

Humanities Department Assessment Report

Fall 2013

BA Program

Beginning about five years ago, we experimented with measuring skills in the Humanities that seemed most concrete and least subject to arbitrary or idiosyncratic judgments on our part. In the BA program, some of us adopted the practice of testing students on their mastery of the cultural information imparted in a particular course, by giving students a set of short-answer questions on key terms at the beginning and end of a course. For example, only a small proportion of students who had just enrolled in HUM 345: Humanism and Mysticism would be able to define or explain terms like "Deism," "agnosticism," "orthodoxy" or "heresy." By the end of the course, most of them (around 80% in courses that used this method) would be able to do this. One of the most important functions of a humanities course is to impart cultural literacy and cultural memory, so this was a reasonable and somewhat useful measure of our success in doing that. This method also helps each of us to know more about the content of our colleagues' courses and what can we expect from students who have taken them, and to build on that knowledge in our own teaching, making or reinforcing connections with ideas and materials that our colleagues have introduced.

Although this measure has real value for individual teachers, it was not an entirely satisfying measure for us as a faculty. First of all, such terms are specific to individual courses, so this kind of measure does not get at what students learn over the course of their degree program. Our students do not take courses in a fixed sequence, and there are several alternatives for fulfilling program requirements at each step of the way. Second, some of us are uncomfortable with the fact that—however useful individual faculty members may find this measure for them—students are apt to treat it as a mere exercise in rote learning that seems to contradict everything else we try to tell them about what skills we value. And at a certain level, they're right. It does not satisfactorily measure the skills that we as a faculty value most: the ability to synthesize this kind of cultural information into a persuasive argument about a particular expressive form, whether it is a film, a novel, a poem, a philosophical treatise, a painting, or a piece of music.

The real utility of these early attempts at assessment was that they forced us to talk to each other about what assessment means for our student demographic, our curriculum and our range of faculty expertise and teaching methods. We have repeatedly rearticulated our learning objectives, both for particular courses and for the program as a whole. Eventually we realized that the most important and useful moments for assessment came when our majors took Humanities core courses, the

only classes made up predominantly or entirely of HUM majors. We also realized that we needed to establish a different learning objective for HUM 425, cultural comparison, in order to establish a baseline for later assessment program skills in HUM 300, our GWAR course. (The chart below reflects this change.) We also realized that the most telling measure of all could be made by comparing progress in student work from HUM 300 to HUM 690, the Senior Seminar. Since our program is closely focused on students' writing and critical skills, using a set of evaluation criteria for papers in the core courses makes the most sense. The chart below is based on this understanding:

Humanities BA Learning Objectives	Place in curriculum where this objective is specifically addressed	Assessment instruments	Use of results for program improvement
Identify and describe the formal features of a range of cultural forms including (but not limited to) texts, images and films.	HUM 301, 300, 690	Evaluation criteria for final paper	To be measured Fall 2013
place an expressive work in its cultural context through close reading of its formal details	HUM 303, 300, 690	Evaluation criteria for final paper	To be measured spring 2014
articulate cross-cultural differences, similarities and relationships represented by cultural works from different areas of the world.	HUM 425, 300, 690	Evaluation criteria for final paper	To be measured Spring 2014
perceive and articulate-- both in discussion and in writing-- formal and historical relationships among written texts and other expressive forms.	HUM 300, 690	Evaluation criteria for final paper and oral presentation	To be measured 2013-2014

Evaluation criteria for final paper, HUM 301(1-5 scale, 5=excellent)

Does the paper demonstrate the student's ability to identify and describe the formal features of a text, image, or film?

Evaluation criteria for final paper, HUM 303 (1-5 scale, 5=excellent)

Does the paper demonstrate the student's ability to place a work in its cultural context through analysis of its formal details?

Evaluation criteria for final paper, HUM 425 (1-5 scale, 5=excellent)

Does the paper demonstrate an ability to perceive and articulate significant cross-cultural differences, similarities and/or relationships?

Evaluation criteria for final paper, HUM 300, HUM 690 (1-5 scale, 5=excellent)

Does the paper demonstrate the student's ability to identify and describe the formal features of a text, image, or film?

Does the paper demonstrate the student's ability to place a work in its cultural context through analysis of its formal details?

Does the paper demonstrate an ability to perceive and articulate significant cross-cultural differences, similarities and/or relationships?

Does the paper demonstrate the student's ability to perceive and articulate formal and historical relationships among written texts and other expressive forms?

Normally we have one section of HUM 301 and 303 each semester and several sections of HUM 425. We can assess the learning objectives in 301 and 303 this fall. Because HUM 425 is taught by several faculty members, including some long-time lecturers, we plan to wait to measure that learning objective until the spring, in order to ensure that everyone teaching it is able to plan for this assessment.

