Assessing Literary Coverage and Analysis in Large Undergraduate Courses

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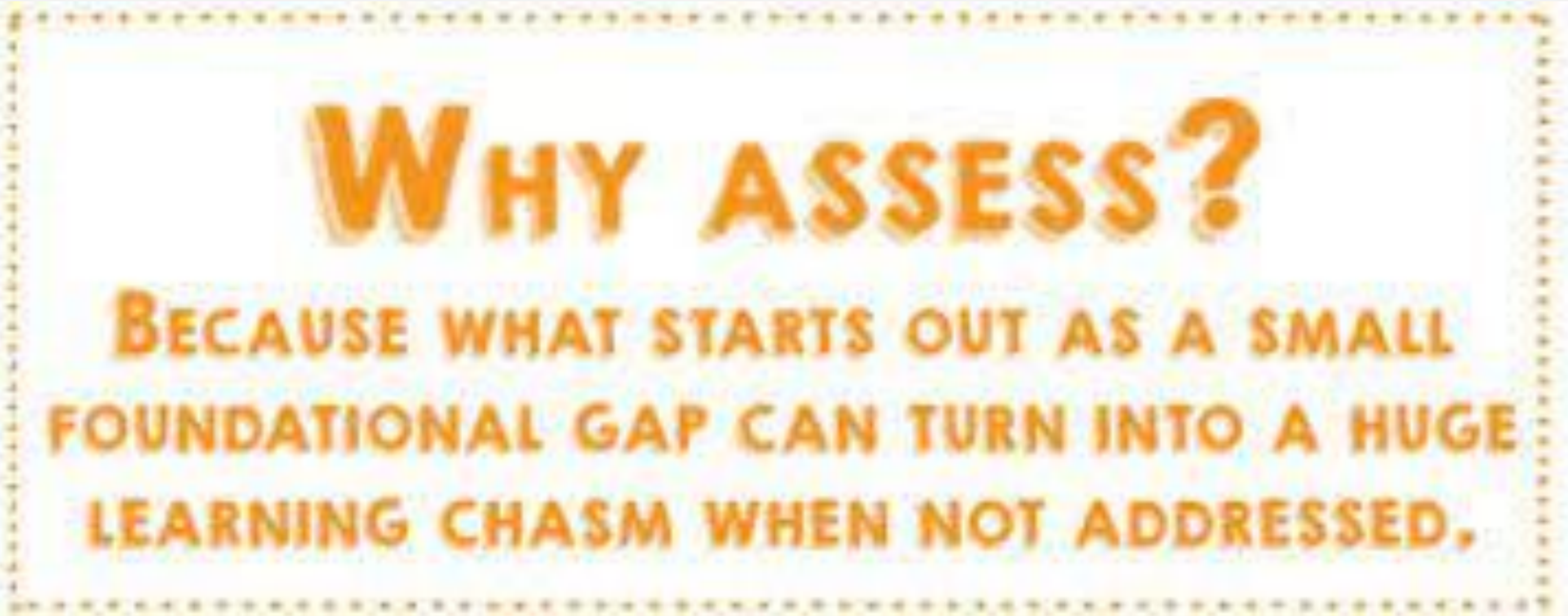
CAL STATE LA DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

ASSESSING LITERARY COVERAGE & ANALYSIS IN LARGE UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

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ENGL 3000-LEVEL READINGS COURSES

- ENGL 3100-ENGL 3700 (6 total, program requirements)
- Designed for breadth, not depth (Coverage)
- Not assessed since semester conversion



LITERARY (TEXTUAL) COVERAGE

Criteria of Coverage

- # of authors
- # of texts/genres
- # of literary periods

For Literary/Textual Coverage in the 3000-level Readings courses, we collected syllabi and assessed the following:

3 sections of ENGL 3100
1 section of ENGL 3200
4 sections of ENGL 3300
2 sections of ENGL 3400
5 sections of ENGL 3600
3 sections of ENGL 3700

FINDINGS

The average for all Readings courses was 2.5, which suggests that, overall, there is adequate coverage of literature at the 3000 level.

However, there were a few sections that need improvement in the # of authors and texts covered.

Most 3100 instructors use a textbook.

Course	Overall Ratings
ENGL 3100	2
ENGL 3100	2
ENGL 3100	2
ENGL 3200	2.5
ENGL 3300	3
ENGL 3300	3
ENGL 3300	3
ENGL 3300	3
ENGL 3400	2.5
ENGL 3400	2.5
ENGL 3600	2.5
ENGL 3600	3
ENGL 3600	3
ENGL 3600	2.5
ENGL 3600	3
ENGL 3700	1
ENGL 3700	2

“CLOSING THE LOOP”

To ensure consistency for our students, we suggest the following ***Guidelines for Readings Courses:***

- We suggest a minimum of 12 different texts should be covered in ENGL 3200-3700.
- All sections of ENGL 3100 could use more historical overview of language.
- We suggest a minimum of 15 authors for Readings courses since they are designed for breadth, not depth.
- In the two sections of ENGL 3400, one stops at 1818 and the other goes to 1950. Regular instructors of ENGL 3400 may want to establish a guideline for the time period to cover to ensure consistency for students.

