

**2003-2004 Annual Academic Assessment for English  
Schreiner University**

**1. State the educational purpose of the assessment program:**

The mission statement addresses student outcomes in the following way: Schreiner University “is dedicated to excellence in preparing students to live purposeful, humane, and productive lives in their work, faith groups, families, and communities.” The English program endeavors to build on these broad goals. The departmental ideal profile reads as follows: The English major offers intensive study of literature, writing, rhetoric, linguistics, mythology, and cultural texts. The curriculum for the English major focuses on British, American, and world literature (in translation), providing a foundational knowledge of literary periods, genres, critical theories, and socio-historical perspectives on literary production. The program also offers a rich variety of courses that focus on the structures and principles of language and writing. The English major is an excellent preparation for graduate studies in literature, law, and other fields, or for careers in education, writing, advertising, and publishing. In order to fulfill this mission and in order to comply with the accreditation requirements set forth by the Southern Association of Universities and Schools, the English Department has developed the following Outcomes Assessment plan. The primary purpose of this assessment program is to describe the cognitive and personal development of our students from when they entered University to when they complete their degree in English.

**2. Educational goals, assessment for each goal, performance standards, and findings:**

The ultimate goal of Outcomes Assessment is to provide a mechanism for program evaluation *and* program improvement. The data collected from these assessment outcomes will be used to detect areas of weakness in students' education and to improve the quality of instruction and curriculum. To this end, the primary audience to which the plan will communicate shall be the Department of English itself. The secondary audience shall be the Southern Association of Universities and Schools in order to establish that the Department regularly assesses student ability and uses that information for program improvement. Lastly, students enrolled in the program will also act as an audience in that findings from the assessment program will impact their instruction in the classroom.

In terms of specific knowledge and skills, the English program endeavors to give students a broad familiarity with the major literary works and periods of literary history as well as the ability to perform close critical analysis of literary and other texts and to deploy the critical strategies deployed in the major fields of criticism. The outcomes assessment evaluation instrument was created with these abilities in mind. The primary instrument is entitled "Checklist for the English Major's Portfolio of Writing" and it was developed with reference to the standard text for outcomes assessment, A. Nichols's *Departmental Guide for Outcomes Assessment*, and Robert Scholes's noteworthy book on literary theory and pedagogy, *Textual Power*. The instrument's rubrics target the following areas:

**Goal 1:** The ability to survey the critical literature regarding a given literary topic.

**Goal 2:** The ability to analyze a passage without recourse to information exterior to the text.

**Goal 3:** The ability to relate a text to extra textual issues, ideas, and analytical schema.

**Goal 4:** The ability to recognize the contributions of major literary figures and the importance of genres and periods of literary history.

**Goal 5:** The above goals presuppose faculty development in the areas mentioned. It is assumed, therefore, that faculty will participate in professional activities that promote development in the goals. The above goals also presuppose an active engagement of students in the academic community, including undergraduate writing and conference attendance.

**Goal 6:** Expand usage of the University Writing Center among both faculty and students.

**Specifics:**

➤ Goal # 1: The ability to survey the critical literature regarding a given literary topic.

➤

This entails an ability to gather and analyze the body of biographical, historical, and analytical essays and books on a given topic. The student must also demonstrate the ability to summarize and synthesize this background material into an effective essay, and do so within the professional format established by the Modern Language Association or the *Chicago Manual of Style* (SU English Department prefers MLA). Students will attain this goal through selected coursework.

1997-8 Assessment of Freshman English Portfolios indicated need for development of further assessment tools. 100% pass rate of students taking ExCET Texas Teacher Certification Exam

1998-9 Use of Senior Portfolio evaluation indicated weakness in Outcome #1. Many graduating seniors appeared unfamiliar with proper MLA citation and demonstrated little or no ability to survey critical literature.

1999-2000 Continued weakness in outcome #1 leads to revamping of curriculum, requiring Literary Criticism earlier in the major sequence.

2000-2001 Improvement in all aspects of Goal #1.

2001-2002 Some decline in MLA ability.

2002-2003 Reviewers of portfolio observed weakness in using critical language and theory in a concerted way. Department addressed the issue as, first, an across-the-board issue, secondly something to be focused upon in Engl 3320.

2003-2004 Reviewers of portfolio report improvement in MLA use. Changes in Texas primary and secondary education requirements leads to revamping of courses designed for teachers (impact on all goals).

➤ Goal # 2 : The ability to analyze a passage without recourse to information exterior to the text.

