

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): American Studies

Department: American Studies

Degree or Certificate Level: MA

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.

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 this year 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 MA numbers change significantly. This is because, as our assessment plan (attached) points out, our MA numbers are currently small. To gather enough student artifacts to create meaningful assessment data, we need to accumulate MA projects and surveys for a length of time. When our MA numbers increase, we may choose to modify this assessment plan to initiate a more rapid assessment cycle. We will 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 this outcome is the MA project, which is described here:

The American Studies MA culminates in a major written project, either a *portfolio paper* or a *thesis*. A *portfolio paper* is a research article, 20-30 pages in length, that makes an original argument based in primary and secondary evidence and demonstrates the student's knowledge of their field. It is typically a revised and expanded seminar paper. A *thesis* is a more extensive project, typically 60-80 pages in length, that makes an original argument based in primary and secondary research and demonstrates the student's knowledge of their field.

The indirect measure artifact of student learning used to determine if students have achieved this outcome 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 MA direct assessment artifacts will be collected either through ASTD 5990: Thesis Research or at the deadline (usually in Spring) for the MA portfolio paper; these will be collected by a student's primary advisor. ASTD 5990 and the portfolio paper process are offered in-person on the St. Louis campus only.

Since our outcomes and assessment plan were revised after our Spring 2022 graduates had completed their projects the above artifact description and learning outcomes were not fully expressed in the graduate handbook that describes the MA projects. 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.

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

Since rubric for evaluating the 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 two MA projects that were completed in Spring 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 MAs 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, 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 two students complete MA projects in 2022. The data below, as a result, is likely to be unreliable due to the small sample size. As we accrue MA projects over a longer assessment cycle, we'll be able to gather more meaningful data;

SLO1: Both artifacts rated a 3 (Exemplary).

SLO2: Both artifacts rated a 3 (Exemplary).

SLO3: One artifact rated a 3 (Exemplary), while one rated a 1 (Developing).

SLO4: Both artifacts rated a 2 (Competent).

SLO5: One artifact rated a 3 (Exemplary), while one rated a 1 (Developing).

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 MA students are doing admirably with contextualizing their work (SLO1) and examining intersections of power (SLO2). Both of the artifacts were completely written (SLO4)—it seemed like both could have seen one more draft to really polish the writing on sentence-levels.

Here, it might be worth noting that both of these students submitted a portfolio paper rather than a thesis. A portfolio paper is shorter and the project requires less intensive research, but because it is not credit-bearing and is, instead, done on top of routine coursework, perhaps students are not able to devote as much time to editorial work. This is something to consider as we look to “close the loop,” or at least to study in future years when we have larger numbers of artifacts from which to collect data.

One of the peculiar things we discussed were the differences in ratings on SLO3 (on interdisciplinarity) and SLO5 (on positioning oneself in a scholar conversation). It should be noted that the opposite students scored a 3 and 1 in those categories. In conversation, it seemed like the strengths and weaknesses of these artifacts in these areas might have been due to the emphases of the project mentors in an interdisciplinary program, one of whom tends to emphasize strong interpretations of primary source texts and one of whom tends to emphasize strong mastery of disciplinary fields.

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.

This means that in Spring 2023 MA advisors can communicate even clearer senses of the outcomes for the project to their students and attend to them in their mentoring role. 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 and portfolio paper in the graduate handbook, as well as all the learning outcomes for the MA. We included last year's handbook description here, which does not yet clearly articulate what our trial rubric does, at least for the portfolio paper. 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 the 2023-2024 academic year. This could aid our students in achieving our MA 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 approaches to student mentoring and perhaps graduate handbook content in its overall description of the MA project.

While the small sample size we assessed with our new rubric this year discourages us from making many curricular or policy changes at this point, we might keep an eye out in future assessment or two things: First, whether students who are choosing to complete their MA with a portfolio paper are writing enough research papers in their first year to begin that revision process early enough that they have adequate time to polish their written work. Second, we may consider whether portfolio paper students are getting enough feedback from their entire committees or relying very heavily on their primary advisors. We might consider how they can get adequate feedback from a range of readers without overstressing faculty workload.

