

SXU English Education Program Assessment by “Analytical Commentary on Academic Work”

Overview: This document proposes a new assessment system for the English Education Program that balances the needs of external accountability with the commitment to academic freedom, while offering students and faculty a universal procedure within a flexible implementation structure. The system requires students to take the lead in compiling a record of standards-based academic achievement, and it provides the program qualitative and quantitative data on student learning in ten areas of literary, linguistic, and rhetorical knowledge and skill.

Furthermore, the system is built on the practice of self-critique of student work in each of the key content areas specified by the profession. These content areas are sufficiently broad as to invite various kinds of scholarship, and they create conditions for rigorous applications of academic discourse in highly flexible ways.

The combination of program-wide processes over time and the comprehensive collection of products will provide the program a measure of outcomes that is unprecedented in its scope, authenticity, and guarantees of student preparedness.

Guiding Principles to This Assessment System

In developing the assessment system, English Education faculty have adhered to and balanced the following principles:

- The system should integrate student work and faculty evaluation into *normal course work* (no outside-of-course evaluation, as in portfolios, presentations, panels, etc.).
- The assessments should cultivate honest, high-quality faculty evaluation (for example, by getting the assignments and evaluative criteria as close to the instructor’s course objectives as possible).
- The system should use a “performance-plus-commentary” approach to portfolio building that teacher candidates will experience in completing their edTPA.
- The system should promote the connecting of learning both *within* and *across* classes.
- The system should feature integrated, authentic, student-directed and developmental learning experiences and processes.
- The program should actually use/depend on its assessment data to improve the program.

- The system should be clearly understood by instructors and students, and be programmatically universal to facilitate student planning and growth over time.
- The system should be scalable—e.g., to allow easy integration of additional, future programmatic assessments like portfolios.
- The system should require students to take responsibility for compiling commentaries across all the standards.

Goal: The goal of this assessment system is to encourage, support, and enable students to *define central disciplinary concepts* and *use academic discourse to make arguments* in critiquing their own work in relation to these concepts over the developmental span of their program.

Procedure: For every 200- and 300-level ENGL course, students will be required to submit a “commentary” paper on one of their course projects (a paper, a presentation, a project, etc.). The student will choose a commentary topic from a choice of 10 areas as specified by the NCTE Standards for

1. Literature (classic texts)
2. Literature (contemporary texts)
3. Literature (non-print, media)
4. Literature (historical traditions)
5. Literature (genre)
6. Diversity (gender, ethnicity, class)
7. Theory
8. Writing
9. Language
10. Adolescent reading and writing

Impact on Department: The broad categories listed above, plus a very flexible commentary approach, should enable a seamless integration into current and future course work, without the heavy hand of a prescriptive new assignment (i.e., other than the commentary itself). A key factor of the commentary assignment is the rhetorical invitation to “make a case”—in *either* direction, i.e., in having students argue that an artifact of their creation (be it a critique, a creative work, or whatever) *does* or *does not* qualify as an exemplar or a good fit for any given category under consideration. The commentary provided by the student is an opportunity for the student to show an awareness of a definition of the category and to apply that definition to his/her work in the context of larger disciplinary terms and discussions.

The only structural change to the department’s programs would be the addition of a standing assignment, a commentary assignment, in all 200- and 300-level classes. The commentary would be performed on an existing instructor-assigned, but student-chosen, student-created course artifact or project. In ENGL 207 students would be introduced to the commentary project and procedure more or less

formally, but the general procedure could be introduced (for students who do not take 207 first) or reviewed in all 200- and 300-level courses. Students would have web access to all the necessary documents for the assessment system, which include the following:

- Commentary Project Overview for Students (Draft attached)
- 10 Commentary Assignment Sheets for Students (Genre draft attached)
- 10 Rubrics for Students and Faculty (Genre draft attached)
- Examples of Student Commentaries that Illustrate Rubric Evaluation Criteria

In essence, instructors would be asked to support the system by including at least one commentary assignment as part of the course work of every course. This assignment may or may not be included in the student's grade (as the instructor desires), but a table of rubric scores for the class would be sent to the program each semester. Typically, students would choose which type of commentary to write for any given course, but faculty would be free to select and feature commentary areas that are relevant to courses, and they might require the completion of that commentary or commentaries as part of class work. In such cases, the program's commentary assignment sheet might be replaced by a course-specific assignment sheet, provided the replacement assignment offered an opportunity to evaluate performance on all the rubric criteria.

Livertext: Each semester the data from 200- and 300-level courses will be gathered by the Program and submitted to Livertext. In the future, all faculty who so desire will submit data directly to Livertext.

