

**Westmont College English Department
Annual Assessment Report
2012-2013**

Department: English

Date: June 11, 2013

Department Chair: Dr. Randall VanderMey

I. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment

Program Learning Outcome	Who is in Charge	Direct Assessment Methods	Indirect Assessment Methods	Major Findings	Closing the Loop Activities
<p>PLO: READING CLOSELY</p> <p>SLO for 2012-2013: Our graduating seniors will be able to recognize literary works that cross a diverse range of literary traditions.</p>	<p>Department Chair (VanderMey) with department administrative assistant (EY) and student assistant (Lauren Hensley)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded assessment by informal analysis of students' in-course reading, based on group discussion at August 2013 Dept. retreat • survey of English major graduates from 2012 and 2013 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporation of insights into Major Curriculum Revision • Revising catalog description of major to communicate outline of revised major (pending, ongoing Fall 2013 and early spring 2014) • Strategic adjustment of syllabi (pending decisions in department meetings in Fall 2013)

Discussion: Assessments for the academic year 2012-2013 were plotted in fall 2011, then modified following the visit and report by the

department's outside reviewer, Dr. Susan Felch, and the Department's Major Curriculum Revision Retreat in July 2012. After specifying in Fall 2012 what we wanted to accomplish (see Appendix 2: Revised Draft of SLO for Assessment in 2011-2012 on pp. 13-14 of the English Department 2011-2012 Annual Assessment Update), we postponed assessment activities during the year to make way for the larger task of conducting a year-long candidate search for someone to replace Prof. Steve Cook, who was forced to retire early in February, 2013.

In our annual assessment work for 2012-2013 we focused on one SLO that would inform quite directly the major curriculum revision we have been undertaking for the past several years. In Fall, 2012, we created a grid, reflecting the 10 requirements that constitute the structure of our newly revised major. In Mayterm, 2013, the Chair, assisted by Eliane Yochum, English Department Administrative Assistant, converted the grid to a 13-question survey, using Survey Monkey (see <https://www.surveymonkey.com/MySurveys.aspx>). The survey contains questions that asks alumni to recall works that they have studied from 1) more than two national traditions, 2) works by both male and female authors, 3) works from more than one ethnic minority, 4) works from more than one religious tradition, 5) works from all four major genres, 6) one work in the context of more than one course, 7) a work from more than one critical perspective, 8) works from more than one Christian denomination, 9) at least one work of criticism, 10) at least one substantial work of literary theory, and 11) works from more than one historical periods. The Chair e-mailed the survey to the 61 English majors who graduated in 2012 and 2013 and by the end of July received 15 replies.

II. Follow-ups

Program Learning Outcome	Who is in Charge	Major Findings	Closing the Loop Activities
<p>PLO: READING CLOSELY</p> <p>SLO: Our graduating seniors will be able to recognize literary</p>	<p>Chair (CLH), department faculty subcommittees, and Administrative Assistant (EY)</p>	<p>The detailed results of our Major Curriculum Revision Work Day (aka "Department Retreat") are presented in the minutes of August 22, 2013. See Appendix C. In brief, our survey showed that 13 of 15 students answered Question #3; of those, 100% named works studied from one national tradition; 84.6% named works from two different traditions; and 53.8% named works studied from three different national traditions. In our discussion, Department members agreed that the array of different works cited by the students was satisfying—i.e., no one course or</p>	<p>The results of the 2012-2013 alumni survey were presented and discussed by the whole department at the Department's Major Curriculum Revision Retreat at Kathryn Stelmach Artuso's house in Camarillo on Wednesday, August 21—just prior to the opening of the new school year. The results of the survey were discussed and weighed. In response to the major findings (see column 3, left), the Department took the following action (see minutes, p. 2, ACTION #1: "By consensus</p>