HUM 300 and Humanities 690 are offered every semester, with enrollments averaging 14-18 in each class. Nearly all Humanities faculty members teach one or the other fairly regularly. Those who are teaching these classes in a particular semester will apply the evaluation criteria and discuss the results of their evaluation of all course papers for both courses, keeping records on each student. They will also consider the course syllabi for both classes, and advise the department on possible alternatives in teaching strategies for those classes. Over time this database will allow us to follow the development of individual students' skills as they progress through the degree, starting from the time they first take a core course.

MA Program

We went through a similar process of experimentation with assessment in the MA program. At first, we tried to measure the most straightforwardly measurable skill we teach our MA students: bibliography and correct citation form in the Culminating Experience. Because we work intensively one on one with our students at this final stage, they all acquire this skill, so the measure did not tell us anything new or enable us to make any improvements. Once again, we found that we needed to measure our students' ability to synthesize information into an interdisciplinary humanistic argument, and once again, a set of criteria for papers emerged as the most appropriate kind of measure. And once again, it was crucial to measure how students' skills progressed from their coursework to the completion of their Culminating Experience. Thus the following chart:

Humanities M.A. Learning Objectives	Place in curriculum where this objective is specifically addressed	Assessment instruments	Use of results for program improvement
to understand and be able to articulate important differences between humanistic ways of knowing and scientific, sociological or religious perspectives	HUM 700, 721	Evaluation criteria for core seminar papers	To be assessed in Fall 2013
To understand and be able to apply, in writing and oral discussion, current critical methods of at least two disciplines in the humanities	HUM 701, 702, 703,704	Evaluation criteria for disciplinary seminar papers	To be assessed in Fall 2013
to appreciate diverse forms of human cultural expression and to be able to describe and compare them, in writing and orally, in a	HUM 710, 711, 712, 713	Evaluation criteria for culture area seminar papers	To be assessed in Fall 2013

culturally sensitive way			
to articulate a theoretically informed interdisciplinary question and find, organize, and present evidence to support one's response to it	Every course, but especially the Culminating Experience	Evaluation criteria for all courses and Culminating Experience	To be assessed in Fall 2013

Criteria for core seminar (700, 721) papers: (1-5 scale, 5=excellent)

1. Does the paper show that the student can identify, interpret, and cite appropriate textual evidence to support an argument?
2. Is the paper grounded in an understanding of scholarly methods appropriate to the humanities?
3. Is the paper's argument interdisciplinary?

Criteria for disciplinary seminar (701-704) papers: (1-5 scale, 5=excellent)

1. Does the paper demonstrate familiarity with the disciplinary assumptions of literature, visual art, history, philosophy, or music?
2. Does the paper show familiarity with a current critical method in literature, visual art, history, philosophy, or music?
3. Is the paper's argument interdisciplinary?

Criteria for culture area (710-713) seminar papers

1. Does the paper demonstrate an understanding of a form of cultural expression originating in Europe, Asia, Africa, or the Americas?
2. Does the paper describe and analyze this expressive form in a way that avoids over-generalizing and cultural essentialism?
3. Is the paper's argument interdisciplinary?

Criteria for Culminating Experience (896, 898)

1. Is the argument nuanced and theoretically well informed?

2. Is the evidence for and against it sufficient, presented fairly, and cited correctly?
3. Is the argument interdisciplinary?

Over the course of a year, nearly all faculty members teach a graduate seminar. HUM 700 and 721, the core courses, are offered once a year and are the obvious starting point for assessment. In this and future years, faculty members teaching core courses will confer to evaluate the papers in each class according to the evaluation criteria above, and make any necessary recommendations to the department for possible alternative teaching strategies, curriculum changes, etc. Faculty members teaching these courses will keep students' papers in electronic form. Faculty members teaching other graduate seminars will evaluate the papers in their classes according to the appropriate evaluation criteria and share the results with the department at the end of each semester. Culminating Experience committees will evaluate each thesis or exam according to the evaluation criteria above, and share those results with the department at the end of each semester.

The final column in both charts—use of results for program improvement—so far includes only plans, not specific recommendations for improvements. In fact, however, we have always implicitly used these kinds of judgments to generate improvements in our core curricula for both the undergraduate and the graduate program. What these charts represent is an effort to make our standards explicit and collective, to use the results of our many discussions of these matters more effectively, to use our to heighten our awareness of how our students progress through their degrees, and to notice the points at which we may need to focus more on their acquisition of particular skills. We expect to be able to fill in that last column with specific details on changes in curriculum and teaching strategies over the next 2-3 years.

Appendix

Sample Assessment Quizzes

HUM 375.5 Biography of a City: Beijing

Please evaluate your own knowledge of the following on a one to five scale as below.