The student must be able to analyze a passage without recourse to information exterior to the text (e.g., biography, history, culture), showing how the relations of the elements within the passage (words, sounds, figurative devices, rhetorical techniques, style) construct meaning for the reader. To do so, the student must show mastery of the quote/analysis method that has been a major part of the literary critic's methodology. Students will attain this goal through selected coursework.

1997-8 Strong student ability in this area.

1998-9 Students strong in regards to Outcome #2.

1999-2000 Continued strength in regards to Outcome #2.

2000-2001 Improvement in all aspects of Goal #2.

2001-2002 Continued strength in regards to Outcome #2.

2002-2003 Continued strength, somewhat impinging upon new goal stated above.

2003-2004 Further strategies for improving goal tried, concentrating on ENGL 3330 but encouraged in all upper-division courses.

➤ Goal # 3 : The ability to relate a text to extra textual issues, ideas, and analytical schema.

The student must demonstrate an ability to reflect not only on the internal meaning of a given work, but also its relationship to extra textual issues, ideas, analytical schema. Such readings include, but are not limited to, social, cultural, and political critiques, and the use of interdisciplinary methods and perspectives, borrowing from sociology, psychoanalysis, anthropology, and cultural theory. Students will attain this goal through selected coursework.

1997-8 Strength in Goal #3, though students are not as strong as in Goal #2. Some indication this is due to library facilities.

1998-9 Assessment shows students somewhat weak in regards to Outcome #3.

1999-2000 Continued weakness in outcome #3 (and #1) leads to revamping of curriculum, requiring ENGL 3320 Literary Criticism earlier in the major sequence. Secondary sources stressed.

2000-2001 Improvement regarding Goal #3, though results highly dependant upon an exceptional group of students.

2001-2002 Some decline in Goal #3, though strength compared with earlier results. Departments asks for online-MLA resource.

2002-2003 See goal one above.

2003-2004 Continued improvement in library's resources, predominantly on-line.

➤ Goal # 4 : The ability to recognize the contributions of major literary figures and the importance of genres and periods of literary history.

The student must possess a mastery of the contribution of major literary figures, genres, traditions, periods -- in short, the broad outlines of the history of literary form and the major figures in this genealogy. Students will attain this goal through selected coursework.

1997-8 Strength in this outcome, though some department members believe a reading list may be required.

1998-9 Students somewhat weak in regards to Outcome #4.

1999-2000 Continued weakness in outcome #4 leads to revamping of curriculum, requiring ENGL 3320 Literary Criticism earlier in the major sequence.

2000-2001 Improvement in all aspects of Goal #4, perhaps due to class members.

2001-2002 Some decline in ability, leading to new discussion of reading list.

2002-2003 Improved ability in this area.

2003-2004 Concerns in this area lead to discussion of further expanding ENGL 4365, a flexible course capable of covering material outside the traditional canon.

The primary assessment tool is based on a portfolio of writing to be submitted by students in their last semester. Advisors shall explain this requirement to their advisees when they declare their major. Also, in the first half of each Spring term, the faculty member in charge of this activity prepares a list of English majors who intend to graduate that year and makes sure that these students turn in the portfolio and that the portfolio is then routed to three faculty evaluators. The student, in consultation with his or her advisor, will determine which essays are to be included in the portfolio. This feature provides the added benefit of allowing the student to engage in self-evaluation and reflection on his or her individual development in the program. There will also be an option allowing students to submit one creative writing piece for evaluation.

Implementation is as follows: in the first few weeks of the Spring term, the faculty member designated as the outcomes assessment coordinator will identify graduating seniors and make sure that they are aware of the requirement. Student writing portfolios are collected in the last few weeks of the term and are then circulated to three faculty evaluators. The evaluations are generally completed by May. Evaluations are "blind" (i.e., each member of the evaluation committee places the completed evaluation form in a sealed envelope which is not opened until the

process is complete and the portfolio is ready to be filed). An effort is made to use a variety of combinations of faculty evaluators.

In addition to the portfolio evaluation, graduating seniors will write a Senior Essay with the prompt:

**In a well-developed 500 word personal essay, please discuss the high and low points of your study in the English major at Schreiner University. Which courses most engaged you? Which courses did you find least helpful? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Schreiner University English program?**

Two English faculty members will read and evaluate the Senior Essay in terms of the above stated goals and also in terms of helpful praise and criticism of the English program. A written review of the student's performance will be placed on file with the student's senior portfolio.