<p>works that cross a diverse range of literary traditions.</p>		<p>one work was carrying all the load of diversifying the student’s exposures. We agreed, however, that we would want to see 100% of our students be able to name works they had studied from at least three different national traditions. The 53.8% figure was disappointing, though the reasons for it were not entirely clear. Our current major does not require that students study works from three or more national traditions. However, when students do study such works—as we know from the contents of our own syllabi (but did not take the time to demonstrate in detail)—they are not always able to name them or their authors a year or two later. Hypotheses: Maybe students forget. Maybe students underestimate the authors’ importance. Maybe students are not good at remembering complex and unfamiliar “foreign-sounding” names. Maybe teachers are not underlining the relevant facts so that students will recognize, value, and remember them.</p>	<p>we decide to alter requirement #5 in the revised major plan by 1) striking “each of” from the original wording of the first line; 2) striking “ENG-046 Survey of British Literature to 1800 (4) and “ENG-047 Survey of British Literature 1800-Present (4)” from the list of options under the heading “British Literature” ; and 3) under the heading “Anglophone Literature” to list ENG-044 Studies in World Literature (4), ENG-165, Topics in World Literature (4), and ENG-185 Twentieth-Century Irish Literature (4). After ENG-165 we agree to strike the words “—when structured to deal with one national or regional tradition (e.g., Indian, Caribbean, African) or a comparison of two national traditions (e.g. Welsh and Irish.”</p> <p>The change to the language has the effect of reducing some of the Anglo-centric bias in our major curriculum and increasing pressure for students to take either lower-division or upper-division options in the literatures of national traditions besides English and American.</p> <p>The effort to revise and refine our new curriculum to assure that students are conscious beneficiaries of our new policies will be ongoing. At the August 2013 Retreat, four working groups were formed to accelerate our work going into the 2013-2014 school year. Drs. Friedman,</p>
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			<p>Delaney, and Tang-Quan are scheduled to bring proposals before the department concerning the design of a new Introduction to the Major course. Drs. Skripsky and Willis will come with proposals on Writing-related questions. Drs. Artuso and VanderMey have already (before Sept. 15, 2013) brought a proposal concerning a new capstone course. (See Appendix B below.) And several former Dept. Chairs will join current Chair Larsen-Hoeckley in planning the roll-out of the new major. The goal is to have decisions made by November 2013 so that they can be approved by the Faculty in time for catalog revision in February 2013. Especially the questions of content in an Introduction to the Major course, questions of total unit count for the major, and questions of Capstone course content bear on our PLO that students will be able to recognize literary works that cross a diverse range of literary traditions.</p>
<p>Discussion The PLO named above is central to the concerns of our department in the past half dozen years and will continue to be central for us at least until the four-year roll-out of the new major curriculum is completed, at the earliest in May, 2018. Our goal of becoming less exclusively English and American oriented and more globally Anglophone in our emphasis has factored prominently in our hiring of Profs. Stelmach Artuso and Sarah Yoder Skripsky, significantly in our hiring of a theorist such as Prof. Jamie Friedman, and strongly and directly in our hiring of Prof. Sharon Tang-Quan. Our decision to revise the curriculum was colored strongly by this same motivation, and was encouraged by our outside reviewer, Dr. Susan Felch, in 2012, and our decisions at the Department Retreat ratified the change and refined the language. We will need to continue to monitor our students' responses to Question #3 (in the alumni survey) and to work toward the 100% response we would wish to see.</p>			

III. Other assessment-related projects (optional)

Project	Who is in Charge	Major Findings	Action
None current	Chair, Dr. Cheri Larsen Hoeckley and members of the department, assisted by department admin assistant Eliane Yochum		
Discussion: Defining a new SLO for the 2013-2014 school year will be the task of the department, led by the chair, early to mid-way through the Fall 2013 semester.			

