

## Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program: American Studies BA

Department: American Studies

Degree or Certificate Level: BA

College/School: Arts and Sciences

Date (Month/Year): 12/1/2020

Primary Assessment Contact: Heidi Ardizzone

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? 2020

In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2019

### 1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle?

LO 3: **Practice** interdisciplinary research methods in the study of American cultures through critical interpretation of a wide variety of American cultural artifacts, such as material, visual, literary, and popular.

### 2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please identify the course(s) in which these artifacts were collected. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

Final project presentations and student reflections from ASTD 4960 (Senior Capstone) on SLU campus/switched to online in March 2020.

### 3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and include them in/with this report.

Faculty attending the (virtual) presentations were asked to rate the presentations informally for their attention to interdisciplinarity. Proposed rubric for future formal assessment of presentations attached.

Rubric for assessing student reflections attached.

### 4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

Results from 2017 are difficult to use as they represented our first attempts at assessment. While the score for Rubric A in LO3 was the lowest at 3.3, we experienced that our scoring for Rubric B (4.1) had been inappropriately inflated, as the evaluators decided it was unfair to penalize the score when students were not explicitly asked to address that topic. This, of course, was a complete misunderstanding of the purpose of assessment as opposed to grading. The truth was that only one or two students even addressed the issue of interdisciplinarity.

In 2020, all students, now prompted, could speak to both the disciplinary methods in their projects, and considered various ways in which they did or could draw on an interdisciplinary model.

Of the six students assessed, all of them directly addressed the issue of interdisciplinarity in both their early reflections of previous work, and in their final self-assessments on LO3. One showed only minimal shifts between their first and second assessment, but most showed marked improvement on their ability to speak to the specific disciplinary methods they used, how they combined 2-3 methodologies in primary sources, or analytics, and their insights into the difficulties and the possibilities for their work.

The informal survey of faculty also concluded that all but one student explicitly mentioned their interdisciplinary methodology in their presentations, and most directly addressed how their work fit into American Studies models of research.

## 5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

The data tells us that our recent majors emerged from their major with a strong awareness of the interdisciplinary research methods that define American Studies as a field. Even in their first reflections, where they This is a very encouraging message that our efforts (described in more detail below) are moving us on the right track. The data do not tell us, however, if a future re-assessment of written capstone projects on LO 3 will reflect the same success in written implementation.

## 6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

This is something of an in-progress situation as we have both previously made changes to allow both better student engagement with LO 3 and multiple views for assessing it. Most of the changes made below are not a result of the current findings but have not yet been reported in full. The final change is a result of these findings:

We last assessed Capstones for LO 3 (and LO 4) in Summer 2017, and noted then that students did not discuss the interdisciplinary nature of their projects or place them explicitly within American Studies scholarship (LO3). This is a crucial point for us so brought most of our concern in subsequent discussions. In Spring 2018 we began to make changes in the syllabus for ASTD 4960. At present, the changes are as follows:

Added an explicit new evaluation criterion for the final capstone project, shared with students at the outset, regarding interdisciplinarity and the American Studies nature of the projects. This was supported by

1. Added readings on the interdisciplinary methods of American Studies
2. Two prompts for student reflection, one at the beginning of their research and one at the end which ask students to both plan and then assess themselves on their interdisciplinary approaches in their capstone projects.

Along with this expansion of the materials we collect to assess LO 3, we are also in the process of adding a regular evaluation of capstone student presentations (proposed rubric attached) which will be used in the future to both provide quick glance feedback each year and archived to allow for multi-year assessment for future reports.

**B.** How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies

- Course content
- Teaching techniques
- Improvements in technology
- Prerequisites

- Course sequence
- New courses
- Deletion of courses
- Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

Changes to the Assessment Plan

- Student learning outcomes
- Artifacts of student learning
- Evaluation process

- Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
- Data collection methods
- Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

We have begun expanding our data collection methods and using additional artifacts of student learning. We are creating new evaluation tools (attached), one of which expands our focus on LO 3 to get more nuanced data.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

## 7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

**A.** What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of assessment data?

In 2018 we had submitted a program change for our major which was approved and instituted in Fall 2019. For all incoming majors after that term, we require that students demonstrate "breadth" by taking at least one class in each of three categories. The categories align with our learning objectives, and we also began asking faculty and instructors to collect papers or other artifacts that met their class's respective LO. The implementation of this curriculum change was eased by the fact that the threads reflected current and recent course offerings. However, with the requirement now in place we have had to ensure that at least one class in each thread is offered each semester so that students have ample opportunities to fill their breadth requirement.

