PROGRAM INFORMATION

Date submitted: May 31, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Program(s):</th>
<th>MA in English</th>
<th>Department:</th>
<th>English &amp; Comp. Lit.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department Chair:</td>
<td>John Engell/Paul Douglass incoming</td>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>924-4425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Prepared by:</td>
<td>Noelle Brada-Williams</td>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>924-4439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next Self-Study due:</td>
<td>Spring 2012</td>
<td>E-mail:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Noelle.Brada-Williams@sjsu.edu">Noelle.Brada-Williams@sjsu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Schedule is posted at: http://www.sjsu.edu/ugs/programplanning/

ARCHIVAL INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location:</th>
<th>Person to Contact:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FO 110</td>
<td>Noelle Brada-Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>924-4439</td>
<td>924-4439</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment schedule is posted at: http://www.sjsu.edu/ugs/assessment
Please send any changes to the schedule or to student learning outcomes to Jackie Snell
jacqueline.snell@sjsu.edu

PLO/SLO #2: Students will demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research.

Initial Evidence of Student Learning:
The main way we access this learning outcome in our program is through English 201, Methods and Materials of Literary Research, which is the one required class of all MA students. We only offer it in the fall of each year. Most MA courses also have a heavy research component.

In addition to the required 201 course and research on various seminar papers, our students also have the option to write an MA thesis which is itself an extended research project and thus an excellent opportunity for students to demonstrate this SLO. In Spring 2011, one of our students, Yelena Severina, won the CSU Research competition with her thesis on Vladimir Nabokov. Ms. Severina’s achievement marked the second time since I have been the graduate coordinator that one of students has won this honor. Ms. Severina has gone on to a doctoral program at UCLA and another 2011 thesis writer, Michal Reznizki, has gone on to a doctoral program at UC Davis. I am happy to say that both have told me that they felt that our department prepared them well for further graduate study and that the training in research was a key component of that preparation.

Thus our initial evaluation of this SLO is that this is actually a strength of our program. It would be easier to write this assessment report if I had a clear narrative of need and a successful change, but on this SLO, the program already seems to be doing quite well and to say otherwise would be a misrepresentation of our students’ achievements. The challenge will be to maintain that strength despite budget cuts (and an ever-diminishing number
of permanent/full-time faculty able to teach at the graduate level) and to aid any students that may fall outside the normative achievement for our program.

**Change(s) to Curriculum or Pedagogy:**

The only negative I see in this 201 course is that several of our students each year take this introductory course at the end of their graduate career rather than at the beginning. Some of this is unavoidable given that classes do fill up, but my own advising efforts have been redoubled this year in order to get new admits into next Fall’s 201 as soon as possible. There is also the problem of conditional admits sometimes finishing their conditional coursework midyear and thus having to take graduate coursework before the semester that they take 201. Based on the relatively small number of people that we accepted for admission this Fall, I suspect that next year it will be easier to get all new students accommodated into the one 201 class offered than it has been in the past.

One major change that we did make this year as a program was to rethink our assessment goals. Two of our previous SLO’s we felt were absolutely necessary to our viability as an MA program but that were not actually required of all students and difficult to access directly:

6. Students preparing for teaching careers will receive the appropriate instruction.
7. Students will be prepared for further graduate study.

We had been thinking for some time about what it meant to access SLO’s which are actually options but not required of all students (some do not want to become teachers and many will not go on to future study, but all must have access to this or we are fulfilling our mission as a graduate program). After considering advice from A.D. Elna Green and the outside reviewer who visited our program this Spring, we decided to fold these SLO’s into a new mission statement for the program which affirms our commitment to these outcomes and to focus on the 5 SLO’s that are required and clearly measurable for all students in the near term while they are still our matriculating students. Below is our new Mission Statement and the remaining 5 SLO’s.

**Mission Statement for M.A. program:**

The written word grounds the Master of Arts in English and Comparative Literature. Its students learn to analyze literature and to write on literary topics at an advanced level. Students complete a rigorous program of courses that introduce them to cutting-edge research while training them to understand a range of theoretical and literary-historical frameworks for understanding literature. Before students earn a Master of Arts in English, they pass a two-part comprehensive exam. They also may choose to write a thesis. Students have the option to engage in graduate study in rhetoric and to train as college-level writing teachers. The program also offers students pathways to prepare for doctoral work.

The five learning outcomes for the MA program:

Students will demonstrate

1. an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric.
2. high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research.
3. critical and analytical skills in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts.
4. a command of written academic English, including the abilities to a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion, b) formulate and defend original arguments, c) employ effectively the language of their discipline and d) write under time constraints.
5. a reading knowledge of at least one foreign language.

**Evidence of Student Learning after Change.**

For Fall 2011, Professor Andrew Fleck taught English 201 and introduced students to a range of courses methods and materials in research in our discipline. He also had them demonstrate their learning in a series of scaffolded projects that included bibliographies and annotated bibliographies and that eventually were built into a research guide into a particular area of the discipline of each student’s own choosing (see attached appendix below). Dr. Fleck reported that 15 out of 17 of the students completed this SLO at a very good level. The other two exhibited
basic proficiency with this SLO. I am very happy with the way that Professor Fleck has taught this course and would encourage other instructors who may be asked to teach this course in the future to follow his lead in helping students to fulfill this SLO so clearly.

