

Assessment activity for PLO #1 in 2014-2015

After our survey of graduates in 2011-2012, some department members recognized a need to know more precisely what texts students were being assigned regularly, and what national, ethnic, and regional traditions those texts drew on. With four members of the faculty hired in the last ten years, we needed a clearer sense of our collective reading list to better target assignments that require students to read across diverse traditions. As a helpful foundation in assessing student learning, we decided to spend this year (while three full-time faculty members were off campus all year, one was away for a semester, and two positions were open) to compile and discuss that list by email. We circulated one version of the list of assigned texts by email in the fall. There was some email discussion, but because so few tenure-line faculty were on campus, that discussion was limited. It was extensive enough for us to agree that the preliminary list was not as helpful as it might be because the student worker who compiled it had listed only title of anthologies, rather than specifying texts that were assigned from those anthologies. A student worker in the summer revised and expanded the list. The expanded list was circulated to all and is stored in the department Program Review file for future reference. Both lists are included in our annual report for 2015.

Changes we have made to the curriculum to improve student learning.

Our compiling of this list and pursuant discussion of it made us aware that we need to be more systematic in our curricular approach to literary diversity, and that we need to be more intentional in naming for English majors the value of diverse traditions in a literary education.

At our April 28 department meeting, we developed CLO’s for our introductory courses (ENG 6H, ENG 60, and ENG 90). We agreed that one of the three CLO’s for all required introductory courses will be: “Practice close analysis of literary texts from diverse historical and cultural traditions.” That CLO will now be included on all syllabi for these courses.

Beginning with the 2015-2016 academic year, all English majors will encounter diverse traditions as a component both of the design of their major curriculum, and as a learning priority in their introductory course to the major.

Effectiveness of our current method for assessing student learning.

We recognize that this year’s assessment project was one step in an on-going process of better understanding our students’ learning through diverse literary traditions. It is foundational information for us to ask more useful questions about out students’ learning.

Changes we plan to make in methods of assessment.

This activity does not focus on student outcomes. It gave us some crucial broad knowledge of our collective expectations on student learning and literary diversity, but we are not likely to use this data collecting strategy again.

The new CLO for introductory courses will now allow us to do embedded assessment with assignments from those courses. From that next round of assessment activity, if we maintain this PLO, we can do comparative assessment between students after their first year in the major and graduating seniors who have completed the full curriculum.