General Education Assessment

Summary of Reports, 2020-21

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:
- Close reading exercise: give a lengthy description of the details of a passage and formulate a hypothesis about the passage (and the larger world in which it is embedded) based on these details, which become the evidence of the hypothesis.
- Close reading exercise requiring application of particular rhetorical and literary terms.
- Extended essay focusing on a close reading of a passage / poem.
- Close reading exercise: analyze a passage, giving instructor all their notes responding to a series of questions. They then produced a claim based on their analysis as well as a counterclaim.
- Have students produce a writing guide for incoming students that would define key aspects of an academic essay and then present examples from their own writing.
- Weekly or biweekly short responses focusing on interpretation (for quick feedback).
- Assign "note sets" to promote active reading, following a rubric of questions.
- Regular journal entries with guiding rubric.
- Class discussions focusing specifically on details of reading (close interpretation).
- Extended essay with secondary sources for context /reaction.

Sample uses of data for improvement:
- Scaffolded approach to essays: assign shorter, then longer, then longer.
- Spend more time on form-content distinction in different media.
- Standardize assignments in interdisciplinary courses to help students see connections (that one can take a similar critical approach to different modes of art).
- Explicitly coordinate learning objectives and assignments with a visiting artistic troupe.
- Shift to focusing largely on student writing—thesis, analysis, etc.—to an assessment of their close reading abilities.
- Move toward a portfolio model for collecting / assessing assignments.

- Utilize technology (e.g. Brightspace) to facilitate student workshops.
- Shift attention to revision / rewrite to better facilitate and evaluate growth as a writer.
- Incorporate current re-tellings of older / classical works of art for contrast and to highlight interpretation.
- Similarly, present multiple translations to students for interpretation.
- Modify reading list toward strengths of students.
- Modify approach to appeal to students who may not be as drawn toward literary analysis (e.g., students more interested in sciences).
- Use technology to draw out students who seem reserved in an in-person class.
- Employed non-traditional grading schemes for formational assessment, e.g. "N" for "not yet" or "S" for "strong" in responding to writing.
- Use a tutorial model (again taking advantage of Brightspace technology).
- Daily group evaluation of a sample, using Google docs for collective marking.

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:
- Regular quizzes.
- Critique of live or recorded artistic performance.
- Create actual works in the medium appropriate to the course content.
- Final exam.
- In-class exercises with immediate feedback
- Research and/or analysis paper.
- Final listening exercise with evaluation.
- Short weekly writing assignments.
- Review of piece of art (visual, aural, performance).

Sample uses of data for improvement:
- Develop assignments that work within a masked environment.
- Revise reading list, for currency, accessibility, and inclusivity.

- Modify grading rubric to address critical thinking.
- Provide more rapid feedback on assignments.
- Develop a "role-playing game" model for engaging students with the art.
- Take students to regional museums to experience more artistic works first-hand.
- Devote more time, attention to outlining and explaining the theories appropriate to the discipline; having student apply theories to the artistic work in question.
- Continually update artistic selections under consideration to reflect most current works, pieces, and forms.
- Develop a workshop/tutorial model to give students more practice.
- Meet with students individually to review performance.
- Additional collaboration with colleagues.

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:
- "Critique a critique"
- Extended essay.
- Multiple shorter essays / responses to readings.
- Brief daily writing assignments focusing on critical analysis.
- Reflective essay
- Oral exams
- Group research project
- "Infinite quiz" in Brightspace (keep taking it until satisfied)

Sample uses of data for improvement:
- Update readings to respond to audience (e.g., in a philosophy course required of Business minors, change readings to engage the significant audience).
- Spending more time on understanding the nature of argument and claims.

