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FROM: Rich Carr, Carolyn Stice, Jennifer Tilbury

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RE: Outcomes Assessment for ENGL 200X, 2014-15

English 200X—World Literature-- is a Core course, part of the “Perspectives on the Human Condition” category. Students must complete six courses/18 credits in this area. Although they can substitute two semesters of a foreign language for six credits of the “Perspectives” requirement (three semesters of ASL)—and thus opt out of 200X, the majority of degree-pursuing students at UAF will complete ENGL 200X. The course can also be offered by faculty from the Foreign Languages Department as FL 200X (the current practice is that a member of that department will deliver a 200X every other summer). Tenured, tenure-track, term, and adjunct faculty may teach the course; graduate teaching assistants do not. The English Department offers six sections of the course per term. The Community and Technical College (CTC) offers one, and eLearning has two online sections available each semester. Summer Sessions & Lifelong Learning and eLearning offer two sections each during Summer Semester.

The following report assesses instructional effectiveness of English 200X during the past two school years (2013-14, 2015-16). Students enrolled in 200X in Spring 2014 and Spring 2015 were given a questionnaire (See attachment) at the start and at the end of the semester; the questions were the same in both cases for #1-6. Question #7 differed in each case: ‘What do you hope to learn from the course?’ [start] vs. “How did your perception of world literature change during this semester? What did you learn in this course? What could make this course even better?” [end]. Completed questionnaires from these courses served as the basis for the assessment process.

The questions were developed from the ‘Guidelines for English 200X: World Literature,’ adopted once the course became part of the Core. The Guidelines are given below:

1. Objectives

- a) To introduce students to the diversity of oral and written literature from around the world;
- b) To develop historical and cultural awareness, aesthetic appreciation, and analytical thinking, via close study of literature;
- c) To encourage global awareness by comparing literatures from different cultures, continents, and eras;
- d) To introduce a variety of approaches to myth, poetry, narrative, stories, novels, nonfiction, and drama.

2. Content: This course is a broad-based literature course covering a wide range of texts and representing several cultures and centuries. An outline of course content is as follows:

a) *Introduction to the role of literature*—This introduction will place literature in context, as a part of the humanities, as an art form, and as a part of culture and society.

b) *Cross-cultural perspectives*—Literature from several cultures will be studied, and students will make connections and distinctions based on cultural concepts. Each course will include non-Western and/or American minority works.

c) *Cross-gender perspectives*—Works of literature created by both men and women will be studied.

d) *Diversity of genres*—Students will learn about several genres and about adaptations and evolution within and among genres. Each course will consider narrative (both oral and written), poetry, and drama, in a variety of forms, including longer forms, such as the novel or full-length plays, and briefer forms, such as short stories, prose poems, or lyric poems. Traditional sources, such as myths, songs, or religious texts, and more modern works will be studied.

The committee selected four sets of completed questionnaires: two from Spring 2014 (a regular face-to-face course and the Honors section), and two from Spring 2015 (a regular F2F version and an online section). The numbers of completed questionnaires are as follows:

Spring 2014 F2F	27 [start of term]	14 [end of term]
Spring 2014 Honors	12	12
Spring 2015 F2F	22	20
Spring 2015 Online	17	14

The committee thus used responses from 78 completed pre-course forms and 60 completed post-course forms.

FINDINGS

N.B. The results below indicate a contrast between ‘literary’ and ‘popular literature.’ Although the division between the two can never be precise, the report uses the terms to distinguish those works considered universally of high quality (e.g. Shakespeare, Moliere, Toni Morrison) and not unlikely to claim a space on a literature syllabus from works without literary pretensions or whose pretensions are secondary to their skill at fulfilling generic conventions (e.g. detective novels, sci fi/fantasy, romance).

WORLD LITERATURE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE—Start of Term

1. Name a work written by a woman author

Spring ’14 (27 respondents) 7 literary writers, 20 popular fiction (12 *Harry Potter*)—all American or British.

Spring ’15 (22 respondents) 11 literary writers, 11 popular fiction (Anne Rice, *Harry Potter*, *Hunger Games*).

Spring ’15 online (17 respondents) 5 literary writers, 12 popular—all American or British.

Spring ’14 Honors (12 respondents) 11 literary (9 *Beloved*), 1 popular.

2. Name a work written by an author from Europe and the United States

Spring '14 18/27 named literary works/authors; 2 of these were European.

Spring '15 mixed responses—popular and classic/literary. Titles include *Siddhartha*, *The Crucible*, *Romeo and Juliet*.

Spring '15 Online 2/25 nonfiction works; all others novels, 1 European title.

