

## Annual Assessment Report Template

**Department: English**

**Date: October 31, 2015**

**Department Chair: Sarah Skripsky (Fall) and Cheri Larsen Hoeckley (Spring)**

### I. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment

<b>Program Learning Outcome</b>	Our graduating seniors will be able to recognize literary works that cross a diverse range of literary traditions.
<b>Who is in Charge</b>	Cheri Larsen Hoeckley and Sarah Skripsky. All department members were included in discussion by email and over department meetings.
<b><u>Indirect Assessment Methods</u></b>	<p>After our survey of graduates in 2011-2012 gave us inconclusive evidence about English majors and their learning about diverse texts, 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 from. As a helpful foundation in assessing student learning, we decided to take 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. In summer of 2014, a student worker compiled an Excel document that includes all texts required on English syllabi in the campus database from the Spring 2010 – Spring 2014 (26 courses).</p> <p>We circulated one version of the list of assigned texts by email in fall 2014. There was some email discussion, but because so few tenure-line faculty members 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 had referred to anthologies by title, rather than including the various poems, short stories, and essays included in those anthologies. A second student worker in Summer 2015 revised and expanded the list to include titles of literary works, rather than of edited anthologies. The new list revealed more diverse titles. When several faculty members returned to campus, the list was again discussed at a department meeting (September 29). The expanded list was circulated to all and is stored in the department Program Review file for future reference. Both lists from 2014-15 are included in our annual report for 2015. The list expanded after the fall department meeting is not included here because it is</p>
<b>Major Findings</b>	<p>We could not target our assessment methods for diversity without a clearer sense of our majors' collective reading list. This survey gave us that more detailed picture. We clearly have room to build our offerings in globally and ethnically diverse literary texts for our students to gain skills and aptitudes from encountering diverse voices, styles, and genre during their English major. Even with that room to improve, our collective teaching from 2011-2014 reflects our concerns with diversity in literary study, and our continued efforts to provide our students with opportunities for understanding other cultures through literary encounters and close attention to texts. For instance, we assigned a total of 325 authors during the period under investigation, and those reading assignments drew from 49 national traditions. The list also included a variety of selections from ethnically diverse American literature, as well as from ethnic minorities within other national traditions. Some American literature from outside dominant white culture taught by more than one faculty member include <i>The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven</i> by Alexie Sherman; <i>The House on Mango Street</i> by Sandra Cisneros; <i>Woman Warrior</i> by Maxine Hong Kingston; <i>Interpreter of Maladies</i> by Jhumpa Lahiri; and <i>Ceremony</i> by Leslie Marmon Silko. Notably, no text by an African American writer falls in that list of repeated texts, though several African American authors are taught individual faculty members (including Lorraine Hansberry, Zora Neal Hurston, Nella Larson, and Toni Morrison).</p>

<b>Closing the Loop Activities</b>	<p>We have decided that the list of assigned texts we had by August was sufficient to provide more informed understanding of how literature classes are introducing our students to diverse literary cultures, and to give some glimpse of how they are encouraging students at different levels of the major to think with more refinement about the value and the complexities of cultural diversity. The September 29 department meeting discussion of the list prompted some suggestions for refining it to extend the content and make the document easier to search. That meeting also prompted some email conversation about our overall goals for departmental program review and the collection and use of data. In the end, the spreadsheet may remain a “living document.” Discussions of the content in the list will prove very useful in our conversations with candidates for the two positions we are searching for this year: Anglophone Literature and Multiethnic American Literature. The discussion also confirmed that our revisions to our major curriculum (accomplished last year) will provide students with more opportunities to encounter diversity (by replacing an Anglo-centric core curriculum and adding requirements that students take courses from at least two national traditions and one course focusing on identity) than were available to students who took our survey in 2011-12.</p>
<b>Discussion</b>	<p>This assessment activity does not focus on student outcomes. For that reason and others, we are not likely to use this data-collection method again, even though it gave us some crucial broad knowledge of our collective practices to engage students with diverse literary texts. Without some clearer understanding of what we are actually offering students as a department of eight full-time faculty, we were ill prepared for understanding exactly where we might refine our strategies to improve students’ awareness, understanding, and appreciation of literary cultures. We have now mapped a new piece of the terrain as we continue to close the loop on what we have learned, and as we move forward to assess student learning about global and multiethnic literature more directly and to improve our students’ understanding of the value of encountering and engaging diverse literary traditions. Those discussions are on-going as we design new courses and hire new faculty (see “Follow-ups” and “Other Assessment or Key Related Projects” below).</p>

