German | 2017-2018 Assessment Report

1. Please give a brief overview of the assessment data you collected this year.

The Learning Outcome assessed for 2017-18 in Modern Languages is as follows:

Research literary and cultural topics and report findings.

The decision was made in the German program to use the final project for GERM 357 German Cinema. The final project was as follows:

> _Final Project_: You may choose one of the following assignments
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> **Traditional essay**: approx. 5-6 pages double-spaced. Select a film that we have NOT watched and discussed in class, from the Weimar period, the NS-Period, the New German Cinema or the post-wall era and write an analysis, both formal and thematic. You must use at least three secondary sources, one of which must be from a scholarly journal or book.
>
> **Creative Project**. Select a film that we have NOT watched and discussed in class, from the Weimar period, the NS-Period, the New German Cinema or the post-wall era, and using VoiceThread offer an analysis of the film using clips, still photos, PowerPoint screenshots or a combination of them. Commentary should be about 8-10mins and explore themes, structure, shot analysis etc. Main idea is to be creative in your analysis! It should also include reference to secondary literature and/or what other critics have written about the film.

Given that GERM 357 is a cross-listed course with HUM STUD 357, we only looked at the papers/projects from students enrolled in the German section of this course. The distribution of grades for the final project were as follows:

A: 10
AB: 2
B: 3
BC: 3
C: 1
CD: 1

[_Note: the CD grade was a case of partial plagiarism, in which an agreement was made with the student for a grade of CD_]

In general, we were happy with the students' ability to research and report/write on their findings. A couple of concerns that we did notice: first, the issue of plagiarism. Final papers were submitted to the D2L dropbox in which TurnItIn was activated. One paper was flagged with a 40% similarity rate and it was determined that of that 40% a majority was copied from other sources and not cited. This continues to be an issue across campus and should continue to be addressed in Eng Comp courses and confronted by instructors when it arises.

The other issue that we found is the (in)ability of students to identify "scholarly" sources, either from lack of understanding or lack of effort. Internet websites continue to be the "go-to" source for some students. I know that this is a topic that is regularly discussed in Eng Comp courses and the library offers great resources and tutorials on researching. Although the topic of evaluating sources was not discussed explicitly in the course, the requirement was to use at least one source from a scholarly journal or book. Students were encouraged to talk to the instructor if they were having trouble identifying or finding such sources (a few students did have difficulties, as the films they selected have not been analyzed in scholarly studies). Overall, though, the grade distribution on this assignment, reflecting their ability to conduct research and report their findings, was quite good and some of the research papers were excellent.

Another positive note is the one creative project that was submitted. Given the move in our unit to explore the digital humanities, I try to offer that as an option in my classes. While only one student chose the creative option, it was an excellent submission that similarly indicated the student's ability to reference secondary literature!

2. How will you use what you've learned from the data that was collected?

Our findings and results mirror those of the Spanish program that found two primary weaknesses: 1) students' inability to cite properly using MLA format (something not stressed in the course, but also noticed) and 2) weaknesses in identifying scholarly sources as well as peer reviewed scholarship. In fall, we will consider meeting with our Spanish colleagues as well as Jennie Young, Director of English Composition, in order to discuss ways to improve student learning in both of these areas. The next time we offer this course, we will be sure to include a session with the Cofrin Library resource librarians to discuss research methods and strategies for identifying and evaluating scholarly sources. Going forward, we will be sure to incorporate this information and engage the library staff whenever we assign a final research paper. We should also as a campus be sure that this information is reaching all students before graduation at the latest.