

## **Student Learning in U.S. Studies (IN250 and IN251) Academic Year 2012-2013 Assessment**

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### **Executive Summary**

The current year was the fourth 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 excellent level for all three learning goals. The results show higher scores than the previous year. 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, etc.

## **Snapshot**

During the 2012-2013 academic year, 32 sections of IN 250 were offered by 20 faculty members, an eight percent increase in participating faculty from the previous year, including 2 sections in Summer 2012, 4 in January 2013 Immersion, and 4 in PACE (see Appendix A):

- 16 sections by four History faculty—two full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty, one adjunct faculty with a terminal degree and one adjunct faculty without terminal degree
- 15 sections by English faculty—three full-time, tenured or tenure-track, one adjunct faculty with a terminal degree, and seven other adjunct faculty
- 2 sections by two Fine Arts faculty—two full-time, tenured or tenure-track
- 1 section by one Communication faculty—instructor status
- 1 section by a PACE staff—full-time staff member without terminal degree

In addition, 25 sections of IN251 were offered by 15 faculty members including 2 sections in Summer 2012 and 4 in PACE (see Appendix A):

- 7 sections by three Sociology faculty— one full-time tenure-track, two adjuncts without terminal degree
- 5 sections by four Political Science faculty— one full-time tenure-track, three adjuncts with terminal degrees
- 5 sections by two Philosophy faculty—two full-time, tenure-track
- 1 section by one Communication faculty—full-time, tenured
- 5 sections by three Biology faculty— two full-time, tenured, one adjunct without terminal degree
- 1 section by one English faculty—fulltime, tenured
- 1 section by one Organizational Leadership faculty—full-time without 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.

Most faculty teaching US Studies classes submitted student artifacts, some in hard copy, some by email, and more through the new moodle page, which has become the standard method. Downloading into moodle has led to a greater pool of artifacts from which to draw for assessment purposes. One artifact from each class was 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 100 separate artifacts were selected for each of the three learning goals, using material downloaded into the moodle shell, 65 artifacts total from 10 of the 32 sections of IN250 and 38 artifacts from 12 of the 25 sections of IN251. 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 2012-2013.

US Studies 2012-2013	IN250	IN251
Analyze cultures or structures	3.34	3.47
Reflect on ethical and social justice	3.24	3.51
Engage in democratic citizenship	3.10	3.39

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

Overall, the data show that students met all three learning goals for both IN250 and IN251 in 2012-2013. The IN250 and IN251 scores indicate that students were performing at an excellent level for all three learning goals.

The four-year assessment trend is shown below.

US STUDIES	IN250				IN251			
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Analyze cultures or structures	3.04	2.96	3.10	3.34	3.04	2.88	3.24	3.47
Reflect on ethical and social justice	2.64	2.42	2.84	3.24	3.32	2.64	3.39	3.51
Engage in democratic citizenship	3.45	1.95	2.45	3.10	3.13	2.66	3.14	3.39

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, a larger and more representative sample was employed as the basis for analysis.

Assuming the data are comparable over the four-year period, they show consistent improvement on all three learning goals. We can clearly say with confidence that students are learning at an excellent level for US Studies classes.

### **Feedback Loop**

In 2012-2013, workshops were also held to continue to assist faculty in teaching for these learning goals. At each forum, faculty were invited to share examples of writing intensive assignments that met the IN250/251 learning goals. All faculty are also being 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 all 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.

**Appendix A**  
**IN250 Courses, AY 2012-2013**

Date	Course Title	Cross-list	FT	Adjunct Faculty
Summer	Intro: Studies Middle America		•	
	South Park & Contemp. America	EN220	•	
PACE Fall	American Cultural Studies and Film			•
	US History to 1865	HI203	•	
	American Popular Music	MH160	•	
Fall	Amer. Multicultural Literature	EN234	•	
	Contemp. Adolescent Lit-Vampire	EN222		•
	Ireland in America	HI210		•
	African American Experiences			•
	US History to 1865	HI203	•	
	US History to 1865	HI203		•
	US History to 1865	HI203		•
	Ecotones: Mid-MidgrdIndent-American Lit			•
	Baseball in America		•	
	Culture of Education in America			•
	US History to 1865	HI203	•	
Jan. Imm	Whitman Trad: Sexuality & Text	EN340	•	
	AmerWomen: Percpt&Real Film/His	HI210		•
	Hollywood Cinema 1927-1949	CO306		•
	South Park and Contemp. America	EN220	•	
PACE Spring	History of US Since 1865	HI204		•
Spring	Amer Pastime/Mirror: Baseball			•
	History of US Since 1865	HI204	•	
	History of US Since 1865	HI204	•	
	Ireland in America	HI210		•
	War Stories			•
	The City in Mod. American Novels	EN220	•	
	Violence in America	HI210	•	
	World War II	HI210	•	
	Introduction to Film	EN250	•	
	US in Cold War	HI310	•	

	Strangers: Coming of Age- America			•
	Reading in Digital Age			•

### IN251 Courses, AY 2012-2013

Date	Course Title	Cross-list	FT	Adjunct Faculty
Summer	Clash: Conservation/Cult- Alaska		•	
	Sociology: Pop Culture & Media	SO220	•	
PACE Fall	Ethical Theory/Moral Issues	PH211	•	
	Crisis Communication	CO360	•	
Fall	Greening II: Perspective from London		•	
	The American Political System	PO105	•	
	Environmental Ethics	PH219	•	
	Racial and Ethnic Group Relations	SO310		•
	Creating a Green Society-US		•	
	State and Local Government	PO240		•
	Civil Liberties & Constitution	PO334		•
	Deviant Behavior	SO232	•	
	Juvenile Delinquency	SO311	•	
	Health and Pollution	ES321		•
	Health and Pollution	ES321		•
PACE Spring	Sociology of Pop Culture & Media	SO220	•	
	Families Across Generations		•	
Spring	Bioethics	PH217	•	
	Bioethics	PH217		
	Criminology	SO361	•	
	Constitutional Law	PO330		•
	The American Political System	PO105		•
	Creating a Green Society		•	
	Hist & Phil of Science	HI210	•	
	Sociology of Gender	SO330		•

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				