- Modified texts to be used for course.
- Expand concept of a "learning portfolio"; employ in different ways
- Modified written exercises to target certain skills.
- Provide more examples of effective analyses / model essays.
- Be more selective in reading assignments: fewer, but more focused.
- Provide more resources, tools to help students prepare for conversation/discussion in class
- Implemented a "freedom week" wherein students explored a topic of their own choosing, and produced an artifact of their choosing (formal paper or creative response, e.g.), followed by tutorial-style conversations.
- Update content, topics to reflect immediate situations (e.g., COVID-19)
- Adding daily assignments to offer more focused feedback relevant to the SLOs
- More frequent, lower stakes exercises
- More intentionally scaffolded assignments
- Engaged class in review of textbooks.
- Share focal points of class—key questions for exploration—with students before semester begins as a way of engaging them in the course from the start.

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 <u>OR</u> by using methods of analysis appropriate to social science.

Sample formal assessment tools:
- Extended formal research assignment, analyzing primary document(s)
- Analysis of primary document on final exam.
- Book review.
- Weekly journal responses
- Capstone project (with applied element)
- Final exam (sometimes giving writing prompts head of time, sometimes not).
- Multiple short essays.
- Identify and analyze primary source on the exam.
- Podcast / short video project.
- Reflection papers.

- Scholarly article review.

Sample uses of data for improvement:
- Reiterating theoretical approaches throughout each section of the course.
- Modify assignments to allow for more application of theories, rather than restatement.
- Developed active polling exercises: students participate in a set of exercises wherein collective action problems were acted out with prompts and polling.
- Modified assessment strategies in response to remote situation.
- Modify readings to include more current, timely sources, to highlight real-world application.
- Shape courses around particular themes to help students focus more effectively on the content and application (more of a case study approach).
- More attention to historical documents, greater range of documents.
- Modified major assignment, e.g., revising paper assignment to measure their ability to integrate a primary and secondary source analysis and to develop historical arguments.
- Changed timing of major assignments.
- Encourage up-to-date engagement by giving multiple quizzes.
- Assign "peer mentor" pairs, esp. pairing up first-year students with more experienced student.
- More contemporary readings.
- Engaged class in review of textbooks.
- Class activities focused on applying and analyzing concepts.
- Writing workshops for students.
- Retain some of the assignments, teaching strategies developed when fully remote.
- Encourage more effective and inclusive discussion by having students prepare formal questions ahead of class.
- Incorporating video clips (using technology) to help students grasp content.
- Clearer models of effective writing for the students.
- Adapt exam questions to require thesis-driven responses that require synthesis across material.
- Diversifying in-class activities and enhancing field trips to provide experiential engagement with the issues explored in our course readings.
- Incorporating flexibility into the syllabus to allow students to pursue aspects of the course topics that interest them most.
- Teach "how to have a discussion" to students.
- Incorporate film as a primary source.
- Modify class discussions to prompt involvement by all (smaller groups, all must take notes or share outcomes, etc.).
- Incorporate some kind of warm-up activity--be it a writing prompt, or brainstorming activity, to get the discussion going.
- Expand office hours and more strongly encourage attendance.
- Professional development (reading books on teaching, attending events at Center for Teaching).
- Use new technology to assist with assessment and feedback for students.
- Pre-record lectures to allow more class time for interaction.

- Oblige students to seek out different, unfamiliar primary sources.
- Develop assignment that prompts students to "follow the footnotes" to understand interaction of secondary sources.
- Develop extended historiography assignment through shorter tasks.
- Have students create annotated bibliographies.

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:
- Weekly quizzes
- Final exam with specific questions tied to specific SLOs
- Had students write computer programs, both independently and in pairs
- Homework assignments
- Periodic tests
- Peer evaluations of work
- Analysis of secondary source
- Regular short responses
- (G5Q) Application of mathematical principles to real scenarios
- (G5E) Laboratory experiments, with formal lab report
- "Discussion responses" in Brightspace
- Personal reflection pieces

- Virtual lab simulations
- Writing assignments addressing current topics in science
- Case studies.
- Formal essay following publication standards.

