 students [18 included]): 84
 12. British Novel (7 students [6 included]): 73

**Note: These averages do not include the zeros earned by students who did not complete the assignments. When not all students enrolled*

completed the assignment, we have marked the difference in number of students included in the average.

- ii. It is clear that we are not hitting our benchmarks for success in critical writing. Students failing to meet deadlines, combined with our departmental policy of reducing the assignment grade for lateness, has significantly brought down the class averages. Coffeehouse Convos was the outlier class for the highest paper averages, and the reasons for this may include:
 1. Upper-level students who were attracted to the apparent difficulty of the course.
 2. An extended research and prospectus process that made it impossible for students to attempt the paper at the last minute.

We intend to try addressing these issues in all our classes next year by having process documents (rough drafts, annotated bibliographies, etc.) carry a specific point value.

IV. Program Changes for the Upcoming Year (2019-20):

- A. For facility with technology:
 - a. While we are satisfied with our current trajectory regarding proficiency with presentational and word processing software, we see significant areas for improvement in the use and implementation of research technologies. To that end, we will continue to develop Library Guides for use in select literature classes in cooperation with Research Librarian Tiffany Raymond.
- B. For research skills:
 - a. We will continue the focus on archival research, as that has been met with enthusiasm and investment by many students.
 - b. We will emphasize in our assignments the relevance of, and distinction between, primary and secondary sources.
 - c. We will consider adopting the online library guide process for other 300-level courses.
 - d. develop rubrics for research process documents including prospectuses and Annotated Bibliographies.
 - e. modify the standard essay rubric to include a section on Works Cited that will evaluate the use of research technologies.
- C. For critical writing skills:
 - a. We intend to revisit the standard grading rubric this summer. It assumes greater sentence-level writing skills than our students have, and it penalizes our students perhaps too harshly for a not fully thought-out premise.
 - b. We will incorporate into all of the required survey courses the prospectus process that Professor McGiff used in ENGL 206 and 250. We are also considering adapting that process for use in other courses, including both ENGL 104 and 300-level literature courses, as appropriate, in hopes of achieving the results that she did in Coffeehouse Convos.
 - c. We will provide ENGL 104 students with examples of both A level and B level critical writing from prior students.
 - d. We will assign point values to process documents for essays.

V. Action Plan for the Upcoming Year:

Learning Outcomes	Data	Timeframe	Who
Technological Competency: Mastery of Library Resources	Grades on research process documents (short-form prospectus in the three survey classes and annotated bibliographies)	At the end of each semester	Professors McGiff, Myers, and Rosenberg
Creativity: Complex and self-aware writing practice	Draft grade for last essay of each class and Portfolio letter grade in cw classes	At the end of each semester	Professors McGiff, Myers, and Rosenberg