

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): American Studies

Department: American Studies

Degree or Certificate Level: PhD

College/School: College of Arts and Sciences

Date (Month/Year): September 2022

Assessment Contact: Emily Lutenski, Chair

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? 2022

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 contexts—such as historical, political, geographic, literary, artistic, social, or intellectual—that shape American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas.

SLO2: Students will assess how American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas shape or are shaped by axes of power, such as race, gender, sexuality, class, nation, or ability.

SLO3: Students will synthesize two or more disciplinary approaches in analyses of American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas.

SLO4: Students will effectively articulate arguments and information for an American Studies audience.

SLO5: Students will identify how their research extends, diverges from, or speaks to prior American Studies scholarship.

SLO6: Students will construct a portfolio of useable professional documents such as cover letters, CVs, sample syllabi, statements of teaching philosophy, conference proposals, or grant applications.

We revised all SLOs and assessment plan in Summer 2022 in response to the feedback we received in Spring 2022. We essentially trialed the plan by completing our entire rubric for SLO1-5 this year (we did not offer ASTD 5900, where SLO6 is assessed, in AY21-22) and discussed it to see if the process and rubric is a functional starting point for our new procedures.

We will not generally be assessing more than one SLO per year unless our PhD numbers change significantly. This is because, as our assessment plan (attached) points out, our PhD numbers are currently small. To gather enough student artifacts to create meaningful assessment data, we need to accumulate dissertations and surveys for a length of time. If our PhD numbers were to increase, we may choose to modify this assessment plan to initiate a more rapid assessment cycle. We would resubmit a revised plan at that time.

The new assessment plan asks us to begin the assessment process for one SLO per year in 2023.

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 SLO1-5 is the dissertation, which is described here:

The American Studies PhD culminates a dissertation that makes an original argument based in primary and secondary research and demonstrates the student's knowledge of their field. It is typically 200-300 pages in length and composed of 4-6 chapters in addition to an introduction and conclusion. Typically, the introduction gives an overview of the dissertation topic, introduces the major problem or question the writer addresses, states the author's argument, situates that argument as part of a scholarly dialogue, and provides a preview of how that argument proceeds across the dissertation's chapters. The conclusion generally explains the stakes of the work that was done in the dissertation and suggests where research may proceed in the future.

The direct measure artifact of student learning used to determine if students have achieved SLO6 is a portfolio of professional documents completed in ASTD 5900 (see attached for a syllabus that explains the course and its typical assignments).

The indirect measure artifact of student learning used to determine if students have achieved all outcomes will be a student survey. The indirect measure was not implemented in 2022 (even on a trial basis) because it had not yet been developed. It will be implemented beginning in 2023 to give us additional data to consider. It is also attached here.

The dissertation as direct assessment artifact will be collected in ASTD 6990: Dissertation Research by a student's primary advisor. The portfolio of professional documents will be collected in ASTD 5990 by the instructor of that course. The survey will be administered by the graduate coordinator near the time of a student's degree completion. ASTD 5990 and ASTD 6990 are offered in-person on the St. Louis campus only.

Since our outcomes and assessment plan were revised after our AY21-22 graduates had completed their dissertations the above artifact description and learning outcomes were not fully expressed in the graduate handbook as they were writing. This is something we can do in the future (as part of our work to "close the loop") now that our assessment plan has been revised. Currently, it is typical to closely mentor students through the dissertation as advisors and committee members. We are committed to continuing that, but we could add clarity to the process by describing the dissertation in our written documents as well.

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).

SLO1-5 will be evaluated by rating the artifact of student learning with a rubric (attached) as a direct measure. SLO6 will also be evaluated by rating the artifact of student learning with a rubric (attached). All SLOs will also be evaluated through an indirect measure, a student survey (attached). The survey was not developed until Summer 2022, and therefore was not administered on a trial basis this year. It will be administered in Spring 2023. ASTD 5900, the course where students develop the artifact for SLO6, was not offered in AY21-22, and therefore that rubric was not administered on a trial basis either.