LITERARY ANALYSIS

Rubric for Evaluating English Majors' Textual Analysis Skills

Textual Analysis is the ability to find, comprehend, interpret, and evaluate the potential meanings of a text based on a clear understanding of textual conventions and rhetorical devices employed by authors.

	Highly Proficient/Outstanding (5)	Capstone Proficient/Very Good (4)	Adequate/Proficient (3)	Not Yet Proficient/Developing (2)	Not Proficient/Unacceptable (1)
Ability to read beyond surface level	Demonstrates **an outstanding** engagement with the text that goes beyond literal meaning. This may include taking risks to offer new interpretations of a text or demonstrating how the interpretation of the text engages in broader discourse. The writer makes inferences and demonstrates figurative or multiple interpretations of text with careful attention to language/word choices.	Demonstrates **a very good** engagement with the text that goes beyond literal meaning. This may include offering figurative interpretations that are embedded within broader discourse and/or links to the writer's own knowledge or understanding of the text.	Demonstrates **an adequate** engagement with the text that goes beyond literal meaning but is not as thorough or innovative as those offered in Categories 4 & 5. New or risky interpretations may be offered but not supported by scholarly interpretations or embedded in broader discourse.	Demonstrates **a poor** engagement with the text by only offering interpretations of the literal meaning or minimal insights into potential figurative interpretations of the text. Little, if any, attempt is made to interpret the text in reference to broader discourse or contexts. May offer more plot summary than analysis.	Demonstrates **no** engagement with the text that goes beyond literal meaning. May offer more plot summary than analysis.
Understanding textual devices	Demonstrates **an outstanding** understanding of textual devices appropriate for the field/sub-discipline. Attention is paid to both form and content of the text and there is an explanation of how both inform the interpretation. Addresses in a compelling way the how and why texts are written in specific ways.	Demonstrates **a very good** understanding of textual devices appropriate for the field/sub-discipline. Attention is paid to both form and content of the text and some explanation is provided as to how both inform the interpretation but not to the extent as those in Category 5.	Demonstrates **an adequate** understanding of textual devices appropriate for the field/sub-discipline. Some attention is paid to both form and content and some explanation is given as to how both contribute to the interpretation of readers' engagement with the text, but this is neither extensive nor particularly original.	Demonstrates **a poor** understanding of textual devices appropriate for the field/sub-discipline. Little attention is paid to the form and content or textual devices used to influence interpretation of the text. Where attempted, there may be a lack of appropriate explanation of how the form and content function.	Demonstrates **no** understanding of textual devices appropriate for the field/sub-discipline.
Using direct evidence	Demonstrates **an outstanding** ability to use direct, appropriate evidence in service of a larger argument and explains how the evidence contributes to the overall interpretation of the text.	Demonstrates **a very good** ability to use direct, appropriate evidence in service of a larger argument, but may not be to the extent of Category 5 or may not always link to the overall interpretation of the text.	Demonstrates **an adequate** ability to use direct evidence in service of a larger argument. Includes direct quotations and/or paraphrases to support an interpretation of the text. May not properly integrate quotations or entirely explain how the evidence supports interpretation.	Demonstrates **a poor** ability to use direct evidence in service of a larger argument. Includes few, if any, direct quotations and instead may paraphrase or summarize the primary text.	Demonstrates **no** ability to use direct evidence in service of a larger argument. Does not attempt to include direct quotations or examples from the text to support interpretation.

Additional Comments (add any contextual details here):

FINDINGS

Course	Surface-level	Textual Devices	Direct Evidence	
ENGL 3100	4.1	3.95	3.9	n=14
ENGL 3200	3.07	3.12	2.42	n=7
ENGL 3300	3	1.8	3.25	n=8
ENGL 3400	3.08	2.54	2.79	n=12
ENGL 3600	2.7	2.5	2.8	n=5
ENGL 3700	3.21	1.78	3.07	n=7

*Scale of 1-5 for each criteria

DISCUSSION:

In 8 out of 18 categories students do not meet the “Adequate/Proficient” category.

Some assignments are better designed to assess textual analysis.

Scores for ENGL 3100 are noticeably higher than other courses, though this could be due to its focus on Linguistics, Rhetoric, and Language.

“CLOSING THE LOOP”

- Reported findings to the Department in April 2022
  - Proposed reducing the number of Readings courses and adding writing instruction at the 3000-level.
  - While there is adequate literary coverage in the Readings courses, students are not demonstrating adequate proficiency in textual analysis skills.
  - Creating a *Best Practices for Readings Courses Guide* for the Department

- We recommend that once per academic year instructors of each of the Readings courses meet with the other instructors who teach the same course(s) to share their syllabi and discuss best practices to ensure consistency & equity.

- Future Assessments may want to emphasize one type of assignment to assess literary analysis.

THANK YOU!