

Department of Comparative and World Literature
Assessment Report for the M.A. Curriculum
Fall 2012

At our Assessment meeting in the Fall 2010, we decided that we would focus on our syllabi and our M.A. student writing as two main areas in which to test the meeting of our program objectives. We also decided that in future years we would not only continue evaluating and improving these two areas of assessment, but expand our assessment measures to encompass such new areas as self-assessments by our M.A. students through their annual Portfolio self-assessments. As the section below entitled "Changes Made Since the 2010 Assessment" will reflect, we have followed up in each of these areas in the two years since that assessment. Before turning to these Changes, I begin below with a reiteration of the Structure of our M.A. Degree from our 2010 report, which serves as a useful general description of our M.A. program.

The Structure of the M.A. Degree

In assessing the degree to which our M.A. syllabi are designed to meet our Student Learning Outcomes (see **Addendum 1-Student Learning Outcomes**), we found that, first, it was important to consider that of our Program Requirements (see **Addendum 2-Program Requirements**), the four Core required classes, CWL 800-815-820-825, are linked, serial courses, no one of which meets all of our SLOs but which when taken in aggregate meet almost all of them (excepting only SLO #6, see below). All of the courses in the Core sequence are closely modeled on the methods, theory and practice of comparative literature, and as such all ensure that students "develop an understanding of the scope and goals of the field of Comparative Literature" (SLO #1). But while CWL 800 is designed to provide students with a broad range of literary theory (SLO #2), CWL 815 is designed to give them deep knowledge of one particular body of theory (SLO #3). CWL 820, on the other hand, is the core course which best meets SLOs #4 and #5, that "students learn to analyze...texts from multiple literary traditions" in oral and written form, in that its course content is explicitly comparative, i.e. encompasses multiple literary traditions. SLO #4, that "students learn to analyze, in oral form, texts from multiple literary traditions," is best met through the Culminating Experience of the Oral Exam (for those of our students who choose the Oral rather than the thesis as their Culminating Experience): the Oral Exam list is comprised of thirty texts of varying genres and periods, no more than eight of which can be from the same linguistic tradition. But even students who do not opt for the Oral Exam get opportunities to achieve this SLO in CWL 820 and other courses. Finally, because our core courses are designed to be taken at the same time by each member of our incoming cohort, all ensure that "students participate in the larger community of comparatists" (SLO #8), but this is especially true of CWL 825, a professionalization course which teaches skills (writing CVs and abstracts; teaching) that smooth student entry into the larger community of comparatists.

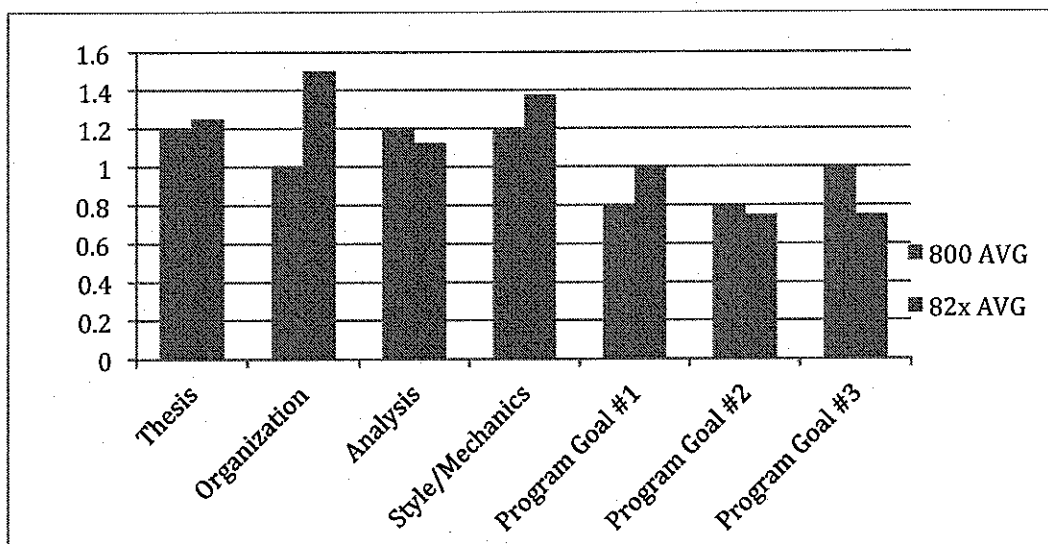
We cannot assess SLO #6, how well "students achieve the ability to read and analyze literature in at least one foreign, i.e., non-native, language at the graduate level,"