Since rubric for evaluating the dissertation as direct measure artifact was not completed until Summer 2022, the department chair, who is the only faculty member routinely compensated for summer work, trialed the rubric on the three dissertations that were completed in Spring or Summer 2022. In a faculty meeting on September 14, 2022, the chair reported the results of this assessment—highlighting students' strengths and weaknesses—to the faculty. The faculty determined that during future meetings in Fall 2022, faculty who supervised PhDs may also report on strengths and weaknesses they have observed in their work. Careful notes will be taken as a supplemental assessment artifact.

This should allow faculty will determine an action plan to make necessary changes to curriculum, pedagogy, mentoring, or assessment plan which can be enacted during the Spring 2023 semester.

In future years, this process will be overseen by the graduate coordinator, and we anticipate the early Fall meeting dedicated to assessment will allow us to proceed in the manner described in the attached revision of our assessment plan—with most of the above discussion taking place at a single meeting devoted to assessment early in the Fall semester.

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 three students complete their dissertations in Spring or Summer 2022. The data below, as a result, is likely to be unreliable due to the small sample size. As we accrue dissertations over a longer assessment cycle, we'll be able to gather more meaningful data for assessing SLO1-5:

SLO1: Every artifact rated a 3 (Exemplary).

SLO2: Every artifact rated a 3 (Exemplary).

SLO3: Two artifacts rated a 3 (Exemplary), while one rated a 2 (Competent).

SLO4: Two artifacts rated a 3 (Exemplary), while one rated a 2 (Competent).

SLO5: Two artifacts rated a 3 (Exemplary), while one rated a 2 (Competent).

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?

It probably goes without saying that with such a small sample size, this data is not terribly meaningful.

It seems like our PhD students are doing admirably with contextualizing their work (SLO1) and examining intersections of power (SLO2). One of the artifacts was not as clearly interdisciplinary in its own analysis as the others, although it participated in an interdisciplinary conversation across secondary sources admirably (SLO3). Two of the artifacts very cleanly written, argued, and organized, while one was slightly less polished (SLO4). Two of the artifacts had a very thorough treatment of scholarly predecessors, while one was more succinct—interesting and accurate, but it also opened some additional questions about the dissertation's scholarly positionings that could have been addressed.

In our discussion of this data, it seemed clear that the two artifacts that occasionally received a 2 (Component) rating on certain outcomes was largely due to the idiosyncratic circumstances of the students who wrote them—both of whom had pressures to finish quickly due to academic employment opportunities that required rapid degree conferral. We are not unsatisfied with competent dissertations under such circumstances—indeed, in our field dissertations are often the first draft of a book, and we expect that they will be developed and revised further when students like these obtain academic employment, should that be something they pursue.

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 on September 14, 2022. 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 discussed whether the rubric seemed to work. In general, we agreed the rubric overall appeared functional. We agreed that a simplified assessment plan based on work produced at the end of a student's degree program would yield the best data, and that assessing one outcome per year would assist us with compiling a larger pool of student work that would provide a more meaningful glimpse into our curricular successes and areas for improvement.

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.

During Fall 2022 we will focus on any modifications to our assessment rubric and surveys so that we can successfully implement our assessment protocols in Spring 2023.

One concrete step we can take to improve both our assessment practices and our students' achievement of them is to include a description of dissertation in the graduate handbook, as well as all the learning outcomes for the PhD. A lot of doctoral education tends to happen through mentoring, and while sections of the graduate handbook, when taken together, give an overview of the dissertation, what that artifact should look like is never succinctly stated as it is in our trial rubric. We tend to revise the graduate handbooks in the summer, so the earliest we can pursue this change will be for the graduate handbook ushered in for AY23-24 academic year. This could aid our students in achieving our PhD outcomes in an even more robust way.

In short, in AY23-23 we first anticipate changes to the assessment plan in terms of revising our rubric if deemed necessary, and from there we might modify our graduate handbook content in its overall description of the dissertation.

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 PhD (and BA and MA) 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 PhD program.

