

**Departmental and Program Assessment
Annual Assessment Plan Basic Update**

Academic Year: 2013-2014

Academic Unit: American Studies

Chair: Jane Harris

Student Assessment Plan (SAP) – Basic Check-list

1. Have any changes been made to your program's student assessment plan or student learning goals? Your recent version should be on the web at <http://www.hendrix.edu/academics/academics.aspx?id=7264>. If you have made changes, then attach a copy of the new plan or goals.

☒X yes ☐ no

2. Are student learning goals available to students on the web on the departmental/programmatic page(s)? If not, then this will be considered as an action plan for the coming year.

☒X yes ☐ no

3. Are student learning goals, appropriate for each course, included in the course syllabi in your department or program? If not, then this will be considered as an action plan for the coming year.

☐ yes ☒X no

American Studies courses come from a variety of departments; therefore, the learning goals for each course will necessarily reflect the distinctive objectives of the English, history, politics, religious studies, sociology, or other disciplinary departments from which students take courses to fulfill their American studies curricular requirements.

Student Assessment Plan Development - Departments and programs who have a complete and current SAP should consider the next step in SAP development.

1. As a next step in SAP development, departments/programs are encouraged begin working on an assessment audit to determine how student learning goals fit across the courses in the major. Sometimes the term “scaffolding” is used to describe this process. This could be as complicated as a full grid of student learning goals, or a single learning goal, across the courses in the major. (This has not been required of departments, but it is a recommended next step when the SAP is up to date.) Has your program already done this?

☐ yes ☒ **Xno** *If yes, please provide any **new** results in either in prose or as a table. If no, then this could be the next annual action plan for your program.*

In one sense, American Studies does measure student learning by requiring a senior thesis that must be integrative of at least two disciplinary perspectives from the courses that constitute the major. Along with the written thesis, majors present their research to program faculty and peers, responding to questions about their work. The thesis and presentation are factors in the consideration of awarding distinction in American Studies.

Yearly Assessment Report – each department or program is expected to have assessment discussions for at least two hours each academic year. If necessary, help is available from David Sutherland, just call.

1. What was your planned action item identified in your last report?
The American Studies program has been in a state of maintenance for the last two years. The 2013-2014 year was intended as a time of reassessment of the way forward given the significant changes that have occurred with the program faculty over the last two years. We did graduate two senior majors, who completed senior theses and made oral presentations during the spring semester of 2014. The faculty have discussed the need for a work day during which we develop plans for reinvigorating the program or letting the program go, if there is a lack of student interest or faculty attention to American Studies. It must be noted that the faculty members who teach courses in the major are some of the most involved faculty on the Hendrix campus. Several are on the leadership team for The Engaged Citizen course. Other members chair their academic departments, act as area chair for the Humanities, serve on the Academic Policy Council, among other duties. Given the problems with scheduling the lengthy work day that we know we need in order to address the needs of the program, we will continue with the plan from 2012-2013 to begin the fall with a meeting of the affiliated faculty to consider how to approach American Studies major at Hendrix.
2. Briefly summarize the topics discussed in your annual assessment meeting.
In our conversations via email messages, faculty acknowledged that we need to meet for serious discussions about the state of American Studies. I am committed to making that happen during 2014-2015, as chair of the program.
3. What was the conclusion of your assessment discussion and how did the collected assessment data inform your conclusion? Specifically describe any curricular or programmatic changes that have been made that were based, at least in part, on the data in your SAP.
The faculty who heard the senior thesis presentations were positive about the quality of the two seniors' research. There was general commitment to the continuation of the program, although we have not yet had time to work out the details of how to move the program forward.

4. Define one new action item for your assessment discussions next year.

Faculty will meet in 2014-2015 to consider: 1) how to assess students' interest in American Studies; 2) how to promote the program more effectively; 3) whether and how to reinstate the Introduction to American Studies course, as a possible entre into the program and as a way to generate student awareness of the major; 4) whether the senior thesis and presentation is the best capstone for the completion of the major; 5) how better to use the Odyssey program in advising our majors so that they will gain experiences that increase their employment or educational opportunities beyond Hendrix graduation.