

## **English Department, Stern College for Women**

**by Dr. Linda Shires, Department Chair; Dr. Nora Nachumi, Assessment Coordinator (2013, 2014)**

Assessment of the English Department curriculum at Stern College for Women has been constructed to take into account the department's three tracks-- Literature, Creative Writing and Media Studies--and its responsibility for the college-wide course in expository writing, English 1100/1200 H.

Beginning in 2011, we first articulated goals and student learning objectives essential to the major, regardless of track. In doing so, we recognized some of these goals and objectives would not be relevant to all of our courses. We had designed the English Major's tracks so students take a range of courses that, in combination, work to accomplish department-wide goals and learning objectives. In turn, the English Major works to accomplish many of the college-wide goals and learning objectives. At the same time, all of our Majors, regardless of track, take our foundational course: Gateway: Introduction to Critical Methods, as do English Minors. All English majors are also required to take courses that pertain to different periods in literary history and courses that provide the opportunity to focus on a particular topic in-depth. Meanwhile, each track has its own required courses and list of electives relevant to that track.

Given the variety of requirements and electives in our department, we have focused our assessment efforts on four types of courses: those that all of our majors share (e.g. Gateway: Introduction to Critical Methods), those that are required for the individual tracks and electives (e.g. Media Studies, Introduction to Creative Writing), those that may be used to meet the requirements of more than one track (e.g. Survey of British Literature III, Writing Women's Lives), and analytic writing courses: Composition and Rhetoric, required of all students in the college, and Advanced Exposition, required of all English Literature majors.

The creation and implementation of a formal assessment process in our department has recently led to the widespread use of rubrics to assess the effectiveness of our courses and tracks. For example, faculty members have created rubrics to score assignments in their individual courses and the department currently is finalizing a uniform rubric to use for grading papers across Composition and Rhetoric. We are also using rubrics to define and assess other modes of student performance including class participation and group projects. In the future, we will develop assessment rubrics for Exit Projects in each track.

We have responded individually and as a department to Assessment results. Our individual instructors have made changes to the design of their courses and to the nature of their assignments. As a department, we have adjusted course requirements for certain tracks and for the major as a whole: introducing a required introductory course in Media Studies, paralleling the number of other required courses in our Media specialties, eliminating a Junior Seminar for all majors, and creating a new Senior-level course for Literature majors (Advanced Exposition). We have altered material in our Gateway course, so that we now teach reading strategies for different genres--from advertising to poetry to narrative-- as well as a variety of theoretical

approaches.. We have also redesigned the Exit Project in Literature and in Creative Writing. Clearly, assessment is a fluid, ongoing process. We will continue to work on modes of assessment, adjusting curriculum and evaluation procedures, as needed.