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. What follows is a summary of the feedback we received and our efforts to offer corrective action in this plan:

The outcome we assessed last year required students to assess literature in three chosen fields and was assessed with a rubric applied to preliminary exams. First, the outcome was a vague charge, with what it meant to "assess" literature was left unclear in the outcome, although it was hinted at somewhat in the rubric. Second, since students develop their own fields, there was not necessarily a way to track whether we are falling short in training students in a certain subject area. Third, the rubric that was used for assessment did not define what constituted "excellent," "good," "acceptable," "poor," or "unacceptable" mastery of the outcome. Fourth, we did not provide much of description of what the artifact should be. Fifth, we would do better assessment about the efficacy of our PhD program as a whole if we were assessing work gathered from the end of a student's degree program.

As a result, we rewrote our learning outcomes for the PhD with, we hope, additional clarity. We limited our assessment to look at two of our most well-defined artifacts. We developed new assessment rubrics to be applied to the dissertation as an artifact for SLO1-5, and the portfolio of professional documents generated in ASTD 5900 for SLO6. These rubrics, we hope, are clearer about what constitutes mastery of the relevant outcomes. Finally, by focusing primarily on the dissertation, we can measure our students' mastery of these outcomes at the end of their degree program, rather than earlier in it.

The PhD program will probably remain small due to student funding constraints; we will likely continue to have no more than 3 students each year who complete the degree. This means to create a meaningful data set it is necessary to accumulate artifacts over a period of years. As a result, when we revised this assessment plan, we also extended the length of our assessment cycle to enable the accumulation of more artifacts.

This revision to our assessment plan also has additional advantages that were not highlighted by the feedback we received on our 2021 report. For example, this revision to our assessment plan also solves a problem that faculty members were concerned with—how complex and time-consuming the data collection and assessment process was. By streamlining the assessment process, we will ensure more accurate record-keeping and increase faculty involvement in the process.

Taken together, we hope this revision to our PhD assessment plan will result in improvements in our students' experience and aid us in delivering the best possible graduate education in American Studies.

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

Implementing the new plan in a preliminary manner in 2022 (even though we could not implement the student survey or assess SLO6) has allowed us a trial to see if we believe it will be workable, although the artifact description and learning outcomes we assessed were not as clearly stated in the graduate handbook as they could be in the future. These were discussed at our faculty meeting on September 14, where careful notes were taken in order to provide a foundation for revision of the rubric before its full implementation in 2023.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

Certainly, having one artifact to assess, which truly epitomizes the culmination of the PhD 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:

American Studies PhD Assessment Rubric (Dissertation)

Artifact Description: The American Studies PhD culminates a dissertation that makes an original argument based in primary and secondary research and demonstrates the student’s knowledge of their field. It is typically 200-300 pages in length and composed of 4-6 chapters in addition to an introduction and conclusion. Typically, the introduction gives an overview of the dissertation topic, introduces the major problem or question the writer addresses, states the author’s argument, situates that argument as part of a scholarly dialogue, and provides a preview of how that argument proceeds across the dissertation’s chapters. The conclusion generally explains the stakes of the work that was done in the dissertation and suggests where research may proceed in the future.

Learning Outcome	Exemplary (3)	Competent (2)	Developing (1)	Insufficient (0)	Rating
SLO1: Students will explain the 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 does not make the connection between 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 shape or are shaped	The student provides a thorough, appropriate assessment of how American cultural practices,	The student thoroughly assesses how American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas shape or are shaped	The student mentions how American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas shape or are shaped by axes of power,	The student does not attend to how American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas shape or are	

by axes of power, such as race, gender, sexuality, class, nation, or ability.	expressions, or ideas shape or are shaped by axes of power, such as race, gender, sexuality, class, nation, or ability—including nuanced attention to how two or more of these frameworks are interlocking.	by axes of power, such as race, gender, sexuality, class, nation, or ability, but the assessment is limited to sufficient attention to one of these frameworks.	such as race, gender, sexuality, class, nation, or ability, but how this occurs is not thoroughly addressed.	shaped by axes of power, such as race, gender, sexuality, class, nation, or ability.	
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 for an American Studies audience.	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 identify how their research extends, diverges from, or speaks to prior American Studies scholarship.</p>	<p>The student commandingly engages with scholarship in their American Studies subfield, and convincingly positions their own work in relation to what has come before in a generative manner.</p>	<p>The student engages dutifully with scholarship in their American Studies subfield and demonstrates how their work relates to it.</p>	<p>The student draws on scholarship in their American Studies subfield, but what their own work contributes to the scholarly conversation in American Studies is unclear or somewhat unconvincing.</p>	<p>The student does not endeavor to position their work in relation to American Studies scholarship.</p>	

