

General Education Assessment

Summary of Reports, 2019-20

Learning Objective 1. Reading Closely: Literary Analysis and Interpretation. *One course.*

The ability to read closely provides a foundation for informed and reflective critical analysis that is fundamental to lifelong learning and literary experiences of lasting value. Instruction in reading closely equips students to pay careful attention to the constitutive details and stylistic concerns of significant works of literature so as to arrive at a meaning that can be defended with confidence. In addition to promoting responsible ways of taking a literary work of consequence on its own terms, courses satisfying this requirement enable students to become proficient at identifying, interpreting, and analyzing new ideas, perennial topics, universal themes, and vivid descriptions of sensory and internal experiences.

Outcomes:

SLO 1: Students can identify and analyze constitutive details and literary style.

SLO 2: Students can produce interpretations of literary meaning.

SLO 3: Students can produce convincing arguments for their interpretations.

Sample formal assessment tools:

- Class discussions focusing specifically on details of reading (close interpretation).
- Weekly or biweekly short responses focusing on interpretation.
- Oral presentations in which student explained interpretation.
- Weekly or biweekly short responses focusing on connecting understanding of reading to a current issue or situation.
- Extended essay focusing on a close reading of a passage / poem.
- Extended essay with secondary sources for context /reaction/
- Series of regular quizzes.
- Final performance of a scene from a play.
- Short online posts.
- Weekly journal entries with guiding rubric.
- Final exam, with specific questions tied to specific SLOs.
- Final in-class essay
- Creative task, e.g., creating a podcast

Sample uses of data for improvement:

- Move to include more contemporary issues to prompt students to make connections.
- Move toward interdisciplinary content to prompt connections.
- Employ additional drafts to assist students in developing thesis and argument.
- Move toward evaluation of penultimate paper, as the last paper is often written at the busiest time of the term and is not the best sample.
- Help students learn to select more effective passages, resources for support in arguments.
- Recognized need to have multiple points of assessment, from shorter to longer papers.
- Used class time to address more common, more persistent errors in writing.

- Modify class time: Mondays, a lecture/demonstration/modelling session about how elements and textual evidence can be used to structure arguments; Wednesdays, students do the same, either as a class or in small groups; Fridays, small writing assignments and with class discussion of individual elements and skills necessary for the writing process.
- Modifying the final paper to a prompt-based assignment rather than an open-ended exploration of a passage.
- More group activities to encourage active participation.
- Delineate a different scaffolding structure for the papers: close reading at the beginning, then narrative and structural relationships, and finally responding to a prompt.
- Building a “bank” of several “tools” for analysis over the course of the semester would be helpful for them, delivered in modelling lectures, e.g. literary tropes/poetic elements, scansion and meter, and a series of critical terms.
- Reduce some of the reading that does not feed directly into the papers, but add in some more contemporary things that would be small, but show how a form (namely the sonnet) develops in modern poetics.
- Build in an assignment that would involve a visit to the Writing Center. This would most likely be a reflective assignment.
- Include more extensive reflections instead of the weekly self-assessment for participation.
- Tackle the range of false oppositions students are bringing with them to these texts: lust/love; love/infatuation; etc. This would most effectively be done in lectures or modeled readings.
- Ask students to submit a reflective piece for each paper they turn in. This wouldn’t be long, but it would ask them to describe the organization of the paper for me, and give a justification for their choices.
- Provide more examples and models for what an ideal product should look like
- Adapt number, type of readings.
- Add a reflection piece.

Learning Objective 2. Understanding the Arts: Creativity, Performance, and Interpretation. *One course.*

The need to create, experience, and comprehend art is a defining human activity. Learning in the arts fosters aesthetic development, self-discipline, imaginative insights, and the ability to make connections between seemingly disparate ideas and issues. Many courses provide insight into the discipline, craft, and creative processes that go into making a work of art, while others focus on analyzing and interpreting the products of that artistic creativity. Developing the ability to think in intuitive, non-verbal, aural, or visual realms enhances creativity, and provides students a way to address problems that do not have conventional solutions.

Outcomes:

SLO 1: Students are able to identify and appreciate non-verbal or intuitive modes of thought.

