Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers

For Academic Programs

Informed by your assessment activities related to student learning, what changes have you made in your degree program in the last three to five years? Describe the changes (e.g., curriculum revision, new courses, faculty development), the general results that prompted the changes (e.g., student performance on an assessment measure), and any impact on student learning that you might attribute to these changes.

The Department of American Studies encourages the deep and broad study of all facets of the complex and dynamic cultures of the United States. Its academic mission in support of a wide range of academic interests and capacities among its constituents is to encourage the development of strong critical thinking skills. As students encounter various facets of American culture and analyze them, they gain a stronger awareness of those features of American cultural, political, artistic, and social history and a stronger capacity to analyze all complex information in all programs of study and disciplines.

The departmental assessment efforts follow the statement above by measuring how well our students perform on writing, thinking, and collaboration tasks that require strong critical thinking. The assessment process has affirmed effective student learning in all levels of AMS courses. As a matter of philosophy and practice, AMS measures the capacity of students to demonstrate gained strength in critical analytical thinking, writing, and collaboration. AMS uses a variety of measures to obtain this information in its assessment process, including direct measures of student performance on major analytical tasks in essay-based exams, research-based essays, as well as class online and in-class discussions with peers. AMS has expanded its assessment measures in the last three years to include more indirect measures as well so that the department can gain information on how students report their own analytical strengths. AMS measures all levels of courses so that we can monitor student learning throughout the curriculum.

During this process, while AMS has affirmed its core philosophy and practice of classroom learning at all levels, it has recognized that it needs to expand its critical thinking components at the freshman level in its core introductory courses AMS 150 and AMS 151. These courses have large enrollments (150+) and therefore present significant challenges for the inclusion of the essay-based analytical content that dominates the rest of the AMS courses; however, the assessment process reveals that student learning can be increased nonetheless to better prepare students for analytical thinking in more advanced AMS courses and all advanced UA courses. In response, AMS has decided to expand the critical thinking component course work required of students in these freshmen-level courses. AMS has employed low-stakes writing (brief response assignments) both in class and online. In 2013-14, this process was handled simply by extending the assignments that already existed and increasing frequency. For 2014-15, AMS will expand this altered approach to make such writing more frequent. Although the challenges of providing substantive feedback to such large classes remain, AMS, due to the success of assessment measures in higher-level courses and to the constant commitment to developing analytical thinking among our students, will continue to offer more writing challenges to students at the freshman level.

Mission / Purpose

The Department of American Studies supports the liberal arts mission of the University of Alabama by providing quality general education courses and programs of study leading to Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Arts degrees in American Studies. The Department promotes knowledge and understanding of American life through scholarly research and is committed to offering teaching and scholarship of the highest quality that explores the ongoing dialogue about America as a nation and an idea. We strive to contribute to the quality of intellectual life on the campus, in Tuscaloosa, across the state and region, and through American Studies professional associations. We seek to provide students with scholarly opportunities to explore how they are shaped by American culture, as well as how they can shape that culture. A special component of the department’s mission is to advance the study and understanding of gender, race, class, and region throughout the curriculum. We also seek to explore the many ways in which the term “American” does not limit itself to the geographical boundaries of the United States, but expands to include transnational connections.

Student Learning Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

SLO 1: Writing Arguments with Synthetic Thinking

Students will demonstrate skill in constructing written arguments requiring synthetic thinking.

Connected Document

American Studies BS Curriculum Maps

Relevant Associations:

AMS uses a range of assessment measures suited to academic work in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The department is confident of its assessment measures and the data they provide. The ongoing process affirms the success of student learning in AMS courses, and faculty believe, whereas the department is meeting targets, the assessment process can continue to help improve student learning.

AMS Learning Outcomes are inter-related and emphasize the core of Liberal Arts demands for synthetic thinking and strong communication skills. AMS will continue to seek to achieve stated learning outcomes for as many students as possible.
Standard Associations
SACS 3.3.1
3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

General Education/Core Curriculum Associations
6 Humanities - SLO is related to students’ ability to deal with questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics as they are represented in literature, philosophy, religion and the arts
11 Writing - SLO is related to building on students’ competency in academic writing skills and aims to extend those skills

Strategic Plan Associations
University of Alabama
3.4 Increase involvement of undergraduate students in research and scholarly activities.

