2020-2021 Analysis of Reading Imaginative Literature Assessment Results

Submitted by Paul Delaney

Introduction: The Westmont College General Education (GE) category of Reading Imaginative Literature (RIL) was assessed during the 2019-2020 academic year. An indirect assessment was conducted by the GE Committee in Spring 2020. Direct assessment was conducted in Fall 2019 by all faculty teaching RIL courses that semester. One hundred and thirty nine students participated in the study. Data was disaggregated by gender, race, upper- and lower-division coursework, class year, and in one case by major. In August of 2019, faculty teaching RIL classes in Fall 2019 agreed on the following as Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) for the assessment.

RIL GE SLOs:
1. *Students will be able to distinguish among genres (or sub-genres) of imaginative literature by identifying the defining characteristics, authorial purposes, and thematic implications associated with various literary and dramatic forms.*
2. *Students will be able to analyze imaginative literature to indicate an understanding of language beyond its literal level by offering a close reading that demonstrates at the level of the individual sentence or line not just what the text means but how the text means what it means.*

This was the first assessment of this GE area since the new GE program came into effect in 2006.

The Fall 2019 courses that were assessed were the following:

ENG-006WA	Studies in Literature	Paul Delaney
ENG-007H	First-Year Honors Seminar in Literature	Randy VanderMey
ENG-044-1	Studies in World Literature	Carmen McCain
ENG-044-2	Studies in World Literature	Carmen McCain
ENG-060	Writers in Conversation	Kya Mangrum
ENG-134	Ethnicity and Race in American Literature	Kya Mangrum
SP-180	Latin American Women Writers	Dinora Cardoso
TA-001	Great Literature of the Stage	John Blondell

Indirect Assessment

In Spring 2020, the GE Committee audited eight syllabi collected from the RIL courses offered that semester. All syllabi but one followed the General Education Syllabus template and met all requirements. The GE Committee was informed that the instructor whose syllabus did not follow the template would not continue teaching at Westmont, and therefore, no action was taken. A minor concern was expressed that some ENG-60 syllabi did not sound inviting to non-English majors. As this course is taught by almost everyone in the department, the GE Committee asked the English Department to address the concern at the departmental level.

Direct Assessment

Methodology

During the Fall 2019 semester, students in Reading Imaginative Literature (RIL) General Education (GE) classes were assessed against an analytical rubric (Appendix A) with five criteria:

    A. Comprehension
    B. Recognition of Genre ("Genre")
    C. Identification of the Implications of Language beyond Its Literal Level ("Figurative Language")
    D. Analysis
    E. Thesis and Argumentation ("Argumentation")

Student work was categorized into four levels of accomplishment:
    4—Highly Developed
    3—Developed
    2—Emerging
    1—Initial

A zero (0) was used for unacceptable work that fell below an Initial level of expectation.

One hundred and thirty nine students participated in this assessment. Each student work was assessed by one assessor, the course instructor. Given the decision to simplify scoring procedures by having each professor score his or her own students, no norming sessions were conducted to ensure that all scorers were on the same page, which was one limitation of the study.

In general, the study results suggest that students are performing acceptably in all categories and across all the populations involved.
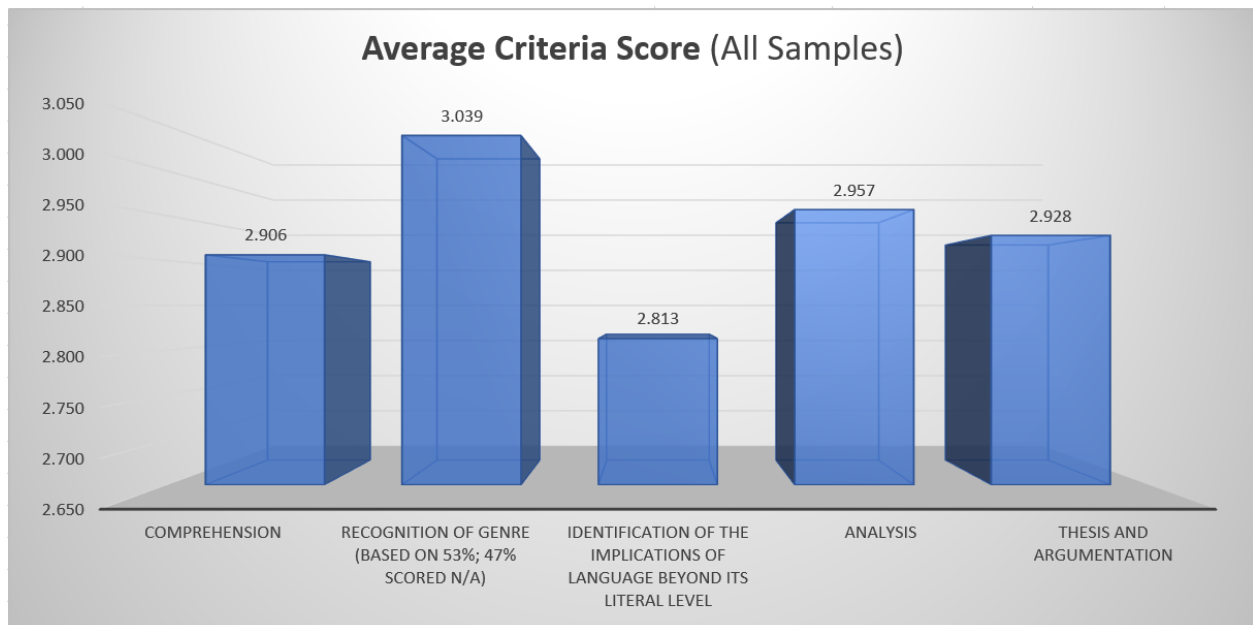

Chart 1: Average Criteria Score on a 4-point scale where 4 = highly developed, 3 = developed, etc.

Since the five categories under review were all evaluated on a 4-point scale, it may be helpful to think of the results as analogous to gpa's. The best results were recorded in the category of Genre where students recorded an average criteria score of 3.04, which demonstrated a "developed" level of accomplishment. However, only half of the students participating in the study recorded scores in the Genre category because some faculty deemed the category irrelevant to their courses for reasons discussed below. In other categories, student performance was tightly clustered from a 2.81 in Figurative Language to a 2.96 in Analysis. While there is certainly room for improvement in all of those scores, none of them raise a red flag, and any difference among categories in terms of level of performance seems modest.
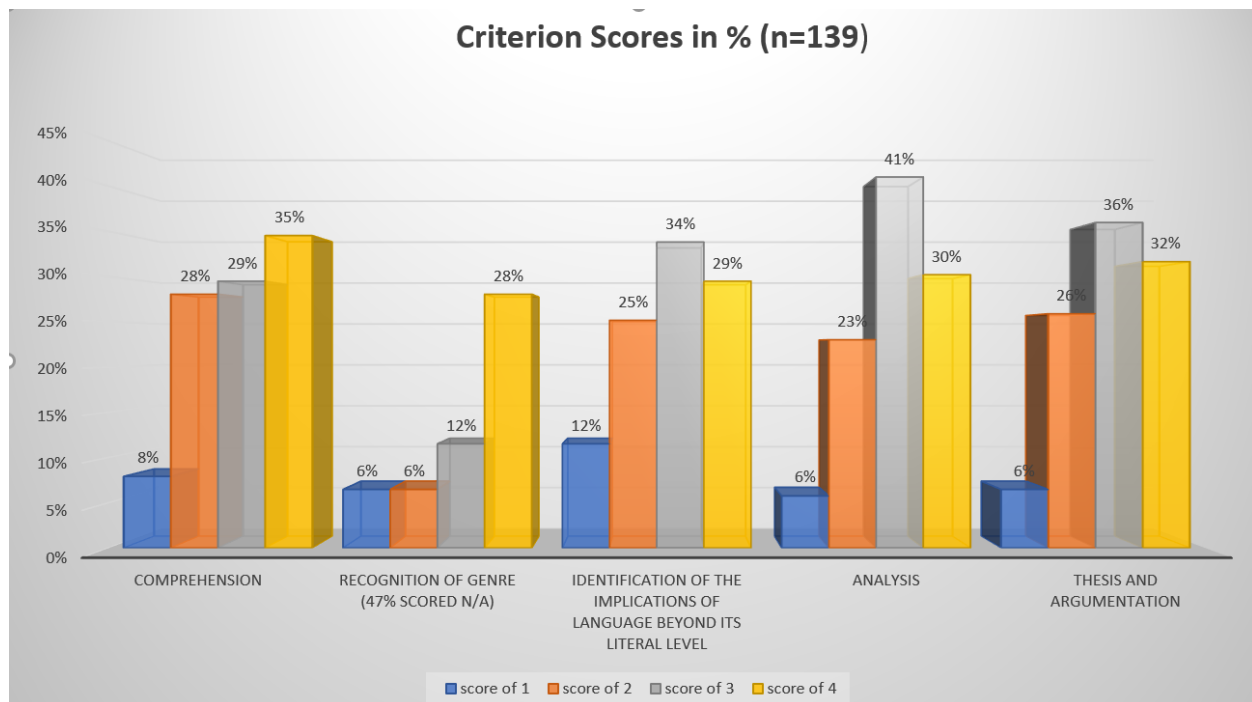

Criterion Scores in % (n=139)

Chart 2: Criteria Score in percentages

Considered in terms of levels of attainment within the categories, for Comprehension and Genre, the highly developed category (level 4) was the most numerous for respondents as a whole, closely followed by the developed category (level 3). For the other three areas, level 3 was the most numerous followed by level 4. But in any event, the two highest levels of accomplishment were the two most numerous levels of attainment in all five areas for students in the aggregate. Those are gratifying results.

The data was disaggregated to determine whether our classes were adequately meeting the needs of various categories of students.

When data was disaggregated by gender (Charts 3 and 4), women showed a higher level of attainment (3.0) than men (2.77) in the area of Comprehension. The conducted T-test analyses of the Comprehension competence, where the disparities between male and female students are most notable, did not show any significant differences between men and women (p =.016). The

attainment by men was higher than that of women in the four other categories: 3.21 to 3.14 in Genre, 2.83 to 2.81 in Figurative Language, 3.02 to 2.92 in Analysis, and 3.04 to 2.89 in Argumentation; however, these differences are not statistically significant either.
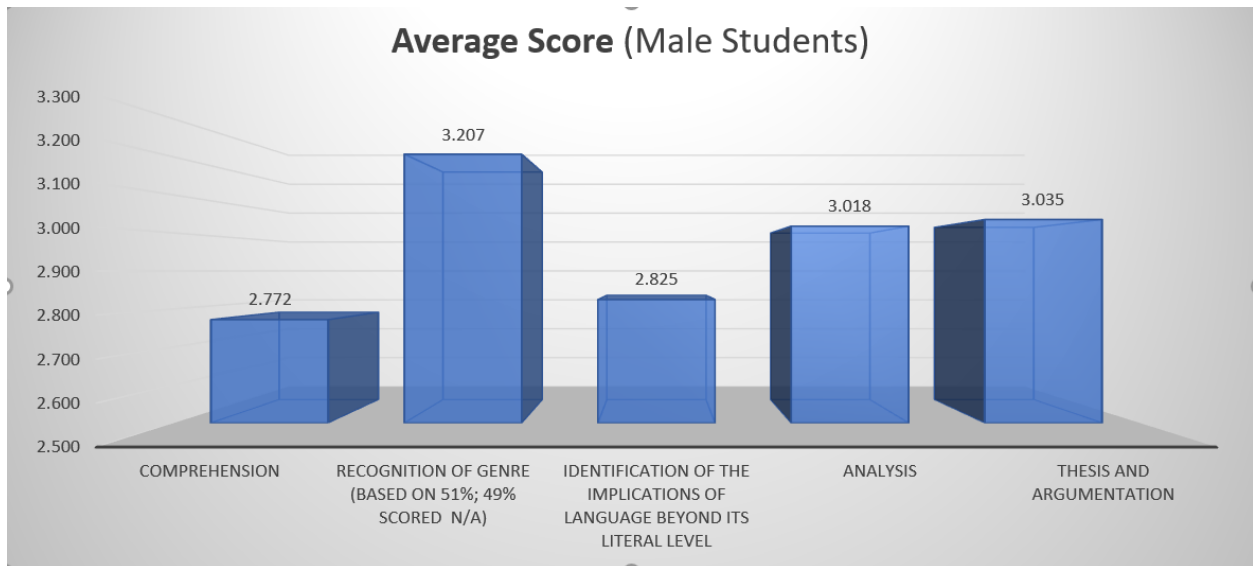

Average Score (Male Students)

Chart 3: Male Scores on a 4-point scale where 4 = highly developed, 3 = developed, etc.

