



Department of Anthropology

College of Arts and Humanities

Undergraduate Program Assessments Report 2013

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Table of Contents

Program Description	1
Mission Statement	1
Learning Objectives for the Major	1
Assessments 2013	2
Part 1: Course Content and Learning Objectives for the Major	3
Part 2: Discussions of Effective Teaching and Class Communication	4
Part 3: Student Writing: Assessments of Anth 305GW	5
Recommendations Summary	7
Appendices	8
A. Assessments Inventory	8

Program Description

Mission Statement

The following is the approved mission statement for the department, which was revised from the draft statement presented in last year's assessment. The mission statement does respond to the external reviewers during our sixth cycle review, suggesting a stronger incorporation and emphasis on the local resources of the Bay Area. However, in comparison to the draft statement, it also outlines the research and educational focus of the department. The changes more explicitly align the mission statement with our strengths, provide a direction for a more focused program, and give prospective students a clear indication of the areas of academic study in which they can receive training.

Anthropology at SFSU focuses on the study of human beings from archaeological, biological, cultural, and visual perspectives. Faculty at SF State have research programs in the Bay Area, across the United States, and internationally. We bring this experience to the classroom and into the community. The location of the campus in a diverse and vibrant urban setting provides unique opportunities for integrating local resources with our students' educational experience.

The Anthropology Department offers a rigorous program with practical training in three sub-fields:

- medical anthropology: public health, human rights, community-based participatory research, and health of migrant populations;*
- visual representation: ethnographic and applied film making, critique of visual ideology, origins of art, still image and photography; and*
- bioarchaeology: contextualized skeletal and dental analyses, health of past populations, and osteology in a medico-legal context.*

Our students explore the theoretical foundations and ethical obligations of the field, gain an appreciation for diversity in lifeways, and acquire an understanding of how anthropology can benefit their own communities.

Learning Objectives for the Major

- I. Diversity: Have an awareness and knowledge of a culturally and biologically diverse world. (Intro Core Courses 100, 110, 120; elective courses)
 - a. Describe the field of anthropology and its objectives.
 - b. Recognize the diversity of cultures and perspectives.
 - c. Recognize diversity in race, class, gender identity, and age.

- d. Recognize diversity in material culture and symbolic values across cultures over time.
 - e. Explain the basic processes of biological evolution and the general course of human evolution.
- II. Theory: Understand the fundamental principles of the three major subfields. (Anth 300, Area 1 Theory and Foundations; upper division requirement in the 3 subfields)
- a. Be able to characterize the distinctive theoretical and methodological approaches of anthropology.
 - b. Critically examine their own cultural and social identities and understand how those identities shape their beliefs and attitudes.
 - c. Understand social inequality and how to become civically engaged to address the issue.
 - d. Have a scientific understanding of human biological diversity, including an appreciation of ethical concerns arising from that diversity.
 - e. Demonstrate knowledge of the wide range of past and present human biocultural systems, including ecological relationships, social and cultural organization, and processes of cultural change.
- III. Method: Use theoretical knowledge to critically analyze and interpret anthropological evidence. (Area 2 Methods and Practicum)
- a. Ability to design a research project and understand the role of data analysis.
 - b. Present opposing viewpoints and alternative hypotheses on various anthropological issues.
 - c. Gather and interpret information from diverse sources, including local resources of the Bay Area.
 - d. Demonstrate applied skills in at least one of the subfields of anthropology.
 - e. Write concisely and logically, incorporating relevant data and knowledge.

Assessments 2013

Assessments for 2013 includes three main items: 1) articulation of course content and learning outcomes with the objectives for the major; 2) discussion of effective teaching strategies; and 3) assessment of student writing and initial development of action plans to improve academic research and writing skills. The final item was prompted by the 2012 assessments where outcomes for the final projects in the methods courses fell below the established goal of having at least 80% of the students rated at Proficient/Good or Accomplished/Excellent (72.5%).

Part 1: Course Content and Learning Objectives for the Major

Learning objectives for the major were broadly addressed by identifying the courses expected to meet each objective in the 2012 assessment. In 2013 the alignment of objectives for the major with individual courses was more specifically addressed through a content analysis of syllabi. All course syllabi from Sp 2012 and Fall 2013 were scored by the department chair (Biella) to determine if they explicitly incorporated elements in the three areas of the learning objectives for the major: diversity, theory, and methods. Score of 1 indicate at least minor coverage and scores of 2 indicate in-depth coverage where the elements within the area are an integral part of the course. The average score is given when multiple sections of a course were included. Because there was no difference in scores for courses taught by the same instructor in different semesters, each instructor was only scored once per course.

