

Data-Based Decisions: Creative Writing

[2019-20](#) [2018-19](#) [2017-18](#) [2016-17](#) [2015-16](#) [2014-15](#) [2013-14](#) [2012-13](#) [2011-12](#) [2010-11](#)

2019-20

Currently, students are performing at either the acceptable or exceptional levels on the Learning Objectives. Therefore, we are not making changes on the basis of this data.

2018-19

Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures

Currently, students are performing at either the acceptable or exceptional levels on the Learning Objectives. Therefore, we are not making changes on the basis of this data.

Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures

- Students would like shorter class periods or more classes being offered at different times and on different days. Some would like a seminar-like course.

Some students would like shorter classes, and some students would like longer classes. We do our best to rotate all genres and all classes through all days and time periods in the week. Someone is always going to want things another way. With the new bell schedule starting in Fall 2020, it is possible that we can make more students happier. We will continue to be very conscious of creating variety within the structures that we must work.

- Students would like more variety in the creative writing offerings and more creative writing faculty.

We hear this often from our students. Mostly, students would like more genre fiction writing. We try to attend to these desires through avenues like The Bull Pen which often focuses on fiction in particular and genre fiction more broadly. We also try to bring visiting writers to campus who write genre fiction. Lastly, in the most recent 5450 courses students have been allowed to work in genre fiction. We have hired Natalie Rogers as a post-doc. She brings wonderful variety to the faculty and already has a following among students. Until more resources, like lines, are made available to creative writing, we can only work with what we have.

- Students would like a required grammar class.

We have added a grammar requirement to the emphasis. Beginning the fall of 2019, all students will be required to take the Elements of Grammar or pass the grammar competency exam. The competence exam was revised over the summer to reflect the most current conversations in grammar.

- Students would like more peer editing outside of class.

We discussed this desire within creative writing. Faculty work to achieve a balance that meets student needs. Some students dislike peer editing. Some students dislike meeting outside of class. We try to create many opportunities for feedback. The Bull Pen and The Community Writing Center are two great places to receive feedback from those who would like more. In addition, the Writing Center has added writing tutors who have specialties in working with creative writing to its staff. Students can request these tutors specifically.

-

2017-18

Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures

Currently, students are performing at either the acceptable or exceptional levels on the Learning Objectives. Therefore, we are not making changes on the basis of this data.

Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures

- Students would like classes focused on genre fiction as well as novel writing.

In the past, we have actually heard a great number of students asking for courses in genre fiction. This year, there were a few requests but not many. In large part, the reduction in the numbers of students asking to write genre-based fiction is a result of the fiction faculty integrating more speculative work into the intro and advanced classes. Still, we recognize this desire on the part of our students to have a dedicated course on genre fiction. We are hoping that the post-doc we are hiring in the spring will have expertise in science fiction, fantasy, or YA. We also have a fiction faculty member who is offering the Special Topics course in the spring as a novel writing course—thereby giving us another way to address this concern.

- Students would like classes on publishing, editing, and finding a job.

In the past several years, we have witnessed an increase in students' concerns about the professional aspects of creative writing. They know they will need to find jobs when they graduate. This semester, one faculty member taught the Special Topics class with this desire in mind. The focus on the course was in professionalization, performance, and publication, and the assignments were all artifacts that could be included on their resumes. *Sink Hollow* also provides students with the opportunity to learn about publishing and editing. At this point, more than forty students are on staff. Student involvement increases with every year. Lastly, we regularly encourage our students to take the grammar class.

- Students would like to read more contemporary literature in both their literary studies classes and creative writing classes.

In many ways, this is very reassuring to hear. It means that our students understand that to be good writers they must be deep readers first. Many students pointed to the close connections they see between their literature courses and their creative writing courses. Because they will be writing contemporary literature, they would like to have classes focused on what is currently being written. This year, Literary Studies created or rededicated faculty to several courses in contemporary literature to amplify their offerings. These new or re-envisioned courses include Native American Studies, Multicultural American Literature, and, most specifically, Contemporary Literature. Students in the creative writing emphasis will be able to take any of these courses. Additionally, the Special Topics in Creative Writing course will provide another course where students read contemporary writers. In that course they will specifically be reading as writers.

2016-17

Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures

Currently, students are performing at either the acceptable or exceptional levels on the Learning Objectives. Therefore, we are not making changes on the basis of this data.

Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures

- Students would like more visiting writers.

Overwhelmingly students named visiting writers as one of the most opportunities that we afford them. They listed recent visiting writers by name and spoke at length about how those writers both inspire and teach. To increase the number of writers that visit our campus, the creative writing faculty is working with the department head and the literary studies faculty to form a May Swenson Reading Series. Once funded, this series would bring a national writer each spring who would be on campus to give a reading, a master class, and make classroom visits. This series would coincide nicely with the opening of the May Swenson House and could possibly reanimate the May Swenson Poetry Award.

- Students would like a wider variety of classes that move beyond the workshop model and focus on “reading like a writer.”

Every year students ask for a larger variety of classes—specifically they consistently ask for classes that are not workshop-based classes but still focus on the craft and technique of creative writing. Overall, students are very happy with the number of literature courses that they take, but they also want courses that talk about professional writers and the art they make. To that end, we are going to start offering a Special Topics in Creative Writing course that will begin in the Fall of 2018. This course will be required for all creative writing majors and will focus on reading as writers.

