

Student Learning in U.S. Studies (IN250 and IN251) Academic Year 2014-2015 Assessment

Millikin University

US Studies Coordinator

Dan Monroe

July 24, 2015

Executive Summary

The current year was the seventh 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 higher scores for two goals and slighter lower scores for one goal 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 2014-2015 academic year, 27 sections of IN 250 were offered, down 8 sections from the previous academic year. The courses were offered as follows: 8 sections in F14 (trad), 12 sections in SP15 (trad), 2 sections PACE F14, 1 section PACE SP15, 2 sections Summer 14, 2 sections January Immersion. (See Appendix A):

- 11 sections by three History faculty—two full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty, one adjunct faculty with a terminal degree (all PhDs)
- 11 sections by English faculty—five 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 full-time instructor
- 1 section by one Philosophy faculty—one full-time tenured

In addition, 35 sections of IN251 were offered, down 3 sections from the previous year. The courses were offered as follows: 11 sections in F14 (trad), 14 sections in SP15 (trad), 2 sections in PACE F14, 3 sections in PACE SP15, 2 sections in Summer 14, 3 sections January Immersion. (See Appendix A):

- 9 sections by three Sociology faculty— one full-time tenured, one full-time tenure-track, one adjunct without terminal degree
- 9 sections by five Political Science faculty— one full-time tenure track, one full-time instructor, three adjuncts with terminal degrees
- 2 sections by two Exercise Science faculty—two full-time tenured
- 7 sections by two Philosophy faculty—two full-time, tenured or tenure-track
- 2 section by one Communication faculty—full-time instructor
- 1 sections by one Biology faculty— one full-time, tenured
- 1 section by one Psychology faculty—full-time, tenured
- 1 section by one Social Work faculty—full-time, tenured
- 1 sections by one Organizational Leadership faculty—full-time without terminal degree
- 2 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 forty 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 2014-2015.

US Studies 2014-2015	IN250/251
Analyze cultures or structures	2.21
Reflect on ethical and social justice	2.63
Engage in democratic citizenship	1.89

Data Analysis and Discussion

Overall, the data show that students met all three learning goals for both IN250 and IN251 in 2014-2015. 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, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015, 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, indeed, scores are remarkably consistent over time. Cultures and structures scored 2.33 in 2013-14 and 2.21 in 2014-15, a slight decline, while ethical reasoning scored 2.52 in 13-14 and 2.63 in 14-15, a slight increase. Democratic citizenship increased from 1.78 to 1.89. This may be a statistical anomaly or it may reflect a slight improvement in meeting the last goal, democratic citizenship, in written assignments. Dr. Mullgardt commented on the democratic citizenship goal, "Instructors this term clearly laid out separate assignments for ethical reasoning and democratic citizenship. Only rarely, however, could all three categories be found in any one paper. More often, either category 1 or 3 was at the forefront, augmented by category 2. As such, papers analyzed culture and ethics, or ethics and citizenship. In the future, a clearer definition of 'Demonstrates Democratic Citizenship' would help." That said, in general, the five-year trend is good to adequate for all three goals. We can clearly say with confidence that students are learning at a good to adequate level in US Studies classes.

Feedback Loop

We did not hold workshops to assist faculty in teaching these learning goals in the academic year 2014-2015. It would be a good idea to resume these workshops; of course the problem is that they are often poorly attended, and the coordinators end up talking to themselves and junior faculty from their own departments. Nevertheless, we should try and assist faculty in meeting the goals, and clearly the democratic citizenship goal needs improvement. In previous forums, 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 2014-2015

Date	Course Title	Cross-list	FT	Adjunct Faculty
Summer	80s American Film		•	
	South Park		•	
PACE Fall	Baseball in America		•	
	US History to 1865	HI203	•	
Fall	American Civil War	HI310	•	
	Immigration and Exiles			•
	Rhetoric of U.S. Superheroes		•	
	Anglo-American Slave Narratives		•	
	US History to 1865	HI203	•	
	US History to 1865	HI203	•	
	History of US Pop Culture		•	
	US Sixties in Film and History	HI210	•	
	World War II	HI210	•	
Jan. Imm				
	Hollywood Cinema 1960-69			•
	South Park and Contemp. America	EN220	•	
PACE Spring	South Park and Contemp. America	EN220	•	
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	•	
	South Park and Contemp. America	EN220	•	
	Introduction to Film	EN250	•	
	Latin American/Latino Novel		•	
	Civil Rights Movement	HI310	•	
	Discourse of Environmental Documenty		•	
	Journalism/First Amendment		•	

IN251 Courses, AY 2014-2015

Date	Course Title	Cross-list	FT	Adjunct Faculty
Summer	American Politics and Film	PO260	•	
	Sociology: Pop Culture & Media	SO220	•	
PACE Fall	Philosophy and Film		•	
	Work and Society		•	
Fall	Constitutional Law	PO330		•
	The American Political System	PO105	•	
	Media History	CO260	•	
	Intro to Criminal Justice	PO235		•
	Foundations of Bilingual Ed	ED209		•
	State and Local Government	PO240	•	
	Bioethics	PH217	•	
	Deviance	SO232	•	
	Juvenile Delinquency	SO311	•	
	Physical Athletic Performance		•	
	Health and Pollution	ES321		•
Jan Immersion	Consumerism		•	
	What's Next: Emerging Adulthood		•	
	Sociology: Pop Culture & Media	SO220	•	
PACE Spring	Juvenile Delinquency	SO221	•	
	Alcohol		•	
	Ethics	PH215	•	
Spring	Business Ethics	PH215	•	
	Sociology: Pop Culture & Media	SO220	•	
	Juvenile Delinquency	SO221	•	
	Scientific Revolutions	PH223	•	
	Medical/Geriatric Social Work	HM360	•	
	Race and Gender Bias in US	PS360	•	
	Criminology	SO361	•	
	Civil Liberties and Constitution	PO334		•
	The American Political System	PO105		•
	Creating a Green Society		•	
	Civil Liberties and Constitution	PO334		•
	Media Literacy	CO260	•	
	Intro to Criminal Justice	PO235	•	
	Comparative Politics	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				