

English and Creative Writing/Literature Assessment Report 2022-23 AY

Courses: English and Creative Writing courses that satisfy the Columbia Core Literature (HL) requirement.

Summary

In the 2022-23 Academic Year, the department examined student performance in Literature (HL) requirement of the Columbia Core. Students are required to complete three to six credits in Literature courses (out of a total of nine in the category of Literature and Humanities). In January, all faculty who taught Literature courses in the Fall 2022 semester were asked to identify the assignment in their courses that best embraces all, or a majority of, the Literature Program Learning outcomes. A total of eleven faculty responded, representing eighteen total sections. A panel of two Literature faculty reviewed the student work and assessed it using a rubric based on the four learning outcomes, with the addition of one more category ("Assignment Completion"). In addition to the student work, the specific assignment parameters were provided to the panel for assignment context. The type of student work ranged from traditional essays to journal entries to exams to interpretive pieces.

Overall, the panel found some of the student work to be of extremely high quality, with many demonstrating a close reading of the texts and providing evidence for their analysis. They also noted the wide range of assignment types identified by faculty, many of which gave students significant opportunities for creativity. They also noted that the Literature learning outcomes might be too broad and ambitious for a 1 to 2 course general education requirement.

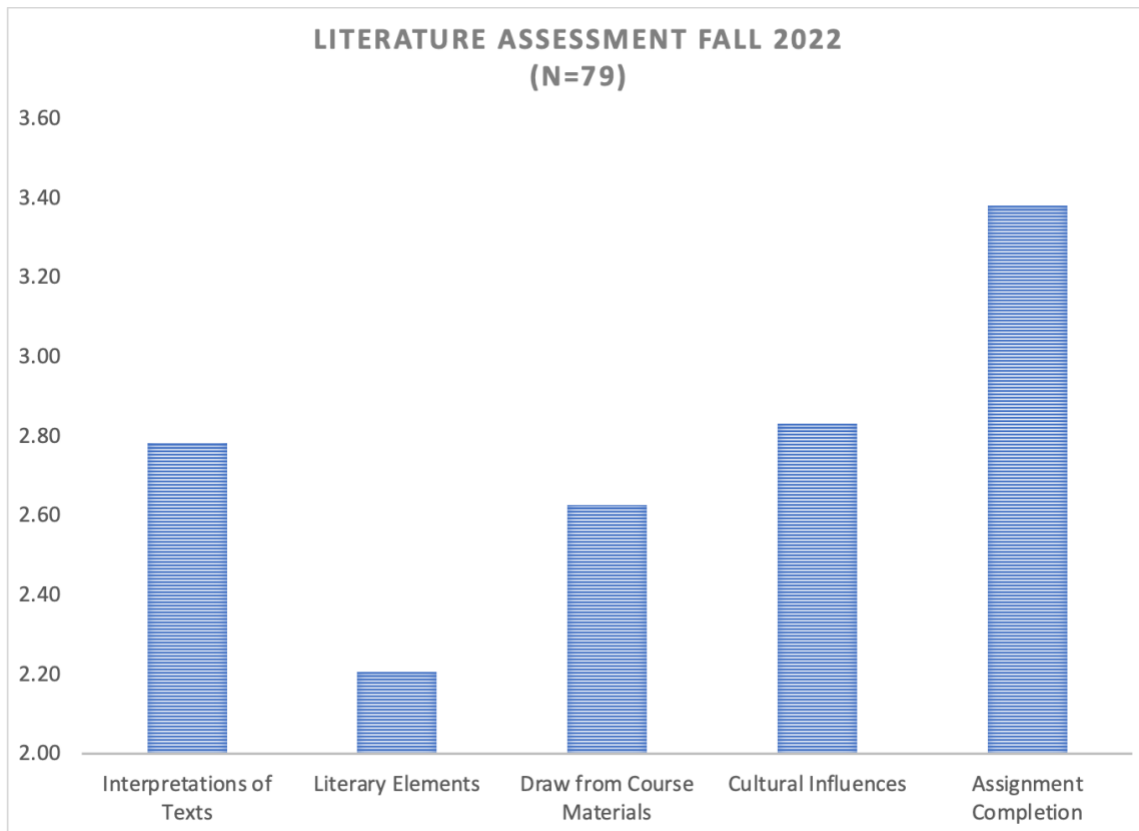
The Literature Program Learning Outcomes:

