

English Department Minutes
Monmouth College
Monday, October 8, 2007
3pm-4:15pm

Absent: Cyn Kitchen (Happy Birthday!); Belschner and Solberg out at 3:50pm

1. Rob quickly reviewed the previous departmental meeting and wanted a clarification from those minutes regarding the statement that “students and faculty do not understand the ‘narrative’ of the course.” Kevin Roberts clarified that statement by noting that it referred to the campus, not the department; there were no further questions or comments. Hale had already distributed an agenda electronically which included some departmental issues and established two goals for this meeting regarding English 110: the course narrative for English 110 (how to convey this to students more effectively) and strategies for teaching revision. The second topic was not addressed at this meeting and will be rescheduled to the next meeting.
2. The following items surrounding the narrative (“the story”) of English 110 were identified by the department:
 - English 110 is a first-year composition course which teaches students to read critically, create written arguments with logic, and apply writing skills to problems later in life while also addressing thesis, support, organization, and grammar (Bruce). Hale added that English 110 is a process course with skills that should translate across the curriculum. Mark Willhardt added that the course builds on more complex tasks with each paper and works to incorporate other voices in student writing through position/proposal papers to the research paper.
 - Hale noted that more time earlier in the semester may be needed in order to integrate fully the idea of someone else’s position when the essay may be viewed as a rebuttal essay. Solberg added that the idea of a variety of student backgrounds required the course to move to a standard level of writing in which different modes may be applied to different situations. Watson likened this to compulsories in ice skating (others likened this to athletics, business, band, etc.) in order for students to understand the necessity of practicing writing in order to reach a college-level standard of writing. Price noted that this would allow a liberally-educated person to communicate effectively to a variety of audiences. The issue of words becoming more important (as compare to writing in high school) also applied to the narrative of the course and Belschner added that she discusses the “work” that a sentence or paragraph does in a piece of writing. Rob Hale added that he had tried to use this broad story of the course (lexicon, etc.) with students, but “it instructed, but didn’t delight.” If this doesn’t work, how can the department improve the presentation of the narrative to students?
 - Watson offered the idea of a “macro/micro” narrative which is reinforced daily by continuously quizzing students regarding why things are done in class each day and making a connection between the previous day and the present day with small and large parts. Hale used this as a summation for the discussion.

- The issue of sample essays in Good Reasons was also discussed. Many of the essays seem to lack objectivity and context, while many of the professional essays lack citations. The latter issue may be a new standard for many current professional essays. The previous issue may spark discussions in class, as Watson noted with his use of the essays in the book. Hale summarized that we may further look at ways to use the book with these essays.
3. Reciprocal Agreement with Knox
Craig Watson asked the department/college to consider allowing students from MC to attend Knox for additional creative writing instruction, while allowing Knox students to attend MC for additional literary study since independent studies are lacking at MC. The issue of working this into the calendar is the biggest problem, but a better fit might occur with Western Illinois University or St. Ambrose University. This could encourage more students to work in the area of creative writing and in other English courses, especially in light of the dean's concern with low numbers in creative writing courses.
 4. Department Chair Meeting
Datatel can generate averages for all class grades at MC. As for faculty data, the college is considering how to use this information and who will have access to it. Faculty Senate asked for this type of information six years ago so adjustments could be made regarding major differences between classes/sections based on grades. Concerns regarding how this data will be used and the implications it might have were voiced by the department. Hale will have more information on this topic after the next department chair meeting.
 5. English 200
The course currently has 18 enrolled for next semester; there may be 3 "floaters"; 17 freshmen haven't signed up for the course yet. Rob Hale wants to offer two sections of English 200 and perhaps get into a pattern of one section each fall and spring for transfers and freshmen who can enroll during the spring term.
English 180 now has 6 pre-enrolled and Hale urged advisors to direct eligible students into the course during Mentoring Week. The topic will be "Families in Contemporary Literature."

Respectfully submitted by Kevin Roberts.