

## 2016-2017 Yearly Assessment Report - College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)

### 1. Identifying Information

**Name of Program:** Department of English

**Type of Program (Major, Minor, Graduate Program, Non-Degree Granting):**

Major with tracks in literature and writing

**College of Arts and Sciences Division (Arts, Humanities, Sciences, or Social Sciences):** Arts

**Name/Title/Email Address of Submitter:** Dean Rader/Professor/rader@usfca.edu

### 2. Mission Statement:

The official mission of the Department of English states:

The study of literature and writing has long stood at the center of humanistic education. In that tradition, the department of English educates students in the rich intellectual and creative values embodied in literary works. Because literature by its very nature expresses the complex intellectual, spiritual, moral, social and psychological life of human cultures, its study is integral to the Jesuit mission of valuing “learning as a humanizing, social activity.” Our inclusive curriculum fully supports “a diverse, socially responsible learning community of high quality scholarship and academic rigor sustained by a faith that does justice.

This mission statement was in place before our last APR in 2008-09 and has not been revised since. However, more recently, we created the following statement for our department’s website:

The Department of English at the University of San Francisco offers both major and minor programs with a literature or writing concentration. Central to these programs is the belief that the close study of literature offers great pleasure, intellectual challenge and versatile training for a variety of careers. Our professors help students develop a greater understanding of the power of language and thought, the rich diversity of literary traditions and the cultural contexts of literary production. Students will mature as readers, thinkers and writers, be able to engage in analysis and discussion and write with acuity and critical self-awareness.

**Has this statement been revised in the last few years?**

Only for the Website

#### **4. Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)**

Since our last Program Review in 2008, the department has substantially revised the Program Learning Outcomes (PLO). In 2013 the department streamlined them from four goals and seven outcomes, to five outcomes:

1. Students will demonstrate in writing and speech the ability to develop clear and coherent interpretive essays and original creative writing; they can articulate in writing and discussion/workshop their responses to literary and/or peer texts.
2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of and sensitivity to pluralism in response to texts that focus on diversity and social justice issues, i.e. writings that underscore the complexity of race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexual orientation.
3. Students will learn to read texts from multiple perspectives: e.g. learn differentiated readings via various contemporary critical theories.
4. Students will identify characteristics of different literary genres: novel, short fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama.
5. Students will identify differences between various historical periods and literary movements.

#### **5. Brief Summary of Most Recent Assessment Plan**

In 2016 the department developed two Curricular Maps. One identifies how our Program Learning Outcomes meet the university's Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO) The other lists all the courses within the major and identifies which PLOs the courses meet. Each class is classified as either Introductory (I), Developing (D), or Mastery (M), specifying the level of skill students are expected to demonstrate for each PLO. These curricular maps were also submitted, along with our assessment report, to the Faculty Director of Curriculum Development for the Humanities, and the Associate Dean for Academic Effectiveness, who in turn offered suggestions for revision. Now that we have received some helpful direction in response to our curricular maps and assessment reports, that feedback will facilitate the department's ability to evaluate and determine how our courses can better meet and contribute to our Program Learning Outcomes.

While we feel pretty strongly that our graduates are meeting our Program Learning Outcomes, we have not done a particularly good job of demonstrating that (and how) they are being met. One of the obstacles impeding this measurement has been the consistent turnover of senior faculty. For example, Eileen Fung was our major assessment specialist. When she went to the Dean's office, those duties were rotated among faculty from year to year based on who was available. Add to that the fact that in the last seven years, no one has been chair more than two consecutive years.

Additionally, some of our current PLOs may be difficult to measure and may need to be revisited. Our sample sizes for the most recent assessments have been small and the rubrics used have not been normed for validity and reliability, so it is difficult to arrive at any clear conclusions about the success of our Program Learning Outcomes.

That being said, the department is in the process of making concrete changes that should facilitate our ability to better meet our Program Learning Outcomes. Annual assessments and feedback from the Faculty Director of Curriculum Development for the Humanities, and the

Associate Dean for Academic Effectiveness should give us the means for developing measurable outcomes, processes to assess student learning for each outcome, and means for evaluating the results of our assessments. We also need to develop a process for informing faculty of the results of our assessments, as well as clearly articulating to students their progress toward outcomes.

Our most recent assessment plan focused on learning outcome 1: students will demonstrate a working knowledge of the fundamentals of artistic composition and craft. Students can apply craft principles to formal elements (e.g., plot, characterization, exposition, poetic line, imagery) to determine appropriate craft strategies as they compose and revise stories, chapters, essays, or poems that possess literal coherence and generate figurative (implicit) meaning. Toward this goal, faculty thesis readers completed a thesis rubric for all MFA theses read in a given academic year, in order to assess program-wide success in achieving learning outcomes. (A thesis rubric is included at the end of this document.)

