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CLAS Core Assessment - Interpretation of Literature Requirement 2024-2025

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The University of Iowa has a long tradition of fostering excellence in the arts of writing and reading. Our commitment to literary life and culture won global recognition in 2008 when UNESCO designated Iowa City a "City of Literature," only the third global site to be honored as such. Every student who attends the University of Iowa has an opportunity to engage with and benefit from this rich heritage, including through the General Education Literature (GEL) course that fulfills the Interpretation of Literature requirement in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS). Students hone their literacy, reading, writing, speaking, and metacognition (or awareness of their thought process) by studying a form of artistic expression that is ancient and enduring, vital and vibrant. They build lively, incisive reading communities, develop informed and imaginative perspectives, and integrate thoughtful feedback on their analytical writing.

Throughout our yearlong assessment process, this committee again and again heard concerns about students not reading enough—and not reading well enough—to succeed in college. As we document below, multiple measures show a steep decline in literacy in the U.S., with 54% of adults reading below the 6th grade level (National Center for Education Statistics 2024, National Literacy Center 2024). Deans, faculty across departments, directors of undergraduate studies, and students themselves report the challenges of comprehension, interpretation, and expression. Many students enter university never having read a piece of literature from start to finish, and even more read literature only if assigned to do so (NIL 2024).

> **Feedback with our writing assignments kept me excited, ambitious, and gave me goals to work towards."**
>
> – GEL student, 2022

Gaining access to the full richness of the human experience as represented in literature requires well-honed reading skills. General Education Literature grants students as yet unversed in the rewards of textual immersion the opportunity to read closely and incisively, make sense of complexity, clarify perspectives, exercise imagination, and hone interpretive problem-solving as members of a reading community.

Each semester, students are able to choose from among abundant GEL offerings organized around open-ended themes that speak to a remarkably broad range of interests. Instructors focus on ensuring general comprehension of assigned readings, which are drawn from distinct historical periods so that students can trace the evolution of varied literary and cultural traditions over time. The main objective here is not to impart comprehensive knowledge of a particular moment or movement in literary history. Rather, GEL works to sharpen all students' reading, writing, and analytical skills – calling attention to the workings of language in general, literary language in particular, and the contexts that shape interpretive strategies.

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> **Going over the books we read in class helped me see different perspectives and notice new details in the book I may not have gotten the first time around**
>
> -- GEL student, 2023

In all its varied genres, literature draws readers into an imaginative space that opens vistas onto other worlds, while inviting us to consider how we are positioned in the one we take as our own. As we document, the general education program in CLAS is distinctive among peer institutions, reflecting our university's commitment to support students with highly varied backgrounds in succeeding in college and graduating with skills that serve them in many careers. GEL faculty teach students *how* to approach texts with intellectual rigor so that they can develop and support interpretations. Instructors expertly guide students in classroom discussion, highlighting how differently situated readers can rightly draw varying meanings from the same written word. Intensive writing assignments challenge students to put their own ideas to the page, pressing them to find their own words and ways of crafting a compelling analysis of the literary text they have been asked to examine. In sum, by developing reading, speaking, and writing proficiency in the richly open-ended context of literature, students build competencies that will prove invaluable as they make their way through college and into any profession and walk of life.

Overview & Previous Review

Interpretation of Literature is a required category in the Communication and Literacy area of the University of Iowa's General Education CLAS Core. It is a requirement for undergraduates in CLAS as well as those in Tippie College of Business, College of Public Health, and University College (BLS). The Interpretation of Literature requirement sets the University apart from peer institutions (only one of which has a similar Gen Ed requirement).

Courses fulfilling the requirement are offered by several departments, including Classics, French and Italian, and Asian Languages and Literatures, but over 95% of the sections are taught in the English Department's General Education Literature Program (GEL). Currently GEL offers around 73 sections of the course each Fall and Spring: 69 in person, 3 over Zoom, and one asynchronous. Each summer the program offers 1 section in person and 2 over Zoom. Around 3,400 students take the course each year, most of them freshmen and sophomores, although enrollments also include a significant and growing number of juniors and seniors. GEL is mostly staffed by graduate instructors from English (PhD and NWP) and the Writers' Workshop, with a few coming from Theatre Arts, Translation, and other programs. In recent years, GEL has also employed VAPs to teach 15-20% of its sections. Beginning in 2025-26, roughly the same percentage of sections will be staffed by a mix of VAPs and Instructional Track faculty.

Interpretation of Literature is currently taught as a small discussion-based class with enrollments capped at 24. Designed as a course for non-English majors, Interpretation of Literature seeks to

introduce students to the rewards of serious literature in the hopes of encouraging lifelong readers. The course culminates in a portfolio assignment, when students reflect on their relationship to literature and how that relationship has developed over a semester of reading multiple genres. Through intentional cultivation of class discussion, students learn a wide range of interpretation while improving their oral communication. The course teaches close reading, which many students identify as the chief skill they acquired from it. Another primary goal is honing students' analytical writing. Each student writes at least 5,000 words in a combination of formal and informal writing assignments. The two major assignments are scaffolded, with instructors devoting class time to thesis workshops, peer review, and individualized feedback.

Meeting roughly every two weeks throughout the 2024-25 academic year, the committee worked hard to understand and assess the courses that fulfill the requirement, their place in the CLAS core and the curriculum more broadly, how well students are meeting the requirement's learning outcomes, and whether those outcomes should be revised to better meet the needs of Iowa's current and future undergraduates. We reviewed the outcomes assessment reports written every year by the GEL Director, self-assessments written by GEL instructors, student evaluation data, course syllabi, the current GEL instructor handbook, and GEL's many web resources. We spoke to many current and recent GEL instructors, and instructors of other courses that satisfy the requirement. We interviewed Dr. Bluford Adams, the current GEL Director (and a member of the committee), as well as Dr. Blaine Greteman, who directed the program from 2018 to 2022. We also spoke with CLAS Directors of Undergraduate Studies and stakeholders from many units across the College and the University. Throughout, we had many substantial and productive conversations about the fate of student reading, the value of classroom discussion and community, the role of writing instruction in the curriculum, how pedagogy training translates into student learning, how students can transfer skills of literary reading to other courses in other fields, and much more besides.

The last evaluation of Interpretation of Literature occurred in 2013. The committee made five recommendations for CLAS that have since been met. These included:

1. Requiring a new Gen Ed area focused on writing skills (which the committee did not think should be a focus of GEL)
2. Training instructors to use writing to help students read well
3. Starting the course with an "autobiography of a reader" assignment
4. Developing a policy on whether to require a final exam
5. Revising the course evaluation to assess the course's purpose

It seems fair to say that in the years since the 2013 review, GEL has embraced teaching writing as a core mission. The course teaches writing not just as a way to enhance students' reading skills, but as an end in itself. Many instructors still use the excellent "autobiography of a reader" assignment, although it is not required of all sections. Midterm and final exams (or exam alternatives) are now required of all sections. The course evaluation has been duly revised.

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Assessment of Student Learning - Current Goals & Outcomes

To help us assess how well students are meeting the requirement's current learning outcomes, our committee reviewed GEL course evaluation data from Fall 2022 to Fall 2024, GEL Director annual outcomes assessment reports from that time span, and instructor self-assessment reports going back to 2018. We also spoke with instructors of GEL and other courses that meet the requirement for their reflections on how much students are learning.

Currently, there are six learning outcomes:

1. Students refine their reading skills by the exposure to a wide variety of genres from multiple centuries.
2. Students improve their reading comprehension and analysis by using a range of strategies or "ways of reading" appropriate for the assigned texts.
3. Students strengthen their analytical and critical responses to texts through the intensive use of oral and written responses.
4. Through assigned readings, class discussion, and writing assignments, students begin to recognize the influence of a reader's individual differences and experiences on interpretation and analysis.
5. In discussion and in writing, students consider and begin to understand the crucial connections between individual texts and cultural, historical, political, social, and other contexts.
6. Finally, students deepen their vision of themselves as readers, particularly as contrasted to the beginning of the course.

In addition, currently each course in the CLAS Core must have five attributes:

1. Academic expectations are clearly defined
2. Students receive early and frequent evaluation of their work
3. A range of teaching and assessment strategies are used
4. Assignments in the course will build in complexity
5. Students practice writing and communication in methods appropriate to the discipline

Overall, the committee has concluded that the courses that satisfy the Interpretation of Literature requirement do broadly succeed in helping students reach every outcome. These courses also satisfy the CLAS Core Course Attributes. That said, as the following summary of data analysis and conversations demonstrates, instructors face a number of challenges. While we were pleased to learn about all the ways these courses are helping Iowa students reach their goals, we propose a set of revised goals that better reflect what these courses are already achieving, as well as what they ought to be doing to meet the challenges of general education in the present moment.

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Findings from Student Course Evaluations

The course evaluation data that the committee reviewed reflects a course that is helping students meet the six learning outcomes, with a few areas in need of targeted improvement.

In their course evaluations, students in GEL rate their agreement with three statements specific to the course:

1. "I am better at analyzing and understanding what I read."
2. "I can better understand how texts are related to their cultural, historical, and political contexts."
3. "I have strengthened my abilities to respond critically to reading materials."

GEL students generally enjoy the texts chosen by instructors, which helps them engage critically in discussion and writing. Although students rarely mention the course's commitment to assigning texts from a wide span of historical eras, students do express appreciation for reading a variety of literary forms (poetry, drama, nonfiction, novels, etc.), as doing so seemed to help them improve their close reading, interpretation, and critical writing skills.

Students also report that their reading comprehension and ability to find meaning in literary texts improved between the first and last weeks of their GEL course. Many students named close reading as a helpful way into literary analysis, and one that they were newly exposed to through the course. In the ACE student surveys from Spring 2022 to Spring 2024, over 75 percent of participating students each semester reported that they "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with the statement, "I am better at analyzing and understanding what I read." One student articulates a common comment, that "the discussions were very useful. There were times when I was very confused about what happened in a story, but when I came to class I would understand it." Over the past two years of evaluation data, however, there is an uptick in student requests for more support from instructors in helping them make sense of difficult texts (this was echoed in our discussions with instructors).

Students identified several key aspects of the course that helped them improve their analytical and critical responses to texts:

1. Class discussions, both whole class and small group.
2. Thorough and constructive feedback from instructors and peers on their written work.
3. Incorporation of smaller assignments to help solidify reading comprehension and practice writing skills (students named quizzes, reading journals, discussion posts, freewriting in class, and opportunities for creative writing).

In the ACE surveys, students again overwhelmingly reported developing an ability to analyze texts in their social and historical context. In response to the claim, "I can better understand how texts are related to their cultural, historical, and political contexts," every semester more than 75 percent of responding students report that they "strongly agree" or "agree" with the statement. Students reported that they connect texts in GEL courses to a variety of ideas and disciplines beyond the course itself. They revealed that some texts helped them "go outside" of themselves to better understand cultural

identities they don't share and challenged their "own views and perspectives," making them reconsider how they understand the world. They appreciated the expansion of their "horizons" and that they were able to read texts that they would not have otherwise encountered. One student enthusiastically noted that they could see the course helping their reading and writing across their other classes, while another wrote exuberantly about the experience of finding relationships between sci-fi texts and real-world issues. Generally, students report through evaluations that class discussions help them make the broader connections listed in learning outcomes. However, they note that the class can become monotonous if there is a lack of facilitation of discussions or a lack of variety in class activities. Some students are unclear about the value of assignments, especially when instructors or prompts do not explicate their purpose.

Students' descriptions of the course's strengths seem to confirm the course's success at helping them "recognize the influence of a reader's individual differences and experiences on interpretation and analysis." Some students reported that the literature presented in class helped them to develop a better understanding of themselves and people in general. One student in 2022 noted that the class readings created a change in their "outlook on life." Another student in 2023-2024 found that a major writing assignment offered "a sense of healing and self-discovery," while a third noted that writing a personal essay felt very "freeing." One student in spring 2024 articulated that texts were especially difficult when characters were unrelatable. The student found a way into literary analysis, however, by examining aspects of the texts that connected with their personal interests.

Overall, students consistently expressed the belief that the course has empowered them to better analyze texts, think critically, and write effectively. In evaluations as well as end-of-semester portfolios, students reported that they developed their sense of who they are as readers. Students collectively felt their ability to read texts closely improved from the start of the semester to the end, one noting that their "ear" for the English language improved by reading poetry. Students reported that the course taught them to notice small things while reading that they would otherwise have overlooked, such as punctuation and line breaks; it emboldened them to explore and better understand their own reading preferences; and it helped shape a new appreciation for literary ambiguity: "I found myself captivated by the nuanced portrayal of [...] characters, grappling with the gray areas of human nature and the blurred lines between right and wrong." Such enthusiasm also showed up in instructors' reports of their students' progress at the end of the semester; one instructor noted that students shared that the class "reignited their love for reading... or made them realize that reading could be an enjoyable and worthwhile pursuit."

