

Literatures Track Learning Outcomes (Revised Fall 2014)

Genre

Courses in this category examine diverse forms of literary expression including poetry, fiction, drama, memoir and autobiography, children's literature, film, creative non-fiction, letters, and reviews. They should work to achieve the following outcome:

Outcome: Generic Transformations. Graduates will demonstrate 1) the ability to identify and analyze the significance of the formal features of genres studied; 2) an understanding of the cultural transformations of generic properties over time; and 3) an understanding of how a text's meaning arises from the way that writers both adhere to and subvert generic conventions. Finally, they will demonstrate an awareness of how the process of adhering to and subverting generic conventions can occur not only in the texts that they analyze but in the essays and other forms of writing that they themselves produce.

Method of Assessment: Rubric applied to sample set of papers (to be determined whether instructor-scored or committee scored).

American Multi-Ethnic and World Literatures

Courses in this category examine global, continental, and diverse United States writing communities. They should work to achieve the following outcome:

Outcome: Understanding of Diversity in Literary and Cultural History. Graduates will demonstrate the ability to identify and explain how categories of difference such as race, ethnicity, and nationality have shaped literary and cultural history and, in turn, how ethnic and world literatures have explored and critiqued the role of these categories in shaping literary representation and, by extension, human experience. Graduates will demonstrate an understanding of literature as a form of verbal art that potentially enables readers to feel empathy for persons other than themselves.

Method of Assessment: Rubric applied to sample set of papers (to be determined whether instructor-scored or committee scored).

Historical Contexts

Courses in this category address literary works and their cultural and historical contexts. They should work to achieve the following outcome:

Outcome: Competency with Literary and Cultural History. Graduates will demonstrate competency in situating and interpreting individual works, genres, and literary movements in relation to history and sociocultural contexts. Graduates will demonstrate familiarity with at least some of the key foundational texts, authors, periods, and movements in American, British, and/or World literatures, while also understanding the politics of canon formation and the centrality of historically marginalized texts and authors to literary study today. Graduates will demonstrate an understanding of literature as a form of verbal art whose value is historically and culturally constructed.

Method of Assessment: Rubric applied to sample set of papers (to be determined whether instructor-scored or committee scored).

Outcomes that pertain to all three categories in the track:

Outcome: Critical Reading. Graduates will demonstrate the ability to read literary and other cultural texts actively and critically, recognizing that such texts are complex and subject to multiple interpretations. Students will be able to engage in “close” textual analysis, as well as intertextual and contextual analysis, in order to uncover the meanings and ideologies embedded in literary and cultural texts. They will be able to argue what a text is saying and how (i.e., through what representational and aesthetic strategies) it is saying it; make thematic and theoretical connections between multiple texts; and be attuned to the larger social and ethical implications of a given text’s meanings. Finally, graduates will develop an understanding of literature’s value as a powerful vessel of the human imagination.

Outcome: Effective Writing. Graduates will demonstrate the ability to write focused and original persuasive essays in which they articulate compelling and nuanced interpretations of literary and other texts and support those interpretations with detailed analyses and (where appropriate) an attention to relevant cultural contexts and theoretical frameworks. They will demonstrate the ability to write clear, grammatical sentences and well-organized texts that reflect an attention to audience, purpose and style, and that follow the conventions of logical argumentation.

Outcome: Information and Disciplinary Literacy. Graduates will demonstrate the ability to conduct research that informs and amplifies their interpretations of literary and cultural texts. These research skills include, but are not limited to, identifying topics and posing productive questions; situating their own insights in relation to existing critical conversations on a given text; investigating a text’s popular and critical reception over time; interpreting how a given text grapples with the problems and conflicts central to a given historical moment and, through its representational strategies, reshapes our understanding of that cultural context. Through their literary research assignments, graduates will develop familiarity with some of the major schools and movements in literary theory and cultural criticism and understand how these critical frameworks shape the way we interpret texts and assign value to them. Graduates will demonstrate the ability to select relevant, appropriate sources, evaluate those sources, and incorporate them effectively and ethically in their own work.