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 MA (and BA 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 MA 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 apply their academic knowledge in broader contexts than academia. This outcome and its curriculum map, the committee pointed out, had two problems. First, the outcome was a vague charge. Second, there wasn't a required place in the curriculum where this could be

measured. MA students had an option to take an internship, where this outcome could be measured, but it wasn't a requirement for the degree, which meant it could never be assessed for all students. As a result, the faculty needed to decide whether this was, indeed, an outcome all MA students should achieve (which would mean that the internship should become a requirement for every student), or whether this was *not* a necessary outcome for a MA in American Studies. We determined that while the internship is incredibly useful for students who want to enter museum studies, nonprofit organizing, or other fields, for students who plan to move ahead to the PhD—which is most of our MA students—this was not a necessary outcome. As a result, we rewrote our learning outcomes for the MA to emphasize disciplinary achievements and habits of mind and retained the internship as an option for the degree, but not a requirement.

The assessment report we received in Spring 2022 also commented on the small number of students completing the MA, and how that meant we weren't able to produce meaningful data. Due to student funding constraints, the size of our MA program is unlikely to change, and we will likely continue with only 2-4 students per year who complete the degree. Instead, to create a meaningful data set, we must accumulate artifacts over a period of years. As a result, when we revised this assessment plan, we 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. It ensures that we will also be focusing on the most advanced work produced by our students when we only use the culminating MA project, whether portfolio paper or thesis, as an artifact for direct measure. Although our MA students have a portfolio paper or thesis option, the major difference between these artifacts is length—both are pieces of original scholarship that will be able to be measured successfully, we believe, using the same rubric. We believe that this is a step forward for more effective assessment of our MA program as a whole.

Finally, 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 MA 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) 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 MA 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.

Program-Level Assessment Plan

Program: American Studies Department: American Studies Date (Month/Year): 09/2022	Degree Level (e.g., UG or GR certificate, UG major, master’s program, doctoral program): MA College/School: College of Arts and Sciences Primary Assessment Contact: Emily Lutenski, Chair
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Note: Each cell in the table below will expand as needed to accommodate your responses.

#	Student Learning Outcomes What do the program faculty expect all students to know or be able to do as a result of completing this program? Note: These should be measurable and manageable in number (typically 4-6 are sufficient).	Curriculum Mapping In which courses will faculty intentionally work to foster some level of student development toward achievement of the outcome? Please clarify the level at which student development is expected in each course (e.g., introduced, developed, reinforced, achieved, etc.).	Assessment Methods	
			Artifacts of Student Learning (What) 1. What artifacts of student learning will be used to determine if students have achieved this outcome? 2. In which courses will these artifacts be collected?	Evaluation Process (How) 1. What process will be used to evaluate the artifacts, and by whom? 2. What tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) will be used in the process? Note: Please include any rubrics as part of the submitted plan documents.
1	Students will explain the contexts—such as historical, political, geographic, literary, artistic, social, or intellectual—that shape American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas.	Introduced: ASTD 5000 – Perspectives in American Studies. Developed: ASTD electives. Achieved: ASTD 5990 – Thesis Research or Portfolio Paper.	1. The direct measure artifact of student learning used to determine if students have achieved this outcome is the MA project, whether a thesis or a portfolio paper. The indirect measure artifact of student learning used to determine if students have achieved this outcome is a student survey. 2. The direct measure artifact is collected by a student’s primary advisor for the MA project, whether in ASTD 5990 or for the portfolio paper deadline typically in the Spring semester. The indirect measure artifact will be administered by the graduate coordinator near the end of a student’s MA.	1. A student’s primary advisor will implement the direct measure of the artifact, which will be completed by the student’s entire 3-person MA thesis or portfolio paper committee and submitted at the time of the student’s oral defense. The primary advisor will give the measures to the department’s graduate coordinator, who will lead the graduate assessment process. The graduate coordinator will administer the indirect measure, a student survey, near the completion of the student’s MA program, typically in the Spring semester. The graduate coordinator will report the results of both the direct and indirect measures—highlighting students’ strengths and weaknesses—to the faculty during an annual department meeting dedicated to assessment in the early Fall semester. This will provide a starting point for discussions with all faculty, where faculty who have supervised MA students may also report