Findings from Director's & Instructors' Annual Assessment Reports

On the whole, both the director's annual assessment reports and the instructors' end-of-course self-assessments report that GEL is helping most of its students reach its learning outcomes.

A recurring theme in these reports is students' need for dedicated writing instruction to be able to make the most of the course. Instructors report spending a lot of time working on student writing.

Many instructors noted that when they did focus more intently on helping students with their writing (with feedback on drafts, peer review workshops, dedicated lessons on essay components, and frequent opportunities for informal writing), students' writing *and* reading skills improved, as evidenced both in their formal writing assignments and in their oral responses to texts in class discussions.

Some instructors expressed frustration with students not paying attention in class, not reading assignment prompts closely, and/or not completing reading assignments. Another, seemingly connected, challenge is student use of ChatGPT to cheat on essay assignments. It is clear that instructors need training, guidance, and support to face these issues. It is also clear that the instructors who focused most intently on meeting students where they are, at helping students see the connection between reading outside of class, talking and listening in the classroom, and writing the essays, were best equipped to navigate these choppy waters.

Overall, the instructors that reported the most successes were the ones who focused most on building community, teaching the skills central to literary studies, and asking the big questions that motivate those skills. Why do we read? What makes a good reader? How does being a good reader of literature help you in other parts of your life? Close reading, iterative reading and writing processes, attention to detail, tolerance for ambiguity, consideration of paradox and contradiction, the process of making sense of that which seems to resist interpretation: these are the skills that literary studies can offer to help all undergraduates succeed. It is reassuring to discover that the instructors who most emphasized the development of these skills—and the ones who discovered that a supportive and inclusive community was a necessary condition for that development—were the ones most satisfied with their students' progress in the course.

These conclusions, both positive and negative, were affirmed by our conversations with recent GEL instructors. The committee got a clear sense of the program's definite strengths, most growing out of the course's small-class, discussion-based focus on reading and writing skills. We also heard about the challenges instructors most often face: students' struggles with reading difficult material, learning how to talk to peers about literature in class, finding enough time for sustained focus, and understanding how to stick with a difficult task, rather than turn to AI, when it seems too hard.

Findings from Faculty & Administrative Stakeholders:

CLAS Directors of Undergraduate Studies

Faculty & Administrators Across Colleges

GEL Faculty Outside English

The assessment committee spent substantial time speaking with and listening to GEL stakeholders across the university. These included faculty outside the English department who regularly teach GEL, including from Classics, East Asian & Slavic Languages, and French & Italian. We spoke with directors of undergraduate studies (DUSs) in CLAS. Committee members also met with faculty and

administrators who send students to take the Interpretation of Literature to fulfill their requirements – including the College of Education, College of Public Health, and Tippie College of Business. Across these conversations, we heard repeatedly that our students need and benefit from General Education Literature. As mentioned above, people articulated with some dismay that in recent years, many of our students are struggling with reading comprehension as well as interpretive writing. Overall, these conversations reflected gratitude for the work that the course clearly does alongside a measure of discouragement that, even with the robust Rhetoric and Interpretation of Literature requirements in place, students could use further education in foundational skills (an observation we address in our final proposals). Here, we underscore those foundational skills with which our students needed extra practice, according to our interlocutors. These include: concise and accurate summary of a text, sustained analysis, and using writing to work out and express interpretation.

Dean Lang and her team circulated four questions to the directors of undergraduate studies before our meeting to consider, holding in mind the particular educational needs of their respective departments. These included:

1. What do you want to ask us about this requirement or the courses that fulfill it?
2. What associated skills do your students currently struggle with? What do they excel at?
3. What skills would you hope a course that fulfills this requirement would provide to the students in your department?
4. What else?

During our discussion, a Tippie College of Business professor noted right off the bat that his students need to hone their skill at swift, crisp, clear summary. Their responses, he sighed, are often lengthy, unfocused, and imprecise. On the flip side, several directors mentioned students' need for lessons in moving from summary into interpretive analysis in longer pieces of writing. Here, faculty from Global Health and World Languages reported that students put forward viewpoints with a great deal of reluctance. Hence the turn to ChatGPT and other large language models (LLMs), not just to cross-check comprehension but to concoct interpretations ("answers") as well. At least anecdotally, it seems that students are availing themselves of AI at those moments when they have the least confidence in their own capabilities and, in turn, do not develop those capabilities and that confidence. Accounts like these raise important philosophical, ethical, and practical questions about human writing, reading, thinking, and education in an age of machine learning – questions we consider in their own subsection below, in light of GEL's purpose.

Faculty and administrators in colleges across campus reflected on the kind of attentive reading that students develop through absorption in longer texts, joining us in an exchange about the pleasures and returns of literature. Sifting through complexity can become challenging when students engage shorter-form genres like social media posts or memes, often designed for the swift and vigorous uptake of already familiar viewpoints. Faculty from the Colleges of Public Health and Education were pleased that their students could spend a semester in the GEL classroom reading literature – which, by definition, invites multiple interpretations and compels readers to assemble analysis and evidence in tandem. They also posed generative questions about bridging students' learning in GEL and in their respective majors and programs. There are times when the metacognition aspect of GEL, where students reflect on their learning

and thinking, can slip between the cracks of daily reading and assignments. Fortunately, portfolio assessment already offers a wonderful opportunity for students to reflect on what they are learning and where they will take their learning next. Sitting down together offered a valuable opportunity to communicate and collaborate across colleges about GEL's purpose and meeting each student's needs across the University, about which we say more below.

Faculty who teach GEL outside of English's pedagogy training program relayed similar accounts. One bemoaned the homogenized, "soulless" paragraphs that many high school graduates have learned to write. She would rather, she said, see students grappling with complexity and following their curiosity in more expansive, less tidy ways – approaches that GEL positions her to teach, particularly from the vantage of World Languages & Literatures. In her course, students from a variety of backgrounds encounter literature from a range of national traditions, offering students a chance to at once expand their horizons and regard more familiar texts and contexts with fresh eyes.

In sum, these wide-ranging discussions yielded several findings that have informed our recommendations, which we list below

The Portfolio Assignment - Reflection Backward & Forward - First, the portfolio assignment in GEL is a crucial organizing feature of the course because of its emphasis on sustained and deliberate development over time. Given the hands-on, individualized labor involved in teaching Interpretation of Literature, this portfolio is rewarding for faculty as well as students: it sets into relief each person's development of their interpretive capacity, writing, and reading over the term. Based on feedback from faculty and administrators in the colleges of Public Health, Business and Education, this portfolio assignment ought to remain, and might serve as basis for student reflection on future reading and interpretation, literary or otherwise.

GEL Across Departments - Staffing & Coordination - Second, faculty who choose to teach courses that satisfy the Interpretation of Literature requirement outside of English contribute substantially to the program, even in smaller numbers. Their teaching enhances the breadth of offerings outside Anglophone literatures to include texts in translation from multiple national traditions and cultures. In addition, many faculty who choose to teach GEL are highly expert in helping students develop their writing and analytic skills. In conversation with interlocutors and amongst ourselves, the committee unanimously welcomed interested faculty outside English to collaborate in teaching GEL, with one caveat. Staffing for courses teaching literature in translation must be done with care, whether in Classics, World Languages & Literatures, or other units. Without expertise in relevant traditions, there is a real risk of flattening text and context. Under proposals, we recommend robust discussions about staffing up front, especially because coordinating instruction across departments falls outside the purview of the directorship of the pedagogy training course for graduate students in English.

Breadth of Text & Context - First, administrators in the College of Education posed questions to the committee about the range of cultures and contexts that each GEL course includes. Their students take GEL to fulfill a requirement in language, literacy, and culture that specifies

engagement with texts from a wide range of contexts. Current course parameters mention breadth of genre and span of centuries, so students would almost certainly engage multiple cultural contexts in GEL. However, if CLAS wishes to continue teaching CoE students in this class, it may be useful to specify course design parameters regarding cultural contexts to more explicitly align expectations in both colleges – expectations we see as already aligned in practice and values.

In sum, it has been rewarding to speak with people across the university who, in various ways, rely on and benefit from the Interpretation of Literature component of CLAS's general education program. Again, while there are challenges that students and faculty alike face in the GEL classroom, there was broad agreement on the important work the course achieves. Indeed, a professor in the School of Social Work articulated that it is abundantly clear to her which students fulfilled their Interpretation of Literature requirement at another institution and which at Iowa, because the latter demonstrate stronger reading, writing, and interpretive skills across the board.

Challenges & Possibilities in Meeting Learning Outcomes

Reading, the Attention Economy & Generative AI

As we mention above, multiple researchers have assessed national literacy rates as precipitously in recent years, with the National Center for Education Statistics finding that 54% of adults read below the 6th grade level and 21% are illiterate. Article after article has bemoaned a steep decline in student reading from middle school onward, a statistic that ranges, if in different ways, across those who attend the most elite universities as well as students who choose not to attend college. The instructors we spoke with report that students at the University of Iowa enter GEL with a vast spectrum of experiences with reading and interpretation. As we mention at the start, they also share that more students than ever have rarely read a work of literature from start to finish, many have never read a novel, and fewer read literature for pleasure on their own time. One of the main takeaways from our conversations with Directors of Undergraduate Studies and other stakeholders from across the University was a shared concern about students not reading enough—and not reading well enough—to succeed in college or beyond.

Contributing to this trend is surely the fact that today's college students lost crucial time from their K-12 education to a pandemic whose effects are still not fully reckoned with. Many instructors have the sense that their students missed out on at least some of the crucial preparation they need to excel in college. Add to this an information economy in which students' attentional resources are increasingly taxed and depleted through the phones in their pockets, and it can start to feel like the practices central to the liberal arts classroom are endangered, among them immersive reading, painstaking writing processes, respectful discussion of complex and sensitive issues. It should be no surprise, then, that a number of instructors reported to us that a significant minority of students seem

to really struggle with basic academic skills such as reading comprehension, writing coherent sentences, and engaging in substantive classroom discussion.

It is in this context that we should understand student use of generative artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT. Our understanding of the significance of the increasing use of such tools is surely still unfolding, but specifically within the academic environment of a course like the Interpretation of Literature, ChatGPT and its brethren are best seen as technologies that rob students of crucial opportunities to practice skills that they sorely need. At a time when more and more students enter college struggling to read long and difficult texts, write about complex ideas in concise and sophisticated language, and engage in civil and substantive discussions, the trajectory of generative AI represents a further threat to undergraduate education. Students who are building basic literacy skills require time and space to engage texts on their own terms. A course like the Interpretation of Literature is precisely a space in which students *practice* these skills, in concert with their peers, and with personalized feedback from a skilled instructor to make sure that practice is constructive. Any tool which takes away from students those opportunities to grapple with these skills on their own is a detriment to their learning. GEL instructors, in their end-of-semester self-assessments, and in conversations with the committee, confirmed the committee's sense that generative AI as a tool for academic dishonesty is a growing problem among GEL students. These students are not doing the work that would help them grow as readers and writers, and their instructors are spending more and more time policing student misbehavior rather than teaching. In contrast with Rhetoric, which is tasked with teaching information literacy and therefore sensibly includes lessons about the ethics, uses, and misuses of AI, and while students may learn in other courses ways to engage with ChatGPT, our committee believes that GEL works best when students write, read, and analyze largely on their own, with support from faculty, or in concert with their peers.

As we reiterate in our recommendations section, we encourage GEL instructors to engage students in reflecting on the practical, ethical, and social dimensions of machine learning in the context of reading, writing, and interpreting literature. Based on research in AI, the humanities, and teaching and learning, we further recommend that GEL act as a time and space for students to read, write, and interpret literature without using AI (Martin 2024, Johnson and Salter 2025, Klein, Martin, Brock, Antoniak, Walsh, Johnson, Tilton and Mimno 2025).

A recent study found an inverse relationship among college students between academic self-efficacy and dependence on artificial intelligence tools: the less students believed in their own capacity to succeed academically, the more likely they were to turn to technological shortcuts. Helping students believe both in the value of literary interpretation and their own capacity to do it well will lead to less dependence on these technologies. Through GEL's pedagogy training, instructors should be encouraged to focus on influencing the three main factors that govern student motivation: value (Do students believe what we're asking them to do will be valuable to them?), efficacy (Do students believe they can achieve it?), and environment (Do students believe they will be supported as they try?). It is by motivating students to engage in the fundamental acts of literary interpretation in GEL that we can help them see why they should want to continue thinking for themselves, rather than offloading those tasks to a machine.

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General education courses like the Interpretation of Literature and Rhetoric have a hugely important role to play in helping students develop and feel confident in the fundamental academic skills that will help them succeed in college. If these courses can persuade students that they have the capacity to do the work asked of them—and to benefit from doing it—we'll help students resist the pull of technological shortcuts.

