

Review of Performance: Introduction to Literature EN 201/2, Spring 2013, number of students: 26 (only 25 completed the course)
 Submitted by: **Monty Vierra**

Program SLO#2. Students should be able to articulate and understand their experiences through effective writing, reading, speaking, and various modes of artistic expression.

SLO#	I, D, M	Reflection/Comment
<p>1.1 Define and identify the basic literary genres: narrative fiction, drama, poetry....</p> <p><i>[The rest of the SLO refers to the content of the current textbook. This SLO should be simplified, as above, to reflect whatever text is being used. Today, most textbooks have a variety of time periods and a more inclusive canon.]</i></p>	<p>I, D</p>	<p>Students were asked to read poems, plays, short stories, and a novelized version of the <i>Odyssey</i>. They were asked to work on handouts related to the <i>Odyssey</i>.</p> <p>Comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Most students developed a good idea of the basic features of these different genres, but they found much of the reading very difficult. For example, many did not know enough basic words to get through a five-page short story in one week. When asked to read a short story or part of a play before class, only three or four did so on a regular basis. Most expected to do the reading in class. Almost all of the students also lacked basic reading strategies, such as highlighting unfamiliar vocabulary and looking up the new words. 2. Most students liked Psalm 8 because it was from the Bible. Perhaps in future one teacher should have the option of teaching a “Bible as Literature” special-focus class. 3. Students also liked the <i>Odyssey</i>, partly because the “lexile” level in the version we have is easier than almost any other work that we read.
<p>1.2 Define, identify, and analyze literary texts using basic literary terminology associated with the different genres of literature.</p>	<p>I, D</p>	<p>About half of the students were able to grasp most of the major literary terms associated with each particular work. The remaining students found these terms difficult to apply.</p> <p>Comments: I did not spend enough time on this part of the course. For instance, when asked on a quiz to identify the number of stanzas in a poem, at least half wrote the number of <i>lines</i>. Although in class I went over the modern idea that a narrator in fiction is not the same as the author, almost a third of the students identified the author as the narrator of the short story “Torn Lace.”</p>

<p>1.3 Define, identify, and apply various critical theories and methods.</p>	<p>I, D</p>	<p>Most students were able to identify the major modern critical theories in a simple quiz and on the final exam. A few students were able to apply the concepts to one or more work that they read.</p> <p>Comment:</p> <p>I spent too much time on this part of the course. Normally, critical theories normally are taught in a separate course to students who have completed a basic course in literature and who plan to pursue English studies. This part of the SLO should be dropped from the course and more time should be devoted to the basics of literary study, what the profession calls the “literary tool kit.”</p>
<p>1.4 Identify historical, cultural, and biographical contexts for selected literary texts and their authors; apply them interpretively to assigned readings.</p>	<p>I (D)</p>	<p>Students were asked to take notes on brief background talks on selected works.</p> <p>Most students gave short presentations in their “teams” about the authors they were most interested in. One team chose Emily Dickinson, for instance, while another chose Wordsworth. Several teams recited poetry from their favorite poets, and one team did an “interpretive” performance (skit) about a short story.</p>
<p>1.5 Write compositions (paragraph and essay length) on literary topics and issues.</p>	<p>I, D</p>	<p>Students were asked to write three short response papers to one work from each genre.</p> <p>The third response paper was used for the department program level assessment.</p> <p>Results:</p> <p>A = 12%, B = 12%, C = 38%, D = 5%, F = 5% (Of the F’s, two students did not do the assignment.)</p>

Additional observations:

1. Based on my experience with a “task-based” program in Korea and which I successfully implemented in Taiwan, I organized students into small groups at the beginning of the semester. In the past, this worked extremely well. Here, however, it was not as successful.
2. First, team members were invited to divide the assignments among themselves and then discuss together what they had learned about each part. As the tasks became increasingly difficult, however, some students did not come, and those who did come were left having to make up the difference, which discouraged those who had made an effort.

3. Second, in their teams, one student had to perform the task of “secretary” and send weekly email reports on what they discussed as a means of reviewing what they did. Most students did not know how to use the ‘cc’ function and it took about six weeks for them to master it, thus undercutting the idea of sharing what they had learned. Other students denied having any access to the Internet whatsoever, and complained that sending reports was too difficult. I required that teams rotate this “job,” but in mixed-gender groups, the male students often decided that “secretary” was a female-one job that they could not or would not do.

Special comments:

Grade	26 students
A	1
B	10
C	7
D	4
F	4*
Withdraw	*One F was “withdrawn” after missing 13 class sessions. OAR did not record this as a W – F. Two other Fs had 10 absences in the end.

Recommendations:

1. Simplify SLO 1.1 and eliminate SLO 1.3.
2. Either (a) find a more suitable textbook or (b) allow teachers to create their own course.
 - a. I propose Meyer’s *Literature to Go*. Fuller discussion to follow during the summer session.
 - b. In Poland, I wrote my own course and acquired appropriate texts. Those materials could be adapted for use here.
3. Require all students to have a dictionary and thesaurus.
4. Eliminate *Odyssey* as a required text; make any “additional” text optional—though professionally I see no rationale for having an extra text.

Institution Learning Outcomes:

Students were assessed on their ability to do the following:

- a. communicate effectively
- b. employ critical thinking
- c. possess specific knowledge and skills in a major discipline or professional program of study
- d. take responsibility and develop skills for learning
- e. interact responsibly with people, cultures, and their environment

The above grades reflect in part the steps students have taken toward meeting these outcomes.

Signature: _____
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Date: May 21, 2013