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### Montana's canon for post-secondary literature foundation courses

John J. Crowley

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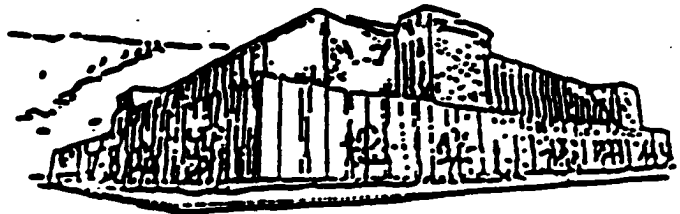
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**MONTANA'S CANON FOR POST-SECONDARY  
LITERATURE FOUNDATION COURSES**

by

**John J. Crowley**

**M.A. The University of Montana, 1986**

**Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements**

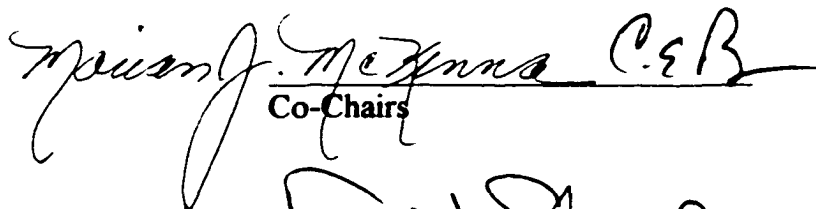
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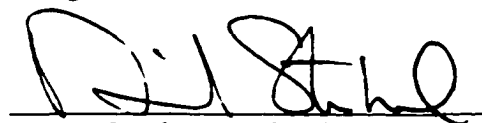
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**Montana's Canon for Post-Secondary Literature Foundation Courses**

Directors: Dr. Clarence E. Burns and Dr.  McKenna 

This study addressed the problem of a lack of accurate information about what is taught in first and second-year literature survey courses offered by Montana's 4-year colleges and universities. The target population for the study included all instructors currently offering such courses at both private and public schools throughout the state. A total of 30 respondents completed questionnaires providing data that described the authors most frequently included in literature survey courses and personal characteristics of the instructors. These data were analyzed and triangulated with data from past catalogs of the participating institutions, and that analysis supported the following conclusions: (a) that literature survey courses at Montana's 4-year colleges and universities reflect a largely traditional pedagogical canon, (b) that this canon has been expanded to include women and minority writers, (c) that authors included in the respondents' courses reflect the respondents' personal theoretical/philosophical concerns, and (d) that the data provided by the study's participants are corroborated by the catalog course descriptions of the institutions involved in the study.



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

For much of the last 30 years, there has been an ongoing national debate in higher education concerning the value of literary canons, or lists of essential authors/works, in the teaching of literature courses ( Bloom, 1994; Casement, 1993; Eagleton, 1983; Harris, 1991). The extent and duration of this debate lead naturally to the question: Given the serious controversy about what should be taught in literature courses, what is actually being taught in such courses and to what extent does that content reflect the attitudes and experience of instructors? No previous study has addressed that question for Montana's colleges and universities; consequently, students, instructors, and administrators must make decisions based on inadequate information about what are essentially general education courses. This study has attempted to address the problem posed by this lack of accurate and detailed information about literature foundation courses and their instructors.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was threefold: (a) to determine as accurately as possible which authors are most commonly included in introductory literature foundation courses taught in Montana's public and private 4-year colleges and universities; (b) to discover

any apparent associations between the choice of authors included in a course and the instructor's gender, department affiliation, theoretical/philosophical concerns, degree of responsibility for course content, length of experience teaching the course, and public or private institutional affiliation; and (c) to examine how instructional approaches towards literature foundation courses have evolved recently in response to critical and political shifts.

### **Background of the Study**

#### **Etymology and Early Use of the Term Canon**

The modern English word *canon*, which has a wide range of meanings, derives ultimately from the Greek word κανών, meaning “*a rule* used by masons or carpenters,” and by metaphorical extension, a “*standard of excellence*” (Liddell & Scott, 1975). The term was borrowed by the Romans, and in its Latin form, *canon*, was applied at the end of the 4th century to the group of texts constituting the official Christian Bible as authorized by the Roman Church (Alter & Kermode, 1987). One important effect of this early use of the term was its association with the concepts of sacredness, authority, and divine inspiration: associations that were reinforced by the further extension of the word's meaning to encompass both ecclesiastical law and the section of the Roman liturgy containing the consecration of the Eucharist.

The use of the Latin word *canon* to denote a body of literature, other than the authorized text of the Bible, began in the 18th century with the German classical scholar, David Ruhnken (Curtius, 1953/1963). It was not until 1885 that the English word *canon*

was first used in this capacity by the *Encyclopedia Britannica* to refer to the “Platonic canon,” and the word has continued to denote a body of “classic texts” belonging to a field, to an author or period, or to the literature of a nation, continent or hemisphere. This wide range of applications underlies the vagueness of reference often associated with the phrase *the canon*, as many authors use the term loosely without clarifying which particular body of texts the term is intended to describe.

Harris (1991, pp. 112-113), expanding on the system of canon classification developed by Fowler (1979), offered 10 useful categories to describe the various types of literary canon: (a) “potential,” for all written and oral literature; (b) “accessible,” for the currently available portion of the potential canon; (c) “selective,” for those authors or texts included in an anthology, course, etc.; (d) “official,” for a combination of the above; (e) “personal,” for those authors/texts important to a particular reader; (f) “critical,” for those texts commonly discussed in critical works; (g) “authoritative,” for a closed group of official texts, e.g., the Bible; (h) “pedagogical” for works covered in introductory high school/college literature courses; (i) “diachronic,” for authors and works that endure over long periods of time; and (j) “nonce,” for works that are currently popular but whose canonical status may not endure.

For the purposes of this study, Harris’s term “pedagogical canon” is used to refer to a list of authors/works that are required reading for a literature foundation course.



### The Development of Western European Literary Canons

The practice of establishing lists of authors, or *canones*, for various classes of literature was established by scholars in ancient Alexandria (Harvey, 1937/1966), and from that practice has evolved the modern concept of literary canons or lists of important authors and works. Although many Greek and Roman literary works were lost following the collapse of the Roman Empire, a substantial number survived because they were considered valuable models for the teaching of Latin and rhetoric, essential subjects in a world where the official language of the Church and of other institutions, including education, was Latin. Consequently, though they might vary slightly, lists of important classical authors and their works were an established feature of medieval pedagogy (Curtius, 1953/1963).

During the Renaissance, a resurgence occurred. The increased availability of books made possible through printing, the renewed interest in classical languages and their literatures, and the emergence of new works and translations in the vernacular contributed to the growth of both classical literary studies and of national literatures.

The new enthusiasm for classical literature led to an expanded classical canon and to an increased prestige for classical literary studies that would survive well into the 19th century. At the same time, the acceptance of literature in the vernacular, encouraged by figures like Dante and Petrarch, laid the groundwork for what would become the national literatures of Western Europe, and with them their respective canons.

Over the centuries, what would become the national literatures of Italy, Spain, France, and Germany (to cite four of the most influential) developed out of a complicated

and interconnected matrix of influences, dominated by the literatures of Greece and Rome. In addition to their common classical heritage, these national literatures shared a continually expanding international body of thought and writing that encompassed legend, mythology, religion, art, music, history, philosophy, and science. In contrast to their common legacy, these literatures also developed individual characteristics particular to their national cultures. Eventually each country developed its own extensive national literature and canons, which in turn have contributed to what has been called the *Western Canon* (Bloom, 1994).

#### The Development of an American Literature Canon

Major contributions to the Western Canon have also come from both England and America, which developed separate though interrelated national literatures with their own systems of canons. The development of a vernacular English literature was encouraged from the time of Alfred the Great, and the result was a succession of great writers, extending over several centuries. Nevertheless, English literature was not established as a field of academic study in colleges and universities until the 19th century, and even then, it had to contend with the perceived superiority of classical literature. The formation of the English literature canon was largely an informal process from the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, with critics arguing over a succession of criteria for evaluating authors and genres. Out of this process, certain authors (such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Austen, and Dickens) have emerged as major figures and maintained their canonical status, while others have moved in and out of obscurity.

The development of American literature had two major obstacles to overcome: the established prestige of classical studies, and the widespread prejudice that Americans were incapable of either speaking or writing correct English. The displacement of Greek and Latin by modern languages and the deference shown by many writers to English literary models contributed to the gradual acceptance of American literature as an academic discipline in American colleges and universities during the 19th century. By the early 20th century, the study of American literature was well established, and with it a literary canon dominated by the writers and values of 19th century New England.

In the course of the development of both British and American literature as academic disciplines, the rationale for their study underwent a transformation. What had been seen primarily as a cultural adornment for the well-bred was now regarded as a vehicle for the transmission of moral values and perennial truths about the human condition.

The resulting shift of emphasis and newfound seriousness of purpose were augmented by an infusion of national pride, prompted by the demands of World War I, as educators were called upon to encourage patriotism and to underscore America's role in the preservation of Western civilization. World War I also gave impetus to the Great Books movement, a general education approach based on the study of classic texts in literature, history, philosophy, and science. Fostered by John Erskine, Mortimer Adler, and Robert Hutchins, this approach, which was adopted for a time by the University of Chicago during the 1930s and has reemerged periodically since then (most recently in the

cultural literacy debate), is usually defended by its supporters as a corrective to what are perceived as declining educational standards (Graff, 1987).

### The Influence of Literary Criticism on Canons

The prevailing concerns of late 19th century literary theory were the realistic/naturalistic depiction of the human condition and the exploration of perennial moral and philosophical questions. Both of these concerns were challenged and eventually supplanted with the emergence of New Criticism.

First developed in the late 1930s, New Criticism, which focused on the imagery and structure of texts rather than on their historical context or their author's biography, became the most widely accepted approach to literary criticism in America during the 1940s and 1950s. This shift in the criteria by which a work was evaluated also affected the canonical status of authors. For example, T. S. Eliot, who was a major spokesman for New Criticism, promoted the relatively obscure poet John Donne while attacking Milton, one of the major figures in the English canon.

A number of critical approaches with European roots, such as Marxism, psychoanalysis, structuralism, and deconstruction, have since drawn their own supporters and had an impact on the teaching of literature in American colleges and universities. With these approaches have come demands for a complete reassessment of the functions of literature and a serious challenge to the relevance of traditional canons (Eagleton, 1983).

One of the strongest contemporary influences on the teaching of literature in America has been feminist criticism, which began to receive increasing attention in the

1960s and 1970s. Feminists challenged the male dominance of literature, including traditional literary canons, and argued for greater recognition for women writers and women's issues. Drawing support from feminists, the multicultural movement has argued for greater inclusion of black, Hispanic, women, Native American, gay and lesbian, and other marginalized writers. Critics have seen in this approach the increasing fragmentation of literature studies driven by the curricular demands of self-interest groups.

The emergence of new approaches to literary theory during the last 30 years has brought growing scrutiny and criticism of traditional literary canons, with charges ranging from irrelevance to racism. Defenders of traditional canons have countered by accusing critics of cultural relativism and barbarism. Increasingly, however, the canon debate seems to be moving towards compromise: a modified canon that preserves the best authors of the past while expanding to include a wider range of new literary talent.

### Importance of the Study

The overall significance of this study is that it provides valuable baseline information about the content of lower-division literature foundation courses currently taught within Montana's 4-year colleges and universities and about the instructors who teach such courses. This information fills a considerable knowledge gap, as no previous study provides such data, and it has practical applications for students, instructors, and administrators. The information from the study provides a solid basis for valid curricular questions, including the following: (a) What authors are first and second-year students most likely to be exposed to, and what cultural values do those authors represent? (b) Are

there obvious deficiencies or biases in Montana's pedagogical canon? (c) What influences are responsible for those deficiencies or biases? (d) Should such literature courses be considered equivalent in questions regarding transfer credit and general education requirements, and do such literature courses meet the accreditation standards of individual schools? Without the type of information provided by this study, students, instructors, and administrators must rely largely on sketchy catalog descriptions and conjecture in making choices and decisions about literature survey courses.