Related Measures

M 1: Analytical Writing
AMS uses Analytical Essays as a measure for analytical writing skills. The instructor calculates the percent of students whose performance is judged to be satisfactory or outstanding on these assignments. This measure will be employed at the 200-400 level courses.
Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Connected Document
AMS Sample Essay Assignment

Target:
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance:
the 200-level target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 300-level target is for 75% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 400-level target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.

Connected Document
AMS Sample Essay Assignment

M 2: Student Self-Evaluations and Analysis of Artifacts
AMS uses student self-reporting on their understanding of key concepts in individual courses. Instructors will include written responses for students to state their comprehension and confidence in key concepts. Instructors will employ this indirect measure in 100- to 400-level courses.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
The target for this student self-evaluation of their comprehension of artifact analysis is for 70% of students to report confidence in both their understanding of analytical methodology and their capacity to apply that understanding in analysis and problem-solving.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Improve Use of Student Self-Reporting of Learning
Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
AMS seeks to expand and improve its use of student self-reporting of comprehension of major concepts and analytical tasks. For t...

M 4: Analytical Research and Writing
Students write research-based essays analyzing multiple artifacts and sources. Instructors calculate percentage of students whose performance is judged to be satisfactory or outstanding on these assignments. This measure will be employed for upper-level undergraduate courses.
Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Connected Documents
AMS Sample Essay Assignment
AMS Sample Essay Grading Rubric

Target:
AMS measures student capacity to perform research and analytical writing in 300-level and 400-level courses.
The target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades in the performance of such assignments typical of AMS upper-level courses.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Seeking additional data for AMS 412
Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
The assessment measure used for AMS 412 in Fall 2012 did not meet instructor targets. The instructor, however, is hesitant to ma...

SLO 2: Evaluating Diverse Cultural Artifacts
Students will evaluate the interrelationship between diverse aspects and artifacts of American culture.

Connected Document
American Studies BS Curriculum Maps

Relevant Associations:
AMS uses a range of assessment measures suited to academic work in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The department is confident of its assessment measures and the data they provide. The ongoing process affirms the success of student learning in AMS courses, and faculty believe, whereas the department is meeting targets the
assessment process can continue to help improve student learning.

AMS Learning Outcomes are inter-related and emphasize the core of Liberal Arts demands for synthetic thinking and strong communication skills. AMS will continue to seek to achieve stated learning outcomes for as many students as possible.

Standard Associations

**SACS 3.3.1**
3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

General Education/Core Curriculum Associations

6 Humanities - SLO is related to students’ ability to deal with questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics as they are represented in literature, philosophy, religion and the arts

Strategic Plan Associations

University of Alabama
2.7 Expand the University's emphasis on global and cultural studies.

Related Measures

**M 2: Student Self-Evaluations and Analysis of Artifacts**
AMS uses student self-reporting on their understanding of key concepts in individual courses. Instructors will include written responses for students to state their comprehension and confidence in key concepts. Instructors will employ this indirect measure in 100- to 400-level courses.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**Target:**
AMS asserts a target of 70% of responding students to report their understanding of cultural artifacts as "good" or higher.

**M 3: Collaborative Critical Thinking**
AMS uses group work and online discussions to measure collaboration and critical thinking. Students demonstrate understanding of key concepts in collaboration with peers with in-class group reports and/or online discussions. Instructors evaluate group work and discussions and determine student success. Instructors will employ this measure in all undergraduate levels.

Source of Evidence: Presentation, either individual or group

**Target:**
The target for collaborative critical thinking measures to assess student capacity for understanding diverse cultural artifacts will be that at least 70% of students at the 200 level courses and 80% of students at the 300- to 400- course levels will demonstrate capacity to collaborate with their peers in performing critical thinking analyses as assigned. The performances will be measured by rubrics, instructor observation, and / or student self-evaluations.

**M 4: Analytical Research and Writing**
Students write research-based essays analyzing multiple artifacts and sources. Instructors calculate percentage of students whose performance is judged to be satisfactory or outstanding on these assignments. This measure will be employed for upper-level undergraduate courses.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

**Connected Documents**

AMS Sample Essay Assignment
AMS Sample Essay Grading Rubric

**Target:**
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance:
The 300-level and 400-level course target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.

