

Student Learning in U.S. Studies (IN250 and IN251) Academic Year 2015-2016 Assessment

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October 24, 2016

Executive Summary

The current year was the eighth year for the new learning goals, as approved by the faculty in 2007-2008. Overall, assessment shows that students in IN250 and IN251 were learning at an adequate level for all three learning goals. The results show slightly higher scores for two goals and slighter lower scores for one goal. This report analyzes these data and discusses future directions for US Studies.

Catalog Description and Learning Goals for US Studies

IN250. United States Studies 1 (3) Sophomore year. Course sections study the diversity of cultures, institutions, and groups in the United States. Inter-disciplinary and historical perspectives inform contemporary understanding of diversity issues. "Culture" refers to learned systems of meanings, and their representations, that people use to interact with the world around them, including language, values, beliefs, norms, traditions, customs, history, art, and artifacts. Pre-requisites: sophomore standing.

The learning outcome goals for students taking a course that fulfills the United States Studies 1 requirement are that students will be able to:

1. analyze diverse cultures in the United States through the use of discipline-appropriate sources;
2. reflect on ethical and social justice issues characteristic of a diverse democratic society; and
3. engage in activities essential to responsible democratic citizenship in the United States.

IN251. United States Studies 2 (3) Sophomore year. Course sections study the diversity of cultures, institutions, and groups in the United States. Inter-disciplinary and historical perspectives inform contemporary understanding of diversity issues. "Social structures" refers to generally stable patterns of interactions, from the smallest units found in individual social relationships, through larger economic, political and social institutions in societies, to worldwide systems of relationships among nations. Pre-requisites: sophomore standing.

The learning outcome goals for students taking a course that fulfills the United States Studies 2 requirement are that students will:

1. analyze social structures within the United States through the use of discipline-appropriate sources;
2. reflect on ethical and social justice issues characteristic of a diverse democratic society; and
3. engage in activities essential to responsible democratic citizenship in the United States.

In addition to these learning goals, the faculty decided that US Studies courses should be writing intensive. The Nyberg Report on Weaving the Threads of MPSL discussed writing intensive courses as those which include the following:

- Written work which represents a substantial portion of the grade.
- Instruction and coaching as students write.
- Guided revision for at least one formal writing assignment.
- Evaluation of the quality of the writing by the characteristics of effective prose, including grammar, organization, and support.
- Support for students needing help with grammar and other elements of composition such as referrals to the Writing Center.

Snapshot

During the 2015-2016 academic year, 38 sections of IN 250 were offered, an increase of 11 sections from the previous academic year. The courses were offered as follows: 13 sections in F15 (trad), 13 sections in SP16 (trad), 4 sections PACE F15, 2 section PACE SP15, 3 sections Summer 16, 3 sections January Immersion. (See Appendix A):

- 19 sections by three History faculty—two full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty, one adjunct faculty with a terminal degree (all PhDs)
- 6 sections by English faculty—three full-time, tenured or tenure-track, one adjunct faculty
- 5 sections by two Fine Arts faculty—two full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty
- 5 sections by two Communication faculty—two full-time tenured or tenure-track
- 1 section by one Philosophy faculty—one full-time tenured or tenure-track
- 1 section by two Nursing faculty—two full-time tenured
- 1 section by one Athletic faculty—one full-time tenured

In addition, 31 sections of IN251 were offered, down 4 sections from the previous year. The courses were offered as follows: 12 sections in F15 (trad), 11 sections in SP16 (trad), 1 sections in PACE F15, 3 sections in PACE SP16, 1 section in Summer 16, 3 sections January Immersion. (See Appendix A):

- 8 sections by three Sociology faculty— one full-time tenured, one full-time tenure-track, one adjunct without terminal degree
- 8 sections by three Political Science faculty— one full-time instructor, two adjuncts with terminal degrees
- 1 sections by one Exercise Science faculty—one full-time tenured
- 5 sections by two Philosophy faculty—two full-time, tenured
- 1 section by one Athletic Department faculty—full-time instructor
- 1 sections by one Biology faculty— one full-time, tenured
- 1 section by one PACE faculty—adjunct without terminal degree
- 1 section by one Social Work faculty—full-time, tenured
- 2 sections by one Organizational Leadership faculty—full-time, tenured
- 3 sections by two Education faculty—one full-time tenure-track, one adjunct without a terminal degree