## **6. Academic Program Review**

### **Date of most recent Academic Program Review's External Reviewer Visit:**

April 25-27, 2017

### **Date of most recent Action Plan Meeting:**

We are slated to meet October 9, 2017.

## **7. Methods**

### **What did you do with regard to assessment of your program/department in 2016-2017?**

Because we wanted to measure a different PLO this year, and because the capstone projects for students in the literature track and students in the writing track are so different, we decided to look at essays in senior-level classes in both the literature and writing track—Prof. Samira Abdur-Rahman's ENGL 410 (Special Topics in Literature: Black Writers and the City) and Dean Rader's ENGL 460 (Poetry Workshop).

### **What were your questions?**

How are students addressing issues of diversity and social justice in their essays and critical writing?

### **How are these questions related to your most recent Academic Program Review and/or Action Plan**

These questions are related to our most recent Academic Program Review in terms of assessing how well students are meeting the micro requirements of a PLO and the macro requirements of the mission of the Department.

### **What PLOs are these questions related to?**

*PLO #2: Students will demonstrate knowledge of and sensitivity to pluralism in response to texts that focus on diversity and social justice issues, i.e. writings that underscore the complexity of race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexual orientation.*

**What direct (most important) and/or indirect methods did you employ?**

Term Papers & Book Reviews

**8. Results**

**What were the direct data results?**

Student work was observed to be in the top one or two areas of accomplishment within each rubric.

**What surprised you?**

Things seem to be working pretty well, but there are some ways to improve integration of theory and form with content.

**What aligned with your expectations?**

Issues of diversity are foregrounded in our curriculum; they come up in almost every class the students take.

**What do you understand these results to mean?**

That senior English majors and minors have a solid foundational curriculum that involves student support and provides students with consistent guidance.

**What are the implications of the data?**

They help us consider how we might help all students reach the top areas of accomplishment as outlined in the rubric.

**9. Closing the Loop**

**What might you do as a result of these assessment results? What curricular or programmatic changes might you implement?**

These assessment results might help us think about how we can create a curriculum that addresses issues of justice and diversity from the freshman year to the senior seminar. It also helped us in these ways.

**a. Designed measurement tools more aptly suited for the task**

We are not very intentional or deliberate about how we assess student work. We are going to try to set up systems for this *before* the semester begins.

**b. Modified rubric**

We have been using mostly proscribed rubrics, but we think we can come up with some more suited to our program and outcomes

**Have you or will you submit any course or program change proposals as a result of these results?**

Not *because* of these results; our curriculum needs an overhaul for other reasons.

## PLO #2 – English Department Assessment Rubric

Students will demonstrate knowledge of and sensitivity to pluralism in response to texts that focus on diversity and social justice issues, i.e. writings that underscore the complexity of race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexual orientation.

### **ENGLISH 450: POETRY WORKSHOP**

Students in this class had to write a professional book review on one of the following books: Solmaz Sharif, *LOOK*; Terrance Hayes, *Lighthouse*; Ada Limón, *Pretty Dead Things*. Sharif identifies as Arab American; Hayes as African American; Limón as Chicana. Advanced poetry students were asked to write reviews of these books paying attention to how race, aesthetics, and the ability of poetry to address social and political issues is manifest in the poems. There were 20 students in the class; 18 were graduating senior English majors; one was an English writing minor; another was a literature emphasis major.

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b># In Category</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Sophisticated	The essay has a sophisticated grasp of how issues of diversity and social justice function within a literary text as both form and content	15	I think this is more a function of the content of our classes across the curriculum than anything the professor (me) is doing, but our students are aware of how race, diversity, and writing as a form of justice works.
<b>Acceptable</b>	Essay has a grasp of the role of diversity in aesthetic and literary production but is not integrated fully into the essay	4	These students all “get” diversity but were not quite able to articulate how race and/or gender were part of the poet’s art.
<b>Developing Competence</b>	Essay addresses diversity but only cursorily or by way of content rather than as a means of inquiry	1	This student chose to focus almost <i>entirely</i> on poetic form but could have been smarter about how form and content merge.
<b>Inadequate</b>	Essay does not address diversity in any meaningful way	0	This was an impressive finding. No one ignored race in their reviews.

## **ENGLISH 410: BLACK WRITERS AND THE CITY:**

Students in the class had to write a 12-15 page final research paper on one of the following authors and novels: Dionne Brand (*What we All Long For*), Ta-Nehisi Coates (*The Beautiful Struggle*) Teju Cole (*Open City*), John Edgar Wideman (*Philadelphia Fire*) and Jacquelyn Woodson (*Another Brooklyn*).

