

Annual Departmental Assessment Report

Department or Program: Indigenous, Race, and Ethnic Studies

Academic Year of Report: 2021

Department Contact Person for Assessment: Brian Klopotek

Section 1: Learning Objectives Assessed for this Report

For each major in the department, list the learning objectives that were assessed during this period.

Ethnic Studies Bachelor's Degree

For this assessment we focused on IRES's Learning Assessment #7 – Original Research.

Section 2: Assessment Activities

For each learning outcome, describe what information was collected, how it was analyzed and discussed, and the conclusions that were drawn from the analysis. In the narrative, reference all relevant means of collecting information about learning goals, including direct measures (e.g. assessment of student assignments), indirect measures (e.g. overall grade patterns in a particular course, student reflections on learning, SERU data), and qualitative information (e.g. faculty observations, student input). While the choice of which assessments are most meaningful is up to the department, a mix of direct and indirect measures is requested.

We made a significant change in 2019 to shift from having a capstone sequence of research courses in which seniors planned and executed an original research project over two terms, to simply requiring that students take two 400-level classes and ensuring that all of our 400-level writing classes required at least 12 pages of writing connected to research and research evaluation. For some classes, that might be a single 12-page research paper, while for others, it might be a series of 4-page papers. The goal is to ensure that students are able to critically analyze how knowledge about race, ethnicity, and indigeneity is produced and evaluate it accordingly. In the old version of capstone classes, all students went through the process together at the same time, and research practices could be the object of focus for the entire term. In the new system, the course content drives the class and attention to research practices can't receive the same sustained attention as in the old system. However, the capstone requirement served as a barrier to graduation for some students and a general source of anxiety. Since most majors outside of the Honors College don't require such a significant hurdle be cleared, we reevaluated what our intention was and implemented these objectives in a more dispersed way that still meets the intended level of competence.

Section 3: Actions Taken Based on Assessment Analysis

For each learning goal assessed for each major, describe any actions taken as a result of assessment information, or plans to take action during the next academic year. Describe how the actions or action plans are meant to address the issues arrived at through the assessment activities in Section 2.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically, and hopefully only temporarily, shifted the way we conduct classes, it's hard to evaluate the progress of the changes we've made. Based on conversations with faculty, the progress has been uneven. As an example, Jennifer O'Neal's research projects previously included trips to Warm Springs and Burns to do work with Paiute elders. Some of that work can be conducted over zoom, but part of the benefit of the trips in the past has been place-based education where students understand the relationship of knowledge to people in different ways. For other classes, while we work hard to keep up student engagement over zoom in creative ways (breakout discussion groups, assigned discussion leadership for specific articles/chapters, and so on), it has proved far more challenging to keep students on task for reading and research assignments.

Section 4: Other Efforts to Improve the Student Educational Experience

Briefly describe other continuous improvement efforts that are not directly related to the learning goals above. In other words, what activity has the department engaged in to improve the student educational experience? This might include changes such as curriculum revisions, new advising approaches, revised or new co-curricular activities, etc. Describe the rationale for the change(s) and any outcomes resulting from the change(s).

2020-2021 was a remarkable year in racial issues, which led to extensive extra work by our department to adapt coursework on the fly. As an example, in both the ES 101: Introduction to Ethnic Studies and ES 252: Introduction to Asian American Studies, in talking about the pandemic, Professor Fujiwara highlighted the ways the virus was being radicalized as the "China virus" and Asian Americans were being blamed and at times physically attacked because of it. She made sure to address the ways that communities of color were disproportionately dying from COVID-19 and how students should understand that. She gave room for students to process the numbers in their own communities, with very specific communities (Navajo Nation, for example) being devastated. She talked about how so many deaths were chalked up to "co-morbidities" and dismissed as being the fault of the people with high blood pressure, for example. She had already planned to discuss police targeting of Black people and the Black Lives Matter movement, but when George Floyd was killed on video and protests erupted around the country and in Eugene, she helped students understand how and why it happened and what they could do about it. Part of that job is just giving people space to grieve collectively as well as giving them tools to act resolutely. All of our classes have a higher proportion of students of color than other classes, so these were particularly important spaces of support for them, and we all adapted our classes to be able to address these pressing current events. Professor Fujiwara was a campus leader on doing this work in the online mode, over zoom, and led training for the entire campus on it.

Section 5: Plans for Next Year

Briefly describe tentative assessment plans for the next academic year. Which goals will be assessed and how? What actions will be taken as a result of this years' analysis of assessment information? What other plans does the department have to improve the student educational experience? What are the budgetary implications of any proposed actions? How will those be addressed?

In the coming year, we will continue to focus on student research and research analysis in the 400-level classes, especially since it seems like data for the last 4 quarters may not be a reliable predictor for how the changes we implemented will impact student learning goals.

In addition, with our first doctoral cohort arriving in the fall of 2021 and all the implementation of new curriculum around that effort, we will closely assess the progress of those students in their research, writing, and professional development. We will evaluate each new course we offer at the 600-level to assess student progress, enrollment trends, and productivity.