				<p>on strengths and weaknesses they have observed in their work. Careful notes will be taken as a supplemental assessment artifact. By the end of the meeting, faculty will determine an action plan to make necessary changes to curriculum, pedagogy, or assessment plan.</p> <p>2. SLO1 will be evaluated by scoring the artifact of student learning on a rubric (attached) as a direct measure. SLO1 (and all SLOs) will also be evaluated through an indirect measure, a student survey (also attached).</p>
2	<p>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.</p>	<p>Introduced: ASTD 5000 – Perspectives in American Studies.</p> <p>Developed: ASTD electives.</p> <p>Achieved: ASTD 5990 – Thesis Research or Portfolio Paper.</p>	<p>1. The direct measure artifact of student learning used to determine if students have achieved this outcome is the MA project, whether a thesis or a portfolio paper. The indirect measure artifact of student learning used to determine if students have achieved this outcome is a student survey.</p> <p>2. The direct measure artifact is collected by a student’s primary advisor for the MA project, whether in ASTD 5990 or for the portfolio paper deadline typically in the Spring semester. The indirect measure artifact will be administered by the graduate coordinator near the end of a student’s MA.</p>	<p>1. A student’s primary advisor will implement the direct measure of the artifact, which will be completed by the student’s entire 3-person MA thesis or portfolio paper committee and submitted at the time of the student’s oral defense. The primary advisor will give the measures to the department’s graduate coordinator, who will lead the graduate assessment process. The graduate coordinator will administer the indirect measure, a student survey, near the completion of the student’s MA program, typically in the Spring semester. The graduate coordinator will report the results of both the direct and indirect measures—highlighting students’ strengths and weaknesses—to the faculty during an annual department meeting dedicated to assessment in the early Fall semester. This will provide a starting point for discussions with all faculty, where faculty who have supervised MA students may also report on strengths and weaknesses they have observed in their work. Careful notes will be taken as a supplemental assessment artifact. By the end of the meeting, faculty</p>

				<p>will determine an action plan to make necessary changes to curriculum, pedagogy, or assessment plan.</p> <p>2. SLO2 will be evaluated by scoring the artifact of student learning on a rubric (attached) as a direct measure. SLO2 (and all SLOs) will also be evaluated through an indirect measure, a student survey (also attached).</p>
3	<p>Students will synthesize two or more disciplinary approaches in analyses of American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas.</p>	<p>Introduced: ASTD 5000 – Perspectives in American Studies.</p> <p>Developed: ASTD electives.</p> <p>Achieved: ASTD 5990 – Thesis Research or Portfolio Paper.</p>	<p>1. The direct measure artifact of student learning used to determine if students have achieved this outcome is the MA project, whether a thesis or a portfolio paper. The indirect measure artifact of student learning used to determine if students have achieved this outcome is a student survey.</p> <p>2. The direct measure artifact is collected by a student’s primary advisor for the MA project, whether in ASTD 5990 or for the portfolio paper deadline typically in the Spring semester. The indirect measure artifact will be administered by the graduate coordinator near the end of a student’s MA.</p>	<p>1. A student’s primary advisor will implement the direct measure of the artifact, which will be completed by the student’s entire 3-person MA thesis or portfolio paper committee and submitted at the time of the student’s oral defense. The primary advisor will give the measures to the department’s graduate coordinator, who will lead the graduate assessment process. The graduate coordinator will administer the indirect measure, a student survey, near the completion of the student’s MA program, typically in the Spring semester. The graduate coordinator will report the results of both the direct and indirect measures—highlighting students’ strengths and weaknesses—to the faculty during an annual department meeting dedicated to assessment in the early Fall semester. This will provide a starting point for discussions with all faculty, where faculty who have supervised MA students may also report on strengths and weaknesses they have observed in their work. Careful notes will be taken as a supplemental assessment artifact. By the end of the meeting, faculty will determine an action plan to make necessary changes to curriculum, pedagogy, or assessment plan.</p>