### General Research Questions

This study addressed the following general research questions:

1. Which authors are most commonly included in the reading lists for lower-division literature foundation courses taught in Montana's public and private 4-year colleges and universities?
2. Are there any apparent associations between the choice of authors for courses and the instructors' gender, department affiliation, theoretical/ philosophical concerns, degree of responsibility for course content, length of experience teaching a particular course, and public/private institutional affiliation?
3. How have instructional approaches towards literature foundation courses and the value of literary canons evolved in response to critical and political shifts during the last 10-20 years?

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purposes of this study, the term *canon* refers to *a body of works considered important or essential to a particular area of literature*, the term *canonical texts* refers to texts recognized as part of the canon for a particular area of literature, the term *pedagogical canon* refers to *a body of texts that constitute the required or recommended readings for a lower-division literature foundation course*, and the term *lower-division literature foundation course* refers to *a freshman or sophomore introductory literature survey course*.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

##### Purpose of the Study

The ongoing debate over the value of canons for literature instruction makes it difficult to say which authors might be included in an undergraduate literature foundation course. This study discovered which authors are most commonly included in such courses taught at Montana's 4-year colleges and universities and established associations that existed between the authors that instructors include in their courses and several related variables: (a) instructor's gender, (b) instructor's department affiliation, (c) instructor's theoretical/philosophical concerns, (d) responsibility for course content, (e) private/public status of the instructor's academic institution, and (f) instructor's length of experience in teaching particular courses.

##### Organization of the Review

The following literature review traces the development of literary canons and the controversy that has extended over the last three decades concerning their value for instruction. The review is divided into two broad sections: theoretical and empirical. The theoretical section includes (a) the historical development of literary canons, (b) the



influence of critical theory on literary canons, (c) support for traditional canons, (d) criticism of traditional canons, and (e) compromise and canon expansion. The study's empirical section includes (a) studies of courses, authors, and texts; and (b) studies of pedagogical textbooks.

### Theoretical Works

#### Historical Development of Literary Canons

The origins and development of literary canons extend back to antiquity and include the formation of early Christian literature, particularly the Bible. Alter and Kermode (1987) explained the complex process whereby the early Christian church established its Biblical canon. To the Hebrew Bible, which had been given canonical form around 100 C.E., the Christians eventually added the 27 books of the New Testament, including four gospel accounts of the life and teachings of Christ. This compilation of scriptures was established as the canon for the Christian Bible in 367 C.E.

The development of literary canons was also traced from the Hellenistic period through the 19th century by Curtius (1953/1963), who discussed the importance of rhetoric and philosophy in the preservation of classical literature and its influence on the development of the national literatures of Western Europe. Harris (1991), drawing on Curtius, explained the historical development of literary canons, and expanded a system of classification devised by Fowler (1979), which helped to clarify the various meanings of the term *canon*. He argued that canons serve a variety of purposes, are ever-changing,

depending on their function in a given society, and cannot be reduced solely to means of exercising power or control.

Graff (1987) traced the evolution of the literatures of England and America and their respective canons, their delayed acceptance in the 19th century as suitable academic subjects, and the use of the “field coverage approach” (assembling a group of professors, each of whom specializes in part of a particular field) by language and literature departments in American universities to sidestep conflicts over literary theory. He pointed out that there never was “a coherent cultural tradition” and argued that facing the long-ignored conflicts and not appealing to a mythical consensus was the challenge facing literature departments.

### Contemporary Literary Criticism

Developments within contemporary literary criticism have had significant impact on the status of traditional literary canons and generated considerable debate about the formation and validity of canons.

Gilbert and Gubar (1979) offered a systematic reinterpretation of women’s literature in the 19th century from the perspective of feminist criticism, arguing that the works of major women writers from the period subverted the patriarchal dominance of literature by developing new aesthetic forms.

Marxist critic Eagleton (1983) traced the evolution of modern literary theory and the implications for literature studies, concluding that “if literary theory presses its own implications too far, then it has argued itself out of existence,” which might be “the best

possible thing for it to do” (p. 204). Adams and Searle (1986/1989) included an overview of the development of literary criticism from the mid-1960s in their collection of essays by contributors representing a variety of perspectives, ranging from feminism to psychoanalysis.

Casement (1993) discussed the rejection of the canon by postmodernist critics. He also cited three prominent leftists who supported the canon as a means of maintaining unity while increasing diversity, and he urged internationalizing the canon to provide greater unity by addressing universal human concerns. Walker (1993) discussed a study by Link (1991) of the current British Romantic literature canon and questioned whether influences of New Criticism and other theories hadn't already been absorbed by the existing paradigm for teaching literature, thus avoiding its being superseded by a new paradigm.

### Defense of Traditional Canons

A number of apologists came to the defense of traditional canons, often charging that critics undervalued the diverse contributions of canonical authors or incorrectly assumed their motives were deliberately political.

Bloom (1994) protested the attacks on the Western Canon by those who challenge its validity or advocate expanding it to satisfy the demands of multiculturalism. He argued that originality is the main quality that makes a writer's work canonical and established a hierarchical body of authors and works with Shakespeare and Dante as the two most important figures. Avery (1995) argued in favor of retaining a work like Plato's *Republic*

and similar canonical works in the core curriculum on the basis of three criteria: “historical influence, excellent writing style, and whether or not they promote critical thinking and morally sensitive citizenship” (p. 242).

Moretti (1993) charged that conservatives tried to appropriate the classics, although many of them were actually written by iconoclasts. And in a similar approach, Casement (1995) attempted to debunk what he saw as a number of myths about the Great Books, including charges of elitism and conservatism, which he claimed were built on half truths about their authors, contents, and supposed political purposes.

One of the persistent criticisms of traditional canons is that they have been hegemonic, perpetuating a political and economic status quo. Van Peer (1996) countered this charge by contrasting Shakespeare’s canonical *Romeo and Juliet*, which actually undermines Elizabethan social values, with Brooke’s contemporary, non-canonical version of the story, which supports those values.

### Criticism of Traditional Canons

Critics have charged that one of the main functions of literature canons is to endorse and perpetuate the values of a dominant group. Zorn (1992) accused political conservatives of mischaracterizing Martin Luther King, Jr., as a spokesman for traditional American values by selectively including his less controversial works in the canon. Baym (1996) lent support to the theory that canons serve a hegemonic function by tracing the process whereby Hawthorne’s *Scarlet Letter* became a classic. She explained how the work was used to promote the dominance of American literature by the Puritan tradition

and gave a detailed account of how conservative politics influenced publishing in 18th and 19th century America.

Canons have also furthered political purposes through exclusion. For example, Bibby (1993) charged that the general exclusion of Vietnam era anti-war poetry from literature anthologies represents a systematic manipulation of the canon for purposes of political repression. Rhoads (1995), who opposed traditional educational approaches and the canon, favored multiculturalism as a means to promote participatory democracy and critical thinking in the classroom.

#### Compromise and Canon Expansion

In the course of the canon debate, many have advocated expanding the canon in various directions while seeking a compromise between the extremes of abandoning traditional canons and creating a canon without barriers. For example, Trout (1994), emphasizing the distinction between curriculum and canon, argued that expanding the curriculum to include noncanonical authors does not in itself require changing the canon, while Hogan (1992) argued for a constantly developing intercultural canon, but without recourse to mandatory cultural diversity.

The feminist movement contributed greatly to both the reassessment of woman writers of the past and to the inclusion of more contemporary women writers. Hamilton and Moke (1993), drawing on the ERIC database, provided an annotated bibliography of articles concerning women writers and the canon from 1984 to 1992. Lescinski (1992) explained how a non-traditional interpretation of Austen and Eliot, not as upholders of the

status quo but as social critics, has been made possible by the influence of feminist criticism in reshaping the canon.

Jaschik (1994) discussed the acceptance of black author Ernest J. Gaines's work in college literature courses and Gaines's support for retaining traditional writers in the canon while including more works by other black writers. LaLonde (1996) explained a personal strategy for including Native American texts in an American literature course, without marginalizing them, by examining their aesthetic features and the perspective they give to the history of American literature. Lastly, Barbieri (1996) argued that the canon is not as threatened as some believe, that it already has a strong multicultural component which needs to be expanded to make students more aware of the world, and that the real threat to literature is from non-literary forms of popular culture, such as comic books, films, and television programs.

### Empirical Works

#### Studies of Courses/Authors/Works

As part of its 1989-1990 survey of English programs at 4-year colleges and universities, the MLA included a questionnaire to determine whether noncanonical authors were replacing traditional authors in certain upper-division American, British, and Renaissance literature courses. In her analysis of the data from that study, Huber (1992, p. 276) found "little evidence . . . that English faculty members have jettisoned traditional texts and teaching methods in their upper-division literature courses," and she concluded that "the major works and authors remain preeminent in the courses surveyed, though

nontraditional texts were cited among the works respondents had recently added to their required readings.”

Commenting on the same study, Franklin, Huber and Lawrence (1992, p. 44) found “substantial continuity, but also some changes, in the literature teachers assign students to read, as well as in the approaches and goals they bring to the classroom.” Morrisey, Fruman and Short (1993), drew sharply different conclusions from those of Huber (1992) concerning the MLA study. In their view, the data indicated that literature departments had become highly politicized and had largely abandoned the traditional canon.

Of particular interest for the present study was a companion study to the above, conducted by the MLA in 1990. This study, which was national in scope, focused on lower-division British and American literature survey courses at 2- and 4-year English departments. The study yielded percentage figures for specific authors regularly included in courses, as well as institutional and departmental information. Unfortunately, data for individual states were not available. In discussing the results of the MLA study, Huber (1995, p. 46) concluded that “traditional authors continue to be taught,” and even though “some faculty members regularly include nontraditional and contemporary authors in their survey courses, innovation accounts for a relatively small portion of any course syllabus.”

### Studies of Pedagogical Textbooks

One of the crucial factors in shaping pedagogical canons for literature foundation courses is the availability of texts, and the primary source for such texts is usually a

commercially available literature anthology. While publishers actively seek advice and criticism from literature instructors, decisions about what to include or exclude from a new edition of a standard anthology also reflect economic constraints, such as authors' fees and printing costs and the availability of texts for publication.

Sullivan (1991) analyzed editions of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* from 1962 through 1986. She concluded that, while the text had been consistently expanded, there had been few significant deletions and that the proportion of works by women authors had actually been shrinking.

Pagni (1994) focused on the short American fiction component of several introductions to literature anthologies and how the publishers' choice of authors and works "affects canonization and multiculturalism, particularly with respect to the college classroom" (p. V). The study provided a summary of the most popular short story writers included in anthologies and concluded that the canon is more fixed for white males than for females, though most anthologies include numbers of male and female authors.

In summary, the development of literary canons has been a long and complicated process, extending over centuries and marked by resistance to change. Movements within modern literary criticism and various social, cultural, and political forces increasingly challenged traditional literary canons, engendering serious controversy during the last three decades. Both theoretical and empirical works from that period indicate that the principle outcome of this controversy has been a pattern of compromise, in which portions of traditional literary canons have survived, while the works of formerly excluded authors--particularly women and minority writers--have received growing acceptance.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Purpose of the Study**

**Given the ongoing debate over the value of canons for literature instruction, it has been difficult to say which authors might be included in an undergraduate literature foundation course. The present study attempted to discover which authors are most commonly included in such courses taught at Montana's private and public 4-year colleges and universities; to establish any associations that might exist between the choice of authors for a course and the instructor's gender, department affiliation, theoretical/philosophical concerns, degree of responsibility for course content, length of experience teaching the course, and public/private institutional affiliation; and to examine how instructional approaches have evolved recently in response to political and critical shifts.**

#### **Type of Research**

**This study, which has combined quantitative and qualitative data, is both descriptive and comparative. It attempted to describe accurately which authors are most frequently included in literature foundation courses, to compare those data with other data that describe personal and professional characteristics of the instructors who teach those**

courses, and to provide some historical perspective by comparing present with past instructional approaches.

