The Assessment Committee had another busy academic year in fall 2008/spring 2009, presenting the results of our pilot portfolio assessment, working on undergraduate learning outcomes, planning a graduation day student conference, ensuring that the Department complies with GE assessment, and inviting the University Assessment Coordinator to speak to the Department.

In spring 2008, the Assessment Committee piloted a portfolio assessment. We asked eight students in the senior seminar to collect four pieces of writing from their careers as English majors and reflect on their reading and writing processes. The Department discussed these portfolios at the retreat just before the fall 2008 semester, focusing on the following questions:

How do the portfolios reflect...
   What we value
   How we get across to students what we value
   What students value

As a result of this discussion, we discovered that:

- We assign diverse genres.
- We value analysis.
- We value organization.
- We value carefully edited writing.
- We value integration of primary and sometimes secondary sources.
- We rarely require revision.
- We rarely ask students to collaborate on their writing.
- We define the “research paper” as a genre in ways that differ significantly from instructor to instructor.
- We rarely ask students to write to an audience other than “teacher as expert.”
- Students value feedback during the writing process—especially in one-on-one conferences.
- Students value self-reflection (in terms of their classroom assignments and the portfolio cover letter).
- Students value assignments that connect to their personal experiences or goals.
- Students value writing for audiences beyond just the teacher.

The Assessment Committee found that the most valuable aspect of the portfolio assessment was what the students themselves learned during the process of reflecting on their writing careers as English Majors in their portfolio cover letters.

In addition to discussing the results of our pilot portfolio assessment, the Assessment Committee was asked by the English Department Executive Committee to create a draft of shared undergraduate outcomes to help inform the Department’s discussions of proposals to
change the major. The Executive Committee thought that it made sense to consider what we most value as a Department before deciding on a new major, and in order to do this in a grassroots way the Assessment Committee asked each discipline (Composition, Creative Writing, TESOL, Literature) to create a list of outcomes for their field. The Assessment Committee then synthesized these outcomes to find seven shared outcomes:

- Historicizing/contextualizing
- Discourse fluency
- Scholarly research
- Theorizing
- Critical reading
- Multiple literacies
- Critical self-reflection

The Assessment Committee then cut-and-pasted outcomes from each discipline that fell under each more general outcome (see Appendix A). These shared values/outcomes were presented at a Department meeting, and it was decided that we would not use these shared outcomes to inform our discussion of a new major. Partially because the shared outcomes were met with resistance, Terry Underwood, the University Assessment Coordinator, was invited to a Department meeting to help explain outcomes-based assessment. Underwood stressed the following:

- Streamlining assessment so that it’s considerate of faculty workload
- Focusing assessment on teaching and learning
- Designing assessment that is sophisticated and not reductive in measuring learning
- Including student self-assessment
- Measuring growth and not just the final product

The Assessment Committee also planned and presented a new spring graduation day student conference. This was a “closing the loop” activity that grew out of our experiences piloting the portfolio, since we discovered that students are more motivated when they write for an audience beyond the teacher. This conference gave graduating senior and graduate students a chance to present their scholarly and creative productions to an audience of the entire Department, as well as friends and family. See Appendix B for the conference program. Members of the assessment committee evaluated the presentations using a rubric. The results of our evaluation show that students performed well when asked to present the results of their scholarship to a wider audience:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Developing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to engage in a scholarly conversation, both within the presentation and in the follow-up discussion/Q&amp;A.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to articulate a well-framed argument with a clearly stated premise.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to provide appropriate support</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to present material professionally (i.e. stayed within the time limit; spoke clearly and loudly; made eye contact with the audience; etc.)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, the Assessment Committee complied with the required GE assessment. We chose to assess Area C, and focus on the outcome:

Students will identify and explain the principal values and/or traditions reflected in one area of emphasis within this category (The Arts and Humanities).

We asked instructors of literature survey courses (50A, 50 B, and 40B) to provide us with student writing that connected to this outcome. We asked for two high, two medium, and two low examples (see Appendix D for assessment grids and example student writing).