Sample uses of data for improvement:
- Provide additional instruction in the use and evaluation of online resources.
- Use/application of "EMRN" rubric as found at https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ717675 to measure student progress more effectively.
- Oblige students to write out explanations of mathematical problems, not just give a number.
- Be attentive to providing multiple assessment opportunities.
- Continue use of technology as developed during Covid teaching (online resources, use of Brightspace, etc.)
- Re-evaluate textbook and related software package
- Embed additional quantitative skill development.
- Introduced low stakes, simplified "intro lab" exercise to introduce necessary concepts and skills for completing lab exercises
- Teach students how to read scientific articles and interpret data
- Flip classroom: provide lectures and problems ahead of time, use class time to respond to questions and concerns.
- Requiring student presentations demonstrating the application of core chemistry principles introduced in the lecture and how it pertains to current issues such as climate change, new technologies, or concerns a student may be passionate about addressing.
- Introduce frequent, low stakes quizzes as a form of testing since studies have shown greater retention by students who have been tested more frequently
- Posing more challenging questions about the projects
- Limiting the amount of time and attempts the students have to complete the quizzes
- Have students create and record a presentation rather than deliver in person—focus then is on the content more than the form of presentation.
- Develop more "real world" scenarios, problems.
- Added a new assignment that asked the students to describe how three of the course modules contributed to a major theme in the class.
- Increased the number of tests to decrease the amount covered on any one test.
- Provide a more student-oriented approach to the incorporated case study. In particular, it will be useful to provide a setting in which most of the case study is completed in small groups. Students will aid each other in their understanding of the case study, including data collection and interpretation.
- Promote more inter-student discussion of the papers in the classroom.
- Incorporate more student self-evaluation.
- Develop early assessment tool to recognize gaps in students' knowledge of essential concepts or skills (e.g., ability to use Excel).

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:
- Final exam (whole or in part)
- (language) Creative work such as a podcast or play in the target language
- (language) Pre- and post-tests
- (language) Sight translation exercises
- (culture) Analytical essay on current topic in target culture
- Self-reflection papers to assess own growth.
- Short written assignments
- Periodic tests
- Regular quizzes
- (culture) Analytical essay on current topic in target culture
- (language) Students made presentation in target language, and then other students recorded their response to the presentation (in the target language).
- (language) Observed conversation with native speaker

Sample uses of data for improvement:
- (language) Added two additional essay assignments asking students to summarize and comment on the target language movies they chose to watch. They encouraged students to look for authentic language materials beyond their textbook.
- Have students transcribe conversations into target language.

- (culture) Because of the online teaching mode, I cut down readings and added discussion sessions. I am quite happy with the results—students were not overwhelmed by the required readings.
- Vary the literary genres covered.
- (culture) Focus on both primary and secondary sources.
- (culture) Assign current events topics to emphasize immediacy of cultural studies.
- (language) Increase opportunities for more oral practice.
- (language) Spend time on translation theory.
- Include class debates in target language to encourage both language practice and review of cultural content.
- (language) Have students summarize debate in target language.
- Content-based instruction including authentic media and articles centered on a real-world problem.
- (language) Focus on teaching small groups at a time.
- Update readings for currency, relevance, inclusion.
- Route students to the Center for Speaking and Listening for additional help with presentations.
- (language) Manipulating small groups to be sure that stronger speakers are with weaker.
- Create more opportunities for self-assessment.
- Writing workshops that specifically acknowledge and address online resources.
- Developed role-playing assignment to engage students in appreciation of culture (e.g. focusing on art: one is the artist, another the patron, art dealer, art curator).

Learning Objective 7. Encountering Perspectives: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. *One course.*
Following Sewanee's communal aspirations, captured in its motto *Ecce Quam Bonum*, this requirement examines the process of becoming a responsible member of one's community through the ability to engage with and learn from perspectives and experiences different from one's own. These perspectives may include intersecting experiences such as race, class, ethnicity, geographic origin, gender identities and expressions, sexual identity, political and religious orientation, and ability. Courses fulfilling this requirement will explore these perspectives while also considering the history of cultural, political, and economic struggle or privilege that have shaped how people define themselves or have been defined. These courses will promote greater self-knowledge as students examine multiple perspectives and reflect on the formation of identities.