Balancing Instructor Freedom with Program Consistency

One of the distinctive features of the courses offered that satisfy the Interpretation of Literature requirement is the sheer number of instructors who teach them. In any given semester, a student looking to fulfill the requirement will take a course taught by one of fifty different instructors, each with their own ideas about pedagogy, literacy, and the value of literature. The challenge of a program like GEL (which this year housed forty-eight of those instructors) involves striking a balance. The program clearly benefits from having so many talented and idiosyncratic instructors, pulled from Iowa's world-class graduate programs in English, Creative Writing, and other fields, and benefits from allowing those instructors to fully buy into their courses, creating a learning environment that reflects their particular strengths and interests. But it's just as clear that a program carried out by so many instructors needs consistent, top-down guidance and training to make sure that the course (ENGL:1200) does not become fifty courses, each with wildly different goals and approaches, leaving students with an inconsistent and wholly unpredictable experience. What's more, the benefits of giving instructors the freedom to shape their sections—benefits to their students and their own pedagogical development—are bolstered when that freedom is grounded in clear guidance and. Such guidance allows instructors to find their own path within a well-drawn map of the territory.

Instructors currently follow these requirements in designing their sections:

1. Each section must include units on nonfiction, poetry, fiction, and drama
2. Students must write a minimum of 5,000 words. This can be through formal or informal writing assignments.
3. There must be two major, graded writing assignments of 4-6 pages in length, and at least one of these papers must be a critical analysis.
4. Students must, as well, create an end-of-semester portfolio that collects their major assignments and a 2-3-page reflection, in which students write about how they have grown as writers, readers, and thinkers through the course.
5. Each section must include a midterm and a final exam or some substitute exercise, such as a take-home essay
6. All sections share the same attendance policy. All students are allowed up to two weeks of absences, excused or unexcused, without penalty. After that, unexcused absences result in a reduction of the final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade. A student who misses more than a month of classes fails the class. Special rules apply to students with disability accommodations and to student athletes.
7. There is no set policy on the use of AI for all sections, but all sections must have a policy on how they will handle it.

Instructors have the option of using a common syllabus, created each year by Program Associates, a group of veteran GEL instructors who have been selected to help administer the program. Most instructors, however, opt to create their own syllabus. Instructors in their first semester teaching GEL must include in their syllabus a common novel, voted on by the GEL instructors, who choose from among 4-5 novels nominated by the GEL Textbook Committee. Along with an ICON page of shared resources, this shared novel allows new instructors to take advantage of a pedagogical community as they make their way through their first semester.

As a committee we looked over many different GEL syllabi and were struck by the variety of approaches on display. For the most part, this seemed to us a strength of the program—it is abundantly clear that Iowa undergraduates are benefitting from being taught by so many creative and passionate early-career instructors. With one section focusing on community, another on scientific advancement, and another on alienation and "spatial liminality" (to pick just three), the course unmistakably provides students with an introduction not just to the practice of the skills of literary studies, but also to the almost endless breadth of the kinds of subjects literary texts can entail. Just as clearly, though, there are obvious drawbacks to this variation in syllabi. Some sections of the course seemed aimed at quite advanced students, whereas others (the majority, it must be said) were more clearly aimed at the first- or second-year students who most typically enroll in a 1000-level general education course. A small handful of syllabi seemed more interested in exploring the instructor's literary and intellectual interests than in meeting students where they are and helping them develop the skills identified in the course's learning outcomes. Some syllabi seemed to promise a course that would be better titled *Introduction* to Literature rather than Interpretation of Literature.

One clear step that we recommend is using the requirement's learning outcomes to guide the training and support given to instructors as well the syllabi given to students. The simple step of requiring all GEL instructors to include the same course goals in their syllabi, and preparing them to design their sections to help students reach those goals, would go a long way to solving some of the problems that come from such a diversity of approaches in the current status quo.

Another step is to introduce a clear policy, across all GEL sections, conveying the importance of GEL as a space for improving writing, reading, and interpretive skills by not relying on AI to write, read, or interpret for them. In addition, we recommend a policy that clarifies that, unlike their lessons on using AI as a tool in their other classes, in this one the instructor, classmates, lessons, feedback, and activities will support their writing and reading, and they are always invited to ask for support. This kind of policy will reduce confusion for students as to what is and isn't allowed, and take some pressure off instructors, who can point to the program policy as something the director sets.

Finally, as our policy no doubt shifts from semester to semester, the policy ought to include some information about the process of what happens in the course (or department) if an instructor suspects academic dishonesty involving AI. This process might, for example, include a reduction in awarded points or a conversation with the student about their process and a chance to try again in their own words. In cases when an instructor has abundant evidence that a student has likely violated academic integrity, then the instructor can submit reports to the college.

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Here is a potential syllabus section, adopted from language written by committee co-chair David Gooblar, that could work well:

> Anything that an "AI" tool like ChatGPT can help you do for this course is something you would benefit from doing yourself. The great promise of these tools is that they can save us time: they can produce an essay, for example, in seconds. They can also summarize texts, or define terms, or rewrite a poorly-worded sentence. Leaving aside for the moment whether these tools can execute these tasks well, technologies that save us time can be hugely beneficial—think of spell check, or, for that matter, the word processor itself. But time-saving technologies don't help if we would have used that time to do valuable work. A big part of this course is the learning you'll do through the processes of reading, thinking carefully about the reading, coming up with what you want to write about the ideas in the reading, and revising that writing to make it clearer. Using a technological short-cut to skip over any part of those processes means you won't get the learning benefit from going through them yourself.
>
> If the goal of this class were to write the best possible essays about literature, then maybe you could make a case that AI tools should be allowed, as they theoretically could help you generate ideas, synthesize data, summarize texts, etc. But that's not the goal of this class. Look at the course's learning goals—they're all about the learning that you do through spending time with these texts, with the course's ideas, with the assignments' tasks, and with your brilliant classmates. As far as I can tell, AI tools cannot help us to make sense of difficult literary works, critically understand the elements of a literary text, nor draw connections between the myriad forces that have shaped us and the world we see reflected in art. The only path that takes you to the learning that this course is designed to help you achieve is through the "wasted time" that AI tools would help you avoid.

Here is another similar sample syllabus section, adopted from the Office of Teaching and Learning to serve an interpreting literature classroom:

- **AI Policy Philosophy & Purpose -** In *Interpreting Literature*, students have the chance to develop and enhance their writing, reading, and interpretive skills through sustained practice within a learning community. The use of AI to generate reading summaries, writing, or interpretations is antithetical to the purpose of the class; therefore, students will craft all process work, drafts, low-stakes writing, final versions, and other submissions working individually, in groups, or with the instructor. This means that the following would be considered violations of academic integrity: a student has another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write essays and drafts and/or other assignments, research-based or otherwise, and using artificial intelligence affordances like ChatGPT.

- **Parameters for GEL Coursework -** In this class, students are welcome to use spellcheck, but not to use tools like Grammarly, which automatically fix sentences without offering the chance to learn *how* to write. Students are welcome to visit the writing center to practice revision with a tutor, and there are opportunities for peer review and feedback on assignments throughout the term. In all academic contexts, work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original. If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please contact your instructor to discuss the issue. Faculty, students, and staff all share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and integrity of the intellectual environment.

- **Consequences of Using AI to Write, Read, and Interpret in this Course -** There are several likely consequences to outsourcing your writing, reading, and interpretation of literature to Co-Pilot, ChatGPT, or other AI tools. Because AI tends to spit out homogenized prose and rote interpretations, the first consequence is the likelihood of receiving a low grade on an assignment. The second consequence is that your instructor may approach you to discuss your work, your composition process, your grade, or

potentially the option to revise an assignment. The third consequence is that you will lose the opportunity to hone your skills at writing and reading and to develop your own voice this term. Our portfolio assignment asks each student to reflect on their growth in analysis, interpretation, and expression. Such an assignment becomes hollow when someone or something else completes these activities for us.

If you find yourself unsure about where to begin an assignment, struggling to work out what a text is saying, concerned about your writing's clarity, or otherwise wanting support, first, you are in good company. Professional writers and readers experience uncertainty all the time. Second, I encourage you to reach out to me, your instructor, and pose questions to fellow students during class. When you have questions about a text or assignment, I hope you won't feel shy to ask.

The Value, Returns & Contributions of Interpretation of Literature

GEL's Contribution to the General Education Program's Comprehensive Outcomes

To prepare students for success during their time at the university and after graduation, the University of Iowa's General Education (GE) CLAS Core aims to develop key student outcomes: including critical thinking, effective communication, ethical reasoning, and cultural perspectives. The "Communication and Literacy" content area of the general education program is central to these outcomes. This area's requirements focus on students' skills of comprehending and expressing ideas clearly, analyzing texts and contexts critically, and engaging in thoughtful, informed discourse. Through the hands-on instruction necessary for writing, reading, and interpretation, these smaller classes develop students' abilities to comprehend, interpret, and communicate effectively across local, national, and international contexts. (More details are available here.)

Within the "Communication and Literacy" area, Interpretation of Literature enhances students' reading and analytical skills. It encourages a habit of thoughtful reading by engaging with various genres and historical contexts. Students learn to critically analyze texts, understand their social, cultural, and political significance, and refine their written and oral communication. Coursework in this area is designed precisely to deepen their ability to engage with complex ideas and diverse perspectives. More details are available here.

Interpretation of Literature (ENGL 1200) and Rhetoric (RHET 1030, 40 or 50) work in distinct and complementary ways. Given vastly decreased literacy including among incoming university students, at least two courses are needed to teach the important recursive skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and interpretation at the college level. General education Rhetoric engages argumentation as fundamental to understanding assigned course readings, self-directed learning, and participation in public discourse. Further cultivating students' reading, writing and speaking skills, GEL is an especially powerful site for vigorous reading, incisive analysis, and crafted, effective expression. Further, students have an opportunity to exercise their imaginations to make sense of our present social world, envision historical contexts, excavate paths untaken, and consider future possibilities.

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In Interpretation of Literature, faculty guide students in encountering the complexity of human experience outside the more oppositional argumentation modeled in Rhetoric. Through literary interpretation, students exercise critical, imaginative, strategic, and empathetic approaches to the perspectives and experiences in literary texts. The small classroom environment reinforces the multifaceted viewpoints that students develop as individual readers who are part of a learning community. Listening to, weighing, and balancing different interpretations of literature invites them to hold space for a multiplicity of informed viewpoints as they interact with their classmates. Given these aims, the course's current success in improving students' literacy, and the expressed need for reading and writing practice, we propose a return to requiring students to take these courses before the end of their sophomore year in order to benefit from the foundational skills they develop.

GEL's Shared & Distinctive Educational Value in Relation to Other Universities

As part of our assessment, Matthew Shadle (Academic Assessment Coordinator) surveyed cognate course requirements at eight peer institutions drawn from the University of Iowa's Regents Comparison Group. A table of key data can be found below, with a more complete chart in our appendix. This comparison study of course requirements and learning outcomes reveals that, while Iowa's GEL requirement promotes outcomes similar to those our peer institutions describe as desirable, this university is noteworthy in engaging the value and power of literary interpretation. In short, Interpretation of Literature is distinctive in its entwined teaching of interpretive acuity, close reading, analytic writing, and human imagination and meaning-making.

Peer University	**Noteworthy Characteristics of General Education Curriculum**
Iowa State University	• Arts and Humanities distribution requirement (4 courses) • Arts and Humanities learning outcomes focus on cultural context and aesthetic appreciation • Writing requirements: 2 foundational communications courses, 1 communication course or project in major
Pennsylvania State University	• Humanities distribution requirement (1 course) • Elective distribution requirements (3 courses in Arts, Humanities, Natural Sciences, or Social Sciences) • 7 gen ed learning objectives covering a broad range of skills • Writing requirements: 3 foundational courses in writing and speaking, 1 writing across the curriculum course

University of Illinois	• Humanities & Arts distribution requirement (2 courses), with courses divided into two subcategories, Historical/Philosophical Perspectives and Literature/The Arts • Literature/The Arts learning outcomes focus on cultural context, interpretive methods, and aesthetic appreciation • Writing requirements: 1-2 foundational composition courses and 1 advanced composition course
University of Michigan	• Humanities distribution requirement (2 courses) • Elective distribution requirements (3 courses in Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities, Mathematical and Symbolic Analysis, or Creative Expression) • No specific Humanities learning outcomes • Writing requirements: 1 first-year writing course (includes disciplinary options, including literature) and 1 upper-level course in major
University of Minnesota	• Literature distribution requirement (1 course) • Literature learning outcomes: interpretive methods, formal analysis, cultural context • Writing requirements: 1 first-year writing course, 4 writing intensive courses, including 1 in major
University of North Carolina	• Aesthetic and Interpretive Analysis skills-based requirement (1 course) • Ways of Knowing skills-based requirement (1 course) • Aesthetic and Interpretive Analysis learning outcomes: interpretive methods, cultural context, aesthetic appreciation • Ways of Knowing learning outcomes: critical thinking • Writing requirements: 1 first-year writing/rhetoric course, 1 upper-level communication course (multiple disciplines)
University of Utah	• Humanities distribution requirement (1 course) • Humanities learning outcomes: interpretive methods, cultural context • Writing requirements: 2 first-year writing courses, 1 upper-level writing/communication course
University of Wisconsin	• Humanities/Literature Arts distribution requirement (2 courses) • 4 gen ed learning outcomes reflecting a broad range of skills • Writing requirements: 1 first-year communication course, 1 upper-level communication course in major

Our peers maintain writing requirements for their undergraduates largely through first-year composition courses that emphasize writing skills or communication courses that emphasize writing, reading, and speaking. Some institutions offer literature courses (either in English or comparative literature) that fulfill first-year (Michigan) or upper-level (Minnesota) writing requirements, but

literary interpretation is neither a learning method nor a learning outcome of these requirements. Notably, universities require writing/communication courses with no parallel in Iowa's curriculum, such as required writing intensive courses or upper-level communication courses in each major – a disparity we consider in our proposals below.