IV. Adjustments to the Multi-year Action Plan (optional)

Proposed adjustment	Rationale	Timeline	Expected Outcome
Define SLO for assessment in the 2013-2014 academic year.		Discuss new SLO in department meeting in September, 2013; agree upon SLO and implementation strategy. Complete assessment activity by May 2014.	New SLO
Define SLO for assessment in the 2014-2015 school year.		By end of 2013-2014 school year	New SLO
Discussion: We are committed in our Multi-Year Action Plan to revisiting SLOs 1-4 in the year 2015-2016, prior to the writing of our next 6-year report. However, our SLO #2, which we assessed in our alumni survey this past year, may easily be assessed each year between now and 2016. We as a department have been clear enough in our direction and decisive enough in the changes we have made, and in the resolutions we have individually and collectively formed, that we could reasonably expect to see improvement in this area well before the roll-out of the new major curriculum is complete.			

V. Appendices

- A. Prompts or instruments used to collect the data
 - B. Relevant assessment-related documents/samples (optional) [Include minutes of Department Retreat
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APPENDIX A

NOTE: The following is a text version of the alumni survey administered in May-July 2013. The on-line version, as it appears on the SurveyMonkey website is attractively formatted and interactive. The survey is easily displayed and the results easily displayed and analyzed on the website, which may be accessed with the username <WestmontModLangs> and the password <2012survey> at https://www.surveymonkey.com/MyAccount_Login.aspx?ep=%2fMySurveys.aspx.

Survey of Senior English Majors' Reading 2011-2013

MY NAME: _____

I graduated in the year (check one) 2012 _____ 2013 _____

PLEASE complete this survey within two weeks of receiving it and return it promptly by the electronic means provided below.

THANK YOU for devoting the time to take this survey and in that way helping the English Department at Westmont College measure the effectiveness of its own programs. We are well along in the process of revising our major. Future majors will not see the current list of three English literature options, three literature electives, and three literature and/or writing electives. Instead, they will see a list of 10 requirements, with options for satisfying each. The department hopes these requirements will ensure that each graduating senior has achieved the desired depth and range of study in the field of English. This survey is designed to see how well we are meeting those objectives even before the new major design is put into place. In the language of assessment, we're trying to establish baselines and benchmarks for future comparison.

Please answer honestly each one of the questions below, claiming to have studied the works in question only if you have completed assigned readings of the work in one of your courses or have carefully read the work outside of classes on your own initiative.

For each question, please provide the author's name and the title of that author's work which you have read. Follow the title with the course designation in this format: e.g., ENG-006. Give first priority to works you have studied in class. If you select a work that you have studied on your own, follow the title with the initials "OMO" (for "On My Own"). In the space provided, please supply any other information you are asked to recall.

SURVEY

1. I studied these works from more than 2 national traditions:
 - a. National tradition/author/title/course: _____

 - b. National tradition/author/title/course: _____

 - c. National tradition/author/title/course: _____

2. I studied works by both male authors and female authors:
 - a. Male author/title/course: _____

 - b. Female author/title/course: _____

3. I studied works from more than one ethnic minority:
 - a. Ethnic minority/author/title/course: _____

 - b. Ethnic minority/author/title/course: _____

4. I studied works by authors from more than one major religious tradition (e.g. Buddhist, Baha'i, Islamic, Hindu, Zoroastrian, etc.):
 - a. Major religion/author/title/course: _____

 - b. Major religion/author/title/course: _____

5. I studied works from the various major genres:
 - a. Poetry/author/title/course: _____

 - b. Drama/author/title/course: _____

c. Fiction/author/title/course: _____

d. Nonfiction/author/title/course: _____

e. Film/author/title/course: _____

6. I studied one work in the context of more than one course:

Author/title: _____

In course:

a. _____

b. _____

7. I studied one work from more than one critical perspective (e.g., psychoanalytical, Marxist, feminist, etc.):

Author/Title: _____

a. Critical perspective/course _____

b. Critical perspective/course _____

8. I studied different works by authors from more than one Christian denomination (e.g., Baptist, Anglican, Pentecostal):

a. Denomination/author/title/course: _____

b. Denomination/author/title/course: _____

9. I studied at least one extensive work of criticism:

Critical work: Author/title/course: _____

10. I studied at least one extensive work of literary theory:
Theory work: Author/title/course _____

11. I studied different works from different historical periods:
a. Historical period/author/title/course _____

- b. Historical period/author/title/course _____

- c. Historical period/author/title/course _____

12. I took a seminar:
Name of seminar/course number _____
Year (place an X after the appropriate year): First _____ Second _____
Third _____ Fourth _____
13. I did an off-campus and/or on-campus internship:
Off-campus: Name of internship _____
Year: First _____ Second _____ Third _____ Fourth _____
On-campus: Name of internship _____
Year: First _____ Second _____ Third _____ Fourth _____

