

Learning Expectations in English 270
(Provided by Anne Philips, Fall 2002)

In an individual course, one aspect of assessment involves the way the instructor identifies her/his goals and expectations. The following example is provided by the English Department faculty at Kansas State University.

From the syllabus for **English 270** (the revised version of English 271 and 272, American literature surveys for non-majors), which is in the process of being certified as a General Education course, with thanks to Greg Eiselein:

The over-arching goal of American Literature is to encourage and prepare you to become thoughtful lifelong readers of literary texts from U.S. traditions in writing. Although you will learn lessons useful in other courses and future employments, this course itself is not, strictly speaking, background information needed to study something else or training in a job skill. This course is preparation for the rest of your life; the focus of this course is *you*, not some other course, teacher, job, or boss.

To become excellent lifelong readers of American literature, you will need to learn and develop four particular abilities.

The Two Fundamental Skills

- 1. Explication: the ability to read a complex and subtle literary text, make sense of it, and explain your understanding of it to others.**
- 2. Contextualization: the ability to use historical and cultural knowledge to enhance your understanding of a literary text.**

The Two Higher-Level Skills

- 3. Appreciation: the ability to explain a text's significance and value.**
- 4. Critical Thinking: the ability to think about and use what you've learned about a text in order to think about or do something else; the ability to connect a text to this something else; the ability to conceptualize, apply, analyze, synthesize, and/or evaluate what you've learned about a text as a guide to action or belief.**

.... In teaching these four skills, this course builds on the thinking and writing skills taught in Expository Writing: focus, organization, development, editing, and tone. If your writing skills are shaky and you've never taken Expository Writing or some other college composition course, you may want to take ENGL 100 along with or before American Literature.