

Student Learning in U.S. Studies (IN250 and IN251) Academic Year 2011-2012 Assessment

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Executive Summary

The current year was the third 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 excellent level for one of the three learning goals and at an adequate level for the other two. Students in 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 2011-2012 academic year, 34 sections of IN 250 were offered by 16 faculty members, including 3 sections in Summer 2011, 4 in January 2011 Immersion, and 5 in PACE (see Appendix A):

- 21 sections by five History faculty—three full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty; one adjunct faculty with a terminal degree and one adjunct faculty without terminal degree
- 7 sections by five English faculty—all full-time, tenured or tenure-track
- 3 sections by three Fine Arts faculty—two full-time, tenured or tenure-track, and one adjunct
- 1 section by one Philosophy faculty—full-time, tenure track
- 1 section by one Communication faculty—full-time and tenured
- 1 section by a PACE staff—full-time staff member without terminal degree

In addition, 27 sections of IN251 were offered by 13 faculty members, including 3 sections in Summer 2011, and 4 in PACE (see Appendix A):

- 8 sections by three Sociology faculty— two fulltime, tenured or tenure-track; one adjunct without terminal degree
- 6 section by two Political Science faculty— one full-time tenure-track; one adjunct with terminal degree
- 5 sections by three Philosophy faculty—two fulltime, tenure-track; one adjunct without terminal degree
- 4 sections by two Communication faculty—both full-time, tenured or tenure-track
- 2 sections by one Biology faculty—fulltime, tenured
- 1 section by one English faculty—fulltime, tenure-track
- 1 section by one Exercise Science faculty—Adjunct without terminal degree

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 continuing to be made this year.

Most faculty teaching US Studies classes submitted all student artifacts, some in hard copy, some by email, and some through a new Moodle page, which will be the standard method for the future. One artifact from each class was randomly selected and then assessed based on a common rubric by a team composed of 1 faculty member who teaches IN250 (Matthews) and 3 faculty members who teach IN251 (Gentry, Laundra, and Troy) 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, 11-12 separate artifacts were selected for each of the three learning goals (33 artifacts in total) from 12 of the 35 sections of IN250 and 12-14 separate artifacts for each of the three learning goals were selected (39 artifacts in total) from 14 of the 29 sections of IN251. I hope that the use of Moodle for collecting artifacts in the future will yield a better representation of the universe of student artifacts. The table below shows the results for 2011-2012.

| US Studies 2011-2012 | IN250 | IN251 |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Analyze cultures or structures | 3.10 | 3.24 |
| Reflect on ethical and social justice | 2.84 | 3.39 |
| Engage in democratic citizenship | 2.45 | 3.14 |

Data Analysis and Discussion

Overall, the data show that students met all three learning goals for both IN250 and IN251 in 2011-2012. The IN250 scores indicate that students were “analyzing” American culture at an excellent level and “reflecting on ethical and social justice” and “engaging in democratic citizenship” at an adequate level. The IN251 scores indicate that students were performing at an excellent level for all three learning goals.

The three-year assessment trend is shown below.

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

Different methodologies were used in the three 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.

A further complicating factor is that the learning goals are going to change with the start of the 2012-13 academic year, and several faculty began teaching to the new goals in the current year. Therefore, all artifacts, especially for the second and third learning goals, were not comparable.

On a more positive note, artifacts were collected from PACE, summer, and immersion classes for the first time, although these were not separately analyzed.

Assuming the data are comparable over the three-year period, they show improvement on all three learning goals. With the exception of "Engaging in democratic citizenship" for IN250 in the 2009-2010 academic year, the scores for the current year are the highest over the period. We can clearly say with confidence that students are learning at the adequate to excellent level for US Studies classes.

Feedback Loop

The 2010-2011 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 change in the learning goals for 2012-2013, workshops have already been held to prepare faculty for the changes. All faculty are also being required to submit new syllabi or new assignments to ensure they will be teaching to the new 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 2011-2012

| Date | Course Title | Cross-list | FT | Adjunct Faculty |
|-------------|---|------------|----|-----------------|
| Summer | American Workers on Film | HI310 | | • |
| | Amer Image: Nazis in Film/Media | HI320 | • | |
| PACE Fall | Plains Indians | HI210 | | • |
| | US History to 1865 | HI203 | | • |
| | Amer. Multicultural Literature | EN234 | • | |
| Fall | Amer. Multicultural Literature | EN234 | • | |
| | Pop Culture:US in UK/UK in US | CO306 | • | |
| | Ireland in America | HI210 | | • |
| | Lit of Labor Movement | | | • |
| | US History to 1865 | HI203 | • | |
| | US History to 1865 | HI203 | • | |
| | US History to 1865 | HI203 | • | |
| | US in 60's History and Film | HI210 | • | |
| | Baseball in America | | • | |
| | US 20 th Century Pop Culture | HI210 | • | |
| | US History to 1865 | HI203 | • | |
| Jan. Imm | Whitman Trad: Sexuality & Text | EN340 | • | |
| | AmerWomen: Percpt&Real Film/His | HI210 | | • |
| | American Workers on Film | HI310 | | • |
| | South Park and Contemp. America | | • | |
| PACE Spring | History of US Since 1865 | HI204 | • | |
| | Christianity and Media in America | HI210 | • | |
| Spring | Amer Pastime/Mirror: Baseball | | | • |
| | History of US Since 1865 | HI204 | • | |
| | History of US Since 1865 | HI204 | • | |
| | Ireland in America | HI210 | | • |
| | Business Ethics | PH215 | • | |
| | Lit of Civil Rights Movement | E233 | • | |
| | Violence in America | HI210 | • | |
| | US in the 1920s | HI210 | • | |
| | Introduction to Film | EN250 | • | |
| | US Cold War Cult/Society | HI310 | • | |
| | Drama Lit: AfricanAmer Theatre/Drama | TH332 | • | |
| | Amer Cult/Film/Mus&Ethics | MH360 | | • |

IN251 Courses, AY 2011-2012

| Date | Course Title | Cross-list | FT | Adjunct Faculty |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|------------|----|-----------------|
| Summer | Gendered Communication | CO332 | • | |
| | Law & Order in Amer Culture | CO306 | • | |
| | Crisis Comm: Theory and Practice | CO360 | • | |
| PACE Fall | History and Philosophy of Science | HI210 | • | |
| | Crisis Communication | CO360 | • | |
| Fall | Political Particptn/Dem Citizenship | PO223 | • | |
| | The American Political System | PO105 | • | |
| | Digital Ethics | PH260 | | • |
| | 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 | | • |
| PACE Spring | Juvenile Delinquency | SO311 | • | |
| | Ethical Theory/Moral Values | PH211 | • | |
| Spring | Hist & Phil of Science | HI210 | • | |
| | Poverty & Welfare | SO224 | • | |
| | Poverty & Welfare | SO224 | • | |
| | Criminology | SO361 | • | |
| | History of Technology | EN200 | • | |
| | Civil Rights, Vietnam, Watergate | PO260 | | • |
| | 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 | | | | |