SLO 2: Students can comprehend a creative process through experience OR analysis.

SLO 3: Students can produce interpretations of artistic work, OR artistic works themselves, which display an understanding of creative processes.

Sample formal assessment tools:

- Final exam.
- Final listening exercise with evaluation.
- Short writing assignments.
- Critique of live artistic performance.
- Research paper.
- Create actual works in the medium appropriate to the course content.
- Writing portfolio with reflection piece.
- Close reading exercises.

Sample uses of data for improvement:

- Develop a workshop/tutorial model to give students more practice.
- More class time to watching/listening to performances to highlight creative activity.
- Revise reading list, both for currency and for accessibility.
- Employ more frequent, regular quizzes to be sure students are actively engaged.
- Provide more rapid feedback on assignments.
- Meet with students individually to review performance.
- Incorporate quick, low or no-stakes in-class assignments on a regular basis that practice the elements of the dance critique by watching videos.
- Require in-person meetings during early stages of research to help develop and clarify ideas.
- Modify schedule of creative assignments to allow for additional feedback, development.
- Allow / create time for collaborative work.
- Continually update artistic selections under consideration to reflect most current works, pieces, and forms.

Learning Objective 3. Seeking Meaning: Wisdom, Truth, and Inquiry. *One course.*

The quest to answer fundamental questions of human existence has always been central to living the examined life. Through this learning objective, students examine how people in diverse times and places have addressed basic human questions about the meaning of life, the source of moral value, the nature of reality and possibility of transcendence, and to what or whom persons owe their ultimate allegiance. Courses that explore texts and traditions dedicated to philosophic questions and ethical inquiry, or that examine religious belief and practice as a pervasive expression of human culture, encourage students to develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be human.

Outcomes:

SLO 1: Students have deepened their understanding of humanity's quest, in diverse times and places, to address questions about the meaning of life, the source of moral value, the nature of reality and possibility of transcendence, and to what or whom persons owe their ultimate allegiance.

SLO 2: Students have gained a critical appreciation of texts and traditions that are dedicated to philosophic questions and ethical inquiry, *or* that examine religious belief and practice as a pervasive expression of human culture.

Sample formal assessment tools:

- Extended essay.
- Multiple shorter essays / responses to readings.
- Formal development of a case study.
- Brief daily writing assignments focusing on critical analysis.

Sample uses of data for improvement:

- Modified texts to be used for course.
- Modified written exercises to target certain skills.
- Provide more examples of effective analyses / model essays.
- Update readings to respond to audience (e.g., in a philosophy course required of Business minors, change readings to engage the significant audience).
- Be more selective in reading assignments: fewer, but more focused.
- Change order in which readings were presented.
- Continue use of online platform as necessitated by move to remote learning.
- Grade “tutorial style” to offer more focused feedback relevant to the SLOs
- Provide a quick reference of “dos and don’ts” for writing.
- Employ writing guide and assists students in developing (step-by-step) philosophical argument.
- Adding daily assignments allowed regular and immediate feedback on analysis.
- Develop more explicit essay prompts to guide students into the argument.
- Collaborate with director of “dialogue across disciplines” to develop more effective classroom discussions.
- Engaged class in review of textbooks.

Learning Objective 4. Exploring Past and Present: Perspectives on Societies and Cultures. *Two courses.*

Curiosity about society and its institutions is central to the engaged life. In addition, informed citizens should have an understanding of individual and collective behavior in the past and present. To address the challenges facing the world today, citizens must understand how these challenges arise and the roles that individuals, communities, countries, and international organizations play in addressing them. Learning how to pose appropriate questions, how to read and interpret historical documents, and how to use methods of analysis to study social interaction prepares students to comprehend the dynamics within and among societies. These skills enable students to examine the world around them and to make historically, theoretically, and empirically informed judgments about social phenomena.

Outcomes:

SLO 1: Students are able to make informed judgments about social phenomena by reading and interpreting historical documents OR by using methods of analysis appropriate to social science.

Sample formal assessment tools:

- Final exam (sometimes giving writing prompts head of time, sometimes not).
- In-class exercises.

