

Assessment Plan 2016-2021 - Culture and Deviance Studies (B.A.)

Anthropology Department,

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Summary

The anthropology department aims to achieve the following goals over the next five years:

1) Continue with on-going assessment of CDS major capstone (ANT450) and the introductory pre-requisite Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (ANT 101). Our assessment efforts have focused on these two courses over the past several years and we are able to gather longitudinal and comparative data on outcomes from both.

2) Add more mid-level (200- and 300-level) courses to our assessment efforts. Our department has sampled different mid-range courses (both core and elective) over the past few years. Our program's core courses were also recently revised.

3) Revise and/or refine Program Learning Goals. The current CDS learning goals are:

- I. Understand and appreciate culture and diversity
- II. Understand social science concepts of deviance
- III. Develop and refine communication skills including writing, oral presentation and data presentation in various formats
- IV. Demonstrate experience in carrying out a research project
- V. Preparation for work in professional fields that require a nuanced perception of cultural difference and the ability to integrate multiple threads of inquiry into a comprehensive whole.

As written some of these goals are too general and faculty found mapping them onto specific course learning objectives was not very effective. We would like to revise and refine these goals to better reflect the existing strengths of the program in terms of the skills, concepts, and knowledge the curriculum is currently offering.

4) Revise and develop course learning objectives for all CDS core courses and develop or revise rubrics for the assessment of these objectives. Much discussion among faculty and students and CDS alumni has yielded new insights into skills that students gain from particular courses and also the need to ensure that some basic skills, such as simple observation and the ability to describe what one sees in a detailed and accurate manner, are included into our program learning goals (see above) and thus also indicated in the learning objectives of specific courses.

5) Consider the addition of writing components to all core courses and selected course electives. All departmental syllabi currently include information about the college's Writing Center, but more could be added to learning objectives to increase writing skills.

Action Plan and Timeline

1) Continue on-going assessment of ANT 450 and ANT 101

The department plans to continue with the assessment of the senior capstone course and the introductory pre-requisite course for the CDS major over the coming 5 year period. Every semester, faculty will be asked to provide the assessment committee with a sample of student work. This work may include (but will not be limited to) research papers, exams, essays or other short writing assignments, quizzes, bibliographies and research proposals. As the learning objectives for these courses may be revised during the 5-year assessment period, we will incorporate such revisions into the assessment process for these courses. The actual assessment of student work from these courses will take place during the fall term using work from fall and spring semesters from the previous year. For example, the assessment of courses during the academic year 2016-2017 will incorporate student outputs from 2015-2016.

Timeline:

Year	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Courses	ANT 101, ANT 450				

2) Add more 200-level and 300-level courses to the assessment effort of the CDS major.

Over the next five years, the department aims to expand the number of mid-level courses it will include in the assessment process. We aim to add at least one core course (such as ANT 330 or ANT 210) and one (frequently offered) elective course (such as ANT 230 or ANT 315) to the assessment process every other year and to repeat the assessment of these added courses in subsequent years. By the end of the 5-year plan, our assessment effort should therefore include a total of eight courses incorporated into an ongoing assessment process.

Timeline:

Year	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Courses	ANT 101, ANT 450 ANT 210 ANT 230	ANT 101, ANT 450 ANT 210 ANT 230	ANT 101, ANT 450 ANT 210 ANT 230 ANT 330 ANT 315	ANT 101, ANT 450 ANT 210 ANT 230 ANT 330 ANT 315	ANT 101, ANT 450 ANT 210 ANT 230 ANT 330 ANT 315 ANT 208 ANT 340

3) Revise and refine program learning goals

We would like to revise and refine these goals to better reflect the existing strengths of the program in terms of the skills, concepts, and knowledge the curriculum is currently offering and that is not well reflected in the assessment process.

There current program learning goals are:

- I. Understand and appreciate culture and diversity
- II. Understand social science concepts of deviance
- III. Develop and refine communication skills including writing, oral presentation and data presentation in various formats
- IV. Demonstrate experience in carrying out a research project
- V. Preparation for work in professional fields that require a nuanced perception of cultural difference and the ability to integrate multiple threads of inquiry into a comprehensive whole.

In terms of example revisions that we will achieve during the 5-year period, for example, is in the area of learning goal IV, research experience. This goal could be more detailed to include learning types of data collection methods, learning about ethics in research, or defining specific basic research skills that our CDS program teaches. Another example is learning goal I, culture and diversity. This goal, as written, does not clarify or distinguish between the fact that culture is an analytical concept, not just a term in the English lexicon. Understanding this concept and being able to use it analytically is a challenging endeavor and we would like to clarify this as an educational process within the course of the major. Similarly, in addition to gaining an understanding of and appreciation for human diversity, the major also provides students with a range of knowledge about this diversity and more importantly, the concept of human variation. We would like to develop a learning goal that incorporates the idea that human variation is not random nor simply individualistic (i.e. a problem of personality), but patterned and systemic and often in conflict with other systems of human variation. Finally, our learning goals could be refined to better reflect the specific basic skills that the CDS major provides to students such as observation, attention to ethnographic details, and notetaking. While students may be interested in content, they are in need of gaining the ability to record, manage and understand how to organize and use observation and notetaking.