Spring '14 Honors all literary works—British or American.

3. Name a work written by an author who is not from a European country or the United States, or by an author representing an American minority.

Spring '14 12/27 no responses; 3 identified works by American minorities.

Spring '15 8/22 no responses; authors mentioned include Borges and Garcia Marquez.

Spring '15 Online 5/17 no responses; 3 identified works by American minorities. Titles include *The Art of War* and *Kite Runner*.

Spring '14 Honors 2/12 no responses, 1 identified work by Alaska Native, 3 by African writers.

4. Give an example of three of the following literary genres: a) epic, b) novel, c) poem, d) drama or film, e) short story, f) nonfiction narrative

The committee discussed the responses to this question but opted to overlook it as a contribution to the assessment. Respondents from all four sections could name three; only in rare cases did anyone identify a short story or a nonfiction narrative. We surmise that respondents used the first four categories and then moved to question 5.

5. Name the titles of two works of literature that deal with the same issue or theme. Describe the issue or theme that they both address.

Spring '14 11/27 no responses; 11 responses named literary works.

Spring '15 5/22 no responses; several identified 'dystopian' as the uniting theme; several did not identify theme.

Spring '15 Online 2/17 no responses; 4 chose Holocaust texts.

Spring '14 Honors 3/12 no responses.

All responses short—one phrase or one sentence.

6. Give three good reasons for reading literature. Of the three, which do you think is most important? Why? Write a paragraph explaining your opinion.

Spring '14 The three most repeated reasons were 1) culture, 2) [gain] a different perspective, and 3) entertainment.

Spring '15 The three most repeated reasons were 1) culture, 2) gain a different perspective, and 3) entertainment. A few wrote a full paragraph; most gave a list with a short explanation.

Spring '15 Online The four most repeated reasons were 1) pleasure, 2) culture, 3) new ideas & knowledge, and 4) [become] a better reader and writer. Most wrote a paragraph response but generally without nuances.

Spring '14 Honors The three most repeated reasons were 1) fun, 2) culture, and 3) improvement in writing. All responses were brief.

7. **What do you hope to learn from this course?**

Spring '14 All (27) respondents addressed questions seriously. Respondents expressed hope that they would find the course useful and enjoyable.

Spring '15 The majority took the question seriously. Although most gave general responses, one expressed hope to learn more about environmental issues, and another wanted to learn appreciation for poetry.

Spring '15 Online 3/17 were not sure of purpose of ENGL 200X; 1 gave no response. Among respondents, one 'wanted to read good books'; another noted 200X was the only class he/she would take dealing with literature.

Spring '14 Honors 3/12 no response or joking response. Among others several expressed interest in reading literature outside of Great Britain, Europe, and the United States.

QUESTIONNAIRE—End of Term

1. **Name a work written by a woman author.**

Spring '14 All (14) respondents save one named one of three literary authors (Munro, Morrison, Atwood). The exception identified one of the Harry Potter books.

Spring '15 Responses were varied. Two chose Harry Potter; the others (18 out of 20) featured a diverse range of writers (Morrison, Ayn Rand, Allende).

Spring '15 Online Two (out of 14) chose popular writers/works (*Outlander*, Harry Potter; the others selected appropriate literary works/authors.

Spring '14 Honors All (12) selected literary texts by women writers: *Beloved*, *July's People*, *Atlas Shrugged*.

2. **Name a work written by an author from Europe or the United States**

Spring '14 All (14) identified serious literary works, though several were from England/Britain (*Beowulf*). Three selected texts from continental Europe (*View with a Grain of Sand*, *Father Goriot*).

Spring '15 All (20) selected literary works; several chose texts from the ancient world (works by Euripides & Ovid, *Gilgamesh*).

Spring '15 Online The group (14) identified a variety of literary titles; three were repeats from the start-of-term questionnaire.

Spring '14 Honors Respondents (12) named works identified on start-of-term instrument.

3. Name a work written by an author who is not from a European country or the United States or by an author representing an American minority

Spring '14 All (14) gave appropriate answers. Texts from Africa, Asia, and Latin America were named as well as texts by American minority writers (Morrison, Alexie).

Spring '15 Two (of 20) did not respond. Several respondents chose obscure texts without giving author's name.

Spring '15 Online All (14) answered with appropriate literary titles; a few titles were repeated from the pre-semester questionnaire.

Spring '14 Honors All (12) named appropriate literary texts.

4. Give an example each for three of the following literary genres: a) epic, b) novel, c) poem, d) drama or film, e) short story, f) non-fiction narrative

Please see remarks in start-of-term section regarding this question. The committee decided not to work with this question and will revise or remove it before further assessments.