THANK YOU investing this time in your alma mater and your major department. We hope you have enjoyed and benefitted from recalling the courses you have taken. We hope that with the abilities and attitudes you have formed, you will continue to learn and teach for a lifetime.

APPENDIX B

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
MULTI-YEAR PLAN
Revised as of September 15, 2013**

Outcomes	2012 - 2013	2013 - 2014	2014 - 2015	2015 - 2016	20XX - 20XX	20XX - 20XX	Means of Assessment, Benchmark	Who is in charge?	How the loop will be closed /has been closed?
1. Integrate borrowed material successfully	X						Evaluate Bibliographic Essays from Senior Seminar	TBD	Collect models of excellence; hold 0-credit workshops
2. Recognize literary works across range of lit. traditions	X						Gather GRE English Literature Subject Test Scores; also, embedded assessment by analysis of students' in-course reading, measured against a dept.-created grid; also, survey of recent alumni	Departmental assistant and student assistant, with Chair	Strategic adjustment of syllabi (individual and by department consensus for GE courses); revision of major curriculum
3. SLO #3		X							
4. SLO #4			X						
5. SLOs 1-4 (revisit)				X					
GE Projects									
6.									
7.									
8.									

Comments/Reflections:

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
CURRICULUM MAP

Goals	Thinking Critically	Reading Closely	Writing with Rhetorical Sensitivity
Learning Outcomes	<p>1. Students will take their own cultural and theological framework into account as they read literary texts, and articulate how this synergy between faith and art influences their angle of vision and expands their affections and sympathies.</p> <p>2. Students will demonstrate intellectual curiosity by examining their own assumptions, entertaining new ideas, engaging in research, analyzing texts, and evaluating evidence.</p>	<p>3. Students will demonstrate familiarity with literary history, able to compare and contrast the work of writers from different periods, and comprehend the content and continuities that shape the literary tradition.</p> <p>4. Students will recognize and articulate how historical, cultural, biographical, theoretical, or interdisciplinary contexts frame the work and shape its meaning.</p> <p>5. Students will comprehend the characteristics of different genres and the ways in which a given work can uphold or undermine those conventions.</p> <p>6. Students will identify and analyze literary devices, figurative language, syntactic strategies, and narrative techniques in order to understand why a writer employs such techniques and what effects they create.</p>	<p>7. Students will write correct, clear, comprehensible, persuasive, and engaging prose. This includes mastering the basics of grammar, style, and mechanics.</p> <p>8. Students will move skillfully among various modes of writing—especially explication, argument, and research essays—with awareness of their strategies and purposes.</p> <p>9. Students will incorporate the voices of others into their writing by accessing scholarly material with online bibliographic tools, smoothly weaving quotations within their own prose, and appropriately documenting their contributions in MLA style format.</p>
Where are the SLOs met? I introductory D developing M advanced	<p>I ENG 2, 6, 44, 45, 46, 47, 90</p> <p>D: Upper-division courses</p> <p>A: ENG 195, 117, 151, 152</p>	<p>I ENG 2, 6, 44, 45, 46, 47, 90</p> <p>D: Upper-division courses</p> <p>A: ENG 195, 117, 151, 152</p>	<p>I: ENG 2, 6, 44, 45, 46, 47, 90</p> <p>D: Upper-division courses</p> <p>A: ENG 104, 195, 117, 151, 152</p>
How are they assessed?	Senior essays	Pre- and post-tests in survey class Senior essays	Senior essays
Benchmark		All students score 50% or above on post-test and 5% or more score above 85%	
Link to the learning standards	Christian orientation, diversity, critical-interdisciplinary thinking, active societal and intellectual engagement, written and oral communication.	diversity, active societal and intellectual engagement, critical-interdisciplinary thinking, written and oral communication.	research and technology, written and oral communication

