

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

DEPARTMENT OF
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

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Associate Dean Yvonne Ozzello
302 South Hall
U. Wisconsin


Dear Yvonne,

Enclosed is our departmental assessment report. I confess that I found the parameters for this report a bit fuzzy, and chose to divide my account into two sections that made far more sense to me than the categories originally suggested. Thus I have one section called "Assessing the Department", and another on "Assessing our Students." I hope that the fact that I have therefore not written an "Abstract" and a "Narrative" will not make this unduly confusing.

I greatly appreciate the funding you made available to Comparative Literature for the assessment report. The survey we were able to conduct among current undergraduates has been immensely useful to us as we think about ways of expanding and strengthening our curriculum, and the extremely positive feedback we received about the major and our faculty and TAs has been quite heartening. Again, thank you for your support in this and in so much else.

I hope that you'll find the report useful as you prepare for the accreditation process, and I would be happy to speak with you at any time regarding any questions or concerns.

Sincerely yours,


Jane Tylus
Chair

College of Letters and Science Assessment Report

Department or Program Name: COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Assessing the Department

As the chart below indicates, the Dept. of CL has been and will continue to be involved in a number of indirect assessment tools aimed at determining how well the department is doing. This year we have been able to add to those tools in two ways: the departmental self-study, an exhaustive consideration of both our undergraduate and graduate major (among many other things), and a survey of our undergraduates. Thanks to the generosity of the College of L&S, the Department of Comparative Literature was able to survey not only its majors presently on campus, as well as several recent alums, but all 461 undergraduates currently taking Comparative Literature courses. While we were primarily interested in the responses of our majors, we also took into careful consideration the data from other undergraduates presently enrolled in our classes.

The self-study, which involved a consideration of our program over the last decade, entailed departmental scrutiny of our requirements for graduate students and in the major, as well as discussion with students and recent graduates. Our number of graduate students has remained fairly constant over the last decade (although next year it will go up considerably; thus far 9 have accepted to come for 1998-99). Our number of majors has vacillated over the last ten years; it is presently at 19, and recent receptions and programs for undergraduates potentially interested in the major will, I believe, increase this number significantly. We were quite pleased by the statistics involving placement: 60% of our recent Ph.D. graduates hold tenure-track or tenured positions; several of our graduates hold visiting professorships and post-docs. Of our undergraduate majors over the last ten years about whom we were able to find current information, roughly 35% have gone on to graduate school in literature or related fields; 30% have gone on to professional school, predominantly in law. Alumni whom we contacted for the self-study felt genuinely pleased with the training and advising they had received. Virtually the only concern that came from our Ph.D.s and M.A.s involved a perceived lack of pedagogical training. To this end, the Dept. of Comparative Literature has proposed a new course, CL 731, entitled "Teaching in the Discipline", mandatory for all teaching assistants. It will be offered for the first time in fall, 1998 as a team-taught, one-credit course.

The feedback from our survey of current majors and undergraduates was extremely positive. There was virtual unanimity about the high quality of our faculty, lecturers, and teaching assistants. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest score, faculty scored an average 4.40 for knowledge of the material; 4.14 for interest and enthusiasm, and 3.98 for accessibility. Scores for our TAs were equally high: 4.22 for accessibility, 4.07 for enthusiasm and interest. Students agreed that their courses have greatly improved their ability to read critically, analyze arguments, formulate arguments

in writing, and think comparatively. Over half of the respondents said that they would take more CL courses if they had the opportunity to do so. Responses to our required capstone course for majors, CL 690, was also very positive. Perhaps most importantly, student responses in regard to the question, "What has been most meaningful so far about your experiences in CL?" reflected excitement about the range of texts offered, appreciation for the sophisticated level of analysis, the generally small class sizes which afford ample opportunity for discussion (in honors courses and 300-level courses), and the exposure to theory and secondary criticism. If I may quote from one senior major in CL whose response was fairly typical: "Certainly one of the greatest things about CL classes are the extra activities, going to plays or movies or other performances . . . making it more than just school, or just another grade on the transcript. The classes thus became integrated into "real life". . . Also invaluable is the personal and direct attention given by professors who are truly interested in students. The wide variety of world literature represented throughout the classes is also something I very much appreciate!"

Three concerns did arise from the surveys which the department will address at its final meeting for AY 1997-8:

1. More courses in Comparative Literature, particularly at the 300-400 level.

While this concern might be partly addressed by attempting to cross-list with other departments (several majors suggested that they would like to see more crosslisted courses, especially with language departments, but also with other humanities and arts departments), it would obviously be alleviated by the addition of more faculty. At present, because we are so understaffed, we can offer only three 300- and 400-level courses a semester. Students have found it difficult to complete the major in four years, particularly since so many of them attend Study Abroad Programs and are therefore gone from Madison for one or two semesters. We have requested two FTEs for 1999-2000 in the hopes of alleviating the problem.

