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# Developing & Implementing an Assessment of the Humanities General Education Objective: *A Do-It-Yourself Guide*

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# Humanities & the Arts

...to understand and appreciate the arts, literature, history, and philosophical systems of major world cultures



- assessment to improve learning
- assessment for accountability

Linda Suskie, *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*. Boston, MA: Anker Publishing, 2004

Do we adopt a pre-existing  
tool or design our own?

*Primary Concerns & Motivations*



# HWC Student Population

- 2-year Urban Community College in the Chicago Loop
- Student Profile:  
[http://hwashtington.ccc.edu/pdfs/Annual\\_Report\\_FY06\\_07.pdf](http://hwashtington.ccc.edu/pdfs/Annual_Report_FY06_07.pdf)

# Humanities & the Arts: A Culture of Experience

- General education requirements include courses in visual, philosophical, literary, musical, and media arts as well as culture and identity.
- Highly interdisciplinary courses
- Experiential learning opportunities in the city
- Active learning techniques in the classroom
- Objectives for humanities shared across all disciplines



# Humanities & the Arts: Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's)

Students will demonstrate:

- Analysis skills by identifying historical periods, major movements, and theories related to the evolution of a particular discipline.
- Evaluation skills by establishing criteria to assess the major characteristics, and to draw inferences from a work (e.g., a painting, novel, play)
- Interpretation skills by responding through the “self” to the synthesis and integration of analyzed and evaluated information.

- Application skills by using techniques relative to the discipline to construct a physical manifestation as a vehicle for communication.
- Communication skills by articulating ideas, emotions, or interpretations through dialogue, reading, writing, and visual imagery (e.g., an essay, an oral presentation, a painting.)



# Searching for the Perfect Assessment Tool?: Design Your Own! We Did...

- To be: Content-appropriate for our students, a reasonable length to maintain their commitment, and aligned with our specific SLO's
- To measure on all three domains: Cognitive, Affective, Behavioral
- Relying on institutional wisdom and the latest research
- In two parts: 1) a survey, and 2) an "exam"

# MESA Community College: A Model

[http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/about/orp/  
assessment/](http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/about/orp/assessment/)



# Part 1: The Survey - sample section

## I think studying the arts and humanities:

(Likert Scale)

- has given/will give me new ways to think about my own life.
- has given/will give me important skills to use in other classes.
- has helped/will help me reach my academic goals.
- has helped/will help me reach my life goals.
- has helped/will help me express myself better.
- has helped/will help me succeed at work.
- has helped/will help me with my family.

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- has helped/will help me be a more creative/imaginative person.
- has helped/will help broaden my taste (in music, literature, visual art, etc.)
- is relevant to my life outside of school.
- is something I would have done even if they were not “required” courses.
- is/will be an important part of my education.

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# Part 2: Essay Responses

- Questions designed to measure aspects of each outcome.
- Choices available to allow for student self-reflection
- Artifacts from about the same context and ideology

*Enjoy the demo!*

# The Rubric: Aligning the Questions, with the Outcomes, with the Measures

## ***RUBRIC/SCORING SHEET for HUMMM:*** ***Arts & Humanities*** **Assessment Week 2006** **Harold Washington College**

Reader # \_\_\_\_\_ ID# \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_Poetry                      \_\_Visual Art                      \_\_Music

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***RUBRIC/SCORING SHEET for HUMMM:***  
***Arts & Humanities***  
**Assessment Week 2006**  
**Harold Washington College**

- 5 = Demonstrates very strong, consistent, sophisticated evidence of the outcome
- 4 = Demonstrates strong, but perhaps inconsistent or unpolished evidence of the outcome
- 3 = Demonstrates basic evidence of the outcome but is lacking in consistency and/or sophistication
- 2 = Demonstrates a lack of evidence of the outcome but some awareness
- 1 = No evidence at all of the outcome

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## Question 1 – Personal Response

- \_\_\_\_ Makes a personal connection to the artifact/  
responds through the “emotional self”
- \_\_\_\_ Uses effective observation skills to understand  
connection
- \_\_\_\_ Understands the artifact’s impact on an  
audience
- \_\_\_\_ Articulates ideas in writing clearly, thoroughly,  
smoothly

Total 1 \_\_\_\_\_



## Question 2 – Interpretation

- \_\_\_\_\_ Draws inferences from interpretation of details
- \_\_\_\_\_ Identifies overall themes, symbols, and/or messages
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reflects on the creator's intent/the artifact's purpose
- \_\_\_\_\_ Articulates ideas in writing clearly, thoroughly, smoothly

Total 2 \_\_\_\_\_

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## Question 3 – Context

- \_\_\_\_\_ Shows awareness of the relationship between the artifact and its possible context
- \_\_\_\_\_ Draws a parallel between observed details and context
- \_\_\_\_\_ Analyzes the artifact as a cultural product
- \_\_\_\_\_ Articulates ideas in writing clearly, thoroughly, smoothly

Total 3 \_\_\_\_\_



## Question 4 – Evaluation

- \_\_\_\_ Shows confidence in determining quality based on a “personal aesthetic”
- \_\_\_\_ Reflects on the characteristics of the artifact connecting form and content
- \_\_\_\_ Possesses a basis for comparison (from same or other disciplines)
- \_\_\_\_ Articulates ideas in writing clearly, thoroughly, smoothly

Total 4 \_\_\_\_\_

GRAND TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_/20

Comments:

Todd was more than a little contentious...

- We all secretly wished that he would join a different committee.



# To-Do List:

- Get institutional approval
- Ask numerous teachers to give up an entire class period
- Ask IT to make sure that all computers have requisite software and hardware
- Section off a large portion of the computer lab for several days at a time
- Train committee members to proctor the testing
- Create “student completion” certificates so that no one student is tested twice
- Wait, you mean I have to grade them too?

# Who took the test?

- 33 faculty members volunteered 42 sections of their classes
- Totaling 664 students
- Approximately 10% of our full-time student population



# Grading them took as long as you would think...

- We reviewed examples of good, mediocre, and bad essays
- We calibrated our scoring using the rubric
- We divided the essays among the 7 graders – 95 apiece
- We met 2 weeks later, recalibrated, and took 95 more essays home to grade

# 36 possible points on each test

- In order to have a 95% degree of confidence in the accuracy of the scoring, we hoped that both graders would score any given test within 2 points of one another
- 331 tests had to be scored a third time to ensure reliability
- 41 tests needed still a fourth score. Those 4 scores were simply averaged



# Student perceptions of studying the humanities:

- 83.6% (of the 664 students) agree it has given them new ways to think about their lives.
- 82.6% agree it has given them important skills to use in other classes.
- 84.8% agree it has helped them reach academic and/or personal goals.
- 86.2% agree it has helped them become more expressive/creative/imaginative.

# Since coming to HWC:

- 52.7% have visited a museum.
- 33.1% took an arts or architecture tour.
- 56.7% have attended a live music performance.
- 45.5% have attended a play.
- 32.9% have attended a poetry reading, slam, or open mic.
- 38.6% have attended a dance or performance art event.
- 32.1% have attended a philosophy debate or discussion.
- Break this into two groups: greater than 50% and less than 50%, and modify the explanation of the results accordingly.



# Trends in Student Writing:

- Responses tended not to use textual evidence to support assertions about a text.
- Responses which focused on contextualizing an artifact or text tended to be the weakest.
- Responses tended to equate the subjectivity of aesthetic judgment with the impossibility of aesthetic judgment.
- Responses tended to use a decidedly simple and narrow emotional vocabulary to express personal responses to texts.



What are we doing with  
assessment data?



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