

## Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

**Program Name (no acronyms):** American Studies

**Department:** American Studies

**Degree or Certificate Level:** B.A.

**College/School:** College of Arts and Sciences

**Date (Month/Year):** 09/2021

**Assessment Contact:** Emily Lutenski, Chair  
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**In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected?** Fall 2019 (when the revised American Studies major became operational) to Spring 2021.

**In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated?** The most recent assessment plan is dated 2020; the department will revise the B.A. assessment plan during the 2021-2022 academic year, along with the Graduate Certificate, M.A., and Ph.D. assessment plans.

### 1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle? (Please list the full, complete learning outcome statements and not just numbers, e.g., Outcomes 1 and 2.)

Student Learning Outcome 2: Comprehend the diversity of American cultures and experiences both within the nation-state and abroad, particularly in terms of race, gender, sexuality, and class.

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

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please describe and 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.

The artifacts used to determine if students achieved the above outcome include assignments that range from online discussion board posts to short response papers, and from longer argumentative essays to take-home essay exams where students respond to a prompt.

The artifacts submitted are determined as follows: at the end of each semester, the Undergraduate Coordinator in American Studies requests that instructors for courses mapped to this outcome file artifacts that they feel best evidence student achievement of the outcome. It bears noting that instructors are also reminded of the outcomes their courses fulfill as they finalize their courses before the semester begins; this enables all instructors to design assignments geared toward student achievement of the outcome.

The courses from which these artifacts were collected are those that fulfill the required "Identities: Social Difference and Agency" breadth requirement in our revised undergraduate major. These courses are mapped to this particular outcome and are identified for our students by an "American Studies Identities" attribute in Banner.

Since our major revision became effective in Fall 2019, we have offered the following courses to aid student achievement of our B.A. Learning Outcome 2: ASTD 2700: Gender, Race, and Social Justice (Fall 2019 and Fall 2020); ASTD 2300: Americans Abroad (Spring 2020, Summer 2021); ASTD 2400: Immigration in U.S. History and Culture (Spring 2020); ASTD 2500: American Identities (Spring 2021); ASTD 3900: Mixed-Race America (Spring 2021). For each of these courses, artifacts were collected in the manner described above.

All courses offered during the Fall 2019-Spring 2020 academic year were offered in-person until the pandemic necessitated the switch to online learning in Spring 2020. All of the courses offered in the Fall 2020-Spring 2021 academic year were offered in a “hyflex” format due to SLU’s COVID-19 protocols. The Summer 2021 course was offered in a synchronous online format due to COVID-19 protocols. None of the courses were offered at the Madrid campus or another off-campus location.

### 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 document** (do not just refer to the assessment plan).

Each artifact of student learning was assessed by a faculty member at the beginning of the Fall 2021 semester after faculty were back on contract. The artifacts were assessed via a rubric included here (see Appendix A). The rubric is rated as follows: 5: Excellent Mastery, 4: Good Mastery, 3: Some Mastery, 2: Minimal Mastery, 1: No Mastery, and what each of those designations means is described in the rubric.

### 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)?

In total, seven artifacts were able to be assessed for this outcome for BA majors since Fall 2019, when our major revision went into place. These came from four different courses. For the second point on the rubric, “Student recognizes the construction of race, gender, sexuality, and class in the United States,” students rated from 1-5 with an average of 3.2. For the second point on the rubric, “Student distinguishes how race, gender, sexuality, and class have shaped American identities and experiences in terms of disadvantage, privilege, oppression, and resistance,” students rated from 2-5, with an average of 3.7. For the third point on the rubric, “Student identifies how factors such as immigration, migration, imperialism, and globalization of impacted Americans and their interlocutors both in the United States and elsewhere,” students rated from 2-4, with an average of 4.

Given the small sample size, it is difficult to say whether teaching modality affected achievement of the learning outcome. Of the courses from where these artifacts were sourced, four came from face-to-face or “hyflex” courses where the primary mode of instruction was face-to-face unless a student was ill, in quarantine, or elected to take the course fully online before the beginning of the term, while three were sourced from courses that flipped from in-person to a fully online format during the first semester affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Spring 2020). The four that came from face-to-face or “hyflex” courses did rate more highly on all points averaged together (4.1) than those that flipped online in Spring 2020 (2.9), but it is unclear whether that was because of the online format, the general disruption of the semester, or other issues wrought by illness, stress, or mental health that were exacerbated by the arrival of the pandemic in Spring 2020.

