

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS  
**PULASKI TECH**

**Assessment Report:**  
**2019-2020**

**ENGL 2340: Mythology**



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## Course-Level Learning Outcomes

### 1. What are the Course-Level Outcomes (CLOs)?

The course had four learning outcomes. The student will:

1. Understand significant literary and cultural developments in world civilizations.
2. Understand the interaction of various literary and cultural traditions.
3. Achieve familiarity with enduring expressions of human thought by studying world mythology, including the study of how they function in society and cultures.
4. Complete a significant analytical writing component.

### 2. Which CLOs were addressed for this academic year? (2018-2019)

All course learning outcomes are assessed in the course through various assignments. CLOs 1 and 2 are assessed through smaller writing assignments, and CLO 3 is assessed through unit tests. CLOs 2 and 4 are also assessed through a larger analytical paper assignment. For the past few years, we have measured and reported exclusively on CLO 4. However, because we now can measure CLO 2 separately due to a change on the rubric, this report will include results for both CLOs 2 and 4.

### 3. Which CLOs are being addressed in your assessment plan next academic year? (2019-2020)

As per the action plan on the last assessment report, the CLOs for the class have been changed. With the new CLOs, we will be assessing all of the learning outcomes, but actively reporting on CLOs 1, 6, and 7, which overlap a great deal with the previous CLOs 2 and 4. We will be working on new assessments for CLOs 2, 3, 4, and 5. The plan is that we should be able to actively report on all CLOs in the future.

### 4. Explain the assessment cycle.

For the past four years, all four outcomes have been assessed each semester through smaller writing assignments, a larger final paper, and tests (as stated in the course standards). This plan focuses primarily on the final paper for the course, which is associated mainly with the last CLO (#4). To align with changes being made in the other literature-based ENGL courses and help better measure another CLO (#2), a change was made to the rubric last year so that two CLOs could be measured with the final paper. CLO 1 and CLO 3 were assessed through smaller writing assignments and tests. These CLOs are assessed but not typically measured or reported on. .

We will be piloting new assessment methods in 2020-2021 for new CLOs, but the final paper will remain as a primary assessment method until the new CLOs are fine-tuned and new assessment methods designed and piloted. The current primary assessment method of the final paper is at least planned to continue from the 2019-2020 academic year through to the 2021-2022 academic year until such time as the other assessments are perfected and we are able to start gathering data and reporting on them on the annual report.

## 5. What are the assessment methods? Are they direct or indirect?

All CLOs were assessed using the following standards. These standards are communicated through syllabi templates and are the same for all ENGL 2340 courses.

Students will study a variety of myths from around the world with a focus on comparing myths from different cultures in order to determine shared types, themes, and traditions. Students will also learn about the development of myths, their purposes in societies, and the primary characters and character types. This class requires students to read and discuss primary and secondary sources critically, with an awareness of cultural and historical significance and contexts. Students will write a minimum of 10 pages total in analytical assignments that will be divided between a number of shorter responses and at least one longer analytical research essay. Students will demonstrate good scholarship by using the conventions of MLA style and documentation. Midterm/final/unit tests will cover content of selected readings, general factual knowledge of history and culture for each unit, and some interpretation of excerpts from the readings.

The final paper assessment has standard guidelines, which include the following:

Student will prepare a 4-6 page analytical research paper that articulates a clear thesis statement, uses supporting examples from primary and secondary sources to generate a critical, well-organized, clearly written interpretation of at least one myth through the use of those sources, demonstrate close analysis of the text, accurately discuss and make connections to the literary and/or cultural context of the myth, and demonstrates a mastery of both MLA formatting, citation and documentation, and Standard American English in the construction of the piece.

## 6. What are the assessment goal(s)?

The threshold of success was 75% scoring adequate proficiency or higher in both areas of Critical Thinking – the generation of a clear interpretation of at least one myth using cited textual support and the being able to accurately discuss and make connections to the literary and/or cultural context of the myth in forming the interpretation - of the standard rubric for the final paper.

## 7. What were the findings for this academic year? (2018-2019)

A total of 39 enrolled in the class in the 2019-2020 school year (19 for fall and 20 for spring). Out of the 39 enrolled, 33 submitted final papers for assessment (17 in the fall and 16 for the spring). This means 85% of the total number of students enrolled were assessed.