**B.** How has this change/have these changes been assessed?

Before beginning their classes, faculty and instructors are reminded which LO/thread their course addresses and asked to be sure at least one of their assignments reflects that LO. (New instructors, including graduate students, are always oriented to our Learning Objectives and required to include at least two on their syllabi addressed in readings and assignments. At the end of the term we collect an artifact for all majors in those classes. We have been archiving these artifacts for four semesters and plan to assess at least one thread next year.

**C.** What were the findings of the assessment?

n/a

**D.** How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

n/a

**IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools and/or revised/updated assessment plans along with this report.**

PROPOSED RUBRIC Summer 2020 (will discuss, amend, and employ in 2021)

American Studies  
Capstone Student Oral Presentation Rubric  
\*\*\*Assessment Use Only\*\*\*  
Submit to American Studies Undergraduate Coordinator

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Learning Objectives to be assessed:

LO 3: **Practice** interdisciplinary research methods in the study of American cultures through critical interpretation of a wide variety of American cultural artifacts, such as material, visual, literary, and popular

LO 4: **Articulate** arguments and information effectively in ... presentations.

Oral Assessment Instructions

1. Listen to the presentation, questions and student's answers
2. Fill out the table below using the following rubric and scale

Scale: 5= Excellent; 4= Good; 3= Acceptable; 2= Poor; 1= Unacceptable.

How well did the student...	Score
Articulate interdisciplinary research methods in their project?	
Use interdisciplinary research methods in their project?	
Express ideas orally in a well-organized and clear manner?	
Present a clear thesis and evidence for their thesis?	
Compose convincing and coherent answers to questions?	

Reviewer's Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

PROPOSED RUBRIC Summer 2020 (will discuss, amend, and employ in 2021)

American Studies  
Written Capstone Rubric  
\*\*\*Assessment Use Only\*\*\*  
Submit to American Studies Undergraduate Coordinator

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Learning Objectives to be assessed:

LO 3: **Practice** interdisciplinary research methods in the study of American cultures through critical interpretation of a wide variety of American cultural artifacts, such as material, visual, literary, and popular (LO 4: **Articulate** arguments and information effectively in ... presentations.)

Written Assessment Instructions

1. Listen to the presentation, questions and student's answers
2. Fill out the table below using the following rubric and scale

Scale: 5= Excellent; 4= Good; 3= Acceptable; 2= Poor; 1= Unacceptable.

How well did the student...	Score
Differentiate disciplinary approaches in the study of American culture?	
Apply interdisciplinary approaches in the study of American culture?	
Competently research, identify, and include relevant but varied primary source materials?	
Analyze primary sources?	
Identify and appraise secondary materials?	

Reviewer's Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: (Capstone Advisor) (Second Reader) (Other)

PROPOSED RUBRIC Summer 2020 (will discuss, amend, and employ in 2021)

American Studies  
Capstone Reflections  
\*\*\*Assessment Use Only\*\*\*  
Submit to American Studies Undergraduate Coordinator

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Learning Objectives to be assessed:

LO 3: **Practice** interdisciplinary research methods in the study of American cultures through critical interpretation of a wide variety of American cultural artifacts, such as material, visual, literary, and popular (LO 4: **Articulate** arguments and information effectively in ... presentations.)

Written Assessment Instructions

1. Listen to the presentation, questions and student's answers
2. Fill out the table below using the following rubric and scale

Scale: 5= Excellent; 4= Good; 3= Acceptable; 2= Poor; 1= Unacceptable.

How well did the student....	First Refl	Second Refl
Differentiate disciplinary approaches in the study of American culture?		
Apply interdisciplinary approaches in the study of American culture?		
Evaluate the strengths and weakness of their own approach to interdisciplinarity?		
Use appropriate criteria for selecting primary sources?		
Identify and appraise secondary materials?		

Reviewer's Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: (Capstone Advisor) (ASTD Faculty) (Other)