Table 1. Alignment of Course Content with Learning Objectives for the Major^{1, 2}

Courses	Diversity	Theory	Methods
100 Intro to Biological Anth (3)	2	2	1
110 Intro to Archaeology (1)	1	2	2
120 Intro to Cultural Anthropology (3)	2	1.67	1.33
300 Foundations of Anthropology (1)	2	2	1
301 Foundations of Archaeology (1)	1	2	2
302 Foundations of Human Variation (2)	1.5	2	0.5
305 GW Writing Anthropology (2)	1	1	2
315 People of Central America (1)	2	2	0
325 Class: Cross-Cultural (1)	2	2	0
327 Anthropology and Film (1)	1	2	2
333 Primate Behavior (1)	1	2	2
420 Indigenous Media & Social Change (1)	0	2	2
450 Arch of Ritual and Religion (1)	2	2	0
470 Archaeology of Mexico (1)	2	2	0
471 Ancient Maya (1)	0	2	1
480 Ancient Civilizations of the Near East (1)	2	2	0
481 Ancient Civilizations of the Far East (1)	1	2	1
530 Human Osteology (1)	1	1	2
531 Fossil Humans (1)	2	1	0
535 Paleopathology (1)	2	1	2
551 Anthropology of the Body (1)	1	2	1
555 Urban Anthropology (1)	1	2	2
557 Ethnography of the Inner City (1)	0	1	2
569 Cross-Cultural Sex and Gender (1)	2	2	0
581 Anthropology and Folklore (2)	1	2	1
585 Globalization and World Cultures (1)	2	2	0

Courses	Diversity	Theory	Methods
592 Archaeological Methods (2)	0	1	2
595 Visual Anthropology I (1)	0	1	2
596 Visual Anthropology II (1)	0	1	2
630 Medical Anthropology (1)	2	2	0
652 Anthropological Statistics (1)	0	1	2
Total Percentage:	1 = 32.3% 2 = 41.9%	1 = 32.3% 2 = 67.7%	1 = 19.4% 2 = 45.2%

¹Scores: 1 = at least minor coverage; 2 = in-depth coverage.

²The total number of syllabi scored is given in parentheses.

General Findings: All courses included at least minor coverage of theory and 74% of the courses included human diversity. Methods were included in 64% of the courses. In general, the progression of learning objectives proceeds as intended with human diversity introduced early in the curriculum, theory throughout, and methods concepts emphasized in the courses specifically designated as fulfilling this requirement of the major (although also included in other courses). The one exception was Anth 531 Human Evolution, which was scored 0 for methods even though it is designated as a course in Area 2 Methodology. It should be noted the full-time faculty member who normally teaches 531 was on leave, and it was taught by a newly hired instructor in Spring 2013.

Actions: In general, the course learning outcomes and content reflect the learning objectives of the major; however, there can be inconsistencies with new instructors.

Recommendations: Better support for new hires regarding course expectations should be implemented. The chair or an assigned full-time faculty member for each new hire or regular lecturers teaching a course for the first time should be responsible for ensuring compliance with the course requirements.

Part 2: Discussions of Effective Teaching and Class Communication

The 2012 assessments recommended that faculty hold at least one meeting to discuss strategies related to using technologies in the larger lecture classes to increase student engagement and learning. However, because we needed to hire a number of new lectures for these courses in the past year, the discussion focused more broadly on effective teaching as we developed standardized departmental criterion for the many peer observations we needed to complete. The initial discussion reviewed general standards in categories such as: structure, goals, methods, and communication. Although these standards were developed in response to new lecturers, the same criterion will be used for full-time faculty.

Additional discussions at two other faculty meetings were prompted by our experiences with the peer observations and mainly focused on how to effectively communicate difficult concepts in a large lecture course, and the importance of structuring the classes to meet learning outcome goals. The general consensus was that both the peer

observations and discussions were helpful to faculty in self-evaluation of their effectiveness, and several faculty indicated that they would welcome more of these discussions.

Part 3: Student Writing: Assessments of Anth 305GW

The instructors for the Anth 305GW were asked to review student writing portfolios and assess progress in writing proficiency. The following is a summary of these assessments.

A) Improvements:

1. Students improved the most in framing thesis/research questions, clarity, coherency, and organization. However, while there were improvements, many still needed considerable help with organizing a research paper.
2. There were also improvements in grammar and mechanics, particularly in basic skills such as the correct use of tense, identification of clear subjects and objects, and avoidance of run-on sentences. However, reinforcement is required and some skills such as avoiding sentence fragments are still a problem for some students.
3. Students demonstrated increased confidence and proficiency in embedding quotations and incorporating multiple sources for a set of ideas.