In addition to the required 201 course, three more of our MA students have successfully completed a thesis in the last calendar year. Additional anecdotal evidence of our students’ successful demonstration of this SLO would include first-year M.A. student Alicia McClintic, one of the students included in Dr. Fleck’s data, who advanced through College- and University-level competitions, to represent SJSU in the Annual CSU Student Research Competition in Long Beach this May. Her research project was entitled "Home Lost, Home Regained: Locating the Church in Cather’s Fiction." I believe this is the third such honor for English MA’s in the last 6 years but a first for a student in her first year in the program. Another first-year student who was also part of Dr. Fleck’s course, Danielle Crawford, has now delivered two papers at professional conferences on her research within our discipline in 2012 and her proposal has been accepted for a third conference in August.

Appendix: English 201 Assignment from Dr. Fleck

*English 201 Research Guide Fall 2011*

The research guide you produce this semester should run parallel to a research project you are completing for another course. The research guide will collect the research you are conducting for that other project, much of which would be invisible in the final project you complete in the other context, and organize it into a coherent “guide” for those who might want to pursue similar research. Our purpose here is for you to use the tools and techniques (the “Materials and Methods”) that you will learn in English 201 and showcase how you have used them to complete another project. The model for the guide is the “Recent Studies in X,” research overviews that appear occasionally in issues of scholarly journals. [For a recent example, see Kim H. Noling, “Recent Studies in James Shirley,” ELR 37.3 (2007): 450-465]. If a person were interested in the research topic you are pursuing in a different class, he or she could read the research guide you produce and quickly get up to speed with current trends, key scholarly texts, and the key primary texts.

Students should approach the project in a series of steps. The first step is for you to select a research topic for another class. In the early phases of the topic, this may end up being somewhat vague (“Shakespeare”), but you should work to narrow that topic to something more specific (“Shakespeare’s use of Chapman’s Homer in Henry V”) as soon as is practical. As part of this early step, you must ask the professor in the other seminar whether he or she has any objection to the overlap between the project you will produce in the other seminar and the research guide you will produce in English 201. Generally speaking, it is not permissible to submit the same project to complete requirements in two different seminars, but this research guide is a different, if related, project than the seminar paper you are producing in another context. It supplements the other project, but does not take the place of the other project.

One early step is to assemble a scholarly bibliography of relevant secondary criticism. You’ll want to begin with the MLA Bibliography, as well as the other databases available to us through the library. The earlier you can narrow the subject of your other project, the more quickly you’ll be able to assemble a preliminary bibliography of secondary sources. You’ll want to begin to read these secondary sources as soon as you can; be sure to keep an eye out in the footnotes for other sources you may not have found using the typical databases. Especially important at this point is to watch for books and articles that occur with some frequency in multiple articles; such occurrences often signal the essential, foundational pieces of criticism you should read. A first preliminary bibliography of at least ten potentially useful articles, presented with reference to the MLA Style Guide, is due on November 1. It’s likely that your final bibliography will evolve from this preliminary list, of course, but this list should serve as a starting point.

You will also produce a descriptive bibliography of the primary texts you are using in the other project (i.e. first and early editions of Shakespeare’s Henry V, crucial and standard modern editions). We discussed some of the scholarly tools (such as the Union Catalog and WorldCat) a person can use to create a descriptive bibliography during our visit to the library early this semester. Your descriptive bibliography should include both bibliographic information
(i.e. citation of the earliest edition, landmark editions, and the best critical editions), each of which should include a paragraph or more of your own prose description of the significance of these editions. You should introduce these entries with a brief bibliographic essay—two or three pages in which you discuss the history of your primary text and the progress toward the edition you will use in your project. You will turn in the descriptive bibliography portion of your research guide on November 8.

As you begin to read the criticism related to your topic and take notes, you should begin to select some secondary materials that you find especially interesting or useful. Pay special attention to sources that others cite with some frequency in their footnotes or bibliographies as these are likely to be key pieces of criticism on your topic. As you select important or interesting secondary sources, produce a brief synopsis of the argument and approach the critic uses. A secondary source with some of your own commentary about its argument and relevance to your topic becomes part of an annotated bibliography. You will turn in a partial annotated bibliography (at least two secondary sources) on November 15.

The final research guide will reincorporate the materials you have submitted in part into the larger whole. You will begin with an overview of your topic (“What is the current state of criticism on Shakespeare’s use of Homer?” for instance). You will survey some of the critical debates in the field (“Did Shakespeare know Homer’s work through Chapman’s translation, did he know Homer through some other source, or was his knowledge of Homer gleaned more generically from his knowledge of other texts?”). You will comment on trends you have observed in your research on the topic (“Shakespeare’s attempts to find patronage with discontented aristocrats has been highlighted in several contexts”). And you will introduce your own entry into the scholarly discussion (“I argue that Shakespeare knew Chapman’s translation and that Henry V approximates Chapman’s own bid for Essex’s patronage”). The preliminary material here—your presentation of an overview of the state of the art and your articulation of your own argument within that context—carries the most weight in the final product. You should then reincorporate the other materials you have produced for the guide (descriptive bibliography, annotated bibliography, further reading [i.e. additional sources]) into the final version you submit on December 13. On that day, you will also have five minutes to make a brief oral presentation to the class, briefly outlining the research and argument related to your other project.