Peer institutions are clearly aspiring to accomplish similar aims to those stated in GEL's learning outcomes. Several seek to foster an interpretive approach to literature and the formal analysis of texts (Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, Utah) similar to the approach taken in GEL. Often these learning outcomes are paired with others focused on fostering aesthetic appreciation or exploring the cultural and social context of literary and artistic work, learning outcomes more associated with the Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts (LVPA) and Values and Society areas of the University of Iowa's CLAS Core. Only the University of Minnesota offers a core requirement comparable to Iowa's Interpretation of Literature requirement. All of the other universities offer literature courses as one option among others within a humanities and/or arts distribution requirement or, in the case of the University of North Carolina, within requirements focused on aesthetic and interpretive analysis and "ways of knowing." In other words, at almost every peer institution considered, students could complete their course work without ever taking a course on literature and literary analysis.

GEL's Value to Student Success, the State of Iowa & Broader Publics

As the Writing University, where students live in the first American UNESCO City of Literature, our requirement is part of Iowa's strength as the highest ranked public institution for writing across the disciplines. When our students enter the GEL classroom, they step into the vibrant life of literature on this campus and have a chance to work with instructors who go on to publish celebrated books. Drawing on this strength of our campus, GEL is uniquely situated on the cusp between literature as an artform and literature as an occasion for developing the powerful interpretive analysis valued and needed across fields, careers, and contexts. In this way, GEL complements without replicating the Rhetoric requirement (which emphasizes argument and persuasion) and the LVPA CLAS Core area (which emphasizes aesthetic appreciation, expression, and imagination as well as analysis). The LVPA area, including the few literature courses under it, is also more thematic and less focused on writing, reading, and creative/critical interpretation.

Each year, 3,400 students spend one semester, or 15 weeks, honing their interpretive skills in the GEL classroom. Each student receives individualized feedback on their work, practices active listening and responsive participation in an interpretive community and demonstrates understanding of a multiplicity of readings as they establish their own. Employers in Iowa and in general reiterate their desire to work with college graduates well-versed in holistic problem-solving, clear writing, measured summary, and incisive analysis—precisely the skills this course emphasizes. Ideally before they are deep into coursework in their declared major, learning specialized vocabulary, methods, and concerns, students in GEL work to enhance broader literacies and skill sets that are valuable across workplaces, civic settings, family life, and more. In part because the University of Iowa is less

selective in its undergraduate admission than many peer institutions, we take seriously the project of supporting each and every student, across a spectrum of college preparedness, so they can succeed and graduate. Working with data about student outcomes, Marissa Green-Francescon in the Office of Assessment determined that students who do not take Interpretation of Literature are 1.43 times more likely to receive a D, F, or W in subsequent courses with a substantial writing component. While one cannot of course assess the contribution of any single course to retention, it is clear that GEL is a key part of Iowa's unusually thoughtful general education core, supporting students with reading and writing across the disciplines and majors up through graduation.

Following graduation, students take with them the skills, but also the experience they garner in GEL. The community that students form around literary interpretation offers a basis for forming friendships and a sense of belonging on a large campus. Our students have grown up amid so much noise. Students build community in GEL because it cultivates reading as a practice of attuned listening. In the public domain, people often read less to learn about or from a text, but with an eye toward leveraging, flipping, or countering others' words to shore up pre-existing viewpoints. Can conflict or political tensions be solved through reading? Probably not. Is good-faith engagement with our own and others' words important for building public trust and a functioning society? Our students say yes. They ask for our help with their reading comprehension: they are daunted by long pieces of writing. Students say they want to become better writers and crave individualized feedback on assignments that they too seldom receive in high school or larger courses. They are appreciative of the chance to exercise their imaginations in concert—not lockstep—with others, and to learn about additional ways of knowing alongside their own.

As a public institution, the University of Iowa works hard to contribute to an informed, thoughtful, free-thinking public, people who are willing to engage with what others say, and do so with curiosity, care, and respect, including if they disagree. This kind of engagement honors individual perspectives and responsibilities, serving the social good. The university's tradition in literature and creative writing and reading is, as we know, a legacy through which Iowa continues to enrich communities locally, nationally, and globally. This legacy is also an asset to the state of Iowa itself. GEL offers students who grew up in Iowa—and may choose to stay here—a sustained understanding of the richness, complexity, and texture of individual and collective human experience.

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Requirement Recommendations, Resources & Guidance

Proposed New Learning Outcomes

Now that we have completed our yearlong assessment, the committee has recommended the following revised learning outcomes for the General Education Literature requirement:

Proposed Learning Outcomes (Revised)	Current Learning Outcomes (2013-2025)
1. **READING**: Students demonstrate improved comprehension and interpretive skills by applying strategies or "ways of reading" appropriate for different texts. 2. **WRITING:** Students can effectively express their interpretation of literary texts through analytical writing. 3. **LEARNING COMMUNITY:** Students demonstrate that they can foster and participate in a reciprocal community, engaging others' ideas and conveying their own. 4. **CONTEXT & IMPACT**: By connecting text and context, students are able to discern how personal experiences shape interpretation and how literature both reflects and influences culture.	1. Students refine their reading skills by the exposure to a wide variety of genres from multiple centuries. 2. Students improve their reading comprehension and analysis by using a range of strategies or "ways of reading" appropriate for the assigned texts. 3. Students strengthen their analytical and critical responses to texts through the intensive use of oral and written responses. 4. Through assigned readings, class discussion, and writing assignments, students begin to recognize the influence of a reader's individual differences and experiences on interpretation and analysis. 5. In discussion and in writing, students consider and begin to understand the crucial connections between individual texts and cultural, historical, political, social, and other contexts. 6. Finally, students deepen their vision of themselves as readers, particularly as contrasted to the beginning of the course.

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Overarching Recommendations

Recommendations for the College:

1. **Reduce Course Caps to 20:** Many stakeholders communicated to this committee their concerns about students lacking the fundamental academic skills necessary for college success. The kind of teaching that can help students develop these skills—and can do so in a way that doesn't reinforce existing disparities among students—can only be done in small classes. GEL's unique impact on the educational trajectory of more than 3,000 Iowa undergraduates can be bolstered by reducing class sizes, allowing instructors to more effectively create the kind of supportive communities and provide the kind of individualized feedback that we know help students thrive at college. As one veteran instructor told the committee, "GEL shrinks the university for students." We recommend shrinking it further. Course caps should return to their previous level: 20 students per section.

2. **Restore Earlier Course Completion Parameters:** Our committee has determined that students benefit from GEL when they complete it before the end of their second year on campus. The class is designed to teach foundational reading, writing, and interpretive skills. We understand the impulse to offer flexibility, especially with students working multiple jobs and being busier than ever. However, it is these very conditions that make completing the course earlier on important. GEL fulfills its purpose—and has a multiplier effect—when students complete it before progressing into upper-division coursework and the requirements of their chosen majors.

3. **Writing Across the Disciplines & Curriculum:** While the University of Iowa is the leading public university in writing across the disciplines, we do not have a writing across the curriculum (WAC) program. In addition, students themselves report that they arrive on campus needing more support with writing, reading, and textual interpretation than GEL and Rhetoric can offer. Many peer institutions use the classic structure of WAC, which incorporates an upper-division writing-intensive course in the disciplines. We recommend that CLAS seriously consider a WAC program that would bookend GE Rhetoric and English; in this class, students would complete a meaningful project in their major with scaffolded support for their writing and reading. We recognize that this recommendation falls outside our charge and wish to register the value of an upper division course on the WAC model in the context of mapping the limits of what GEL can accomplish, even when well-designed and taught.

4. **Integrate Writing Fellows:** The English Department is currently hiring two new instructional-track faculty to teach GEL. These faculty members, as well as the Visiting Assistant Professors the program continues to rely on, will each teach four sections of GEL each semester. This gives them nearly 100 students per semester, a daunting number for the attentive and personalized feedback necessary for an effective course. We recommend that the College support an expansion of the Honors Writing Fellows program to provide each of these faculty members with two writing fellows per section to help provide feedback to students on their writing assignments.

Recommendations for the English Department:

1**. Prioritize Learning Outcomes Across Sections:** One of GEL's strengths is that each section reflects its instructor's interests and strengths; centering sections around the requirement's common learning outcomes would make sure that those interests and strengths are being harnessed in service of the program's objectives. The GEL instructor handbook should be revised to further emphasize the skills at the heart of the requirement's learning outcomes, underlining to instructors—new instructors, especially—that helping students reach those goals is the ultimate purpose of teaching the course, and that such a purpose should guide every decision the instructors make.

2. **Portfolio & Sustained Practice**: The Portfolio assignment continues to play a key role in establishing GEL as fifteen weeks when students develop skills in reading, writing, and literary interpretation through sustained practice. By asking students to reflect backward and project forward on their development as readers, the portfolio frames the course's lessons as both cumulative and transportable. We recommend retaining this assignment and encouraging instructors to preview it early in the term. In keeping with Portfolio-based self-assessment, we further recommend that the GEL classroom support skill building to the side of generative AI. The emergence of artificial intelligence involves more than just academic dishonesty or, indeed, individual practice. It continues to raise important questions about creative labor, writing and reading as generative human activities, and education itself. We encourage instructors to engage students in reflecting on the practical, ethical, and social dimensions of machine learning in the context of authorship, reading, and interpretation. Based on research in AI, the humanities, and teaching and learning, as noted above, we further recommend that GEL serve as a time and space for students to read, write, and interpret literature without using AI.

3. **Scaffold a Creative Assignment Option**: As we documented, this course sits at the generative intersection of interpretive problem-solving, the literary arts, writing skills, and the university's unique creative heritage. We also know that the invitation to integrate creative elements into analytic writing increases students' sense of ownership over their work. Finally, since the last assessment, the English department has added the creative writing track. We recommend that the pedagogy training include the topic of teaching with a creative writing assignment or a creative-critical assignment. We also recommend continuing to guide instructors in teaching craft in student writing as one of many tools of analysis. Students hone skills by writing-to-read and reading-to-write. Scaffolding a creative assignment that instructors can opt to teach will benefit undergraduates and graduate instructors alike.

Recommendations That Involve the College & English:

1. **Strengthen Pedagogy Training:** The pedagogy training that GEL provides its graduate instructors is a great boon to graduate students at Iowa, the institution more broadly, and the profession. We recommend that the program double down on this strength, bolstering its training and support to prepare its instructors for successful careers in the classroom. Practice-based pedagogy requires an ample repertoire of lessons. Instructors must build a skillset for giving generative feedback on student writing, collating sentence-level with global comments. To co-create a lively and mutually respectful learning community, instructors must learn to balance open-ended facilitation with maintaining clear parameters.

The GEL director, in turn, gives feedback on instructors' syllabuses, lesson plans, grading practices, and more. Currently, new instructors take part in a three-partial-day orientation in August, a six-week colloquium in the fall semester, and a full-semester one-credit-hour colloquium in the spring. We recommend that the orientation be lengthened, and the fall colloquium be extended to a full semester. We also call on the English Department and the College to commit more resources for pedagogy training in the program, particularly for instructors beyond their first year of teaching.

2. **Interpretation of Literature Orientation & Onboarding**: We recommend that CLAS support the director of GEL and additional stakeholders in conveying the purpose of the course to through a number of media. First, based on suggestions from GEPCC, we suggest that in orientation about general education, or on tours, presenters or guides emphasize that Iowa students have a chance to experience the heritage of a City of Literature through our thoughtful general education program. Second, we strongly recommend designing a website that conveys the requirement's purpose and value to students and instructors alike (as well as the interested public). Drawing on what we learned from conversations with deans and faculty from the Colleges of Education, Business, and Public Health, we recommend that the website, where appropriate, use language-in-common that reflects the course's role for students across colleges. We hope that such a website would be one way to address common feedback from students that, at times, GEL lessons can feel in the weeds, where metacognition and value of the lessons grow amorphous. Most of all, by featuring our new learning outcomes and imagery of writing, reading and the rich experience of GEL interpretive communities, this refreshed website would orient students to GEL as, yes, a requirement, but also a distinct opportunity and Iowa tradition.