### **Population and Sample**

The population included 54 faculty members identified as currently teaching literature foundation courses at the following 4-year institutions: Carroll College, Montana State University-Billings, Montana State University-Bozeman, Montana State University-Northern, Montana Tech of The University of Montana, Rocky Mountain College, The University of Montana-Missoula, University of Great Falls, and Western Montana College of The University of Montana. The self-selected sample included 30 respondents, of whom 15 were men and 15 were women. Respondents were not asked to indicate their age on the questionnaire; however, the mean number of years since they had received their highest degree was 14.5 years.

### **Setting**

The setting for the study included departments within Montana's public and private, 4-year colleges and universities that offer lower-division (100- and 200-level) literature foundation courses. These survey courses are intended to introduce students to British, American, world, or general literature.

### **Research Design**

The study followed a descriptive research design which combined both survey and comparison. Data gathered from a survey instrument were examined to establish the

frequency with which authors are included in courses and to establish any apparent associations between that frequency and the following personal characteristics of instructors: (a) gender, (b) department affiliation, (c) theoretical/philosophical concerns, (d) responsibility for course content, (e) length of experience in teaching a particular course, and (f) private/public institutional affiliation. Survey data were also compared with catalog course descriptions from the institutions involved in the study and with conclusions from a study conducted by the Modern Language Association.

### Instrument

The instrument used in the study (see Appendix A) consisted of a 2-page questionnaire containing 14 questions intended to generate data identifying the authors most commonly included in literature foundation courses and personal and professional characteristics of the instructors for those courses. The questions also elicited comments from respondents about the recent evolution of instructional approaches to literature foundation courses and the instructional value of literary canons.

### Research Questions

This study attempted to address three main questions: (a) Which authors are most frequently included in lower-level literature foundation courses offered by Montana's 4-year colleges and universities? (b) Are there any apparent associations between the frequency with which authors are included in a course and the instructor's gender, department affiliation, theoretical/philosophical concerns, degree of responsibility for course content, length of experience in teaching the course, and public/private institutional

affiliation? (c) How have instructional approaches evolved during the last 10-20 years in response to political and critical shifts?

### Data Analysis

The quantitative data gathered from questionnaires returned by the study's participants were analyzed and compared using the percentages based on the total number of respondents. The qualitative data provided by respondents were summarized and analyzed through triangulation with data from catalog course descriptions from the participating institutions and from the 1990-91 MLA study of undergraduate literature survey courses (Huber, 1995).

### Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The study had several limitations. First, the data analyzed were from respondents who represented a self-selected subset of the target population, rather than a random sample, and the return rate of 56% was insufficient to justify inferences for the total population. Second, its coverage was broad, including American, British, world, and general literature courses, in order to cover most literature survey courses. Third, it was anticipated that a number of the instructors would be adjuncts rather than full-time faculty, which might limit their personal knowledge of long-term changes within their departments.

The study also included the following delimitations. First, it was delimited to authors and not their works in order to increase the probability of accuracy and the rate of return for questionnaires. Second, it was delimited to literature foundation courses at 4-year schools, since these courses are intended to adequately prepare students for more

specialized upper-level literature courses. Third, it was delimited to Montana in order to provide students, instructors, and administrators across the state with a body of accurate information on which to base questions about the quality and content of a significant group of general education courses.

### Procedure

The procedure for the study involved the following steps:

1. Literature foundation courses offered during the Fall 1998 semester at Montana's 4-year colleges and universities were identified through those institutions' catalogs, and the instructors teaching those courses were identified through class schedules and phone calls to departments.
2. Those instructors scheduled to teach relevant courses were sent questionnaires and cover letters (see Appendixes A and B) requesting their participation in the study and guaranteeing the confidentiality of their responses.
3. Follow-up requests, including letters and phone calls, were made to those instructors who had been asked to participate in the study but who had not yet responded within three weeks of the initial request, which yielded an additional ten responses.
4. Data from the questionnaires were collected, tabulated, and evaluated.
5. Literature foundation course descriptions for the period 1978-1998 from the catalogs of the participating schools were collected, summarized, and compared with data from the questionnaires.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Background**

The data were collected from questionnaires sent to faculty identified through class schedules as teaching undergraduate literature survey courses during Fall Semester 1998 at Montana's 4-year colleges and universities, both public and private. The questionnaire (see Appendix A), containing 14 questions, was sent to a total of 54 instructors during the fall of 1998. A total of 30 were returned, for a return rate of 56%.

The purpose of the study was three-fold: to determine (a) the names of those authors most frequently included in literature survey courses, (b) any apparent associations between the personal characteristics of instructors and their choice of authors, and (c) changes in instructional attitudes during the last 20 years, due to political, critical, and other shifts. The following data have been arranged accordingly.

#### **Representative Authors Included in Courses**

In question 9, respondents listed up to 10 representative authors for any of the undergraduate literature survey courses that they currently taught. Courses and their lists of authors were assigned to four broad categories, based on course titles and catalog descriptions: (a) American literature, (b) British literature, (c) introduction to literature,

and (d) world literature. This yielded the following distribution of respondents: American literature, 4; British literature, 8; introduction to literature, 16; and world literature, 10. It should be noted that some respondents submitted author lists for more than one course. Also, while 80% of the respondents included lists of authors for courses, 20% either declined to do so or stated that they did not consider their courses literature surveys. A total of 233 authors/works were identified by the respondents (*Beowulf* and the Bible are listed as “works” because they cannot be attributed to single authors). The breakdown of authors/works by category is as follows: American literature, 72; British literature, 57; introduction to literature, 107; world literature; 59. Some authors/works (Shakespeare, for example) appeared in more than one category.

Table 1 presents a composite list of those authors, from all four of the above categories, who were included by at least 4 (or 13.3%) of all respondents in their surveys. This list was used as a basis for establishing correspondences between the respondents’ personal characteristics and their choices of authors. (A complete composite list of all authors included by respondents in their questionnaires is included in Appendix C).

**Table 1**  
**Percentages of Respondents Including Individual Authors/Works in Their Literature Survey Courses**

<b>Authors/Works</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
William Shakespeare	43.3
Homer	26.7
Sophocles	26.7
Virginia Woolf	26.7
Geoffrey Chaucer	23.3
Euripides	23.3
Franz Kafka	23.3
Joseph Conrad	20.0
Emily Dickinson	20.0
Nathaniel Hawthorne	20.0
Plato	20.0
Leslie Marmon Silko	20.0
William Wordsworth	20.0
Aeschylus	16.7
The Bible	16.7
John Donne	16.7
Frederick Douglass	16.7
William Faulkner	16.7
Charlotte Perkins Gilman	16.7
Ernest Hemingway	16.7
John Milton	16.7
Michel de Montaigne	16.7
Mary Shelley	16.7
Edmund Spenser	16.7
The author of <i>Beowulf</i>	13.3
William Blake	13.3
Anne Bradstreet	13.3
Dante Alighieri	13.3
René Descartes	13.3
Arthur Miller	13.3
Edgar Allan Poe	13.3
Sappho	13.3
Saint Augustine	13.3
Alfred, Lord Tennyson	13.3
Thucydides	13.3
Mark Twain	13.3
William Butler Yeats	13.3

(No. of respondents on which percentage was based) (30)



### Personal Characteristics of Instructors

#### Data for Questions 1-9

Questions 1-9 elicited information about the following personal characteristics of the respondents: 1. gender, 2. education, 3. department affiliation, 4. academic rank, 5. responsibility for course content, 6. institutional affiliation, 7. theoretical/philosophical concerns, 8. areas of instructional emphasis, and 9. length of experience teaching courses. Those data, which are included in Appendix D, are summarized below.

While the study's 30 respondents were evenly distributed by gender, an overwhelming majority (86.7%) had earned a doctorate. Two thirds of the respondents had a degree in English, and almost half (46.7%) had received their degree within the last 10 years. Department affiliations were more diverse, with English claiming the largest number of respondents (40%), followed by Liberal Studies (16.7%) and Languages and Literature (13.3%). Several other departmental designations were given by 30 % of the respondents (see Appendix D).

A clear majority of the respondents were tenured (56.7%), while only a small minority were non-tenure track (13.3%). Full professors and associate professors each comprised one third of the respondents. The remaining one third were either assistant professors or adjuncts.

A large majority of the respondents (80%) were responsible for choosing the authors for their courses. Roughly a third (30%) of the respondents taught at The University of Montana-Missoula, a fifth (20%) taught at Montana State University-

Bozeman, and the remaining half (50%) taught at the other seven campuses included in the survey.

The leading theoretical/philosophical concerns identified by respondents were Cultural Criticism and Gender Studies (both 46.7%), followed by Feminism and Reader Response (both 43.3%), New Criticism (40.0%), Marxism and Multiculturalism (both 33.3%), Deconstruction, Intertextualism, and Psychoanalysis (all 26.7%), Narrative Theory (20.0%), and Reception Theory (13.3%). In addition, respondents provided 18 “Other” concerns.

A clear majority of the respondents (76.7%) identified Texts as an area of instructional emphasis, while just over half (56%) identified Genres, and roughly a third (36.7%) identified both Authors and Critical Theory. Respondents also identified 10 “Other” areas of emphasis.

Lastly, the personal information elicited from respondents also included the length of their experience in teaching individual literature survey courses (half of the instructors gave information on two or more courses, while 10.0% of them gave no information for any course). In ascending order, according to length of experience teaching a particular course, 46.7% indicated between 1 and 7 years of experience teaching a particular course; 26.7%, between 8 and 14 years; 26.7%, between 15 and 21 years; and 10%, between 22 and 26 years.

### **Respondents' Personal Information and Choices of Authors**

In addition to addressing the above questions concerning author choice and personal information about the respondents, the study established any apparent associations between the frequency of an author's inclusion by respondents in their courses and the following variables: (a) instructor's gender, (b) instructor's department affiliation, (c) instructor's theoretical/philosophical concerns, (d) responsibility for course content, e) private/public status of the instructor's academic institution, and (f) instructor's length of experience in teaching particular courses. Those data are included in the following tables.

#### **Instructor's Gender**

Table 2 gives a comparative breakdown by percentage, according to the respondents' gender, for those authors most commonly included in courses (see Appendix E for a bar graph showing the male/female distribution of respondents for 10 most frequently included authors). The total number of respondents was 30, of which 15 were men and 15 were women.

**Table 2**  
**Percentages by Gender and Department Affiliation for Respondents Including Individual Authors/Works in Their Literature Survey Courses**

<b>Authors/Works</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Lang</b>	<b>Liberal</b>
Shakespeare	23.3	20.0	20.0	6.7	16.7
Homer	10.0	16.7	6.7	10.0	10.0
Sophocles	13.3	13.3	3.3	10.0	13.3
Woolf	13.3	13.3	6.7	10.0	10.0
Chaucer	16.7	6.7	13.3	3.3	6.7
Euripides	10.0	13.3	3.3	10.0	10.0
Kafka	13.3	10.0	6.7	6.7	10.0
Conrad	10.0	10.0	3.3	6.7	10.0
Dickinson	13.3	6.7	13.3	0.0	6.7
Hawthorne	13.3	6.7	6.7	3.3	10.0
Plato	10.0	10.0	3.3	6.7	10.0
Silko	10.0	10.0	3.3	6.7	10.0
Wordsworth	10.0	10.0	6.7	6.7	6.7
Aeschylus	3.3	13.3	6.7	6.7	3.3
The Bible	6.7	10.0	0.0	6.7	10.0
Donne	10.0	6.7	6.7	3.3	6.7
Douglass	10.0	6.7	3.3	6.7	6.7
Faulkner	10.0	6.7	6.7	0.0	10.0
Gilman	6.7	10.0	10.0	3.3	3.3
Hemingway	10.0	6.7	3.3	3.3	10.0
Milton	13.3	3.3	10.0	3.3	3.3
Montaigne	6.7	10.0	0.0	6.7	10.0
M. Shelley	6.7	10.0	0.0	6.7	10.0
Spenser	13.3	3.3	10.0	3.3	3.3
<i>Beowulf</i>	6.7	6.7	6.7	3.3	3.3
Blake	10.0	3.3	3.3	6.7	3.3
Bradstreet	10.0	3.3	3.3	3.3	6.7
Dante	6.7	6.7	3.3	0.0	10.0
Descartes	3.3	10.0	0.0	6.7	6.7
Miller	13.3	0.0	10.0	0.0	3.3
Poe	13.3	0.0	3.3	0.0	10.0
Sappho	3.3	10.0	0.0	3.3	10.0
Augustine	6.7	6.7	0.0	3.3	10.0
Tennyson	6.7	6.7	10.0	0.0	3.3
Thucydides	6.7	6.7	0.0	6.7	6.7
Twain	10.0	3.3	3.3	3.3	6.7
Yeats	3.3	10.0	10.0	3.3	0.0

(No. of respondents on which percentages were based) (30)

Those authors most frequently included by male respondents included Shakespeare (23.3%), followed by Chaucer (16.7%), and by Dickinson, Hawthorne, Kafka, Miller, Milton, Poe, Sophocles, Spenser, and Woolf (all 13.3%). Those authors most frequently included by female respondents included Shakespeare (20.0%), followed by Homer (16.7%), and by Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, and Woolf (all 13.3%).