The Learning Story

In US Studies classes, students learn about different aspects of American society through the two-course sequence. IN250, US Cultural Studies, emphasizes the literature and history of America, while IN251, US Structural Studies, emphasizes the structure of American society. Students read primary texts in a discipline, reflect on ethical and social justice issues in America, engage in activities essential to democratic citizenship, and write a polished essay or paper, or a series of them that demonstrate these engagements through writing. In all sections, students learn about the experiences and perspectives of diverse cultures and people living in the United States. Courses may focus on particular groups (African Americans, women) or particular issues (poverty and welfare, Vietnam, Civil Rights, Watergate), but all faculty are committed to inculcating students to sharper critical thinking and writing skills. Competencies that promote professional success and understanding of others are emphasized (as per MPSL Prepares 1 and 2).

Assessment Methods and Data

One of the major problems in assessing US Studies classes is the wide diversity of classes offered from many disciplines, with the large majority of them being cross-listed with disciplinary offerings. In general, faculty see themselves as teaching their disciplinary course, be it English Literature, History, Sociology or Political Science, to name a few, with the added requirements to make it a US Studies class. That said, the efforts of the university studies coordinators to facilitate assignments that reflect the IN learning goals have been producing a greater degree of fealty to those goals among participating faculty. Each year, we come closer to a community of scholars for US Studies.

Downloading into moodle has become the standard method for submitting artifacts for assessment purposes. We now have a consistently greater pool of artifacts from which to draw. Artifacts from 250/251 classes were randomly selected and then assessed based on a common rubric by a team composed of 2 faculty members who teach IN250, Monroe and Mullgardt, and they assessed each artifact. (See Appendix B) With this rubric, each learning goal was assessed on a scale of 1 – 4, with 4 being Excellent, 3 being Good, 2 being Fair, and 1 being Poor. The following table shows the range of possible scores and their interpretation.

Green	Excellent	3.00-4.00
Yellow	Adequate	2.00-2.99
Red	Nominal	1.00-1.99

In total, more than forty separate artifacts were selected for each of the three learning goals, using material downloaded into the moodle shell, from 250/251 classes. As with last year's survey, moodle proved of immeasurable value in yielding a larger and more representative sample size of evaluable student artifacts. The table below shows the results for 2015-2016.

US Studies 2014-2015	IN250/251
Analyze cultures or structures	2.43
Reflect on ethical and social justice	2.62
Engage in democratic citizenship	2.52

Data Analysis and Discussion

Overall, the data show that students met all three learning goals for both IN250 and IN251 in 2015-2016. The IN250 and IN251 scores indicate that students were performing at an adequate level for all three learning goals. This is marked improvement for democratic citizenship, the third goal.

Different methodologies were used in the four years, so these data are not strictly comparable. In 2009-10, a combination of committee assessment and self-assessment was used, while only committee assessment was used in 2010-11 and 2011-12. Furthermore two artifacts were randomly selected from 66% of the sections in 2010-11, while in 2011-2012 three artifacts were randomly selected from less than half of the sections. However, in the latter year greater care was devoted to ensuring that appropriate artifacts were chosen for each of the three learning

goals. In 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-16, a larger and more representative sample was employed as the basis for analysis.

Assuming the data are comparable over the five-year period, they show consistent performance in meeting the goals, indeed, scores are remarkably consistent over time. Cultures and structures scored 2.33 in 2013-14, 2.21 in 2014-15, and 2.43 in 15-16, a slight increase, while ethical reasoning scored 2.52 in 13-14, 2.63 in 14-15, and 2.62 in 15-16, still consistent in the green zone. Democratic citizenship increased from 1.89 to 2.52. This may be a statistical anomaly or it may reflect a marked improvement in meeting the last goal, democratic citizenship, in written assignments. The five-year trend is good to adequate for all three goals. We can clearly say with confidence that students are learning at a good to adequate level in US Studies classes.

