

## **Student Learning in IN250 U.S. Studies Academic Year 2007-08 Assessment**

Millikin University

IN250 Coordinator

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### **Executive Summary**

The 2007-08 academic year was again a time of transition. With a new Coordinator, the methodology used in assessing student learning was refined, and an interim report based on just the fall semester was developed to smooth the transition between the two plans. A copy of that report is appended to this document (Appendix C). US Studies faculty were also conscious of the changes to the MPSL that will begin in the 2008-2009 academic year. However, these changes will not have meaningful consequences for US Studies until the 2009-2010 academic year, because incoming first-year students will take US Studies classes in their sophomore year. Nevertheless, pilot IN251 classes will be offered during the 2008-2009 academic year to ensure that transfer students will be able to satisfy their MPSL requirements. Assessment of student learning in IN250 for the 2007-08 academic year demonstrates that learning goals are being satisfied and that IN250 is a strong component of the sequential program of the MPSL.

### **Goals**

The IN250 learning goals are:

By the end of IN250 U.S. Studies, students will be able to

1. Critically respond to texts by or about some of the diverse cultures and people living in the United States;
2. Use discipline-appropriate sources to inform their critical analyses of diverse individuals' or cultures' experiences and perspectives; and
3. Write at least one well-developed critical analysis about cultural, structural, or institutional issues specific to the discipline of the course.

### **Snapshot**

During the 2007-08 academic year, 25 sections of IN 250 were offered by 17 faculty members (see Appendix A):

- 12 sections by eight History faculty—three full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty; five adjunct faculty without terminal degree
- 5 sections by three Political Science faculty—two full-time tenure-track; one adjunct faculty
- 2 sections by one Sociology faculty—full-time, tenured
- 1 section by one Communication faculty—full-time, tenured
- 2 by one Theatre faculty—full-time, tenure track
- 1 by one Exercise Science faculty—full-time, tenured
- 2 by two English faculty—one full-time tenure-track, one full-time without terminal degree

### **The Learning Story**

In all sections of IN250, 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. In all sections, students use discipline-specific sources in their writing, which ranges from the formal essay to informal discussion threads in Blackboard. Competencies that promote professional success and understanding of others are emphasized (as per MPSL prepares 1 and 2).

### **Assessment Methods and Data**

The IN250 Coordinator collected artifacts at the end of the Fall 2006 and Spring 2007 semesters. The IN250 self-study committees (Monroe and Troy in the Fall, and Monroe, McKenna, and Troy in the Spring) randomly selected 5 artifacts each from 6 (out of 8 possible) of the Fall IN250 classes and 3 artifacts each from 11 (out of 13 possible) of the Spring IN250 classes. The artifacts included term papers, essay exams, and assignments. The committees used a single rubric (see Appendix B) to assess all artifacts on a 1-5 scale (1 indicating Nominal, 5 indicating Excellent) on each of the three goals. They then calculated average scores for each learning goal, for all artifacts in total and for each specific class. The following table shows the range of possible scores and interpretation.

Green	Excellent	3.67-5.00
Yellow	Adequate	2.34-3.66
Red	Nominal	1.00-2.33

One difference between the Fall and Spring semesters concerns how the committees interpreted the learning goals. The Fall committee noted uncertainty about how the three learning goals should be interpreted. On the first learning goal, for example, the members of the committee were uncertain whether they were to assess how well the student critically responded to texts or how well the student showed an understanding of diverse cultures. Similarly, on the third goal, they were unclear about whether they were to assess a "well-developed critical analysis" or the coverage of "cultural, structural, or institutional issues." Based on this confusion, the members of the Spring committee decided:

- ❖ On the first learning goal, they would emphasize how well students showed understandings of "diverse cultures and people living in the United States."
- ❖ On the second learning goal, they would emphasize how well students used "discipline-appropriate sources."
- ❖ On the third learning goal, they would emphasize how well-written the students' critical analyses were.