### Instructor's Department Affiliation

Table 2 also gives data for author choices by the instructors' department affiliation (see Appendix F for a bar graph showing the departmental distribution of respondents for the 10 most frequently included authors). The study's 30 respondents identified 10 different departments in their surveys. To facilitate comparison, those department affiliations were reduced to three broad groups: English, Languages and Literature, and Liberal/Women's Studies-Humanities. Within these groups, English had the largest number of respondents (16 or 53.3%), Liberal/Women's Studies-Humanities, the next largest (8 or 26.7%), and Literature and Languages, the smallest (6 or 20%).

Among those respondents with an English department affiliation, Shakespeare was the most frequently included author (20.0%), followed by Chaucer and Dickinson (both 13.3%), and Miller, Milton, Spenser, Tennyson, and Yeats (all 10.0%).

Respondents with a Languages and Literature department affiliation most frequently included Euripides, Homer, Sophocles, and Woolf (all 10.0%), followed by Aeschylus, Descartes, Kafka, Montaigne, Plato, and Thucydides (all 6.7%).

Those respondents with a Liberal/Women's Studies-Humanities department affiliation most frequently included Shakespeare (16.7%), followed by Sophocles (13.3%), and by the Bible, Augustine, Conrad, Dante, Euripides, Faulkner, Kafka, Hawthorne, Hemingway, Montaigne, Plato, Poe, Sappho, Mary Shelley, and Silko (all 10.0%).

### Instructor's Theoretical/Philosophical Concerns

Tables 3 and 4 give a comparative breakdown by percentage, according to the respondents' theoretical/philosophical concerns, for those authors/works most commonly included in courses (as shown in Table 1).

Those respondents who indicated Cultural Criticism as a concern most frequently included Shakespeare (20.0%), Woolf (16.7%), Chaucer, Homer, Sophocles, and Wordsworth (all 13.3%).

Those respondents who indicated Deconstruction as a concern most frequently included Shakespeare (13.3%).

Those who indicated Feminism as a concern most frequently included Woolf (20.0%), followed by Homer, Shakespeare, and Sophocles (all 16.7%), and Euripides, Plato, and Wordsworth (all 13.3%).

Those respondents who identified Gender Studies as a concern most frequently included Shakespeare (20.0%), followed by Euripides, Homer, Sophocles, Woolf, Wordsworth, and Yeats (all 13.3%).

Those who identified Intertextualism as a concern gave the highest rating to Homer (13.3%), followed by Euripides, Plato, Sophocles, and Woolf (all 10.0%).

**Those who indicated Marxism as a concern included Marx and Shakespeare most frequently (both 13.3%).**

**Those respondents who indicated Multiculturalism as a concern most often included Shakespeare (20.0%), then Sophocles, Woolf, and Wordsworth (all 13.3%).**

**Table 3**  
**Percentages by Theoretical/Philosophical Concerns for Respondents Including Individual Authors/Works in Their Literature Survey Courses**

Authors/Works	Cult	Decon	Fem	Gender	Inter	Marx
Shakespeare	20.0	13.3	16.7	20.0	6.7	13.3
Homer	13.3	10.0	16.7	13.3	13.3	10.0
Sophocles	13.3	6.7	16.7	13.3	10.0	6.7
Woolf	16.7	6.7	20.0	13.3	10.0	13.3
Chaucer	13.3	6.7	10.0	10.0	3.3	6.7
Euripides	10.0	6.7	13.3	13.3	10.0	6.7
Kafka	6.7	6.7	6.7	3.3	6.7	6.7
Conrad	6.7	3.3	10.0	3.3	3.3	3.3
Dickinson	6.7	6.7	6.7	10.0	0.0	10.0
Hawthorne	10.0	6.7	6.7	6.7	0.0	3.3
Plato	10.0	10.0	13.3	10.0	10.0	10.0
Silko	6.7	6.7	10.0	10.0	6.7	0.0
Wordsworth	13.3	3.3	13.3	13.3	6.7	10.0
Aeschylus	6.7	3.3	10.0	10.0	6.7	3.3
The Bible	6.7	6.7	10.0	6.7	6.7	6.7
Donne	10.0	3.3	6.7	3.3	0.0	6.7
Douglass	6.7	10.0	6.7	3.3	6.7	6.7
Faulkner	10.0	3.3	10.0	6.7	0.0	10.0
Gilman	6.7	6.7	10.0	6.7	3.3	6.7
Hemingway	6.7	3.3	3.3	6.7	0.0	6.7
Milton	6.7	3.3	3.3	6.7	3.3	6.7
Montaigne	6.7	6.7	10.0	6.7	6.7	6.7
M. Shelley	6.7	6.7	10.0	6.7	6.7	6.7
Spenser	10.0	6.7	6.7	10.0	3.3	6.7
<i>Beowulf</i>	6.7	3.3	3.3	3.3	0.0	3.3
Blake	10.0	3.3	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7
Bradstreet	6.7	6.7	3.3	6.7	0.0	6.7
Dante	6.7	6.7	10.0	10.0	6.7	6.7
Descartes	6.7	6.7	10.0	6.7	6.7	6.7
Miller	3.3	0.0	3.3	3.3	0.0	6.7
Poe	3.3	3.3	3.3	0.0	0.0	3.3
Sappho	3.3	3.3	10.0	6.7	3.3	3.3
Augustine	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7
Tennyson	10.0	3.3	10.0	6.7	3.3	6.7
Thucydides	6.7	6.7	6.7	3.3	6.7	6.7
Twain	6.7	6.7	3.3	6.7	0.0	6.7
Yeats	10.0	3.3	10.0	13.3	3.3	10.0

(No. of respondents on which percentages were based) (30)



**Table 4**  
**Percentages by Theoretical/Philosophical Concerns for Respondents Including Individual Authors/Works in Their Literature Survey Courses**

Authors/Works	Multi	Narra	New	Psych	Reader	Recep
Shakespeare	20.0	3.3	16.7	10.0	20.0	3.3
Homer	10.0	10.0	10.0	6.7	13.3	3.3
Sophocles	13.3	6.7	10.0	6.7	16.7	0.0
Woolf	13.3	3.3	13.3	13.3	13.3	3.3
Chaucer	10.0	3.3	10.0	10.0	13.3	6.7
Euripides	10.0	6.7	6.7	3.3	13.3	0.0
Kafka	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7	10.0	3.3
Conrad	6.7	0.0	6.7	6.7	6.7	0.0
Dickinson	6.7	3.3	13.3	6.7	10.0	3.3
Hawthorne	6.7	6.7	10.0	10.0	13.3	6.7
Plato	10.0	6.7	10.0	6.7	10.0	3.3
Silko	10.0	3.3	6.7	3.3	10.0	0.0
Wordsworth	13.3	0.0	10.0	10.0	13.3	0.0
Aeschylus	6.7	6.7	3.3	0.0	10.0	0.0
The Bible	6.7	3.3	6.7	3.3	6.7	0.0
Donne	6.7	0.0	10.0	3.3	3.3	0.0
Douglass	6.7	3.3	6.7	6.7	10.0	3.3
Faulkner	6.7	3.3	13.3	6.7	6.7	0.0
Gilman	6.7	3.3	10.0	6.7	10.0	3.3
Hemingway	0.0	3.3	6.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Milton	6.7	3.3	6.7	3.3	6.7	3.3
Montaigne	6.7	3.3	6.7	3.3	6.7	0.0
M. Shelley	6.7	3.3	6.7	3.3	6.7	0.0
Spenser	6.7	3.3	6.7	6.7	10.0	6.7
<i>Beowulf</i>	0.0	0.0	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3
Blake	10.0	0.0	3.3	6.7	10.0	0.0
Bradstreet	0.0	3.3	10.0	3.3	3.3	3.3
Dante	6.7	6.7	10.0	3.3	6.7	3.3
Descartes	6.7	3.3	6.7	3.3	6.7	0.0
Miller	6.7	0.0	6.7	3.3	6.7	0.0
Poe	3.3	3.3	10.0	10.0	10.0	6.7
Sappho	3.3	3.3	6.7	0.0	3.3	0.0
Augustine	6.7	3.3	6.7	3.3	6.7	0.0
Tennyson	10.0	3.3	10.0	10.0	10.0	0.0
Thucydides	6.7	3.3	3.3	3.3	6.7	0.0
Twain	0.0	3.3	10.0	3.3	3.3	3.3
Yeats	10.0	0.0	6.7	3.3	6.7	0.0

(No. of respondents on which percentages were based) (30)

Those respondents who expressed a concern for Narrative Theory included Homer the most frequently (10.0%), followed by Aeschylus, Dante, Euripides, Hawthorne, Kafka, Plato, and Sophocles (all 6.7%).

Those respondents identifying with New Criticism most frequently included Shakespeare (16.7%), followed by Dickinson, Faulkner, and Woolf (all 13.3%).

Those respondents who identified Psychoanalysis as a concern included Woolf the most frequently (13.3%), followed by Chaucer, Hawthorne, Poe, Shakespeare, Tennyson, and Wordsworth (all 10.0%).

Those respondents who expressed a concern with Reader Response most frequently included Shakespeare (20.0%), followed by Sophocles (16.7%), and by Chaucer, Hawthorne, Homer, Kafka, Woolf, and Wordsworth (all 13.3%).

Lastly, those who identified Reception Theory as a concern most frequently included Chaucer, Hawthorne, Poe, and Spenser (all 6.7%).

### Responsibility for Course Content

Table 5 gives a comparative breakdown by percentage for those authors most frequently included in survey courses, according to the assignment of responsibility for deciding which authors to include in those courses. Of the total number of 30 respondents, 24 indicated that the inclusion of authors in their courses was a personal decision, 4 indicated that it was a committee decision, and 2 indicated that it was a department decision.