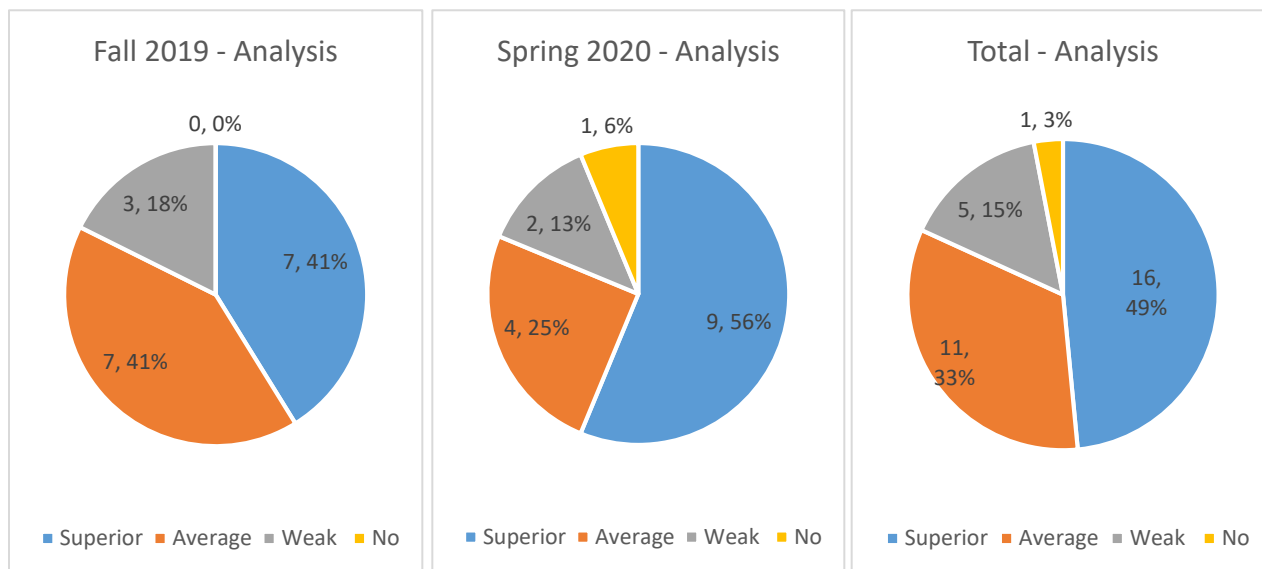
Out of 33 students assessed with the final paper in 2019-2020,

- 82% of them displayed adequate or higher proficiency in the area of being able to generate a clear interpretation of at least one myth using cited textual support, which means 18% scored either weak or no proficiency in this area.
- 61% of them displayed adequate or higher proficiency in being able to accurately discuss and make connections to the literary and/or cultural context of the myth in forming an interpretation, which means 39% of them scored weak or no proficiency.

This means that for the first outcome, the target was exceeded by a wide margin, but for the second outcome, the target was not reached by a wide margin as well.

## What is your analysis of the findings?

The results break down to the following:

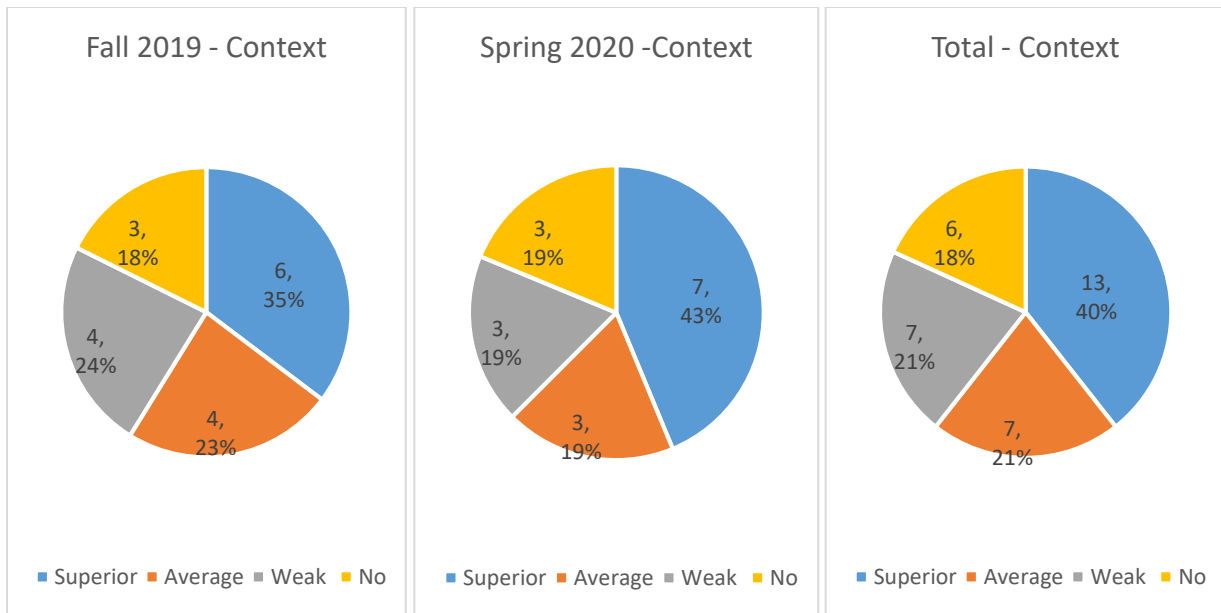


When it came to analysis of the text (first outcome measured), for Fall 2019, 41% of those students assessed scored superior proficiency on the rubric, compared to the 41% who scored average proficiency and the 18% who scored weak. For Spring 2020, the number of those who scored superior proficiency increased to 56%, dropped slightly for those who scored average proficiency (24%) and stayed stable at 19% for those with weak or no proficiency.