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
Minutes of August 21, 2013 Major Curriculum Revision Working “Retreat”

DEPT. OF ENGLISH
Major Curriculum Revision Work Day (aka “Department Retreat”)
at Kathryn and David Artuso’s house, Camarillo, CA

Thursday, August 22, 2013

Minutes

Members present: K. Stelmach Artuso, J. Friedman, S. Skripsky, P. Willis, S. Tang-Quan, P. Delaney, C. Larsen Hoeckley (presiding), R. VanderMey

1. Coffee, snacks, and greeting at 9:00 am
2. Paul D. offers devotions based on a reading from the 4th chapter of Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis*, re. Gregory of Tour’s pastoral activity and use of the vernacular in writing, underscoring the duty of the Christian to take interest in everyday and individual, personal events, as when we interact with our students. Paul opens with prayer.
3. Cheri invites us to mention books, poems, essays, or plays we love to teach. Her own choice would be *Jane Eyre*. Randy: poetry by Sufi master Hafiz. Kathryn: Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* and Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*; also, Edward Said on contrapuntal reading. Jamie: *Nonviolent Communication*, by Marshall Rosenberg, also Judith Halberstam re. queer identities. Sarah: Chapters in Jamie K. Smith’s *books*, also article, “How to Talk to Little Girls” and reading in preparations for co-teaching “Wisdom and Folly in World Literature” with Omedi Ochieng. Paul W.: Wendell Berry’s “*Fidelity*” (collection of short stories). Sharon: *Monkey Bridge* (re. Vietnam War experience). Paul D., Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; also, Sophie Treadwell, *Machinal*.

4. The Department discusses results of the alumni survey Randy sent out earlier in the summer, focusing especially on question #3: “I studied these works from more than 2 different national traditions”. This question follows from the Student Learning Outcome we isolated for assessment in the year 2012-2013. Out of 15 completing the survey, 13 answered the question. Out of 13, 100% named author/title/course for a work from one national tradition; 11, or 84.6% named these for a second national tradition; 7, or 53.8%, named these for a third national tradition. General agreement that the array of works cited by students is satisfying but that we would want to see 100% response re. the second and third national traditions. Points of discussion pertain to 1) reasons for the fall-off in percentages (are students reporting accurately or “arguing from silence”); 2) the possibility of altering #5 in the Revised Plan to require literature in at least three national traditions; 3) the relationships between this question and questions of unit count, “borrowing” courses from other majors, double- or triple-dipping, contents of an introduction to the major course, and the place of surveys in requirement #5.

ACTION #1: By consensus, we decide to alter requirement #5 in the revised major plan by 1) striking “each of” from the original wording of the first line; 2) striking “ENG-046 Survey of British Literature to 1800 (4)” and “ENG-047 Survey of British Literature 1800-Present (4)” from the list of options under the heading “**British Literature**”; and 3) under the heading “**Anglophone Literature**” to list ENG-044 Studies in World Literature (4), ENG-165 Topics in World Literature (4), and ENG-185 Twentieth-Century Irish Literature (4). After ENG-165 we agree to strike the words “—when structured to deal with one national or regional tradition (e.g. Indian, Caribbean, African) or a comparison of two national traditions (e.g. Welsh and Irish).”

ACTION #2: After discussing overall unit count and questions of how many requirements any one course may meet, we agree by consensus to add a preamble to the revised “English Major Requirements” to be worded as follows: “An English major requires 40 units. At least 24 of those units must be in literature. Any one course may meet no more than two of the requirements below.”