- 1 = I never heard of it before this class
2 = I've heard of it, but I don't know anything about it.
3 = I know a little about it, but I'm not clear on the details
4 = I studied it in a class or I'm familiar with it from my own experience
(For places, museums or performances: I've been to see it at least once.)
5 = It's a particular interest of mine and I know a lot about it.
(For places, museums or performances: I go often, I'm really a fan.)

1. The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco
2. Beijing opera
3. civil service examinations
4. Genghis (Chinggis) Khan
5. Manchu bannermen
6. Buddhism
7. Daoism (Taoism)
8. Confucius
9. Mao Zedong (Chairman Mao)
10. The Forbidden City
11. eunuchs
12. Tian'anmen Incident
13. Inner Asia/Tibet
14. Cultural Revolution
15. May Fourth Movement
16. Marxism
17. Mandate of Heaven
18. *Dream of the Red Chamber (Hong lou meng)*
19. Ming dynasty
20. Lao She

Which of these words do you know? Circle the Y or N or M (for maybe, if you think you know what it means but you're not sure you could use it correctly in a sentence.)

- | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|
| 1. hierarchy | Y | N | M |
| 2. syncretic | Y | N | M |
| 3. moralistic | Y | N | M |
| 4. imperialism | Y | N | M |
| 5. cosmology | Y | N | M |
| 6. proletarian | Y | N | M |
| 7. vernacular | Y | N | M |
| 8. honorific | Y | N | M |
| 9. concubine | Y | N | M |
| 10. literati | Y | N | M |

HUM 530.1 Chinese Civilization

Please evaluate your own knowledge of the following on a one to five scale as below.

1 = I never heard of it before this class

2 = I've heard of it, but I don't know anything about it.

3 = I know a little about it, but I'm not clear on the details

4 = I studied it in a class or I'm familiar with it from my own experience

(For museums or performances: I've been to see it at least once.)

5 = It's a particular interest of mine and I know a lot about it.

(For museums or performances: I go often, I'm really a fan.)

1. The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco
2. civil service examinations
3. the Brotherhood of the Peach Orchard
4. Buddhism
5. Daoism (Taoism)
6. Confucius
7. Mogao Caves at Dunhuang
8. Mandate of Heaven
9. *Dream of the Red Chamber (Hong lou meng)*
10. karma
11. Legalism
12. Regulated Verse
13. the Monkey King
14. Qin shi huang di (the first Qin emperor)
15. the Qianlong emperor
16. the Platform Sutra
17. the Four Books
18. Sima Qian
19. The Heart Sutra
20. the noble man (*junzi*)

Which of these words do you know? Circle the Y or N or M (for maybe, if you think you know what it means but you're not sure you could use it correctly in a sentence.)

- | | | | |
|------------------|---|---|---|
| 1. hierarchy | Y | N | M |
| 2. syncretic | Y | N | M |
| 3. moralistic | Y | N | M |
| 4. courtesan | Y | N | M |
| 5. cosmology | Y | N | M |
| 6. carnivalesque | Y | N | M |
| 7. vernacular | Y | N | M |
| 8. honorific | Y | N | M |
| 9. concubine | Y | N | M |
| 10. literati | Y | N | M |

SIGN IN.



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 HUMANISM AND MYSTICISM

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Apr 6

After

Assessment
 Test
 "After"

First	Last/ Web page	
Samuel	Bastida <i>Subade</i>	
Vladimir	Beloso <i>Velloso</i>	88
Shane	Brimble <i>Shane Brimble</i>	100
Richard	Bueher	
Isaac	Burdick <i>Isaac Burdick</i>	88
Elish	Cullen	
Adam	Deles	
Debra	Doyle <i>Debra Doyle</i>	93
Jessica	Druck <i>Jessica Druck</i>	75
Alexandra	Forster <i>Alexandra Forster</i>	65
Atticus	Frey <i>Atticus Frey</i>	95
John	Fullbright <i>John Fullbright</i>	100
Chris	Holmes <i>CHRIS</i>	93
Taqui	Keshishyan <i>Taqui Keshishyan</i>	100
Alana	Keys <i>Alana Keys</i>	88
Jessica	Loera <i>Jessica Loera</i>	100
Nichollette	Logan <i>Nichollette Logan</i>	AB
Christopher	Lunsford	
Cody	Mackenzie <i>CODY</i>	100
Jeremy	Maltby	
Jamila	Manuel <i>Jamila Manuel</i>	83
Kiralae	Mccamon-Roddewig <i>Kiralae Mccamon-Roddewig</i>	78 73
Galen	Monticue <i>Galen Monticue</i>	100
Michelle	Myers <i>Michelle Myers</i>	83
Brian	Perez <i>Brian Perez</i>	88
Charles	Prather <i>Charles Prather</i>	90
Cori	Runyon <i>Cori Runyon</i>	93
Amanda	Schulz <i>AMANDA</i>	90
Anna	Serebryanaya <i>Anna Serebryanaya</i>	98
Lizette	Suarez <i>Lizette Suarez</i>	90
Jessi	Tinsley <i>Jessi Tinsley</i>	83
Zachary	Vasquez <i>Zachary Vasquez</i>	98
Kimberly	Velasquez <i>Kimberly Velasquez</i>	85
Davin	Wentworth-Thrasher <i>Davin Wentworth-Thrasher</i>	83
First	Last/ Web page	