**M 5: Analytical Interpretation and Cultural Context**
AMS faculty demonstrate how to read artifacts via lectures and discussions in all AMS courses. Instructors evaluate student capacity to apply this instruction in their own critical thinking on essay exams. This measure is most accurate when applied to entire exams rather than individual or focused questions. Instructors calculate percent of students whose performance is judged satisfactory or outstanding on these exams. Instructors will employ this measure in 200- to 400-level courses.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

**Target:**
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance:
the 200-level course target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 300-level and 400-level course target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.
Faculty may assert higher targets for specific courses.

**SLO 3: Developing Liberal Arts Methodologies**
Students will demonstrate a knowledge of and ability to apply a range of liberal arts methodologies in an interdisciplinary fashion. Instructors will assess this skill with specific questions on essay exams or analytical writing assignments. This measure will be employed in 400-level courses.

**Connected Document**

American Studies BS Curriculum Maps

**Relevant Associations:**
AMS uses a range of assessment measures suited to academic work in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The department is confident of its assessment measures and the data they provide. The ongoing process affirms the success of student learning in AMS courses, and faculty believe, whereas the department is meeting targets the
assessment process can continue to help improve student learning.

AMS Learning Outcomes are inter-related and emphasize the core of Liberal Arts demands for synthetic thinking and strong communication skills. AMS will continue to seek to achieve stated learning outcomes for as many students as possible.

**Standard Associations**

**SACS 3.3.1**

3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

**General Education/Core Curriculum Associations**

6 Humanities - SLO is related to students' ability to deal with questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics as they are represented in literature, philosophy, religion and the arts

**Strategic Plan Associations**

University of Alabama

3.4 Increase involvement of undergraduate students in research and scholarly activities.

**Related Measures**

**M 5: Analytical Interpretation and Cultural Context**

AMS faculty demonstrate how to read artifacts via lectures and discussions in all AMS courses. Instructors evaluate student capacity to apply this instruction in their own critical thinking on essay exams. This measure is most accurate when applied to entire exams rather than individual or focused questions. Instructors calculate percent of students whose performance is judged satisfactory or outstanding on these exams. Instructors will employ this measure in 200-to 400-level courses.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

**Target:**

AMS assigns targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance: the 200-level course target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades; the 300-level and 400-level course target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades. Individual faculty may assert higher targets for specific classes.

**SLO 4: Exploring Concepts and Controversies**

Students demonstrate knowledge of the central concepts and controversies in American Studies in course exams. Instructors evaluate student performance above 70 percent as satisfactory. This measure will be employed in 100- and 200-level courses.

**Connected Document**

American Studies BS Curriculum Maps

**Relevant Associations:**

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AMS Learning Outcomes are inter-related and emphasize the core of Liberal Arts demands for synthetic thinking and strong communication skills. AMS will continue to seek to achieve stated learning outcomes for as many students as possible.

**Standard Associations**

**SACS 3.3.1**

3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

**General Education/Core Curriculum Associations**

6 Humanities - SLO is related to students' ability to deal with questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics as they are represented in literature, philosophy, religion and the arts

**Strategic Plan Associations**

University of Alabama

3.3 Encourage and reward creative strategies for engaging students in learning and life-long learning.

**Related Measures**

**M 3: Collaborative Critical Thinking**

AMS uses group work and online discussions to measure collaboration and critical thinking. Students demonstrate understanding of key concepts in collaboration with peers in-class group reports and/or online discussions. Instructors evaluate group work and discussions and determine student success. Instructors will employ this measure in all undergraduate levels.

Source of Evidence: Presentation, either individual or group

**Target:**

The target for collaborative critical thinking measures in examination of concepts and controversies will be that at least 70% of students at the 200 level courses and 80% of students at the 300- to 400- course levels will demonstrate capacity to explore central concepts and controversies with their individual analyses of course material. The performances will be measured by rubrics; instructor observation, and /or student self-evaluations.

**M 7: Analytical Reading and Discussion**

Students demonstrate understanding of key concepts and controversies via in-class quizzes, which can often serve as practice for exams. Instructors calculate percent of students whose performance is judged to be satisfactory or outstanding on these assignments. This measure will be employed at 200- to 400-level courses.

Source of Evidence: Standardized test of subject matter knowledge
Target:
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance:
the 100-level target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 200- and 300-level target is for 75% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 400-level target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Improve Student Learning in AMS 150 and AMS 151
Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
AMS believes that our first-year courses provide valuable opportunities for learning, and we will focus our action plans around ...