Student Name:

Rater Name:

Rating Date:

American Studies PhD Assessment Rubric (Portfolio of Professional Documents)

Artifact Description: The American Studies PhD is the terminal degree in the field. It prepares students to enter academia or related professions in the public humanities. Professional development of doctoral students, then, is important for their career placement. In ASTD 5900 – The Practice of American Studies, students learn the norms, languages, and formats of professional documents such as cover letters, CVs, sample syllabi, statements of teaching philosophy, conference proposals, or grant applications. By the end of the course, they will have compiled a portfolio of these materials.

Learning Outcome	Exemplary (3)	Competent (2)	Developing (1)	Insufficient (0)	Rating
SLO6: Students will construct a portfolio of useable professional documents such as cover letters, CVs, sample syllabi, statements of teaching philosophy, conference proposals, or grant applications.	The student's portfolio is comprehensive, with a robust assortment of materials. The materials are appropriate for submission to jobs, journals, review committees, etc. The portfolio adheres to disciplinary norms in style, tone, and format. The writing is correct and clear. The materials are also unusually	The student's portfolio is comprehensive, with a robust assortment of materials. The materials are appropriate for submission to jobs, journals, review committees, etc. The portfolio adheres to disciplinary norms in style, tone, and format. The writing is correct and clear.	The student's portfolio has a sample of professional materials. The materials are likely to be appropriate for submission to jobs, journals, review committees, etc., with revision and faculty mentoring. The is portfolio largely adheres to disciplinary norms in style, tone, and format, but there may be some areas that	The student's portfolio contains a small number of professional materials. They are not appropriate for submission to jobs, review committees, etc. The portfolio makes no effort to adhere to disciplinary norms in style, tone and format. The writing is unclear or has	

	interesting and informed.		need improvement. The writing is correct, but it may lack some clarity due to jargon.	numerous mistakes in spelling, grammar, or mechanics.	
--	---------------------------	--	---	---	--

Student Name:

Survey Date:

American Studies PhD Exit Survey

Artifact Description: This survey is provided to students graduating with an American Studies PhD in order to gather information about the American Studies doctoral curriculum, course offerings, pedagogy, and mentoring. Student feedback delivered here will help us to consistently revise our practices to deliver the best possible graduate education in American Studies.

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

SLO1: Students will explain the 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)
--------------------	---------------	----------------	--------------------

SLO2: Students will assess how American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas shape or are shaped by axes of power, such as race, gender, sexuality, class, nation, or ability.

Extremely Well (3)	Very Well (2)	Adequately (1)	Insufficiently (0)
--------------------	---------------	----------------	--------------------

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)
--------------------	---------------	----------------	--------------------

SLO4: Students will effectively articulate arguments and information for an American Studies audience.

Extremely Well (3)	Very Well (2)	Adequately (1)	Insufficiently (0)
--------------------	---------------	----------------	--------------------

SLO5: Students will identify how their research extends, diverges from, or speaks to prior American Studies scholarship.

Extremely Well (3)	Very Well (2)	Adequately (1)	Insufficiently (0)
--------------------	---------------	----------------	--------------------

SLO 6: Students will construct a portfolio of useable professional documents such as cover letters, CVs, sample syllabi, statements of teaching philosophy, conference proposals, or grant applications.

Extremely Well (3)	Very Well (2)	Adequately (1)	Insufficiently (0)
--------------------	---------------	----------------	--------------------

2) What aspects of your doctoral education in American Studies helped you with your learning, and why were they helpful?

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