### 5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

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

While it is likely that the lower ratings in Spring 2020 were at least in part due to the shift to online learning and other conditions of the pandemic, there may be another explanation as well, which is that the courses from which artifacts were sourced that semester focused more on the aspect of this learning outcome that is specifically geared toward broadening student attention to the cultures of the United States in transnational or global perspectives than on the aspects of this learning outcome focused on the construction of race, gender, sexuality, and/or class. Indeed, for those courses, the final point on the rubric was, on average, much higher than the first two (4.3 versus 2.3).

Our sense, then, was that it may sometimes be too much for a single course to look at both aspects of this outcome at the same time, and that perhaps this single outcome may make more better sense as two different outcomes assessed through two different rubrics, as we discuss in our section below on “Closing the Loop.”

In general, while average ratings between 3-4 on all points is not terribly disappointing, we would rather see students rate between 4-5 on all points. One plausible interpretation of this data, however, is that student artifacts were collected too early in their time to degree, when they were still developing the skills necessary to rate more highly.

Indeed, all but one of the artifacts collected here were from 2000-level courses. The last was from a 3000-level course, and it had a higher average rating on all points (4.3) than most of the others (which ranged from 2.3 to 4.3). In the future, we should consider recalibrating our assessment plan to ensure we are assessing the work of our majors nearer to the completion of their degree, such as in their capstone projects. We will address this further in our next section on “Closing the Loop.”

## 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?

The findings of this cycle of assessment were shared and discussed with all faculty at a routine department meeting near the beginning of the Fall 2021 semester; future meetings and conversations throughout the Fall 2021-Spring 2022 academic year will focus on refining assessment practices in tandem with an intensive focus on curriculum review and refinement within the department.

- 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.

Throughout the Fall 2021-Spring 2022 academic year, we will renovate our undergraduate catalog with a focus on ensuring there is distinction between courses where students are still developing their ability to meet our outcomes and courses when students are expected to be able to achieve the outcomes with good or excellent mastery. As part of this, we anticipate renumbering courses, particularly at the 2000- and 3000-levels, to create a clearer sense of course sequencing.

At the same time, we will be renaming courses with a focus on student recruitment, which we hope will give us a larger sample size of majors than we have now. A larger major will mean more data, and less of it will be at risk of being thrown off by an occasional anomaly—in short, a larger major will give us a clearer picture of the effectiveness of that major.

Renaming and renumbering courses throughout our catalog will offer students a more diverse sequence of gateways to the major and allow us to gather artifacts from courses where students will evidence more developed achievement of the outcomes than we are able to gather now.

In addition, we will develop a new assessment plan that will allow us to gather student work produced later in a student's degree program than it is now. Our current breadth requirement, which is the place in the major from where we have been gathering the assessment artifacts for this learning outcome, includes courses taken at all levels, but what became clear in this assessment cycle is that students are still developing as they are taking these courses.

Rather than, for example, change course sequencing or introducing prerequisites into the curriculum, which would have negative effects on students' time to degree (and ours is currently very good), it makes more sense to assess most our outcomes, including this one, with students' senior capstone papers. This re-envisioning our curriculum map for the major, seeing our breadth requirement as part of the "developing" stage of student learning, and the capstone as the place where "mastery" of nearly all of our outcomes is evidenced. To do this would allow us to break apart this outcome into two outcomes as well, should we choose to do so.

Should we break this apart into two outcomes, however, it would require a dedicated place in the curriculum map where students would address both at the developing stage. If staffing shortages mean we cannot introduce a new breadth requirement, for example, into the major curriculum, we need to think about course-level adjustments to our current "Identities" requirement that ensure that students will equally meet its emphasis on the construction of race, gender, sexuality, and/or class and its emphasis on the importance of transnational frameworks to understanding American cultures.

Finally, we may consider whether both of these emphases are already addressed by our courses, but perhaps our artifact collection practices are not adequately showcasing students' mastery of these skills. A solution to this could be—particularly as SLU introduces its new University Core Curriculum—offering a Cura Personalis 3 course as a one-credit attachment to our Senior Capstone course.

This could be offered via a collaboration with the Capstone instructor, a GA mentor, and Career Services staff and involve the composition of an e-portfolio wherein students would explicitly address both sides of this learning outcome (as well as the other outcomes) by collecting their best evidence of their achievement, as well as a public-facing website to host their work, which they could provide to prospective employers and graduate programs.