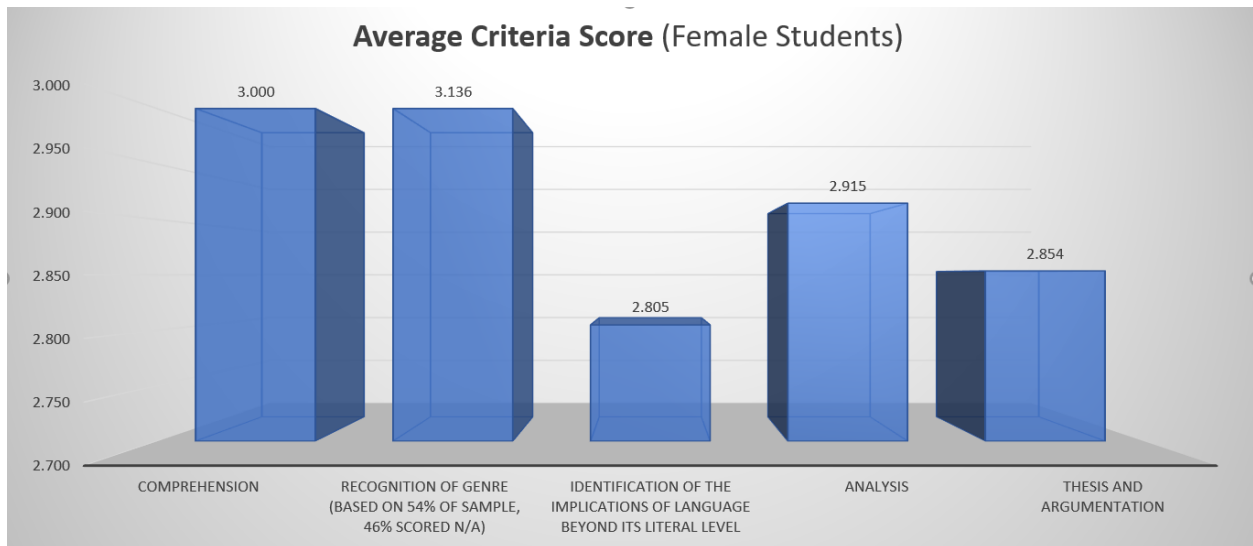**Average Criteria Score** (Female Students)

Chart 4: Female Scores on a 4-point scale where 4 = highly developed, 3 = developed, etc. (N.B. The difference between 3.136 and 3.000 is *greater* than the difference between 2.915 and 2.805 despite appearances to the contrary in Chart 4. Indeed, since lines are drawn at 0.5 intervals, there should be at least two more lines at the top of the chart with 3.136 above the second of those lines.)

When data was disaggregated by race (Chart 5 and 6), white students showed a modestly higher level of attainment in all five categories compared to students of color: 2.99 to 2.90 in Comprehension, 3.18 to 3.03 in Genre, 2.96 to 2.71 in Figurative Language, 3.06 to 2.85 in Analysis, and 2.99 to 2.85 in Argumentation. Again, while those differences are measurable they are not statistically significant. The conducted T-test analyses did not show any statistically significant differences between the results of white students and students of color in the Analysis category (p =.018), where these

differences are most notable. It is worth noting that faculty in all three disciplines—Spanish, Theatre Arts, and English—have been moving toward revising the curriculum to be more actively anti-racist by ensuring greater inclusion of under-represented voices. The data here reinforce the need to continue those efforts to serve more equitably the needs of all our students.
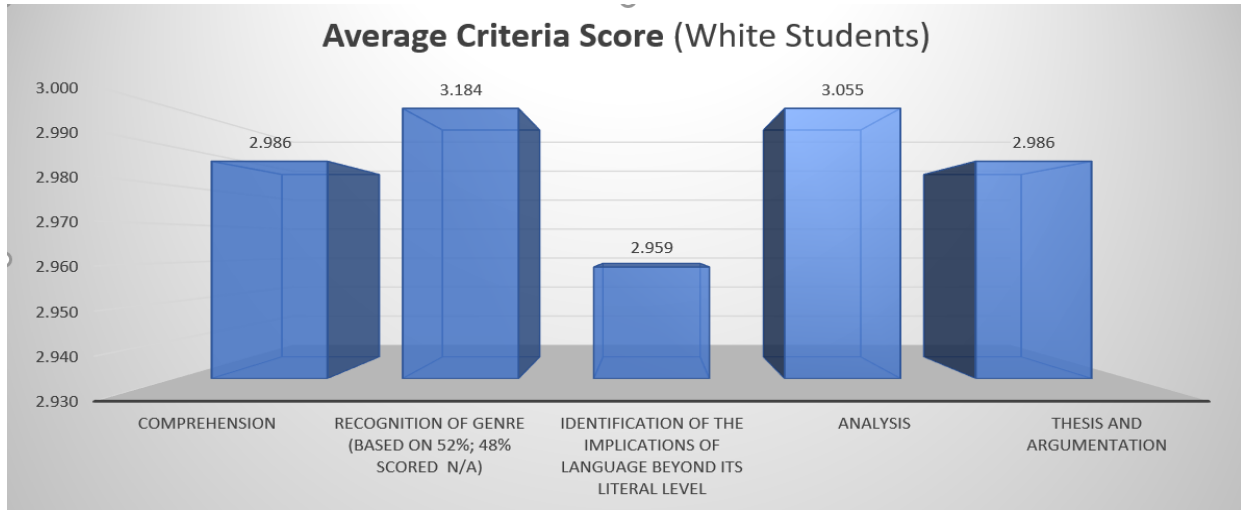

Average Criteria Score (White Students)

Chart 5: White students' scores on a 4-point scale where 4 = highly developed, 3 = developed, etc. (N.B. The difference between 3.184 and 3.055 is *greater* than the difference between 3.055 and 2.959 despite appearances to the contrary in Chart 7. Again, there should be more lines at the top.)
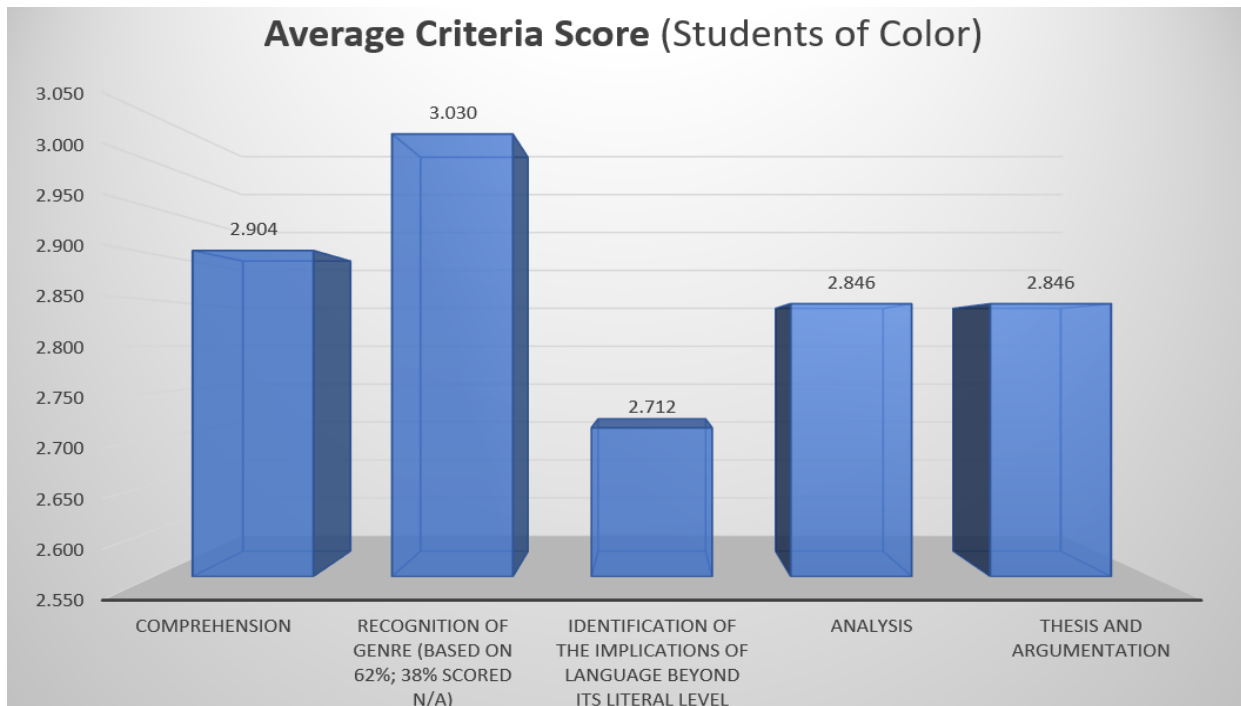

Average Criteria Score (Students of Color)

Chart 6: Scores by Students of Color on a 4-point scale where 4 = highly developed, 3 = developed.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, students in upper-division classes scored higher than students in lower-division students in every category: 3.42 to 2.83 in Comprehension, 4.0 to 3.13 in Genre, 3.47 to

2.71 in Figurative Language, 3.32 to 2.90 in Analysis, and 3.21 to 2.88 in Argumentation (Charts 7-10). All of those differences are substantial, with the difference between a 3.47 and a 2.71 being especially striking. However, even for students in lower-division courses, a range from 2.71 to 2.90 (apart from Genre) reflects a range of attainment that is acceptable.
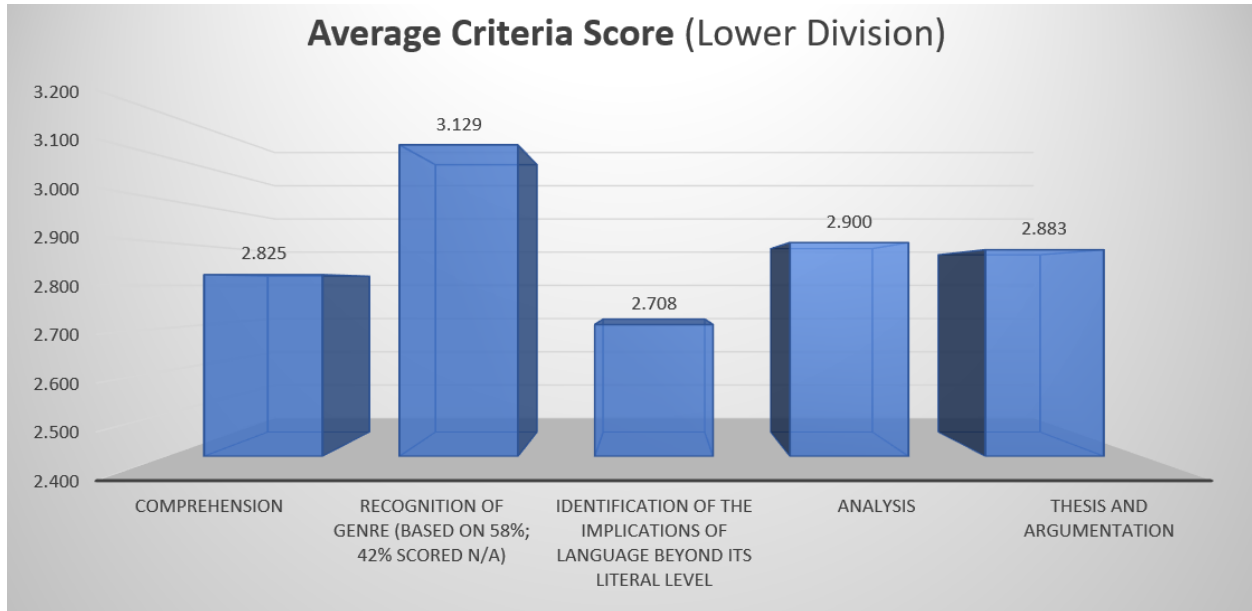
Average Criteria Score (Lower Division)

COMPREHENSION: 2.825
RECOGNITION OF GENRE (BASED ON 58%; 42% SCORED N/A): 3.129
IDENTIFICATION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF LANGUAGE BEYOND ITS LITERAL LEVEL: 2.708
ANALYSIS: 2.900
THESIS AND ARGUMENTATION: 2.883

Chart 7: Scores in lower-division classes on a 4-point scale where 4 = highly developed, etc.