As it did last year, the Undergraduate Program Committee also conducted our Senior Survey with some revisions agreed upon by the department as a whole. The survey, conducted using SurveyMonkey.com, was closed on June 23, 2009 and netted 65 responses. Questions regarding specific curricular elements, such as the Shakespeare requirement, an Introduction to English Studies course, the lower division surveys, etc. will provide student input for curricular issues facing the department as it continues to consider revising its major. (Again copies of the survey are available on request.)

Since its inception, the Assessment Committee has worked toward broadening the Department’s Assessment plan and closing the assessment loop. We inherited the assessment of senior seminar research papers, and broadened that assessment to include advanced composition essays. We then further broadened our assessment with portfolios, which gave us a snapshot of writing throughout the entire major and involved students themselves in the assessment process, turning the assessment moment into a learning moment for students. In terms of closing the loop, in its brief history the Assessment Committee has facilitated
multiple assessment retreats for 120A and 198T instructors, facilitated the creation of learning outcomes for 120A and 198T, created an instructor resource Web site for 120A, updated the 120A course description, and presented a student writing conference. We have always maintained that assessment must reflect curriculum, and that curriculum can benefit from the results of assessment. Because of this, we are pleased that the Department has decided to create a new Curriculum and Assessment Committee. Because this new Curriculum and Assessment Committee will be forming, and the current Assessment Committee will dissolve, we decided not to follow through with one of our goals for this academic year: creating a five-year plan for assessment. However, we would like to end this report—and end our service as a committee—with suggestions regarding assessment that we hope the new Curriculum and Assessment Committee will consider:

Suggestions for the New Portfolio Assessment

- Continue developing the portfolio assessment, as recommended in our program review, by the University Assessment Coordinator, in the literature on writing assessment (Condon, Elbow, Huot, White, Yancey), and in position statements on assessment by the NCTE, the Conference on College Composition and Communications, and The Council of Writing Program Administrators.

- Integrate the portfolio assessment into the senior seminar curriculum by seeking volunteers from the 198T instructors to assign it as a final project.

- Use the portfolios to simplify assessment by combining GE and Major assessment, since the portfolios contain writing from both GE and major courses.

- Use the portfolios as an aid in creating undergraduate learning outcomes.

- Use the portfolios as a way to map our curriculum and learning outcomes over time, with a focus on where each learning outcome is being introduced and reinforced.

- Use the portfolios to measure student growth, and not just discrete performances.

- Pilot an electronic portfolio assessment when the university provides the resources to do so.

Suggestions for the New Student Conference

- Ask the new Student Outreach and Activities Committee to continue presenting the student conference each spring.

General Suggestions for Assessment

- Design a five-year plan for assessment.

- To keep assessment manageable, choose one outcome to assess/map each year.

- Continue “assessing the assessment.”
Appendix A: Shared Outcomes Draft Statement

Shared Outcomes and Disciplinary Differences

Historicizing/contextualizing

Knowledge of literary periods, knowledge of the history of the English language, knowledge of histories of rhetoric, knowledge of sociocultural contexts (race, class, gender, politics)

Discourse fluency

Logical argumentation about literary texts; production of disciplinary discourse in linguistics; appropriate use of purpose, focus, and organization; imaginative voice and expression; fluency in the conventions of academic discourse

Scholarly research

Research in and integration of literary criticism, primary and secondary research in applied linguistics, research in rhetoric and writing using appropriate methods and methodologies for Composition

Theorizing

Analyzing literature in the context of critical traditions, knowledge of the major theories of language acquisition, knowledge of current and historical theories of rhetoric and writing, knowledge of praxis—the ways rhetoric and writing theory and practice inform one another and the connection between theory and classroom practice for first and second language literacy development.

Critical reading

Ability to employ different approaches to the analysis of literary texts; examination of what texts tell us about larger questions of literary form, identity, aesthetics, the cultural moment, etc.; analyze the features of language from a cross-linguistic perspective; develop rhetorical reading skills to become a critical consumer of texts; critique their own or each other’s work using the terminology of the craft appropriate to the genre

Multiple literacies

Literary approaches applied to non-literary, written and visual texts; analyzing language form multiple perspectives; understand and produce a variety of textual genres and write for a variety of rhetorical situations; express ideas through literary forms; recognize the range of discourse communities within English Studies

Critical self-reflection

Personal engagement and self-direction in the study of literature; reflection on similarities and differences between their own culture’s literature and the literary texts of other historical moments and cultures; develop a critical, self-reflexive awareness of their literacy processes
Appendix B: Student Conference Program

The First English Department Student Conference

“What's At Stake?”

