Assessment Report for Socio-Political Distribution
AY 2014-15

Assessment Plan

Student Learning Outcomes Assessed: Upon completion of the core curriculum, students will have demonstrated the ability to

- Examine the interdisciplinary nature of complex global problems.
- Use discussion, research, information literacy, class presentations, writing etc. to demonstrate critical thinking.

Assessment Activities:

- Rubric Scoring, Random Sample of Student Work
- Discussion of Results
- Development of Action Plans

Rubrics:

- Core SLOs
    - **Global Problems:** Examine the interdisciplinary nature of complex global problems.
    - **Critical Thinking:** Use discussion, research, information literacy, class presentations, writing etc. to demonstrate critical thinking.
- Critical Thinking AAC&U VALUE
    - Explanation
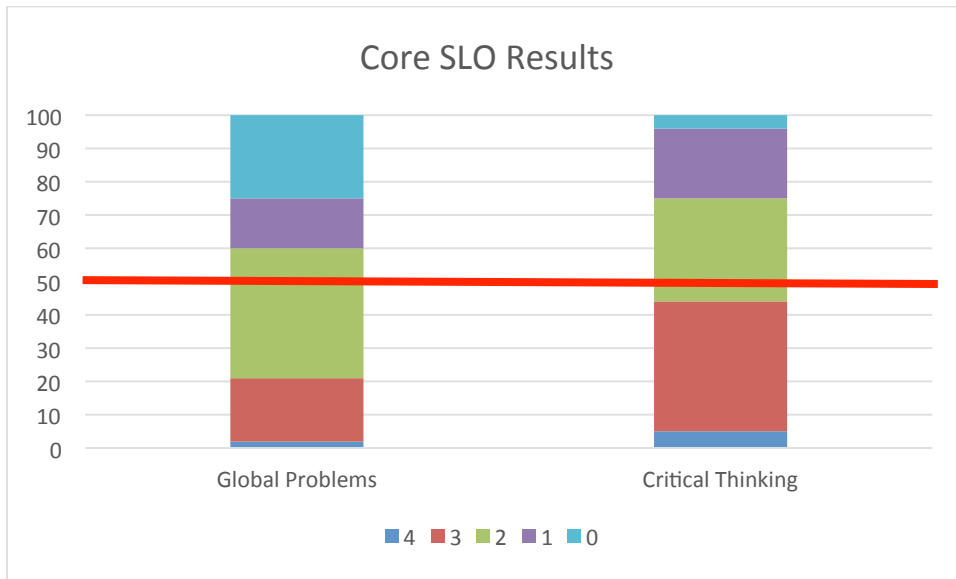   - Evidence
    - Position

Assessors:

- Shaffer, Business (economics)
- Courtemanche, Political Science
- Pickens, Psychology
- Hunchuk, Sociology

Assessment Results

Assessment Baseline:
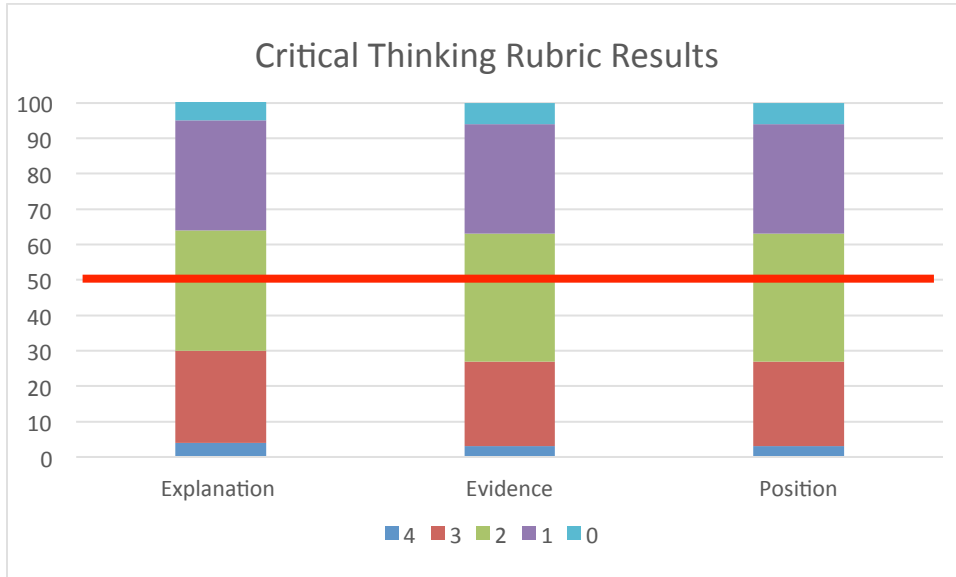**50% of students assessed will score a 2 or higher on each assessed criterion.**

Assessment of Core Learning Outcome:

Core SLOs
- *Complex Problems:* With 60% of the student samples scoring a 2 or higher, we **met** our assessment goal.
- *Critical Thinking:* With 75% of the student samples scoring a 2 or higher, we **met** our assessment goal.