Table 5  
**Percentages by Content Responsibility and Academic Affiliation for Respondents  
 Including Individual Authors/Works in Their Literature Survey Courses**

Authors/Works	You	Com	Dept	Private	Public
Shakespeare	30.0	10.0	3.3	10.0	33.3
Homer	6.7	13.3	6.7	6.7	20.0
Sophocles	6.7	13.3	6.7	6.7	20.0
Woolf	13.3	10.0	3.3	6.7	20.0
Chaucer	23.3	0.0	0.0	10.0	13.3
Euripides	3.3	13.3	6.7	6.7	16.7
Kafka	10.0	13.3	0.0	0.0	23.3
Conrad	6.7	10.0	3.3	0.0	20.0
Dickinson	20.0	0.0	0.0	3.3	16.7
Hawthorne	20.0	0.0	0.0	3.3	16.7
Plato	3.3	13.3	3.3	3.3	16.7
Silko	3.3	13.3	3.3	3.3	16.7
Wordsworth	13.3	3.3	3.3	6.7	13.3
Aeschylus	6.7	6.7	3.3	6.7	10.0
The Bible	0.0	13.3	3.3	0.0	16.7
Donne	16.7	0.0	0.0	3.3	13.3
Douglass	3.3	13.3	0.0	0.0	16.7
Faulkner	16.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.7
Gilman	10.0	6.7	0.0	0.0	16.7
Hemingway	16.7	0.0	0.0	3.3	13.3
Milton	16.7	0.0	0.0	10.0	6.7
Montaigne	0.0	13.3	3.3	0.0	16.7
M. Shelley	0.0	13.3	3.3	0.0	16.7
Spenser	16.7	0.0	0.0	10.0	6.7
<i>Beowulf</i>	13.3	0.0	0.0	3.3	10.0
Blake	10.0	3.3	0.0	6.7	6.7
Bradstreet	13.3	0.0	0.0	3.3	10.0
Dante	3.3	6.7	3.3	3.3	10.0
Descartes	0.0	10.0	3.3	0.0	13.3
Miller	13.3	0.0	0.0	3.3	10.0
Poe	13.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.3
Sappho	0.0	10.0	3.3	0.0	13.3
Augustine	0.0	10.0	3.3	0.0	13.3
Tennyson	13.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.3
Thucydides	0.0	13.3	0.0	0.0	13.3
Twain	13.3	0.0	0.0	3.3	10.0
Yeats	13.3	0.0	0.0	6.7	6.7

(No. of respondents on which percentages were based) (30)

Those respondents responsible for choosing their own authors most frequently included Shakespeare (30.0%), followed by Chaucer (23.3%), Dickinson, and Hawthorne (both 20.0%). Respondents who indicated that the authors/works in their courses are chosen by a committee most frequently included the Bible, Douglass, Euripides Homer, Kafka, Montaigne, Plato, Mary Shelley, Silko, Sophocles, and Thucydides (all 13.3%). Lastly, those who indicated that the choice of authors/works was a department decision most frequently included Euripides, Homer, and Sophocles (all 6.7%).

#### Instructor's Institutional Affiliation

Table 5 also shows the frequency with which authors are included in courses, based on the private/public academic affiliation of the respondents. Of the total number of 30 respondents who participated in the survey, 6 (20%) indicated a private college/university affiliation, and 24 (80%) indicated a public college/university affiliation.

Those affiliated with private institutions most frequently included Chaucer, Milton, Shakespeare, and Spenser (all 10.0%), followed by Aeschylus, Blake, Euripides, Homer, Woolf, Wordsworth, and Yeats (all 6.7%). Those affiliated with public institutions most frequently included Shakespeare (33.3%), followed by Kafka (23.3%), and by Conrad, Homer, Sophocles, and Woolf (all 20%).

#### Length of Instructor's Experience

Table 6 gives a comparative breakdown by percentage (based on the total number of 30 respondents) for those authors most frequently included in survey courses,

according to the length of the respondents' experience in teaching particular courses. It should be noted that not all respondents indicated the length of their experience in teaching a course, even though they may have included the names of authors for that course.

**Table 6**  
**Percentages by Length of Teaching Experience for Respondents Including Individual**  
**Authors/Works in Their Literature Survey Courses**

<b>Authors/Works</b>	<b>1-7</b>	<b>8-14</b>	<b>15-21</b>	<b>22-26</b>
Shakespeare	23.3	3.3	10.0	3.3
Homer	13.3	6.7	0.0	3.3
Sophocles	13.3	6.7	3.3	3.3
Woolf	13.3	3.3	3.3	3.3
Chaucer	13.3	0.0	10.0	0.0
Euripides	13.3	3.3	3.3	3.3
Kafka	6.7	3.3	3.3	3.3
Conrad	13.3	0.0	0.0	3.3
Dickinson	0.0	3.3	10.0	0.0
Hawthorne	3.3	6.7	10.0	0.0
Plato	10.0	6.7	0.0	3.3
Silko	10.0	6.7	0.0	3.3
Wordsworth	13.3	3.3	3.3	0.0
Aeschylus	6.7	3.3	3.3	0.0
The Bible	10.0	3.3	0.0	3.3
Donne	16.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Douglass	6.7	3.3	0.0	3.3
Faulkner	0.0	10.0	10.0	0.0
Gilman	3.3	6.7	0.0	3.3
Hemingway	3.3	3.3	6.7	3.3
Milton	10.0	3.3	3.3	0.0
Montaigne	10.0	3.3	0.0	3.3
M. Shelley	10.0	3.3	0.0	3.3
Spenser	6.7	0.0	10.0	0.0
<i>Beowulf</i>	10.0	0.0	3.3	0.0
Blake	10.0	0.0	3.3	0.0
Bradstreet	3.3	0.0	6.7	0.0
Dante	3.3	6.7	0.0	3.3
Descartes	10.0	3.3	0.0	0.0
Miller	0.0	3.3	3.3	6.7
Poe	0.0	6.7	3.3	0.0
Sappho	6.7	3.3	0.0	3.3
Augustine	6.7	3.3	0.0	3.3
Tennyson	6.7	3.3	0.0	0.0
Thucydides	6.7	3.3	0.0	3.3
Twain	3.3	0.0	6.7	0.0
Yeats	6.7	3.3	3.3	0.0

(No. of respondents on which percentages were based) (30)

The 14 respondents with 1-7 years of experience in teaching their courses most frequently included Shakespeare (23.3%), followed by Donne (16.7%), and then by Chaucer, Conrad, Euripides, Homer, Sophocles, Woolf, and Wordsworth (all 13.3%). The 8 respondents with 8-14 years of experience most frequently included Faulkner (10.0%), followed by Dante, Gilman, Hawthorne, Homer, Plato, Poe, Silko, and Sophocles (all 6.7%). The 8 respondents with 15-21 years of experience most frequently included Chaucer, Dickinson, Faulkner, Hawthorne, Shakespeare, and Spenser (all 10.0%), followed by Bradstreet, Hemingway, and Twain (all 6.7%). Lastly, the 3 respondents with 22-26 years of experience in teaching their courses most frequently included Miller (6.7%).

### Changes in Instructional Attitudes

#### Answers to Questions 12-14

In addition to supplying authors' names and personal data, survey participants were asked in Question 12 to indicate what instructional value literature canons might have for their courses, in Question 13 to describe any changes in the content of literature foundation courses during the last 10-20 years, and in Question 14 to identify the influences precipitating those changes. Question 12 was answered by 23 respondents (76.7% of the total number), Question 13 was answered by 24 respondents (80.0%), and Question 14 was answered by 21 respondents (70.0%). Several themes emerged from these data, and they are summarized below.

**Question 12.** When asked what value, if any, literary canons have for their courses, 13.3% of the respondents said “little,” “not much,” or something similar. Half of those instructors were referring to courses that focus on critical interpretation, rather than survey an area of literature. Conversely, 26.7% of the respondents reported that the canon was “central,” “key,” or “very important” for their courses.

Some ambivalence was expressed by 20% of the respondents, who indicated that the instructional value of canons “depends on the course,” or who claimed that canons were more valuable for instructors than for students, as an aid in deciding what to teach. Lastly, 26.7% of the respondents found canons to have instructional value, but take a “selective” approach or “balance canon with non-canon.”

**Question 13.** When asked what changes, if any, they would describe in the content of literature foundation courses during the last 10-20 years, 36.7% of the respondents indicated more “women” writers, 20% indicated more “multicultural” writers, and 20% indicated more “minority” writers. The inclusion of more non-canonical writers and the expansion of the canon were mentioned by 20% of the respondents, while an increased focus on the political aspects of literature was indicated by 13.3%. Several other issues, including “anti-Semitism,” “feminism,” “race,” “homosexuality,” and “cultural and gender expansion,” were mentioned by 30% of the respondents. Fifty percent of the respondents saw the above changes as positive, while 16.7% saw them as negative, and 10.0% saw them as neither positive nor negative.



**Question 14.** When asked to what they ascribed the above changes in literature foundation courses, 50% of the respondents indicated “political” shifts or movements, including the Civil Rights Movement and the subsequent empowerment of women, blacks, and Native Americans. For 26.7% of the respondents, the changes were the result of “critical” shifts or influences, particularly those that have challenged “patriarchal readings.” Several other factors were identified by 43.4% of the respondents, including “weaker preparation for new Ph.D.’s” through a “narrowing of chronological interests,” “better selections by anthology editors,” “trends in philosophical approaches that originated in France,” “marketing,” “genuine interest in unrecognized material,” “demographic facts and pressures [as] more minorities and women entered the classroom and then the profession,” “enlightenment,” and “lower literary abilities in all students and some teachers.” The overall attitude toward the above factors appeared positive for 40.0% of the respondents, negative for 6.7%, and neither positive nor negative for 20%.

#### **Catalog Course Descriptions 1978-1998**

Lastly, the study included an examination of catalog course descriptions from the participating institutions for the period 1987-1998 to provide additional data for triangulation. A summary of those data, arranged according to the private or public affiliation of the institutions, follows.

**Private institutions.** Carroll College’s 1977-1978 catalog descriptions for its British and introduction to literature courses, which focused on “conventional genres” and “major

and minor” writers, remained unchanged until 1989-1990, when British literature became an upper-level sequence. In 1992-1994, American and British literature courses were added, focusing on “political, social, and cultural milieux.” In 1998 the course descriptions were greatly expanded with references to critical approaches and individual authors, including women, black, and Native American writers.

Rocky Mountain College’s catalog descriptions for American, British and introduction to literature courses showed a consistent focus on “major and minor writers,” language, and “historical development” through the 1980s. In 1990, the names of individual authors, including two women, were added, as well as a reference to “Romantic, Victorian, and Modern British literature as a universe of problems and ideas.”

Catalog course descriptions for British, world and introduction to literature courses at the University of Great Falls focused on literary forms and genres, history of ideas, and periods from 1978 to 1987. Then, the names of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton were added to the British literature description. There have been no significant changes since.

Public institutions. The 1977-1979 catalog descriptions for the British and introduction to literature courses at Montana State University-Billings focused on periods and major writers (including Chaucer and Shakespeare) with “special emphasis on cultural influences affecting representative authors.” In 1979, an American literature sequence was added, as was a comparative literature sequence, focusing on the “outstanding writings of classical Greece and Rome” and including the names of a number of writers, none of

whom were women. In 1993, a world literature course offered “a comparative basis for understanding different cultures,” and referred to “Chinese, Indian, Russian, Latin American, and European” works.

The 1978-1980 catalog descriptions for American and British literature courses at Montana State University-Bozeman offered an “historical and critical review by period,” while the description of world literature mentioned “major works from non-English cultures,” and gave a list that included “French, German, Russian, Asiatic, Latin American, and Native American.” In 1991, the American and British literature descriptions referred to “selected major works and writers” presented “in the context of cultural, historical and social patterns.” The world literature description replaced the term “Asiatic” with “Classical” in its enumeration of types of literature “from non-English cultures” (presumably dropping Asian literature from the survey) and added “English-speaking cultures outside the United States and Britain (e.g., Canadian, Australian). “

The 1978-1980 catalog descriptions for the world literature sequence at MSU-Northern offered a “literary and critical approach to the major works of our Western literary heritage” and included the names of several male European authors. A British literature sequence, added in 1980, referred to “some of the giants of the modern world” and included a list of exclusively male authors. By 1982, the reference to “giants” had disappeared, an American sequence had been added, and the world literature sequence stressed “our Western and Oriental literary heritage.” Women authors began to be

mentioned in 1988, and in 1992, the introduction to literature course description stated, "Selections will include works by women and minority writers."