These options—and probably more—will be discussed by faculty at department meetings scheduled throughout the 2021-2022 academic year, with the goal to strengthen our assessment protocols by applying our rubrics to the artifacts we can capture closest to students' graduation dates: their senior capstones. We hope to have a revised assessment plan to implement in 2022-2023, one which can generate more accurate data to help us understand which of the above directions to take in curriculum revision.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

N/A

## 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?

Since our major revision only went into effect in Fall 2019, we have to date made changes to our assessment protocol, but not to our curriculum—we need a student to complete the whole curriculum before we can see with any accuracy where it needs additional refinement. We have, however, made changes to our assessment protocols in recent years.

Our 2020 assessment report, for example, suggested developing a rubric to assess student senior capstone presentations in addition to students' written work. This feedback is being incorporated as we consider our learning outcome 4 ("Articulate arguments and information effectively in writing and presentations"), where

we have a clearly developed rubric for assessing writing (see Appendix B) but had not developed attendant points on student presentations. Bringing together these two rubrics will be part of our revision to our assessment plan during the Fall 2021-Spring 2022 academic year.

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

While the changes to our assessment protocols are not assessed in the same manner as student work, we received for the feedback on our assessment report from the committee devoted to undergraduate assessment for the first time in early Summer 2021. In crucial manners, this feedback functions like assessment for our assessment plan.

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

Upon reviewing our 2020 assessment report, the committee offered some valuable suggestions to revise the proposed rubric for capstone presentations. In particular, the committee suggested that the rubric needed to more clearly define the ratings offered, much in the way our rubric for student written work does.

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

Adding the emphasis on presentations to the current rubric for SLO4 and with the same level of that detail will address the committee's excellent comments and allow for more robust assessment of student capstone work. This will be completed this academic year, along with a broader overhaul of our assessment plan that allows us to focus on student work produced at the end of the major curriculum rather than when achievement of outcomes is still being developed.

**IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools (e.g., rubrics) with this report as separate attachments or copied and pasted into this Word document. Please do not just refer to the assessment plan; the report should serve as a stand-alone document.**

## Appendix A: American Studies B.A. SLO 2 Rubric

### American Studies Undergraduate SLO 2 Assessment Rubric

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Evaluator Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**American Studies Student Learning Outcome 2**

Comprehend the diversity of American cultures and experiences both within the nation-state and abroad, particularly in terms of race, gender, sexuality, and class.

- Students will recognize the construction of race, gender, sexuality, and class in the United States, and how these have shaped American identities and experiences in terms of disadvantage, privilege, oppression, and resistance.
- Students will identify how factors such as immigration, migration, imperialism, and globalization have impacted Americans and their interlocutors both in the United States and elsewhere.

	<b>5: Excellent Mastery</b>	<b>4: Good Mastery</b>	<b>3: Some Mastery</b>	<b>2: Minimal Mastery</b>	<b>1: No Mastery</b>	<b>Score:</b>
<b>Student recognizes the construction of race, gender, sexuality, and class in the United States.</b>	In addition to demonstrating how race, gender, sexuality and/or class are produced culturally, historically, socially, or ideologically, student illustrates how they reflect each other rather than existing in isolation.	Student comprehensively demonstrates how race, gender, sexuality and/or class are produced culturally, historically, socially, or ideologically.	Student addresses race, gender, sexuality, and/or class and indicates that they are not fixed or essential but does not engage how such factors are produced culturally, historically, socially, or ideologically.	Student addresses race, gender, sexuality, and/or class but does not indicate the ways in which such factors are produced culturally, historically, socially, or ideologically.	Student does not address race, gender, sexuality, and/or class meaningfully in her work.	
<b>Student distinguishes how race, gender, sexuality, and class have shaped American identities and experiences in terms of disadvantage, privilege, oppression, and resistance.</b>	Student thoroughly documents how the construction of race, gender, sexuality and/or class creates privilege, disadvantage, oppression and/or resistance and the outcomes or meanings of such negotiations of power in an especially sophisticated and nuanced way.	Student thoroughly documents how the construction of race, gender, sexuality, and/or class creates privilege, disadvantage, oppression, and/or resistance and the outcomes or meanings of such negotiations of power.	Student acknowledges that the construction of race, gender, sexuality, and/or class create privilege, disadvantage, oppression, and/or resistance and documents how.	Student acknowledges that the construction of race, gender, sexuality, and/or class create privilege, disadvantage, oppression, and/or resistance, but does not document how.	Student does not address how the construction of race, gender, sexuality, and/or class create privilege, disadvantage, oppression, and/or resistance.	
<b>Student identifies how factors such as immigration, migration, imperialism, and globalization have impacted Americans and their interlocutors both in the United States and elsewhere.</b>	Student addresses factors like immigration, migration, imperialism, and globalization in a comprehensive way, documenting the importance of a broader view of the United States thoroughly and convincingly—and also with particular sophistication and nuance.	Student addresses factors like immigration, migration, imperialism, and globalization in a comprehensive way, documenting the importance of a broader view of the United States thoroughly and convincingly.	Student addresses factors like immigration, migration, imperialism, and globalization, and documents the importance of a broader view of the United States in at least a cursory way.	Student acknowledges factors like immigration, migration, imperialism, and globalization, but does not document the importance of a broader view of the United States.	Student does not look beyond the nation as at factors such as immigration, migration, imperialism, and globalization.	