Entry level assessment will take place during ENGL 3307 Advanced Composition, a capstone composition course offering practicums in writing exposition, narration, description, argument and in writing the basic modes of technical and professional writing with components in traditional and transformational grammar, mechanics, and rhetoric and ENGL 3320 Literary Criticism, a study of the main theories from Plato to the present, with emphasis on modern critical approaches and practical applications for teaching literature in the classroom. ENGL 3320 is required before students take upper-level survey courses.

Midpoint assessment will consist of the student's continued success in upper-level courses going into the senior year.

Goal # 5 :

One hundred percent of English faculty have participated in professional conferences every year. Most faculty have published in their respective fields. Discussion in 2002-2004 indicates that release time, especially sabbaticals, will help further in professional development. One English professor on sabbatical Fall 2004. Though the University has expanded faculty-development support, professors report that it is still inadequate.

Student participation in Sigma Tau Delta national conference and the National Undergraduate Literature Conference continues to expand, with seven students participating in 2003-2004. There is need for University financial support.

English majors also show excellence in internal University venues, such as the Library Research paper contest, awards for student research projects, and publication in the student newspaper and literary journals.

Goal # 6 Key Performance Indicator: One hundred percent of the English faculty requiring students to utilize the Writing Center by May 2005.

## ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT PORTFOLIOS

The student portfolios will be evaluated by three English faculty members on a scale of one to five (1 = Poor; 2 = Below Average; 3 = Average; 4 = Good; 5 = Excellent) based upon the following rubric.

➤ Goal # 1: The ability to survey the critical literature regarding a given literary topic.

### SCORING RUBRIC FOR PART 1: CRITICAL REVIEW

**CATEGORY: *Critical Review***-- An ability to survey the critical literature regarding a given literary topic. This entails an ability to gather and analyze the body of biographical, historical, and analytical essays and books on a given topic. The student must also demonstrate the ability to summarize and synthesize this background material into an effective essay and do so within the professional format established by the Modern Language Association or the Chicago Manual of Style, though MLA is our main concentration.

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5: A score of five indicates that at some point in the student's portfolio s/he provides the relevant background to a literary study as a starting point for analysis. These high-level performances are characterized by well-written, well-organized, and well-researched sections that effectively summarize a body of critical commentary. These performances furthermore demonstrate the ability to highlight the relevant differences between critical evaluations and will indicate relative strengths and weaknesses. They will also demonstrate a knowledge of the particular disciplinary foci of a critical commentary (biographical, formal, etc.). Finally, these excellent performances will set up the literary review in a manner that prepares the way for their own further commentary and analysis. These works will use a format style in a nearly perfect manner.

4: These essays also provide relevant background to a literary student but are less thorough and less sophisticated than level 5 performances. They provide a range of

specimens from a body of research but are somewhat less complete. Further, performances at the 4 level will perform summarization in a less-adequate manner and will be less effective in revealing the differences and relative strengths and weaknesses of the various specimens. Likewise, they will be less capable in terms of noting disciplinary foci of the body of specimens, and the bridge between the review and the student's own commentary and analysis will be somewhat less effective. These papers will demonstrate a very good grasp of formatting.

3: The mid-range performances are marked by a general superficiality in terms of the literary review. While there will be an identifiable review of the literature, it will strike the evaluator as being adequate at best. Attempts to note differences between evaluations, while present, will strike the evaluator as being somewhat limited and naive. The general character of the literary review in these cases will strike one as being perfunctory in nature and at best, adequate; use of proper format may be a bit uneven.

2: These inadequate performances will approach the literary review in a perfunctory manner, but with more superficiality than #3 performances. The review may seem haphazard, the summaries, inadequate. There will be little or no discernable discourse on the differences between critical evaluations, and will be very naive in terms of demonstrating knowledge of disciplinary foci of various specimens. These performances have an identifiable literary review, but they will be perfunctory and inadequate with weak formatting skills

1: These very poor performances will show virtually no understanding of the function of the literary review and may fail to do such a review altogether. It will strike the reviewer that the student has failed to learn this process, or that the department has failed to teach it.

➤ Goal # 2: The ability to analyze a passage without recourse to information exterior to the text.

## **SCORING RUBRIC FOR PART 2: INTRINSIC ANALYSIS**

**DEFINITION OF CATEGORY--*Intrinsic Analysis ("Close Reading")***--The student must be able to analyze a passage without recourse to information exterior to the text (e.g., biography, history, culture), showing how the relations of the elements within the passage (words, sounds, figurative devices, style) evoke meaning. To do so, the student must show mastery of the quote/analysis method that has been a major part of the literary critic's methodology.

