Academic Year(s) Assessed: 2023-2024
College: Letters and Science
Department: American Studies Program
Department Head: Susan Kollin, Program Director
Submitted by: Susan Kollin

Program(s) Assessed

List all majors (including each option), minors, and certificates that are included in this assessment – add or subtract rows as needed – please use official titles:

Majors	Minors, Options, etc.
American Studies	Undergraduate Major
American Studies	MA program
American Studies	Doctoral Program

AMST Undergraduate Program
1. Past Assessment Summary

Last year, we assessed two learning outcomes (#3 and #4) for our undergraduate program. These outcomes addressed our students' success in constructing persuasive arguments and effective thesis statements as well as their ability to communicate effectively. While we met our threshold of 75% for the outcomes, we also noted the importance of maintaining strong lines of communication with our NTT faculty. Previously, we had several different instructors rotating through the teaching of AMST 101D for our major, so we wanted to make sure going forward that NTT faculty were fully aware of the learning outcomes for the course as well as the requirements of classes that have a CORE designation. Last year, we also discussed what courses we might want to evaluate in years when AMST 401R is not offered due to low enrollment. This year, we assessed AMST 201IH, which makes sense as a substitute for AMST 401 because it is the methods class for our major.

2. Action Research Question.

Our action research question this year was "Do students demonstrate an ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the sources they use as evidence in their essays?" This question speaks to the continued value of citational practices in scholarly papers at a time when it is often easier for students to locate material online that is written for popular audiences or in non-academic settings. We want to help students recognize the difference between peer-reviewed academic publications and sources that may be less authoritative such as blog entries or non-peer reviewed news stories. While we see a value in having students engage popular sources as a kind of

evidence in their work, we also want them to understand the ways peer-reviewed publications typically claim more authority and argumentative power in the academy than other sources do.

3. Assessment Plan, Schedule, and Data Sources.

a) **Please provide a multi-year assessment schedule that will show when all program learning outcomes will be assessed, and by what criteria (data).**

ASSESSMENT PLANNING SCHEDULE CHART					
PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOME	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	*Data Source**
Our students will be able to use evidence from primary and secondary sources in making an argument.	xx			xx	Randomly selected papers from AMST 101 & AMST 401 (substitute AMST 201 if capstone is not offered)
Our students will be able to cite sources according to the conventions of the discipline.	xx			xx	Randomly selected apers from AMST 101 & AMST 401 (substitute AMST 201 if capstone is not offered)
Our will be able to recognize the ways American culture can be interpreted from multiple perspectives.		xx			Randomply selected papers from AMST 101 & AMST 401 (substitute AMST 201 if capstone is not offered)
Our students will be able to apply the analytical methods of AMST to a range of historical and contemporary issues.		xx			Randomly selected

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOME					Data Source
					papers from AMST 101 & AMST 401 (substitute AMST 201 if capstone is not offered)
Our students will be able to construct a persuasive argument and an effective thesis statement.			xx		Papers collected from AMST 101 & AMST 401 (substitute AMST 201 if capstone is not offered)
Our students will be able to communicate effectively.			xx		Papers collected from AMST 101 & AMST 401 (substitute AMST 201 if capstone is not offered)

b) **What are the threshold values for which your program demonstrates student achievement?**

Threshold Values		
PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOME	**Threshold Value**	**Data Source**
Our students will be able to use evidence from primary and secondary sources in making an argument.	*The threshold value for this outcome is for 75% of assessed students to score above 2 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.*	*Randomly selected student essays (at least 15%)*
Our students will be able to cite sources according to the conventions of the discipline.	*The threshold value for this outcome is for 75% of assessed students to score above 2 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.*	*Randomly selected student essays (at least 15%)*
Our will be able to recognize the ways American culture can be interpreted from multiple perspectives.	*The threshold value for this outcome is for 75% of assessed*	*Randomly selected*

	students to score above 2 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.	*student essays (at least 15%)*
Our students will be able to apply the analytical methods of AMST to a range of historical and contemporary issues.	*The threshold value for this outcome is for 75% of assessed students to score above 2 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.*	*Randomly selected student essays (at least 15%)*
Our students will be able to construct a persuasive argument and an effective thesis statement.	*The threshold value for this outcome is for 75% of assessed students to score above 2 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.*	*Randomly selected student essays (at least 15%)*
Our students will be able to communicate effectively.	*The threshold value for this outcome is for 75% of assessed students to score above 2 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.*	*Randomly selected student essays (at least 15%)*

4. What Was Done

a) **Self-reporting Metric (required answer): Was the completed assessment consistent with the program's assessment plan? If not, please explain the adjustments that were made.**

We used our assessment committee's recommendations from last year about substituting a new class in the event that AMST 401R is not offered. This year, we substituted our methods class for the capstone seminar.

b) **How were data collected and analyzed and by whom? Please include method of collection and sample size.**

Following feedback received last year regarding the size of the sample, the program director requested that instructors submit a random sample of papers that amounted to at least 15% of the number of students enrolled in the class. This year, three tenure-track faculty members served on the AMST Assessment Committee and were responsible for reading and ranking the papers on a 1-4 scale. 86.7% of student papers in AMST 101 and 82% of student papers in AMST 201 ranked above a 2 on a 1-4 scale.

