

## Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): American Studies

Department: American Studies

Degree or Certificate Level: BA

College/School: College of Arts and Sciences

Date (Month/Year): September 2023

Assessment Contact: Heidi Ardizzone, Chair

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? AY22-23

In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2022

Is this program accredited by an external program/disciplinary/specialized accrediting organization? No

### 1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle? (Please list the full, complete learning outcome statements and not just numbers, e.g., Outcomes 1 and 2.)

SLO1: Students will explain the relevant contexts—such as historical, political, geographic, literary, artistic, social, or intellectual—that shape American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas.

We revised all SLOs and assessment our plan in Summer 2022 in response to the feedback we received in Spring 2022. We essentially trialed the plan by completing our entire rubric in 2022. Now, in 2023, we are beginning our assessment cycle by assessing SLO1, above.

### 2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please describe the artifacts in detail and identify the course(s) in which they were collected. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

The direct measure artifact of student learning used to determine if students have achieved this outcome is the senior thesis, which is described here:

The American Studies thesis is the culmination of the major. Students produce an extensive, original research project (30-40 pages in length) that demonstrates familiarity with the public concerns and interdisciplinary emphasis of the field, including its methodological, interpretive, curatorial, analytical, and theoretical imperatives. The thesis makes an argument about the construction, development, or meaning of diverse American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas. The argument is convincingly supported by properly documented primary and secondary source evidence. It is clearly written in an appropriate style, tone, and genre for American Studies audiences.

The indirect measure artifact of student learning used to determine if students have achieved this outcome is a student survey. It is also attached here.

The senior thesis was collected in ASTD 4960 – Senior Workshop: Crafting the American Studies Thesis. This is the capstone course for the American Studies major, which is offered in-person every Spring semester on the St. Louis campus only. The indirect measure was collected electronically by the department chair but should be collected by the ASTD 4960 instructor in the future to streamline the assessment process.

### 3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and **include them in/with this report document** (please do not just refer to the assessment plan).

The SLOs was evaluated by rating the artifact of student learning with a rubric (attached) as a direct measure. All SLOs were also evaluated through an indirect measure, a student survey (also attached).

The ASTD 4960 instructor evaluated the direct measure artifact with the rubric at the end of the Spring 2023 semester.

In future years, this process will be overseen by the undergraduate coordinator, and we anticipate a Fall meeting dedicated to assessment will allow us to proceed in the manner described our 2022 assessment plan.

#### 4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

We had four students complete the senior thesis in 2023. The data below, as a result, is likely to be somewhat unreliable due to both our small sample size.

SLO1: For SLO1, one thesis rated a 3 (Exemplary), two rated a 2.5 (between Exemplary and Competent), 1 rated a 2 (Competent).

On the BA exit survey, every student rated themselves a 3 (Exemplary) on their mastery of SLO1.

We only offer this course in person on the St. Louis campus, so there are no differences in modality or location.

#### 5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

SLO1: With the small sample size, it is difficult to deduce if the differences in the scores between students is meaningful, or a result of idiosyncratic experiences of the students during the semester—of having an illness, for example, or having an overly busy graduating semester. That the theses all demonstrated competence, however, is a good signal that our undergraduate degree program is delivering on SLO1.

#### 6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

We discussed these findings at our department meeting in Fall 2023. We took careful notes that iterated the above, and tried to deduce why the ratings for the artifacts were what they were, while also discussing the limitations of the assessment this year (the small sample size, etc.). We also thought greater faculty awareness of the assessment plan will mean that faculty will be able to encourage the development of the appropriate outcomes at the level of pedagogy and assignment delivery rather than a wholesale revision to the curriculum.

B. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies

- Course content
- Teaching techniques
- Improvements in technology
- Prerequisites
- Course sequence
- New courses
- Deletion of courses
- Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

Changes to the  
Assessment Plan

- Student learning outcomes
- Artifacts of student learning
- Evaluation process
- Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
- Data collection methods
- Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

In Spring 2024 the instructors for our senior thesis will have an even clearer sense of the outcomes for the project and be able to articulate these in course materials, such as the syllabus, and scaffold them into the thesis assignment.

One concrete step we can take to improve both our assessment practices and our students' achievement of them is to include the revised description of the thesis on every syllabus for ASTD 4960, as well as all the learning outcomes for the major. In Spring 2024, we can align these to better implement our assessment protocols and aid our students in achieving our BA outcomes in an even more robust way.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

N/A

## 7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of assessment data?

We revised our entire assessment plan for the BA (and MA and PhD) in Summer 2022 in response to the feedback we received in Spring 2022. This is not a curricular change, but it seemed most urgent to have a workable assessment plan so that we could collect meaningful data to enact any future changes in our curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment practices. We hope that in 2023 we will begin to have that data and be able to consider any more robust changes to our BA program. This is excellent timing for our assessment plan revision, as it will allow us to capture data only from students who have completed our revised major that was implemented in Fall 2019—that was not possible before, when all our graduates were still working under our old major.

