

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): American Studies

Department: American Studies

Degree or Certificate Level: Graduate Certificate

College/School: College of Arts and Sciences

Date (Month/Year): 09/2021

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In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? 2021

In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? The most recent assessment plan is dated 2018; the department will revise the Graduate Certificate assessment plan during the 2021-2022 academic year, along with the B.A., 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 1: Apply the major practices, theories, or research methodologies in American Studies.

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 artifact collected per our current assessment plan is an exam, taken at the end of ASTD 5000: Perspectives in American Studies, which is the only required course for the Graduate Certificate. This is a closed-book essay wherein students respond to a prompt based on their ASTD 5000 course, which introduces students to graduate study in American Studies, including the major theories and methods of the field.

This course was offered in a "hyflex" mode in Fall 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the primary mode of instruction was in person unless a student was ill, in quarantine, or had made arrangements to take courses only online before the semester began. In general, this course is offered in-person, and only on the St. Louis campus.

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)?

We only have one student currently in the graduate certificate program, so could only assess one artifact. That student rated 5 on the rubric's first point, which is "Student comprehends the major theoretical approaches that inflect American Studies scholarship." The artifact presented rated 5 on the rubric's second point, which is "Student differentiates disciplinary approaches in the study of American culture." The student rated 4 on the rubric's third point, which is "Student applies interdisciplinary approaches in the study of American culture."

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

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

It is difficult to deduce anything meaningful from the above results given that only one student's work could be assessed. We can, however, analyze whether the assessment plan seems functional.

The student scored lower on the third point of the rubric, which is "Student applies interdisciplinary approaches in the study of American culture" than the other two points. This third point echoes the learning outcome's overarching emphasis to "Apply the major practices, theories, or research methodologies in American Studies," which means this point is crucial to deliver and assess. But the results of this assessment cycle require we ask whether the exam is the appropriate artifact wherein to examine application, and therefore whether the assessment plan itself needs revision now that we have had a chance to implement it.

The exam format is geared toward exemplifying student *comprehension* of theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches to American Studies, rather than an *application* of those approaches, which would be easier to see in the form of an analytical research paper. This student's work reasoned through how one *could* apply theoretical insights and interdisciplinary methods in studies of American culture but did not execute that application itself—and could not execute that application—in the exam format.

By the time of the next assessment cycle, faculty should address whether the exam is the best tool to use for the assessment of this outcome. Is this simply a matter of the exam prompt being tweaked to ask for application in a more transparent way? Or is it possible that a different type of artifact would allow students to better showcase their abilities to achieve this outcome more fully—perhaps, for example, a course-level assessment tool wherein the student's cumulative work in ASTD 5000 is examined with a revised rubric for evidence of student achievement of the outcome?

While considering such questions, faculty may discuss whether ASTD 5000 is the best place to map achievement of this outcome—while it is the core course of the graduate certificate (certificate students may never have another course in common) and introduces students to the theories and methods of American Studies in the manner of a survey, it is not necessarily the course wherein a certificate student would show "Excellent Mastery" of these theories and methods. Instead, this student's work shows, comprehension is perhaps the major goal of the introductory course, not application.

This leads, finally, to a question about the graduate certificate outcome itself. Perhaps for a graduate certificate it is not *application*, but *comprehension* that is the major goal—which would mean rewriting the outcome to better reflect the major goal of the degree program. These are the issues to tackle throughout the Fall 2021-Spring 2022 academic year as we look ahead to our 2022 assessment cycle.

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.

As outlined above, in our analysis of these findings, we must determine whether this is a matter of changing the prompt for the certificate exam, a matter of discarding the exam as a meaningful assessment tool and using some kind of course-embedded assessment in ASTD 5000, or whether the outcome is inappropriate for a certificate and needs to be revised. Faculty meetings throughout this academic year will determine the best path forward with the goal to revise the assessment plan for the graduate certificate (as well as the B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. programs) by the end of the Spring 2022 semester, enabling us to implement it in the Fall 2022-Spring 2023 academic year.

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?

This was the first time we have performed assessment on this program; it is a recently developed program and the first graduate certificate student matriculated in Fall 2020.

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

N/A

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 (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 Graduate Certificate SLO 1 Rubric

American Studies Graduate Certificate SLO 1 Assessment Rubric

Student Name: _____ Evaluator Name: _____ Date: _____

American Studies Graduate Certificate Student Learning Outcome 1
Apply the major practices, theories, or research methodologies in American Studies.

	5: Excellent Mastery	4: Good Mastery	3: Some Mastery	2: Minimal Mastery	1: No Mastery	Score:
Student comprehends the major theoretical approaches that inform American Studies scholarship.	Student can describe with nuance and precision more than two theoretical approaches common in American Studies scholarship and why they have had traction in the field.	Student can describe with precision at least two theoretical approaches common in American Studies scholarship and why they have had traction in the field, but their appraisal may lack complexity or depth.	Student can describe at least one theoretical approach common in American Studies, but her description may have minor inaccuracies. She attempts to explain, but cannot satisfactorily explain, why such approaches have had traction in the field.	Student can identify at least one theoretical approach common in American Studies, but her explanation of this theory is off-base and the reason why it has had traction in the field is largely opaque.	Student does not identify a theoretical approach common in American Studies.	
Student differentiates disciplinary approaches in the study of American culture.	Student can describe with nuance and precision how a source does its work in disciplinary or interdisciplinary ways, including the kinds of questions asked, analysis used, and source material that constitutes evidence. Furthermore, student understands why this matters for her own work.	Student can sufficiently describe how a source does its work in disciplinary or interdisciplinary ways, including the kinds of questions asked, analysis used, and source material that constitutes evidence, but does not understand why this matters for her own work.	Student can draw conclusions about what kind of disciplinary or interdisciplinary work a scholar participates in based on the types of primary sources a scholar uses but does not understand how disciplinary or interdisciplinary approaches shape questions or analysis.	Student can recognize and label the disciplinary or interdisciplinary conversation that work participates in based on the institutional location of a scholar, but does not attend much to primary source material, questions, or analysis.	Student does not address disciplinary or interdisciplinarity in the study of American cultures.	
Student applies interdisciplinary approaches in the study of American culture.	Student successfully applies two or more disciplinary approaches to the study of American culture and clearly articulates why these tools are the appropriate ones to answer the student's research question.	Student successfully applies two or more disciplinary approaches to the study of American culture but does not clearly articulate why these tools are the appropriate ones to answer the student's research question.	Student uses the source material of two or more disciplines, but then uses the analytical tools of only one discipline to interpret it.	Student only uses one disciplinary perspective in her or his work in both source materials and analysis but does so successfully.	Student does not successfully use any interdisciplinary or disciplinary approaches in the study of American culture.	