Students were asked to address how the novel attends to the larger theme of race and place studied during the course of the semester. Students were asked to integrate scholarship in literary geography, black studies and literary theory to consider how cities are comprised of various sites of contact and conflict. Students were also asked to describe how ethnicity, gender, class and migration complicated how their primary source imagined and represented both blackness and the city. There were 10 students in the class; four were graduating seniors, one was a sophomore; there were 5 juniors of which 2 were in the writing concentration. One student received an incomplete due to a medical leave. Another student failed to submit final work. The rubric below represents the eight papers submitted.

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b># in Category</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Sophisticated</b>	The essay has a sophisticated grasp of how issues of diversity and social justice function within a literary text as both form and content	<b>3</b>	Essays in this category integrated concepts of pluralism and diversity by thinking through the complicated means by which race becomes an unstable category. These students used issues of migration, age and sexuality to demonstrate their competency in both assessing and integrating primary and secondary sources.
<b>Acceptable</b>	Essay has a grasp of the role of diversity in aesthetic and literary production but is not integrated fully into the essay	<b>3</b>	The strength of these essays were in their ability to note themes of diversity and pluralism in their primary source. They struggled to demonstrate why these themes mattered and to make more meaningful connections to their secondary and theoretical sources.
<b>Developing Competence</b>	Essay addresses diversity but only cursorily or by way of content rather than as a means of inquiry	<b>2</b>	These essays lacked levels of sophistication that emerge from more nuanced engagement with secondary sources. These papers gestured towards the learning outcome by

			acknowledging the role of pluralism and diversity, but did not think through the deeper implications of both.
<b>Inadequate</b>	Essay does not address diversity in any meaningful way	<b>0</b>	

Program Learning Outcomes X Courses	PLO1	PLO2
Courses or Program Requirement	1. Students will demonstrate in writing and speech the ability to develop clear and coherent interpretive essays and original creative writing; they can articulate in writing and discussion/workshop their responses to literary and/or peer texts.	2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of and sensitivity to pluralism in response to texts that focus on diversity and social justice issues, i.e. writings that underscore the complexity of race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexual orientation.
English 192 -- Introduction to Literary Study	I	
Minority Literature requirement	D	D
English 310 -- Literature 1 (1100-1700)	D	D
English 320 -- Literature 2 (1700-1900)	D	D
English 330 -- Literature 3 (1900-present)	D	D
English 340 -- Shakespeare	D	D
Literature Track requirements:		
English 399 -- Critical Analysis	D/M	



English 410 -- Special Topics in Literature & Film D

English 490 -- Senior Seminar in Literature M

### Writing Track requirements:

English 360 -- Intro to Writing Nonfiction I

English 361 -- Intro to Writing Fiction I

English 362 -- Intro to Writing Poetry I

English 364 -- Intro to Writing Oral History I

English 400 -- Special Topics in Writing D

English 450 -- Fiction Workshop D/M

English 460 -- Poetry Workshop D/M

English 470 -- Nonfiction Workshop D/M

English 499 -- Senior Seminar in Writing M

### Electives:

English 198 -- Ignatian Literary Magazine D

English 321 -- History of the English Language D

English 480 -- Internship in Writing and Lit. D

PLO3	PLO4	PLO5
3. Students will learn to read texts from multiple perspectives: e.g. learn differentiated readings via various contemporary critical theories.	4. Students will identify characteristics of different literary genres: novel, short fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama.	5. Students will identify differences between various historical periods and literary movements.
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PLO1

Institutional Learning Outcomes X Program Learning Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate in writing and speech the ability to develop clear and coherent interpretive essays and original creative writing; they can articulated in writing and discussion/workshop their responses to literary and/or peer texts.

Institutional Learning Outcomes

1. Students reflect on and analyze their attitudes, beliefs, values, and assumptions about diverse communities and cultures and contribute to the common good.

2. Students explain and apply disciplinary concepts, practices, and ethics of their chosen academic discipline in diverse communities. X

3. Students construct, interpret, analyze, and evaluate information and ideas derived from a multitude of sources. X

4. Students communicate effectively in written and oral forms to interact within their personal and professional communities. X

5. Students use technology to access and communicate information in their personal and professional lives. X

6. Students use multiple methods of inquiry and research processes to answer questions and solve problems.

X

7. Students describe, analyze, and evaluate global interconnectedness in social, economic, environmental and political systems that shape diverse groups within the San Francisco Bay Area and the world.

Key:

I = Introductory

D = Developing

M = Mastery

PLO2	PLO3	PLO4
<p>2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of and sensitivity to pluralism in response to texts that focus on diversity and social justice issues, i.e. writings that underscore the complexity of race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexual orientation.</p>	<p>3. Students will learn to read texts from multiple perspectives: e.g. learn differentiated readings via various contemporary critical theories.</p>	<p>4. Students will identify characteristics of different literary genres: novel, short fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama.</p>
X	X	



X

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## PLO5

5. Students will identify differences between various historical periods and literary movements.

X

X

X