

English Department Learning Outcomes (Approved April, 2009)¹

Humans are linguistic animals. Language is the most fundamental and pervasive tool we have for interpreting our world and communicating with others as we act in and attempt to transform that world. Whether they pursue an emphasis in literature or writing, English majors gain a deeper understanding of the resources of the written word. Both literature and writing courses help students explore how writers use the creative resources of language—in fiction, poetry, nonfiction prose, and drama—to explore the entire range of human experience. English courses help students build skills of analytical and interpretive argument; become careful and critical readers; practice writing—in a variety of genres—as a process of intellectual inquiry and creative expression; and ultimately to become more effective thinkers and communicators who are well-equipped for a variety of careers in our information-intensive society.

Specific learning outcomes for English courses include the following:

1. **Reading:** Students will become accomplished, active readers who appreciate ambiguity and complexity, and who can articulate their own interpretations with an awareness and curiosity for other perspectives.
2. **Writing skills and process:** Students will be able to write effectively for a variety of professional and social settings. They will practice writing as a process of motivated inquiry, engaging other writers' ideas as they explore and develop their own. They will demonstrate an ability to revise for content and edit for grammatical and stylistic clarity. And they will develop an awareness of and confidence in their own voice as a writer.
3. **Sense of Genre:** Students will develop an appreciation of how the formal elements of language and genre shape meaning. They will recognize how writers can transgress or subvert generic expectations, as well as fulfill them. And they will develop a facility at writing in appropriate genres for a variety of purposes and audiences.
4. **Culture and History:** Students will gain a knowledge of the major traditions of literatures written in English, and an appreciation for the diversity of literary and social voices within--and sometimes marginalized by--those traditions. They will develop an ability to read texts in relation to their historical and cultural contexts, in order to gain a richer understanding of both text and context, and to become more aware of themselves as situated historically and culturally.
5. **Critical Approaches:** Students will develop the ability to read works of literary, rhetorical, and cultural criticism, and deploy ideas from these texts in their own reading and writing. They will express their own ideas as informed opinions that are in dialogue with a larger community of interpreters, and understand how their own approach compares to the variety of critical and theoretical approaches.
6. **Research Skills:** Students will be able to identify topics and formulate questions for productive inquiry; they will identify appropriate methods and sources for research and evaluate critically the sources they find; and they will use their chosen sources effectively in their own

¹ *Note: This list of learning objectives is derived from the more detailed list of objectives drafted by the English faculty in 2000. It is meant to summarize, but not replace, that list.*

writing, citing all sources appropriately.

7. Oral communication skills: Students will demonstrate the skills needed to participate in a conversation that builds knowledge collaboratively: listening carefully and respectfully to others' viewpoints; articulating their own ideas and questions clearly; and situating their own ideas in relation to other voices and ideas. Students will be able to prepare, organize, and deliver an engaging oral presentation.

8. Valuing literature, language, and imagination: Students will develop a passion for literature and language. They will appreciate literature's ability to elicit feeling, cultivate the imagination, and call us to account as humans. They will cultivate their capacity to judge the aesthetic and ethical value of literary texts--and be able to articulate the standards behind their judgments. They will appreciate the expressive use of language as a fundamental and sustaining human activity, preparing for a life of learning as readers and writers.