The catalog descriptions for American, British, world, and introduction to literature courses at Montana Tech from 1978 to 1998 emphasized the analysis and evaluation of "major authors and works" in different genres and "major philosophical concerns." The 1998 course descriptions for the world literature sequence omitted a long-standing reference to "timeless literary masterpieces" and stressed the inclusion of "both Western and non-Western examples."

The 1978 catalog description for the introduction to literature course at The University of Montana-Missoula stated, "The works studied will deal with significant and recurrent human preoccupations and problems," while the course descriptions for the American and British literature sequences mentioned an "emphasis on four or five selected figures," without mentioning individual authors. By 1991, American and British literature course descriptions included authors' names, including those of a few women. In 1992, the authors' names were replaced with a reference to "major texts" and "discussions of what those texts represent."

Western Montana College's 1978-1980 catalog description for a world literature course offered "an overview of literature as it relates to culture in the Western world from the Greeks to the Americans." The description for an introduction to literature sequence stressed an "emphasis on literary forms, terms, and principles," while the description for an American literature sequence stressed "American literature as the expression of

American thought.” Those descriptions were basically retained until 1992, when the introduction to literature course description was modified to include “selections . . . drawn from multicultural sources . . . including works by women,” a new focus on “literary analysis and criticism,” and on “literature as a means of examining human problems, achievements, values, and conflicts.” The description for American literature now offered a course, “encompassing the eras of realism, naturalism, modernism and postmodernism, and reflecting the cultural, ethnic, and philosophical diversity which enriches American literature and thought.” Lastly, the British literature sequence now emphasized “the relationship of a given period and the crosscurrent of ideas and issues,” as well as “the role of literature in serving both to record and shape events.”

In conclusion, the above results reflect the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, drawn from instructors and from course catalogs. The chief purpose of that analysis was to provide an accurate information base describing Montana’s current pedagogic canon for undergraduate literature courses.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### Background

**This study was prompted by a lack of accurate information about the content of first and second-year literature survey courses offered by Montana's 4-year colleges and universities, following a protracted debate over the value of traditional literature curricula. Thus, this study investigated the following: (a) which authors are most frequently included in such literature survey courses, (b) what associations, if any, are apparent between the personal characteristics of instructors and their inclusion of certain authors in their courses, and (c) what changes in instructional attitudes have occurred during the last 20 years because of political, critical, and other shifts.**

**The target population for the study included all instructors currently offering first and second-year literature survey courses at both private and public schools throughout the state, and the rate of response (56% or 30 instructors) provided a representative sample. One difficulty in interpreting the data provided by the returned questionnaires was that the respondents provided uneven responses. Thus, while most respondents supplied the requested information, such as the names of the 10 authors most frequently included in their courses, some gave incomplete or unrelated answers. Nevertheless, the findings suggest which authors a given student is most likely to encounter in a first or second-year**

literature survey class, how the inclusion of those authors reflects the background and interests of the instructors, and how Montana's pedagogical canon has evolved during the last two decades.

### Authors

The results of the study demonstrate (see Table 1) that, notwithstanding recent trends in the teaching of literature, many traditionally canonical authors are still well represented in the pedagogical canon for undergraduate literature survey courses in Montana's 4-year colleges and universities. For example, Shakespeare, who had the highest rate of inclusion among the study's 30 respondents (43.3%), is joined by other established English authors/works, including Chaucer (23.3%), Wordsworth (20.0%), Donne, Milton, and Spenser (all 16.7%), and *Beowulf*, Blake, and Tennyson (all 13.3%). Canonical American authors are also well represented, with Dickinson and Hawthorne (both 20%), Faulkner and Hemingway (both 16.7%), and Miller, Poe, and Twain (all 13.3%).

Five ancient Greek authors who are often regarded as pillars of the Western Tradition are included: Homer and Sophocles (26.7%), Euripides (23.3%), Plato (20.0%), and Aeschylus (16.7%). Also included are several traditional European members of the Western Canon: Kafka (23.3%), Conrad (20.0%), Montaigne (16.7%), and Dante and Augustine (both 13.3%). Lastly, the Bible (16.7%) appears to have a firm position in Montana's pedagogical canon.

That the above writers were included is expected from the perspective of the traditional canon, though their relative scores might be cause for concern, such as the relatively low scores for Blake, Twain, and Dante. Even more disturbing for traditionalists might be the absence from Table 1 of several canonical authors who were mentioned by fewer than four (or 13.3%) of the respondents. The playwright Williams is not there, nor are the novelists Austen and Dickens, nor the poets Whitman and Thomas.

The relatively high rankings of the following authors are encouraging for feminists. Virginia Woolf, for example, ranked with Homer and Sophocles (all 26.7%), Silko with Conrad and Dickinson (all 20.0%), and Gilman, with Faulkner and Milton (all 16.7%), while Mary Shelley (16.7%) ranked higher than either Blake or Twain (13.3%).

#### Associations Between Author Choices and Personal Data for Respondents

##### Gender

Since the data described survey courses, which often have an historical perspective, and since women authors have received growing recognition mainly within the past 150 years, it is not surprising that male authors greatly outnumbered female authors, who accounted for only 6 (or 17.1 %) of the 35 authors, in the composite list used as a basis for comparison in this study (see Table 1). Given this traditional preponderance of male authors in literature, one might expect to see evidence of some effort to compensate for the imbalance. And that expectation was confirmed by the data: while the gender distribution for respondents was equal, the study's 15 male respondents included 91 male authors, but an equal number of female respondents included only 76.



While the lower level of support of female respondents for male authors suggests a certain degree of gender bias, interestingly enough, that bias is not apparent in the data for the seven women authors most frequently included (see Table 1), where one might expect to see substantially greater support from female than from male respondents. Equal numbers of male and female respondents included Woolf (13.3%) and Silko (10.0%), while more males than females included Dickinson (13.3% vs. 6.7%) and Bradstreet (10.0% vs. 3.3%), and more female than male respondents included Gilman and Shelley (both 10.0% vs. 6.7%) and Sappho (10.0% vs. 3.3%).

Another area where one might have anticipated gender bias was the inclusion of authors who might be characterized as “men writing primarily for a male audience,” such as Conrad and Hemingway. Yet, Conrad was included equally by both sexes, while Hemingway was included by 10.0% of the men respondents and by 6.7% of the women.

In terms of individual authors, there were several puzzling disparities, not obviously related to gender bias: men strongly favored Milton and Spenser (4:1), and Miller and Poe (4:0); while women strongly favored Aeschylus (4:1). Thus, while the study did reveal less female than male support in general for male authors, it did not reveal systematic gender bias for all author choices.

### Department Affiliation

Traditional canonical authors received strong support from those respondents with an English department affiliation, with 20% of the study’s participants indicating such an affiliation and including Shakespeare, 13.3% including Chaucer and Dickinson, and

10% including Miller, Milton, Spenser, Tennyson, and Yeats. More surprisingly, 10% of this group of respondents also included the minor author Gilman, while only 3.3% included the more established authors, Blake, Bradstreet, Conrad, Hemingway, Poe, and Twain. Respondents with an English department affiliation showed no support for the Bible or for Mary Shelley.

Not surprisingly, 10.0% of the study's respondents, in addition to claiming a Languages and Literature departmental affiliation, included three major Greek authors, Euripides, Homer, and Sophocles, and the same percentage included the noted English feminist author Woolf. Moreover, 6.7% of this group of respondents also included several other European authors important to the Western Canon: Aeschylus, Descartes, Kafka, Montaigne, Plato, and Thucydides. Those who received no support from respondents with a Languages and Literature department affiliation included the American writers Dickinson, Faulkner, Miller, and Poe, and most surprisingly, considering his contribution to the development of vernacular literature, the traditionally canonical author Dante.

Lastly, 16.7% of the study's respondents claimed a Liberal/Women's Studies-Humanities department affiliation and included Shakespeare, while 13.3% of these respondents included Sophocles, and 10% included the Bible and an assortment of canonical/non-canonical authors: Augustine, Conrad, Dante, Euripides, Faulkner, Kafka, Hawthorne, Hemingway, Montaigne, Plato, Poe, Sappho, Mary Shelley, and Silko. The catholicity of these authors is attributable in part to the strong participation in the survey

of instructors who teach Introduction to Literature/the Humanities courses. The only author to receive no support from this group was Yeats (0.0%).

### Theoretical/Philosophical Concerns

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the data comparing the respondents' theoretical/philosophical concerns with their author choices is the consistency with which three authors received a high rate of inclusion: Shakespeare, Homer, and Woolf.

Shakespeare was the author most frequently included among those respondents who also identified the following concerns: Cultural Criticism (20%), Deconstruction (13.3%), Gender Studies (20%), Multiculturalism (20%), New Criticism (16.7%), and Reader Response (20.0%). He was also the most frequently included author (along with Marx) by respondents who also identified Marxism as a concern (13.3%).

Homer was the author most frequently included by those respondents who also identified Intertextualism (13.3%) and Narrative Theory (10.0%) as concerns. Woolf was the most frequently included author for those respondents who also identified Feminism (20%) and Psychoanalysis (13.3%).

While several groups of authors were not mentioned by respondents with particular concerns, only four shared the distinction of being the sole authors from the composite list to receive no mention from respondents identifying their theoretical/philosophical concerns. Those identifying Cultural Criticism as a concern omitted Miller, those identifying Gender Studies omitted Poe, those identifying Marxism excluded Silko, and those identifying Reader Response as a concern excluded Hemingway.

### Responsibility for Course Content

The data for the responsibility of choosing which authors/works to include in a course revealed that this decision is very largely a personal one ( 80% of the respondents) and far less frequently that of a committee (13.3%) or of a department (6.7%). Thus the data for the first group of respondents are particularly significant, since they describe the majority of the participants in the study, and because they form a largely traditional literary canon. Shakespeare was included by the largest number of those respondents who also choose their own authors (30.0%), followed by Chaucer (23.3%), Dickinson and Hawthorne (both 20.0%), and then by Donne, Faulkner, Hemingway, Milton, and Spenser (all 16.7%).

On examination, the data for the other two groups of respondents reveal a tendency towards the inclusion of women and multicultural authors/works. Thus, for those respondents who indicated that author choices are made by a committee, the most frequently included authors/works were for the Bible, Douglass, Euripides, Homer, Kafka, Montaigne, Plato, Mary Shelley, Silko, Sophocles, and Thucydides (all 13.3%), followed by Augustine, Conrad, Descartes, Sappho, Shakespeare, and Woolf (all 10.0%). And for those respondents whose authors are chosen by a department, the most frequently included authors were Euripides, Homer, and Sophocles (all 6.7%).

### Private/Public Affiliation

As with the responsibility for choosing authors for courses, the distribution of the respondents according to their affiliation with a private or a public institution was skewed,

with only 20% of the respondents identifying their institutional affiliation as private and 80% as public. Thus, the data for respondents teaching at public colleges and universities would have a broader impact given the greater number of students enrolled in their literature courses.

In general, the respondents who also had a private school affiliation most frequently mentioned traditional canonical authors, with Chaucer, Milton, Shakespeare, and Spenser receiving the highest number of votes (all 10.0%), followed by Aeschylus, Blake, Euripides, Homer, Woolf, Wordsworth, and Yeats (all 6.7%). Interestingly, 14 authors/works from the composite list (see Table 1) were not included by these respondents: Augustine, the Bible, Conrad, Descartes, Douglass, Faulkner, Gilman, Kafka, Montaigne, Poe, Sappho, Mary Shelley, Tennyson, and Thucydides.

Among respondents who were also affiliated with public institutions, a similarly traditional group of authors was most frequently mentioned, including Shakespeare (33.3%), Kafka (23.3%), Conrad, Homer, Sophocles, and Woolf (all 20%). There were no authors/works from the composite list that were not included by this group of respondents.

It might be assumed that schools with a religious affiliation would give low priorities to openly skeptical writers, like Descartes and Montaigne, or to writers who deal openly with sexual passion, like Faulkner and Sappho. Yet, none of the respondents affiliated with a private institution included either Augustine or the Bible.