c) **Please provide a rubric that demonstrates how your data were evaluated.**

Indicators	Beginning - 1	Developing- 2	Competent- 3	Accomplished- 4
our students will be able to use evidence from primary & secondary sources	the paper does not include sources in their paper	the paper demonstrates the use of sources but without notable distinction about the type of source	the paper indicates a knowledge of the differences between the various types of sources	the paper selects mostly academic or scholarly types of sources in making the argument

our students will be able to cite sources according to the conventions of the discipline	the paper does not cite sources or does so with a limited recognition of the conventions of the discipline	the paper employs an academic citation style but is often inconsistent in applying the guidelines	the paper cites sources according to the discipline with only a few mistakes	the paper demonstrates a clear understanding of how to cite sources correctly according to the conventions of the discipline

5. What Was Learned

a) **Based on the analysis of the data, and compared to the threshold values established, what was learned from the assessment?**

We noticed that students were often citing the course lectures themselves as a source of evidence in their papers. The assessment committee agreed that lectures are regarded as public presentations delivered in an open classroom and thus do not need to be cited. The exception would be if the lecture included information such as quotes or data from a published study or included passages from a publication. In these instances, students should contact the professor to obtain the full citational information about the source they wish to cite from the lecture in their work.

b) **What areas of strength in the program were identified from this assessment process?**

We were pleased to note that faculty are designing engaging paper assignments that prompted students' interests in the subject. We were also pleased that students showed strong affective and intellectual connections to particular lectures and assigned readings in a class. Both courses addressed interdisciplinary approaches in exciting ways that clearly inspired students.

c) **What areas were identified that either need improvement or could be improved in a different way from this assessment process?**

We will encourage faculty to address the continued value of citational practices with their students. We agreed that Purdue OWL is a great resource to incorporate into the recitation sections. While it is easy to cut and paste from websites or borrow freely from other online sources such as YouTube, blogs, or other sites that are not formally published, we will also encourage faculty to emphasize the importance of understanding the origin or source of one's evidence, especially in an era of AI.

6. How We Responded

a) **Describe how "What Was Learned" was communicated to the department, or program faculty. How did faculty discussions re-imagine new ways program assessment might contribute to program growth/improvement/innovation beyond the bare minimum of**

achieving program learning objectives through assessment activities conducted at the course level?

The AMST assessment committee met on September 30th to discuss our findings and to develop ideas for improving the learning experiences in our classes. We determined that having faculty share their paper assignments with each other would be useful and even inspirational for all parties. The program director shared the committee's findings with our NTT faculty on October 11th and October 14th. In one case, we emphasized that we were not asking instructors to conduct a major overhaul or start assigning formal research papers in the lower-division classes. Instead, the committee thought making small adjustments to the assignment sheet would ensure that students understood the importance of using proper citational protocols for the discipline and the type of sources to emphasize in their papers.

    b) **How are the results of this assessment informing changes to enhance student learning in the program?**

In general, students do not always enjoy doing citations and often do not see the value of using the proper citation style. Members of the assessment committee, however, believe ongoing conversations about the value of learning the proper citational practices of a discipline or field of study are important and will empower students as scholars and writers. While we have no way of measuring levels of student confidence or empowerment, we believe that emphasizing these skills will benefit students in all of their university classes. As we go forward, the program director will share these findings with NTT faculty and their graduate teaching assistants as a way of ensuring that ample time is devoted to learning these skills in the recitation sections.

    c) **If information outside of this assessment is informing programmatic change, please describe that.**

n/a

    d) **What support and resources (e.g. workshops, training, etc.) might you need to make these adjustments?**

No additional resources are needed to implement these findings.

7. Closing the Loop(s). **Reflect on the program learning outcomes, how they were assessed in the previous cycle (refer to #1 of the report), and what was learned in this cycle. What action will be taken to improve student learning objectives going forward?**

    a) **Self-Reporting Metric (required answer): Based on the findings and/or faculty input, will there be any curricular or assessment changes (such as plans for measurable improvements, or realignment of learning outcomes)?**

        No XX

In reviewing the last report that assessed the PLO(s) in this assessment cycle, what changes proposed were implemented and will be measured in future assessment reports?

Based on feedback from last year, the AMST assessment committee changed our collection process by increasing the percentage of writing samples that we assessed for a more representative analysis. We are now collecting samples that draw from 15% of the enrollment in a class. We also included more information about the thresholds, which was missing from our report last year. Finally, we updated our assessment language to better reflect Bloom's Taxonomy of Action Verbs.

e) **Have you seen a change in student learning based on other program adjustments made in the past? Please describe the adjustments made and subsequent changes in student learning.**

As noted in the student papers, the assessment committee agreed that faculty have been successful in presenting innovative interdisciplinary materials in their classes. They are also designing engaging and thought-provoking papers for their assignments. As a result, students are writing interesting and valuable essays which connect them affectively and intellectually to the assignments. We want to continue fostering this innovation and creativity among AMST faculty and students.

Submit report to programassessment@montana.edu
Update Department program assessment report website.
Update PLO language in CIM if needed (Map PLOs to Course LOs)