

Global Studies Department Assessment Plan and Year 2 (2018-19) Outcomes

1. GLBL Assessment Plan

For academic years 2017-18 and 2018-9, our assessment plan was built around the 1-credit senior capstone class taught by Dr. Galen Martin. The capstone was to be focused on working with students to write, critique, rewrite and complete an original research paper, which could be either their senior honors thesis if they are writing one, or a paper for another class they might be taking (either a paper required by the class, or a research/writing enhancement of a final class product if the class doesn't require an actual research paper). Such a capstone can offer an intensive opportunity to develop analysis, research and writing skills, regardless of the particular courses that each student happens to be taking, and furthermore, working intensively in this way with students can provide Dr. Martin with thorough, substantive information about the skills level of each student. He assessed their research and writing skills with assignments at the beginning and the end of the term, to gauge how well our majors were otherwise meeting two important learning outcomes, and how well the class served as an intervention to ensure that they were able to meet them. Thus, this assessment is summative, in the sense that it provides information about how well our curriculum prepares students to fulfill the learning outcomes selected, and also formative, in the sense that it provides students the opportunity to close gaps in their analytical, research and writing skills.

2. Learning Outcomes assessed

The learning outcomes assessed in this pilot round were the following two; a complete list of the INTL learning outcomes can be found in the appendix.

- Employ methods of interdisciplinary social science research: use library databases to find relevant literature, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of academic arguments, and use evidence to support arguments.
- Convey complex information and ideas in English that is clear, robust, carefully edited, well organized, and stylistically engaging and accessible.

3. Results

Dr. Martin offered the seminar Spring term 2017 to an inaugural cohort of 17 juniors and seniors, and again in Winter term 2019. At the beginning of each term he asked students to submit writing samples, many of which had already been graded as part of a regular course. Our choice of learning outcomes, means of assessment and intervention were all validated by Dr. Martin's report of how many juniors and seniors had NOT written a standard research paper, given much thought to the differences between formal and informal writing styles, received any significant feedback on their writing besides a grade, or used programs such as Zotero and Mendeley to organize their bibliographies.

Nonetheless, he found the students very receptive to one-on-one feedback on their writing. He was able to identify the number of students who met, failed to meet or exceeded expectations in the three learning outcomes when they entered the seminar,

and also determine the number of students who improved or did not improve during the seminar, a measure of the effectiveness of the seminar as a way to address the gaps identified. By comparing these numbers, we can see that the class does provide improvement in both learning outcomes, and that of the 9 students enrolled in W19, none failed to meet either expectation by the end of the term. Below are the numbers of students meeting/failing to meet/exceeding each learning outcome at the beginning, and then again when the course was completed:

- Employ methods of interdisciplinary social science research: use library databases to find relevant literature, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of academic arguments, and use evidence to support arguments.

Pre-test: at beginning of term:

exceeds expectations 2/9
meets expectations 6/9
fails to meet expectations 1/9

Post-test: at end of term:

exceeds expectations 7/9
meets expectations 2/9
fails to meet expectations 0/9

- Convey complex information and ideas in English that is clear, robust, carefully edited, well organized, and stylistically engaging and accessible.

Pre-test: at beginning of term:

exceeds expectations 2/9
meets expectations 5/9
fails to meet expectations 2/9

Post-test: at end of term:

exceeds expectations 6/9
meets expectations 3/9
fails to meet expectations 0/9

4. Future plans

We were pleased by the results, which provided us with substantive feedback about how well our lower division curriculum is preparing students with the skills we recognize as essential. We were also pleased with the way Dr. Martin was able to address the gaps identified. However, we were concerned at the number of upper division students who failed to meet expectations at the beginning of the course, after they had presumably successfully passed through our lower division intro courses. For this reason, ideally we would be able to

- 1) Offering the capstone as a 1-credit seminar every term, so more students could enroll and still receive the intensive intervention that they need with their writing and research skills, and
- 2) Enhance the research/writing component of some of our lower division core courses.