3. **Staffing and Coordination Across Departments**: Faculty in Classics, World Languages & Literatures and additional departments who choose to teach Interpretation of Literature valuably enhance the breadth of offerings outside Anglophone literatures to include texts in translation from multiple national traditions and cultures. As a committee, we considered staffing and coordination across departments in CLAS. Faculty who teach world languages and literatures in GEL and additional committee members all agreed that staffing must be done with care, whether in Classics, World Languages & Literatures, or other units, especially where graduate students are concerned. Without an instructor with expertise in relevant traditions and teaching them to students from any background, there is a risk that a course would flatten text and context. We recommend robust discussions about staffing up front, especially because coordination of instruction across departments falls outside the bounds of the already substantial labor involved in directing the pedagogy course for graduate students in English. We also recommend that directors of GEL make themselves reasonably available for discussion about this requirement and course to all instructors before they begin teaching it and at checkpoints thereafter.

4**. Course Title**: Given the central role of practice in this course as well as the ethos of CLAS's general education program, we recommend discussion of the title ENGL 1200: *Interpreting Literature*, moving forward. We also recommend changing the title of the requirement itself.

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Appendices

Appendix 1:

Comparison Study of Similar Requirements at Peer Institutions

Compiled by Matthew Shadle (Academic Assessment Coordinator, CLAS)

University	Literature & Writing Requirements (or cognate requirements)	Learning Goals
Iowa State University General Education - College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Undergraduate Majors, Certificates, Minors, Pre-Professional Study | Iowa State University Catalog	Communication Proficiency Foundation Courses: ENGL 1500 Critical Thinking and Communication ENGL 2500 Written, Oral, Visual, and Electronic Composition Each Major is required to have a communication-related course or project General Education: Arts and Humanities Liberal Arts and Sciences: 12 credits Agriculture and Life Sciences: 3 credits	LAS Arts and Humanities Learning Goals: • To develop an understanding of human cultural heritage and history • To develop an appreciation of reasoning • To develop an appreciation of the aesthetic value of human creativity

	Business: 9 credits (humanities OR social sciences) Design: 6 credits (humanities OR social sciences) Engineering: 0 credits Health and Human Sciences: 6-9 credits (15 total of humanities AND social sciences)	

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Pennsylvania State University Baccalaureate Degree General Education Requirements | Penn State Foundations and Knowledge Domains | Penn State General Education Learning Objectives | Penn State	Foundations: Writing/Speaking (9 credits) Knowledge Domains: Humanities (3 credits) Exploration: 9 credits in Arts, Humanities, Natural Sciences, or Social Sciences (must include 3+ in Natural Sciences) University Requirements: Writing Across the Curriculum (3 credits)	3 of 7 Learning Objectives Effective Communication: The ability to exchange information and ideas in oral, written, and visual form in ways that allow for informed and persuasive discourse that builds trust and respect among those engaged in that exchange, and helps create environments where creative ideas and problem-solving flourish. Key Literacies: The ability to identify, interpret, create, communicate, and compute using materials in a variety of media and contexts. Literacy acquired in multiple areas, such as textual, quantitative, information/technology, health, intercultural, historical, aesthetic, linguistic (world languages), and scientific, enables individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, to lead healthy and productive lives, and to participate fully in their community and wider society. Critical and Analytical Thinking: The habit of mind characterized by comprehensive exploration of

		issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating a conclusion. It is the intellectually disciplined process of conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.

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University of Illinois Gen Ed Requirements – General Education @ Illinois LAS gen ed distribution requirements | College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at Illinois Learning Outcomes – General Education @ Illinois	General Education - Composition I (4-6 hours) and Advanced Composition (3 hours) - Humanities & Arts (6 hours, Historical/Philosophical Perspectives, or Literature/The Arts)	After taking a course in **Literature & Arts**, students will be able to: 1. **Foundations:** Identify and describe the formal elements and social dimensions of literary and/or artistic works. (C-SLOs 1 & 4) 2. **Foundations:** Express a critical understanding of literary and/or artistic concepts through a variety of accessible media such as text, speech, drawing, illustration, comics, storyboards, design, film, music, dance/movement, theatrical arts, visual art, sculpture, or video. (C-SLO 1) 3. **Inquiry:** Exercise diverse interpretive methods for understanding how literature and arts address and express matters of cultural, social, and political significance. (C-SLO 1) 4. **Inquiry:** Apply knowledge of literary and/or artistic works to develop research questions and/or produce creative projects. (C-SLO 2) 5. **Context:** Identify how material conditions and cultural constructions in a

		variety of global contexts shape the human experience. (C-SLO 4)

Appendix 2: GEL Syllabus Template *(updated 1/7/25)*

Legend:

Black = Required Language and Information

Blue = You fill this in. See the sample syllabi in the GEL Teams files. Feel free to copy, cut & paste, and rewrite any of the information. Information does not need to appear in a specific order. \

The University of Iowa
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Semester, Year

Interpretation of Literature: ENGL:1200: Your Section #

Time You Meet Room and Building

Department of English: **https://english.uiowa.edu/**

Course ICON site: To access the course site, log into **Iowa Courses Online (ICON) https://icon.uiowa.edu/index.shtml** using your Hawk ID and password.

Course Home
For Undergraduate Courses: The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the home of this course, and CLAS governs the add and drop deadlines, the "second-grade only" option (SGO), academic misconduct policies, and other undergraduate policies and procedures. Other UI colleges may have different policies.

Instructor: Your Name (If you prefer being addressed by a title, indicate here. For example, "Please address me orally and in your emails as Ms. Crane.")

Office Location: Building and room number

Student drop-in hours: (i.e., office hours; you are required to hold 3 hours minimum per week; online GEL sections can have all online hours, but in-person sections must have **at least some in-person hours** each week) and by appointment.

Email: your-address@uiowa.edu (Students should contact you via email; do not list the department phone number as your phone number.)

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Department Chair: Loren Glass, **loren-glass@uiowa.edu**; 308 EPB.

Department Main Office: 308 EPB

Course Supervisor: Bluford Adams, Bluford-adams@uiowa.edu, 458 EPB, (319) 335-0461.

Course Description

This is where you describe what students should expect in the course and the department goals/outcomes. Usually, this section is 1-2 paragraphs in length. You should specify the goals and learning objectives of your course, its themes, and major issues. In 3-4 sentences describe what you expect your students to learn during the semester. Giving your students a specific set of goals and learning objectives will make it easier for you to explain the relevance and importance of classroom assignments and exercises. You should mention that the course is in the "Communication and Literacy" content area of the CLAS General Education CLAS Core.

Learning Outcomes

Here are the English Department and CLAS outcomes for GEL:

- Students cultivate lifetime habits of frequent, sensitive, intelligent, and satisfying reading
- Students refine their reading skills by the exposure to a wide variety of genres from multiple centuries.
- Students improve their reading comprehension and analysis by using a range of strategies or "ways of reading" appropriate for the assigned texts
- Students strengthen their analytical and critical responses to texts through the intensive use of oral and written responses.
- Through assigned readings, class discussion, and writing assignments, students begin to recognize the influence of a reader's individual differences and experiences on interpretation and analysis.
- In discussion and in writing, students consider and begin to understand the crucial connections between individual texts and cultural, historical, political, social, and other contexts.
- Finally, students deepen their vision of themselves as readers, particularly as contrasted to beginning of the course.

And here is a typical restatement of these outcomes, tailored to a particular class:

- Students will use and refine their skills of reading, speaking, and writing to respond critically and thoughtfully to literary texts and other media
- Students will learn to see themselves as readers, recognizing the influence of individual differences (such as gender, ethnicity, geography) and experiences on interpretation.
- Students will consider the connections between individual texts and broader cultural contexts.

Workload expectations

The University of Iowa expects a 3-hour credit course to entail at least 6 hours of outside preparation per week by students. Sample description: For each semester hour credit in this course, students should expect to spend two

hours per week preparing for class sessions. This is a three credit hour course, so your average out-of-class preparation per week is six hours. This will fluctuate throughout the semester; some weeks will be a bit lighter and others more intense.

List of all required texts (list all course texts here including author/editor's name, exact title, edition, ISBN number, retail price, date of publication, publisher, and place where books were ordered). **Under no circumstances should you order more than 2-3 books in any single genre.**

Other required materials

Note the other materials that are required for this course, such as paper and writing utensils for daily activities/quizzes, folders or notebooks for reading journals, and printing money for readings placed on the course website. You can also note here if you require students to print writing assignments and readings so that they have a sense of how much they should expect to spend.

!! All GEL courses should include these assignments with the indicated grade weights:

Grading policies:

Participation: 15%

Major Writing Assignment 1: 15 %

Major Writing Assignment 2: 20%

Midterm Exam: 15 %

Final Exam: 15%

Other Assignments (reading responses, quizzes, presentations, etc.): 20%

Final Portfolio: (may also be worth up to 5% if you choose) **Required of all students. Students who fail to submit the Final Portfolio will have their final grade lowered by a third of a letter.**

= 100%

In this section, provide a brief description of the course work. Will the writing assignments be critical papers, or a combination of critical and creative responses? REMEMBER: Your students must write at least 5,000 words over the course of the semester. (This includes both formal writing assignments and informal writing exercises.) How will you ensure reading accountability? Will there be quizzes or mandatory discussion posts? What will be in the portfolio, and how will it count? Tell students that you will post full descriptions of all writing assignments on ICON.

Note: GEL requires students to submit a final portfolio at the end of the semester, but instructors have flexibility in how to use the portfolio. Some choose to make it a graded component of their course; others choose to make it a shorter assignment and simply give it a completion grade, while making it clear that any student who fails to complete the assignment will have their final grade reduced by a third of a letter. Minimum requirements for the portfolio are: A copy of all major written assignments (minimum 3 assignments, tbd by instructor) and a final 2-3 page reflective paper on what the student learned during the course. See the GEL handbook for further details.

IOWA

Below is the standard ICON grading scale of an A-F plus/minus scale that you should include. Note that A+ is only used in the case of rare and extraordinary academic achievement.

Grading System

A	94-100%	A-	90-93.9%	B+	87-89.9%
B	84-86.9%	B-	80-83.9%	C+	77-79.9%
C	74-76.9%	C-	70-73.9%	D+	67-69.9%
D	64-66.9%	D-	61-63.9%	F	60% and below

Attendance policy

In this section, detail the GEL attendance policy (see below) and provide information about the differences between excused vs. unexcused absences, the relationship between attendance and participation, and additional expectations, such as that students are expected to submit assignments on time, even when they will miss a class. You might refer to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences on attendance and absences: http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/attendance-absences as well as the language on the registrar's website regarding absences: http://registrar.uiowa.edu/absence-class

*If you want to use this CLAS **absence form**, you can put a link to it in your syllabus. (It is also to be found on the Student Tools tab of ICON.) You should tell students it is due within **two weeks** of any absence.

Instructors: Please paste in EITHER this section OR the next one, depending on whether your class meets 2 or 3 times each week

Attendance Policy for MWF Class:

IOWA

Students are expected to attend all classes. They should arrive on time and remain until I dismiss class. That said, occasionally everyone needs to miss class, whether it is due to illness, family or personal emergency, or even being overwhelmed by work for other classes. Therefore, I allow each student **six absences** without penalty. You do not need to provide any excuse for these absences, though if you know ahead of time you will be missing class, an email is always appreciated.

Each unexcused absence beyond the permitted six will lower your **final grade in the course** by **1/3 of a letter grade**. So, with seven unexcused absences, an A becomes an A- and a B- becomes a C+. With eight unexcused absences, an A becomes a B+, a B- becomes a C, etc.

There may also be other circumstances in which a student must miss class because of illness, military service obligations, religious holy day obligations, University-sponsored activities, or **"unavoidable circumstances" as defined by CLAS.** Students with mandatory religious obligations or UI-authorized activities must discuss their absences with me as soon as possible. Religious obligations must be communicated within the first three weeks of classes. **I will excuse these absences only if you provide proper documentation (within two weeks of the absence) and make up all missed coursework.** These excused absences **will** count towards the aforementioned six, though you will not be penalized for excused absences accrued beyond the allowed six. For example, if you miss six classes for University-sponsored activities and then decide to skip a seventh class later in the semester, it will lower your final grade. However, if you need to miss a seventh class because of a documented illness, it will not lower your final grade. For information on excused and unexcused absences, see http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/attendance-absences

Please note: I will explicitly tell you if an absence is excused. **Otherwise, you should assume the absence is unexcused. I will keep an updated record of your absences on ICON, so you can keep track of how many you have.**

STUDENTS WITH 13 OR MORE ABSENCES FAIL THE COURSE
You will automatically fail the class if you accumulate more than twelve total absences, which is over one full month of the semester. **This rule does not apply to student athletes and others who miss more than twelve classes while participating in University-sponsored activities. Those absences, which must be documented by the sponsoring University program or office, will not be included in their total tally of absences.**

Tuition Insurance: Any student who fears they cannot meet these attendance requirements should consider the tuition insurance available through the **UI Billing Office**.