Average Criteria Score (Upper Division)

COMPREHENSION: 3.421
RECOGNITION OF GENRE (BASED ON 16%; 84% SCORED N/A): 4.000
IDENTIFICATION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF LANGUAGE BEYOND ITS LITERAL LEVEL: 3.474
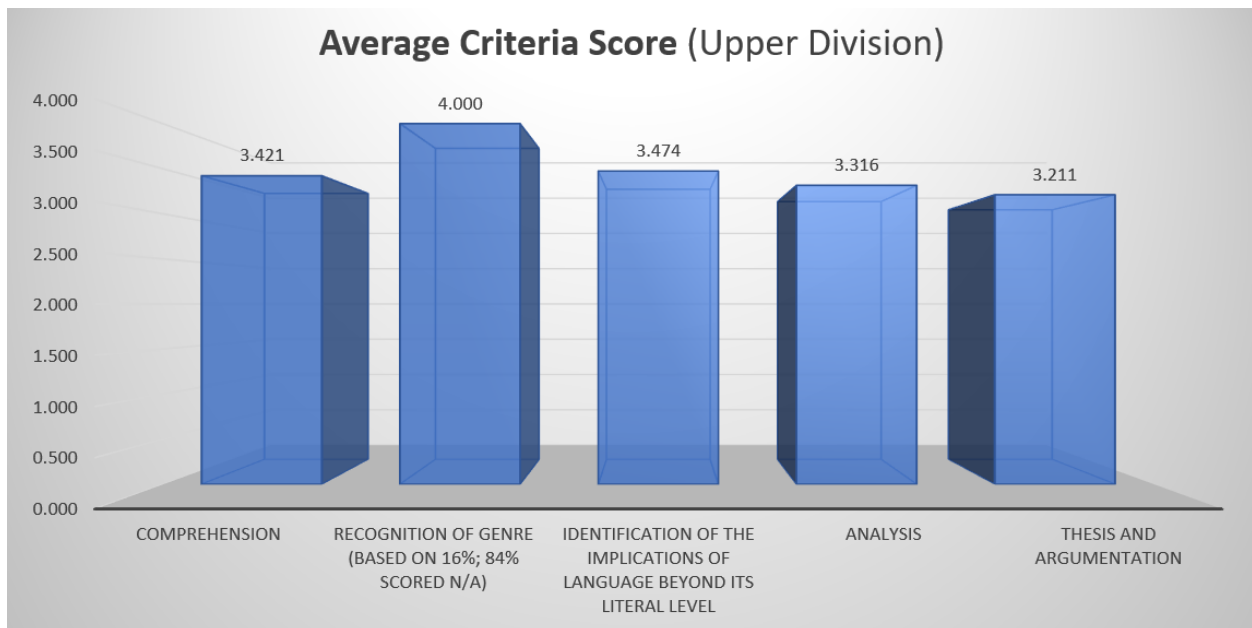ANALYSIS: 3.316
THESIS AND ARGUMENTATION: 3.211

Chart 8: Scores in upper-division classes on a 4-point scale where 4 = highly developed, etc.

When scores are broken down by level of attainment in each of the categories, what might first appear to be lower results in terms of Recognition of Genre just reflects the extent to which upper-division students were enrolled in classes in which considerations of genre were not applicable (as,

for example, in classes which focus on fiction). Gratifyingly, no students in upper-division classes were reported to be at an initial area of attainment in any of the five areas (Chart 10). The one area in which there might be room for improvement is Argumentation where 26% of upper-division students were still at an emerging level of attainment (though a gratifyingly large 73% of upper-division students were in the two highest levels of attainment even in the area of Argumentation).
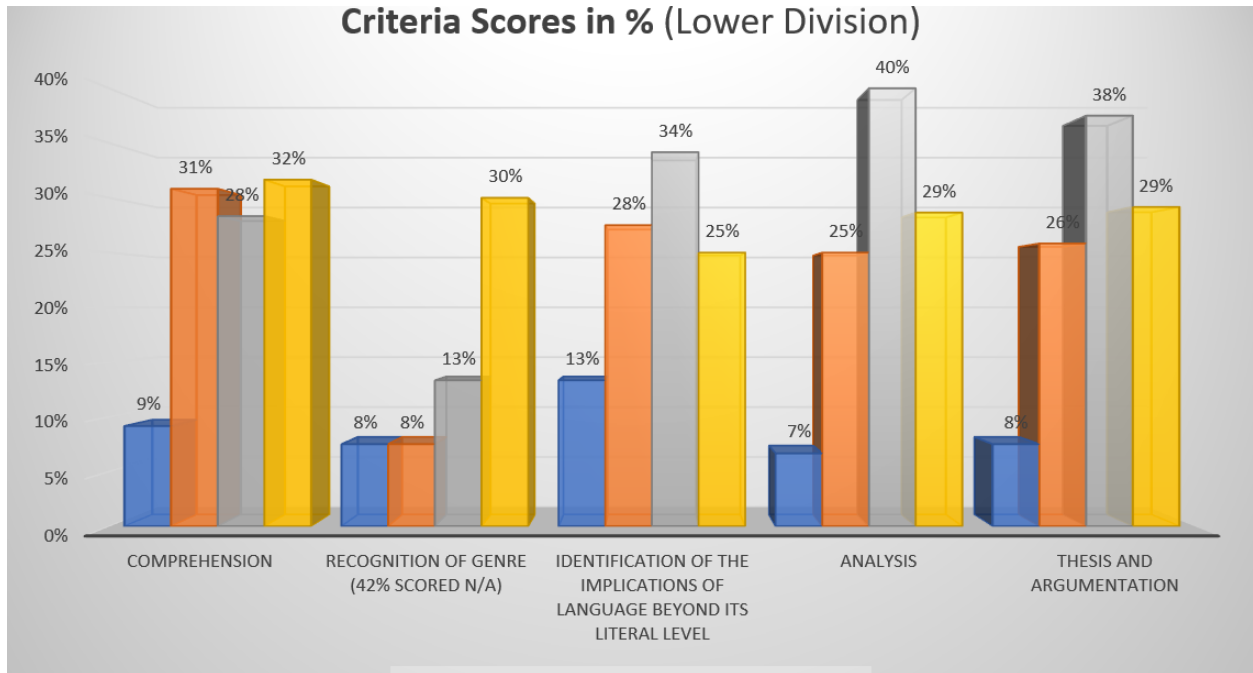

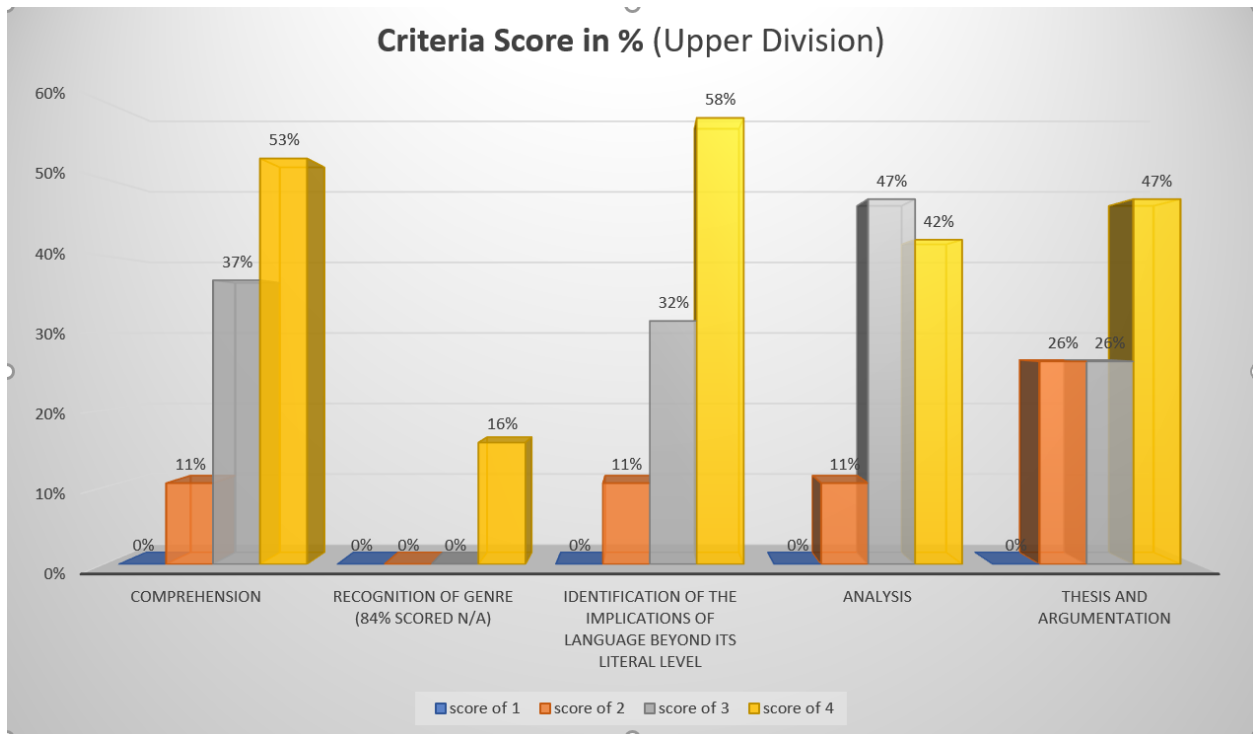Chart 9: Scores in lower-division classes in categories by percentage.

Chart 10: Scores in upper-division classes in categories by percentage.

