



DEAN FOR THE STUDY OF RACE
AND ETHNICITY
1600 GRAND AVENUE
SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA
55105-1899

TEL: 651-696-6431
FAX: 651-696-6886
E-MAIL: rhodes@macalester.edu
www.macalester.edu/americanstudies

American Studies
Department Assessment Plan
Revised 2014

1. Department Learning Statement

The American Studies major exposes students to key local, national, and global questions about the centrality of race and ethnicity as constitutive elements of social, political, and cultural formations. Core courses require students to learn the basic theories and methodologies of the overlapping fields of American Studies and Ethnic Studies and to develop skills as independent researchers and community interlocutors. Students may choose to develop specializations in closely related fields through cross-listed courses, including Media and Cultural Studies; Educational Studies; Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies; Legal Studies; and Urban Studies.

2. Department Learning Goals and Outcomes

- Develop an understanding of and facility with interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of race and ethnicity in an American and transnational context.
- Understand the concepts of race and ethnicity in relation to other categories of difference including gender, sexuality, class, and national identity.
- Apply the knowledge acquired in the American Studies classroom to “real-world” civic engagement opportunities in a responsible and ethical manner.
- Demonstrate academic excellence through writing, research, and oral presentation skills.

3a. Department Assessment Strategies--ongoing

- Senior Survey: For three years—from Spring 2010–Spring 2012 the department administered an on-line survey of graduating seniors to gather in-depth qualitative information about the major’s experiences in the department. In Spring 2013 the seniors answered the same set of questions as part of a video symposium. While this improved the response rate because it was conducted during class time, it lacked the anonymity of the on-line survey.
- Course evaluations: In 2011 the department revamped its in-house course evaluation to more closely address the learning goals and outcomes listed above. All faculty are asked to administer this evaluation, which is comprised of open-ended questions. The faculty then meet to discuss the student responses to determine whether there are trends—both positive and negative—that cut across

courses taught by different faculty at different levels. This data is separate from course evaluations used to improve course content and pedagogy.

3b. Department Assessment Strategies—new

- Develop standardized guidelines for student internship reports and review them by department faculty each year to determine how their civic engagement experiences reflect learning from American Studies courses.
- Develop plan for student submission of representative work (a concept discussed in the 2011-12 Assessment Report; this will require faculty to prime students in advanced research-based courses and to set a deadline for submission; develop assessment criteria to guide how faculty evaluate student submissions. These materials will focus on overall excellence in writing and research.

4. Four-Year Timeline for Implementation

Spring 2014

- This year we will administer the on-line survey during a meeting of the Senior Seminar, thus merging the strategies of the previous years. Students will be given prompts to discuss the questions and topics in small groups and will then be asked to provide their answers on-line. The questions will be streamlined to focus on one key learning goal—interdisciplinary approaches to American/Ethnic Studies
- Continue course evaluations

Fall 2014-Spring 2015

- Develop plan for student submission of representative work; this will require faculty to prime students in advanced research-based courses and to set a deadline for submission; develop assessment criteria to guide how faculty evaluate student submissions
- Develop guidelines for student internship reports and implement beginning in Spring
- Continue on-line survey; assess one learning goal—race and ethnicity in relation to other categories of difference
- Continue course evaluations

Fall 2015-Spring 2016

- Evaluate first cohort of student submissions
- Begin ongoing evaluation of internships related to learning objectives
- Continue on-line survey; determine which learning goals to address
- Continue course evaluations; time to review and revise instruments

Fall 2016-Spring 2017

- Faculty discussion of student submissions; revise guidelines and procedures as needed
- Continue evaluation of internships and civic engagement goals; revise
- Continue on-line survey
- Continue course evaluations