

Marquette University
Department of English

Guidelines for Teaching Our Literature Surveys

The following guidelines are meant for new faculty, part-time faculty, instructors, or any faculty returning to the sophomore literature courses. They are meant to provide not a blueprint but some ideas for helping to plan and construct syllabi for the various sophomore courses, and to suggest some activities that might facilitate the students' learning experience.

For further suggestions, please consult the file of syllabi available in the English Department office. The Undergraduate Studies Committee also encourages consultation with other faculty who are teaching the surveys.

I. Student Assessment and Evaluative Tools: i.e., Assignments

- In keeping with Marquette's policy of making course expectations clear for students, sophomore survey syllabi should include a justifiable system of assessment with an emphasis on composition that reinforces standards taught in English 001 and 002. For instructors wishing more quantitative guidelines, it has generally been thought reasonable to expect

√ a minimum of two essays of formal writing totaling 10-12 pages, exclusive of journals, response papers, etc.

√ two examinations (or their equivalent)

II. Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of each survey students should be able to:

- Summarize plots, describe characters in order to analyze particular literacy features of major works studied
- Provide a credible interpretation of a text that infers meaning by neither dismissing nor distorting significant details
- Produce clear and persuasive written papers or essays on literary topics. Such papers should contain well-developed theses supported by evidence in language from the text
- Exhibit an understanding of and facility in applying literary critical terms
- Employ interpretive strategies in their reading
- Respond effectively to the artistic elements in a literary work

- Engage in discussions about a literary work's meanings
- Identify, analyze, and include in writing assignments reference to common literary terms like metaphor, simile, allegory, symbol, etc.

Depending upon the survey (historical or genre)

- List and characterize the major periods, genres studied
- Explicate poems or significant passages of other genres read, paying attention to the rhetorical effect of sentence structure, word choice, and (for poetry) meter and rhythm
- Evaluate major themes and relate them to historical, social, religious issues current at the time—or pertinent to contemporary concerns
- Place, compare, and evaluate major authors and their contributions to the genre, to the national literature

III. Some Recommended Activities

A number of instructors have found the students do not do well on longer formal papers, at least early in the semester. For that reason, they have developed a number of other evaluative assignments. Among these are the following. Also included are some additional activities intended to stimulate interest and thereby enhance students' motivation.

- Short diagnostic assignments early in the semester (e.g. a short explanation, a “position paper”, etc.)
- Reading Quiz
- Oral Presentation, debates, etc.
- Varieties of participation (might include reading aloud, recitation, dramatic reading, etc.) reflecting different learning styles
- Other kinds of group work
- E-mail or community journals (as instructor time and expertise allow).
- For drama and fiction, but also historical surveys: local theatre productions, film versions of drama and fiction (a wide variety available in the department, and through IMC), to which students are assigned reaction, review, or more formal analytical papers

- For poetry, as well as fiction, instructors can also encourage students to attend any of the many local poetry or fiction readings
- Use of relevant secondary sources for doing literary analyses or background studies of authors, works, or the cultural context of course work.

IV. Syllabi

- Sample syllabi for all survey courses are available in the department office.