				<p>2. SLO3 will be evaluated by scoring the artifact of student learning on a rubric (attached) as a direct measure. SLO 3 (and all SLOs) will also be evaluated through an indirect measure, a student survey (also attached).</p>
4	<p>Students will effectively articulate arguments and information for an American Studies audience.</p>	<p>Introduced: ASTD 5000 – Perspectives in American Studies.</p> <p>Developed: ASTD electives.</p> <p>Achieved: ASTD 5990 – Thesis Research or Portfolio Paper.</p>	<p>1. The direct measure artifact of student learning used to determine if students have achieved this outcome is the MA project, whether a thesis or a portfolio paper. The indirect measure artifact of student learning used to determine if students have achieved this outcome is a student survey.</p> <p>2. The direct measure artifact is collected by a student’s primary advisor for the MA project, whether in ASTD 5990 or for the portfolio paper deadline typically in the Spring semester. The indirect measure artifact will be administered by the graduate coordinator near the end of a student’s MA.</p>	<p>1. A student’s primary advisor will implement the direct measure of the artifact, which will be completed by the student’s entire 3-person MA thesis or portfolio paper committee and submitted at the time of the student’s oral defense. The primary advisor will give the measures to the department’s graduate coordinator, who will lead the graduate assessment process. The graduate coordinator will administer the indirect measure, a student survey, near the completion of the student’s MA program, typically in the Spring semester. The graduate coordinator will report the results of both the direct and indirect measures—highlighting students’ strengths and weaknesses—to the faculty during an annual department meeting dedicated to assessment in the early Fall semester. This will provide a starting point for discussions with all faculty, where faculty who have supervised MA students may also report on strengths and weaknesses they have observed in their work. Careful notes will be taken as a supplemental assessment artifact. By the end of the meeting, faculty will determine an action plan to make necessary changes to curriculum, pedagogy, or assessment plan.</p> <p>2. SLO4 will be evaluated by scoring the artifact of student learning on a rubric (attached) as a direct measure. SLO4 (and all SLOs) will also be evaluated through an</p>

				<p>indirect measure, a student survey (also attached).</p>
5	<p>Students will identify how their research extends, diverges from, or speaks to prior American Studies scholarship.</p>	<p>Introduced: ASTD 5000 – Perspectives in American Studies.</p> <p>Developed: ASTD electives.</p> <p>Achieved: ASTD 5990 – Thesis Research or Portfolio Paper.</p>	<p>1. The direct measure artifact of student learning used to determine if students have achieved this outcome is the MA project, whether a thesis or a portfolio paper. The indirect measure artifact of student learning used to determine if students have achieved this outcome is a student survey.</p> <p>2. The direct measure artifact is collected by a student’s primary advisor for the MA project, whether in ASTD 5990 or for the portfolio paper deadline typically in the Spring semester. The indirect measure artifact will be administered by the graduate coordinator near the end of a student’s MA.</p>	<p>1. A student’s primary advisor will implement the direct measure of the artifact, which will be completed by the student’s entire 3-person MA thesis or portfolio paper committee and submitted at the time of the student’s oral defense. The primary advisor will give the measures to the department’s graduate coordinator, who will lead the graduate assessment process. The graduate coordinator will administer the indirect measure, a student survey, near the completion of the student’s MA program, typically in the Spring semester. The graduate coordinator will report the results of both the direct and indirect measures—highlighting students’ strengths and weaknesses—to the faculty during an annual department meeting dedicated to assessment in the early Fall semester. This will provide a starting point for discussions with all faculty, where faculty who have supervised MA students may also report on strengths and weaknesses they have observed in their work. Careful notes will be taken as a supplemental assessment artifact. By the end of the meeting, faculty will determine an action plan to make necessary changes to curriculum, pedagogy, or assessment plan.</p> <p>2. SLO5 will be evaluated by scoring the artifact of student learning on a rubric (attached) as a direct measure. SLO5 (and all SLOs) will also be evaluated through an indirect measure, a student survey (also attached).</p>

Use of Assessment Data

1. How and when will analyzed data be used by program faculty to make changes in pedagogy, curriculum design, and/or assessment practices?

