

Humanities General Education Annual Assessment Report 2013-2014

I. Introduction

The Humanities General Education Program serves all Oregon Tech degree students, who are each required to take nine credits in this general education area. The program offers courses in art, literature, humanities, music, philosophy, and foreign languages. The program also offers a number of online courses to serve degree completion students as well as on-campus students.

As of next year, the program will also offer a minor called "ALPs." ALPs is an 18-credit minor built around courses in Arts, Literature, and Philosophy (ART, ENG, HUM, and PHIL), and it allows students to chart their own "route" to the "summit," depending on their specific interests. Currently, there are five suggested "routes," or specializations:

- Art
- Digital Technology and Culture
- Literature
- Ethics
- Philosophy of Science/Logic

Or, students can complete the minor in whatever way they see fit, making their own route. The ALPs minor was approved by CPC in 2014 and is now in the general catalog.

II. Program Purpose, Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes

The Humanities faculty reviewed and updated the program purpose, objectives, and learning outcomes during a spring humanities faculty meeting in May 2013. The faculty affirms the below statements:

Humanities General Education Program Purpose

The Humanities General Education Program provides for the study of fine arts, literature, humanities, drama, film, music, philosophy and foreign languages which allows students the opportunity to learn specific methods for critically evaluating human beliefs, values and conduct within various conceptual frameworks.

Global Humanities Learning Objectives

Students will:

1. Critical Thinking

- Become better critical thinkers by learning to identify, clarify and evaluate important ideas and arguments.
- Learn to challenge standard assumptions by asking constructive questions and presenting coherent perspectives as the result of their questioning process.

2. Communication

- Improve their ability to communicate effectively using written, oral, and/or visual media.

3. Lifelong Learning and Independent Learning Skills

- Develop better information literacy by recognizing the different cultural, social, political, etc. contexts in which meaning is made and through which it

is disseminated.

4. Teamwork

- Learn to coordinate and cooperate with others to achieve shared goals.

Discipline-Specific Humanities Learning Objectives

Students will:

5. Cultural Awareness (Literature)

- Develop a familiarity with other cultural perspectives, which is essential to success in our globalized world.

6. Understanding of Ethical Practice (Philosophy)

- Gain greater ethical awareness, by grasping theory and being able to apply theory to particular situations.

7. Design (Art)

- Knows the elements and principles of design as they relate to the expressive and communicative potential of two-dimensional, three-dimensional, and/or digital media.

III. Three-Year Cycle for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

We have created a new assessment cycle based on our new learning outcomes:

Learning Outcomes	'13-14	'14-15	'15-16	'16-17	'17-18	'18-19
Critical Thinking	X		X			X
Communication		X			X	
Lifelong Learning and Independent Learning Skills			X			X
Teamwork		X			X	
Cultural Awareness (Literature)				X		
Understanding of Ethical Practice (Philosophy)				X		
Design (Art)				X		

Table 1 General Education Assessment Cycle

IV. Assessment Activities

Dr. Ben Bunting conducted a formal assessment of one student-learning outcome during the 2013-2014, SLO #1 Critical Thinking.

SLO #1. Critical Thinking:

- **Become better critical thinkers by learning to identify, clarify and evaluate important ideas and arguments.**
- **Learn to challenge standard assumptions by asking constructive questions and presenting coherent perspectives that are results of the questioning process.**

Direct Assessment #1

Dr. Bunting assessed this outcome in two sections of HUM 148, Intro to Humanities II, in winter 2014 term using rubric-scored essays. These essays were from the “Comparison Paper” assignment, in which students were tasked with comparing a contemporary piece of media (short story, novel, graphic novel, film, television show, video game, etc.) with one of the class texts. The primary goal of the assignment was to identify and describe similarities between the two works in terms of character archetypes, particular plot tropes, and/or larger themes. It was expected that the description of these similarities would be supported by the use of evidence (mainly quotations and specific examples) taken from both works. Students were encouraged but not required to avoid focusing entirely on similarities between the two works, and to discuss differences in the context of social, historical, or cultural changes that might account for those differences (for example, a few students compared Shelley's *Frankenstein* with more modern “mad scientist” stories to show the similarities between the two, but also how we've become less sympathetic toward the mad scientist archetype over time. This assignment was based in part on daily online posts the students were expected to complete that tasked them with responding to questions about the readings. These questions typically focused on things like identifying character types, discussing larger themes across multiple course readings, and so on. Generally speaking, students did well in their comparisons of similarities between the works, but had trouble expressing the nuances of the more complicated optional part of the assignment. Seventy-five students completed the course. We set the minimum acceptable performance at 75% to reflect the fact that while this is a 100-level course, this assignment is the students' primary test of critical thinking.

Dr. Bunting rated the proficiency of students using the performance criteria described in the table below:

Performance Criteria	Assessment Method	Measurement Scale	Minimum Acceptable Performance	Results
Identify	Student essay, rubric	1-4 Scale, % at 3 or 4	75% at 3 or 4	80%
Clarify	Student essay, rubric	1-4 Scale, % at 3 or 4	75% at 3 or 4	80%
Evaluate	Student essay, rubric	1-4 Scale, % at 3 or 4	75% at 3 or 4	80%

Table 2 Assessment Results for SLO #1 in HUM 148, winter term 2014

V. Summary of Student Learning

SLO #1. Critical Thinking:

- **Become better critical thinkers by learning to identify, clarify and evaluate important ideas and arguments.**
- **Learn to challenge standard assumptions by asking constructive questions and presenting coherent perspectives that are results of the questioning process.**

Strengths: Nearly all students were able to put together an effective comparison that identified similar thematic and/or character elements in each text and then explicated why these similarities reinforced the continued cultural importance of the course texts.

Weaknesses: Many students had difficulty moving from the “basic” comparison method described above to also discuss the differences between the works and to explore the possibilities of why those differences might have come into being (audience expectations, limits of a particular expressive medium, changing cultural attitudes, historical factors, and so on). Also, students frequently had difficulty correctly documenting their evidence and including direct quotations (instead of just relating a paraphrased, anecdotal version of a plot point or character description) when they were discussing a work in a medium other than print.

Actions: Next term, I will be changing the assignment sheet to make the comparison of the differences between the works a mandatory part of the assignment to require students to dig into this more difficulty side of the comparison. During lectures, I will make clearer that the historical and cultural context of each work that I present isn't merely a pointless “introduction” before we start talking about the reading, but an important part of the class that the students will have to understand and discuss to do well on the paper assignment. The assignment sheet will also stress that citation and source documentation

cannot be lacking simply because the work a student is writing about isn't a print book.

VI. Changes Resulting from Assessment

According to last year's assessment report, our goals as new faculty this year were to: 1) consider Oregon Tech's mission and best practices of its academic peers, 2) develop and offer new courses while eliminating others, 3) bring forth a proposal for a new minor based in humanities, and 4) take on the related assessment activities. We achieved all of these goals, while evaluating our current student learning outcomes and changing them to reflect the new orientation of humanities at Oregon Tech.

Since our focus in humanities this year was the revitalization of existing courses, the creation of new courses, the approval of the ALPs minor, and the development of new student learning objectives, our assessment this year was minimal and not an extremely accurate representation of our students' work. Our main goal for next year is to have a robust assessment of two of our new student learning objectives and to rigorously evaluate how accurately our new assessment plan reflects our students' work. From there, we will then make any changes that seem necessary.