The higher level of attainment for upper-division classes may reflect some differences by discipline (Charts 11 and 12). The study only included two upper-division classes: ENG 134 and SP 180. Unlike English and Theatre Arts, only upper-division courses in Spanish grant RIL credit. Results were disaggregated for English classes, for English classes plus Theatre Arts, and for Spanish. Students in the Spanish class towered over other students in every category. The number of students scoring in the highest level of attainment in the Spanish literature class ranged from 64% to 82%. By contrast no more than 20% of students reached the highest level of attainment in any category in English classes.
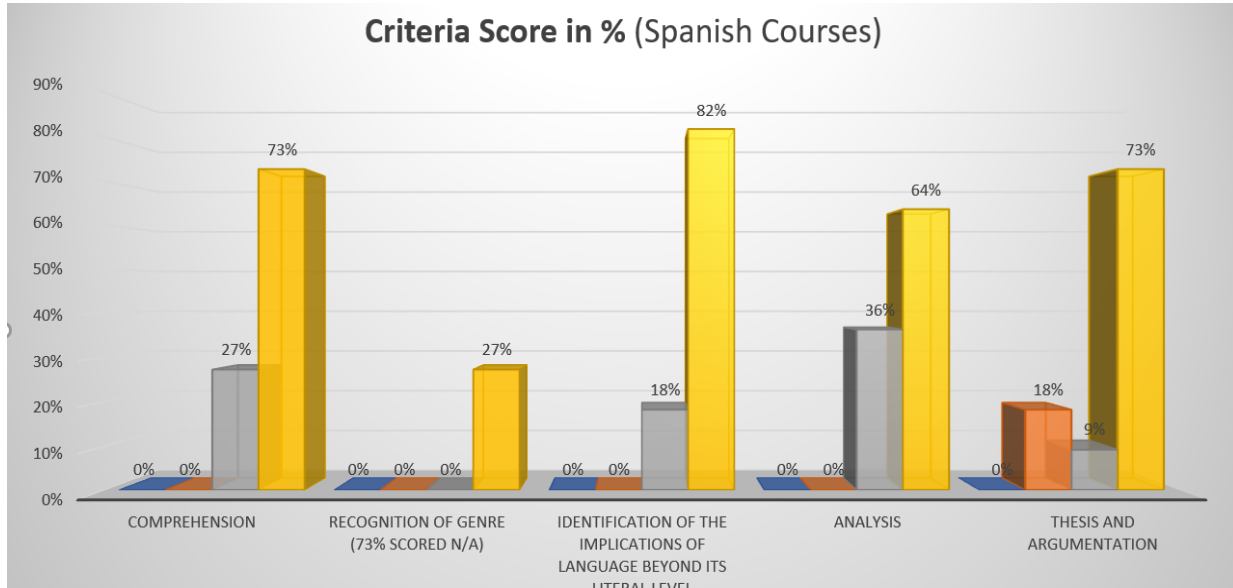

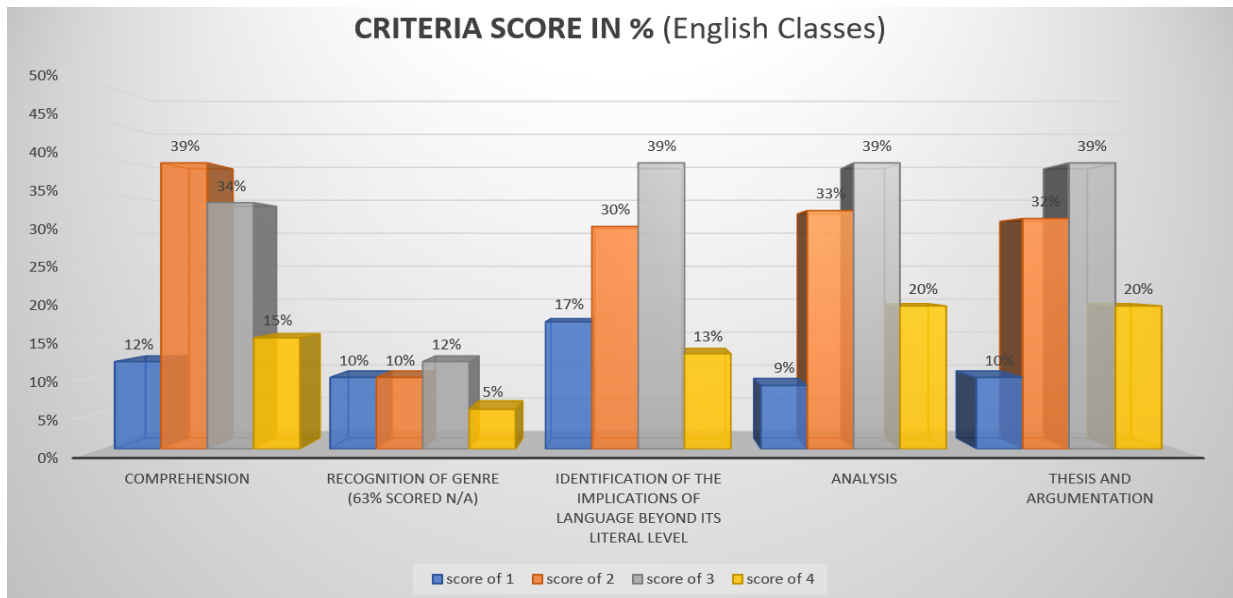Chart 11: Scores in Spanish classes in categories by percentage.

Chart 12: Scores in English classes in categories by percentage.

CRITERIA SCORE IN % (ENG + TA)
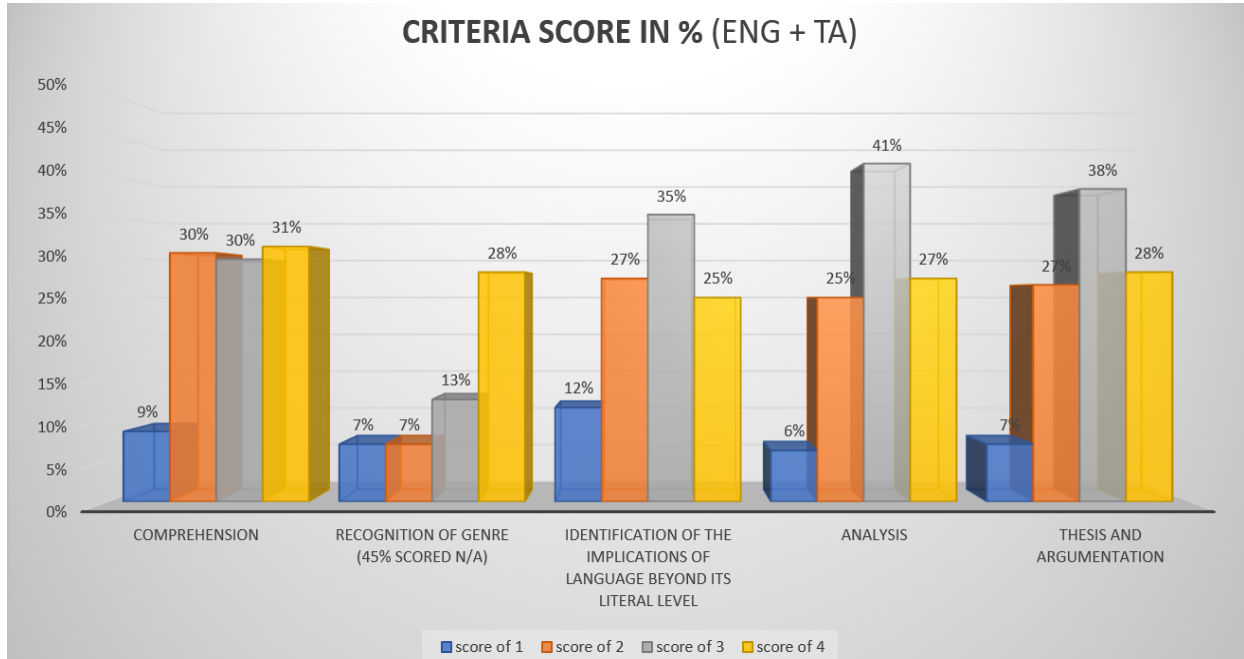
Chart 13: Scores in English and Theatre Arts classes in categories by percentage.

The remarkably high attainment of students in Spanish and perhaps Theatre Arts classes may have something to do with the otherwise surprising result that non-English majors bested English majors in every single one of the five areas (Charts 13 -16). The differences in Argumentation were perhaps not statistically significant. But in Analysis and also in Figurative Language, 44% of non-English majors scored in the highest category as compared to 30% of English majors.

Criteria Score in % (English Major)

Chart 14: Scores by English majors in categories by percentage.

Criteria Score in % (Non-English Majors)

COMPREHENSION: score of 1: 2%, score of 2: 21%, score of 3: 38%, score of 4: 40%
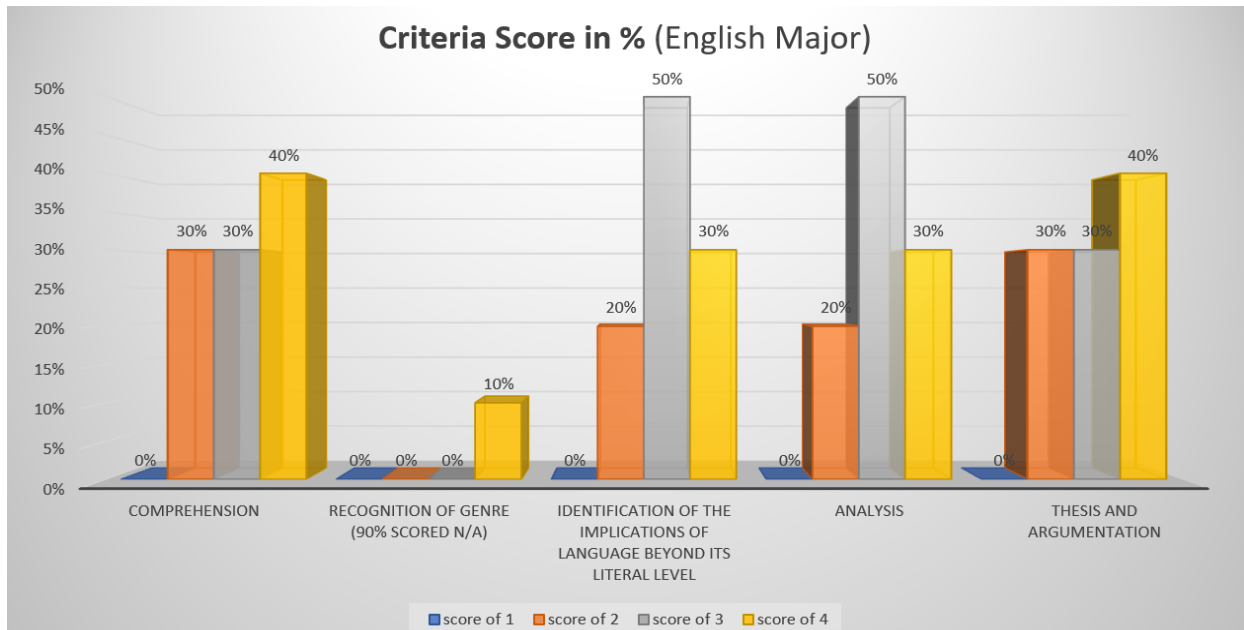
RECOGNITION OF GENRE (54% SCORED N/A): score of 1: 4%, score of 2: 6%, score of 3: 8%, score of 4: 27%

IDENTIFICATION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF LANGUAGE BEYOND ITS LITERAL LEVEL: score of 1: 6%, score of 2: 21%, score of 3: 29%, score of 4: 44%

ANALYSIS: score of 1: 0%, score of 2: 23%, score of 3: 33%, score of 4: 44%

THESIS AND ARGUMENTATION: score of 1: 0%, score of 2: 27%, score of 3: 31%, score of 4: 42%

Chart 15: Scores by non-English majors in categories by percentage.

