

Assessment of the BA in Comparative Literature

Assessment 2003-2005

Department of Comparative Literature

Comparative Literature Major

(We presented the following revisions to our assessment plan in 2003)

In revising the assessment process, the Department should

1. Identify and list field specific characteristics of evaluation for introductory and final essays
2. Appoint a committee to evaluate essays.

Final essays in our capstone course, CMLT 4020, document a student's level of achievement in critical thinking in general and in the essential skills of comparative literature study. Explicit criteria like the following should be detailed, and used explicitly in the evaluation of essays at both levels

1. The essays should show detailed knowledge of a body of significant literary texts in an area of study chosen by the student.
2. They should demonstrate the student's ability to create interpretations of literary texts—to derive meaning from them—and to generalize these interpretations within historical, formal, rhetorical, cultural or other systems of literary analysis. This requires an ability to relate individual practices of critical analysis to recognized theories of literary, cultural, linguistic, and other types of criticism;
3. The essays should demonstrate the student's ability to communicate interpretations persuasively through discipline

In 2004 2005, students in the capstone course were assigned to write a second essay which is now included in the assessment.

Criteria for CMLT Essay evaluation:

Mark each essay on a 1 to 9 scale on each of the following

- Ability to frame a mature, cogent argument in Comparative Literature
1. mechanics
 - a. spelling
 - b. grammar
 - c. sentence structure
 - d. paragraph structure
 - e. essay structure

 2. persuasion
 - a. opening paragraph
 - b. evidence
 - c. linking
 - d. conclusion

 3. Range of experience in Comparative Literature
 - a. range of literary texts addressed
 - b. depth of knowledge of literary texts addressed

 - c. range of theoretical approaches
 - d. depth of knowledge of theoretical approaches

 - e. range of genres addressed
 - f. knowledge of inter-generic comparison

 - g. use of language resources other than English for research
 - h. expression in languages other than English

The following chart shows the average scores on a scale from 1-9 for the essays collected in each year. 2004 and 2005 results reflect the inclusion of a second required essay.

Outcomes: Comparative Literature majors should acquire (1) a basic knowledge of events, movements and developments in world literary and cultural history; (2) a knowledge of the methods and approaches in the discipline of comparative literature; (3) analytic skills necessary to read literature critically and perceptively; and (4) superior skills in oral and written communication.

Expected Results of the Major:

- (1) Graduates should be able to characterize major Western literary periods and genres, identify and describe key issues in some non-Western literatures,

- demonstrate familiarity with several works by major world writers, and situate those writers in their cultural and historical context.
- (2) Graduates should be able to characterize specific methodological issues in comparative literature and describe major contemporary critical approaches to literature.
 - (3) Graduates should be able to analyze individual works of literature in terms of genre, structure, theme, style, mode and cultural-historical context.
 - (4) Graduates should be able to communicate their analyses effectively through clear and literate oral presentations and expository papers that demonstrate mastery of compositional mechanics, the rudiments of style, the conventions of bibliographical citation in the discipline, and the structural elements of the critical essay.

Assessment Methods and Procedures:

- (1) Entrance-Exit exams administered upon entrance to the major and during the student's final quarter; tests and papers in CML 401 (Approaches in CML); Capstone Oral Exams; Capstone Written Exams' Capstone Essays' Portfolios. Entrance-exit exam tests general increase in cultural-historical knowledge; CML 401 includes instruction in concepts of genre and periodization; specific content knowledge can be measured during the Capstone course; and overall increase in content knowledge can be demonstrated in portfolios.
- (2) Tests and papers in CML 401, which is designed primarily to teach methods and approaches to CML; Capstone Oral/Written Exams and Essays, will all show knowledge in this area.
- (3) Capstone oral/Written Exams and Essays will involve analysis of individual works and will provide multiple measurements of students' critical skills' Portfolios of students' papers will provide a record of students' development as literary critics.
- (4) Capstone Written Exams and Essays and student Portfolios will provide evidence of students' writing ability; Capstone Oral Exams and Presentations will demonstrate students' effectiveness in oral communication.

C. The Use of Assessment Results for Improvement of the Major Program:

- (1) How will results be analyzed? A departmental Assessment Committee will be appointed annually to review Entrance-Exit Exams and Portfolios. Faculty teaching the Capstone Course will communicate the results of the course's work to the Committee, which will prepare an annual report for the CML faculty.
- (2) What use will be made of the data and the resulting analyses? The Assessment Committee will propose means of improving departmental instruction to the faculty, with curricular issues being referred to the curriculum committee. Changes in course content across the curriculum, modification of courses, development of new courses, etc. will be introduced whenever appropriate.

- (3) The results of the Capstone Oral/Written Exams and Essays and Portfolio reviews will be reported to the faculty. Results of the Entrance-Exit Exam will be reported to the faculty and students. Since the information is not standardized, its usefulness is restricted to the department, and communication of the departmental finds to other administrative units would not contribute to the goal of improving the degree program.
- (4) The mechanisms or procedures for improving the degree include implementation of Assessment Committee and Curriculum Committee recommendations, development of departmental initiatives based on assessment reports, and administrative modifications of the program (scheduling, course assignments, etc.)

In revising the assessment process, the Department should

1. Create a baseline for assessment through analysis of essays written for the introductory Comparative Literature course, CMLT 4010
2. Identify and list field specific characteristics of evaluation for introductory and final essays.
3. Appoint a committee to evaluate essays. While the committee has been part of our assessment plan for some time, it has never been appointed.

Final essays in our capstone course, CMLT 4020, document a student's level of achievement in critical thinking in general and in the essential skills of comparative

literature study. Explicit criteria like the following should be detailed, and used explicitly in the evaluation of essays at both levels

1. The essays should show detailed knowledge of a body of significant literary texts in an area of study chosen by the student.
2. They should also demonstrate the student's ability to create interpretations of literary texts-to derive meaning from them-and to generalize these interpretations within historical, formal, rhetorical, cultural or other systems of literary analysis. This requires an ability to relate individual practices of critical analysis to recognized theories of literary, cultural, linguistic, and other types of criticism;
3. The essays should also demonstrate the student's ability to communicate interpretations persuasively through disciplined and organized formal writing.

The standards that will be used to evaluate the new Analytical Writing section of the GRE exam may prove useful to the committee.