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Q T terms Test ✓

max. 50 of each side
(Dean's account)

1

Prof. Leonard: Needs Survey October 21, 2004 - ~~2005~~ - ~~2006~~

This is anonymous, so there's no need to impress me. Like the questionnaire, this survey should help me be a better professor for this particular class.

Use a pencil and fill in the computer sheet I'll provide. Please answer as you would have before this course, before seeing Casablanca, an opera, art museum etc

On a scale of A-E, with "A" meaning "never heard of it" and "E" meaning "know it well" what number would you give to these?

Sample answers to a question about the Mona Lisa:

- A. The what?? Never been there. No idea.
 - B. Oh, that thing. An old picture, right?
 - C. I know the picture you mean. I don't really know anything about it.
 - D. Leonardo. She's smiling. Mysterious. Big discussion about why.
 - E. I had it in an art survey course. I know it well. Saw it in Milan.
- (Or, if I'm asking about a building or place, E. I've been there)

So, ranking from A to E, with A being the least familiarity, rank this list

1. Citizen Kane before this class (movie)
2. Casablanca before this class (movie)
3. Orwell's Animal Farm before this class (book or anime cartoon)
4. Orwell's 1984 before this class
5. T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land (poem)
6. Shakespeare before this class (any play)
7. Impressionism
8. Manet
9. Monet
10. Van Gogh
11. Jackson Pollock
12. John Cage
13. Rigoletto (opera)
14. Pagliacci (opera)
15. Any opera
16. Kabuki theater (performance, not the movie theater)
17. Notre Dame Cathedral
18. Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel
19. Dante's Inferno
20. Homer's Iliad
21. Homer's Odyssey
22. Greek or Roman Sculpture
23. Any ballet
24. Art Museums before this class (A=never, E=member, go constantly)
25. Confucius's Analects
26. Tao te Ching by Lao Tzu
27. Haiku poetry or Zen Buddhism
28. Mysticism

Leonard/ Needs Survey 2004 - ~~5~~ - ~~2006~~

Subject: Bring to class: TEST/ BASIC VOCAB FOR STUDY OF RELIGION

Date: Saturday, January 23, 2010 1:49 PM

From: George Leonard <g_leonard@sbcglobal.net>

To: HUM 345 SPRING 2010 g_leonard@sbcglobal.net

Conversation: Bring to class: TEST/ BASIC VOCAB FOR STUDY OF RELIGION

Dear Hum 345 (Required)

Cultural Literacy Test: Basic Vocabulary for the Study of Religions

Print out two copies. You can print out this email, or go to the link and print out the nicer looking and more manageable form there.

<http://www.georgeleonard.com/vocab345.pdf>

1. Bring one copy to our first class so you can better follow the lecture and make notes. This is like learning your ABC's. You can't even read Wikipedia without these. With these terms and concepts, you'll be able, afterwards, to analyze any religion you encounter, and read the professional discussions of it. Let alone Wikipedia.

2. The second week, bring a second clean copy of these terms AND a Zeus scantron for an in-class test. (While you're at it, think ahead: buy a half dozen scantrons, some large size blue books, and pick up a pencil or two.)

Basic Vocabulary for the Study of Religion 1/4

1.- The name of the sudden American interest in Asian religion during the 1950s.

- a) The turn East
- b) Spirituality
- c) Natural supernaturalism
- d) Atheism
- e) None of the above

2.- Originally means "bound to a certain practice."

- a) Ligament
- b) Religious
- c) Spiritual
- d) Agnostic
- e) None of the above

3.- Belief in no god

- a) Agnostic
- b) Heretic
- c) Atheist
- d) Natural Supernaturalist
- e) None of the above

4.- Belief in a watchmaker god

- a) Religious
- b) Agnostic
- c) Deism
- d) Atheist
- e) None of the above

5.- It is impossible to know if God exists or not

- a) Agnostic
- b) Deism
- c) Atheist
- d) Natural Supernaturalist
- e) None of the above

What is
being
measured
and
why