In response to our assessment process in 2021, on which we received feedback in Spring 2022, the entire faculty discussed the need to streamline our assessment plan. As our assessment report feedback from AY20-21 indicated, we had areas of our plan that could be improved. We determined to rewrite our assessment plans to submit in Fall 2022. This work was completed over Summer 2022. In early Fall 2022 the entire faculty met to discuss the plans before they were submitted to the College of Arts and Sciences and the Provost's Office in late September 2022. What follows is a summary of the feedback we received in Spring 2022 and our efforts to offer corrective action in this plan:

The outcome we assessed in 2021 year (a more complex version of SLO2) had numerous components and was quite complicated, which was characteristic of many of our SLOs (in part because we are an interdisciplinary field of study). In our new plan, we revised our SLOs to make them less complex and thus more easily assessable, as well as more transparent for our students.

The assessment report feedback also stressed that we should be focused on assessing the most advanced work produced in our students' degree plan. That has also been addressed by this revision. This also solves a problem that faculty members were concerned with—how complex and time-consuming the data collection and assessment process was. By locating this to our capstone course, we both assess students' most advanced work and streamline faculty labor. Not only that, but we have a specific artifact to assess—the senior thesis. This will enhance the effectiveness of our assessment.

The 2022 revision to our assessment plan will result in an accumulation of student artifacts over a period of years rather than only a handful of them produced during a single year, creating a larger data set that will be more meaningful and, we hope, lead to the best possible undergraduate American Studies education.

Going forward, we need to think more about how similar outcomes differ at the BA, MA, and PhD level. American Studies is unusual in that students, even those entering the PhD program, typically do not have background in the field, and therefore there is more overlap in SLOs for the different-level programs than may be typical, as we discussed with SLU's Assessment Coordinator, Marissa Cope, after receiving feedback on our 2022 assessment.

The faculty wonder if it makes sense to expect not different outcomes, fundamentally, but higher scores and a greater number of students achieving them at different levels—this should be tackled for American Studies overall for the 2024 assessment cycle.

**B.** How has this change/have these changes been assessed?

Implementing the new plan in a preliminary manner in 2022 allowed us a trial to see if we believe our new assessment plan will be workable. It will take time and an accumulation of artifacts to truly assess whether these changes have worked.

**C.** What were the findings of the assessment?

Certainly, having one artifact to assess, which truly epitomizes the culmination of the BA degree, is an improvement in the quality of our assessment protocol and the quality of the measures. The simplified outcomes are also a step in the right direction. At this point the small artifact sample size remains an issue, but the sample size will increase with time. The process is greatly streamlined and as a result we feel like overall involvement in the assessment process will be improved.

**D.** How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

Moving forward, it makes sense to continue to think about how to translate the complexity of an interdisciplinary field to simple, measurable outcomes, and implementing simple, measurable processes for all our degree programs. "Interdisciplinarity" is often a buzzword in higher education, but few people successfully describe, implement, and measure it. This is the challenge of assessment in American Studies, and it makes good sense to continue to consider how our instruments, our curriculum, and our pedagogical practices are meeting this challenge.

**IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools (e.g., artifact prompts, rubrics) with this report as separate attachments or copied and pasted into this Word document. Please do not just refer to the assessment plan; the report should serve as a stand-alone document.**

**Student Name:**

**Rater Name:**

**Rating Date:**

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**American Studies BA Assessment Rubric**

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**Artifact Description:** The American Studies thesis is the culmination of the major. Students produce an extensive, original research project (30-40 pages in length) that demonstrates familiarity with the public concerns and interdisciplinary emphasis of the field, including its methodological, interpretive, curatorial, analytical, and theoretical imperatives. The thesis makes an argument about the construction, development, or meaning of diverse American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas. The argument is convincingly supported by properly documented primary and secondary source evidence. It is clearly written in an appropriate style, tone, and genre for American Studies audiences.

<b>Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Exemplary (3)</b>	<b>Competent (2)</b>	<b>Developing (1)</b>	<b>Insufficient (0)</b>	<b>Rating</b>
SLO1: Students will explain the relevant contexts—such as historical, political, geographic, literary, artistic, social, or intellectual—that shape American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas.	The sources or ideas addressed by the student are thoroughly and appropriately contextualized and the student cogently explains why these contexts matter to the overall argument.	The sources or ideas addressed by the student are contextualized, but the student offers somewhat unconvincing explanations of why these contexts matter to the overall argument.	The student attempts to contextualize the sources or ideas addressed in the thesis, but these contexts are inadequately researched and why they matter to the overall argument remains opaque.	The student does not endeavor to contextualize the sources or ideas in the thesis.	
SLO2: Students will assess how American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas are constructed by	The student provides a thorough, appropriate assessment of how American cultural practices,	The student thoroughly assesses how American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas are constructed by or	The student mentions how American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas are constructed by or interpreted through	The student does not attend to how American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas are	