### Length of Experience

To facilitate comparison, the data for length of experience in teaching particular courses were grouped according to 7-year class intervals. This yielded a distribution with almost half (46.%) of the respondents indicating that they had taught a course for 1-7 years, almost a quarter (26.%) for both 8-14 and 15-21 years, and only 10% for 22-26 years. Since some of the respondents gave data for more than one course with different lengths of experience, analysis of this data was not particularly instructive.

Those with 1-7 years of experience in teaching their literature survey courses most frequently included traditional authors, such as Shakespeare (23.3%), Donne (16.7%), and Chaucer, Conrad, Euripides, Homer, Sophocles, Woolf, and Wordsworth (all 13.3%). These respondents excluded both Dickinson and Faulkner.

Respondents indicating 8-14 years of experience also favored traditional authors, including Faulkner (10.0%), Dante, Gilman, Hawthorne, Homer, Plato, Poe, Silko, and Sophocles (all 6.7%). This group of respondents excluded *Beowulf*, Blake, Bradstreet, Chaucer, Conrad, Donne, Spenser, and Twain.

Those respondents with 15-21 years of experience teaching their courses continued the patterns shown above and most frequently included Chaucer, Dickinson, Faulkner, Hawthorne, Shakespeare, and Spenser (all 10.0%). These respondents omitted the following authors/works: Augustine, the Bible, Conrad, Dante, Descartes, Douglass, Gilman, Montaigne, Sappho, Shelley, Silko, Tennyson, and Thucydides.

Lastly, the smallest group of respondents, those with 22-26 years of experience in teaching their courses, most frequently included Miller (6.7%) and omitted all of the following: Aeschylus, *Beowulf*, Blake, Bradstreet, Chaucer, Descartes, Dickinson, Donne, Faulkner, Hawthorne, Milton, Poe, Spenser, Tennyson, Twain, Wordsworth, and Yeats.

The only overall pattern that emerges from the analysis of this data is general support for authors/works belonging to traditional literary canons. This pattern parallels the findings of the 1990-1991 MLA national study of undergraduate courses offered by English departments as presented by Huber (1995).

#### Changes in Instructional Attitudes

Answers from Questions 12-14 in the questionnaires completed by the study's respondents were augmented by information drawn from course descriptions. These descriptions were found in the catalogs from 1978-1998 for the colleges and universities included in the study in order to ascertain changes in instructional attitudes during the last 20 years.

#### Answers to Questions 12-14

Questions 12-14 in the survey were designed to elicit comments from the respondents about the value of literary canons for their courses (Question 12); changes that have occurred in the content of literature courses during the last 20 years (Question 13); and political, critical, or other shifts that have precipitated those changes (Question

14). The majority of respondents (80%) answered all three questions, so their comments can be considered representative.

Question 12. Assessments of the instructional value of literary canons ranged from strongly negative (13.3%) to strongly positive (26.7%), with a large number of respondents (46.7%) finding some value in canons but advocating a selective approach that includes non-canonical authors. These observations are corroborated by the data for author choices (see Table 1), in which canonical authors are strongly represented, though not perhaps according to a strictly traditional pecking order, and traditionally non-canonical authors are also included, some with surprising prominence.

Question 13. In describing changes in the content of literature foundation courses during the last 10-20 years, the majority of respondents mentioned the expansion of traditional canons through the inclusion of some group of writers, such as women (36.7%), multicultural (20%), minority (20%), and non-canonical (20%). Another theme that emerged was an increased focus on the political aspects of literature (13.3%). A third of the respondents also identified an assortment of other issues that have surfaced in literature foundation courses, including anti-Semitism, feminism, gender, homosexuality, and race. Lastly, half of the respondents characterized the changes that have occurred as positive, as opposed to 16.7% who characterized them as negative. Again, these observations are corroborated by other data from the study, including the list of authors



most frequently included in courses and the theoretical/philosophical concerns of the respondents.

Question 14. Half of the respondents, when asked to what they attributed the above changes in literature foundation courses, identified political shifts or movements, particularly the empowerment of women, blacks, and Native Americans. Another 26.7% identified critical shifts or influences, especially those challenging traditional patriarchal approaches to literature. And 43.4% mentioned a variety of influences, including weaker Ph.D. preparation through a narrowing of chronological focus, better anthology selections, French-inspired philosophical trends, interest in unrecognized material, more women and minority students and teachers, and lowered student and teacher abilities. The overall attitude towards the above factors precipitating change was positive for 40.0% of the respondents and, despite the critical comments about teachers and students, negative for only 6.7%.

#### Catalog Course Descriptions 1978-1998

Course descriptions from the participating institutions for the period 1978-1998 were examined as a means of supporting the data derived from Questions 12-14 in the study. The information from those course descriptions supports the conclusions drawn from the three questions.

**Private institutions.** Several patterns emerge from the catalog course descriptions for the study's private institutions: (a) a general emphasis in the descriptions on historical periods, genres, and major authors that extends from the late 1970s through the 1980s; (b) the introduction of individual authors' names in the late 1980s; and (c) continuing throughout the 1990s, the inclusion of women and minority authors' names accompanied by a shift of focus to critical approaches, problems, and the political, social, and cultural context of literature. The comments of the study's respondents are strongly consistent with the patterns identified in the last of the above observations.

**Public institutions.** Similar patterns can be found in the catalog course descriptions for the study's public institutions: (a) a strong emphasis on periods, genres, problems, major authors and works, and the Western literary/cultural heritage, which persists through the late 1970s and the 1980s; (b) the mention of individual women authors' names and the inclusion of "Oriental" literature in the late 1980s; and (c) a dramatic shift toward the inclusion of women, minority, and non-Western writers, and a new focus on texts during the 1990s. As with the course descriptions for private institutions, those for public institutions are congruent with the comments expressed by the study's respondents in Questions 12-14 and the data describing the respondents' theoretical/philosophical concerns.

### Conclusions

In summary, the analysis of the data generated by this study supports the following conclusions: (a) that the authors most frequently included in first and second-year literature survey courses at Montana's 4-year colleges and universities constitute a largely traditional pedagogical canon, (b) that this canon also includes women and minority writers, and thus reflects attempts to expand the traditional canon while preserving major authors, (c) that authors included by the study's respondents in their courses somewhat reflect the respondents' personal theoretical/philosophical concerns, and (d) that the data provided by the study's participants are corroborated by the catalog course descriptions of the institutions with which the participants have been affiliated. What these conclusions reveal is a pedagogical canon in transition.

The significance of this study is that it provides Montana's students, educators, and institutions of higher education with current baseline information about the content and instructors for lower-division literature courses, which form an important part of the general education core. This information constitutes a solid basis for valid curricular questions concerning the transmission of cultural values, the representation of women and minority authors, and the transformation of traditional literary canons.

### Considerations for Further Study

#### Impact of the Study

The main impact of this study should be to increase awareness among Montana's post-secondary literature instructors that, despite obvious efforts to update and expand the

pedagogical canon, certain groups of authors remain seriously under-represented, particularly women and Native Americans. Also, several traditionally canonical authors, and Shakespeare in particular, appear to have been singled out for study at the expense of other important canonical writers. Both of these problems suggest that the process of revising Montana's pedagogical canon remains an important concern.

### Amplifications of the Study

In providing accurate information about the pedagogical canon for Montana's undergraduate literature survey courses, this study should provide a point of departure for future investigations. For example, based on these findings, a future study might test the hypothesis that the current pedagogical canon reflects a strong sexual bias that favors traditional male authors, or the hypothesis that the current pedagogical canon only marginally recognizes established minority authors. An attempt might also be made to collect more information about the academic preparation of literature instructors to see if there is any correlation between how they were taught and how they teach.

### Comparisons with Other Institutions

The present study's findings also invite future studies in which the sample size could be increased by including institutions from neighboring states, thus allowing for an expanded analysis and providing the opportunity to compare Montana's colleges and universities with other institutions. Future studies would also benefit from the inclusion of

**more demographic variables, which would provide valuable information about the cultural presentation of canonical authors.**

APPENDIX A

LITERATURE FOUNDATION COURSE SURVEY

1. What is your gender? M \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your highest degree? \_\_\_\_\_ Discipline \_\_\_\_\_ Year Granted \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your department affiliation? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your academic rank? Tenured \_\_\_ Tenure Track \_\_\_ Non-Tenure Track \_\_\_ Lecturer  
 \_\_\_ Adjunct \_\_\_ Asst. Professor \_\_\_ Assoc. Professor \_\_\_ Full Professor \_\_\_
5. Who is primarily responsible for the content of your literature course(s)?  
 You \_\_\_\_\_ A Committee \_\_\_\_\_ Your Department \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the name of your college/university? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you identify with any of the following theoretical/philosophical concerns? Cultural  
 Criticism \_\_\_\_\_ Deconstruction \_\_\_\_\_ Feminism \_\_\_\_\_ Gender Studies  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Intertextualism \_\_\_\_\_ Marxism \_\_\_\_\_ Multiculturalism \_\_\_\_\_  
 Narrative Theory \_\_\_\_\_ New Criticism \_\_\_\_\_ Psychoanalysis \_\_\_\_\_ Reader  
 Response \_\_\_\_\_ Reception theory \_\_\_\_\_ Other

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8. Which of the following do you emphasize in your course(s)? Authors \_\_\_\_\_ Texts \_\_\_\_\_ Genres  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Critical Theory \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
9. List up to 10 representative authors for any of the undergraduate literature survey courses that  
 you currently teach. (Please indicate two-part sequences as separate courses.)  
 Course Title \_\_\_\_\_ How long you've taught course \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Course Title \_\_\_\_\_ How long you've taught course \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Course Title \_\_\_\_\_ How long you've taught course \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Course Title \_\_\_\_\_ How long you've taught course \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

10. **Would you be available for a telephone or personal interview during October/November? Yes**  
**\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**
11. **At which phone number(s) can you be reached? \_\_\_\_\_ (If you**  
**have time, your answers to the following questions would also be helpful.)**
12. **What instructional value, if any, do literary canons have for the courses that you have listed**  
**above.**
13. **What changes, if any, would you describe in the content of literature foundation courses during**  
**the last 10-20 years?**
14. **To what do you ascribe these changes (e.g., critical and political shifts)?**

**Please return the completed questionnaire to Jack Crowley, Department of Liberal Studies,**  
**Montana Tech, 1300 West Park Street, Butte, MT 59701.**

**APPENDIX B**  
**LETTER TO POTENTIAL STUDY PARTICIPANTS**

**October 10, 1998**

**Dear Professor \_\_\_\_\_:**

**I am writing to request information about your literature course(s), which I hope to use in a doctoral dissertation for The University of Montana's School of Education. The dissertation will focus on the content of first and second-year literature foundation courses offered at Montana's four-year colleges and universities and attempt to determine the current status of literary canons in undergraduate literature instruction. I should add that I am currently an assistant professor in the Liberal Studies Department of Montana Tech, where I teach writing and literature courses.**

**I would very much appreciate your cooperation in completing the enclosed survey (which should take approximately 20-30 minutes) and returning it in the attached envelope by October 30. The information that you provide will remain confidential, and no names of specific institutions or respondents will be revealed. Upon completion of the study, I will make the results available at your request. If you have any questions about the study, you can reach me by phone at 496-4462 or by E-Mail at JCROWLEY@MTECH.EDU.**

**Thank you for your assistance.**

**Sincerely,**

**Jack Crowley  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Liberal Studies**



## APPENDIX C

Numbers and Percentages of Respondents Including Individual Authors/Works in Their Literature Survey Courses