2. More attentiveness to writing (at the 200-lecture level) and to working collaboratively. The two questions that drew comparatively low responses were "Have CL courses improved your ability to write clearly and grammatically?" (3.02 on a scale of 5) and "Have CL courses encouraged you to work collaboratively?" (2.72). The former score may well reflect the fact that over half of the students who responded to the survey were from our large lecture courses this semester, CL 202 and 203, in which our teaching assistants are teaching 35% and 40% loads. Such a teaching load necessitates few writing assignments. On the other hand, students from our small honors classes and our 300-level classes gave higher scores in response to the question. We would like to consider how we might be able to enhance the writing component of our large lecture courses, as well as how we might encourage students to work collaboratively across the board. We will address these concerns in our course "Teaching in the Discipline" next fall.

3. More team-teaching. A number of students suggested how much they enjoyed guest lecturers and team-taught courses such as Comp Lit 357, currently being offered with Scandinavian Studies and taught by four professors. The Curriculum Committee is

currently exploring possibilities for more team-taught courses; this would be greatly facilitated by more flexibility within the College as to how credit hours are counted.

Assessing our students:

The department uses a wide range of assessment tools, as indicated by the chart below. Many of those tools have been in place for some time. Our capstone seminar, CL 690, was instituted in the spring of 1994 for all of our undergraduate majors. Another "entry level course" to the major, CL 310, was recently made mandatory for all majors. It serves as an important gauge of undergraduate performance at a critical time in our majors' careers, as they move from the broad 200-level courses into our small and intense 300-level classes. Our advising has improved over recent years; students now are asked to meet each semester with the department advisor. Additionally, this year we have benefitted from the scrutiny afforded by the departmental self-study, and from the detailed survey we handed out to all of our students currently enrolled in CL courses. Finally, thanks to generous donations of our alumni, for the first time this year, the Dept. of Comparative Literature is pleased to offer the Maria Tai Wolff Undergraduate Achievement Award in Comparative Literature. Majors in the department are in the process of submitting essays written for CL classes; a committee will read the essays in the next two weeks, and the award will be presented to a deserving CL major at our final department meeting on May 14. Reading a number of essays generated from within the department will not only enable us to decide on a talented and deserving undergraduate for the award, it will also give us greater insight into our majors' research and writing skills, and facilitate our ongoing shaping of our curriculum to fit student needs.

For our graduate program, we currently have in place a number of indicators which we will continue to use in the future. These include the following:

first year:

- Translation exam, a four-hour exam in which students must demonstrate expertise both in translating from a foreign language into English, and in *explication de texte*;
- Comparative Literature 702, "Introduction to Comparative Methodology," an entry-level course mandatory for all first- and second-year students.

second year:

- Master's Exam: a written 25-page exam on questions submitted by a committee addressing a formal list of literary and theoretical texts, followed by an oral defense

post-master's:

- Comparative Literature 822, "Seminar in Translation", mandatory course for all prelim students; trains and tests them in translation skills and theory;
- preliminary exams: written and oral exams in three areas of Comparative Literature;
- dissertation proposal meeting: 6-8 weeks after the oral prelims, dissertators must meet with their committee regarding their proposal; the meeting is used for discussion and, if applicable, approval of the proposal

-- thesis oral exam after dissertation is completed; four department members and one outside non-reader constitute the committee.

Additionally, every year since 1994, the Graduate Review Committee has met to discuss student progress. The Committee reviews graduate students' portfolios in the spring and sends out letters to all graduate students to inform them of their progress and to remind them of necessary requirements.

The survey given to our undergraduate majors and students has proven to be extremely valuable in assessing our curriculum and the content of our major. We will be distributing a survey next year to our graduate students in an effort to solicit from them comments about the program. Finally, we will also be continuing our effort, begun for the 10-year Self Study, to remain in contact with alumni and survey them periodically about the major. To this end, it will be essential to implement if not an exit interview with our majors, at least an exit survey so that we will be better informed as to the whereabouts of our graduates. We are planning on developing such a form for 1998-9.

Assessment Tools Used:

Direct Indicators

	Undergraduate	Graduate
National Exams	_____	_____
Local Exams	_____	_____
Capstone Course(s)	annually since 1994	_____
Embedded Testing	mandatory CL 310 since 1995	translation exam; mandatory 702 and 822 since 1986 and 1995 respectively
Student Portfolios	_____	Graduate Review Committee examines portfolios of each graduate student each spring since 1994
Review theses & dissertations	review of all UG theses submitted for dept. award; as of May 1998	oral exams for MA and Ph.D
Performance Evaluations	_____	_____
Pre and Post Testing	_____	translation exam first year

Indirect Indicators

	Undergraduate	Graduate
Student Surveys	April, 1998	spring, 1999
Exit Interviews	exit forms/letters to Be developed for 1998-9	exit forms/letters to be developed for 1998-9
Alumni Surveys	fall, 1997	fall, 1997
External Reviews	10-year dept. review, spring 1998	10-year dept. review, spring 1998