Criteria Score in % (Undecided Majors)

COMPREHENSION: score of 1: 10, score of 2: 26, score of 3: 20, score of 4: 25

RECOGNITION OF GENRE (90% SCORED N/A): score of 1: 7, score of 2: 6, score of 3: 12, score of 4: 25

IDENTIFICATION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF LANGUAGE BEYOND ITS LITERAL LEVEL: score of 1: 13, score of 2: 23, score of 3: 28, score of 4: 17

ANALYSIS: score of 1: 8, score of 2: 19, score of 3: 36, score of 4: 18

THESIS AND ARGUMENTATION: score of 1: 9, score of 2: 20, score of 3: 32, score of 4: 20
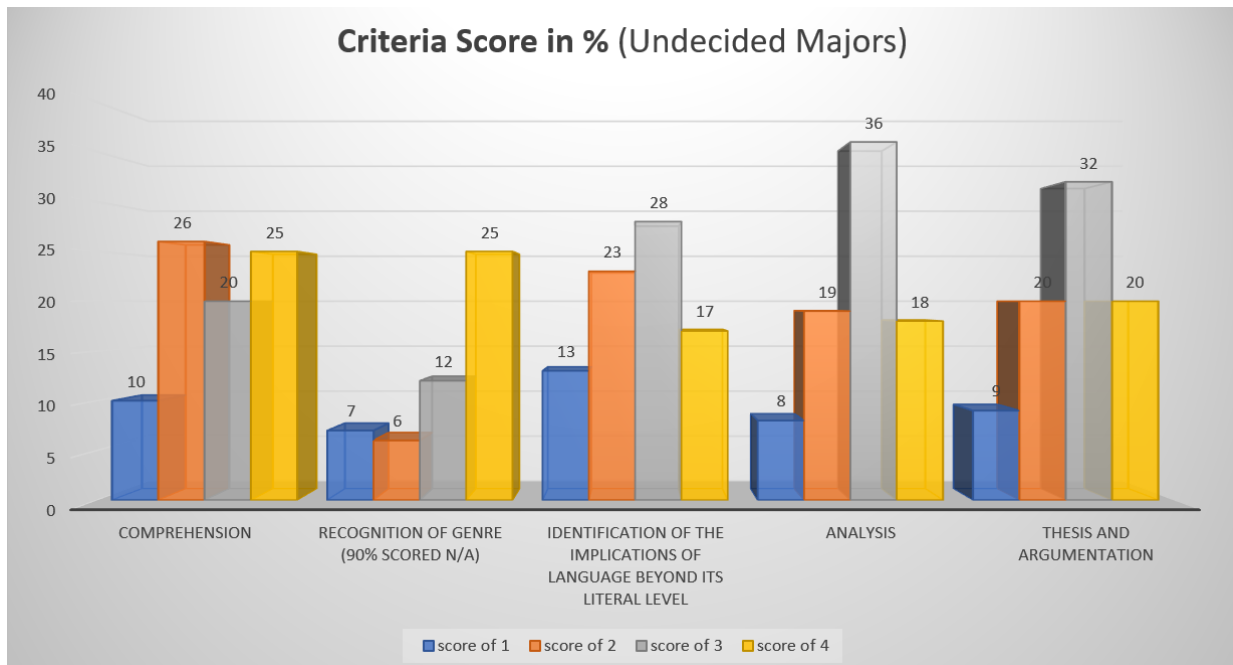
Chart 16: Scores by undecided majors in categories by percentage.

The graph for Average Criteria Scores shows that English majors attained a perfect 4.0 for Genre. One is tempted to find that as gratifying, even if the small print indicates that only 10% of English majors were assessed regarding that category. What the small print does not show is that the study includes just 10 English majors (out of the 139 in the study). So that perfect score for Genre in Chart 17 reports the assessment of precisely one student.
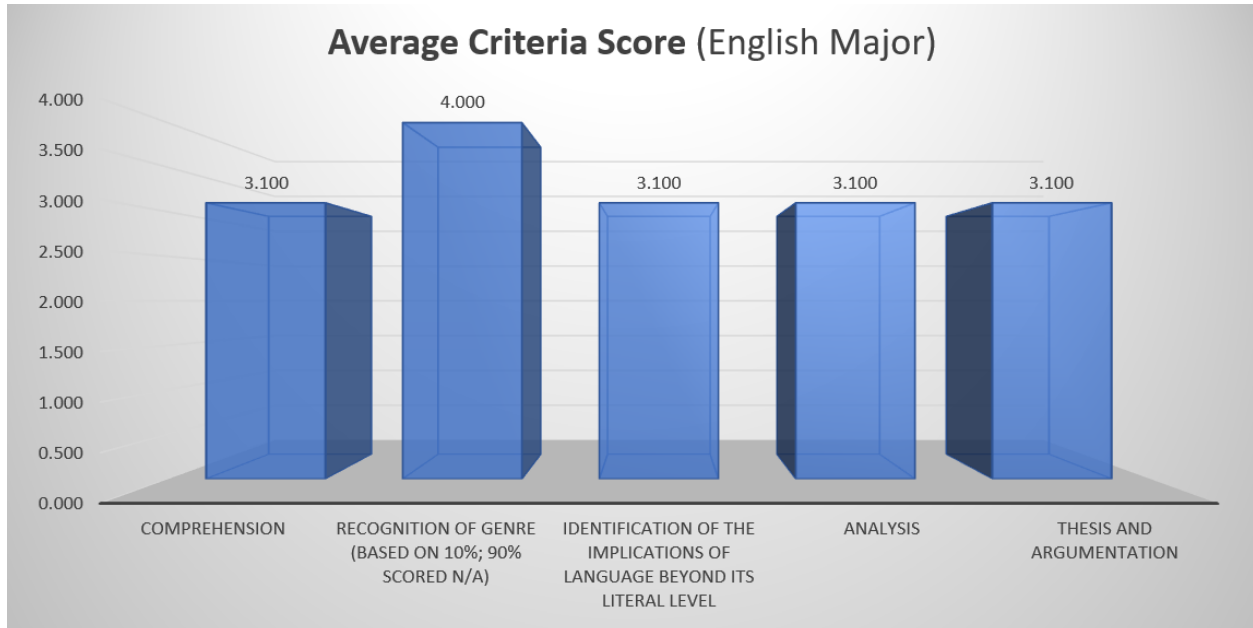

Chart 17: Scores by English majors on a 4-point scale where 4=highly developed, 3=developed, etc.
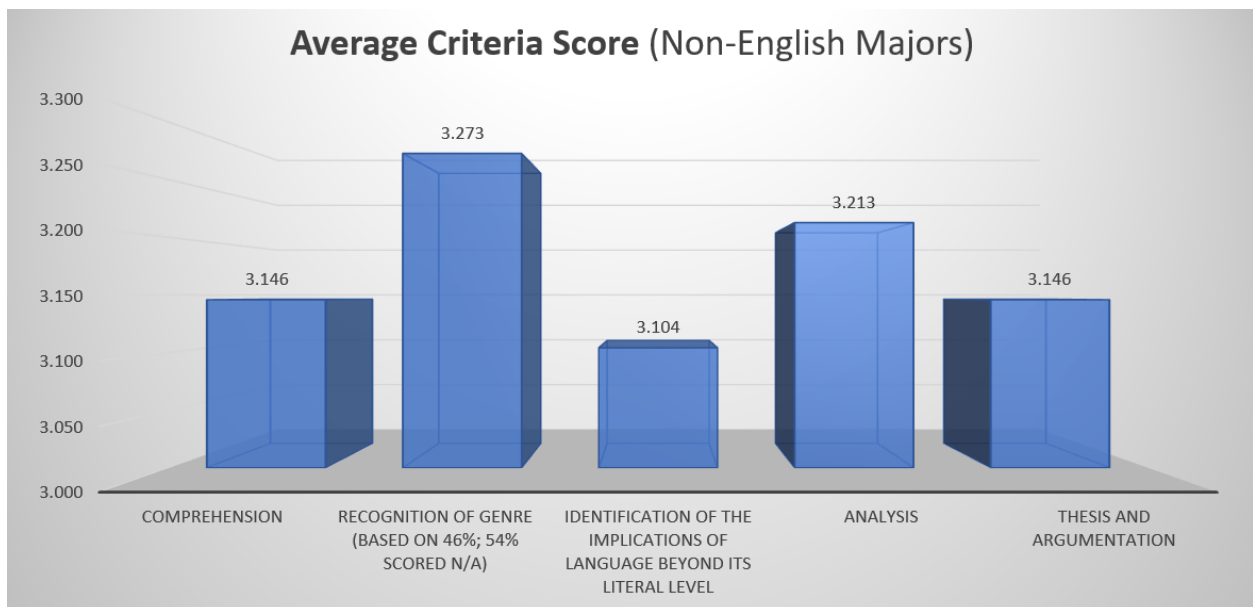

Chart 18: Scores by non-English majors on a 4-point scale where 4=highly developed, etc.
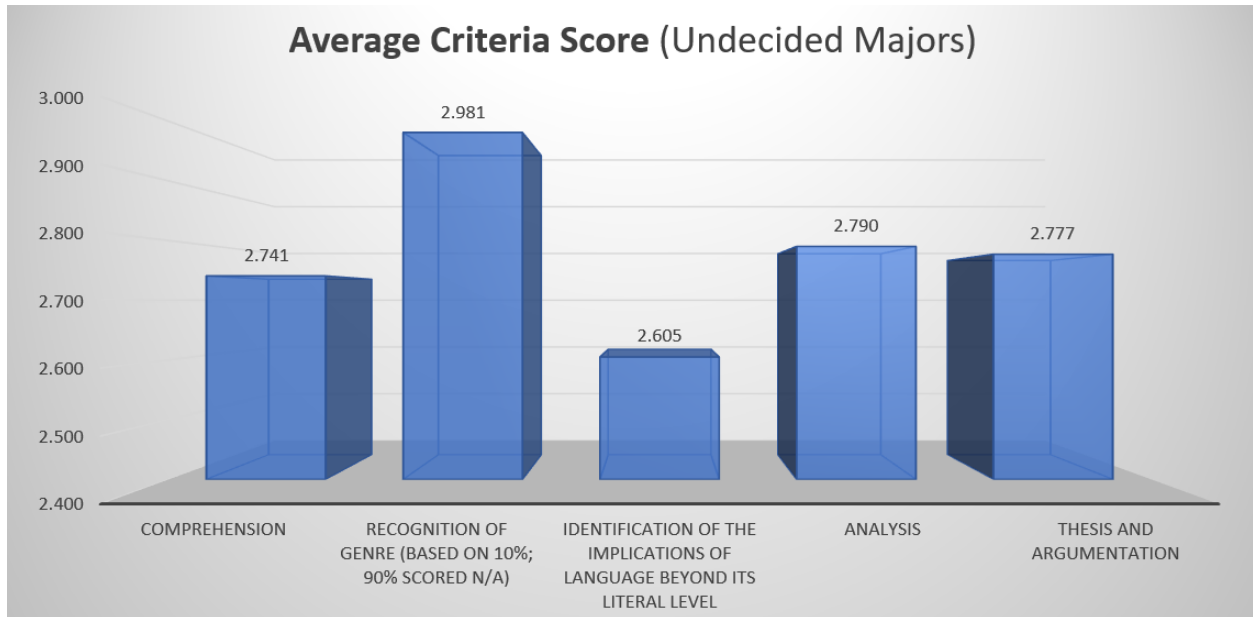
Average Criteria Score (Undecided Majors)

Chart 19: Scores by undecided majors on a 4-point scale where 4=highly developed, etc.

However, perhaps the most significant variable affecting how English majors appear in comparison to non-English majors is the fact that all of the English majors in the study had their performance assessed in English classes—and only in English classes.

The six English RIL classes enrolled 27 students with declared majors in fields other than English. The two Spanish and Theatre Arts RIL courses enrolled 21 students with declared majors in fields other than English. Table 1 presents a breakdown of the way those students with majors other than English performed in English classes.

Rubric Category	ENG	SP&TA
Comprehension	2.70	3.62
Recognition of Genre	2.55	3.92
Identification of the Implications of Language Beyond Its Literal Level	2.67	3.62
Analysis	2.89	3.62
Thesis and Argumentation	2.89	3.43

Table 1: Performance of students of majors other than English in English classes.

Again, the comparison to student GPA's might be instructive. Perhaps the differences between a student with a 2.77 and a student with a 3.0 GPA are appreciable but not momentous. However, the differences between a student with a 2.67 and a student with a 3.62 really are quite substantial. And the differences between a student on track to graduate summa cum laude with a 3.92 and one with a 2.55 certainly qualify as momentous.

The huge disparity in scores for majors other than English is also reflected in scores for undeclared majors. A total of 55 students in English classes are listed as Undecided in terms of their choice of major. In Theatre Arts and Spanish classes 26 students are listed as undecided. Here's a breakdown of the way students listed as Undecided performed in English classes (far left column) and in Spanish and Theatre Arts classes (right column):

	ENG	SP&TA
All five categories of the rubric	2.37	3.51

Table 2: Undecided majors' performance in English and Spanish/Theatre Arts classes

Once again, the disparity between the scores received by Undecided majors in English classes and by Undecided majors in other classes is quite substantial.

