

English Department Minutes
Monmouth College
Friday, May 25, 200
9am-Noon

Absent: Belschner; Willhardt in at 9:30am; Bruce in at 9:45am; Price out at 10:15am

1. Rob began with an overview of the meeting and introductions were given for the benefit of the new adjunct, Cyn Kitchen.
2. English 110
 - Assessment: for the last year, the department has used a slightly reformatted version of 110 compared to the previous year. Based on diagnostic essays and instructor observation, the following points were made regarding the course:
 1. Revision became an act of editing for many students
 2. Peer reviews occurred more often than true revisions
 3. Students became better at writing thesis statements, paragraphs, and integrating quotes from essays, but did not significantly improve with argument
 4. Students had lots of ideas regarding the writing process with a sense of “doing rather than thinking” (Price) or being able to explain the process of writing
 5. Students view writing as a “right or wrong,” not applicable to all areas (Price)
 6. Students have difficulty responding to something that they have read (Hale)
 7. Reading continues to be a stumbling point for many students (Watson)
 8. Analysis of quotations in writing was poor (Willhardt)
 9. Students have trouble questioning the content of anything (Solberg)
 10. Students thought they did the research paper the best of all the essays in the course (Price), while some thought it was the hardest essay to write (Hale); many research papers were more expository than argumentative (Roberts/Watson)
 11. Thesis, mechanics, grammar, topic sentences were often done well, but critical thought was poor
 12. Students often found material to be too difficult to understand (Willhardt)

Based on the above issues, the following ideas were discussed and agreed upon:

1. The purpose of the diagnostic must be reevaluated. In future, diagnostic readings should be shorter and more focused so students can understand the content better and, hopefully, be able to write a better response/essay. Diagnostic prompts must avoid personal experience and

require students to address the argument in the diagnostic essay.

2. There should be an emphasis on creating proper paragraphs, then moving on to essays. Using models, the first part of English 110, after reading strategies, will be to focus on paragraph writing intertwining rhetorical strategies. Watson has sample paragraphs.
 3. The lexicon, after revision (see below), needs to be used earlier in the course with a more direct focus on the terms.
 4. Each instructor should turn in graded diagnostics (with rubrics), student answers to shared questions (use the same numbers for students as with graded diagnostics), and a paragraph assessing each section to Kevin.
 5. The course is now all composition/argument; literature has been completely removed as a unit, although instructors may use a piece or two of literature as appropriate.
- Course Objectives: based on Rob's handout, the following changes were made:
 1. Objective D (develop an understanding and appreciation of literature through major analytical terms) has been deleted. This concept (Obj. D) should be developed in English 180 and in ILA.
 2. The lexicon is now revised by dropping all literary terms, but adding "annotation" and "close reading" to the list.
 3. The course description now reads: "The main focus of the course will be writing and reading"—dropping the use of "literary study."
 4. Rob and Kevin will develop a new objective (D) for reading with a connection to writing.
 - CAC Alignment: Steve Price noted the following items:
 1. English 110 is making better connections with other courses across campus.
 2. The CAC narrative is an overview of goals for the campus—not all of the goals are suitable for English 110.
 3. The narrative needs to add how process/revision works in English 110.
 4. "Critical thinking" needs to be explained more fully which could come from the old language rubric from Watson.
 5. Rob asked Steve to argue for a more argumentative sequence in "Reflections" (junior year) in order to refresh some concepts from English 110.

- Modes: the following will be the modes for 2007-2008:
Reading Analysis; Paragraph development with rhetorical strategies from lexicon; Position paper; Proposal paper; Evaluation paper; Research paper.
- Essay Requirements: the following was agreed upon:
 1. Reading/Argument Analysis—2-3 pages (minimum) (counts as the short/mini essay)
 2. Position, Proposal, Evaluation---3-4 pages (minimum)
 3. Research paper---5-6 pages (minimum) with 4-6 sources (25 pages maximum, combined for sources)
- Texts: after a lengthy discussion, Good Reasons with Contemporary Arguments, 3rd Edition, by Faigley and Selzer was selected for the course. Kevin will be distributing instructor manuals as soon as they arrive from the publisher. The course will continue to use the Bedford Handbook by Hacker.
- Miscellaneous:
 1. The percents for the course will be 70/30—70% for all papers and 30% for the rest of the material (quizzes, homework, participation, discussion, final exam).
 2. Dual Credit: Rob has been working on this with admissions. It is difficult for admissions and the registrar to track down. Rob suggested to Sue Dagit that students must take a four-hour *argumentative writing* course in order to insure that students are better prepared to write at the college level. Hale will follow-up on how to make this happen.
 3. Kevin and Steve will collect sample student essays over the next year from all instructors, check them, and propose the best ones as samples to the department for use as models. Rob will provide a target date for this undertaking.
 4. Rob would like to meet every other week this fall for the first ten weeks of the semester for an in-progress review/update for 110. Specific goals and an agenda are needed for these meetings since they should be pedagogical in nature. Rob will send a call for topics later.
 5. Instructors may wish to use Survey Monkey for additional, personalized questions for students. Erika found the tool useful when doing the course evaluation (go to www.surveymonkey.com).
 6. Kevin would like to develop a collection of shared final questions, sample essays (as noted in #3), and diagnostic essays (for first- and last-day diagnostics) for the course. All instructors should submit these to him at any time.

3. MLC Transformation

Rob met with Jane to clarify transformation of MLC into a tutoring/ADA center. Marta Tucker will reside in MLC 105, Carol Whiteside in the security office in the morning, and Steve Price in MLC 210; adjuncts will move to 202. Conferencing could be a problem due to space limitations' Rob is working on this with Marta. The English Department and connected resources should be kept together. Mark Willhardt requested a written plan for the changes at the department's meeting with the dean, and Hale reiterated the request, but there is no point in further meetings without this baseline report.

4. Senior Seminar

Rob provided a handout regarding the course (see attachment). He found departmental Objective 8 (Acquire a basic knowledge of the history of English, of traditional grammar and modern grammar theories) to be a weak point because most students no longer take History of the English Language. Objective 2 (Understand and use process writing strategies in composing thesis-focused essays) is also weak because upper-level majors aren't revising their work the way they should. After discussion, it was decided to challenge majors early on in the department's sequence of courses and to emphasize process to help them improve their writing. The following suggestions were made as pedagogical strategies to help students revise:

- Require students to write three sentences per draft about how a student changed the draft (Rob)
- Require conferences during class time (Mark)
- Write two weeks into the course with a close reading
- "Red-line" papers (Watson)
- Make papers due earlier in the term, particularly with survey course, so a bridge can be made from English 200
- Use more four hour courses instead of three hour courses (this would be an institutional change)
- Further consider how to get students to revise more and be more conscientious about writing (a possible topic for a fall meeting)
- Can the "junior year rut" be solved? It seems to be a campus-wide issue.

5. Miscellaneous

- SWOTS is gone. The dean prefers annual conversations for reviews. For the English Department, a 2007-2008 curriculum goal will be student revision (how to get students to do more and do it effectively)
- Departmental goals: summer camp for college writing or perhaps for humanities—this could be for juniors and rising seniors with admissions making a template for housing, food, etc., while the English Department becomes the pilot for other departments so the content of the camp can be "plugged in" from summer to summer. Craig noted that Ripon did this

with science, but students in a camp at Monmouth College should turn out to be humanities students, not just science or English students. This could help attract quality students to the college.

Respectfully submitted by Kevin Roberts.