## Analysis of Assessment Results

Mean scores of raters for each learning goal for each class Fall 2007			
Instructor	Critical Response to Diverse Cultures	Use of Sources	Critical Analysis
Dunn - Civil Rights	3.2	2.8	2.9
Dunn - Con Law	3.1	3.3	2.8
Landro - Theatre	4.3	4.2	4.3
Luy - Sport	2.2	2.0	2.1
Monroe - US Hist.	3.1	3.5	3.2
Murphy - US Hist.	2.9	2.9	2.7
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>2.98</b>
Mean scores of raters for each learning goal for each class Spring 2008			
Instructor	Critical Response to Diverse Cultures	Use of Sources	Critical Analysis
Crowe - Outsiders	3.78	4.06	3.89
Jessup - World Rel.	4.11	4.00	3.39
Jones - Women	3.94	3.94	4.06
Landro - Theatre	4.00	4.17	3.94
MCKenna - Folklore	4.39	4.33	3.78
Monroe - US Hist	3.39	3.39	3.00
Ono - Pol. Part.	2.94	3.56	3.11
Sorensen - IL Hist.	2.11	2.56	2.11
Tillman - US Hist.	3.22	3.94	3.83
Troy - Poverty	3.94	4.28	3.50
Wrighton - Gp. Inf.	3.39	3.89	3.39
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>3.56</b>	<b>3.83</b>	<b>3.45</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>3.41</b>	<b>3.58</b>	<b>3.29</b>

Overall, students in the 2007-08 IN250 courses met all three learning goals. The average scores for the three learning goals (3.41, 3.58, 3.29, respectively) fell in the adequate range. Of the 54 individual scores (not reported here), only 5 fell in the Nominal category, while 22 fell in the Excellent category. These scores indicate that students are indeed learning, based on the goals developed by the faculty.

### **Comparison of AY2006-07 and AY2007-2008 Data**

Since the methodology used to assess student learning changed across these two years, the assessment scores are not strictly comparable. The IN250 Fall 2007 interim report attempted to recreate the 2006-07 methodology and apply it to the Fall 2007 classes. I attempted to do the same thing here for the entire academic year.

<b>Comparison of AY2006-07 and AY2007-08 % Of Artifacts Judged To Be At Least Adequate</b>			
	<b>Critical Response to Diverse Cultures</b>	<b>Use of Sources</b>	<b>Critical Analysis</b>
2006-2007 Academic Year	85%	82%	61%
2007-2008 Academic Year	77%	89%	77%

Assuming that the 2006-2007 report used an arbitrary 60%, 70%, and 80% as the 3 cutoffs for Nominal, Adequate, and Excellent, respectively, student learning for the first learning goal, Critical Response, dropped from Excellent to Adequate. There was no change in the Use of Sources, the second learning goal, both scoring in the Excellent range. Finally, the scores rose from Nominal to Adequate on the third learning goal, Critical Analysis. This last finding might indicate greater attention to the quality of writing in IN250 classes.

Therefore, regardless of the methodology, students in IN250 during the 2007-2008 academic year met the learning goals established by the faculty.

### **Initiatives and Improvement Plans**

This year, the faculty voted for a change in the curriculum that will have dramatic effects on IN250. Starting in the 2008-2009 year, two courses will be required in US Studies, rather one: IN250 will be US Cultural Studies, while IN251 will be US Structural Studies. These changes take effect with students entering the University in the 2008-2009 academic year. Since most students take these classes in their sophomore year (2009-2010), new learning goals will have to be developed for these two classes during 2008-2009.

The members of the Spring 2008 Committee discussed the results of the Spring assessment, noting that the nature of the assignments from which the artifacts were derived seemed to affect how well student learning could be assessed. Term papers were better than exams, which were in turn better than individual assignments. The 2006-07 report noted the same thing. As the IN250 faculty meet during the 2008-2009 academic year to discuss the learning goals for the new IN250 and IN251 classes, this point should be kept in mind. The fact that one of the new threads running through the sequential program will be that the class will be writing intensive should help with this issue.