Since no major other than English was disaggregated, all students in the study fall into one of three categories: English majors, students with majors other than English, undecided majors. Students with majors other than English scored significantly lower in English RIL courses as opposed to non-English RIL courses. Similarly, undecided majors scored significantly lower in English RIL courses as opposed to non-English RIL courses. Given the performance of those two populations, it seems reasonable to surmise that students in general scored significantly lower in English RIL courses than in non-English RIL courses. Since all English majors in the study were enrolled only in English RIL courses, it may well be that the relatively low marks of English majors reflect their being assessed only in English courses.

Looking at disaggregated data by class year is perhaps the most vexing way to approach these assessments. Chart 20 indicates that a staggering 83% of seniors are still stuck at an emerging level of attainment in terms of Argumentation.
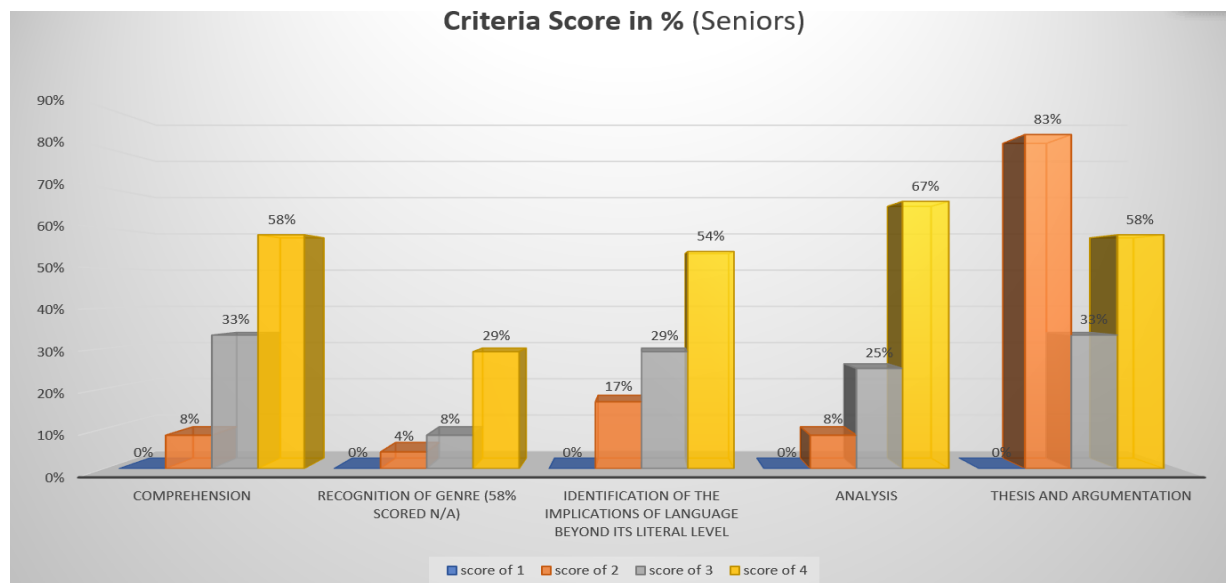

Chart 20: Scores by seniors in categories by percentage. (N.B. See narrative explanation on p. 15).

That 83% of seniors at the emerging level of attainment for Argumentation contrasts with 29% of juniors, 27% of sophomores, and 34% of first-years (Charts 21, 22 and 23).
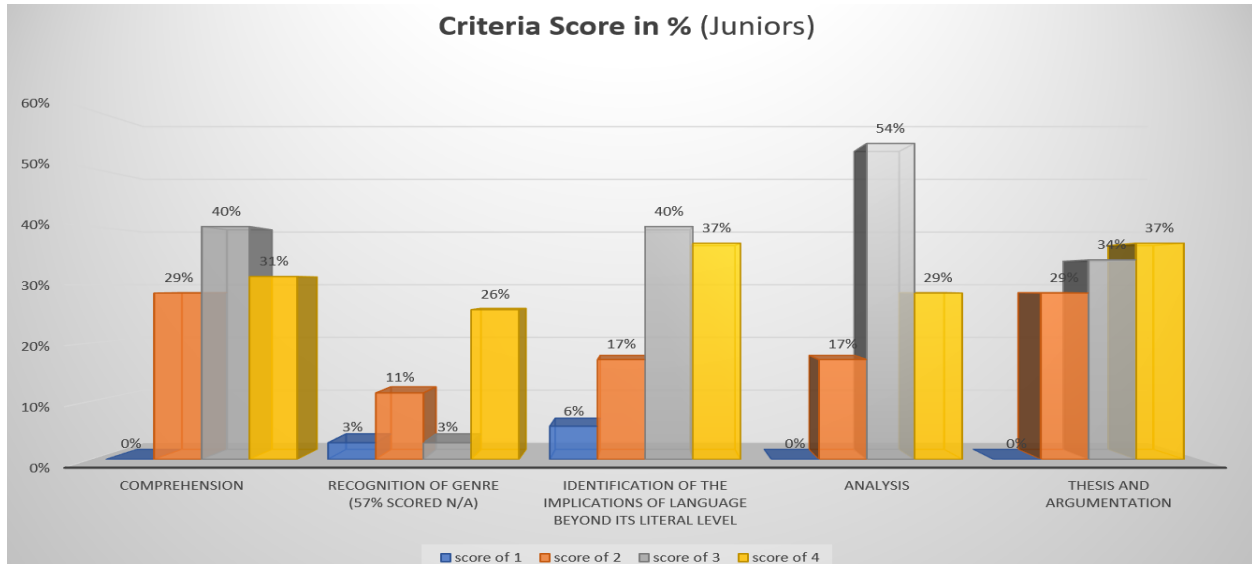

Chart 21: Scores by juniors in categories by percentage.
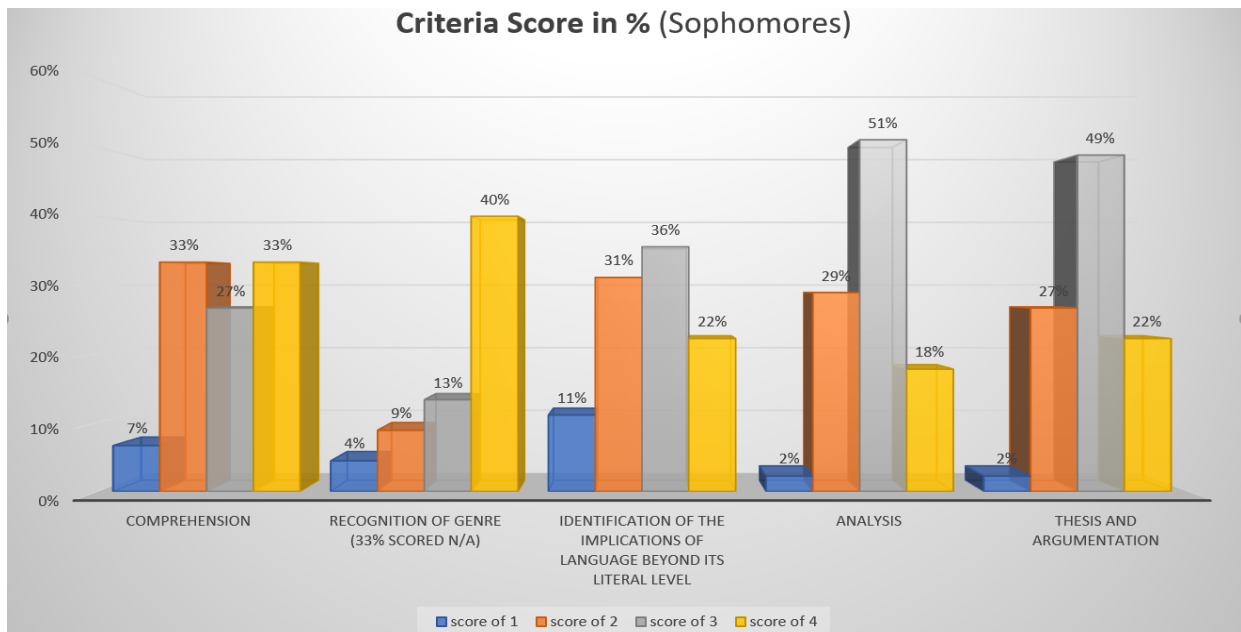
Chart 22: Scores by sophomores in categories by percentage.

Criteria Score in % (Freshmen)
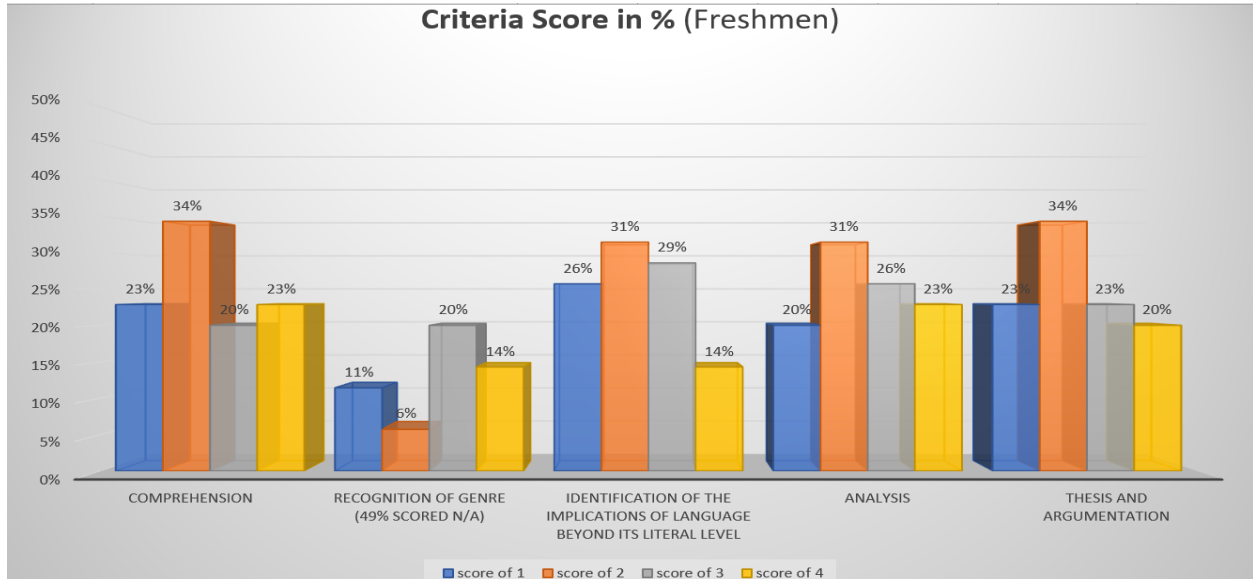
Chart 23: Scores by first-year students in categories by percentage.

However, the raw data, sorted by class year, indicates that the study includes 23 seniors. Sorting by level of attainment within the Argumentation category shows the level of attainment is listed as highly developed for 13 of those 23 seniors, as developed for 8 of the 23, and as emerging for only 2 of the 23. The indication by Chart 20 that 83% of seniors are stuck at an emerging level of attainment for Argumentation is erroneous.