- Students would like more focus on grammar, technical skills, and practical skills for the marketplace.

We regularly encourage our students to take a grammar class. It is not a required course for the emphasis, but it is a course that is helpful. Recently, the tech writing faculty have made their spring capstone course open to creative writing students. This course focuses on creating professional documents. The advisor encourages students to take that course. However, they often don't. In the advanced classes, we offer at least a day that focuses on professionalization. This happens every semester in all three advanced classes. The committee will consider offering a panel discussion in the future that focuses on jobs and job placement.

2015-16

Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures

Currently, students are performing at either the acceptable or exceptional levels on the Learning Objectives. Therefore, we are not making changes on the basis of this data.

Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures

- Students routinely ask for a greater variety of courses, specifically novel writing, genre-writing, contemporary literature, capstone, and publication classes.

Limitations in faculty prevent us from offering more classes. We currently have 3.25 tenure-line allocated to teach over 100 students in the creative writing emphasis. Without new hires, particularly in fiction, we have no means of offering new classes, though we have the expertise and desire to teach the very courses students are asking for. Literary Studies is now offering English 5310: Contemporary Literature. This course began being offered in Fall 2016. It will focus on work published in the year 2000 or later and is open to creative writing students. Technical Writing has also opened its Spring semester Capstone to students from all emphases. Faculty are encouraging students in creative writing to take advantage of both of these opportunities

- Students are asking for more information about publishing, internships, and job opportunities.

Recently internship opportunities have increased for creative writing students in particular. With the launch of *Sink Hollow*, the department's online literary magazine, internships abound. Currently, we have 16 students interning for the magazine, learning about publishing, marketing, editing. We also routinely bring published authors to campus through Helicon West, our speaker series, and through our own funding efforts. This year we have focused on YA literature and have brought two YA authors to campus—including a former student who now has a publishing contract for a series. Novelist Liz Kay visited fiction classes, and several authors have given master classes. These are places where students can learn about the writing profession. Most classes offer some form of credit to students who attend these events. And the events themselves are published widely. We have started publishing on Canvas as well television screens around campus in order to get the word out. Lastly, there is increased visibility with

internship possibilities. The coordinator visits creative writing classes to talk with students about internships. And there is a new internship bulletin board.

- Students ask for smaller class sizes and more one on one time professors.

We cap creative writing classes at 20. Our national organization, AWP, suggests 12 or 15. We are above the national recommendation, but, given a recent comparison of peer institutions, our cap sizes put us in the middle of the pack. Faculty devote many hours each week to meeting with students outside the classroom. We will encourage students to attend The Bull Pen or the newly creative Cache Valley Writing Center for more feedback on their work.

2014-15

Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures

Currently, students are performing at either the acceptable or exceptional levels on the Learning Objectives. Therefore, we are not making changes on the basis of this data.

Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures

- Students routinely ask for a novel writing or play writing course. Several years ago, we made it possible for them to take play writing in Theater Arts. A novel writing course, though, is impractical. It would require students to take a year-long course—even if we could staff it. More importantly, students aren't ready for this kind of class. Most novel writing courses occur at the graduate level. To meet this need in part, Dr. Charles Waugh, who teaches the advanced fiction course has added a section to his class that focuses on structure of novels and how students might consider a long form in theory. In addition, the recently established Community Writing Center holds workshops on novel writing that students could be encouraged to attend.
- Students routinely ask for a contemporary literature course. They like the offerings from Literary Studies in general, but they feel they are not exposed to enough contemporary literature—the literature they want to write. Literary Studies has recently created a new contemporary literature course that will begin next year. Dr. Jennifer Sinor is meeting with the chair of Literary Studies to make sure that creative writing students will find what they want in that course.
- Students are asking for more information about publishing. We made a decision a year or so ago to make sure that the three advanced classes take a day each semester to focus on publishing. We will make sure this continues to happen. With the creation of *Sink Hollow* students will have another avenue for learning about publication.
- In general, students ask for more courses in creative writing. They want more workshops, more contemporary literature courses, more professionalization courses. If creative writing were given another faculty member in fiction, we would be able to meet these needs.

2013-14

Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures

Currently, students are performing at either the acceptable or exceptional levels on the Learning Objectives. Therefore, we are not making changes on the basis of this data.

Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures

- Several students mentioned an ideal class size would be 12 to 15 students. Coincidentally, this size matches the AWP recommendations for undergraduate class sizes.
- Students asked for more creative writing faculty so that they can have a greater variety of approaches to the genres and so that more workshops can be offered.
- Students asked for more readings on campus by visiting writers.

2012-13

No data available for 2012-13.

2011-12

Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures

Currently, students are performing at either the acceptable or exceptional levels on the Learning Objectives. Therefore, we are not making changes on the basis of this data.

Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures

- Students mentioned that nonemphasis students in the intro classes bring the overall quality of the class down.
- We are considering a new core class—a general creative writing class that would be for nonemphasis students. It would cover all three genres. We will talk with Susie Parkinson, the HASS advisor, about whether this would create more pressure.
- Students wanted to have a capstone experience. We are trying to use the Bull Pen, the department's creative writing club, as a replacement for the capstone course, and we will encourage more students to attend.

2010-11

Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures

Currently, students are performing at either the acceptable or exceptional levels on the Learning Objectives. Therefore, we are not making changes on the basis of this data.

Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures

In the future, we would like to amplify our assessment process by conducting exit interviews. These will begin in the spring of 2012.