Assessment of Critical Thinking:

Critical Thinking

- *Explanation:* With 64% of the student samples scoring a 2 or higher, we **met** our assessment goal.
- *Evidence:* With 63% of the student samples scoring a 2 or higher, we **met** our assessment goal.
- *Position:* With 63% of the student samples scoring a 2 or higher, we **met** our assessment goal.

Reflection

Core SLO Assessment Grid:

- The grid was very helpful, clear and realistic between categories. It was easy to make a distinction between the Poor, Needs Improvement, Good, and Excellent categories based on the descriptions provided in each cell.
- The wording of the SLO's seem to be geared more toward the SEMS series in the Core, and some are not broad enough to encompass the learning goals of the distributive areas of the Core. Specifically, rewording of SLO #2 will be addressed in the Action Items.
- The Socio-Political group originally thought to assess Core SLO #3 ("Describe the historical development, the interconnectedness or complexity of different societies") this year, but chose to instead assess SLO #8 ("Use discussion, research, information literacy, class presentations, writing, etc. to demonstrate critical thinking").
  - Core SLO #3 was thought to be double/triple barreled in its wording, and too complex. Additionally, not all courses that would be used in the Socio-Political distribution area of the Core would address this component at all (Ex. American Government and Politics). Finally, the types of samples collected did not lend themselves to be assessed on this dimension. In order to do this, one would need to look at student research papers that explicitly require a global and historical comparison in the prompt.
- A larger question that arose from this discussion was whether or not it was appropriate to have all listings within a department count toward the distributive area of the Core. From an assessment perspective, we felt it would be helpful to have a predetermined list of courses from each department that would be applicable toward the Core. We could then ensure that the course a student selects for this component would meet the appropriate Core SLO's.

Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric:

- We felt the wording of the selected learning outcomes within this rubric was broad enough to encompass all of the disciplines in the Socio-Political Distribution.

General Observations:

- The wording of some of the Core SLO's may not be applicable to the Socio-Political distribution area of the core (and possibly other distribution areas as well). For example, we discussed the wording of Core SLO #2: "Examine the interdisciplinary nature of complex global problems". While this SLO is easily addressed throughout many of the SEMS series courses, it is not a primary focus (with measures that are able to be reliably assessed) of the courses that would be part of the distributive area of the core. A suggested revision to the wording of this SLO is part of the Action Plan.
- There is a serious concern regarding types of assessment materials submitted. The Socio-Political assessment team noted a problem with multiple choice quizzes/tests being submitted for review. One simply doesn't know if the student just guessed correctly. There is also a need for keys and color copies of the material (when appropriate) if this were to be successful. Also, using a multiple choice quiz/test creates a dichotomy for responding, unless application-based questions were created to scenarios in which critical thinking can be appropriately assessed. This will be further addressed in the Action Plan.
- Methodological issues-
  - The samples collected include a range of student ages/years (i.e. freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior standing), but the data is not parsed out to examine this variable. For example, the samples from PSY-150 would have primarily included freshmen-level students, whereas the ECON-221 students have the prerequisite for junior or senior standing. Upon a reflection of this year's samples, we know that a significant portion of higher scores (Good and Excellent ratings on the Core SLO Assessment Grid, and 3's and 4's on the AAC&U Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric) came from ECON-221 sample research papers in which the course is comprised of mostly Juniors

and Senior students. We therefore question whether we met our assessment goal because the average is being pulled higher, or skewed, by these higher-level students.

- We then also question the weighting of the number of samples from each course that was used in this assessment. For example, some courses had 3-4 samples, while others had 8-10 samples. Given the previously mentioned methodological concern of factoring in student ages/year, we also feel that having significantly more samples from one class over another can skew our assessment data.
- We also questioned who was really being assessed in group work. With these samples, you are not assessing individual progress then, but a final, finished product that could reflect varying levels of contribution by students of varying ages/years.

- The biggest question we have asked upon reflection of this process is: What are we assessing when we are assessing the core?
    - Baseline vs. Growth Model- Is the expectation that we capture student growth as they make their way through the Core?   Or, are we assessing a particular stage of a student's progression through the Core, meaning we would be assessing a particular student age/level? If the latter is true, which we think it is, then perhaps collected student samples need to reflect only one student age/level.

- Thoughts on the Core Assessment 3-day process:
    - Do not have the Institute begin the day after graduation, before grades are due for all students/classes from the current semester.
    - Given the proposed Action Item to broaden the assessment process to include more samples, more time (and therefore compensation) would be needed to complete the scoring. We predict needing at least another full day of scoring time to accommodate the increase in overall samples that will need to be assessed. Additionally, we could begin scoring in the afternoon of the first day after introductory material is covered.