M 8: Student Self-Evaluations and Key Concepts
AMS uses self-evaluations by students concerning their understanding of key course concepts. Instructors measure percentage of students reporting satisfactory progress. Instructors employ this indirect measure in 200-level courses.
Source of Evidence: Student course evaluations on learning gains made

Target:
AMS asserts a target wherein 70% or more of students report successful understanding of major concepts and controversies to corroborate other measures reported by instructors.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Improve Use of Student Self-Reporting of Learning
Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
AMS seeks to expand and improve its use of student self-reporting of comprehension of major concepts and analytical tasks. For...

M 9: Key Concepts and Major Issues
AMS uses exams to measure student learning success regarding key concepts and major cultural issues. Instructors measure percentage of students who perform above 70 percent. Instructors employ this measure at all levels of undergraduate education.

Source of Evidence: Standardized test of subject matter knowledge

Target:
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance:
the 100-level target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 200- and 300-level target is for 75% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 400-level target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.

Other Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

OthOtm 5: Improving and Sustaining Recognized Quality
The program will improve and sustain a high level of recognized quality.

Relevant Associations:
AMS uses a range of assessment measures suited to academic work in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The department is confident of its assessment measures and the data they provide. The ongoing process affirms the success of student learning in AMS courses, and faculty believe, whereas the department is meeting targets the assessment process can continue to help improve student learning.

AMS Learning Outcomes are inter-related and emphasize the core of Liberal Arts demands for synthetic thinking and strong communication skills. AMS will continue to seek to achieve stated learning outcomes for as many students as possible.

Strategic Plan Associations
University of Alabama
1.1 Promote and enhance areas of academic, scholarship, and research excellence.
1.2 Increase the recognition of the University’s service priorities that enhance the quality of life for all Alabamians.
1.5 Effectively use course offerings and class size to support priorities.

Related Measures

M 10: Admissions to Graduate Programs
Chair will measure student rate of success in admission to graduate and professional graduate programs for those who apply.
Source of Evidence: Graduate/professional school acceptance rate

Target:
WEAVE demands that I place a target here even though this measure has nothing to do with the AMS BA program. WEAVE lists ALL measures in all programs and departmental outcomes/measures listings. This causes confusion and implies that we are somehow not providing information as needed. If administrators choose only to evaluate the reporting done by departments by running audit reports, then they will never get accurate information.

M 11: Student Satisfaction


Chair will measure student satisfaction with the program from the exit survey of all majors and minors.
Source of Evidence: Student satisfaction survey at end of the program

**OthOtm 6: Building Enrollment and Degree Completions**
The program will build and sustain an optimal level of annual program enrollments and degree completions.

**Relevant Associations:**
AMS uses a range of assessment measures suited to academic work in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The department is confident of its assessment measures and the data they provide. The ongoing process affirms the success of student learning in AMS courses, and faculty believe, whereas the department is meeting targets the assessment process can continue to help improve student learning.

AMS Learning Outcomes are inter-related and emphasize the core of Liberal Arts demands for synthetic thinking and strong communication skills. AMS will continue to seek to achieve stated learning outcomes for as many students as possible.

**Standard Associations**
SACS 3.3.1
- 3.3.1.2 Administrative support services
- 3.3.1.3 Educational support services

**Strategic Plan Associations**
- University of Alabama
  - 1.1 Promote and enhance areas of academic, scholarship, and research excellence.
  - 1.5 Effectively use course offerings and class size to support priorities.

**Related Measures**

**M 12: Degrees Awarded**
Chair will measure number of degrees awarded for the past three years, and compare it to ACHE viability standards.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**Target:**
AMS measures graduation rates to assess its enrollment numbers and degree completions in line with standards.

**M 13: Course Hour Production**
Chair will measure the undergraduate course hour production for the past three fall semesters.
Source of Evidence: Administrative measure - other

**Target:**
not applicable

**OthOtm 7: Achieving High Value Constituent Ratings**
The program will be highly valued by its program graduates and other key constituencies it serves.

