***Literary Inquiry and Analysis***

**Definition**

“Literary” refers to “of or relating to the writing, study, or content of literature, especially of the kind valued for quality of form”; it also refers to the very “nature of literature” (*OED*). “Inquiry” is a systematic process of exploring issues, objects, or works through the collection and analysis of evidence that results in informed conclusions or judgments. “Analysis” is the process of breaking complex topics or issues into parts to gain a better understanding of them (AAC&U Inquiry and Analysis VALUE rubric). Literary Inquiry and Analysis involves inquiry specifically into evidence related to literary texts through an analytical process that involves systematic interpretation of literature’s meaning and modes of generating meaning: its language use, forms, historical context, themes, genres and the critical theories used to understand it. This process requires a unique set of skills that set it apart from inquiry and analysis into other realms of human experience and endeavor.

**Rationale and Intent**

Fitchburg State University’s Literary Inquiry and Analysis requirement and learning outcome helps teach students to understand and evaluate literary texts to understand the ways in which different literary genres and approaches can communicate ideas and information, explore timeless themes of the human experience, inspire our imaginations and better comprehend our human past. Literature can give us a window into the human experience both in the past and the present. As Jorge Luis Borges wrote, “A book is more than a verbal structure or series of verbal structures; it is the dialogue it establishes with its reader and the intonation it imposes upon his voice and the changing and durable images it leaves in his memory. A book is not an isolated being: it is a relationship, an axis of innumerable relationships.” In a global society as we seek to better engage people of other religions, cultures and backgrounds, equipping our students with the skill of literary analysis helps to provide them with an invaluable means of fostering understanding and empathy and facilitating such human dialogue.

**Goal**

Fitchburg State University students will engage with and answer questions associated with diverse literary texts in relation to historical periods, themes, genres, and/or critical theories using literary analysis, critical evaluation, and theoretical interpretations.

**Potential Course Objectives**

Potential course objectives that could appear in a course explicitly teaching literary inquiry and analysis include several of the projected outcomes for students that are listed below. The objectives below are recommended as models for general education course syllabi. The list is not meant to be complete. Faculty should feel free to adopt these as course objectives, or they may develop their own.

* Demonstrate a clear understanding of primary literary texts and their forms, and demonstrate a familiarity with the cultures, genres, and places in literary history from whence they come.
* Understand how to do close reading of literary texts, sensitive to both the denotative and connotative aspects of literary diction.
* Foster familiarity with the terminology and the conventions of literary analysis.
* Understand the use of descriptive and figurative language, and the dimensions of imagery and prosody.
* Account for the role of context(s) in the production, reception, and transmission of literary and cultural texts ~~(~~across periods, histories, geographic or national spaces, and cultural differences~~)~~.
* Identify the major theoretical schools, be able to critique and assess them and be able to apply those approaches to a variety of primary texts.
* Support literary analysis with research from peer-reviewed academic resources and include both in- and end-text citation of those sources that adheres to field-relevant documentation styles.