Timeline:

The revision of our program goals will cover a two-year period, beginning in Fall of 2016:

Year	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Program Goal	I, II, III	IV, V	Assess Revised Goals (as needed)	Assess Revised Goals (as needed)	Assess Revised Goals (as needed)

- 4) Revise and develop course learning objectives for all CDS core courses and develop or revise rubrics for the assessment of these objectives.

The department's fourth goal for the 5 year period is closely connected with the work we seek to achieve in our third goal, described above. This fourth goal has two parts: a) revise existing learning objectives for courses that we have previously assessed (ANT 450, ANT 101, ANT 330, ANT 340), or that we have had slated for assessment (ANT 110, ANT 210, ANT 208, ANT 315) but have not yet done so, and b). develop learning objectives for courses in the program which do not as yet have them clearly defined (e.g, ANT 100, ANT 224, ANT 345) or that are new to the program entirely such as ANT 325 Ethnographic Research Methods.

Obviously, this process will be integrated with goal three, but can also move forward independently of this effort.

In addition to revising and refining course learning goals, we will reconsider the effectiveness of our four-point scale for our assessment rubrics:

- 4 - Exceeds Expectations: Significant understanding of and insight into the concept or outstanding use of skill.
- 3 - Meets Expectations: Understands how to or exhibits the use of the concept or skill.
- 2 - Approaches Expectations: Some familiarity with or ability to use the concept or skill.
- 1 - Below Expectations: Inaccurate or mistaken understanding of or inability to use the concept or skill.

This rubric was designed to fit with any of the learning objectives of the courses in our assessment process. But other rubrics presently employed by other departments and programs, such as English, contain a more simplified three-point scale:

Exceeds Expectations / Meets Expectations / Fails to Meet Expectations

This simplified scale is then applied in a skills/objectives rubric that can map onto different course levels using the same (or similar) skills and objectives. Such overlap may also help to make a better correspondence to the larger program learning goals for the major.

We plan to make our assessment scale(s), assessment rubric(s) and overall mapping of course objectives onto program goals more in sync, more consistent, and as clear as possible. We will achieve in unison with the revision and refinement of goals and objectives.

Timeline:

Year	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Learning Objectives Project	ANT 110 ANT 208 ANT 210	ANT 325 ANT 225 ANT 340	ANT 315 ANT 330 Any new Courses	Review Objectives for all courses	Review Objectives for all courses.

- 5) Consider the addition of writing components to all core courses and selected course electives.

Although writing skills among students in the CDS major, whose work was assessed in 2015, appear to have improved from previous assessments, the department will aim to include more writing (low and high stakes) assignments in the structure of courses. Such assignments should be both low stakes and higher stakes writing tasks that can enable students to a) write more frequently and as part of the course outcomes, and b) gain a better understanding of the higher level skills involved in the writing process. Likewise, our previous assessment revealed that information literacy is strong in introductory (ANT 101) and in the capstone (ANT 450) courses, we are in need of strengthening the inclusion of this area in the content and structure of mid-level courses.

This is not to say that present courses do not include skills oriented toward improving students' information literacy, but rather that the range of skills, and the depth of interaction with databases, reference sources and archival materials, is limited and somewhat repetitive. For example, most mid-level courses in the CDS program incorporate in some way the online materials available through the website of the American Anthropological Association (www.americananthro.org) or the database of journals that publish primary research in cultural anthropology (Anthrosource). But other online informational sources are not incorporated or are not systematically represented within the scaffolding of the CDS program. These would include databases on contemporary social problems, websites that connect law with social science, and other interdisciplinary associations and organizations that would be important content and theory sources for CSD undergraduates.

The department plans to formulate a set of learning objectives focused on writing skills for all levels of courses in the CDS program, beginning with ANT 101, moving to ANT 450, and increasing the role of writing skills and instruction in mid-level course both old and new. Likewise, we will aim to refine and to improve the information literacy components of mid-level courses.

Timeline:

Year	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Writing Skills/Information Literacy Project	ANT 101 (writing) ANT 210 (info lit)	ANT 450 (writing) ANT 208 (info lit)	Additional courses added to both efforts (e.g. ANT 230, ANT 330, ANT 340)	Ongoing	Ongoing