As noted above, each student's primary advisor will have a student's entire committee complete the assessment rubric with either the MA thesis or Portfolio paper as an artifact. The graduate coordinator will administer the student survey near the end of each student's degree program, which is typically in the Spring. Early in Fall semester, the entire faculty will meet to discuss the assessment data for one outcome and develop an action plan for making any necessary changes to pedagogy, curriculum, or assessment practices based on that data. The action plan may include further steps to gather data and make decisions (student focus groups, additional meetings), but these should be carried out by the end of the Fall semester. Any changes should be implemented in the subsequent Spring semester to allow time for any curriculum changes to be finalized. These should go into place by the subsequent Fall semester. Overall, this plan proposes one calendar year from the discussion of assessment data to changes being enacted in pedagogy, curriculum, or assessment practices.

2. How and when will the program faculty evaluate the impact of assessment-informed changes made in previous years?

The assessment plan proposed here includes assessing one outcome per year for a five-year cycle. This means that we would evaluate the impact of assessment-informed changes for each learning outcome every five years. This seems like a long time, but it makes sense for our unit because our MA numbers are small. To gather enough student artifacts to create meaningful assessment data, we need to accumulate MA projects and surveys for a length of time.

Additional Questions

1. On what schedule/cycle will program faculty assess each of the program's student learning outcomes? (Please note: It is not recommended to try to assess every outcome every year.)

The assessment plan proposed here includes assessing one outcome per year for a five-year cycle. It is notable, though, that the rubric included here addresses each of the above learning outcomes (SLO1-5) and the entire rubric will be completed by MA project committees each Spring; this is so we have numerous faculty members involved in the assessment process over a period of years, during which we will be compiling enough student artifacts to provide meaningful data. However, the assessment plan articulated here envisions only compiling and disseminating the data for one outcome per year; this is so that our small number of faculty can do focused work to envision and enact any action plan to change pedagogy, curriculum, or the assessment plan without significant workload hardships.

2. Describe how, and the extent to which, program faculty contributed to the development of this plan.

Throughout AY21-22 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 apply their academic knowledge in broader contexts than academia. This outcome and its curriculum map, the committee pointed out, had two problems. First, the outcome was a vague charge. Second, there wasn't a required place in the curriculum where this could be measured. MA students had an option to take an internship, where this outcome could be measured, but it wasn't a requirement for the degree, which meant it could never be assessed for all students. As a result, the faculty needed to decide whether this was, indeed, an outcome all MA students should achieve (which would mean that the internship should become a requirement for every student), or whether this was *not* a necessary outcome for a MA in American Studies. We determined that while the internship is incredibly useful for students who want to enter museum studies, nonprofit organizing, or other fields, for students who plan to move ahead to the PhD—which is most of our MA students—this was not a necessary outcome. As a result, we rewrote our learning outcomes for the MA to emphasize disciplinary achievements and habits of mind and retained the internship as an option for the degree, but not a requirement.

The assessment report we received in Spring 2022 also commented on the small number of students completing the MA, and how that meant we weren't able to produce meaningful data. Due to student funding constraints, the size of our MA program is unlikely to change, and we will likely continue with only 2-4 students per year who complete the degree. Instead, to create a meaningful data set, we must accumulate artifacts over a period of years. As a result, when we revised this assessment plan, we 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. It ensures that we will also be focusing on the most advanced work produced by our students when we only use the culminating MA project, whether portfolio paper or thesis, as an artifact for direct measure. Although our MA students have a portfolio paper or thesis option, the major difference between these artifacts is length—both are pieces of original scholarship that will be able to be measured successfully, we believe, using the same rubric. We believe that this is a step forward for more effective assessment of our MA program as a whole.

Finally, 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 MA assessment plan will result in improvements in our students' experience and aid us in delivering the best possible graduate education in American Studies.

IMPORTANT: Please remember to submit any rubrics or other assessment tools along with this plan.

Student Name:

Rater Name:

Rating Date:

American Studies MA Assessment Rubric

Artifact Description: The American Studies MA culminates in a major written project, either a *portfolio paper* or a *thesis*. A *portfolio paper* is a research article, 20-30 pages in length, that makes an original argument based in primary and secondary evidence and demonstrates the student’s knowledge of their field. It is typically a revised and expanded seminar paper. A *thesis* is a more extensive project, typically 60-80 pages in length, that makes an original argument based in primary and secondary research and demonstrates the student’s knowledge of their field.

