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Spring 2015

French Discipline Assessment Report 2014/2015

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Recommended Citation

French Discipline, "French Discipline Assessment Report 2014/2015" (2015). *Assessment of Student Learning Reports*. 160.

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For the academic year 2014-2015, the French discipline had the following intentions for assessment:

**Annually,* students finishing 1002, 2002, and 3011 will retake the on-line placement exam to gauge how well students are making benchmarks at each level of proficiency, and whether the benchmarks we have set are reasonable. Administration will be overseen by the coordinator in French.*

Students in 1001 were asked to share their knowledge of French and the Francophone world on the first day of class by means of an inventory of their prior experiences: (Have you studied French before? If so, when/where? Did you take the placement exam? If so, when and into which class did you place? Do you have any experience traveling or studying abroad? Why did you decide to study French?)

Throughout the semester, students will study and discuss Francophone cultural sections of the first-year textbook. They will be encouraged to compare cultural elements such as musicians and cuisine to that of their native country/culture. Cultural comparison competency is integral to an assigned presentation and formal, written exams. For the purposes of assessment 80% or better on these activities represents adequate competence. We will measure what % of students across two sections of 1001 and 1002 meet that benchmark, and with what frequency (i.e. on 60% of exams, for example). Data will be collected by Adrienne Barbo.

While the discipline felt that these would be excellent data to measure, unfortunately, Adrienne Barbo had to leave the university for medical reasons, and the discipline was unable to collect and analyze this data.

Therefore, the discipline has instead assessed some of the curricular changes introduced to the French course offerings. Over the past two years, French has offered a revised version of 3001, originally a conversation and composition class. The changes to this course's focus are the result of previous assessment data from 2009-2012, which showed a consistent and deep lack of historical and cultural knowledge of France and of francophone countries in our French majors. Over these three academic years, the assessment reports included pre- and post-tests of students' cultural knowledge and proved that our students come to our upper-division electives with basically no understanding of French and Francophone history at all. The French discipline therefore decided to change the "Conversation and Composition" course to one on "Culture and composition" as a way to address directly the needs and desires of students to have a more thorough and well-rounded understanding of French history and culture before beginning upper-level French courses. The new form of the course debuted in Fall 2013, and it was repeated Fall 2014. This was further amended beginning Fall 2015, as detailed below.

Measurable differences have been found in the way that students approach class discussion, research, and writing. Whereas in years 2009-2010, 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 entire classes left blank pre-tests asking them to identify cultural events that took place in pre-modern, contemporary, and francophone histories, students are now on more stable footing. For

example, in 2012, an entire class of students in a medieval literature seminar were unable to name a single year that could have been placed in the Middle Ages as a cultural pre-test. Most thought that the Middle Ages were not part of chronology but of fairy tales. Two years later, in 2014, the first students who had taken the revised 3001 (in fall 2013) took a medieval literature seminar, and on the cultural pre-test each student was able to name specific events, rulers, and cultural information surrounding each decade in which a literary work was written. The same data appeared at the beginning of Fall 2015 with a cultural pre-test. The research by these students was much more in-depth and better organized than in the past because the students already had a strong understanding of the time around the works. This has created better discussions in class and a better ability to focus on analyzing texts instead of needing to spend a lot of time grasping basic historical concepts.

The revised "Culture and Composition" course became such a success that the French discipline further recrafted it in last year's catalog revisions, breaking and expanding the 4-credit Fren 3001 into three two-credit "Civilization and Composition" courses: Fren 3002, Fren 3003, and Fren 3004. Fren 3002 presents France from 30,000 BCE through 1715 CE, along with grammar, culture, and literature. 3003 presents France from 1715 CE to the present day, along with grammar, culture, and literature. 3004 presents the 55 Francophone countries along with their culture and literature. Each course stresses the importance of writing skills as a way to analyze and synthesize the information learned. These courses are being taught for the first time this year.

For our 2015-2016 assessment plan, the French discipline has decided to focus on these new Civilization and Composition courses. In each of them, we will administer a pre-and post-test to assess students' incoming understanding of French and francophone history and culture.

We will also give pre- and post-tests in our upper-division 3xxx elective courses to see how much knowledge the advanced students retained from one class to another and whether they are able to build upon it as they move through their studies.