- Homework assignments.
- Extended formal research assignment, analyzing primary document(s)
- Analysis of primary document on final exam.
- A significant component of the course involved analyzing how memory is shaped and performed by ancient texts and monuments. Students wrote a response paper comparing how civic ideology is conveyed on the Athenian acropolis and throughout All Saints' Chapel.
- Multiple short essays.
- Respond to multimedia primary/historical sources (e.g., radio shows).
- Develop research bibliography.
- Group assignments.
- Reflection papers.
- Online discussion forums.

Sample uses of data for improvement:

- Modify readings to include more current, timely sources, to highlight real-world application.
- Changed writing prompt on exam essays to state author's thesis then ask for engagement (rather than having them spend time summarizing the argument).
- Engaged class in review of textbooks.
- Modify writing assignment structure to target certain skills, including how they approached historical documents
- Changed writing assignments to more intentionally connect concept to theory.
- Revise attendance policy.
- Develop more structured peer-assessment models.
- Encourage discussion by having students prepare formal questions ahead of class.
- Introduce each assignment as more explicitly concerned with the development of a well-defined historical skill.
- Develop worksheet for each skill introductions, so that the discussions we have in class can be easily referenced as they work on their own.
- Introduce these assignments as explicitly related to each other. This was done implicitly throughout the course, and explicitly at the end/as they prepared their research papers, but it may be more beneficial and transparent for me to present these assignments as closely related from the outset.
- Develop extended historiography assignment through shorter tasks.
- Use creative works to supplement historical / nonliterary ones to amplify context.
- Encourage up-to-date engagement by giving multiple quizzes.
- More contemporary readings.
- Have students collaborate on assessment / analysis of current events.
- Use time each Monday to review key principles from previous week.
- Re-order tasks / assignments throughout term to build more effectively.
- Develop rubric for grading.

Learning Objective 5. Observing, Experimenting, and Modeling: The Scientific and Quantitative View. *Three courses. One must include substantial quantitative, algorithmic, or*

abstract logical reasoning. One must be a science course with a substantial experiential or experimental component.

The study of the natural world through careful observation, construction and testing of hypotheses, and the design and implementation of reproducible experiments is a key aspect of human experience. Scientific literacy and the ability to assess the validity of scientific claims are critical components of an educated and informed life. Scientific and quantitative courses develop students' ability to use close observation and interpret empirical data to understand processes in the natural world better. As they create models to explain observable phenomena, students develop their abilities to reason both deductively and inductively.

Outcomes:

G5 SLO 1: The student can evaluate scientific information and/or scientific texts, and distinguish data or facts from interpretation and opinion.

G5 (experiential) SLO 1: The student demonstrates the ability to use scientific methodologies to study and draw reasonable conclusions about the natural world through detailed observations, carefully recorded data, and data analysis techniques appropriate for their field of study.

G5 (experiential) SLO 2: The student can evaluate scientific information and/or scientific texts, and distinguish data or facts from interpretation and opinion.

G5 (experiential) SLO 3: Students demonstrate the ability to calculate and analyze empirical data sets and/or demonstrate the ability model mathematical theory.

G5 (quantitative) SLO 1: The student demonstrates the ability to calculate and analyze empirical data sets and/or demonstrate the ability model mathematical theory.

Sample formal assessment tools:

- Periodic tests
- (G5E) Laboratory experiments, with formal lab report
- (G5E) Scientific paper based on results of own lab work
- (G5E) Students designed and implemented their own research study
- (G5Q) Application of mathematical principles to real scenarios
- Develop poster for display and discussion.
- Hands-on mapping exercises
- Weekly quizzes
- Writing assignments addressing current topics in science
- Analysis of primary and secondary sources
- Formal essay following publication standards
- Textbook reviews (to highlight different modes of scientific writing)
- Personal reflection pieces
- Literature reviews
- Data analysis exercise
- Final exam with specific questions tied to specific SLOs
- Analysis of real-life case study or of contemporary issue
- Group research projects, with presentations
- Field journals

Sample uses of data for improvement:

