



Humanistic Studies | 2013-2014 Assessment Plan

For over a decade, we have relied on our senior Capstone Seminar for the assessment of majors and minors. In the last six years, the seminar has focused on the theme of unity and diversity in philosophy, politics, religion and culture. Students read primary sources from Buddhist, Greek, Roman, English and other traditions. They also discuss and debate topics like the nature of evil, beauty, the soul, life after death, cultural relativism, and identity in a globalized world. Each semester, students are required to produce a substantial paper. In it, they must select two thinkers or cultural artifacts, one from the seminar and another from their previous work in Humanistic Studies. They must indicate how these thinkers or artifacts link unity and diversity. Although the professor meets with students to help them craft essays, they must come up with thinkers or artifacts on their own. For example, they can compare a work of music to a non-fiction work, a philosophy text with a film or an artistic work with a philosophical one. The final project measures program effectiveness by:

1. Challenging students to creatively link ideas or thinkers.
2. Developing advanced writing skills.
3. Encouraging interdisciplinary work in the Humanities.
4. Analyzing primary texts.

Professor Derek S. Jeffreys has been teaching the Seminar for us over the past 5-6 years and has been quite pleased with the quality of the final projects. Many students have written fascinating papers that exhibit considerable sophistication. For example, one student compared Oscar Wilde and the Greek philosopher Plotinus on beauty. Another discussed Machiavelli and Hobbes on political power. Still another explored evil in Plotinus and *A Clockwork Orange*. Finally, one student discussed identity in the economist Amartya Sen and the ancient historian Polybius. All these projects were exciting examples of careful work in the Humanities

In the past, the seminar was required for both majors and minors. However, we realized that the minors were not as well prepared for the seminar as majors were, given that they had not had as many Humanities courses as the majors. Consequently, we found minors did not do as well in the seminar or on the final essay, perhaps due to no fault (or less fault) of their own. Moreover, as we have had over 150 minors and seminars are capped at 20, we found ourselves having to offer the seminar every semester and still, not all students (mostly minors) could take it to meet graduation requirements. Therefore we decided to change the minor requirements and we now no longer require the seminar. Instead, minors are now required to take Expository Writing since writing is crucial to the Humanities and it's important that students have as much practice and feedback as possible to hone their writing skills.

Overall, we feel that we have made significant adjustments in our courses and our pedagogical approach. Half of our faculty members have been with UW-Green Bay or UW-System Teaching Fellows and Prof. Haynie was selected to lead CATL as well as direct the UW-System Teaching Fellows program. Similarly Prof. Voelker was appointed co-director of the UW-Green Bay Teaching Scholars Program as well as Primary Investigator of OPID's Wisconsin Teaching Fellows and Scholars Program Assessment Project. This involvement by our faculty in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning underscores our

commitment to student learning and helps account of the increase in learning reported by students in our program. As we move forward, we are working on creating a structure by which we can now apply the assessment of student learning to the program as a whole. Imbedded assessment and a commitment to strengthening critical thinking in our individual courses has been very successful and we plan to replicate this strategy as we look to gain a more holistic assessment of the HUS major and minor.

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