

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): American Studies

Department: American Studies

Degree or Certificate Level: Graduate Certificate

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? 2023

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: Apply the major practices, theories, or research methodologies in American Studies.

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 artifact used to determine if students achieved the outcomes was a take-home exam that asked the following question:

Contemporary American Studies scholarship frequently foregrounds questions about the relationship between power and culture. Accordingly, that scholarship has been influenced by theoretical approaches from a wide variety of disciplines that serve to shed light on this relationship.

Identify three bodies of theory, theoretical works (essays or books), or theorists encountered in the course which aim to explicate the relationship between power and culture in some fashion or another. For each, describe its basic workings for a reader who hasn't come across it before. Tell your reader what this theoretical innovation, work, or theorist allows us to see or do that scholars wouldn't readily have been able to understand or accomplish otherwise. Describe its relevance to American Studies work—either specific works you've encountered here or elsewhere, or ideas about the kinds of work it could make possible.

Close by briefly describing how the integration of the various theoretical insights you describe departs from characteristic emphases of American Studies scholarship in at least one earlier moment in the discipline's history.

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 exam was evaluated by the instructor of the one required course for the graduate certificate program, ASTD 5000: Perspectives in American Studies on a pass/fail basis.

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)?

All three certificate students who took the exam passed the exam.

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

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

While the small sample size is a limitation, this demonstrates the efficacy of the ASTD 5000 course, which is the only required course for the graduate certificate. However, the certificate’s assessment plan could be rethought, which will be addressed below in the section on “closing the loop.”

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?

The faculty shared these findings in Spring 2023 and discussed them in Fall 2023. The determination was that the certificate program’s assessment plan might be revised. Right now, students complete an at-home exam outside of class for the certificate. However, it will streamline the assessment process for both the students and instructor if the instructors who routinely teach ASTD 5000 could consider course-embedded assessment, where instead of a pass/fail exam administered outside of class, a rubric could be applied to the student work produced in ASTD 5000 which would rate student mastery of the learning outcome. This would aid instructors in designing syllabi and assignments, as well as students in achieving the outcome, because this could be clearly articulated on assignments and the course syllabus. One consideration is that the ASTD 5000 course is not a culminating project for the graduate certificate—in some cases, it is the first ASTD course a certificate student takes, and right now the certificate has no culminating project. But since it is the only required course, course-embedded assessment might make the most sense for this certificate and be the best assessment the department can do, as we discussed with Assessment Coordinator Marissa Cope after receiving feedback on our 2022 assessment reports.

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.

As mentioned above, the certificate program’s assessment plan might be revised. Right now, students complete an at-home exam outside of class for the certificate. However, it will streamline the assessment process for both the students and instructor if the instructors who routinely teach ASTD 5000 could consider course-embedded assessment, where instead of a pass/fail exam administered outside of class, a rubric could be applied to the student work produced in ASTD 5000 which would rate student mastery of the learning outcome. This would aid instructors in designing syllabi and assignments, as well as students in achieving the outcome, because this could be clearly articulated on assignments and the course syllabus. One consideration is that the ASTD 5000 course is not a culminating project for the graduate certificate—in some cases, it is the first ASTD course a certificate student takes, and right now the certificate has no culminating project. But since it is the only required course, course-embedded

assessment might make the most sense for this certificate and be the best assessment the department can do, as we discussed with Assessment Coordinator Marissa Cope after receiving feedback on our 2022 assessment reports.

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 did complete a cycle of assessment for the graduate certificate in 2021; our prior assessment plan for the graduate certificate had only one outcome. We did not receive any feedback on our graduate certificate assessment in 2022 when we received the feedback for our other programs, and therefore we have not considered that here.

However, faculty in the program are concerned about the assessment artifact for the certificate being an exam that is taken in addition to the coursework. As a means of assessment alone this produces a useable artifact but doing so means additional labor for faculty (to write, proctor, and grade the exam) as well as for students. It also may be a deterrent to students considering our graduate certificate program.

Since the only required course for the graduate certificate is ASTD 5000, we believe it is possible to rewrite our certificate assessment plan to include course-embedded assessment in ASTD 5000, which would streamline the assessment process for both faculty and students and eliminate barriers for enrollment in the certificate program.

As a result, we may revise our certificate assessment plan in order to include course-embedded assessment in ASTD 5000. We began to discuss this possibility when we revised our other assessment plans in Summer 2022, but we discovered we needed to do more research and have more conversation on how to create course-embedded assessments that generate usable artifacts without compromising the academic freedom of faculty. That is still in progress.

We hope the forthcoming revision to our graduate certificate 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?

N/A

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

N/A

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

N/A

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.