

# Data-Based Decisions: Literature

**2018-19**   **2017-18**   **2016-17**   **2015-16**   **2014-15**   **2013-14**   **2012-13**   **2011-12**   **2010-11**

## **2018-19**

### Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures

This group of graduating seniors at least met—and in half the cases, fully mastered—the first two primary essay-writing objectives of the Literature emphasis. Objective 3 was a bit weaker, with more Acceptable than Exceptional scores. This difference shows up regularly: the quality of the prose, on a sentence level, generally does not quite reach the same level as the structure of the argument or the strength of the analysis. The Literature faculty will continue discussing this issue and sharing techniques for improvement.

### Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures

In response to student feedback, we will begin offering the new 5000-level seminars on Gender and Sexuality, Race and Ethnicity, and Multimedia Literature next semester (Spring 2020). There are now 5 such seminars: one will be offered each semester.

To further diversity the curriculum, the faculty created three new courses at the 4000 level: U.S. Latinx Literature, African American Literature, and Native American Literature. Subject to approval, those courses will start being offered in Fall 2020.

The faculty is currently discussing changes to the 3000-level literary history courses, considering whether to make them less like surveys and more like topics courses, focusing on a narrower set of texts.

The faculty is also currently discussing a new 3000-level course, entitled “Critical Lenses” or “Ways of Reading,” that would introduce English majors (especially those in the Literature and Teaching emphases) to literary theory.

Finally, this year the faculty is considering additional ways to restructure the curriculum requirements, making the path to graduation more flexible for students.

## **2017-18**

### Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures

This cohort of graduates of the Literature emphasis overwhelmingly achieved “Acceptable” or “Exceptional” performance in all three categories. In categories 1 and 3, three of the 22 possible rankings were “marginal,” suggesting that the faculty should continue to stress the importance of clear, emphatic thesis statements and lines of logic that make the argument more visible, and of writing clear, direct,

concrete prose.

### **Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures**

We have made a number of changes to the curriculum that should reinforce what students already see as a strength of the emphasis: the variety and diversity of courses they are required to take. For example, we recently voted to eliminate ENGL 4300 (Shakespeare) as a specific requirement for Literature emphasis students (instead counting it as one of the courses that fulfills the “Authors/Genres” requirement); the three credits thus freed up were transferred to the “Electives” column, giving students more flexibility to move within the curriculum and shape it to their needs and interests.

We are also planning to create a new “Digital English” course that will help meet student demand for technological innovation in the curriculum.

Finally, the Literature curriculum committee has been having a discussion about the structure of our curriculum, hoping to strike a better balance between the two considerations students have expressed appreciation for: coverage of large swaths of the literary canon, and in-depth looks at special topics and problems in literary studies. By the end of the 2018-2019 academic year, we are likely to vote to create a number of new courses (and possibly eliminate or redesign the 3000-level Literary History courses at the bedrock of our current curriculum) that we think will re-invigorate the emphasis while preserving the aspects of the program that students value.

## **2016-17**

### **Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures**

In sum, this group of Literature graduates at least met and in some cases mastered the primary essay-writing objectives of the Literature emphasis. The weakest category was #3, which suggests that the faculty should continue to stress the importance of writing clear, direct, concrete prose even as the critical arguments become more complex and abstract.

The other data visible here is the low number of graduates in the Literature emphasis. To attract more English majors into the department and especially its Literature courses, we are now adding General Education literature courses taught by tenure-line faculty. With the addition of two new hires in the Literature area, we should be able to offer 2-3 sections of Gen Ed literature each year. The new, more flexible requirements should also help us to attract and retain more students in the emphasis.

### **Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures**

We have already increased the flexibility of the curriculum by adding free elective credits into the requirements. We are also proposing to add ENGL 4630: American Nature Writers to the Authors/Genres requirements, which will add further flexibility.

As the previous year's group also recommended, students would like a greater diversity of non-English/American and ethnic literature in the curriculum. In response to this student feedback, we are now proposing to incorporate both ENGL 3520: Multicultural Literature and ENGL 3620: Native American Studies within the Literary History options.

To further diversify and update the curriculum, we are also proposing three new 5000-level courses: Race and Ethnicity in Literature, Gender and Sexuality in Literature, and Multimedia Literature.

This year, we have begun a discussion of how best to revise ENGL 2600, so that it connects more clearly to the upper levels of the Literature curriculum. The best idea so far is to have faculty visit the course, introducing themselves and their interests/methods to students, explaining how skills learned in 2600 will translate into their upcoming courses.

## **2015-16**

### **Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures**

In sum, this group of Literature graduates at least met and in most cases mastered the primary essay-writing objectives of the Literature emphasis. Based on this data, we will continue in our courses to stress the importance of not only developing but also questioning your own arguments. We will also continue to share with one another creative assignments that offer different means of accomplishing this critical end.

The other data visible here is the shrinking number of graduates in the Literature emphasis. To attract more English majors into Literature courses, we are now discussing how best to increase General Education literature courses taught by tenure-line faculty. One option is to offer ENGL 2300 instead of ENGL 4300 as our Shakespeare requirement, which would serve the added purpose of attracting and recruiting first-year students into the department.

### **Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures**

The responses from the student interviews revealed that, while they did understand the careful structure of the curriculum, they would appreciate a bit more flexibility in choosing courses, both within Literature and across the English department.

In response to this student feedback, we are now (Fall 2016) discussing increasing the elective credits from 3 to 9, with 6 of those being open to any English course at the 3000 level or above. (The other 3 would be restricted to a Literature course.)

The responses from the student interviews also revealed that they would like a greater diversity of non-English/American and ethnic literature in the curriculum.

In response to this student feedback, we are discussing how best to reconfigure our world literature offerings. We also plan to incorporate Multicultural Literature within the Literature curriculum. In the longer term, we have been discussing the possibility of revising the 4000-level of the curriculum to emphasize issues of cultural difference and diversity.

## **2014-15**

### **Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures**

In sum, this group of Literary Studies graduates met or exceeded all learning objectives. In general, the readers observed that the students were best at identifying and focusing on key questions at outset of their essays, although many of them struggled at times to express their ideas in clear, direct language.

### **Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures**

We will change the 5000-level of the curriculum to include more contemporary literature than we currently teach--a wish that many of our students have expressed in the interviews.

## **2013-14**

### **Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures**

In sum, this group of Literary Studies graduates met or exceeded all learning objectives.

### **Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures**

The committee decided to implement indirect assessment measures beginning in 2015.

## **2012-13**

**Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures**

In sum, this group of Literary Studies graduates met or exceeded all learning objectives.

**Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures**

No indirect measures used this year.

**2011-12**

**Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures**

In sum, this group of Literary Studies graduates met or exceeded all learning objectives.

**Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures**

No indirect measures used this year.

**2010-11**

**Data-based decisions correlated to direct measures**

In sum, this group of Literary Studies graduates met or exceeded all learning objectives.

**Data-based decisions that rely on indirect measures**

No indirect measures used this year.