HUM 1B Assessment GELOs 2, 4 and 5  
Spring, 2016

This cohort evaluated students by selecting 15 papers randomly from a section of HUM 1B (Prof. Kenneth Peter). Names and identifying information were removed. Five papers were assigned to each of three faculty (Professors James Lindahl, Tova Cooper and Hanns Hohmann). The three faculty members read the papers and rated each paper for each of the 3 GLOs pertaining to Critical Thinking. The rating scheme was as follows:

"5" equals "Ample evidence that this objective is fully developed in the paper."  "1" equals "No evidence that this objective is developed in the paper."  "2" 3" and "4" are intervals.

The actual assignment was as follows:

**Write a 5-7 page essay, following the advice in the essay writing guide and additional online resources. Here is the topic:**

*Some criticize Machiavelli for having a perverse sense of ethics, while others admire him as the first “realist” in modern political thought. Some criticize More for being too idealistic, while others admire him for standing up to tyranny and taking principles seriously. Write an ARGUMENTATIVE essay where you takes sides in these debates, endorsing one interpretation of Machiavelli, endorsing one interpretation of More, and explaining why you favor Machiavelli over More or More over Machiavelli. Base ALL your opinions on direct analysis of quotations from More or Machiavelli—show me directly what you admire and what you criticize.*

The data were as follows:

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Average for GELO 2 = 3.9  
Average for GELO 4 = 3.6  
Average for GELO 5 = 2.7
% 3 or above in GELO 2 = 93%
% 3 or above in GELO 4 = 87%
% 3 or above in GELO 5 = 40%

Analysis
Nearly all students demonstrated adequate understanding of GLOs 2 and 4, and many were superior. Most students do not yet demonstrate an adequate understanding of GLO5. This objective demands a deeper understanding of inductive and deductive logic which is instructed next semester in HUM 2A, so we are neither surprised nor concerned by this result. Overall, we are pleased that our students understand and demonstrate the ability to pose evidence-based arguments in dialogue with other points-of-view and also can identify and evaluate assumptions. The handful of students who do not meet these GLOs receive extensive feedback and will have another year in the program to bring their analysis up to par.
GELO 2: Students should be able to present effective arguments that use a full range of legitimate rhetorical and logical strategies to articulate and explain their positions on complex issues in dialogue with other points of view.

Out of 98* students assessed:

- **55** mastered GELO 2 at a high level (averaged a “B+” or better on assessment activities)
- **30** mastered GELO 2 at an average level (averaged a “C” or better on assessment activities)
- **13** either failed to master GELO 2, or did so at a marginal level (“C-” or below on assessment activities)

* Professor Scaff reports that two students failed to attempt any of the GELO or ENG assignments. These students are not included in this report.

We assessed GELO 2 in a number of ways. **Professor Wood** used his Persuasive Letter Assignment. In this assignment, students are expected to produce an original and compelling refutation of an idea raised by one of the primary authors on this semester’s reading list in the form of a personal letter. In this letter, students must convince the implied reader that s/he should reconsider an important point about which s/he has written. **Professor Smay** used the second and final draft that students submitted for his Research Essay Assignment. In this assignment students are instructed to advance an original thesis about a philosophical or literary work, and to defend that thesis by reference both to that work and to at least three pieces of scholarship pertinent to the argument they are making. **Professor Trost** used her Research Project Assignment. In this assignment, students are expected to conduct database research on a topic related to the work of one of the primary authors on this semester’s reading list and compose an essay based on this research (after submitting a working thesis and annotated bibliography). In the research essay, students must successfully make an argument supporting their thesis, using database sources as their evidence. **Professor Scaff** assembled this data from the grades that the students received on their papers.

GELO 4: Students should be able to identify and critically evaluate the assumptions in and the context of an argument.

Out of 98 students assessed:

- **57** mastered GELO 4 at a high level (averaged a “B+” or better on assessment activities)
34 mastered GELO 4 at an average level (averaged a “C” or better on assessment activities)

7 either failed to master GELO 4, or did so at a marginal level (“C-” or below on assessment activities)

We assessed GELO 4 in a number of ways. Professor Wood assessed GELO 4 using his Critical Thinking Essay. In this assignment, students are expected to select and analyze one brief excerpt from one of our Marx readings. Evaluating the persuasiveness of their chosen excerpt, students must support their analysis with at least two arguments, ensuring that at least one proof specifically reflect upon Marx’s broader cultural context.

