

CRC Spring Research Projects 2019-2020

Each year, the Composition program is asked to engage in “Gen Ed Assessment” in order to help the college better understand what students are learning in their core curriculum courses. Many years ago, we transformed our process of assessment and re-grounded that assessment in individual classroom-based empirical research projects done by a collection of individual faculty members. During the 2019-20 academic year, the CRC will continue to follow this approach and will use these projects as a way to help faculty in the English department learn more about the factors that lead to more or less “equity” in their Eng 12 and 24 courses.

We frame “assessment” here as a form of [classroom-based action research](#) that has the potential to enrich our individual classes and provide deep insight into our program as a whole. Feel free to glance at that link about action research if you wish, but essentially it just means defining a particular area of your teaching that you’d like to study in a systematic and meaningful way. Like any other research project, it begins with a particular question you’d like to pursue, which we call your “inquiry interest.” Given our focus this year on improving equity in student outcomes in Eng 12 and 24, we ask that you develop a question that relates to some aspect of equity in the teaching and learning of Composition. Some options that immediately come to mind are:

- How students from different demographic backgrounds feel about curricular choices;
- How students from different demographic backgrounds engage in certain curricular choices;
- How changing assessment practices and goals might change disparate outcomes for students;
- How changing the way we respond to different Englishes in our students’ writing might change outcomes for our students;
- ...and many other options!

In addition to planning your classroom-based project, we ask that you find and draw on one academic article that relates to your interest and that helps you frame or theorize the way you're approaching your project. We recommend finding this scholarship early in your process so that you can take advantage of any information or frameworks offered in the scholarship. Of course, you are more than welcome to draw on any of the scholarship read by the CRC this year, but we also ask that you spend some time on ERIC, JStor, or other databases looking for scholarship that is closely related to what you're trying to figure out via your own research.

The next step, of course, is designing a **method** for your project. Methodology is notoriously challenging to design, and please don't feel as if you have to come up with an air-tight way of researching your inquiry. Instead, please design a meaningful, reasonable way that you might go about gathering some kind of empirical data from your class and/or students that would allow you to see the phenomenon you want to see. For example, you might use the following suggested list of classroom artifacts for this project: drafts of student essays, student journals or homework assignments, short surveys or questions you ask students to complete, a recorded class discussion, a recorded interview...the list really does go on. The method you design should be responsive to your question and to the type of data you want to gather.

At the end of the term, we'll ask you to provide us with a written description of your entire project: what you focused on and why, the method you employed, the secondary research you consulted, a description of the data you collected, and your discussion of what you think that data tells you about your own teaching. In your discussion, we'll ask you to include a brief reflection on what, if anything, you plan on doing differently the next time you teach the course and on the questions you still have about student learning in your class.

If you have any questions, please do NOT hesitate to reach out to Annie to ask for guidance with this process or to make suggestions.