



English | 2015-2016 Assessment Report

1. Please give a brief overview of the assessment data you collected this year.

We assessed two different courses, taught by Professors Stefan Hall and Rebecca Nesvet. Below are their narratives commenting on the assessment.

Rebecca Nesvet:

ENG 215: English Literature II: Milton through the Present develops students' understanding of important works of British literature by providing awareness of and appreciation for our literary heritage. This 200-level survey course exposes students to a carefully curated range of canonical British poetry, fiction, essays and drama--works that have shaped not only British but global thought. They include Milton's epic *Paradise Lost* and anti-censorship tract *Areopagitica*, classics of British Romantic and Victorian poetry, Gothic novels, and Conrad's proto-Modernist interrogation of imperialism. The course concludes with the first paperback novel ever printed, James Hilton's *Lost Horizon*--leaving students at the brink of the last major revolution in publishing prior to the digital age.

Students develop awareness of these texts via intensive class discussion, ungraded free-writes, and graded in-class short-essay exams and one paper, an assignment that involves two layers of draft scaffolding and the opportunity to improve one's grade by consulting the Writing Center and revising accordingly. Students also learn about the drafting, feedback, and revision processes of the canonical writers, primarily via a unit wherein they close-read Mary and Percy Shelley's draft manuscripts at the (online) Shelley Godwin Archive <shelleygodwinarchive.org>.

Students have demonstrated their appreciation of these texts in various ways. Most students are able to clearly articulate the influence of each generation of writers on the next, on distant subsequent generations, and even on their own culture and lives. These demonstrations range from their discussion, essay, and exam answers to evocative surprises--such as one student's impromptu yet thorough use of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "A Man's Requirements" to critique a Beyonce music video to another student's deep engagement with Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," which, she bravely explained to the class, helped her to explain her husband's Special Operations combat experience to people outside the military and veteran community. "He is an Ancient Mariner," she began a speech that she is now developing into a blog post to share with the world beyond UWGB. If that isn't appreciation of literature, I don't know what is.

Stefan Hall:

English 214 : Introduction to English Literature 1 (Fall 2015)

In this course students read almost a millennium of British literature, from the oldest Anglo-Saxon poetry composed in the eighth century to the 1600s. The Anglo-Saxon portion of the syllabus included canonical and non-canonical works translated into modern English such as *Beowulf* and

several shorter religious and secular poems. The Middle-English portion of the syllabus included canonical works by Chaucer, Langland, and the Gawain Poet in both the original fourteenth-century English as well as in modern-English translation. The English Renaissance portion of the syllabus included canonical works by Shakespeare, Marlowe, Donne, Herbert, and Herrick, amongst others. In this survey course, students gained a great appreciation of the rich literary tradition of Britain through close readings of primary texts, through conducting outside research on authors and historical events and people, and through sharing their research in class in oral presentations or group discussions. Beyond assessing students' competency in class, there were three written assignments during the semester, one on Anglo-Saxon poetry, one on Middle-English poetry, and one on English Renaissance poetry, all of which involved the close-reading and research skills students developed during the semester. A majority of the students wrote three excellent literary analyses which exhibited a great comprehension of British literature in both its historical and literary contexts and traditions. Therefore, this course did indeed "develop students' understanding of important works of American and English literature by providing awareness of -- and appreciation for -- our literary heritage."

2. How will you use what you've learned from the data that was collected?

The English department was short-handed this year (3 full-time faculty for 150+ majors) and that inhibited our ability to digest this information as a group. As the program chair, I can say the following: we used this year's and last year's assessments to see if we were meeting our bedrock learning objectives. In conclusion, we are. Our goals moving forward are not so much how to improve upon what is described here, but how to expand the range of assignments that allow students to develop and express their appreciation of a given literary heritage. Our department has two new hires coming in, and our task is to continue a culture shift in not so much the content we offer, but the tools we bring to that content and connecting them more directly to skills and contexts beyond our curriculum.