Colleagues,

As many of you learned last year as instructors of First-Year English or Sophomore Literature, we are now required to assess all lower-division studies courses (including each Sophomore Literature class) and submit our report to the University’s Institutional Assessment office, SACS, and THECB (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board).  For the Sophomore Literature Assessment in Fall 2015, we’ll be **assessing all sections of 2330 and 2360.** Some of you performed this assessment last year and the assessment is largely the same. Keep in mind that this is required for Sophomore Literature to remain part of the new common core and, as such, needs to meet state-based outcomes for common core classes.

As part of the changes to all state university common cores, the THECB has come up with core objectives for each class taught as part of the common core.  Our class is listed under the Language, Philosophy, and Culture component for the core.  According to the Core Objectives for the Language, Philosophy, and Culture component of the Texas Core Curriculum, in sophomore literature students will:

1. examine ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures.
2. demonstrate creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
3. effectively develop, interpret and express ideas through written, oral and visual communication.
4. relate choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.
5. demonstrate intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

**Here’s what you’ll be required to do this semester to assess our students** (and we tried to set this up to make it as easy on you as possible while still meeting the basic requirements).

You’ll be asked to perform and report your results **for five tasks** during the course of the semester (and on the fifth and final one, all you’ll do is report when your departmental evaluations are turned in at semester’s end).

**Here are the five tasks:**

* **Task 1:  Embedded exam questions**
	+ Identify 5 multiple-choice questions, on any course exam except the final, that measure students’ understanding of "how literature reflects the human condition across cultures."  (As you can see above, the quoted phrase comes verbatim from the state's component area description; we can interpret it broadly. When I assessed in Fall 2014, I used questions that asked about gender, race, and class but it’s up to you how to interpret “human condition across cultures” as most literary texts have the human condition as their subject.)
		- **Documentation of Task 1:**
			* Provide Chad a copy of the 5 selected embedded questions.  Document the number of students who answer at least 3 of the 5 questions correctly as well as the date of exam and the number of students who took the exam.
* **Task 2: What unifies the literature we have read this semester?**
	+ During a class in the final three weeks of the semester, have students either respond in writing to (required if more than 100 students enrolled), or participate in oral discussion of (if fewer than 100 students enrolled), the question “what unifies the literature we have read this semester?”
		- **Documentation of Task 2:**
			* Document the date task was performed and the number of students responding in writing or number attending class on the date of the oral discussion
* **Task 3: Writing activity**
	+ Conduct at least one writing activity during a class in the final three weeks of the semester.  This activity may be an essay, an essay exam, a short-answer exam question, or an in-class writing-to-learn activity.
		- **Documentation of Task 3 (one of the following):**
			* a) if the writing activity is an essay, essay exam, or short-answer exam question – the number of students who submit the required writing assignment and the date;

-OR-

* + - * b) if the writing activity is an in-class writing-to-learn activity – the number of students who participate in the activity, plus the total number of students attending class on the designated day and the date.
* **Task 4: Honesty pledge**
	+ Require that students write and sign the Texas State student honesty pledge on one exam or paper.  (The honesty pledge: “I pledge to uphold the principles of honesty and responsibility at our University.”) You’re encouraged to have students write the pledge on all exams and papers.
		- **Documentation of Task 4:**
			* Document the number of students who write and sign the honesty pledge, plus the total number of students who submit the exam or paper as well as the date of the exam or due date of the paper.
* **Task 5: End-of-course evaluations**
	+ Let Chad know when you have conducted end-of-course evaluations.  Chad will pick up the evaluations and record students’ responses to statement 3 (“I have learned about texts and writers from a variety of cultural groups”), and then return evaluations to the English Department.
		- **Documentation of Task 5:**
			* No additional documentation required.

Our hope is to make these tasks easy for you to implement into your class and easy to report by the end of the semester.  Attached is the data report sheet that you can fill out as you perform each task.  In addition, we’ve set up a way for you to input your data on the Sophomore Literature TRACS page so that you can report your answers on one form at the end of the semester. You’re also welcome to email me the results of each task as you complete it.  My advice would be to **make use of your assigned IA/s** for this data collection if you have a large class. It’s my understanding that participation can be listed as service on both your and their vitas as participation in Outcomes Assessment. Many instructors found their IAs helpful in completing the assessment last year and some faculty found that these assessments gave the IAs duties during times when they weren’t as busy with other class tasks.

Soon I’ll send some tips on performing TASK 1 (which seems to be the trickiest one to complete) as well as tips for the other tasks.

Thanks in advance for doing your part to help us assess Sophomore Literature and keep it in the common core for Texas State.  If you have any questions about the assessment, feel free to talk to me (or to Nancy Wilson) at any point during the semester.