Outcomes:
Understanding: Understand how individual experiences, histories of contestation, and cultural background inform perspective and identity
Self-reflection: Gain understanding of one's own perspective and the assumptions that come from that perspective
Communication: Communicate one's perspective and engage respectfully with the perspectives of others
Evaluation: Use evidence to reflect critically on competing perspectives
Empathy: Value diverse perspectives as essential for learning, growth, and development

This particular Learning Objective has a rubric associated with it (attached).

This was the first year that this requirement was part of General Education, and this particular Learning Objective had a rubric associated with it (attached).

As this was the first year for the objective, responses from faculty recognized the developing shape of the requirement:

- What advice do other professors with more history teaching DEI-type classes have for keeping the typical Sewanee student engaged on these challenging subjects? That is, somebody who comes from a well off, segregated, racially prejudiced background.
- What are effective assessment instruments for this competency, especially ones that will not lead a student to prejudge the questions, shift into a politically correct lingo, and simply provide answers we want to hear, not the ones the student actually believes.
- I question whether it makes sense now to have a 300-level history course count as a General Ed.
- I will likely adjust the readings somewhat, and continue to find ways to make students comfortable in speaking each day. Towards the end of the semester, there were ten students doing most of the talking.
- Were I to teach this course again, I'd do more to bring out the impact of the inequities of social class.

ASSESSMENT RUBIC FOR G7 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

ITEM	4 (HIGHEST)	3	2	1 (LOWEST)
Understanding: Understand how individual experiences, histories of contestation, and cultural background inform perspective and identity	Student demonstrates sophisticated understanding of the complex factors that have shaped groups' identity formation and perspectives	Student demonstrates adequate understanding of the complex factors that have shaped groups' identity formation and perspectives	Student demonstrates partial understanding of the complex factors that have shaped groups' identity formation and perspectives	Student demonstrates superficial or no understanding of the complex factors that have shaped groups' identity formation and perspectives
Self-reflection: Gain understanding of one's own perspective and the assumptions that come from that perspective	Student articulates detailed insights about core beliefs from their own perspective and the assumptions that shape these core beliefs	Student articulates some details about core beliefs from their own perspective and the assumptions that shape these core beliefs	Student articulates some core beliefs from their own perspective some of the assumptions that shape the core beliefs	Student articulates either some core beliefs from their own perspective or some of the assumptions that shape the core beliefs but not both
Communication: Communicate one's perspective and engage respectfully with the perspectives of others	Student states a position based on their perspective and engages with another person's or group's perspective, laying bare the assumptions, logic, and implications of both perspectives	Student states a position based on their perspective and engages with another person's or group's perspective, but inadequately addresses the assumptions, logic, and implications of both perspectives	Student states a position based on their perspective and engages with some elements of another person's or group's perspective but displays little understanding of the assumptions, logic, and implications of either perspective	Student states a position based on their perspective but cannot accurately egage with another person's or group's perspective, and shows little awareness of the implications
Evaluation: Use evidence to reflect critically on competing perspectives	Student can independently apply varying perspectives to the study of a subject and accurately and fully reflects on the perspectives based on the study of the subject	Student can independently apply varying perspectives to the study of a subject but has trouble reflecting on the perspectives based on the study of the subject	Student can apply varying perspectives to the study of a subject but does not understand how to analyze perspectives based on the study of the subject	Student needs help applying varying perspectives to the study of a subject matter and cannot draw inferences from the study
Empathy: Value diverse perspectives as essential for learning, growth, and development	Student appreciates the value of varying perspectives and articulates how the perspectives expand and deepen understanding of a particular subject	Student recognizes the varying perspectives and articulates some ways that the perspectives expand and deepen understanding of a particular subject	Student identifies some components of varying perspectives and articulates some ways that the perspectives address a particular subject	Student describes another person's or group's perspective but primarily does so through their own perspective

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