May 15, 2009 at 2.30-4.45pm
Orchard Suite of the University Union

PANEL 1: WHAT'S AT STAKE IN THE CLASSROOM?
Moderator: Rhett Farinholt
2:35—3:35 pm

“Web 2.0 in the Multilingual Composition Classroom: Promoting Multiple Literacies through Emerging Technologies.”
Allison Himelright, MA student, TESOL and Composition

“The Relevance of English Studies in Understanding a Media-Centered Culture.”
Elizabeth Geisser, MA student, Literature

“Perceptions and Pedagogy in First-Year Composition Courses at California State University, Sacramento.”
Katie Miller, MA Student, Composition
Sonya Hale, MA Student, Composition

PANEL 2: WHAT'S AT STAKE IN REPRESENTATION?
Moderator: Rachelanne Smith
3:45—4:45pm

“Under the Feet of Jesus: More than a Love Story.”
Trina Drotar, MA student, Creative Writing

“’The Pieces that Prevailed’: The Flaming Lips’ Zaireeka as Imaginative Exploration of Post-Colonial Zaire.”
Chris Staver, MA student, Literature

“Trying to Get it Right: Accurate Approximations.”
Megan Hellam, MA student, Composition

“What Absurdity is This?: Defending the Study of English Literature Through the Lens of Absurdist Drama.”
Lindsey Snodgrass, MA student, Literature
Appendix D: Area C GE Assessment

Rubric for 50A:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GE Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Course Specific Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Course-Embedded Assessment Tool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify and explain the principal values and/or traditions reflected in one area of emphasis within this category</td>
<td>Students will demonstrate familiarity with some significant and culturally diverse examples, both canonical and non-canonical, of American literature between the 17th and mid-19th centuries</td>
<td>The course offers a rich selection of readings ranging from traditional choices such as Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Nature” to less obvious choices such as Phyllis Wheatley’s “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” which students will respond to in exams, essays, and class discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will reveal an understanding the major literary genres and modes employed by writers of the period</td>
<td>Among the selections students will read stories or novels by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, poems by Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, and essays by Benjamin Franklin, sections from autobiographies such as Frederick Douglass’s and demonstrate their understanding in midterms, final exam, papers, and class discussions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will show an understanding of some recurring themes in the literature of the period</td>
<td>Faculty introduce themes such as the American Adam, the reverence for nature, the movement into the wilderness, Puritan notion of sin and redemption, etc. and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will reveal an understanding of the relevance of the literature of past to the modern world</td>
<td>Faculty will draw comparisons between these writers and those in later centuries, thus students might be asked to compare Emerson’s transcendental view of nature with Robert Frost’s more austere vision of nature or asked to consider Puritan notion of redemption that 20th century scholar Max Weber ties to America’s commercial obsessions. Faculty will assess students’ comprehension through exams, papers, and class discussions.</td>
<td>evaluate students’ understanding of through graded materials such as exams, papers, and class discussions. A representative example can be seen in the following final exam topic: “In one work this semester we have seen a writer describe America as a &quot;city upon a hill.&quot; Clearly the writer is referring to the fact that there is something extraordinary, different, perhaps even overwhelming about this place. Discuss three different works by three different writers (two of which must be from the nineteenth century) for the ways in which they reveal America as being unique place.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students will practice analyzing, discussing, and writing about the literature.