Weaknesses:

1. Students still have underdeveloped and insufficiently elaborated ideas, resulting in weak writing.
2. Despite considerable time devoted to in-text citation style and formatting bibliographies most students did not consistently follow the AAA style guidelines used in the course.
3. It is difficult to fully cover academic research skills and literature reviews in the GVAR course. Most students were lost on how to conduct adequate and thorough searches of the literature. A much smaller number still had problems distinguishing scholarly research from other types of sources.

C) GVAR Instructor Recommendations:

1. Consistent and specific writing assignments should be included throughout the semester.
2. Continued instructor feedback is imperative to improve students writing skills, including opportunities to turn in drafts and cumulative writing assignments. One instructor noted that students said they felt more confident in their final product when advanced drafts were required. Peer review was also suggested as an effective way to improve student writing.

3. Adopt a standard citational and bibliographic style for the department to reinforce the expectations. Once students learn a consistent style well, it is more likely that they will be able to translate these skills to a new style.
4. Provide more guidance on conducting academic research and identification of scholarly sources throughout the curriculum. Subject specific workshops could be developed in conjunction with library staff.

Actions: We have begun collecting materials such as handouts and resources that pertain to research and writing skills in order to develop consistent and specific guidelines for the department. The GVAR instructors and a few other faculty members have already contributed materials and the remaining faculty will be asked for contributions by the beginning of the semester.

Recommendations: The faculty should develop a clear plan to improve student writing across the curriculum by: 1) review the complete comments assessing student writing by the GVAR instructors; 2) complete development of shared departmental writing and academic research resources; 3) identify where specific writing skills will be addressed in the curriculum; 4) discuss writing requirements and appropriate student peer and instructor feedback; and 5) reinstitute the 2011 assessments of the final papers in the methods courses to track the effectiveness of these action.

Recommendations Summary

The following recommendations will be presented and discussed at the faculty meetings at the beginning of the Fall 2013 semester.

1. The chair or an assigned full-time faculty member for each new hire or regular lecturers teaching a course for the first time should be responsible for ensuring compliance with the course requirements.
2. Review the complete comments assessing student writing by the GVAR instructors
3. Complete development of shared departmental writing resources (e.g., student research and writing handbook, standard class handouts such as peer review guidelines and assessment rubrics; standardized citation styles)
4. Identify where specific writing skills will be addressed in the curriculum (300s, upper division, methods courses).
5. Discuss writing requirements and appropriate student peer and instructor feedback.
6. Reinstitute the 2011 assessments of the final papers in the methods courses to track the effectiveness of these action.

Appendices

A. Assessments Inventory

Appendix A

San Francisco State University Inventory of Program Assessment Activities, August 2013

Program: Anthropology **College:** Arts and Humanities **Date:** 6/25/13

Program Mission: Students should demonstrate an awareness and knowledge of a culturally and biologically diverse world and show a basic understanding of the fundamental theories across the three major sub-fields represented at SFSU: Archaeology, Biological Anthropology, and Socio-cultural Anthropology. Students should also demonstrate an ability to integrate the fundamental principles of the sub-fields and to use their theoretical knowledge to critically analyze and interpret anthropological evidence.

Measurable learning outcome	Place in curriculum where outcome is addressed	Academic year outcome was/will be assessed	Assessment/procedures Methods/strategies	Summary of findings about student learning	Use of findings for program improvement
<p>1) Diversity: Have an awareness and knowledge of a culturally and biologically diverse world.</p> <p>a) Describe the field of anthropology and its objectives.</p> <p>b) Recognize the diversity of cultures and perspectives.</p> <p>c) Recognize diversity in race, class, gender identity, and age.</p> <p>d) Recognize diversity in material culture and symbolic values across cultures over time.</p> <p>e) Explain the basic processes of biological evolution and the general course of human evolution.</p>	<p>Intro Core Courses: 100, 110, 120</p> <p>Area 1 & Area 2</p>	2010-2013	10-20 question multiple choice format tests will be administered by each instructor in the introductory classes at the beginning and end of the semester. Questions focus on fundamental concepts of diversity as listed in Learning Outcomes 1a-3.	<p>Goals: a) Improvement from first to second test.</p> <p>b) At least 75% of anthropology majors answering each question correctly in the second test.</p>	<p>Instructors teaching courses that do not meet the 75% target will be asked to develop a written plan for students to reach these goals.</p> <p>2010-2011 Results mostly met the 75% threshold target. Where this was not the case, the results were used to initiate discussions of pedagogy in the introductory courses.</p> <p>2012-2013 A faculty meeting discussed criteria for effective teaching as part of the development of clear guidelines for peer evaluation. Further discussion on effective teaching took place during two other faculty meetings.</p>