5. Cheri re-introduces the request from the GE committee that the department submit its “comments and reflections regarding the current interpretive statement for the Reading Imaginative Literature GE area,” specifically focusing on the shaded sentence, “Specifically excluded are courses that focus on contemporary commercial genres such as baseball fiction, spy thrillers, science fiction, romance novels, pornography, murder mysteries, children’s literature and Westerns.”

ACTION #3: After discussion, we agree to delete the shaded sentence. We also agree to modify the previous sentence to say, “. . . will focus on works chosen for their literary artistry rather than their commercial or primarily sociological or doctrinal appeal.” The whole paragraph, then, will be worded as follows:

“Content: The focus will be on such imaginative genres as lyric and narrative poetry, prose fiction, creative non-fiction, and drama. The poems, stories, and plays we read will raise some of the enduring questions about what it is like to experience love, to endure loss, to encounter the other, to cope with discrimination, to cling to faith, and to entertain doubt—ultimately what it means to be human and have a sense of stewardship for one’s life. While we recognize that thoughtful writers can illuminate any human experience, courses fulfilling this requirement will focus on works chosen for their literary artistry rather than for their commercial or primarily sociological or doctrinal appeal. Specifically included are courses focusing on works that require attention to diction (including sensory and connotative language, simile, and metaphor), image patterns, characterization, character foils, structure, setting, narrative point of view, literary allusion, and literary content. Work that falls within such a capacious category includes drama from Sophocles to Shakespeare to Stoppard, prose fiction from Jane Austen to Toni Morrison to Chinua Achebe, poetry from Dante to Gerard Manley Hopkins to Eavan Boland.”

6. Cheri reminds us that our change in major curriculum design needs to go before the full faculty by November, so that it can be approved in time for catalog revision in the spring. To expedite our work, we agree to form working groups on four key topics: 1) Writing courses, 2) an introductory course (“cradle”), 3) the pace and process of a roll-out of the new major, and 4) the definition of a “capstone” course (“grave”). We agree to have preliminary discussions on these topics after lunch and then to schedule discussions at future department meetings to consider the working groups’ proposals.
7. Kathryn raises the question of whether ENG-006 should count toward the major.

ACTION #4: The Department affirms by consensus that ENG-006 will count toward the major under the new design.

8. 12:00 Noon: We break for a one-hour lunch.

9. 1:00 pm: We resume. Kathryn asks for recommendations for literary scholars or creative writers who could focus on questions of faith as presenters at the May 2014 CCL conference at Westmont. Names proposed: Mark Jarman (poet), Tanya Runyan (author of a CCL Book of the Year), Naomi Shihad Nye (had her at last CCL here), Leila Aboulela (Western-trained novelist, conservatively Islamic), Paul Huston (fiction writer living in Arroya Grande), Karen Lee (from Vanguard).
10. Refining the Curricular Map (discussion based on Randy's April 9, 2013 document, listing six questions.
- a. ENG-006 again: we are reminded by Cheri and Jamie that ENG-006 is taught more interactively now than in the past; would like members of the department to stop advising students not to take survey.
 - b. Introduction to Literary Study: Sarah mentions Calvin's course as a model, with its focus on literary history, critical method, and vocation (both theoretical and practical treatment). Paul D. speaks in favor of options to satisfy the introductory course requirement, so long as we require close analysis, writing, study of more than one genre, and pay attention to issues of race, gender, ethnicity, and class.
 - c. Cheri asks: what is our stance on letting course other than English count toward the English major? The question is prompted by the Theater Arts Department's request that, in a *quid pro quo* arrangement, we consider giving English major credit for TA-001, Great Literature of the Stage. We decide to take up the question of the place of ENG-106, Language Acquisition, in the major at a later date.

ACTION #5: We decide, by consensus, that TA-001 should count for the English major for those students who are ENG/TA double majors. Cheri will communicate this to the TA department.
 - d. Capstone course: Discuss revolves at first around the question of whether we might conflate requirements 8-10 on the current draft of the curriculum revision plan. Randy and Kathryn take notes and agree to process what was said and to present a proposal to the department at our September 3 meeting.