## II. Follow-ups

<b>Program Learning Outcome</b>	<p>Our graduating seniors will be able to recognize literary works that cross a diverse range of literary traditions.</p>
<b>Who is in Charge</b>	<p>Paul Willis, Search Committee Chair; Sarah Skripsky &amp; Cheri Larsen Hoeckley, Department Chairs; Department Search Committee: Paul Delaney, Jamie Friedman, Cheri Larsen Hoeckley, Sarah Skripsky, Randy VanderMey, Paul Willis.</p>
<b>Closing the Loop Activities</b>	<p>We will conduct two searches 2015-2016. We have redesigned both of those positions, and we will hire specialists in Anglophone literature (for global diversity) and Multiethnic American literature (for ethnic diversity). Specialists in both of these fields will enhance our students’ opportunities to engage in study of globally and ethnically diverse literature. As our colleagues, the two people in these positions will help to shape our continued conversations about literary study, helping all of us to model the scholarly, cultural, and devotional value of recognizing diverse literary traditions. Our more detailed awareness of the courses we have taught will contribute to our conversations with candidates in the recruiting and hiring process by making each faculty member more aware of our particular efforts to engage students in a greater diversity of authors’ voices.</p>
<b>Discussion</b>	<p>The job descriptions for these two positions and the departmental conversations that created them reflect our refined understanding of the value of diversity in literary study. Of course, these positions reflect the college-wide student learning goals for Global Awareness and Diversity, as indicated in our Institutional Learning Outcomes. They are also tied to our awareness of shifts in the past three decades in the content of literary study and of our students’ need to engage with a wider ethnic and global range of literary understanding to prepare for graduate work, for work in literary professions, and for conversations and interaction in a diverse church and world. The position descriptions for these two openings are included in the Appendices to this report.</p>

### III. Other assessment or Key Questions-related projects

<b>Project</b>	Implementing new curriculum for the English Major.
<b>Who is in Charge</b>	All English department faculty, including faculty on one- and two-year appointments: Katherine Calloway, Paul Delaney, Jamie Friedman, Elizabeth Hess, Cheri Larsen Hoeckley, Sarah Skripsky, Randy VanderMey, Paul Willis.
<b>Action</b>	Create and offer two sections of English 60, the required introduction to the major under the new curriculum. Revise the First-Year Honors Seminar to meet the description of that requirement.
<b>Discussion</b>	
<p>In a second round of activities to “close the loop” on our earlier student assessment activities, we implemented our first year of required “Introduction to the Major” courses. These courses are designed to address several areas where we saw possibilities for enhancing student learning after our last six-year report. Engagement with a diversity of literary traditions was among those areas. In discussion over the creation of English 60 for this year (offered in sections taught by Elizabeth Hess and by Cheri Larsen Hoeckley, and prepared for 2015-16 by Katie Calloway), we considered ways to group or to pair texts from previously under-represented voices. The syllabi for these course (available in the campus syllabus database) reflect the outcome of our discussions about best practices for including a wider range of literary voices to introduce students from the first steps of the major to the rich texture of literary voices. We will develop more direct assessment methods in future rounds of assessment. These courses, of course, work toward goals for Global Awareness and Diversity (reflected in that Institutional Learning Outcome). The revised curriculum is attached to this report for reviewers’ reference.</p>	

<b>Project</b>	Departmental participation in and interaction with Institutional Assessment
<b>Who is in Charge</b>	Several department members (Katherine Calloway, Elizabeth Hess, Greg Orfalea, and Randy VanderMey) participated in this assessment project on Information Literacy under Molly Riley’s direction. Randy VanderMey continued his participation with the Critical Thinking Pedagogy group.
<b>Action</b>	
<b>Discussion</b>	
<p>From those who participated in the Informational Literacy student assessment, Elizabeth Hess, especially, prompted discussion by email and in department meetings based on her experiences with the grade norming sessions. These conversations helped us to understand some differences within our own discipline about sentence-level practices for incorporating sources, and also helped us to consider some new teaching strategies for working with the research paper assignment in English 2. The Institutional Assessment helped us to solidify our sense that simply introducing students to citation style sheets does not give them sufficient preparation to ethically, let alone elegantly, incorporate another’s ideas into their own writing. Our emphasis (in the Introduction to the Major requirement) on teaching and practicing strategies for quoting literary texts will give English majors repeated practice with those higher-order thinking skills in their first year of the major. Randy VanderMey’s experience with the Critical Thinking Pedagogy group continues to inform our discussions of the Capstone course for the revised English Curriculum.</p>	

### V. Appendices

- A. Data on texts taught in the English Department 2010-2014 (.pdf)
- B. “Closing the Loop” Documents: 1. Revised Curriculum 2. Anglophone Position Description, 3. Multiethnic Americanist Position Description.