

English Department Minutes
Monmouth College
Friday, January 11, 2008
9:30am-12:35pm

Absent: Bruce; Solberg in at 10am

- Introduction: Rob Hale noted that this was, by request/agreement, the review of the fall semester of English 110 for all department members and other items afterward for full-time members.

1-3. (English 110)

Sourced Essay

- the chapters in the book didn't work well for the research essay due to a lack of opposing opinions (MW)
- the book was better for certain topics, especially media (MB)
- a packet from the past was used; refutation chapter was good (RH)

Paragraph Work

- paragraph work helped with mini-thesis focused essays; focus was bad, but a cure for larger paragraph development (CW)
- Paris Hilton assignment helped for paragraph development (MW)
- problem was paragraphs to argument analysis was not connected; a deliberate connection between the two is needed; had some good activities with paragraphs (RH)

Book

- book is problematic (sketchy); the course needs a "cultural literacy" primer; a vocabulary list of glossary terms is needed (students were clueless as to terms in essays); essay five was too sophisticated and pace had to be slowed down; biases of particular writers is a level not addressed; book drives toward research (CW)
- there is always a struggle in reader-based composition courses (RH)
- similar problems as CW faced; dealing with one particular essay could be difficult with content. It helped reinforce reading, though. (MB)
- contemporary awareness is a problem with students; also surfaces in ILA and CATA 101 (SP)

Lexicon

- will focus on them more at the beginning of the course (MW)
- hard to focus at the beginning of the course without a context for the terms (Marlo B.)
- use a text essay and apply the terms to the essay early on (RH)

Papers

- evaluation paper is most successful because students are familiar with the topics (CW)

Rubric

- a new rubric draft will be sent to the department by Kevin for feedback

Final Diagnostic

- students still used a lot of personal reflection (KR)
- the agree or disagree set-up led to a lot of summary (RH)
- the final diagnostic didn't assess argumentative skills (ES)
- must disagree with a position in order to improve the prompt (RH)

Problems

- mastery of background information**
- difficulty of reading assignments**
- different type of diagnostic or prompt**

- students wanted to go to Internet for refutations and lines of argument; perhaps we should accept this trend or give only two Internet sources to go to for this (RH)
- “outboard brain syndrome”-students can reference stuff on the Internet without remembering things themselves (MW)
- this (going to Internet) becomes their prewriting; we need to use this experience in the course if possible (SP)
- didn't address audience and counterargument much because students had no experience with them (MB)

Solutions

- slow down pace**
 - use fewer essays**
 - make a studied use of the Internet; focus on a limited, more fact-based use of the internet**
 - tie entire course to one topic**
 - make diagnostic prompts more evaluative with criteria from lexicon with specific instructions for types of “tools” to use in response**
- could use New York Times or Newsweek in class; this would “lower the bar” for the course (RH)
 - we should not lower the bar, but slow the pace down in class; use fewer articles, but spend more time on them. This is not approaching the critical thinking and critical reading with liberal arts foundation (CW)
 - give them focused places to look at for information (MW)
 - make the Internet a supplement; help them control the information they find (SP)

4.-6. Outcome of Fall Department Meetings

The following was accomplished in the fall: pedagogy for English 110; the effectiveness of the English major. Rob will set up meetings between English and CATA (content will be through an initial electronic discussion) and with Frank Gersich (assessment) later; there will be two meetings in the spring regarding the major. Rob will send out a schedule later, but Wednesdays at 4pm may be the time for all department meetings in the spring.

7. **Student Worker:** Caitlyn will be working four hours/week; Marlo has a list of possible second workers

A ten-minute break occurred; adjuncts left (Solberg and King); the meeting reconvened with full-time faculty.

1. Major courses for Fall 2007 Review

- upper-division students don't work or think at the appropriate level; mostly juniors have this problem, some seniors (CW)
- this has been noticed before; juniors become complacent; sophomores have lots of potential (RH)
- non-traditional students help level of discourse in classes and more could be added to rosters (CW/RH)
- since there are many retired people in the area, Rob will check with the dean to see about offering courses to them for a committed audit or credit
- majors have a hard time remembering material from the surveys; non-majors haven't done well in the surveys (Marlo B.)
- students have problems with memorization (MW)
- students also have problems with "stock" issues such as quote identification (RH)
- in the last five years, it seems as if students just summarize material with no connections between ideas; the survey courses may need to be reorganized to small, thematic units; it is difficult getting students to do outside work (CW)
- in some of the surveys, about 25% of the students can make connections; Rob uses 15 major questions in the final designed to make connections between major ideas.
- the surveys also have the problem of students not taking responsibility for things not covered in class, but annotation of texts is good (Marlo B.)
- Rob makes sure that papers are about non-class works from a list he develops
- students do not carry over things from class to class; final research papers became "information dumps" that were left to the last minute. English 200 isn't helping students manage large research papers or projects (RH)
- for the Chaucer class, three or four students dropped it early on. Majors need to meet the challenges of courses and not bail out on the first day. Contemporary content may be seen as easier, so students may move to these courses. (MW)
- the early Chaucer drops could just be an anomaly, but students do view contemporary works as more accessible. There is a definite lack of a work ethic in students, coupled with a lack of passion. The department has a reputation as being the hardest major outside of the sciences on campus and students don't wish to meet this challenge. (RH)
- perceived sense of difficulty is a problem with majors. Honors had a 33% drop from the program in the first month. (CW)
- for English 180, Craig will treat attendance as he does in English 110. Many

students saw class attendance as optional and low marks are coming from this poor attendance. (CW)

--one aim for 180 is to pull education students out of surveys and bring majors into English. Strategies will have to be revisited. (RH)

2/3. Staffing/Sabbatical Replacement

Rob talked to the dean about scheduling classes next year and sabbatical replacements. She liked the idea of a two-year hire for sabbatical replacement. A hire in journalism in order to grow with writing needs of the campus and a tenure-track position in writing for the department in 2-3 years are issues on the horizon. Since the dean doesn't want shared positions between departments, we would need to consider including the journalism or professional (Advanced Comp., magazine writing, discipline writing) writing position in English. This may "bleed" people from the true English major, but it may also attract better students (MW). It could also attract some of the worst students to the English major (RH), while also moving the major away from Liberal Arts and ultimately weakening the literature component of the major (Marlo B.).

There is a disconnect between what students want as journalism majors and what the college actually offers (CW); admissions needs to be reminded about the problem with "journalism" at Monmouth College. A bridge between CATA and English (one course) could be useful for journalism. Rob noted that CATA was interested in this, but the dean is concerned with a possible lack of oversight of such a program/course. He also noted that this will change our majors, lowering the bar in the 300 courses, but Mark noted that ONU had a good balance in such programs and it could be created here. Unfortunately, recruitment can't be done on a bridge course (MW).

If the program must be placed somewhere, English will take journalism or professional writing instead of giving it entirely to CATA. A journalism/English hire would have two sections of 110, one section of INTG, and two writing classes, while also sponsoring the school newspaper.

As for the sabbatical replacement, an ABD hire can be done with a minority literature (Spanish, African-American, etc.) specialty; once in the department, a national search could be done for a tenure-track position. The tenure-track could also have creative writing if Mary retires soon. Rob will talk to the dean about the journalism issue—we have sabbatical issues now, but the department is interested in journalism for the long term.

4. Capital Improvements

- MLC heating and air-conditioning
- Exterior rear gutter
- Additional computers for MLC 2
- Ceiling tile replacement in MLC 208
- Bigger copier
- Remove middle post from MLC 2

Respectfully submitted by Kevin Roberts.