ACTION #6: We agree to cancel requirement #9 on the revised major when we roll it out and, instead, fold the research paper requirement into the major author courses, maybe into the Introduction to the Major course, and maybe into the Capstone course, as an option.

11. Cheri presents a meeting schedule for the semester:

Sept.	3	Capstone Courses
	17	Introductory Course
Oct.	1	
	8	
	29	
Nov.	12	
Dec.	3	

12. Working groups are formed to discuss four main issues:

Introductory Course: Jamie F., Paul D., Sharon T-Q (Sept. 17)

Writing: Sarah S., Paul W.

Capstone Course: Kathryn A., Randy VM

Roll-Out: Three former English department chairs and Cheri will consult

13. Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m. with warm thanks all around to Kathryn and David Artuso for so warmly and generously hosting us.

Respectfully submitted,

Randall J. VanderMey
Department Meeting Secretary

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
Capstone Design Proposal Designed by Profs. Artuso and VanderMey
Discussed at the September 3, 2013 Meeting of the English Department

Department of English
August 28, 2013

Proposed policy for Capstone Courses in the new revised major:

Kathryn and Randy volunteered to weigh the department's discussion at the working retreat and derive from it a policy for the rest of the department to consider. We met at noon on Tuesday, August 27, and came up with a series of premises on which we could both agree. We recommend these to the rest of the department for consideration.

We agreed that to satisfy the "capstone" requirement, a course (or experience) ought to

- Qualify for 4 units, not 2 or less
- serve a distinctive function appropriate to students in their last year of the major and 7th or 8th semester at the college (i.e., not be simply "another course," including simply another seminar);
- "lean forward" toward life beyond college, even as it invites synthesis of the students' prior work and exercises students' previously developed skills;
- focus on the students' interests and learning rather than primarily on the professor's;
- place leadership in the hands of the students
- require a substantial original project of each student, drawing upon the student's own interests;
- provide options to accommodate all of our majors, with their different interests, including creative writing as well as literary critical and theoretical work;
- involve students in collaborative work with other students
- demand substantial amounts (say, 15-pp.) of mature and well-researched critical reflection ("metacognitive" work) in writing, even if the rest of the requirement is met by a portfolio of the student's own creative writing;
- require roughly comparable work of all who take it—those who are preparing for grad school as well as those who are preparing for other fields or occupations

In spirit, we want the capstone course to open up to a future life of critically-informed engagement with literature, rather than to end in the isolation of the cubicle. We want capstone courses to be demanding enough to be respected, yet flexible and fresh enough to generate fresh joy and aspiration in our field. We want the capstone course to be a place in which students take command of their own learning, yet experience the pleasures and challenges of literate community.

We would want courses or experiences to meet these criteria in explicit ways and for the department to provide some sort of oversight so that these standards are maintained.

Examples of courses or experiences that would **meet** these criteria:

- Major Honors Project (the collaborative element is satisfied through the student's work with an advisory committee and through the public defense of the project)
- A seminar built around a theme (such as tragedy, love, journey, transformation, etc.) in which students may choose what authors to study and in what forms to write, as long as they produce at least the required volume of critically reflective, researched writing and assume leadership
- A purpose-built seminar such as the "book club" seminar plan presented by Randy, as long as the course would demand a sufficient amount of researched critical writing
- A creative project devised by a group of students and approved by the department which would meet all of the criteria above
- A course in which students are invited/required to revisit and substantially expand upon earlier work, as long as all of the other criteria above are met
- An England Semester course or creative project specially adapted to satisfy all of the above criteria

Examples of courses or experiences that would **not** meet the criteria:

- A seminar focused on a single author of the professor's choice

- A semester as editor-in-chief of one of the student publications, unless special arrangements were made by petition to the department to assure that the criteria above were met
- An “ordinary” off-campus or on-campus internship
- Any “ordinary” upper- or lower-division course or tutorial in either a creative or critical area of study