**Appendix A**  
**IN250 Courses, AY 2007-08**

Date	Course Title	Cross-listed Department & Course number	FT Tenured Or t-track, W/terminal Degree	FT Contract Faculty w/ Terminal Degree	FT Contract Faculty w/o Terminal Degree	Adjunct Faculty
Fall 2007	Criminal Law: 4,5,6 <sup>th</sup> Amendments	PO260				•
	Civil Rights, Vietnam, & Watergate	PO260				•
	World Religions in America	HI210				•
	History of American Workers	HI210				•
	U.S. History To 1865	HI203	•			
	U.S. History To 1865	HI203	•			
	Drama & Representation of US	TH331	•			
	Sport in America		•			
Spring 2008	Rhetoric-Violence in America	CO260	•			
	Political Participation and Democratic Citizenship	PO260	•			
	Group Influence in America (2 sections)	PO260	•			
	Drama & Representation of US	TH331	•			
	US History Since 1865 (2 sections)	HI204	•			
	US History Since 1865 (2 sections)	HI204				•
	The Outsider in Film & Fiction	EN220			•	
	Poverty and Welfare (2 sections)	SO224	•			
	Women in America	HI210				•
	State and Local History	HI210				•
	Native American Myths and Folklore		•			
	Christianity in the US	HI210	•			
	World Religion in US	HI210				•

**Appendix B**  
**IN250 Assessment Rubric**

Millikin University  
IN250 U.S. Studies  
Student Learning Evaluation—REVISED June 26, 2007

By the end of IN250/U.S. Studies, students will be able to

1. Critically respond to texts by or about some of the diverse cultures and people living in the United States;
2. Use discipline-appropriate sources to inform their critical analyses of diverse individuals' or cultures' experiences and perspectives; and
3. Write at least one well-developed critical analysis about cultural, structural, or institutional issues specific to the discipline of the course.

Item Evaluated: Variable—may be an essay, exam, or response paper

Evaluation by: Self-Study Assessment Team Member

	Excellent (5 points)	Adequate (3 points)	Nominal (1 point)
Critical Response	An excellent response demonstrates consistent reflective thinking in using previous reading, research, and/or experience as a prompt not only to describe and explain, but also to develop awareness of the self in relation to other cultures.	An adequate response demonstrates inconsistent reflective thinking in using previous reading, research, and/or experience as a prompt not only to describe and explain, but also to develop awareness of the self in relation to other cultures.	A nominal response lacks a connection between uses of reading and writing and the development of self-awareness in relation to others.
Use of Sources to Inform Critical Analysis	An excellent analysis demonstrates the student's consistent ability to use discipline-appropriate sources. The student interprets, rather than summarizes, relevant evidence. Student can formulate a well-positioned and well-supported argument or opinion by critically synthesizing multiple perspectives.	An adequate analysis demonstrates the student's inconsistent attempt to use discipline-appropriate sources. The student inconsistently attempts to interpret, rather than summarize, relevant evidence. Student attempts to formulate a well-positioned and well-supported argument or opinion by critically synthesizing multiple perspectives.	A nominal analysis demonstrates no attempt to interpret evidence.
Well-developed Critical Analysis	An excellent analysis demonstrates the student's consistent ability to compose a well-organized, properly-documented, and carefully-edited piece in a confident voice.	An adequate analysis demonstrates the student's inconsistent attempt to compose a well-organized, properly-documented, and carefully-edited piece in a confident voice. The student may make errors in documentation and/or grammar and mechanics.	A nominal analysis demonstrates no attempt to edit or document. There are many errors in documentation and/or grammar and mechanics.

## **Appendix C**

IN250  
Interim Assessment Results  
Fall 2007  
March 17, 2008

This report outlines the result of an assessment made for IN250 classes taught in Fall 2007. This interim report is important because it allows us to track changes more closely than simply on a yearly basis, and because the method of analysis has changed from previous years to more accurately reflect a holistic conception of assessment.

### **The Learning Goals**

The learning goals for IN250, as most recently revised in 2007 are:

By the end of IN250 U.S. Studies, students will be able to:

1. Critically respond to texts by or about some of the diverse cultures and people living in the United States;
2. Use discipline-appropriate sources to inform their critical analyses of diverse individuals' or cultures' experiences and perspectives; and
3. Write at least one well-developed critical analysis about cultural, structural, or institutional issues specific to the discipline of the course.

### **Snapshot**

During the Fall 2007 semester, 8 sections of IN 250 were offered by 7 faculty members:

- 1 section by one Religion faculty--adjunct
- 3 sections by three History faculty—two full-time tenured or tenure-track; one adjunct
- 2 sections by one Political Science faculty—adjunct faculty
- 1 by one Theatre faculty—full-time tenure-track
- 1 by one Exercise Science faculty member—full-time tenured

### **The Learning Story**

In all sections of IN250, 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. In all sections, students use discipline-specific sources in their writing, which ranges from the formal essay to informal discussion threads in Blackboard. Competencies that promote professional success and understanding of others are emphasized (as per MPSL prepares 1 and 2).