Please note that an absence is not the same as an extension, and I still expect you to turn in via ICON any written assignments due that day. The only exception is reading quizzes, which you will not be penalized for missing as long as the absence is excused or one of your allotted six. If the absence is not one of the six or otherwise excused, you will also receive a 0 on the reading quiz for that class.

***Any student seeking an SDS absence accommodation should meet with me at the beginning of the course as should any student who feels that they will be unfairly impacted by these attendance policies.**

Attendance Policy for M/W or Tu/Th Class:

IOWA

Students are expected to attend all classes. They should arrive on time and remain until I dismiss class. That said, occasionally everyone needs to miss class, whether it is due to illness, family or personal emergency, or even being overwhelmed by work for other classes. Therefore, I allow each student **four absences** without penalty. You do not need to provide any excuse for these absences, though if you know ahead of time you will be missing class, an email is always appreciated.

Each unexcused absence beyond the permitted four will lower your **final grade in the course** by **1/3 of a letter grade**. So, with five unexcused absences, an A becomes an A- and a B- becomes a C+. With six unexcused absences, an A becomes a B+, a B- becomes a C, etc.

There may also be other circumstances in which a student must miss class because of illness, military service obligations, religious holy day obligations, University-sponsored activities, or **"unavoidable circumstances" as defined by CLAS.** Students with mandatory religious obligations or UI-authorized activities must discuss their absences with me as soon as possible. Religious obligations must be communicated within the first three weeks of classes. **I will excuse these absences only if you provide proper documentation (within two weeks of the absence) and make up all missed coursework.** These excused absences **will** count towards the aforementioned four, though you will not be penalized for excused absences accrued beyond the allowed four. For example, if you miss four classes for University-sponsored activities and then decide to skip a fifth class later in the semester, it will lower your final grade. However, if you need to miss a fifth class because of a documented illness, it will not lower your final grade. For information on excused and unexcused absences, see http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/attendance-absences

Please note: I will explicitly tell you if an absence is excused. **Otherwise, you should assume the absence is unexcused. I will keep an updated record of your absences on ICON, so you can keep track of how many you have.**

STUDENTS WITH 9 OR MORE ABSENCES FAIL THE COURSE
You will automatically fail the class if you accumulate more than eight total absences, which is over one full month of the semester. **This rule does not apply to student athletes and others who miss more than twelve classes while participating in University-sponsored activities. Those absences, which must be documented by the sponsoring University program or office, will not be included in their total tally of absences.**

Tuition Insurance: Any student who fears they cannot meet these attendance requirements should consider the tuition insurance available through the **UI Billing Office**.

Please note that an absence is not the same as an extension, and I still expect you to turn in via ICON any written assignments due that day. The only exception is reading quizzes, which you will not be penalized for missing as long as the absence is excused or one of your allotted four. If the absence is not one of the four or otherwise excused, you will also receive a 0 on the reading quiz for that class.

***Any student seeking an SDS absence accommodation should meet with me at the beginning of the course as should any student who feels that they will be unfairly impacted by these attendance policies.**

GEL Policy on Exam Conflicts:

Per university policies, "[w]hen there is conflict between an exam scheduled outside of class time and a regularly scheduled course, the regularly scheduled course will take precedence." Hence, students

enrolled in GEL will not be excused from class to take an exam for another course. University policies further state that "[i]nstructors must offer reasonable options, including makeup time and location, without penalty to students who miss exams due to conflicts described above." Students who anticipate missing an exam due to a conflict with their GEL course should contact the instructor giving the exam to request an alternative time to take it. If a student chooses to miss their GEL class to take an exam for another class, the absence will not be excused.

Policy on the Use of AI

Your students are likely to use AI to help them with their assignments, so you must set down clear guidelines about that practice in your syllabus. Will you ban their use of AI entirely? (If so, you should say that any use of AI will be considered plagiarism and treated as such.) Will you allow students to use AI-generated material as a source for their papers, provided that they properly cite it? (If so, you should explain how you want students to cite the AI-generated material.) It is up to you to set boundaries on the use of AI and to make those boundaries clear in your syllabus. You should periodically remind students of your policies on the use of AI throughout the semester, especially when they are working on their papers. For some valuable tips on teaching in the age of AI, including help with syllabus language, see the FAQ's at https://teach.its.uiowa.edu/artificial-intelligence-tools-and-teaching

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as if it were your own. It can occur intentionally or unintentionally. Intentional plagiarism is cheating; it's when you deliberately copy another person's words or ideas without acknowledgment. Examples of this include copying all or any portion of an encyclopedia entry or published essay, downloading a paper off the internet, and handing in a paper from a fraternity's files. Keep in mind that your instructors read widely and have a lot of experience reading student work. Believe us when we tell you that words that are not your own are easy to spot. The consequences for plagiarizing are severe: we report all cases to the college, and the usual consequences is a zero on the assignment and often failing the course.

Unintentional plagiarism is by far the most common form, and usually involves improper citation of your reference sources. The best way to avoid this is to learn how to cite your sources correctly and, when in doubt, to cite anything you have consulted. Careful notetaking and a clear understanding of the rules for quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing sources, according to a recognized manual of style, will help prevent accidental plagiarism. Proper citation tells your instructors where you got your information and demonstrates to them that you are not trying to cheat.

If you are unsure about which citation form to use, check with your instructor.

Late Assignment Policy

Late work will be **docked 1 letter grade** for every day late, beginning as soon as the original due date has passed. A paper due at 12 p.m. turned in at 12:30 p.m., for example, will be docked 1 letter grade. Late major work submitted over four or more days after the due date will receive an automatic F. If you miss class, you are still responsible for submitting work on time via ICON or email.

IOWA

Please Note: You can add further explanation of this policy as needed, but it is IMPERATIVE that you stress this policy at the beginning of the semester. Obviously, some unavoidable emergencies and/or scheduling conflicts may appear that will cause us to make exceptions to this policy, such as documented family emergencies.

Optional Additional Sections: See Sample Syllabi for Examples

- Technology Policy (What kinds of tech they can bring into the classroom? Do you allow computers, e-readers, etc.)
- Additional Resources (Confidential reporting options on and off campus, Writing Center, Tutor Iowa, UI Counseling Services)
- Communication (email etiquette, classroom environment)
- Participation (What counts as engaged participation in your classroom? What are examples of class disruptions? Mention that students have a right to a distraction-free learning environment.) I recommend that you add this policy: Students who appear to be surfing the internet or texting will be marked absent for the day.
- Policies for discussing graded work
- Collaboration (CLAS asks that instructors specify if collaboration is allowed on assignments and, if so, your expectations for a student's individual performance. If collaboration is not allowed or is considered academic misconduct, this should be emphasized. The student's responsibility for understanding these boundaries and for asking for clarification should be stressed.)

The following CLAS Policies and University Policies links must be included in your syllabus so just cut and paste this entire purple section:

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Policies

Academic Honesty and Misconduct

All students in CLAS courses are expected to abide by the **college's standards of academic honesty**. Undergraduate academic misconduct must be reported by instructors to CLAS according to **these procedures**. Graduate academic misconduct must be reported to the Graduate College according to Section F of the **Graduate College Manual**.

Student Complaints

Students with a complaint about a grade or a related matter should first discuss the situation with the instructor and/or the course supervisor (if applicable), and finally with the Director or Chair of the school, department, or program offering the course. Undergraduate students should contact **CLAS Undergraduate Programs** *for support when the matter is not resolved at the previous level.*

Drop Deadline for this Course

You may drop an individual course before the drop deadline; after this deadline you will need collegiate approval. You can look up the drop deadline for this course **here**. *When you drop a course, a "W" will appear on your transcript.* The mark of "W" is a neutral mark that does not affect your GPA. To discuss how dropping (or staying in) a course might affect your academic goals, please contact your Academic Advisor. *Directions for adding or dropping a course and other registration changes can be found on the* **Registrar's website**. *Undergraduate students can find policies on dropping CLAS courses* **here**.

IOWA

Date and Time of the Final Exam

The **final examination date and time** will be announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes and it will be announced on the course ICON site once it is known. *Do not plan your end of the semester travel plans until the final exam schedule is made public. It is your responsibility to know the date, time, and place of the final exam.* According to Registrar's final exam policy, students *have a maximum of two weeks after the announced final exam schedule* to request a change if an exam conflict exists or if a student has more than two exams in one day (see the **policy** here).

University regulations require that students be allowed to make up examinations *that have been missed due to illness, religious holy days, military service obligations (including service-related medical appointments), or other unavoidable circumstances or University-sponsored activities. Students with UI-authorized activities must discuss their absences with the instructor as soon as possible. Religious obligations must be communicated within the first three weeks of classes.*

Communication: UI Email

Students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for any communication with instructors or staff in the UI community. For the privacy and the protection of student records, UI faculty and staff can only correspond with UI email addresses.

Mental Health Resources and Student Support

Students are encouraged to be mindful of their mental health and seek help as a preventive measure or if feeling overwhelmed and/or struggling to meet course expectations. Students are encouraged to talk to their instructor for assistance with course-related concerns. For additional mental health support, please see the guidance and resources at **mentalhealth.uiowa.edu**, including the 24-7 **UI Support and Crisis Line**.

Additionally, the Office of the Dean of Students can help students navigate personal crisis situations. They can provide one-on-one support, help with identifying options, and access to **basic needs resources (such as food, rent, childcare, etc.)**. Student Care and Assistance: 132 IMU, **dos-assistance@uiowa.edu**, or 319-335-1162 and more info: **dos.uiowa.edu/assistance**

University Policies

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University is committed to providing an educational experience that is accessible to all. If a student has a diagnosed disability or other disabling condition that may impact the student's ability to complete the course requirements as stated in the syllabus, the student may seek accommodations through **Student Disability Services** (SDS). SDS is responsible for making Letters of Accommodation (LOA) available. **The student must provide an LOA to the instructor as early in the semester as possible, but requests not made at least two weeks prior to the scheduled activity for which an accommodation is sought may not be accommodated.** The LOA will specify what reasonable course accommodations the student is eligible for and those the instructor should provide. Additional information can be found on the **SDS website**.

Free Speech and Expression

Absences for Religious Holy Days

IOWA

Classroom Expectations
Non-discrimination
Sexual Harassment/Misconduct and Supportive Measures
Sharing of Class Recordings **(if appropriate)**

SPRING 2025 CALENDAR OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

This is a tentative calendar and is subject to change. Updates will be posted to ICON and/or announced in class. Students are responsible for tracking course activities, readings, and assignments. Note midterm dates and significant deadlines, such as the last day to drop. The master calendar, which includes university holidays and other important deadlines, can be found here: ***https://registrar.uiowa.edu/academic-calendar***

NOTE: returning GEL instructors are allowed to change the order of these units (i.e., to begin with Poetry or Drama instead of nonfiction), but the sequence of major assignments and exams should remain roughly the same, and you should aim to devote at least three weeks to each of the genres. This should leave you three weeks to return to one or more of these genres and/or introduce new ones, such as the Graphic Novel, Film and Visual Media, etc.

Week 1 (Jan. 20-24) Unit 1: Essaying and Nonfiction

M: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day NO CLASS

W: Introduce the syllabus. What is an essay/nonfiction? Why are you reading the ones you've chosen? Describe reading and assignments, etc.

F:

Week 2 (Jan. 27-31)

M:

W:

F:

Week 3 (Feb. 3-7)

M:

W:

F:

Week 4 (Feb. 10-14) Unit 2: Poetry

M: Introduce poetry unit and assign first major writing assignment if you have not done so.

W:

F:

IOWA

Week 5 (Feb. 17-21)

M:

W:

F:

Week 6 (Feb. 24-28)

M:

W:

F: The first major writing assignment is due by now or before

Week 7 (Mar. 3-7): Midterm and Unit 3: Narrative Fiction

M:

W: Review for midterm and introduce narrative fiction unit and the novel and/or short stories you will be reading.

F: **Midterm exam today (or next week).**

Week 8 (Mar. 10-14)

M:

W:

F:

Week 9 (Mar. 17-21) SPRING BREAK

Week 10 (Mar. 24-28)

M:

W:

F:

Week 11 (Mar. 31-Apr. 4) Unit 4: Drama

M: Introduce the drama unit and the play(s) you will read

W:

F: Assign the second major writing assignment by now.

IOWA

Week 12 (Apr. 7-11)

M:

W:

F:

Week 13 (Apr. 14-18) Final weeks on materials of your choice (Graphic novel, drama, novel, etc)_

M:

W:

F: Major writing assignment 2 due by now.

