

English Major – Assessment Plan

Program learning objectives (PLOs)

The range of courses we teach in English and American literature, creative writing, and film and media studies, have some shared objectives. We want our students to:

1. **Knowledge and comprehension in the discipline:** enter into and absorb the body of texts or films they study, to understand better their forms, traditions, meanings, critical implications, and historical backgrounds.
2. **Critical analysis:** critical analysis of texts or films
3. **Research:** develop research skills in study and analysis of texts or films
4. **Communication- writing:** develop and improve writing skills in creative or analytical writing efforts
5. **Communication- oral:** convey ideas in class discussion or formal presentations
6. **Integration of knowledge and abilities:** build a body of knowledge and abilities that, together, can be used as a base for creative work and scholarly research.

For all the clarity of these goals, there are many goals of our teaching—and those among the most central—that remain hard to measure, or to quantify in terms of grades and rankings. The ways in which the work in our classes can open up students' imaginations, powers of thought and memory, and writerly skills, may not be easy to gauge at the end of a single semester, but rather develop from class to class, and continue after graduation.

Curriculum mapping

Each of the four different tracks in the English major have specific requirements that focus students on these learning objectives, even as they give students flexibility in shaping their own work.

English Major Track Requirements: In the English literature track, students must take at least two 100-level historical survey courses which give them an overview of the tradition. They must also take at least two upper-level courses both before and after 1800 – which is to say, courses both before and after what we think of as the threshold of modernity, reinforcing the historical breadth of understanding gained in the surveys. PLO 1-6

English Major Advanced Seminar: In addition, each major must take an advanced seminar, which requires of them an extended piece of research or

critical writing, again reinforcing skills they have learned in other literature classes. PLO 1-6

English Major Electives: Beyond that, they are free to take additional electives in literature, media studies, or creative writing. PLO 1-6

Creative Writing Track Requirements: The creative writing track has essentially the same basic requirements- two 100-level historical survey courses and at least two upper-level courses both before and after 1800. PLO 1-6

Creative Writing Advanced Courses: Students must complete two introductory and two advanced workshops in fiction, poetry, or dramatic writing. One aim here is to make sure that our students of creative writing are also informed and skilled readers of literary texts. PLO 1-6

Language, Media and Communication Track Requirements: The track in Language, Media, and Communication track requires two literature courses, as well as at least six classes in the areas of journalism, debate, film studies, or media studies, the choice of which will be decided together with the LMC advisor, so that they relate to and reinforce each other as best as possible. (This list may include relevant courses in Political Science, Anthropology, or Linguistics.) PLO 1-6

Language, Media, and Communication Advanced Research Course or Internship: They are also required to complete either an advanced research course or an internship that in some ways tests their writing and communication skills (for instance, in some form of communications research or public relations). PLO 1-6

Theater Track Requirements: Students in the Theater track must, like English literature majors, complete the same two survey courses, as well as the same four courses in literature before and after 1800, though as much as possible with a focus on dramatic literature. This is to give them backgrounds as readers as well as critical writers. PLO 1-6

Theater Production Requirement: But this track also requires hands-on participation in at least four productions of the UR Theater program (either as actors or production assistants), and at least eight hours of classes in theater method, acting, directing, voice, movement, etc. In such cases, evaluation is based less on writing, than on students' ability to fulfill certain creative and practical goals. It should be made clear this work is not in any way based on a conservatory model—it is not pre-professional training—rather it is a way of understanding theatrical performance as both an object and a means of learning about theater and theatrical literature. PLO 1-6

Assessment Methods

The nature of such study means that all of these objectives are intertwined, and reinforce each other. The ways we measure students' achievement of these goals—the ways *we* know that *they* know—are various.

Both course papers and exams allow students to show both their mastery of the primary course materials and their analytic abilities, as well as their skill as writers. PLO 1, 2, 4, 6

In many classes, participation in class discussion is also part of the evaluation, as are oral presentations. PLO 5

Often, especially in creative writing classes, the entirety of a student's work is evaluated at the end of the semester, in the form of a portfolio. PLO 1-6

As a rule, a student's success in the class will be measured through a combination of these different tasks, at the discretion of each individual professor.

Beginning in Fall 2013, a selection of English course faculty will use the direct assessment measure, the Faculty Course Reflective Memo format, to document course learning objectives, their alignment with English program learning objectives, and present a review of student performance on the specially selected course assessments described above. Faculty will also note details of planned course improvements if student performance warrants this step.

Two additional direct measures were implemented in 2011, and will continue to be implemented. English major awards given to students will be documented and English major post-graduation admission to related graduate programs will be tracked.

In addition, two indirect measures have been implemented. The College Senior Survey was implemented in 2000 and will continue to be implemented annually. The College Alumni Survey was implemented in 2009 and will continue to be implemented every 3 to 5 years.

The English program undergraduate committee will review assessment data at the end of each academic year, and determine curricular changes based on that review.