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 by axes of power,	The student provides a thorough, appropriate assessment of how American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas	The student thoroughly assesses how American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas shape or are shaped by axes of power,	The student mentions how American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas shape or are shaped by axes of power, such as race, gender,	The student does not attend to how American cultural practices, expressions, or ideas shape or are shaped by axes of	

such as race, gender, sexuality, class, nation, or ability.	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.	such as race, gender, sexuality, class, nation, or ability, but the assessment is limited to sufficient attention to one of these frameworks.	sexuality, class, nation, or ability, but how this occurs is not thoroughly addressed.	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 language, style,	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 argument might not	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 language, style,	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 an academic	

	genre, and tone are appropriate for American Studies audiences. There are no problems with spelling, punctuation, grammar, or syntax. All sources are properly documented.	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.	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.	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.	
SLO5: Students will identify how their research extends, diverges from, or speaks to prior American Studies scholarship.	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.	The student engages dutifully with scholarship in their American Studies subfield and demonstrates how their work relates to it.	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.	The student does not endeavor to position their work in relation to American Studies scholarship.	

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 PhD curriculum, course offerings, and pedagogy. 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)
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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)
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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 for an American Studies audience.

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

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

6. Requirements for MA in American Studies

Established in 1971, the Master of Arts program in American Studies at Saint Louis University gives students solid grounding in the origins, development, practices, and theoretical framework of the field, as well as aiding them in the pursuit of independent research. The MA is a stand-alone degree for work in arts and cultural institutions, libraries, museums, historical societies, public humanities, nonprofit agencies, and other venues. Some students may also pursue the MA in American Studies as a prelude to further degrees, such as a professional MA or doctorate.

Course Requirements

Thirty (30) credit hours, including Perspectives in American Studies (ASTD 5000). For students who choose the thesis track (outlined below), 6 of these credit hours will consist of Thesis Research (ASTD 5990), taken during the second year of coursework. There is no language requirement for the MA degree.

No more than 6 of the credit hours to be counted toward the degree may be taken outside of American Studies. Such outside courses require the prior approval of the student's faculty advisor.

Qualifying Exam

At the end of their second semester of coursework, all MA and MA-to-PhD students take a two-hour qualifying exam to demonstrate their growing knowledge of the field. The exam consists of essay questions provided by American Studies course instructors. Students must answer two of the questions: one covering material from ASTD 5000, and the other chosen from questions about materials covered in another American Studies class taken during the first year. The exam is a take-home exam, organized by the professor teaching ASTD 5000.

Portfolio Paper or Thesis

After successful completion of the qualifying exam, students pursue one of two research paper options: a *portfolio paper* or a *thesis*.

A portfolio paper is a 20–30 page research article, typically a revised and expanded seminar paper meant to demonstrate the student's extensive knowledge of their field.

It is developed in conjunction with a two-person faculty committee (a chair and one member) over the summer following the first year of the MA program and during the second year of the MA program. A third faculty member will be assigned as an additional reader by the department.

A *thesis* is a more developed project with an original argument, typically 60–80 pages in length, based on extensive primary and secondary research. It is developed in conjunction with a three-person faculty committee (a chair and two additional members) over the summer following the first year of the MA program and during the second year of the MA program. To pursue the thesis option, a student *must* obtain prior permission from the prospective thesis advisor by the end of their first year in the program.

Oral Examination

After the student's committee has approved the final version of the portfolio paper or thesis, the student completes a one-hour oral examination before three faculty members on a date set by the department. For a portfolio paper, these will be the members of the two-person portfolio committee plus an additional faculty member, and the exam will be on the portfolio paper. For a thesis, these will be the members of the three-person thesis committee, and the exam will be a public defense of the thesis. The final accepted copy must be submitted to all committee members at least 16 days before the oral examination date set by the department.

Advising

During the student's first year in the MA program, the student's advisor is the faculty member serving as cohort advisor for that year's entering class of graduate students. (The Graduate Coordinator generally fills this role.) By the end of the first year, the student should have selected a faculty member to serve as chair of their thesis or portfolio-paper committee; that faculty member also then becomes the student's advisor.