Other Program Assessments: This new "Analytical Commentary on Academic Work" assessment system is designed to address NCTE Content Standards 1 and 2, which cover literature, language, and writing. The remaining standards which cover content pedagogy (Standards 3 and 4); learners (Standard 5); social justice (Standard 6); and the profession (Standard 7) will be addressed in the English Education program courses. They will be addressed as follows:

- Standard 3: TRL
- Standard 4: TWL
- Standards 5, 6, and 7: The Program Essay: "Learners and the Profession that Supports Them" in TWL, TRL, ENGL 344, and methods

Common Rubric Design: Though only one rubric (Genre) has been designed as an example for the sake of this proposal, a rubric rationale has been developed to guide the creation of all ten rubrics. Each rubric would have the following four criteria:

- **Criterion 1:** Provide a **description of the artifact** you created and that you are commenting on.

- **Criterion 2:** Provide a close reading of the **artifact**, with some focus on whatever it is the rubric is designed to measure.
- **Criterion 3:** Provide some understanding of the **broader context of whatever it is the rubric is designed to measure.**
- **Criterion 4:** Show capacity to write using the **discourse conventions** of literary/linguistic/rhetorical analysis.

Rubric Scoring:

Exceeds	Meets	Emerging	Not evident
3	2	1	0

Each commentary should be 2-4 pages, double-spaced, in length.

Draft

[Draft of Project Overview to give to students]**Analytical Commentary Assessment Program**

Throughout their studies in the major, students in the English Education Program are required to compose a series of commentaries designed to document their knowledge and skills in ten key areas of literary, linguistic, and rhetorical. The ten areas are as follows:

1. Literature (classic texts)
2. Literature (contemporary texts)
3. Literature (non-print, media)
4. Literature (historical traditions)
5. Literature (genre)
6. Diversity (gender, ethnicity, class)
7. Theory
8. Writing
9. Language
10. Adolescent reading and writing

Students are asked to complete one commentary for each 200- and 300-level course in the program (excluding the English Education courses). (There are 10 such courses.)

The commentary is based on a course assignment of the student's choice. In some classes instructors will guide or encourage students to write certain types of commentaries, but in all cases, it is the student's choice as to which commentary will be completed in which course. It is the student's responsibility over the entirety of the program to ensure that all 10 commentaries are completed by the time the student completes ENGL 373, at which point the student will compile the 10 commentaries into a portfolio.

Each of the ten areas has an assignment sheet and rubric to guide the student in writing the commentary.

The ideal commentary provides evidence that the writer is aware of basic literary/linguistic/rhetorical categories, terminology, and modes of discussion. As well, the ideal commentary will show a strong degree of self-awareness as one critiques and categorizes the literary/linguistic/rhetorical writings that comprise the artifacts under review. Students are encouraged, to the extent possible, to connect knowledge and skills from the entire body of their English coursework as they plan and complete all their commentary assignments.

[SAMPLE Assignment Sheet]**Genre Commentary Assignment Sheet**

Background

Genre may be defined generally as “a category of artistic composition, as in music or literature, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter” (*Oxford Dictionaries*)

In literature studies, the term sometimes refers to the broad literary categories of epic, tragedy, comedy, poetry, the novel, non-fiction, parody, and the like. The features of literary works that get classified into these categories are often clear enough that readers are able to place the works decisively into one distinct category.

Beyond these classifications, there is another sense of “genre” that opens up a more fluid, or granular, or *ad hoc* form of classification. The term genre may be used on this smaller level to indicate “any identifiable set of characteristics that may be used to define a potential group or phenomenon.” When one says, “I am not ‘that guy,’” he is engaging in a type of “genre thinking,” for the term “that guy” is clearly definable and classifiable. A “chick flick” is a certain *kind of* film. A blog rant has identifiable stylistic and content features. And on it goes.

In between these two extremes of “genre” as a technical term for literary classification, and “genre” as a type of thinking that looks for any criteria upon which to base groupings, there is widespread use of the term by literary critics, teachers, readers, and audiences in general.

The Commentary Assignment

For this assignment, choose an artifact of yours that represents some form of genre analysis (or performance) that you may use as the basis for a brief, focused analysis of the concept of genre.

Use your commentary to engage in an “informed genre discussion” that employs the discourse conventions of literary or rhetorical commentary. Drawing on your concept of “genre” from your coursework, your artifact, and your new research, make an argument about the genre analysis (or performance) in your selected artifact. Possible questions your commentary might explore include (but are not limited to) the following:

- What is the definition of genre that your artifact promotes, suggests, makes possible, or prevents?

- How would you summarize the range of genre concerns raised by your artifact?
- What kind of genre commentary have other critics made about the text upon which your artifact is based?
- How does your artifact complicate or simplify the idea of genre?
- What would happen to the text in question (or to your artifact itself), if it were altered or transformed into a *different* genre?
- How does your genre analysis, either in your artifact or your commentary, connect to conventional notions of genre in literary studies?

Requirements:

- Before writing your commentary, consult the evaluation rubric for this assignment.
- Length: 2-4 pages, double-spaced.

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