

## **Student Learning in U.S. Studies (IN250 and IN251) Academic Year 2010-2011 Assessment**

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### **Executive Summary**

The current year was the second year for the new learning goals, as approved by the faculty in 2007-2008. Overall, assessment shows that students in IN250 were learning at an adequate level for two of the three learning goals and at a nominal level for the third goal. Students in IN251 were learning at an adequate level for all three learning goals. The results show lower scores than the previous year, but a new methodology was used, which makes the scores not comparable. This report reports 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 2010-2011 academic year, 19 sections of IN 250 were offered by 11 faculty members (see Appendix A):

- 10 sections by three History faculty—one full-time tenured faculty; one adjunct faculty with a terminal degree and one adjunct faculty without terminal degree
- 7 sections by six English faculty—four full-time, tenured or tenure-track, one full-time, non-tenure track, and one adjunct faculty without terminal degree
- 2 sections by two Philosophy faculty—full-time, tenured or tenure track

In addition, 21 sections of IN251 were offered by 8 faculty members (see Appendix A):

- 7 sections by three Sociology faculty— two fulltime, tenured or tenure-track; one adjunct without terminal degree
- 8 section by two Political Science faculty— one full-time tenure-track; one adjunct with terminal degree
- 1 sections by one Biology faculty—fulltime, tenured
- 3 sections by one Philosophy faculty—fulltime, tenure-track
- 1 section by one English faculty—fulltime, tenure-track
- 1 section by one Exercise Science faculty—fulltime, tenure-track

## **The Learning Story**

The 2010-2011 academic year was the second year for US Studies classes with the learning goals that were revised in 2007-2008. 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 some of the 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 in their students sensitivity and empathy, as well as 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. Attempts to create a community of scholars for US Studies have progressed slowly, but some progress was made this year.

After experimenting with various methods of collecting artifacts for assessment over the past two years, the Coordinator returned to a traditional model, whereby most faculty teaching US Studies classes submitted all student artifacts. Two artifacts from each course were randomly selected and then reviewed by a team composed of 2 faculty members who teach IN250 (Crowe and Monroe) and 2 faculty members

who teach IN251(Dunn and Gentry) assessed each artifact, based on a common rubric. (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 the fall semester, 4 artifacts were reviewed from two of the ten IN250 classes and 10 artifacts were reviewed from all IN251 classes. In the spring semester, 12 artifacts were reviewed from 6 of the 9 IN250 classes, and 18 artifacts were reviewed from all of the IN251 classes. The following two tables show the results of this review for each semester.

FALL 2010	IN250	IN251
Analyze cultures or structures	2.75	2.88
Reflect on ethical and social justice	2.12	2.35
Engage in democratic citizenship	1.56	2.72

SPRING 2011	IN250	IN251
Analyze cultures or structures	3.17	2.88
Reflect on ethical and social justice	2.72	2.93
Engage in democratic citizenship	2.34	2.60

Combining both classes and both semesters, we get the final, overall results in the following table:

US STUDIES 2010-2011	IN250	IN251
Analyze cultures or structures	2.96	2.88
Reflect on ethical and social justice	2.42	2.64
Engage in democratic citizenship	1.95	2.66

### Data Analysis and Discussion

Overall, the data show that students met two of the three learning goals for IN250 in 2010-2011, and all three learning goals for IN251 in 2010-2011. The IN250 scores indicate that students were “analyzing” American culture and “reflecting on ethical and social justice” at an adequate level, and that they were “engaging in democratic citizenship activities” at only a nominal level. The IN251 scores indicate that students were performing at an adequate level for all three learning goals.

The two-year assessment trend is shown below.

US STUDIES	IN250		IN251	
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2009-2010	2010-2011
Analyze cultures or structures	3.04	2.96	3.04	2.88
Reflect on ethical and social justice	2.64	2.42	3.32	2.64

Engage in democratic citizenship	3.45	1.95	3.13	2.66
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Different methodologies were used in the two 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. Therefore, I have greater confidence in the 2010-2011 data, although they are uniformly lower. The data for "Engage in Democratic Citizenship" for IN250 are troublesome and serve as a warning flag indicating that changes need to be made.

Assessment over the past two years, since the learning goals have been stated in this way, has also indicated that the language of the learning goals is troublesome. Assessors have had problems distinguishing between the second two learning goals. The University Studies Coordinators have also discussed this problem with respect to IN350, Global Issues, since the goals are constructed in parallel. Therefore, changes to the language of the learning goals will be submitted to the Council on Curriculum for ultimate approval from the whole faculty in Fall, 2011.

Communication and cooperation from faculty teaching in the PACE program has begun to improve, but no artifacts have yet been received for assessing US Studies courses delivered in this format. Further attention will need to be paid to ensure artifact collection from PACE courses.

### **Feedback Loop**

The 2009-2010 report was distributed to all faculty teaching IN250 and the IN251. Individual consultations were held with a few faculty members, especially those new to Millikin or developing a new US Studies class. Workshops were also held to continue to prepare faculty in teaching for these learning goals. Given the difficulty of building a learning community of US Studies instructors, the workshops were poorly attended, however. 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 to the democratic citizenship learning goal among faculty teaching IN250.

**Appendix A**  
**IN250 Courses, AY 2010-2011**

Date	Course Title	Cross-listed Department & Course number	FT Tenured Or t-track	FT Contract Faculty	Adjunct Faculty
Fall	Ireland in America	HI210			•
	Slave Narratives	EN233	•		
	Multicultural Literature	EN234	•		
	Holocaust in American Life				•
	US History to 1865	HI203			•
	US History to 1865	HI203	•		
	US History to 1865	HI203	•		
	World Religions in America	HI210		•	
	US in 60s History and Film	HI210	•		
	Emotional Themes in Western Culture	EN200	•		
	US/UK Pop Culture	EN200		•	
	Spring	Philosophy of Religion	PH214	•	
US History since 1865		HI204	•		
US History since 1865		HI204	•		
Ireland in America		HI210			•
History and Philosophy of Science		PH223	•		
US Drama and Culture		EN220	•		
Literature of Civil Rights Movement		EN233	•		
Violence in America		HI210	•		
Introduction to Film		EN250	•		

**IN251 Courses, AY 2010-2011**

Date	Course Title	Cross-listed Department & Course number	FT Tenured Or t-track	FT Contract Faculty	Adjunct Faculty	
Fall	Business Ethics	PH215	•			
	American Political System	PO105	•			
	Race and Ethnic Group Relations	SO310			•	
	Creating a Green Society		•			
	State and Local Government	PO240			•	
	Civil Liberties and the Constitution	PO334			•	
	Deviant Behavior	SO232	•			
	Juvenile Delinquency	SO311	•			
	Health and Pollution	ES321	•			
	Spring	Bioethics	PH217	•		
		Bioethics	PH217	•		
		Poverty and Welfare	SO224	•		
Poverty and Welfare		SO224	•			
History of Technology		EN200	•			
Criminology		SO361	•			
Fat Politics		PO260	•			
Civil Rights, Vietnam, Watergate		PO260			•	
American Political System		PO105	•			
American Political System		PO105	•			
American Politics and Film	PO260	•				
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				