Indeed, numbers look much more reassuring if we look at the average criteria scores by class year (Charts 24-27):

Average Criteria Score (Seniors)
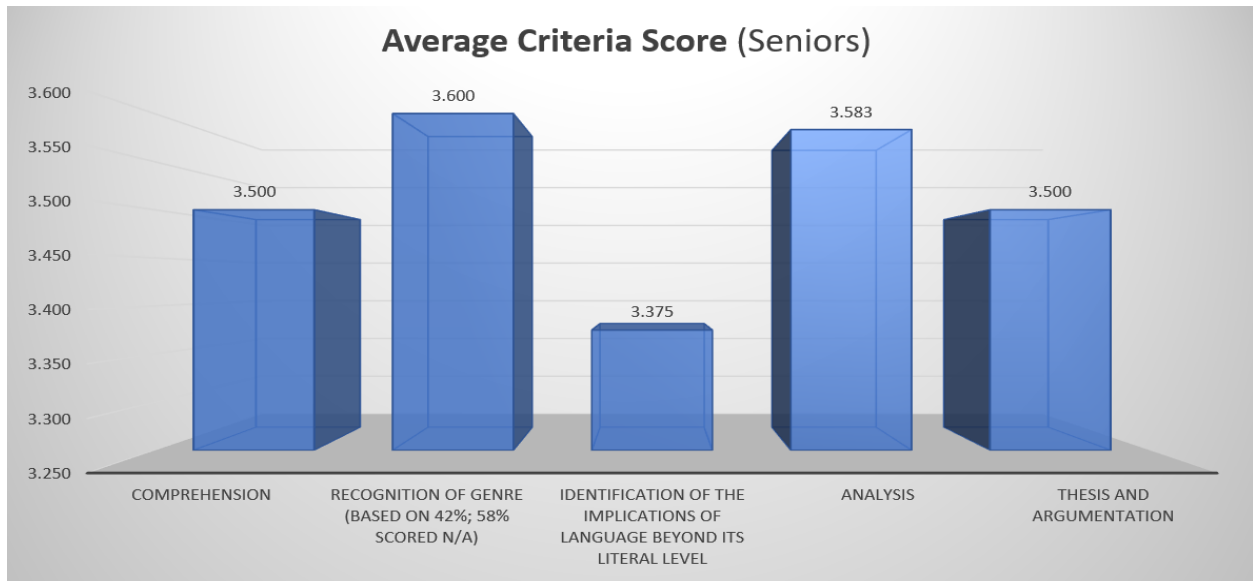
Chart 24: Scores by seniors on a 4-point scale where 4=highly developed, 3 = developed, etc.

Average Criteria Score (Juniors)

	Score
COMPREHENSION	3.029
RECOGNITION OF GENRE (BASED ON 43%; 57% SCORED N/A)	3.000
IDENTIFICATION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF LANGUAGE BEYOND ITS LITERAL LEVEL	3.086
ANALYSIS	3.114
THESIS AND ARGUMENTATION	3.086
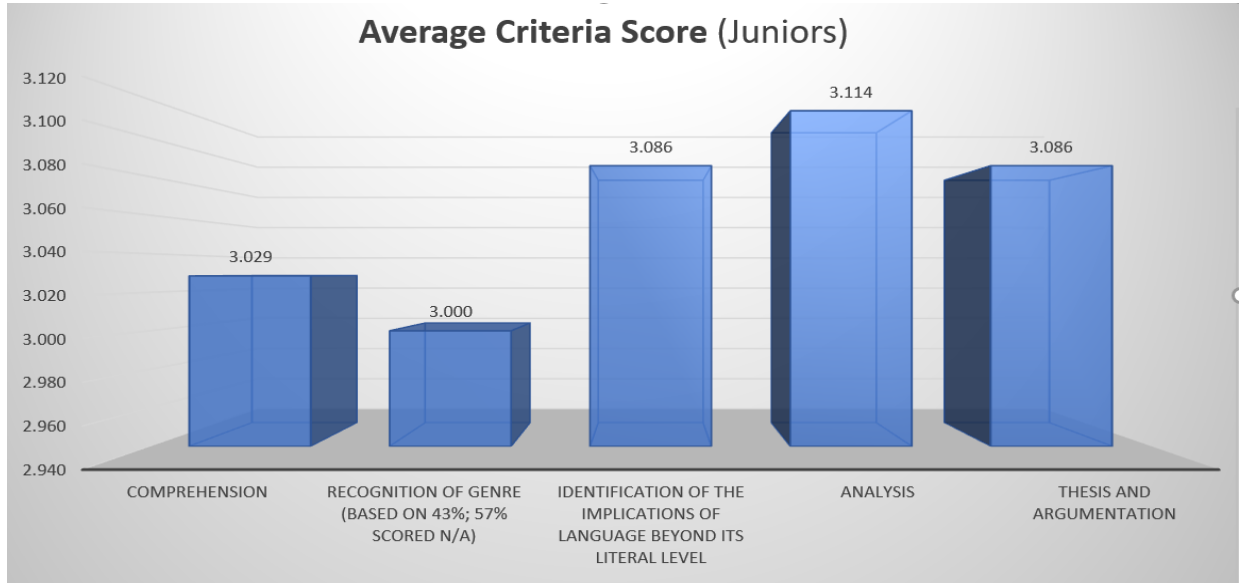
Chart 25: Scores by juniors on a 4-point scale where 4=highly developed, 3 = developed, etc.

Average Criteria Score (Sophomores)

	Score
COMPREHENSION	2.867
RECOGNITION OF GENRE (BASED ON 67%; 33% SCORED N/A)	3.267
IDENTIFICATION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF LANGUAGE BEYOND ITS LITERAL LEVEL	2.689
ANALYSIS	2.844
THESIS AND ARGUMENTATION	2.911
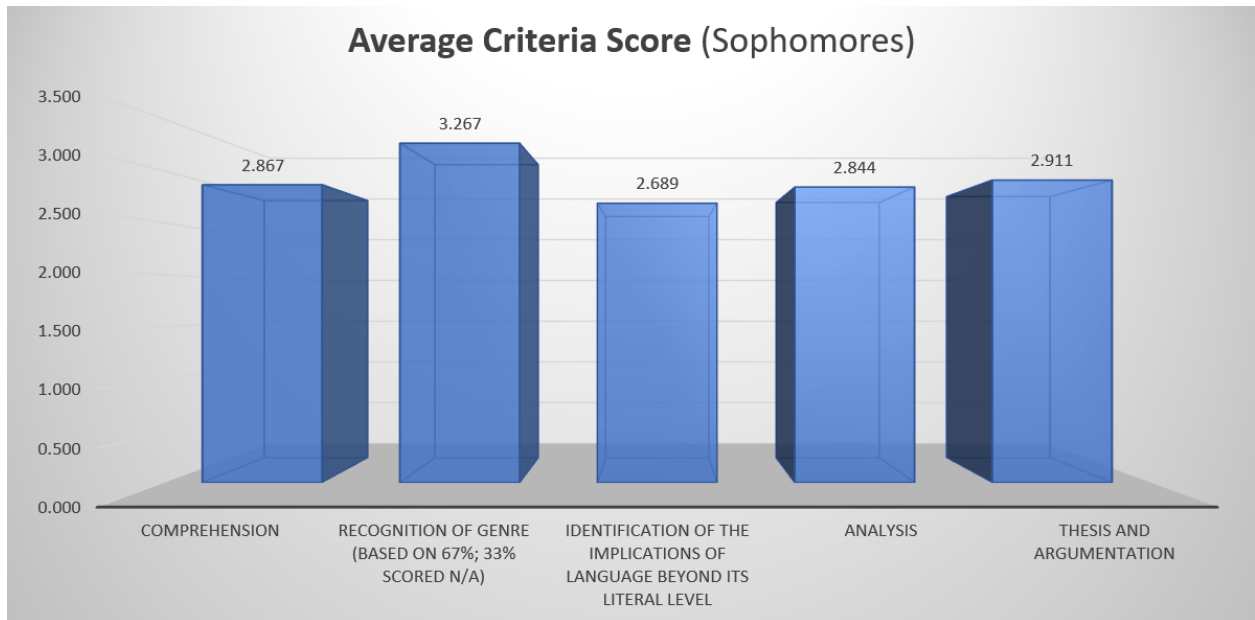
Chart 26: Scores by seniors on a 4-point scale where 4=highly developed, 3 = developed, etc.

Average Criteria Score (Freshmen)

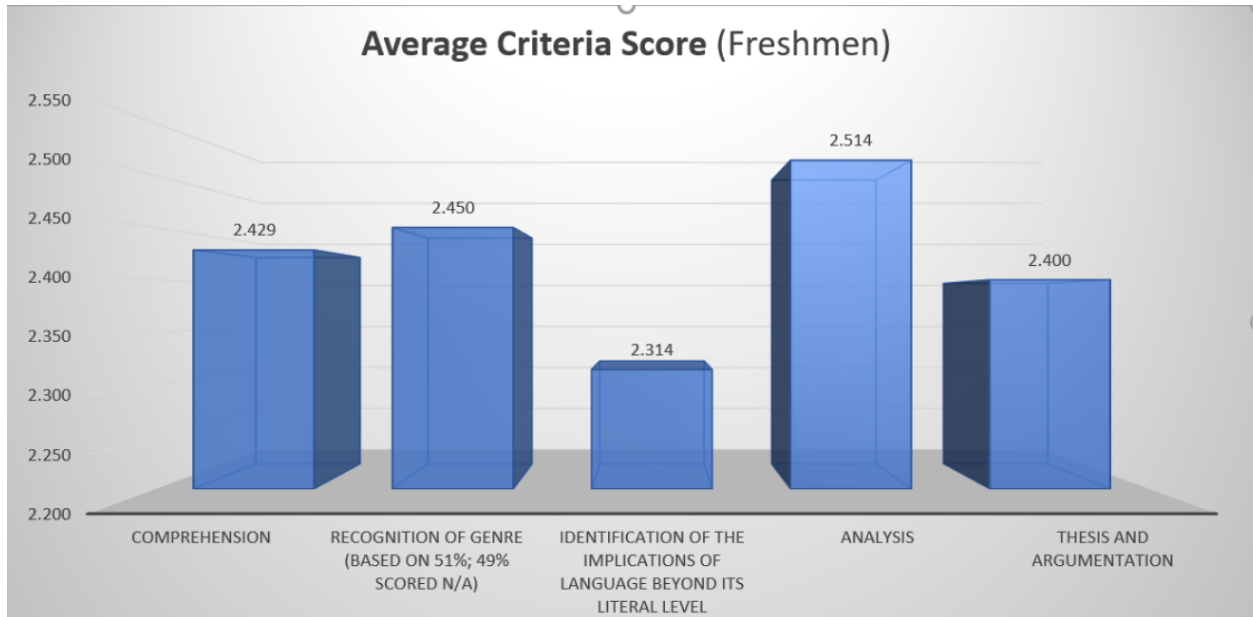|				
COMPREHENSION	RECOGNITION OF GENRE (BASED ON 51%; 49% SCORED N/A)	IDENTIFICATION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF LANGUAGE BEYOND ITS LITERAL LEVEL	ANALYSIS	THESIS AND ARGUMENTATION
2.429	2.450	2.314	2.514	2.400

Chart 27: Scores by seniors on a 4-point scale where 4=highly developed, 3 = developed, etc.

Although there is always room for improvement, no red flags emerge from this study. All students are demonstrating reasonable levels of accomplishment in all areas—except for those anomalous scores in Argumentation by seniors.

Discussion and Interpretation. In a debriefing session to discuss the results, faculty raised questions about what sort of assessment tools might be employed in future years. In addition to the sort of assessment of written work which we relied on this time, perhaps it might be possible to employ different modalities such as having students engage in a dramatic reading of poetry followed by talking about the inflections they made or why they paused when they did. Both Carmen McCain and Kya Mangrum emphasized the importance of students being grounded in the historical context of a piece of literature.