Students should be able to:

1. Write fresh interpretations of texts and/or issues in literary studies in which you 1) perform a reasonable close reading by analyzing relevant literary elements (techniques, themes, forms/genres, stylistic choices, or other literary devices), and 2) make appropriate references to relevant texts.
2. Indicate how you (might) use or adapt literary elements (techniques, themes, forms/genres, stylistic choices, or other literary devices) used by writers in this course for your own development in the arts and communications.
3. Draw upon course materials to develop further, meaningful questions about this course, other literature courses, or other areas of the arts and communications.
4. Demonstrate how common or culturally specific heritages, perspectives, histories, and/or belief systems influenced the writers in this course and the forms or genres in which they wrote. Demonstrate how common or culturally specific heritages, perspectives, histories, and/or belief systems influenced the writers in this course and the forms or genres in which they wrote.

Results:

Category	Mean
Interpretations of Texts	2.78
Literary Elements	2.21
Draw from Course Materials	2.63
Cultural Influences	2.83
Assignment Completion	3.38



Panelists were asked to comment on the project.

1. What surprised you about the results?

Panelist 1:

I enjoyed reading through the various literature assignments and students' interpretations and close readings of the texts. While I expected the students' essays to be good, what surprised me the most was how great the essays were. They were better than I had

anticipated. I thought students did a great job with closely reading the texts and providing evidence for their analysis. I was impressed with the creativity and level of analysis in the essays. The attention to the cultural and historical background was very good, as well. I was also surprised at the variety of creative assignments.

Panelist 2:

I was a bit surprised that the last category, assignment completion, outranked categories of creativity. I expected our students to score highest on "fresh interpretation," with the parameters of the assignments left behind. Not the case at all. This goes to show that the students are still focused on following directions more (as a whole) more than interpreting the assignment in their own way. Some of the assignments were helpfully open-ended, while some had so many expectations, it felt daunting from my perspective.

2. What did not surprise you about the results?

Panelist 1:

When reading the results of the assessment, I was not surprised to read that the course outcomes that had the highest mean scores (aside from Assignment Completion) were Interpretations of Texts and Cultural Influences. I felt that the fulfillment of these two outcomes was the strongest in the essays I read. I also was not surprised that the Literary Elements outcome had the lowest mean score. This seems to be an area that was not focused on closely in the assignments and the essays that I read. I also was not surprised that the essays did not fulfill all four of the course outcomes. I think it would be rather difficult for one assignment to fulfill all four course outcomes and for all four outcomes to be adequately met in a semester.

Panelist 2:

Given the range of assignments, as well as the course level, I was not surprised to see that some students appeared very adept at achieving the assessment goals and others did not. We have some graduate-level pieces here, but also some journal entries from students less accustomed to writing or analysis. Given the gap, perhaps it would be helpful to more strongly emphasize the assessment goals in the upper-level courses. If students are not experienced or prepared to engage in a basic level of analysis, interpretation, etc. or do not really understand how to use texts in their assignments, we might have to reconfigure.

3. Based on your participation in this project, what are the implications for curriculum and pedagogy?

Panelist 1:

This assessment project has demonstrated that students are skilled in crafting solid literary analysis essays, closely reading texts, and providing textual evidence to support their reading. Students also show understanding of the cultural and historical influences of the literature and take this background into account in their analysis.

Finally, the assessment project has demonstrated to me that it would be rather difficult for one assignment to fulfill all four course outcomes. As we discussed in our meeting, it may be wise to reconsider some of the outcomes, particularly the Literary Elements outcome.

Panelist 2:

I think the department needs to discuss what goals it privileges more. Do we want our students to produce creative, original work in a variety of forms or do we want standardization in terms of more formal literary analysis? Do we continue to emphasize ties to each student's major (see this topic through their own lens) or do we push for more directed interpretations? This will inform HOW and WHY we create these assignments. For example, I allow students the option of adapting assignment a bit, but we discuss first. That would obviously change if the department decided to focus more on traditional analysis.