Faculty will require essay midterms, final exam, a variety of papers, and brief written response papers. Additionally, faculty will require student participation in group discussions. A representative example of such practice can be seen in the following paper topic:

“Compare Poe’s attitude toward science in ‘Sonnet--To Science’ to Hawthorne’s in ‘Rappacini’s Daughter.’ Once again ask yourself how each writer conceives of science, what his or his characters’ relationships with it may be, and what benefits or problems it presents.”
Rubric for 50B:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GE Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Course Specific Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Course-Embedded Assessment Tool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify and explain the principal values and/or traditions reflected in one area of emphasis within this category</td>
<td>Students will demonstrate familiarity with some significant and culturally diverse examples, both canonical and non-canonical, of American literature between the 17th and mid-19th centuries</td>
<td>The course offers a rich selection of readings ranging from traditional choices such as Mark Twain’s “Jumping Frog” to less obvious choices such as Zora Neale Hurston’s “Gilded Six Bits,” which students will respond to in exams, essays, and class discussions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Students will reveal an understanding the major literary genres and modes employed by writers of the period | Students will show an understanding of some recurring themes in the literature of the period | Faculty introduce themes such as war as a threat to romanticism, the recovery of the past, American individualism, and personal alienation, etc., and evaluate students’ understanding of through graded materials such as exams, papers, and class discussions. A representative example can be seen in the following essay topic: “Dreiser
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students will reveal an understanding of the relevance of the literature of past to the modern world</th>
<th>Faculty will draw comparisons between these writers and those in later centuries, thus students might be asked to compare the treatment of World War I to what students know about Vietnam or the position of women in American society in the 19th century and that position in contemporary America. Faculty will assess students’ comprehension through exams, papers, and class discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will practice analyzing, discussing, and writing about the literature</td>
<td>Faculty will require essay midterms, final exam, a variety of papers, and brief written response papers. Additionally faculty will require student participation in group discussions. A representative example of such practice can be seen in the following final exam topic: “Compare the use of time and space as well as the arrangement of scenes, or the writing styles of two playwrights in two plays we have studied this term.”</td>
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</table>
Rubric for 40B:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GE Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Course Specific Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Course-Embedded Assessment Tool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify and explain the principal values and/or traditions reflected in one area of emphasis within this category</td>
<td>Students will demonstrate familiarity with some significant and culturally diverse examples, both canonical and non-canonical, of British literature between the 18th and 20th centuries</td>
<td>The course offers a rich selection of readings ranging from Wordsworth’s verse to James Joyce’s “The Dead” Rosetti’s “Goblin Market,” which students will respond to in exams, essays, quizzes, and class discussions. A representative example can be seen in the following final exam topic, “Compare and contrast the handling of wasteland themes in any two of the following for weeks: Rosetti’s ‘Goblin Market,’ Lawrence’s ‘Horse Dealer’s Daughter,’ Lessing’s ‘To Room Nineteen,’ Joyce’s ‘The Dead.’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will reveal an understanding the major literary genres and modes employed by writers of the period</td>
<td>Among the selections students will read a novel, Jane Austen’s Sense and Sensibility, stories by D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce, and poems by Coleridge, Keats, and Yeats and John Gay and demonstrate their understanding in midterms, final exam, papers, and class discussions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will show an understanding of some recurring themes in the</td>
<td>Faculty introduce themes such relating to Romanticism, Victorianism, and Modernism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will reveal an understanding of the relevance of the literature of past to the modern world</td>
<td>Faculty will draw comparisons between these writers and those in later centuries, thus students might be asked to compare concepts of nature in Wordsworth and the later works of T. S. Eliot. A representative example can be seen in this final exam question, “Trace the five existential themes (absurdity, isolation, failure of communication, lack of freedom, problem of commitment) through two Eliot poems we read.” Faculty will assess students’ comprehension through exams, papers, and class discussions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>and ideas such as the Self and the relationship of Self to Society. Faculty evaluate students’ understanding of through graded materials such as exams, papers, and class discussions. A representative example can be seen in the following midterm topic: “Coleridge defines the Romantic (or Secondary) Imagination as that which ‘reconciles opposite or discordant qualities.’ Discuss the thematic value of attempted reconciliation in any three of Coleridge’s poems.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing about the literature</td>
<td>variety of papers, and brief written response papers. Additionally faculty will require student participation in group discussions. A representative example of such practice can be seen in the following final exam topic: “Discuss the role of narrative irony in at least three of Tennyson’s poems.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*See attached examples of student writing.*