because the required coursework—three graduate seminars in a non-native literature—takes place outside the department, often in the Foreign Languages and Literatures department.

SLO #7, that “students explore the relation of a single national literature to other literatures,” takes place through the combination of required coursework in our M.A., especially through the focused treatment of a single foreign national literature set against two required program electives (which must explicitly *not* focus on that same foreign literature) and the four required Core courses, but also often through a student’s Culminating Experience work, a thesis or Oral exam.

Analysis of Student Writing Measures

Per our projection in the Fall 2010 assessment, we endeavored to analyze how well Core graduate student papers performed on our graduate Writing Rubrics and Program Goals. We analyzed papers from our gateway Core course, CWL 800, and our final or exit course, CWL 825. As the graph below will show, our analysis revealed student improvement in some writing measures, including Thesis, Organization and Style/Mechanics, as well as in Student Learning Outcome #1. Other measures, including Analysis, and Student Learning Outcomes #2 and #3 showed little change or slight weakening.



Changes Made since the 2010 Assessment

After our Fall 2010 assessment, we decided that we wanted to revise our SLOs before the next assessment cycle with a view to making two improvements: (1) making the list of SLOs much shorter and more focused; and (2) refining the language of our SLOs in light of current best practices. We have since done so, as here indicated in **Addendum 1A- Revised Student Learning Outcomes.**

Secondly, we found we need to find ways to make sure that program SLOs get incorporated into the design of the appropriate courses. We have also begun doing this: all Core graduate syllabi are now being updated to reflect the particular Student Learning Outcomes with which they are aligned. We had specifically noted in 2010 that it would be best to make the final seminar paper in CWL 825, the last in our Core series, a comparative one across the board for CWL 825 syllabi, and have updated our syllabi to reflect integration of this comparative element for the course accordingly.

Finally, we noted in 2010 that we hoped in the future to incorporate student self-assessments (included in their Portfolios) and surveys completed by students as they exit the program into our program assessment efforts. We have now carried out such an analysis of Student Portfolios. Specifically, we analyzed a random sampling of eleven portfolios of students who entered our MA program between 2005 and 2009 (taking 2-3 portfolios per year) and went on to receive their MA in Comparative and World Literature. We read these student's final Statements of Achievement, in which they reflect on what they achieved and learned through the MA program, as an index of the success of our MA Student Learning Outcomes by noting which Outcomes were reported as achieved in these final reflective Statements. There is of course a subjective component in what students remember having learned at the end of their program, and the Statements reflected variety in their degree of specificity, their length, in their interpretation of what sort of self-reflection (personal, professional) was being called for, and so on. The necessary subjectivity of self-reflection notwithstanding, the analysis produced two sets of data of note. The first concerns *the quantity of total Outcomes referred to by students as being achieved*: of the sample of eleven, seven (or 63.6% of) students mentioned achieving five or more of our total of eight Student Learning Outcomes; two (18% of) students reported the achievement of four of our total Outcomes, and another two (18% of) students mentioned achieving three Outcomes, the lowest number of Outcomes reported by any student in the sample. Some 2/3rds of our graduating students, then, reported a level of achievement regarding at least 5/8 or 62% of our Learning Outcomes.