### **Assessment Methods and Data**

All faculty teaching IN250 classes in Fall 2007, with the exception of those taught by the adjunct faculty members in Religion and History, submitted artifacts, including final exams, term papers, or written assignments, at the end of the Fall 2007 semester. The IN250 self-study committee randomly selected five artifacts from each of the six classes. The committee used a single rubric (see Appendix A) to assess all the artifacts, scoring each artifact on a 1-5 scale (1 indicating Nominal, 5 indicating

Excellent) on each of the three goals. We then calculated average scores for each learning goal, for all artifacts in total and for each specific class. The following table shows the range of possible scores and interpretation.

Green	Excellent	3.67-5.00
Yellow	Adequate	2.34-3.66
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### Analysis of Assessment Results

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Murphy - US Hist.	2.9	2.9	2.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>2.98</b>

**Overall, the results show that all learning goals were met at an Adequate level in Fall 2007. One class showed a Nominal level, and one class showed an Excellent level, on all three learning goals, respectively.**

The question of how these compare to previous years' results is a complex one, because the analytical strategy changed. In the 2006-2007 report, three faculty read 16 of the 205 artifacts submitted, and scored each one on a 0-5 scale. They totaled the scores from the three faculty for each learning goal, arriving at a score within a 0-15 range. They then reported the percent of artifacts that had at least Adequate total scores (within a 6-10 range, or higher). To the extent possible, we have recreated their methodology to enable us to compare the results from Fall 2007 to those from the 2006-2007 year. The table below reports that comparison.

Comparison of Fall 2007 with 2006-2007 Academic Year % Of Artifacts Judged To Be At Least Adequate			
	Critical Response to Diverse Cultures	Use of Sources	Critical Analysis
2006-2007 Academic Year	85%	82%	61%
Fall 2007	83%	79%	68%

We can make two conclusions from these results. First, they are broadly comparable across the two years, suggesting continuity. Second, assuming that the 2006-2007 report used 60%, 70%, and 80% as the 3 cutoffs for Nominal, Adequate, and Excellent, respectively, we see continued Excellence for Critical Response and continued Nominal performance for Critical Analysis, while the scores for Use of Sources dropped from Excellent to Adequate. As we describe below, however, it

makes greater methodological sense to use the new strategy, and conclude that students in IN250 classes performed at an adequate level on all three learning goals in Fall 2007.

The new strategy makes greater methodological sense. First, it bases the analysis on means of scores given by raters for each artifact, which allows us to develop class means, as well as total means. Therefore, our measure of how well students performed is more closely connected to actual student performance. For example, if we report that 83% of artifacts were judged to be at least Adequate, we have no information on the range of scores. As we approach 100% Adequacy, we will be left with no reasonable way to measure future improvement. On the other hand, if we report that students scored a 3.14 on a 5-point scale, we can categorize the students' work as before, but we can also more clearly measure changes over time, *even if most students score in a particular range*. Second, the new strategy reduces the arbitrary nature of the 60%, 70%, and 80% cutoffs. The report for 2006-2007 did not provide a rationale for these cutoff points. With the new strategy, the theoretical range of means was simply divided into three equal categories and class means and total means were placed within those categories.

### **Initiatives and Improvement Plans**

A workshop will be held during Spring 2008 for those teaching IN250, both from last semester (Fall 2007) and currently (Spring 2008). The purpose of this workshop is to review the results from Fall 2007 and discuss implications for their current courses. This assessment will be conducted again in Spring 2008, to obtain results for the 2007-2008 academic year. It will also be conducted each semester of the 2008-2009 academic year.

This year, the faculty voted for a change in the curriculum that will have dramatic effects on IN250. Starting in the 2008-2009 year, two courses will be required in US Studies, rather one: IN250 will be US Cultural Studies, while IN251 will be US Structural Studies. These changes take effect with students entering the University, or changing their majors, starting in the 2008-2009 academic year. Since most students take these classes in their sophomore year (2009-2010), new learning goals will have to be developed for these two classes during 2008-2009.