## Appendix B: American Studies B.A. SLO 4 Rubric

### American Studies Undergraduate SLO 4 Assessment Rubric

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Evaluator Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### American Studies Student Learning Outcome 4

**Articulate** arguments and information effectively in writing and presentations.

- Students will demonstrate appropriate tone, style, and genre for American Studies audiences in clear and correct writing and presentations.
- Students will argue concisely and accurately in writing and presentations, and prepare sufficient evidence and reasoning to support claims, including proper documentation of sources.

	<b>5: Excellent Mastery</b>	<b>4: Good Mastery</b>	<b>3: Some Mastery</b>	<b>2: Minimal Mastery</b>	<b>1: No Mastery</b>	<b>Score:</b>
<b>Student clearly states a research question or problem.</b>	Student's question is answerable, complex, interesting, and clearly conversant with field-level problems in American Studies.	Student's question is answerable and sufficiently complex. It is somewhat interesting, but not clearly conversant with field-level problems.	Student's question is answerable but may be relatively simple. While sufficient to make an argument, its relationship to the field is unarticulated.	Student's question is simple and leads to a paper that is more descriptive to argumentative.	Student's question is articulated but is unanswerable.	
<b>Student has an effective argument.</b>	Student's argument is clearly stated and proceeds logically with strong transitions. The argument is supported sufficiently by evidence and the stakes of the argument are clear.	Student's argument is clearly stated and proceeds logically, although some transitions could be stronger. The argument is supported sufficiently by evidence, but the student may not clearly articulate what the stakes of the argument are.	Student's argument is less clearly stated, and the logic and organization could be improved. There may be places where evidence is described rather than interpreted.	Student's argument is unclear. There are some problems with organization and logic and the evidence provided cannot sufficiently support a claim.	Student does not have an argument. The work is disorganized and illogical. The evidence provided to support the argument is irrelevant.	
<b>Student work is appropriate for disciplinary audience.</b>	Student has clearly geared her work to an American Studies audience; the purpose of the work is clear, and the language, style, genre, and tone is carefully crafted to speak to an American Studies audience.	Student's work is appropriate for an academic audience in language, style, genre, and tone, but perhaps not for American Studies in particular.	Student does not entirely understand the conventions of academic language, style, genre, and tone; there are a few places it may be inappropriate.	Student's paper is largely inappropriate for an academic audience in language, style, genre, and tone.	Student work is wholly inappropriate for an academic audience in language, style, genre, and tone.	
<b>Student work is grammatically and mechanically correct.</b>	There are no problems with spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence, or paragraph construction.	There are rare errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence, or paragraph construction, but never severe enough to impede reading or listening.	There are errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence, or paragraph construction that are severe enough to hinder understanding of the student's points.	There are routine errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence, or paragraph construction that make portions of the student's work unintelligible.	There are consistent errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence, or paragraph construction that make the majority of the student's work unintelligible.	
<b>Student work is properly documented.</b>	Student properly cites all sources using Chicago or MLA style; the student includes a bibliography listing all sources consulted for the paper.	Student cites all sources using Chicago or MLA style and includes a bibliography, but there may be some errors in formatting.	Student cites most sources using Chicago or MLA style and includes a bibliography, but there are errors in formatting and some information may be missing.	Student does not sufficiently cite sources using Chicago or MLA style, and citations that are provided are formatted incorrectly.	Student routinely does not cite sources using Chicago or MLA style and has consistent problems providing proper information for citations.	