The second set of data concern *the frequency with which particular Student Learning Outcomes were referred to in Statements of Achievement*, a frequency which may be interpreted as a reflection of the program's success in bringing about particular Outcomes. The following charts the frequency of Outcomes reported as achieved, in descending order of frequency, from strongest to weakest Outcome:

<u>Student Learning Outcome</u>	<u>Number of Times Reported Achieved</u>
SLO #6	10
SLO #5	8
SLOs #2, 7, and 8	7
SLO #1	6
SLO #4	4
SLO #3	3

The above shows what we have always suspected, that the Comparative and World Literature MA program is particularly successful at Outcomes like SLO #6, preparing students for literary analytical work in a foreign literature at the graduate level, and SLO#5, preparing students for written analysis of texts from multiple literary traditions. Many students also noted the strong training provided in the traditions of literary theory (SLO#2), in the relating of a single national literature to other literatures (SLO#7), and our enabling of their participation in a larger community of comparatists through various professional activities (SLO#8). Less explicitly stated, in part no doubt because it is implicit to the MA degree, was SLO #1, the achievement of understanding the scope and goals of the field of Comparative Literature. SLO#4, preparation in the Oral analysis of texts from multiple traditions, tended to be mentioned only by those engaged in the Oral Exam (rather than the Thesis) for their Culminating Experience. Finally, the department may wish to consider whether the infrequency of SLO #3, training in a specific body of literary theory or criticism, in student Statements of Achievement is a legitimate reflection on the strength of that departmental Outcome or a matter of such training not standing out as a "highlight" for many outgoing MAs.

Addendum 1- Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will develop an understanding of the scope and goals of the field of Comparative Literature.
2. Students will become familiar with various traditions of literary theory.
3. Students will explore one particular body of literary theory or criticism in depth.
4. Students will learn to analyze, in oral form, texts from multiple literary traditions, at a level appropriate to someone newly entering the profession.
5. Students will learn to analyze, in written form, texts from multiple literary traditions, at a level appropriate to someone newly entering the profession.
6. Students will achieve the ability to read and analyze literature in at least one foreign, i.e., non-native, language at the graduate level.
7. Students will explore the relation of a single national literature to other literatures.
8. Students will participate in the larger community of comparatists.

Addendum 1a—Revised Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes: M.A.

1. Students will ~~<understand> develop an understanding of~~ the scope and goals of the field of Comparative Literature.
2. Students will ~~<read broadly in> become familiar with various <different>~~ traditions of literary theory.
3. Students will ~~<master> explore~~ one particular body of literary theory or criticism ~~in depth~~.
4. Students will ~~learn to~~ analyze, in oral form, texts from multiple literary traditions, at a level appropriate to someone newly entering the profession.
5. Students will ~~learn to~~ analyze, in written form, texts from multiple literary traditions, at a level appropriate to someone newly entering the profession.
6. Students will ~~achieve the ability to~~ read and analyze literature in at least one foreign, i.e., non-native, language at the graduate level.
7. Students will ~~<understand> explore~~ the relation of a single national literature to other literatures.
8. Students will participate in the larger community of comparatists.

Addendum 2- Program Requirements

Core Requirements in Comparative Literature (12 units)

CWL 800 Introduction to Graduate Study	3
CWL 815 Topics in Critical Theory	3
CWL 820 Topics in Comparative Literature	3
CWL 825 Advanced Study in Comparative Literature	3

Foreign Literature Requirement (9 units)

Graduate seminars (courses numbered 700 and higher) in a single foreign literature	9
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[Note: "Foreign Literature" means a literature and language other than the student's native language; e.g., a native speaker of Japanese must complete seminars in a literature other than Japanese.]

Program Electives (6 units)

Upper-division (courses numbered 300 and higher) or graduate courses in at least one literature other than that of the "foreign literature" requirement, e.g. foreign literatures, English, literature in translation, comparative literature, etc. (upon advisement)	6
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Culminating Experience (3 units)

CWL 896 Directed Reading in Comparative Literature and comprehensive Oral Examination	3
OR	
CWL 898 Master's Thesis and Prospectus	

TOTAL	30
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