Week 14 (Apr. 21-25)

M:

W:

F:

Week 15 (Apr. 28-May 2)

M:

W:

F:

Week 16 (May 5-9) Do not assign any major projects this week (aside from portfolio submissions). Please remember that final exams may only be given during finals week according to CLAS policy. Likewise, no major exams may be given the week before finals week.

M:

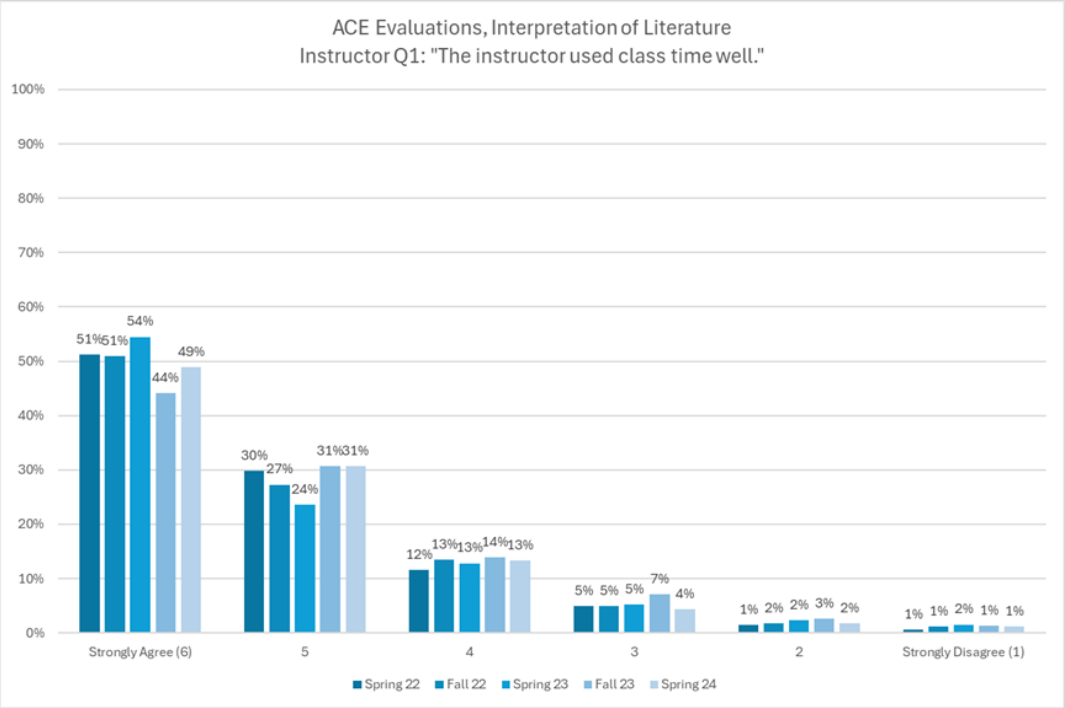
W:

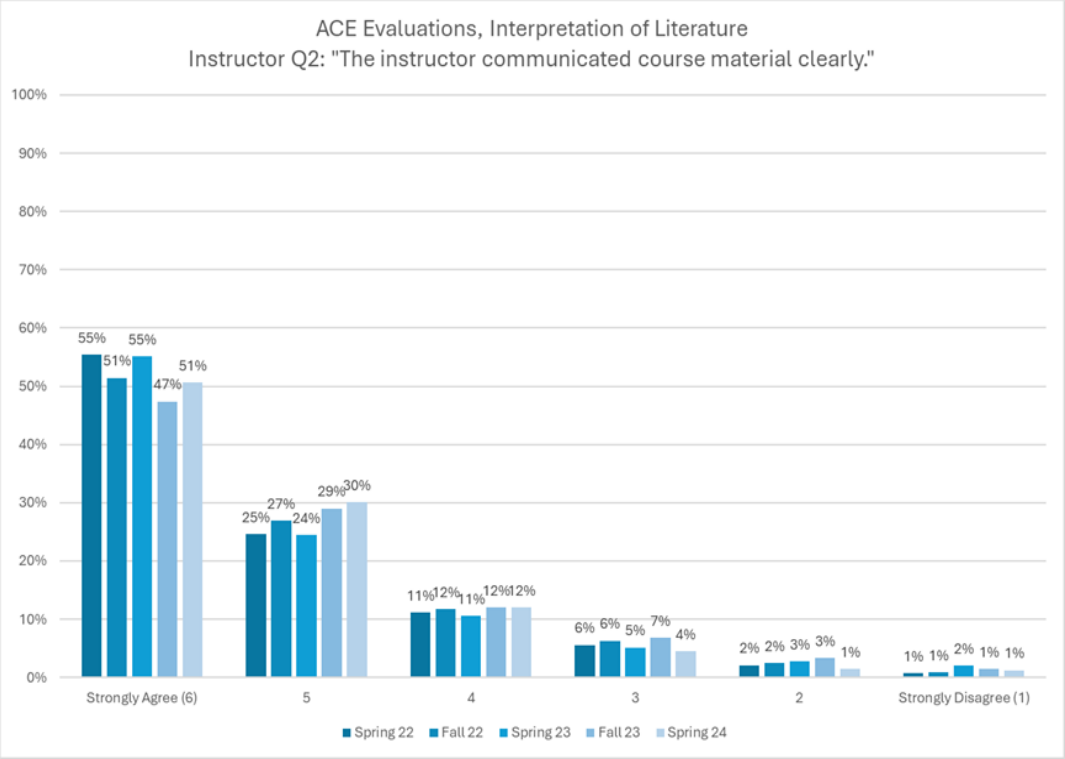
F: Final review and conclusion.

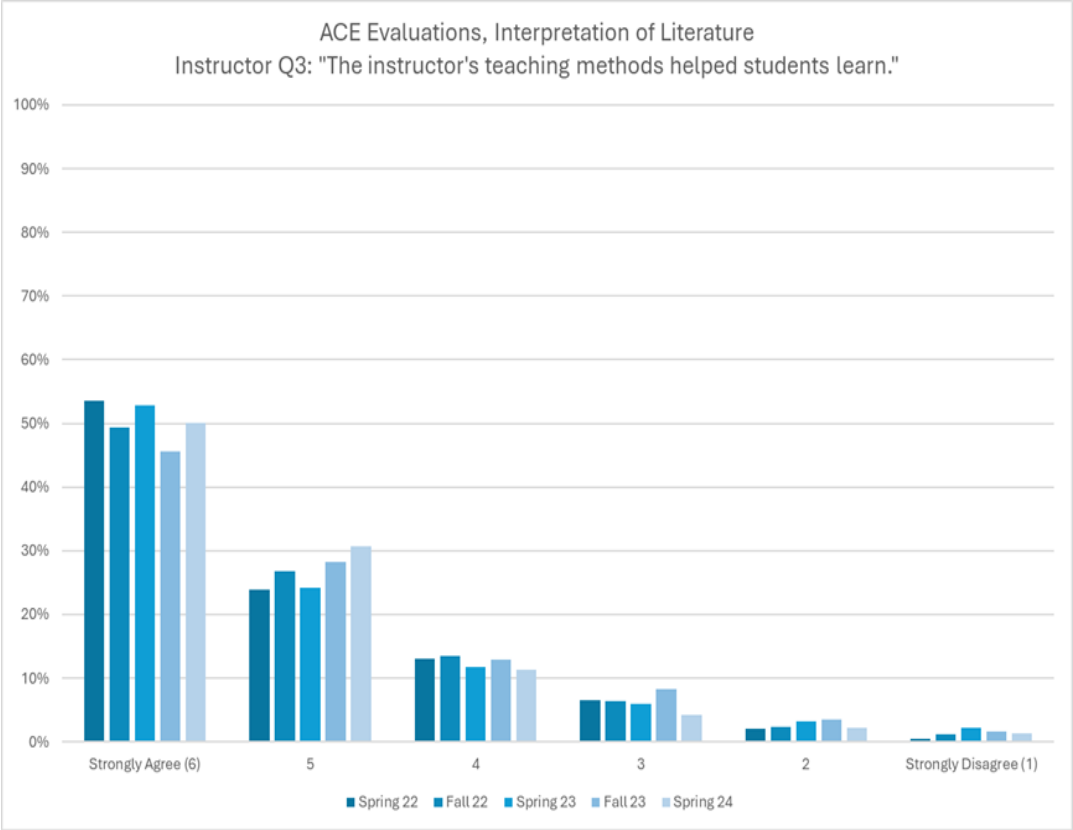
Week 17: Finals Week

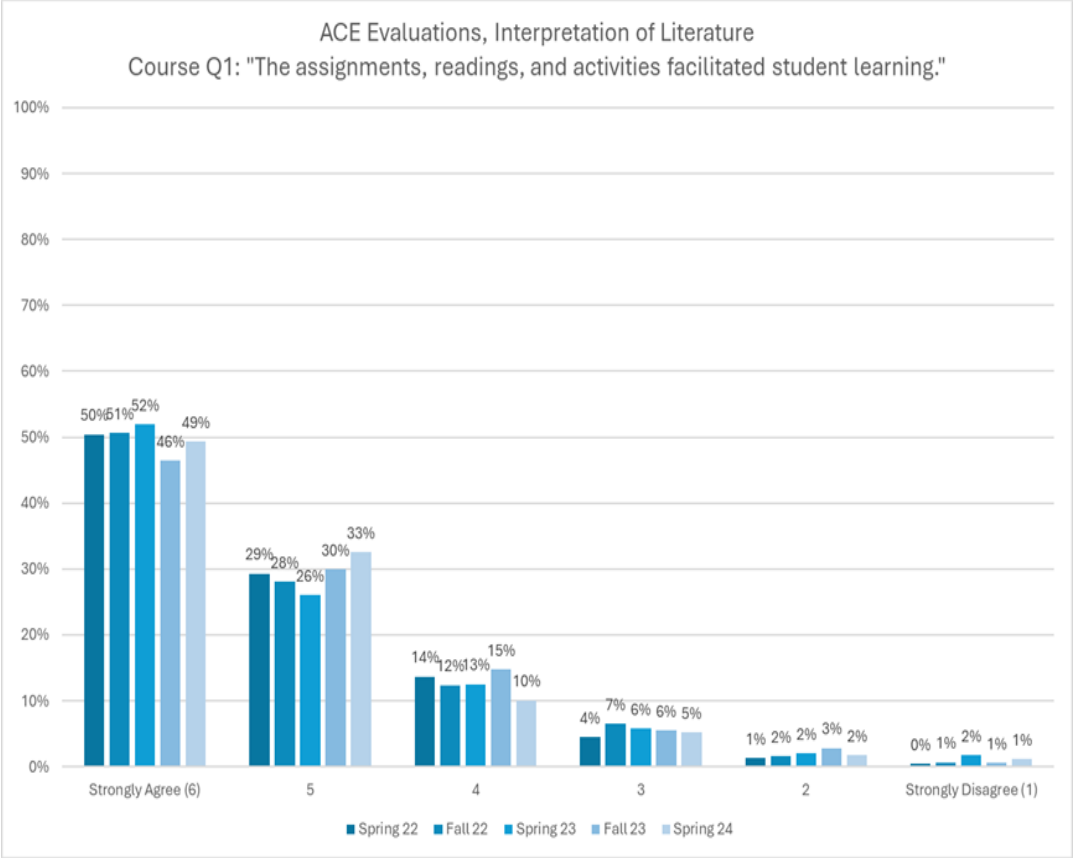
The final exam schedule for each semester is announced around the fifth week of classes; students are responsible for knowing the date, time, and place of a final exam. Students should not make travel plans until knowing this final exam information.