Professor Smay used his Critical Thinking Assignment, for which students are expected to evaluate Chinua Achebe’s critique of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. The assignment requires both mastery of a complex literary work and critical engagement with literary scholarship. Professor Trost used her Critical Thinking Assignment (Part 2). In this 2-part assignment, students are expected (Part I) to explain Utilitarian ethics, using Bentham and Mill’s writings, and (Part 2) apply Utilitarian thought to their choice among several major speeches from their semester’s readings, explaining whether or not the reasoning in the document is consistent with Utilitarian principles and giving reasons for their evaluation. Professor Scaff assembled this data from the grades that the students received on their papers.

GELO 5: Students should be able to effectively distinguish and convey inductive and deductive patterns as appropriate, sequencing arguments and evidence logically to draw valid conclusions and articulate related outcomes (implications and consequences).

Out of 99* students assessed:

38 mastered GELO 5 at a high level (averaged a “B+” or better on assessment activities)

53 mastered GELO 5 at an average level (averaged a “C” or better on assessment activities)

8 either failed to master GELO 5, or did so at a marginal level (“C-” or below on assessment activities)

* Professor Trost reports that a student who failed to complete assignments assessed for GELO 2 and 4 completed this assignment.

All instructors used Question 1 from the Long Form Exam to assess student accomplishment of GELO 5. In this essay, students were asked to respond to a quotation (prompt) that makes a claim about the modern era, basing their discussion on course readings and lectures. They were asked to paraphrase the author’s point and evaluate the claim in a well-reasoned argument. For purposes of assessing GELO 5, particular
emphasis was given to the strength of the students’ arguments, which were evaluated for logical coherence and consistency. That question is as follows:

For this essay, you will respond to the claim about the modern era made by a recognized scholar in the passage below. First paraphrase (restate succinctly in your own words) the point that the author is making. Then in a well-reasoned discussion, evaluate the claim that the writer makes based on the readings and lectures you have experienced in Humanities 2B. Plan to write in detail about several of the figures that we have studied and to incorporate specific references to and examples from the texts that you choose to discuss. Here is the passage:

[T]here appears to be widespread agreement . . . on a second large paradox in modernity itself. For now as the external-life world becomes more objectified, functionally coordinated, and aligned with the imperatives of instrumental rationality, so the sense of the individual self becomes more inward, psychologically inclined, and connected to a search for validating subjectivity. The latter gives new meaning to the old Augustinian view . . . that genuine belief is constrained precisely because it is opposed to reason. . . . On the one hand, culture validates increasing ‘personal freedom,’ while on the other it harbors increasing ‘homelessness’ as a longing to flee from our instrumental selves into nonrational wholeness. Restated in more comprehensive terms, such tensions pit . . . the technical and sociological world of production and what [Max] Weber and his contemporaries called ‘technical progress’ against the cult of the self, the call of interiority, and (in our stylish language of today) the ‘longing for true presence.’ The two sides of modernity become differentiated and set against each other in a struggle for our allegiance.

**English 1B competency:** Students are expected to “to rely on the intellectual tasks (they) practiced in English 1B/Humanities Honors Program, such as reading and synthesizing information from sources, summarizing and paraphrasing, quoting, analyzing, and asserting a position.”

Out of 99* students assessed:

- **37** demonstrated 1B competency at a high level (averaged a “B+” or better on assessment activities)
- **54** demonstrated 1B competency at an average level (averaged a “C” or better on assessment activities)
- **8** either failed to demonstrate 1B competency, or did so at a marginal level (“C-” or below on assessment activities)

* Again, Professor Trost reports that a student who failed to complete assignments assessed for GELO 2 and 4 completed this assignment.

As with GELO 5, all instructors used Question 1 from the Long Form Exam to assess student accomplishment for this component (see GELO 5 above). For purposes of assessing English 1B Competency, particular emphasis was given to the students’ capacity for expressing their ideas in a clearly structured, well written essay, and to
incorporate evidence drawn from their readings in an analytically sound and convincing fashion.

**Additional Thoughts**

We have been asked to share some thoughts about what those grading data mean with respect to students’ readiness for more advanced English composition. Comparing GELO 2 and 4 with assessments for GELO 5 and ENG 1B competency, we observe a noticeable drop in student performance. Starting with high level scores for GELO 2 (55) and high level scores for GELO 4 (57), averaging them both (56), the assessment of mastery drops 32.14% when compared to high level for GELO 5 and 33.93% when compared to high level English 1B competency. We still need to explore the reason for this drop, but we can initially hypothesize that the specific methods in which GELO 5 and English 1B competency were assessed, compared to the relatively broader *full assignment*-based assessment of GELO 2 and 4, might account for some of the disparity. An additional issue for future consideration is whether individual seminars might need to focus more attention on inductive and deductive reasoning, along with the degree to which students demonstrate excellence in quoting, paraphrasing, and synthesizing information. Undoubtedly these items are well covered in HUM 1A and 1B, but refreshers might be necessary for 2A and 2B.