**Relevant Associations:**

**Related Measures**

**M 11: Student Satisfaction**
Chair will measure student satisfaction with the program from the exit survey of all majors and minors.
Source of Evidence: Student satisfaction survey at end of the program

**Target:**
AMS expects its graduates to report satisfaction with the program.

**M 14: Student Career Plans**
We will include indirect measures of informal discussions with majors and minors about future plans.
Source of Evidence: Discussions / Coffee Talk

**Target:**
AMS reaches out to all majors to provide support for career plans.

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**Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)**

**Improve Use of Student Self-Reporting of Learning**
AMS seeks to expand and improve its use of student self-reporting of comprehension of major concepts and analytical tasks. For the course referred to in the 2011/12 (American Popular Humor; offered every year), the instructor will add other questions of key concepts and incorporate "practice" for exams using such questions as assessment measures to improve student learning. If successful, the instructor will help implement such measures in other AMS courses.

**Established in Cycle:** 2011-2012
**Implementation Status:** In-Progress
**Priority:** Medium

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**
- **Measure:** Student Self-Evaluations and Analysis of Artifacts | **Outcome/Objective:** Writing Arguments with Synthetic Thinking
- **Measure:** Student Self-Evaluations and Key Concepts | **Outcome/Objective:** Exploring Concepts and Controversies

**Implementation Description:** This task will require multiple semesters to gather useful and applicable information to expand into other courses.

**Projected Completion Date:** 01/2015
**Responsible Person/Group:** Jeffrey Melton
**Additional Resources:** None
Improve Student Learning in AMS 150 and AMS 151

AMS believes that our first-year courses provide valuable opportunities for learning, and we will focus our action plans around both AMS 150 and 151. This will be an ongoing effort by the department. Both courses have innovative approaches to team teaching. We plan to maintain their status as innovative courses and begin adopting more active learning techniques to help reach more students are encourage deeper learning. For 2013/14, AMS 150 is making the following changes to encourage more student learning success:

**Students will perform more in-class writing assignments and online postings to build writing and synthetic thinking skills and demand introspection on course lectures.**

**Students will provide several self-evaluations of learning regarding major concepts during the semester.**

**Established in Cycle:** 2012-2013  
**Implementation Status:** In-Progress  
**Priority:** High

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**  
**Measure:** Analytical Reading and Discussion  
**Outcome/Objective:** Exploring Concepts and Controversies

**Implementation Description:** This action plan will be initiated in 2013/2014 and will be measured for two years so that two cycles of each freshman level course can be evaluated to ensure useful data.  
**Projected Completion Date:** 06/2015  
**Responsible Person/Group:** AMS faculty; Lynne Adrian; and Edward Tang

#### Seeking additional data for AMS 412

The assessment measure used for AMS 412 in Fall 2012 did not meet instructor targets. The instructor, however, is hesitant to make changes as a result due to the atypical enrollment of this course and will defer until more data can be provided in Spring 2014 when the course will be offered again. If the new data corroborates the data from Fall 2012, the instructor will make significant adjustments to improve student learning with the assignment.

**Established in Cycle:** 2012-2013  
**Implementation Status:** On-Hold  
**Priority:** Medium

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**  
**Measure:** Analytical Research and Writing  
**Outcome/Objective:** Writing Arguments with Synthetic Thinking

**Implementation Description:** Response to the unmet target for Fall 2012 will be deferred until Spring 2014 once additional data becomes available.  
**Projected Completion Date:** 06/2014  
**Responsible Person/Group:** Jeffrey Melton
Mission / Purpose

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Student Learning Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

SLO 1: Writing Arguments with Synthetic Thinking
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Connected Document
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Relevant Associations:
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Standard Associations
SACS 3.3.1
3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

General Education/Core Curriculum Associations
6 Humanities - SLO is related to students' ability to deal with questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics as they are represented in literature, philosophy, religion and the arts
11 Writing - SLO is related to building on students' competency in academic writing skills and aims to extend those skills

Strategic Plan Associations
University of Alabama
3.4 Increase involvement of undergraduate students in research and scholarly activities.

Related Measures

M 1: Analytical Writing
AMS uses Analytical Essays as a measure for analytical writing skills. The instructor calculates the percent of students whose performance is judged to be satisfactory or outstanding on these assignments. This measure will be employed at the 200-400 level courses.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Connected Document
AMS Sample Essay Assignment

Target:
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance:
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the 300-level target is for 75% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 400-level target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.

