

Department of English  
May 28, 2008

Core Curriculum Area 4  
ENG 265 and ENG 266

During the latter part of the Spring 08 semester, we collected writing samples from students enrolled in ENG 265 (Readings in Literature of the Western World) and ENG 266 (Introduction to Literary Genres and Ideas). Specifically, we collected samples from 18 sections of these 2 classes and used 17 of these as our sample, with 1 set of samples serving as our norming samples.

On Tuesday, May 27, seven English faculty members read a total of 356 writing samples, using a holistic scoring system, grounding in primary traits, to do so. Each sample—a microtheme—was scored twice, with two faculty reading each so as to ensure rater reliability. Each microtheme was scored on a 1 to 4 basis, with 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest score. The two scores were then added to yield a final score. A microtheme totaling 5 or higher would be deemed as showing evidence that the student had met the criteria for the English literature portion of Core Curriculum Area 4. Our goal was to certify 75 percent as scoring 5 or higher. A summary of the data is given in the table below:

Final Score	Number of Essays
2	25
3	24
4	73
5	56
6	81
7	76
8	21
	N = 356

A total of 234 microthemes were scored a 5 or higher, which yielded a passing rate of 66 percent. We are understandably disappointed in this score.

Analysis of each of the individual sections showed that 2 sections had a large number of microthemes with a final score of 4. Review of these samples showed that the writers had written competently but had responded to only the first half of the prompt. We assume that the instructions the students received from their instructors in preparation for the writing sample needed to be clearer. That is, the instructors probably needed to provide their students with more direction, so that their students interpreted clearly what the prompt called for. In the future, when next we review writing samples from ENG 265 and ENG 266, we will provide the instructor of each section with a written set of instructions to read to their students, so that all students receive the same set of instructions.