

Department of English
Assessment Story
Spring 2009

A few years ago our Director of Undergraduate Studies and the Associate Chair realized that enrollments were falling in the Introduction to Modern Literature courses (207 and 208). These courses had been courses of first choice for students seeking to satisfy the L&S literature breadth requirement. Using lecturers and TAs in these courses to get input from students, and using feedback from SOAR, we learned that students increasingly saw these two courses as limited and predictable options, compared to the growing buffet of courses that had arisen across the College to help meet the requirement, some of which did not require any essay writing. In response to these findings, the Department of English retained the writing requirements for these courses, but dropped the 207-208 structure and invented a series of topics courses that faculty members could design. These are now the courses numbered 155 through 172, and include such topics as "The Bible as Literature," "The Representation of Home in American Literature," "Shakespeare," "Scripts and Selves," "Fantasy and Science Fiction" and many other topics. This made the teaching of these introductory courses much more attractive to faculty members and more appealing to students. We also added an additional credit-hour to some of these courses to provide Comm-B instruction in one or more of the lectures. These changes have been a remarkable success.