

## **Student Learning in U.S. Studies (IN250 and IN251) Academic Year 2017-2018 Assessment**

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### **Executive Summary**

The current year was the tenth 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 2017-2018 academic year, 33 sections of IN 250 were offered, down slightly from previous years. The courses were offered as follows: 12 sections in F17 (trad), 13 sections in SP18 (trad), 3 sections January Immersion, 5 sections in summer 2017. (See Appendix A):

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

In addition, 31 sections of IN251 were offered. The courses were offered as follows: 16 sections in F17 (trad), 12 sections in SP18 (trad), 2 sections in Summer 17, 1 section January Immersion. (See Appendix A):

- 8 sections by three Sociology faculty— one full-time tenured, two full-time tenure-track
- 8 sections by three Political Science faculty— one full-time instructor, two adjuncts with terminal degrees
- 5 sections by Communication faculty—two full-time tenured or tenure-track
- 1 sections by one Exercise Science faculty—one adjunct faculty
- 4 sections by two Philosophy faculty—two full-time, tenured
- 1 sections by one Biology faculty— one full-time, tenured
- 2 sections by one interdepartmental faculty—adjunct without terminal degree
- 1 section by one Organizational Leadership faculty—full-time, tenured
- 1 section by Business faculty—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 faculty member who teaches IN250, Dr. Monroe, and he 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 fifty 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 2017-2018.

US Studies 2014-2015	IN250/251
Analyze cultures or structures	3.05
Reflect on ethical and social justice	3.00
Engage in democratic citizenship	2.90

### Data Analysis and Discussion

Overall, the data show that students met all three learning goals for both IN250 and IN251 in 2017-2018. 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, 2015-16, and 2017-18, 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, 2.43 in 15-16, and 3.05 in 2017-18, a slight increase, while ethical reasoning scored 2.52 in 13-

14, 2.63 in 14-15, 2.62 in 15-16, and 3.00 in 17-18, still consistent in the green zone. Democratic citizenship increased from 2.52 to 2.90. 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 did not have workshops to assist faculty in teaching these learning goals in 2017-18. 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 always 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. As coordinator, I met or traded emails with faculty teaching 250/251, evaluated countless syllabi and offered suggestions for improvement to both syllabi and to writing assignments. Working with faculty on 250/251 forms a significant part of my work load at Millikin.

**Appendix A**  
**IN250 Courses, AY 2017-2018**

Date	Course Title	Cross-list	FT	Adjunct Faculty	
Summer	Baseball in America		•		
	1980s in American Film		•		
	Hollywood Cinema		•		
	LGBT Theater			•	
	Lincoln in the Bardo		•		
Fall	Intro Sports Psychology		•		
	Political Theater			•	
	Media History		•		
	Human Growth		•		
	American Film		•		
	Lit Fiction, Ident, Comm		•		
	Philosophy Religion		•		
	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 1980-89		•		
	Whitman Trad		•		
	American Workers			•	
Spring	American Pastime Baseball			•	
	History of US Since 1865	HI204	•		
	"	"	•		
	The Cold War	HI210	•		
	World War Two	HI210	•		
	Violence in America	HI210	•		
	American Civil War	HI310	•		
	Ethical Theory		•		
	Lincoln in the Bardo		•		
	College Athletics		•		
	African-Am Theater		•		
	Human Grwth/Diversity		•		
Journalism/Media & Race		•			

### IN251 Courses, AY 2017-2018

Date	Course Title	Cross-list	FT	Adjunct Faculty	
Summer	Baseball in America		•		
	Power/Lies/Politics		•		
I					
Fall	Constitutional Law	PO330		•	
	The American Political System	PO105	•		
	Supreme Court		•		
	Bioethics		•		
	Self-Leadership Online			•	
	Intro to Public Relations			•	
	Sociology of Gaming			•	
	Stereotype/Prejudice		•		
	Deviance	SO232	•		
	Juvenile Delinquency	SO311	•		
	Criminology		•		
	Health and Pollution	ES321		•	
	Foundations of Gender		•		
	Performing the City		•		
Sociology of Gender			•		
Intro to Health Comm		•			
Jan Immersion					
	Sociology: Pop Culture & Media	SO220	•		
Spring	Bioethics		•		
	Sociology of Gender		•		
	Juvenile Delinquency	SO221	•		
	History and Phil of Science		•		
	State and Local	PO240	•		
	Crime and Public Policy		•		
	Criminology	SO361	•		
	Civil Liberties and Constitution	PO334		•	
	Business Ethics		•		
	Creating a Green Society		•		
		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				