

Student Learning in U.S. Studies (IN250 and IN251) Academic Year 2013-2014 Assessment

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Executive Summary

The current year was the fifth 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 two learning goals and a nominal level for the third goal. The results show slightly lower 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.

Snapshot

During the 2013-2014 academic year, 35 sections of IN 250 were offered by 13 faculty members, including 2 sections in Summer 2013, 5 in January 2014 Immersion, and 5 in PACE (see Appendix A):

- 19 sections by three History faculty—two full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty, one adjunct faculty with a terminal degree
- 8 sections by English faculty—four full-time, tenured or tenure-track, one adjunct faculty
- 2 sections by one Fine Arts faculty—one full-time tenured faculty
- 2 sections by two Communication faculty—one full-time tenured, one instructor
- 4 sections by two Philosophy faculty—two full-time, tenured or tenure-track

In addition, 38 sections of IN251 were offered by 18 faculty members including 3 sections in Summer 2013 and 6 in PACE (see Appendix A):

- 10 sections by three Sociology faculty— one full-time tenure-track, two adjuncts without terminal degree
- 10 sections by five Political Science faculty— one full-time tenure-track, four adjuncts with terminal degrees
- 2 sections by two Exercise Science faculty—two full-time tenure track
- 4 sections by one Philosophy faculty—one full-time, tenure-track
- 1 section by one Communication faculty—full-time, tenured
- 3 sections by two Biology faculty— two full-time, tenured
- 1 section by one Business Administration faculty—fulltime, tenured
- 4 sections by one Organizational Leadership faculty—full-time without terminal degree
- 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 eighty 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 2013-2014.

US Studies 2013-2014	IN250/251
Analyze cultures or structures	2.33
Reflect on ethical and social justice	2.52
Engage in democratic citizenship	1.78

Data Analysis and Discussion

Overall, the data show that students met all three learning goals for both IN250 and IN251 in 2013-2014. The IN250 and IN251 scores indicate that students were performing at an adequate level for two learning goals and at a nominal level for the third learning goal (democratic citizenship).

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 and 2013-2014, 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, with a slight decline in scores last year. This may be a statistical anomaly or it may reflect a need to emphasize the importance of meeting the last goal, democratic citizenship, in written assignments. In general, the five-year trend is excellent to adequate for all three goals. We can clearly say

with confidence that students are learning at an excellent to adequate level in US Studies classes.

Feedback Loop

Workshops have been held 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 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.

Appendix A
IN250 Courses, AY 2013-2014

Date	Course Title	Cross-list	FT	Adjunct Faculty
Summer	Intro to American Studies		•	
	Alcohol: Soc. Ramifications		•	
PACE Fall	US Sixties in Film and History	HI210	•	
	US History to 1865	HI203	•	
Fall	Hemingway and Amer. Century	HI310	•	
	Amer. Multicultural Literature: Latino	EN234	•	
	Contemp. Adolescent Lit-Vampire	EN222		•
	Ireland in America	HI210		•
	Captivity Narratives		•	
	US History to 1865	HI203	•	
	US History to 1865	HI203	•	
	US History to 1865	HI203		•
	Philosophy of Religion		•	
	Baseball in America		•	
	History of US Pop Culture		•	
	US Sixties in Film and History	HI210	•	
	US in 1920s	HI210	•	
	Outsiders Come of Age		•	
	Moral Horizons: US/UK		•	
Jan. Imm	Whitman Trad: Sexuality & Text	EN340	•	
	Philosophy thru Film		•	
	Hollywood Cinema 1950-1959			•
	South Park and Contemp. America	EN220	•	
	American South	HI310	•	
PACE Spring	History of Baseball			•
	Baseball in America		•	
Spring	Amer Pastime/Mirror: Baseball			•
	History of US Since 1865	HI204	•	
	History of US Since 1865	HI204	•	
	Ireland in America	HI210		•
	Philosophy of Religion		•	
	Trad. African American Lit: Neo Slave		•	
	Violence in America	HI210	•	
	World War II	HI210	•	
	Introduction to Film	EN250	•	

	US in Cold War	HI310	•	
	Civil Rights Movement	HI310	•	

IN251 Courses, AY 2013-2014

Date	Course Title	Cross-list	FT	Adjunct Faculty
Summer	Clash: Conservation/Cult-Alaska		•	
	Sociology: Pop Culture & Media	SO220	•	
	Law and Order in Pop Culture		•	
PACE Fall	Ethical Theory/Moral Issues		•	
	Foundations Bilingual Ed		•	
	Families Across Generations		•	
Fall	Fat Politics		•	
	The American Political System (2 sections)	PO105	•	
	Foundations Bilingual Ed		•	
	Creating a Green Society-US		•	
	State and Local Government	PO240		•
	Topics in Public Policy	PO334		•
	Deviance	SO232	•	
	Juvenile Delinquency	SO311	•	
	Health and Pollution	ES321		•
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Jan Immersion	Families Across Generations		•	
	What's Next: Emerging Adulthood		•	
	Philosophy of Sports/Ethics		•	
	Politics of the South		•	
	Sociology: Pop Culture & Media	SO220	•	
PACE Spring	Juvenile Delinquency		•	
	Consumerism in America		•	
	Sociology: Pop Culture & Media	SO220	•	
Spring	Environmental Ethics		•	
	Sociology: Pop Culture & Media	PH217		
	Juvenile Delinquency		•	
	Criminology	SO361	•	
	Constitutional Law	PO330		•
	The American Political System	PO105		•
	Creating a Green Society		•	

	Civil Liberties and Constitution		•	
	Innovation/Entrepreneurs in America		•	
	Intro to Criminal Justice		•	
	Consumerism in America		•	
	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				