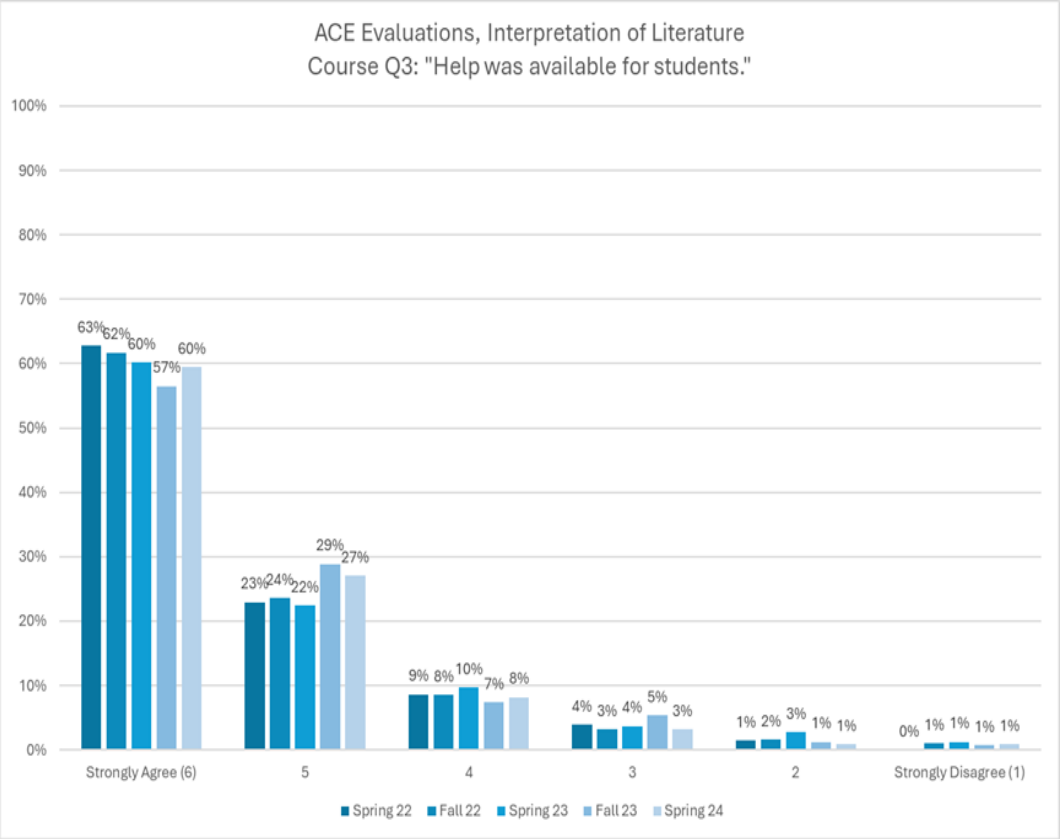
Appendix 3: Data on Student Responses to ACE/SPOT Feedback Surveys

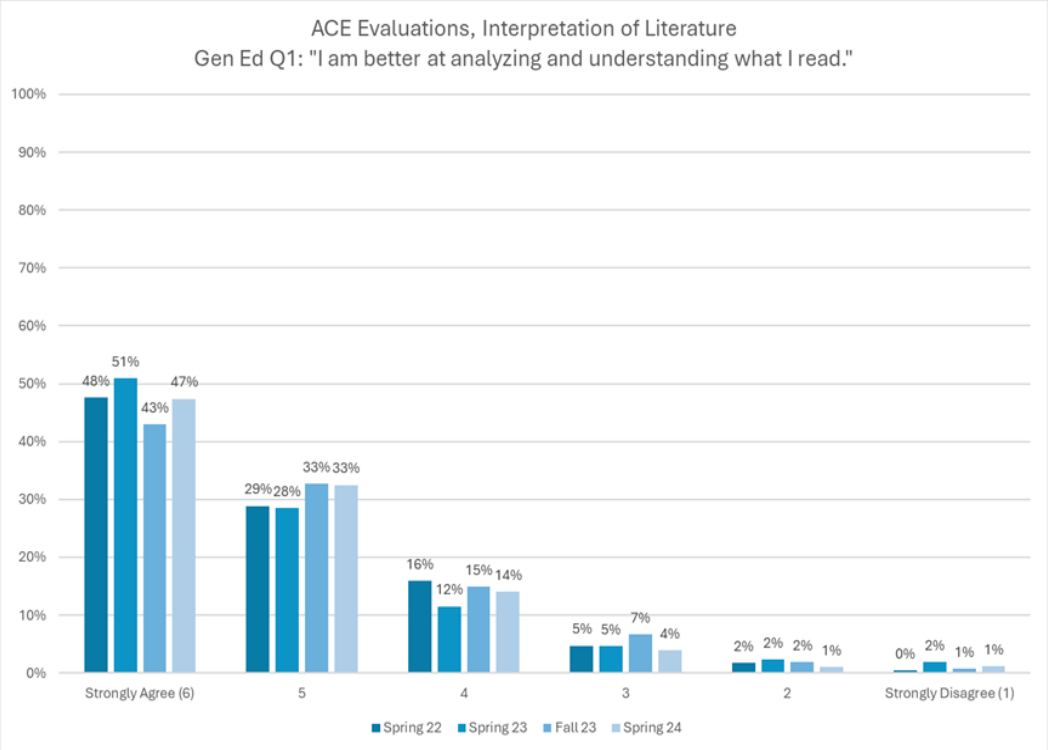

ACE Evaluations, Interpretation of Literature
Instructor Q1: "The instructor used class time well."
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
51% 51% 54% 44% 49%
30% 27% 24% 31% 31%
12% 13% 13% 14% 13%
5% 5% 5% 7% 4%
1% 2% 2% 3% 2%
1% 1% 2% 1% 1%
Strongly Agree (6)
5
4
3
2
Strongly Disagree (1)
Spring 22
Fall 22
Spring 23
Fall 23
Spring 24

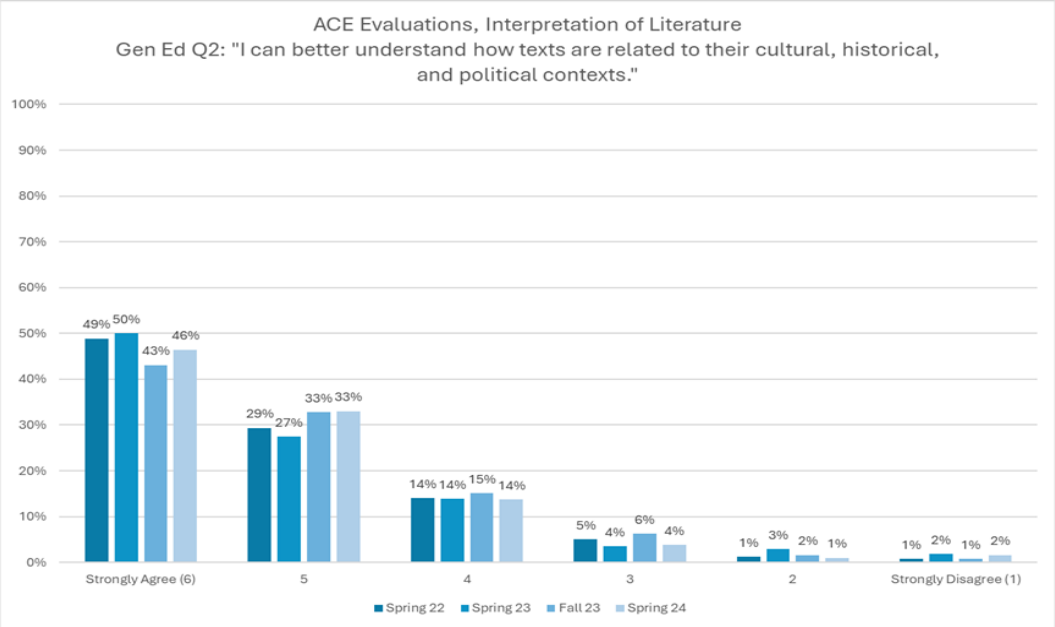

ACE Evaluations, Interpretation of Literature
Instructor Q2: "The instructor communicated course material clearly."
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
55% 51% 55% 47% 51%
25% 27% 24% 29% 30%
11% 12% 11% 12% 12%
6% 6% 5% 7% 4%
2% 2% 3% 3% 1%
1% 1% 2% 1% 1%
Strongly Agree (6)
5
4
3
2
Strongly Disagree (1)
Spring 22
Fall 22
Spring 23
Fall 23
Spring 24

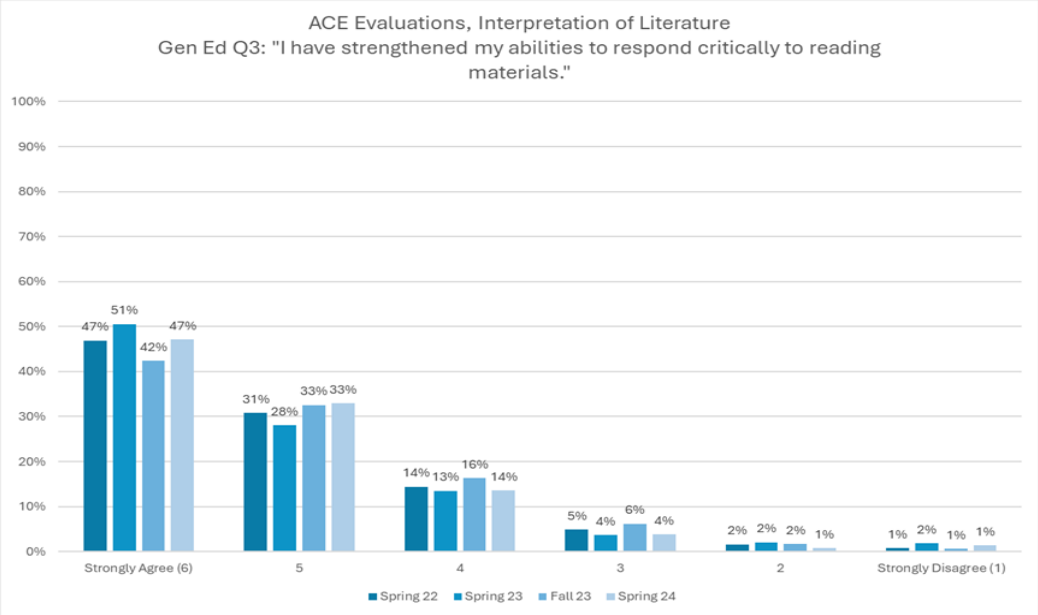

ACE Evaluations, Interpretation of Literature
Instructor Q3: "The instructor's teaching methods helped students learn."
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Strongly Agree (6)
5
4
3
2
Strongly Disagree (1)
Spring 22
Fall 22
Spring 23
Fall 23
Spring 24


ACE Evaluations, Interpretation of Literature
Course Q1: "The assignments, readings, and activities facilitated student learning."
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
50% 51% 52% 46% 49%
29% 28% 26% 30% 33%
14% 12% 13% 15% 10%
4% 7% 6% 6% 5%
1% 2% 2% 3% 2%
0% 1% 2% 1% 1%
Strongly Agree (6)
5
4
3
2
Strongly Disagree (1)
Spring 22
Fall 22
Spring 23
Fall 23
Spring 24


ACE Evaluations, Interpretation of Literature
Course Q3: "Help was available for students."
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
63% 62% 60% 57% 60%
23% 24% 22% 29% 27%
9% 8% 10% 7% 8%
4% 3% 4% 5% 3%
1% 2% 3% 1% 1%
0% 1% 1% 1% 1%
Strongly Agree (6)
5
4
3
2
Strongly Disagree (1)
Spring 22
Fall 22
Spring 23
Fall 23
Spring 24


ACE Evaluations, Interpretation of Literature
Gen Ed Q1: "I am better at analyzing and understanding what I read."
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
48% 51% 43% 47%
29% 28% 33% 33%
16% 12% 15% 14%
5% 5% 7% 4%
2% 2% 2% 1%
0% 2% 1% 1%
Strongly Agree (6)
5
4
3
2
Strongly Disagree (1)
Spring 22
Spring 23
Fall 23
Spring 24


ACE Evaluations, Interpretation of Literature
Gen Ed Q2: "I can better understand how texts are related to their cultural, historical, and political contexts."
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
49% 50% 43% 46%
29% 27% 33% 33%
14% 14% 15% 14%
5% 4% 6% 4%
1% 3% 2% 1%
1% 2% 1% 2%
Strongly Agree (6)
5
4
3
2
Strongly Disagree (1)
Spring 22
Spring 23
Fall 23
Spring 24


ACE Evaluations, Interpretation of Literature
Gen Ed Q3: "I have strengthened my abilities to respond critically to reading materials."
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
47% 51% 42% 47%
31% 28% 33% 33%
14% 13% 16% 14%
5% 4% 6% 4%
2% 2% 2% 1%
1% 2% 1% 1%
Strongly Agree (6)
5
4
3
2
Strongly Disagree (1)
Spring 22
Spring 23
Fall 23
Spring 24

Interpretation of Literature ACE Evaluations Means for All Questions, by Semester					
Question	**Semester (# of Student Respondents)**				
	Spring 2022 (806)	**Fall 2022 (906)**	**Spring 2023 (975)**	**Fall 2023 (883)**	**Spring 2024 (806)**
"The instructor used class time well."	5.23	5.17	5.18	5.03	5.17
"The instructor communicated course material clearly."	5.24	5.16	5.18	5.06	5.20
"The instructor's teaching methods helped students learn."	5.19	5.11	5.11	4.99	5.18
"The assignments, readings, and activities facilitated student learning."	5.22	5.18	5.15	5.10	5.19
"Assessments (such as quizzes, papers, and exams) aligned with course objectives."	5.37	5.28	5.24	5.24	5.30
"Help was available for students."	5.42	5.38	5.30	5.32	5.39
"I am better at analyzing and understanding what I read."	5.15	--	5.16	5.06	5.18

"I have strengthened my abilities to respond critically to reading materials.	5.18	--	5.13	5.07	5.15
"I can better understand how texts are related to their cultural, historical, and political contexts."	5.15	--	5.16	5.06	5.18