In total, the number of students who scored superior or average proficiency stayed the same from fall to spring as well as the students who struggled with the skill area. In the end, about half of the total students assessed both semesters scored superior proficiency in this skill area. Coupled with those who scored average proficiency, you have more than three quarters who did at least an adequate job (82%) and only one student between both semesters who showed no proficiency.

There is not a clean comparison previous assessment results from the last two years because both the assignment and the rubric were changed slightly last year. However, some comparison can be made since the same two skill areas have been measured through the same standard assignment – just that the skill areas were measured jointly as a measure of critical thinking skills rather than separately. Last year, 79% of students assessed scored at least adequate proficiency while in the previous academic year, only 60% scored at least adequate proficiency.

Even if you are just looking at a spring-to-spring comparison of results from the last three years, you would see slight increases year to year in performance on the final paper. For instance, In Spring 2018, only 18% of the student assessed scored the highest rating in critical thinking. In Spring 2019, that number increased to 50% of the students assessed. Last year, that number went up to 56% scoring the highest rating in terms of critical thinking demonstrated on the final paper.



Last year, students were evaluated separately in terms of a demonstration of critical thinking skills. When it came to their ability to explain how cultural context factored into their interpretations, they struggled a bit more than the previous skill. For Fall 2019, only 35% of students assessed scored superior proficiency while 24% scored adequate proficiency, 24% scored weak, and 18% scored no proficiency. In Spring 2020, performance was better with 44% scoring superior proficiency, 19% scoring adequate, 19% scoring weak, and 19% scoring no proficiency. All in total, the number of students who scored at least adequate proficiency increased from 58% to 62% while the number on the lower end of the scale went from 42% to 38%, a slight decrease. In all, 61% of students assessed last year scored at least adequate proficiency and 39% scored either weak or no proficiency.

It is worth noting that the fall semester was the first time that the skill was being focused on independently of another skill, so it could be considered a pilot semester on how to handle teaching this particular skill. Improvements were made between the fall and spring, which seems to have resulted in improvements in student performance in that area. With further improvements, the results could be much higher in subsequent semesters.

Also, literary analysis is a skill introduced in many Comp II classes, so students are formally taught how to do the skill in that class and it is reinforced in this class. It is not surprising that students would do better in being able to analyze and provide textual support since they have likely already worked with this skill in the prerequisite class. However, the second outcome measured is not likely introduced in Comp II and takes the first skill a step further. It would make sense that students would struggle with it more if being introduced to it in the class and having limited writing assignments to practice the skill before being assessed on it.

The course is only taught online, so there is no comparison that can be drawn between online and traditional classes.

## 8. What is the action plan for the next academic year? (2020 - 2021) Explain.

The plan for the next academic year includes the following:

1. The two key skills will continue to be assessed, measured, and reported on as more improvement will be made to address the second outcome, in particular, and to provide some direct data for comparison (since data from previous years does not provide a good comparison).
2. More instruction will be provided in Unit 2. Emphasis will be placed on understanding cultural context and using that information to inform an interpretation of the myth. However, since there are multiple approaches to interpreting myths, careful language must be used to avoid steering students toward one particular approach over others.
3. The instructions for the final paper need to provide more detailed guidelines on what this “discussion and making connections” should look like when it comes to cultural context. Model passages and papers with highlight portions should be provided for students as a resource.
4. A multiple measure may be necessary to help get at this skill area. Since new CLOs are being designed for the course, new assessment measures – one akin to a type of portfolio – may be better able to capture exact data on this area. This could take the form of a comprehensive, short-answer test that gets at each of the new outcomes and allows students to explain where they demonstrated this skill and provide explanations and examples, perhaps even pulled from their own smaller writing assignments. This would free up the final paper to focus on close reading and textual analysis skills.
5. On the subject of new CLOs, there should be continued emphasis on these two skills as part of the larger writing assignment – the Final Paper – while other CLOs should be assessed in smaller writing assignments or tests.
6. “Knowledge” of context can also be measured through tests, which are a part of the course. A plan should be created for looking at test performance to get at this skill from a different angle. New thresholds should be established for success in this area and possibly reported on next year’s assessment report.
7. Start a discussion with Comp II instructors, particularly those who use literature as a theme for the class, about how to introduce and reinforce these dual skills on a final paper for that course so that some students will be exposed early to it before the class.
8. Push for exemplary papers regarding mythology be included in *Milestones*, the school’s academic journal, as models for student writing.
9. Provide clear guidance for tutors in the Collaboration Center about how the expectations of a paper for this class differs from those in standard literature classes so that they can provide better guidance to students needing help.
10. Lastly, continue two policies started last year – requiring student conferences to discuss the final paper, in particular, and requiring rough drafts before final drafts. Both of these methods give the instructor the opportunity to address the guidelines for the final assessments and assure more students submit assignments, reduce confusion, and communicate clear expectations regarding the outcomes.