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5: These excellent essays will strike the evaluator as being brilliant and creatively resourceful in terms of analyzing a passage of prose or verse. The analysis will be thorough, performing a close reading of text with fine attention to detail. The student will, as appropriate, use terminology (e.g., irony, point-of-view, narrative distance,

metaphor, etc.) of the literary and linguistic traditions, but in a way that is sophisticated rather than merely mechanical. The evaluator will feel genuinely surprised by the strength of the student's close reading. Finally, the student will make what Spitzer calls the "to and fro journey" between textual detail and thematic core. This student will show a firm grasp of the Russian Formalist insight that literature is a specific use of language that is indirect and that mobilizes a number of devices to generate a non-literal meaning that can only be fully understood through thoughtful analysis.

4: These essays will also do a very good job with passage analysis. The close reading, however, will not go quite as far as in the best examples. While the reading will strike one as being compelling, these essays will be somewhat less sophisticated and the analysis somewhat more limited and predictable.

3: These essays perform at best an adequate analysis; they will "let go" of the passage too quickly, will make mechanical or minimal use of literary terms.

2: The performances will strike the evaluator as being naive and inadequate, perhaps thoughtless, with a lazy approach to the complexities of language. These essays will talk about or around literature rather than analyze it

1: These papers will prove weak indeed in terms of analyzing literature, and may in fact fail all together to even attempt such analysis. In terms of departmental self-criticism, the presence of these scores will indicate a failure of the department to teach literary analysis.

- Goal # 3 : The ability to relate a text to extra textual issues, ideas, and analytical schema.

### **SCORING RUBRIC FOR PART 3: Extrinsic Analysis**

**DEFINITION OF CATEGORY--*Extrinsic Analysis***—The student must demonstrate an ability to reflect not only on the internal meaning of a given work but also its relationship to extratextual issues, ideas, analytical schema. Such readings include, but are not limited to, social, cultural, and political critiques, and the use of interdisciplinary methods and perspectives, borrowing from sociology, psychoanalysis, anthropology, and cultural theory.

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5: These excellent essays will prove very effective at placing a given text or body of texts in one or more contexts in a way that goes well beyond simplistic socio-historical background. These "parallel readings" will strike the evaluator as being extremely sophisticated in terms of applying a body of theory to textual readings in a fluid and complex manner. These essays will give the necessary background in

terms of theorists and theories and will make fluid transitions from the theory to the literary text under examination.

4: These essays will also do a good job of placing a given text within a broader intellectual/textual context, but generally, the nature of the parallel reading, while being more or less complete, will be more obvious, lacking in subtlety and development.

3: These essays will be adequate at best. References to exterior bodies of ideas will be casual, undeveloped, and perhaps careless. The extrinsic content will seem somewhat separate from the student's reading of the primary text rather than integrated.

2: These essays will be inadequate in terms of the task. The student will merely mention rather than apply an idea or a text to his/her critical analysis. The student may misapply or misunderstand the material. References to specific secondary sources will be sketchy and inadequate.

1: These essays will make at best a token attempt at the task.

➤ **Goal # 4** : The ability to recognize the contributions of major literary figures and the importance of genres and periods of literary history.

**SCORING RUBIC FOR PART 4: *Literary History, Genres, Traditions.***

**DEFINITION OF CATEGORY--*Literary History, Genres, Traditions*--**An ability to recognize the contribution of major literary figures, genres, traditions, periods--in short, the broad outlines of the history of literary form and the major figures in this genealogy.

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5: These excellent examples will include sections that provide a comprehensive coverage of relevant material from literary history, generic conventions, and cultural traditions that will support his/her analysis of a given work. The material will be competently written, fluid, and appropriately footnoted. These papers will demonstrate a firm understanding of the way in which literary works emerge from and define a given cultural nexus.

4: These essays will also provide coverage of material from literary history, generic conventions, and cultural tradition, but in a somewhat less comprehensive manner. Further, the sense of the complexity of these matters may be somewhat lacking from the coverage, and the coverage of these issues may seem somewhat separate from the analytical section of the paper.

3: Coverage of these issues will be adequate at best--a kind of a prefatory sketch that may even strike one as "filler."

2: Inadequate coverage, compounded by a misunderstanding of terms and a poor grasp of historical sequencing.

1: At best, a token attempt at the task.