or interpreted through frameworks of nation, class, race, gender, ability, or sexuality.	expressions, or ideas are constructed by or interpreted through frameworks of nation, class, race, gender, ability, or sexuality—including nuanced attention to how two or more of these frameworks are interlocking.	interpreted through frameworks of nation, class, race, gender, ability, or sexuality, but the assessment is limited to sufficient attention to one of these frameworks.	frameworks of nation, class, race, gender, ability, or sexuality, but how this occurs is not thoroughly addressed.	constructed or interpreted through frameworks of nation, class, race, gender, ability, or sexuality.	
SLO3: Students will synthesize two or more disciplinary approaches in analyses of American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas.	The student thoroughly integrates two or more disciplinary approaches to analyze of American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas.	The student uses the approaches of two or more disciplines to analyze American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas, but these approaches are not integrated.	The student competently uses a single disciplinary approach to analyze American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas.	The student's analysis is not transparently derived from disciplinary knowledge.	
SLO4: Students will effectively articulate arguments and information about American cultural practices, expressions, and ideas.	The student has a clearly stated argument that proceeds logically with strong transitions. The argument is sufficiently supported by primary and secondary source evidence and the stakes of the argument are clear.	The student has an argument and a logical organizational structure, but there may be points where transitions could be more effective. The argument is sufficiently supported by primary and secondary source evidence, but the stakes of the	The student's argument is less clear than it could be, and the organization of the paper could be improved. There are places where the evidence that is meant to support the argument is described rather than interpreted. There are rare places where the	The student does not have an argument. The essay is disorganized. The evidence presented does not support the argument. The essay's language, style, genre, and tone is inappropriate for	

	<p>The language, style, genre, and tone are appropriate for American Studies audiences. There are no problems with spelling, punctuation, grammar, or syntax. All sources are properly documented.</p>	<p>argument might not be transparent. The language, style, genre, and tone are appropriate for academic audiences, but perhaps not for American Studies in particular. There are rare errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, or syntax. All sources are documented, but the documentation may have subtle formatting errors.</p>	<p>language, style, genre, and tone may not be appropriate for academic audiences. There are errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and syntax that may occasionally impede reading. Most sources are cited but there may be some information missing in the documentation.</p>	<p>an academic audience. There are frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and syntax that make portions of the student's work unintelligible. The sources are not cited.</p>	
<p>SLO5: Students will demonstrate the ability bridge academic concerns with American cultural practices, expressions, and ideas and the concerns of broader public life.</p>	<p>The student's work uses the academic tools of American Studies to engage convincingly with the concerns of broader public life in a manner that is detailed, specific, and comprehensive.</p>	<p>The student's work makes connections between academic concerns in American Studies and the concerns of broader public life in a manner that is more descriptive or speculative than analytical.</p>	<p>The student's work implies connections between American Studies and the concerns broader public life, but these are not transparently addressed.</p>	<p>The student's work does not appear relevant to broader public life.</p>	

**Student Name:**

**Survey Date:**

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**American Studies BA Exit Survey**

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**Artifact Description:** This survey is provided to graduating American Studies majors in order to gather information about the American Studies curriculum, course offerings, and pedagogy. Student feedback delivered here will help us to consistently revise our practices to deliver the best possible undergraduate education in American Studies.

**1) How well did you achieve each of the following student learning outcomes?**

SLO1: Students will explain the relevant contexts—such as historical, political, geographic, literary, artistic, social, or intellectual—that shape American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas.

Extremely Well (3)	Very Well (2)	Adequately (1)	Insufficiently (0)
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SLO2: Students will assess how American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas are constructed by or interpreted through frameworks of nation, class, race, gender, ability, or sexuality.

Extremely Well (3)	Very Well (2)	Adequately (1)	Insufficiently (0)
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SLO3: Students will synthesize two or more disciplinary approaches in analyses of American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas.

Extremely Well (3)	Very Well (2)	Adequately (1)	Insufficiently (0)
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SLO4: Students will effectively articulate arguments and information about American cultural practices, expressions, and ideas.

Extremely Well (3)	Very Well (2)	Adequately (1)	Insufficiently (0)
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SLO5: Students will demonstrate the ability bridge academic concerns with American cultural practices, expressions, and ideas and the concerns of broader public life.



Extremely Well (3)	Very Well (2)	Adequately (1)	Insufficiently (0)
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**2) What aspects of your education in American Studies helped you with your learning, and why were they helpful?**

**3) What might American Studies do differently to help you learn more effectively, and why would these actions help?**