Randy VanderMey questioned whether faculty in English, Spanish, and Theatre Arts all share the same understanding of such concepts as "reading," "imaginative," "literature," "analysis," "comprehension," "genre," figurative language," "thesis or argument," and "mastery." Suggesting that we may be operating with different sets of values, assumptions, policies, parameters, or standards of rigor, he mused that perhaps an assessment of students might be based not on an essay they have written for class but on something like a musician's capacity to "sight read." So a student could be confronted by a new piece of literature, a photo, a film clip, a sonnet. Rather than ask the student to "interpret" the work, the student could be asked what an attentive reader would want to attend to in the given text. What would a careful reader consider when reading this text? How would they go about reading it well? In response to Randy's idea, others suggested that perhaps students could be given a pre-test early in the semester and then again at the end to compare how their awareness of criteria to be addressed had changed. It was proposed that as early as Fall 2020, students in RIL courses be shown different works but be given the same prompt. As we played with the possible phrasing of such a prompt, the wording that emerged was: "What are the factors that an attentive reader would want to consider in interpreting this text?"

Although it was unclear if the committee appointed to assess student performance in RIL classes in 2019-2020 could impose an expectation on faculty teaching RIL classes in 2020-2021, the consensus that seemed to emerge was that faculty teaching RIL courses should choose a text of some kind and ask students early on "What are the factors that an attentive reader would want to consider in interpreting this text?" Then near the end of the semester, students could be asked to apply the same prompt (to the same text? or to a different text?) to see how their awareness of possible factors to consider in literary interpretation may have changed. We have not discussed how any results from such exercises would be reported.

In August 2019 we drafted revised criteria for RIL courses and employed those revised criteria in assessing RIL courses in fall 2019. Those revised criteria specified that 75% of the material students read in a course that receives RIL credit must be "imagined, invented, fictive." That is, to receive GE credit for Reading Imaginative Literature, students must be reading literature that is imaginative. That continues to seem fairly obvious. The August 2019 revision also put in place a Student Learning Outcome that focused on matters of genre. In a sense we were road-testing that SLO in the fall by employing "Recognition of Genre" as one of five criteria to be assessed. As it turned out, that was the only criterion that faculty asked to waive. And, indeed, several faculty in the study decided not to assess their students regarding genre. While faculty teaching poetry were happy to have students distinguish between Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnets, faculty teaching fiction or drama found the topic less relevant. Faculty who were teaching drama courses did not devote much attention to delineating differences among dramatic sub-genres. Faculty teaching prose fiction courses did not engage students in distinguishing among contrasting types of fiction. So instructors deemed the category of Recognition of Genre as "not applicable" for fully 54% of students participating in the study.

Although we discussed the possible elimination of Recognition of Genre as a criterion, English faculty argued against removing it. The consensus of English faculty was that the reason so many faculty waived that category had to do with the assessment tool we were using. That is, a close reading essay engaged in a microscopic examination of a particular passage in a work may not be an appropriate instrument for macroscopic observations on the distinguishing characteristics of the overall genus and species of the work in which that passage is embedded. But faculty felt that the distinguishing characteristics of a genre were still important considerations that students should master even if the particular assessment tool we were using on this occasion did not lend itself to examining such mastery. The recommendation that emerged was that the next round of assessment should use a couple of different tools. Perhaps a close reading essay could be supplemented by a quiz regarding the distinctives of genre.

Recommendations:

Given the fact that Recognition of Genre was waived by a number of faculty in the assessment of close reading essays, we recommend that the next assessment of the Reading Imaginative Literature category should use a couple of different assessment tools. Perhaps a close reading essay could be supplemented by a quiz regarding the distinctives of genre.

However, we acknowledge that the introduction of the Recognition of Genre as a criterion involved the deletion of clarifying language that should be restored to the description of the RIL GE category. See Appendix A.

Given the modest disparity between the levels of attainment shown by students of color and white students, we recommend that faculty continue their efforts to make the curriculum more anti-racist by ensuring the inclusion of more diverse voices in our RIL courses in order to serve more equitably the needs of all our students.

Given the decision to simplify scoring procedures by having each professor score his or her own students, no norming sessions were conducted to ensure that all profs were on the same page. That results in it being difficult to know if our results are comparing apples with apples. Such disparities seem especially pronounced between English and the other two disciplines. The committee agreed on two recommendations for the future. When the RIL category comes up for assessment some years from now, it would be helpful to have sample essays that demonstrate each of the levels of attainment. Secondly, it would be helpful to have norming sessions to help ensure that professors doing the assessments were applying criteria in roughly similar ways. A third option to consider would be having more than one assessor weigh in on each student's work. That would multiply the workload because a professor would not just be marking his or her own students but also those of a colleague.

Appendix A

Reading Imaginative Literature Rubric

adapted from the VALUE Rubrics at htpps://www.aacu.org

	Highly Developed/ Excellent 4	Developed / Strong 3	Emerging / Average 2	Initial / Weak 1
Comprehension	Recognizes possible implications of the text for contexts, perspectives, or issues beyond the author's explicit message (e.g., might recognize broader issues at play, or might pose challenges to the author's message and presentation).	Uses the text, general background knowledge, and/or specific knowledge of the author's context to draw more complex inferences about the author's message and attitude.	Evaluates how textual features (e.g., sentence and paragraph structure or tone) contribute to the author's message; draws basic inferences about context and purpose of text.	Apprehends vocabulary appropriately to paraphrase or summarize the information the text communicates.
Identifying the implications of language beyond its literal level	Can explain multiple interpretations of image patterns, metaphoric structures, and other literary devices and the way images, metaphors, or devices change in the course of a particular text.	Can interpret a variety of image patterns, metaphoric structures, and other literary devices.	Can interpret major image patterns, metaphoric structures, and other literary devices.	Can identify some imagery, metaphors, and other literary devices.
Genres	Uses ability to identify texts within and across genres, monitoring and adjusting reading strategies and expectations based on generic nuances of particular texts.	Articulates distinctions among genres and their characteristic conventions.	Reflects on reading experiences across a variety of genres, reading both with and against the grain experimentally and intentionally.	Applies tacit genre knowledge to a variety of classroom reading assignments in productive, if unreflective, ways.
Analysis Interacting with texts in parts and as wholes	Evaluates strategies for relating ideas, text structure, or other textual features in order to build knowledge or insight within and across texts and disciplines. Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus	Identifies relations among ideas, text structure, or other textual features, to evaluate how they support an advanced understanding of the text as a whole. Organizes evidence to reveal important patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus.	Recognizes relations among parts or aspects of a text, such as effective or ineffective arguments or literary features, in considering how these contribute to a basic understanding of the text as a whole. Organizes evidence, but the organization is not effective in revealing important patterns, differences, or similarities.	Identifies aspects of a text (e.g., content, structure, or relations among ideas) as needed to respond to questions posed in assigned tasks. Lists evidence, but it is not organized and/or is unrelated to focus.
Evidence Selecting and using information	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis.	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation.

Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)	Conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.

Appendix B

Reading Imaginative Literature—revised criteria

Certification criterion # 1:

Courses fulfilling the GE category for Reading Imaginative Literature will focus on written works that are imagined, invented, fictive. At least 75% of material assigned in the course (both in terms of titles and page count) will consist of written works of the imagination (i.e., plays, poems, or prose fiction—either novels or short stories) as opposed to literary criticism, critical theory, scholarly writing, textbook readings, or any other form of non-fiction. Courses satisfying this requirement develop students' skills in analyzing and understanding uniquely literary ways of knowing. Such an approach invites students to see how literature reveals things we cannot know except by inference or by metaphor. Students in these courses should recognize how imaginative literature honors the complexity of human experience. Further, by encouraging the practice of compassion by imagining the other, the course involves students in ways of knowing that are inherently ethical.

Interpretive Statement

Courses accepted as fulfilling the General Education category of Reading Imaginative Literature will meet the following criteria in approach, content, and methodology.

Approach: The course will offer an exploration of how literature can inform our lives and deepen our faith. Moving across space (to other places and other cultures) and time (to historical periods other than our own) we will seek to discern what is essentially human from what is particular to the place and time we inhabit. This mode of inquiry requires students to explore literature with the goals of:

- understanding more about how the context in which a text was written helps to determine how it should be read
- increasing respect for the benefits of paying close attention
- learning to notice the interplay of form, style and content
- appreciating presentational as opposed to propositional approaches to truth
- encountering the other with empathy, compassion and love
- articulating and wrestling with the ethical questions implicit in a text
- examining the assumptions we bring to our reading
- discerning issues of social, racial, and economic justice and the abuses of power
- deepening our understanding of what it means to read as people of faith and with increased regard for the significance of story for people of the book.

Content: The focus will be on such imaginative genres as lyric and narrative poetry, prose fiction, creative non-fiction, and drama. The poems, stories, and plays we read will raise some of the enduring questions about what it is like to experience love, to endure loss, to encounter the other, to cope with discrimination, to cling to faith and to entertain doubt—ultimately what it means to be human and have a sense of stewardship for one's life. While we recognize that thoughtful writers can illuminate any human experience, courses fulfilling this requirement will focus on works of significance for their literary artistry rather than their commercial appeal. Specifically excluded are courses that focus on contemporary commercial genres such as baseball fiction, spy thrillers, science fiction, romance novels, pornography, murder mysteries, children's literature, and Westerns. Specifically included are courses focusing on works that require attention to diction (including sensory and connotative language, simile, and metaphor), image patterns, characterization, character foils, structure, setting, narrative point of view, literary allusion, and literary context. Work that falls within such a capacious category includes drama from Shakespeare to August Wilson, prose fiction from Jane Austen to Toni Morrison to Chinua Achebe, poetry from Gerard Manley Hopkins to Gwendolyn Brooks to Eavan Boland.

Methodology: Courses that satisfy the category of Reading Imaginative Literature will direct attention to the interplay of language and style, will consider the relationship of form and content, and will locate works within a literary tradition. Specifically excluded are approaches that see literature as a utilitarian means to some non-literary end, that would use literature as a quarry for the extraction of nuggets of sociological constructs, psychological symptoms, philosophical precepts, doctrinal truths, or other paraphrasable propositions. Throughout, the course will raise literary questions as to how a poem means as well as what a poem means, how prose fiction complicates our response to a narrative voice as well as what the story reveals of human relationships, how drama offers multiple possibilities for interpretation of dialogue as well as giving timeless expression to the experience of tragedy, of reconciliation, of enduring justice and of enduring injustice.

Student Learning Outcome

Students will be able to distinguish among genres (or sub-genres) of imaginative literature by identifying the defining characteristics, authorial purposes, and thematic implications associated with various literary and dramatic forms.

Interpretive Statement

For example, students of drama will distinguish among some of the following: tragedies, comedies, histories, romances, farces, fourth-wall verisimilitude, epic theatre, or kitchen-sink drama. Poetry students will distinguish among some of the following: Petrarchan sonnets, Shakespearean sonnets, odes, villanelles, narrative poetry, epic poetry, elegies, or slam poetry. Students of prose fiction will distinguish among first-person, omniscient, or third-person limited novels, as well as some of the following: epistolary, picaresque, or coming-of-age novels; realism, naturalism, or magical realism; speculative fiction, novels of ideas, and such fictional forms as the neo-slave narrative.

Certification criterion # 2:

In courses fulfilling the GE category for Reading Imaginative Literature, students will engage in close reading of imaginative texts, analyzing at the level of the individual sentence or line not just *what* the text means but *how* the text means what it means.

Student Learning Outcome

Students will be able to analyze imaginative literature to indicate an understanding of language beyond its literal level by offering a close reading that demonstrates at the level of the individual sentence or line not just *what* the text means but *how* the text means what it means.

Interpretive Statement

Students will analyze the way sentence structure, imagery, diction, and linguistic structure contribute to the meaning of the text. In reading drama, students will analyze the juxtapositions, oppositions, and reversals of individual speeches—with attention to the character's shifting objectives, obstacles, and tactics—while also demonstrating (for Shakespearean verse) what metrical analysis reveals of the character's emotional poise or precariousness. In reading poetry, students will analyze how rhythm, meter, rhyme, line breaks, and poetic structure contribute to the meaning of a passage. In reading prose fiction, students will analyze the way some of the following affect how the passage means what it means: point of view, narrative focus, narrative irony, situational irony, narrative structure, character development, narrative voice, the suspension of disbelief, and other literary devices.