Feedback Loop

We have resumed regular workshops to assist faculty in teaching these learning goals. It remains difficult to attract faculty to the workshops. Nevertheless, we should try and assist faculty in meeting the goals, and clearly the democratic citizenship goal needs improvement. In previous forums, faculty were invited to share examples of writing intensive assignments that met the IN250/251 learning goals. All faculty are also required to submit new syllabi or new assignments to ensure they will be teaching to the goals. The current report will again be distributed to faculty teaching IN250 and IN251. The report will form a basis for future workshops and further consideration of the US Studies learning goals and how they should be assessed. Particular attention will be devoted in these workshops to the changed learning goals and the changed methods of collecting artifacts through moodle. In training, the importance of the third goal, democratic citizenship, will be emphasized. It is encouraging that a broader cross-section of faculty are teaching both 250 and 251, which suggests that efforts to recruit faculty into university studies have been successful.

Appendix A
IN250 Courses, AY 2015-2016

Date	Course Title	Cross-list	FT	Adjunct Faculty
Summer	Philosophy Film		•	
	Hollywood Darkest		•	
PACE Fall	Hollywood Cinema		•	
	Baseball in America		•	
	US to 1865		•	
	Bynd Bows and Arrows		•	
Fall	American Civil War	HI310	•	
	Immigration and Exiles			•
	American Baseball			•
	Moral Horizon		•	
	Hybrid Literature		•	
	Critical Issues		•	
	Anglo-American Slave Narratives		•	
	US History to 1865	HI203	•	
	US History to 1865	HI203	•	
	History of US Pop Culture	HI210	•	
	Hemingway	HI310	•	
	World War II	HI210	•	
Jan. Imm				
	Hollywood Cinema 1970-79		•	
	Prologue/Promise		•	
	American Workers			•
PACE Spring	World War II	HI210	•	
	College Athletics		•	
Spring	Baseball in America		•	
	History of US Since 1865	HI204	•	
			•	
	Ireland in America	HI210		•
	US in Cold War		•	
	Trad. African American Lit: Neo Slave		•	
	Violence in America	HI210	•	
	US 1920s	HI210	•	
	Media History		•	
	Latin American/Latino Novel		•	
	Civil Rights Movement	HI310	•	
	African-Am Theater		•	
	Human Grwth/Diversity		•	
	Journalism/Media Politics		•	

IN251 Courses, AY 2015-2016

Date	Course Title	Cross-list	FT	Adjunct Faculty	
Summer	Baseball in America		•		
	Power/Lies/Politics		•		
PACE Fall	Emerging Adulthood			•	
Fall	Constitutional Law	PO330		•	
	The American Political System	PO105	•		
	Supreme Court		•		
	Environ Ethics		•		
	CIS: Tombstone			•	
	Foundations of Bilingual Ed	ED209		•	
	State and Local Government	PO240	•		
	Stereotype/Prejudice		•		
	Deviance	SO232	•		
	Juvenile Delinquency	SO311	•		
	Psych Athletic Performance		•		
	Health and Pollution	ES321		•	
	Jan Immersion	Consumerism		•	
		Romance/Marriage/Family			•
Sociology: Pop Culture & Media		SO220	•		
PACE Spring	Juvenile Delinquency	SO221		•	
	Philosophy Sport		•		
Spring	Families Generations		•		
	Bioethics		•		
	Sociology of Gender		•		
	Juvenile Delinquency	SO221	•		
	Scientific Revolutions	PH223	•		
	Gender and Politics		•		
	Topics in Persuasion			•	
	Criminology	SO361	•		
	Civil Liberties and Constitution	PO334		•	
	The American Political System	PO105		•	
	Creating a Green Society		•		
	Civil Liberties and Constitution	PO334		•	
	Criminology		•		
	Intro to Criminal Justice	PO235	•		

APPENDIX B

IN250/251
Assessment Rubric

GOAL	EXCELLENT 4	GOOD 3	FAIR 2	POOR 1
Analyze cultures or structures				
Reflects on ethical or social justice issues				
Demonstrate democratic citizenship				