- Thoughts on the Assessment Baseline for 2016 Assessment:
    - Given that our assessment will include only lower-level (100-200 level) courses, we feel that the current assessment baseline is

appropriate. Assessment Baseline for 2016: 60% of students assessed will score a 2 or higher on each assessed criterion.

Action Items

Action Items for Next Academic Year:

- Revise the second CORE SLO to include learning outcomes that are geared toward the distributive area of the core.
    - SLO #2 could be changed to read: "Examine the nature of complex global or societal problems". Additionally, the descriptors should be changed to the following:
        - Excellent- Effectively addresses global or societal issues from more than one perspective.
        - Good- Evaluates global or societal issues from more than one perspective.
        - Needs Improvement- Explains global or societal issues from more than one perspective.
        - Poor- Identifies global or societal issues from only one perspective.
- Work individually (as departments) and collectively (as distributive areas of the Core) to develop assignments that help guide students to meet assessment goals, with a preference toward short answer/essay assignments or short papers, no longer than 5 pages.
    - Could be a need for additional instruction time or resources (i.e. library or student workers) within particular courses.
    - Clear prompts that ask students to address each component of the assessment rubric being used in a distributive area.
        - For example, given that we are assessing the use of Evidence from the Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric from the AAC&U, the samples being collected from each department need to be a written piece that requires that student to interpret/evaluate information from sources, and question the viewpoints of experts.
- Develop a standardized sampling design to help with some methodological concerns

- o Ex. 1: There will be 4 samples from each course, regardless of number of sections offered each academic year, to help keep the data from being skewed to one particular age level of student or department.
- o Ex. 2: The number of samples will be determined by calculating 10% of total student enrollment for each course (including all sections) over the academic year, with a cap of 6 samples.
- We will consider adopting components of the Problem Solving VALUE Rubric from the AAC&U for the next cycle of assessment.
- Make an "information sheet" that includes criteria for the type of assignment being collected for the samples, a course list of all courses that will be included in the Socio-Political distribution area of the Core, and a summary of the chosen rubrics that we will be using for the assessment process. Department Chairs would be responsible for distributing this information to the relevant departmental faculty such that appropriate samples of student work can be generated/collected throughout the year.

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Proposal:
Socio-Political Distribution Area of the Core
Information for Assessment

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Goal: To identify/create an assignment/essay question that will address the relevant SLO's from the Core and Critical Thinking VALUE AAC&U rubrics summarized on the next page.

Criteria:

- Each course will submit a total of 4, randomly selected samples for assessment.
  - If more than 1 section of the course is offered over the academic year, the samples can be pulled across sections but will still total 4 samples, such that 52 total samples will be assessed across the 13 courses in the Socio-Political distribution area of the Core.
- The prompt for the assignment should help guide students to meet assessment goals. For example, using Core SLO #2 descriptors, prompt students in the assignment/essay question to engage in activities such "identify…", "explain…", and "evaluate…".
- The sample assignment should be a written piece of material from the student, with a preference toward short answer/essay assignments or short papers that are no longer than 5 pages.

Courses to be included in the Socio-Political distribution area of the Core

Psychology:
PSY-150: General Psychology
PSY-210: Positive Psychology
PSY-250: Applied Psychology

Sociology:
SOC-121: Microsociology
SOC-141: Macrosociology
SOC-191: Social Problems
SOC-211: Anthropology

Criminal Justice:
CJS-101: Introduction to Criminal Justice
Microeconomics

Political Science:
POSC-116: American Government & Politics
POSC-146: Introduction to Comparative Politics
POSC-156: Introduction to International Relations

Economics:
ECON-211: Principles of Macroeconomics
ECON-221: Principles of

Core SLO Assessment Grid

SLO	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Needs Improvement (2)	Poor (1)
#2: Examine the nature of complex global/societal problems	Effectively addresses global or societal issues from more than one perspective.	Evaluates global or societal issues from more than one perspective.	Explains global or societal issues from more than one perspective.	Identifies global or societal issues from only one perspective.
#8: Use discussion, research, information literacy, class presentations, writing, etc. to demonstrate critical thinking	Issue/Problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/Problem to be considered critically is stated, but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/Problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.	Issue/Problem to be considered critically is not apparent.

CRITICAL THINKING VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

Definition

Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone	Milestones		Benchmark
	4	3	2	1
Explanation of issues	Issue/ problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/ problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/ problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/ problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.
Evidence *Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion*	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/ evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/ evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/ evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/ evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.
Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) acknowledges different sides of an issue.	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.