5. Name the titles of two works of literature that deal with the same issue or theme. Describe the issue or theme they address.

Spring '14 One gave no response; two gave titles without a theme. Eleven delivered appropriate responses to question; it is evident that the titles chosen were from the course syllabus.

Spring '15 One gave no response; the bulk (19) identified short stories with similar themes (The course syllabus stressed short fiction).

Spring '15 Online One gave no response; 2 wrote full paragraph responses. Seven wrote one-sentence answers 13 respondents chose a wide representation of world lit titles (ancient, modern; sacred). A few made complex comparisons between works.

Spring '14 Honors All (12) responded with one sentence—titles only without specific theme(s) presented.

6. Give three good reasons for reading literature. Of the three, which do you think is most important? Why? Write a paragraph explaining your opinion.

Spring '14 Responses showed more sophistication in phrasing but most of the responses stressed ideas found in the start-of-term exercise. The two most commonly expressed reasons were (1) exposure to alternate cultures and viewpoints and (2) entertainment, especially being thrilled or shocked. Individual responses ranged from seeing the commonality of the human experience to stretching the intellect to promoting the imagination (a sampling only).

Spring '15 Responses were a bit longer than in the earlier set. Three most common reasons were 1) entertainment, 2) emphasis on what can be learned from history, and 3) expanded knowledge of writing styles.

Spring '15 Online Most respondents wrote several sentences. The ideas were similar to the pre-term results, but the language changed; writers showed more confidence in addressing the questions.

A substantial portion of responses identified history as a valuable part of the world literature experience.

Spring '14 Honors Responses seemed rushed; participants did not seem to take exercise seriously. Culture, new things, greater awareness—these were the chief reasons given for reading literature.

7. How did your perception of world literature change during the semester? What did you learn? What could make this course even better?

Responses to the final question do not fit into categories. For those taking the exercise seriously (i.e. those using more than one word or a two- or three-word phrase in answer), these questions generated a wide range of individual responses. Some responded personally ('I loved the course,' 'Change the teacher,' 'I became more enthusiastic about world literature despite the difficulty. We read thoroughly') while others wrote in more general terms ('I learned a greater appreciation for literature from people of different backgrounds,' 'I gained a global perspective and the insight to go on with that perspective,' 'Not just Americans can write great literature'). In each section several reported that their 'perception' did not change, but all writers acknowledged that they had learned something or some things—about themselves as readers, about the possibilities of literature awaiting them, about the richness of world experience found in their assigned texts.

Spring '14 Responses were more specific about the concept of world literature. Most showed enthusiasm for particular aspects of the course—e.g. reading outside comfort zone, exposure to art of Asia and Africa.

Spring '15 Responses exuded a greater excitement about literature than did the start-of-term answers. Most frequently repeated statements commended the diversity of the literature and noted student ability to make connections with people from other cultures.

Spring '15 Online Six respondents stated that their perception of world literature had changed; four commented they enjoyed learning about other religions.

Spring '14 Honors Class members gave short answers only—at most one sentence and generally less.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

English 200X—World Literature—is the only Core class devoted to literature. The objectives as stated in the "Guidelines for English 200X" stress introducing students "to the diversity of oral and written literature," developing "historical and cultural awareness," and encouraging "global awareness." The largely enthusiastic tenor of the answers to the final question and the specific aspects of the course cited suggest that instructors have met these objectives and students are responding appropriately and affirmatively. A few questions on the start-of-term questionnaire brought familiar popular texts and writers in response--#1 and #2—or no response -- #3. Certain questions at the start brought brief or general answers (#5, #6). This situation changed in the end-of-term sets. Literary titles and authors replaced the popular; answers to the later question expanded and demonstrated fuller engagement with the questions. The final response to #7 displayed a rich range of engaged responses showing appreciation for the world literature experience.

The committee recommends that the assessment instrument—i.e. the questionnaire—be revised. One member suggested eliminating the United States from question #2 (which asks for work by author from Europe or the US); making two questions out of #3, one on non-western works and one on minority American texts; and changing question 7 in the end-of-term exercise to read “How did your understanding of world literature change during this semester?” Another committee member remarked that a couple of the instructors had changed the format of the questionnaires to allow more space on the page for responses; these two (Spring ’15 F2F and Spring ’15 Online) sections produced lengthier and generally more engaged responses to the questions. This committee member also asked about the possibility of moving these assessment instruments online. All agree that question #4 must be revised or eliminated; the group needs to decide what need the question is intended to address. The committee will meet again this fall to revise the questions before assessing ENGL 200X in Spring 2016.