Authors/Works	Number	Percentage
William Shakespeare	13	43.3
Homer	8	26.7
Sophocles	8	26.7
Virginia Woolf	8	26.7
Geoffrey Chaucer	7	23.3
Euripides	7	23.3
Franz Kafka	7	23.3
Joseph Conrad	6	20.0
Emily Dickinson	6	20.0
Nathaniel Hawthorne	6	20.0
Plato	6	20.0
Leslie Marmon Silko	6	20.0
William Wordsworth	6	20.0
Aeschylus	5	16.7
The Bible	5	16.7
John Donne	5	16.7
Frederick Douglass	5	16.7
William Faulkner	5	16.7
Charlotte Perkins Gilman	5	16.7
Ernest Hemingway	5	16.7
John Milton	5	16.7
Michel de Montaigne	5	16.7
Mary Shelley	5	16.7
Edmund Spenser	5	16.7
The author of <i>Beowulf</i>	4	13.3
William Blake	4	13.3
Anne Bradstreet	4	13.3
Dante Alighieri	4	13.3
René Descartes	4	13.3
Arthur Miller	4	13.3
Edgar Allan Poe	4	13.3
Sappho	4	13.3
Saint Augustine	4	13.3
Alfred, Lord Tennyson	4	13.3
Thucydides	4	13.3

<b>Authors/Works</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Mark Twain	4	13.3
William Butler Yeats	4	13.3
Aphra Behn	3	10.0
William Bradford	3	10.0
Emily Brontë	3	10.0
Kate Chopin	3	10.0
Charles Dickens	3	10.0
Fyodor Dostoevsky	3	10.0
George Eliot	3	10.0
Benjamin Franklin	3	10.0
The <i>Gawain</i> poet	3	10.0
Herman Melville	3	10.0
Eugene O'Neill	3	10.0
Sylvia Plath	3	10.0
Wallace Stevens	3	10.0
Jonathan Swift	3	10.0
Edward Taylor	3	10.0
Walt Whitman	3	10.0
Tennessee Williams	3	10.0
William Carlos Williams	3	10.0
Chinua Achebe	2	6.7
Aristophanes	2	6.7
Jane Austen	2	6.7
Elizabeth Bishop	2	6.7
Elizabeth Barrett Browning	2	6.7
George, Lord Byron	2	6.7
Raymond Carver	2	6.7
Anton Chekhov	2	6.7
Samuel Taylor Coleridge	2	6.7
E. E. Cummings	2	6.7
Jonathan Edwards	2	6.7
Ralph Waldo Emerson	2	6.7
Robert Frost	2	6.7
Seamus Justin Heaney	2	6.7
Henrik Ibsen	2	6.7
Henry James	2	6.7
James Joyce	2	6.7
Julian of Norwich	2	6.7
John Keats	2	6.7
Margery Kempe	2	6.7
D. H. Lawrence	2	6.7

<b>Authors/Works</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Jack London	2	6.7
Christopher Marlowe	2	6.7
Karl Marx	2	6.7
Marianne Moore	2	6.7
Toni Morrison	2	6.7
Plautus	2	6.7
Alexander Pope	2	6.7
Ezra Pound	2	6.7
Marilynne Robinson	2	6.7
Christina Georgina Rossetti	2	6.7
Mary Rowlandson	2	6.7
George Bernard Shaw	2	6.7
Percy Bysshe Shelley	2	6.7
Richard Sheridan	2	6.7
Sir Philip Sidney	2	6.7
John Steinbeck	2	6.7
Henry David Thoreau	2	6.7
Virgil	2	6.7
Alice Walker	2	6.7
Oscar Wilde	2	6.7
Mary Wollstonecraft	2	6.7
Richard Wright	2	6.7

(No. of respondents on which percentage was based) (30)

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## APPENDIX D

Data for Questions 1-6

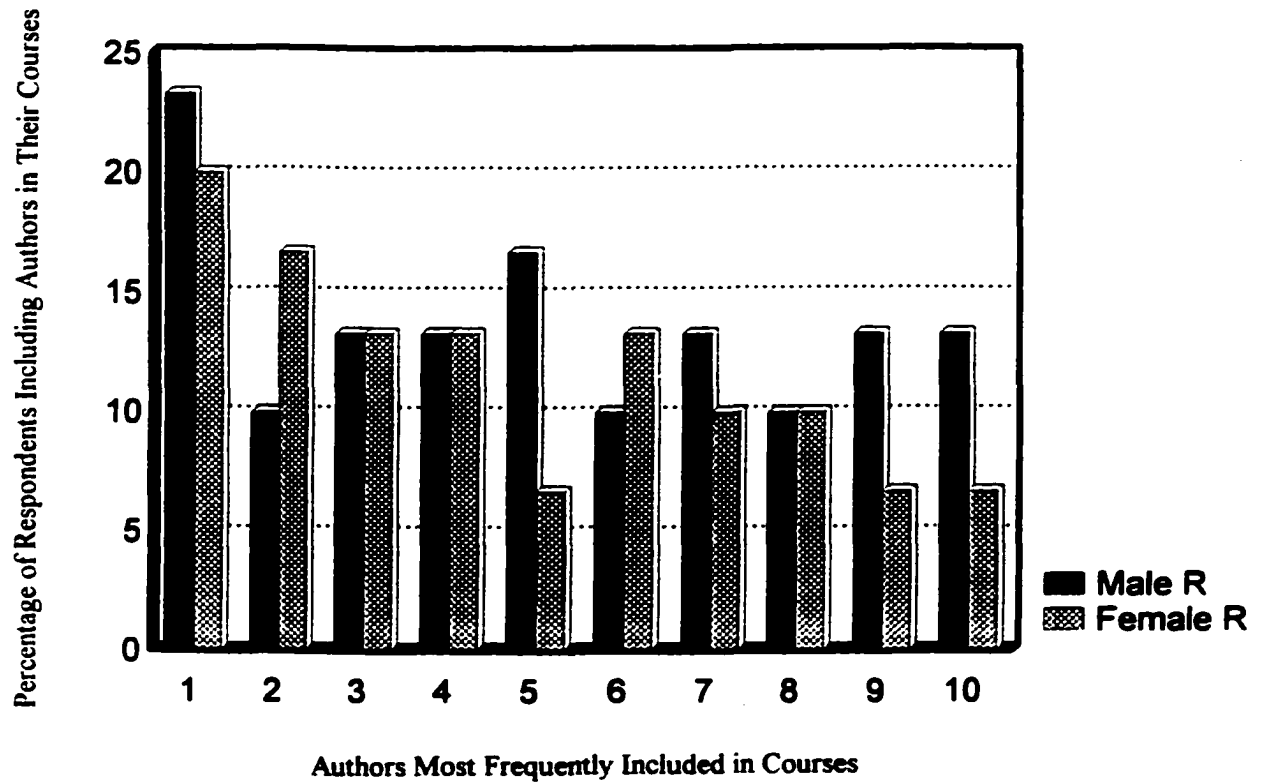
	Number	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	15	50.0
Female	15	50.0
<b>Highest Degree</b>		
PhD	26	86.7
MA	2	6.7
MFA	1	3.3
DA	1	3.3
<b>Discipline</b>		
English	19	66.3
French	2	6.7
Literature	2	6.7
American Studies	1	3.3
Classics	1	3.3
English & Creative Writing	1	3.3
English Language & Literature	1	3.3
No Designation	1	3.3
Philosophy	1	3.3
Theater	1	3.3
<b>Year Granted</b>		
1990-1999	14	46.7
1970-1979	9	30.0
1980-1989	5	16.7
1960-1969	1	3.3
1950-1959	1	3.3
<b>Department</b>		
English	12	40.0
Liberal Studies	5	16.7
Languages & Literature	4	13.3
English & Philosophy	2	6.7
English Literature	1	3.3
English & Theater	1	3.3
Foreign Languages	1	3.3
Foreign Languages & Literatures	1	3.3
Humanities	1	3.3
Liberal & Women's Studies	1	3.3

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Tenure Status</b>		
Visiting	1	3.3
Tenured	17	56.7
Tenure Track	9	30.0
Non-Tenure Track	4	13.3
<b>Rank</b>		
Full Professor	10	33.3
Associate Professor	10	33.3
Assistant Professor	5	16.7
Adjunct	5	16.7
Lecturer	0	0
<b>Course Content Responsibility</b>		
You	24	80.0
Committee	3	10.0
Department	2	6.7
Collective Instructors	1	3.3
<b>School</b>		
U of M-Missoula	9	30.0
MSU-Bozeman	6	20.0
Carroll College	4	13.3
MSU-Billings	3	10.0
Montana Tech	3	10.0
Western Montana College	2	6.7
MSU-Northern	1	3.3
Rocky Mountain College	1	3.3
<b>(No. of respondents on which percentage was based) (30)</b>		

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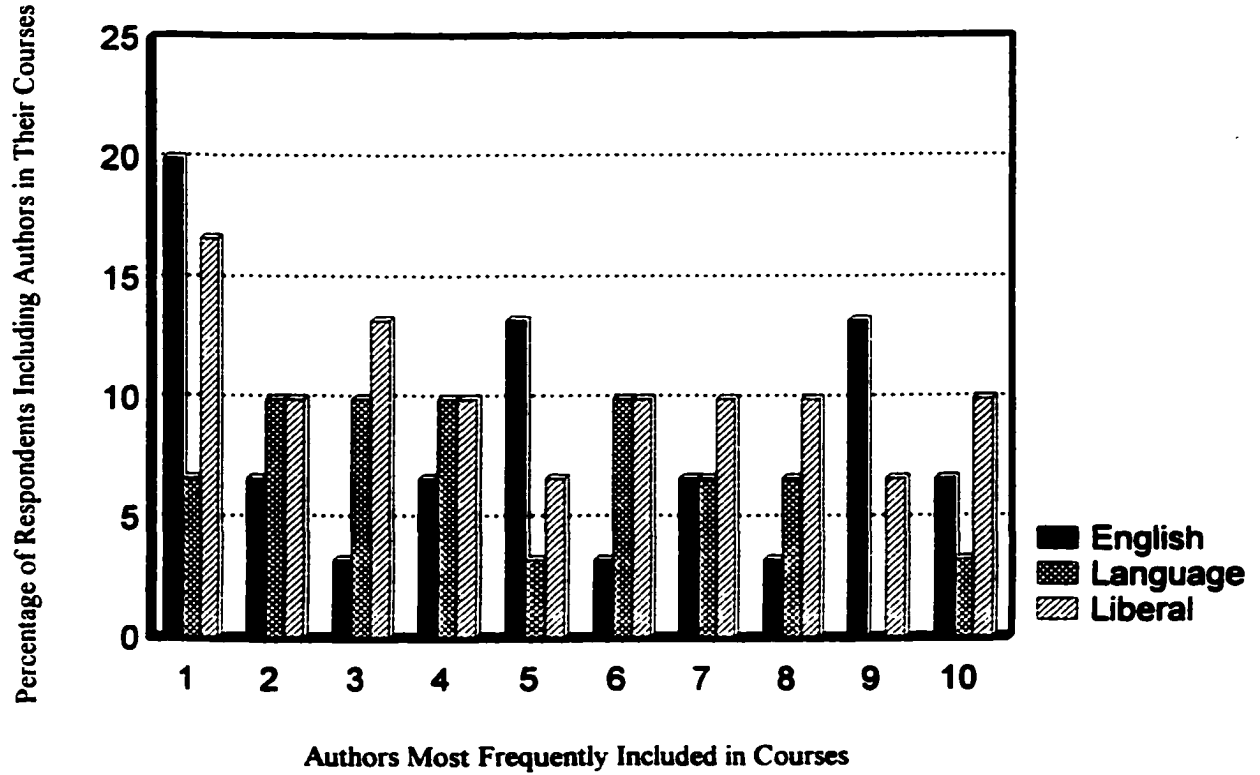
## APPENDIX E

Male/Female Distribution of Respondents for 10 Most Frequently Included Authors:  
 1. Shakespeare 2. Homer 3. Sophocles 4. Woolf 5. Chaucer 6. Euripides 7. Kafka  
 8. Conrad 9. Dickinson 10. Hawthorne



## APPENDIX F

**Departmental Distribution of Respondents for 10 Most Frequently Included Authors:**  
**1. Shakespeare 2. Homer 3. Sophocles 4. Woolf 5. Chaucer 6. Euripides 7. Kafka**  
**8. Conrad 9. Dickinson 10. Hawthorne**



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