- Provide additional instruction in the use and evaluation of online resources.
- (G5E) Additional prep time to enhance creative lab assignments.
- Periodic, structured review of course content.
- (G5Q) Develop more “real world” mathematics applications.
- (G5E) Require more hands-on interaction with available samples rather than relying on computer-based images
- Shift course out of General Educations, as it is limited to and appropriate for advanced students.
- Develop early assessment tool to recognize gaps in students’ knowledge of essential concepts or skills (e.g., ability to use Excel).
- (G5Q) Active modeling of effective lab reports.
- Adapt online learning platforms to enhance discussion, e.g. record a lecture, have students watch lecture and submit questions as they do; questions lead to the next discussion.
- Re-evaluate textbook to focus on individual readings.
- (G5E) Employ phone-based applications to enhance field research.
- Coordinate with other faculty in department to be sure the course skills match what is necessary for more advanced work.
- Create more opportunities for group / collaborative learning.
- Dedicated more time to assisting students with how to write a paper on a scientific topic.
- Employed peer feedback on essays / projects.
- (G5E) Provide additional time with essential lab equipment / computer models.
- Determine students’ at taking exams at the college level (vs. writing papers only).
- Incorporate “active learning” activities into class participation (less lecturing).
- (G5E) Assign work that will be due at the end of each lab day to assess students’ understanding of principles of the lab.

Learning Objective 6. Comprehending Cross-Culturally: Language and Global

Studies. *One 300-level or higher foreign language course OR foreign language through the 200 (3rd semester) level together with one course in a related culture.*

The cross-cultural comprehension requirement at Sewanee helps to prepare students for full citizenship in our global society. Upon completion of this requirement, students have developed a range of communicative strategies in a foreign language, recognition of another cultural perspective, and the capacity for informed engagement with another culture. These skills lead students to understand a variety of texts: oral, visual, and written. Students practice writing, public speaking, conversing, critical thinking, and textual analysis. Success in a foreign language gives students knowledge that they can apply broadly to academic and non-academic settings. The study of at least a second language is and always has been a hallmark of liberal arts education, providing not just access to the thought and expression of a foreign mentality and culture, but also a useful way to reflect on one’s own mentality, language, and culture.

Outcomes:

G6 (language) SLO 1: Students can read and comprehend authentic text in the target language, with the help of a dictionary, and can express themselves (in the case of modern languages) in the target language.

Note: Competency in this SLO can be demonstrated by passing the intermediate (200-level) language course. Those students who place out of the 200-level course must demonstrate competency at the 300-level.

G6 (culture) SLO 1: Students can analyze and discuss texts related to a culture and recognize another cultural perspective.

Sample formal assessment tools:

- (language) Observed conversation with native speaker
- (culture) Analytical essay on current topic in target culture
- (language) Student presentation in target language
- (culture) Analytical essay on current topic in target culture
- Final exam (whole or in part)
- (culture) Students create a physical artifact associated with culture (and relevant to discipline), provide a written context about the prop, and offer brief presentation to class
- Short written assignments
- Periodic tests
- (language) Pre- and post-tests
- (language) Creative work such as a podcast or play in the target language
- (language) Sight translation exercises
- Self-reflection papers to assess own growth.

Sample uses of data for improvement:

- (language) Have students transcribe conversations into target language.
- Have students debate about an issue critical to target culture
- (language) Have students summarize debate in target language.
- Increase opportunities for class discussion
- (language) Use Zoom to enhance opportunities for speaking in target language.
- (language) Manipulating small groups to be sure that stronger speakers are with weaker.
- (language) Emphasize oral exams.
- “Flipping” classroom: have them watch recorded lecture before coming to class for discussion.
- (culture) Assign current events topics to emphasize immediacy of cultural studies.
- (language) Move toward shorter, “low stakes” translation exercises to boost confidence.
- (language) More one-on-one sessions, esp. for writing in the language.
- Allow for more peer-led learning.
- (language) Engage students in selecting reading texts for class.
- Allow / encourage rewrites of essays.
- Provided supplemental materials for course textbook with immediate cultural relevancy
- Emphasize discussions to encourage self-reflection and cross-cultural awareness
- (language) Used more authentic texts (e.g., newspapers) rather than textbook examples