Measurable learning outcome	Place in curriculum where outcome is addressed	Academic year outcome was/will be assessed	Assessment/procedures Methods/strategies	Summary of findings about student learning	Use of findings for program improvement
<p>1) Theory: Understand the fundamental principles of the three major subfields. (Theory Core Courses 300, 301, 302; Area 1)</p> <p>a) Characterize the distinctive theoretical and methodological approaches of anthropology.</p> <p>b) Examine their own cultural and social identities and understand how those identities shape their beliefs and attitudes.</p> <p>c) Understand social inequality and how to become civically engaged to address the issue.</p> <p>d) Have a scientific understanding of human biological diversity & appreciation of ethical concerns arising from that diversity.</p> <p>e) Demonstrate knowledge of the wide range of past and present human biocultural systems, including ecological relationships, social and cultural organization, and processes of cultural change.</p>	<p>Anth 300 Area 1 Theory and Foundations Upper division requirement in the three subfields</p>	<p>Spring 2011-2013</p>	<p>a) Review and standardization of core student learning objectives. b) Develop method to assess the implementation of the learning objectives. c) faculty discussions of pedagogy facilitated by the assessments committee.</p>	<p>Assessment committee to present final recommendations</p>	<p>Facilitated discussion among faculty will be utilized to insure that the theory courses are adequately covering the core methodologies and theoretical approaches of anthropology.</p> <p>Spring 2011: Discussion of the core theories and methodologies important in the three subfields took place. Standardized baseline syllabi for all 300-level courses are now in place.</p> <p>Fall 2014: Develop and implement an instrument that directly measures relevant student learning.</p>

Measurable learning outcome	Place in curriculum where outcome is addressed	Academic year outcome was/will be assessed	Assessment/procedures Methods/strategies	Summary of findings about student learning	Use of findings for program improvement
<p>1) Method: Use theoretical knowledge to critically analyze and interpret anthropological evidence. (Area 3)</p> <p>a) Ability to design a research project and understand the role of data analysis.</p> <p>b) Present opposing viewpoints and alternative hypotheses on various anthropological issues.</p> <p>c) Gather and interpret information from diverse sources.</p> <p>d) Demonstrate applied skills in at least one of the subfields of anthropology.</p> <p>e) Write concisely and logically, incorporating relevant data and knowledge.</p>	Area 2 Method and Theory	<p>Begin Fall 2010</p> <p>Fall courses evaluated even years. Spring courses evaluated odd years.</p> <p>2011: modified to all courses evaluated every year.</p>	<p>The curriculum committee will randomly sample 5 papers from each of the methods courses taught during a semester (~4). Fall courses will be evaluated in even years and Spring courses will be evaluated in odd years. The projects will be evaluated based on a four-category assessment:</p> <p><i>Novice/Inadequate:</i> Does not understand basic principles of research methods.</p> <p><i>Developing:</i> Shows some understanding of basic research methods but is not able to incorporate the relevant theoretical concepts of the field.</p> <p><i>Proficient/Good:</i> Has a good foundation in research methods and applications, and shows evidence of integrating theoretical concepts of the field.</p> <p><i>Accomplished/Excellent:</i> Shows both exceptional understanding of research methods and applications and exemplary integration of theoretical concepts. Abilities suggest the student has skills that will enable scholarly contributions to the field.</p>	<p>Goal: at least 80% of students rated at Proficient/Good or Accomplished/Excellent</p> <p>2011: Assessments are on-going. Preliminary results indicate students are near the goal (75%) across the program but continued sampling is needed to evaluate individual courses.</p> <p>2012: Further assessment indicates students are still somewhat below the goal (72.5%) for proficiency.</p>	<p>2012-2013: Assessment of student writing and recommendations based on review of student writing in the GWAR course. Began development to improve student writing and research skills with the aim of improving proficiency as judged based on final projects in the methods courses.</p> <p>Fall 2013: Completion and implementation of: 1) shared departmental writing and academic research skills resources; 2) finalize where specific skills will be addressed in the curriculum and 3) gauge progress by reinstating evaluations of final products in the methods courses.</p>