Connected Document
AMS Sample Essay Assignment

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met

RESULTS SUMMARY: AMS assessed student performance on analytical response essays in a 200-level course (AMS 203, Fall 2012) and research essays in a 400-level course (AMS 430, Spring 2013). For the 200-level course, the instructor used a series of response essays as a direct formative assessment. There were two stated goals: 1) 80% of students to perform at 70% or higher averaged over seven response essays written throughout the course; 2) average scores should improve as the course progressed. Goal 1 was met: 82% of students achieved at or above 70%. Goal 2 was met: average scores for the response essays steadily increased as the semester progressed and students improved critical thinking and writing skills. For the 400-level course, the instructor used research essays as a direct summative assessment. There was one stated goal: 80% of students to perform at 70% or above. The goal was met: 90% students earned the stated goal.
INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: The response essay assignment at the 200 level requires students to synthesize information from multiple sources (readings, lectures, discussions) and apply individual critical thinking skills as they offer individual responses based on textual evidence. The research essay assignment requires the same type of analytical thinking as the response essays but also demands substantive research and more elaborate and complex critical thinking skills and coherent writing. Both assignments are typical of AMS courses and accurately reflect work engaged by students and assessment efforts in all courses. The results indicate the success of such assignments to meet stated outcomes requiring synthetic thinking and writing. AMS will continue to employ such assignments as measures of student learning. Moreover, to improve student success, AMS faculty will seek to improve already strong results.

M 2: Student Self-Evaluations and Analysis of Artifacts
AMS uses student self-reporting on their understanding of key concepts in individual courses. Instructors will include written responses for students to state their comprehension and confidence in key concepts. Instructors will employ this indirect measure in 100- to 400-level courses.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
The target for this student self-evaluation of their comprehension of artifact analysis is for 70% of students to report confidence in both their understanding of analytical methodology and their capacity to apply that understanding in analysis and problem-solving.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met

RESULTS SUMMARY -- Indirect Measure: To obtain data regarding this measure, AMS reviewed student evaluations of their writing skills in response to course work for a 100-level course (AMS 150, Fall 2012). In final course evaluations, students responded to two questions directly related to synthetic thinking and writing: 1) "How helpful were the in-class papers for your learning in this course?" and 2) "How helpful were the on-line postings for your learning in this course?". For both the in-class essays and online postings, students were required to respond to major points made during lectures and to draw connections between varying but related course topics. Student responses affirmed the assertions inherent in the course for the two types of writing assignments: 72% of respondents indicated that the in-class essays were "Very Good" or "Excellent" in developing synthetic writing. This is an improvement over the previous year. INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: The student evaluations serve as a helpful indirect measure of the success of efforts to meet the learning outcome, but AMS seeks to improve student confidence in the assignments and their critical writing at the freshman level. AMS will expand the writing assignments and measure how student confidence levels respond.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Improve Course Evaluation Questions
Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
To complement the current university system of online course evaluations, AMS will continue developing departmental evaluation f...

Improve Use of Student Self-Reporting of Learning
Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
AMS seeks to expand and improve its use of student self-reporting of comprehension of major concepts and analytical tasks. For t...

M 4: Analytical Research and Writing
Students write research-based essays analyzing multiple artifacts and sources. Instructors calculate percentage of students whose performance is judged to be satisfactory or outstanding on these assignments. This measure will be employed for upper-level undergraduate courses.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Connected Documents
AMS Sample Essay Assignment
AMS Sample Essay Grading Rubric

Target:
AMS measures student capacity to perform research and analytical writing in 300-level and 400-level courses. The target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades in the performance of such assignments typical of AMS upper-level courses.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Not Met

RESULTS SUMMARY: AMS uses a research essay assignment to assess student capacity to write arguments with synthetic thinking. For 2012/13, AMS gathered data from a 400-level course (AMS 412, Fall 2012) to assess student learning for analytical interpretation and cultural context. The instructor used research essays as a direct summative assessment as students were required to conduct original research and apply critical thinking and writing skills to cultural artifacts and historical context. There was one stated goal: 80% of students to perform at 80% or above. The goal not met: 78% students achieved the stated goal. This particular section was a small enrollment atypical of the course; the total student enrollment at the end of the semester was only 9; 7 of 9 scored above 80%; the other 2 students scored above 70%. INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: The research essay assignment requires substantive synthetic thinking applied to interpretations of multiple artifacts and documents in reference to cultural context relevant to the course. The assignment demands substantive research and more elaborate and complex critical thinking skills and coherent writing. As such, it is a valuable tool for AMS classes. AMS will continue to employ such assignments and seek ways to encourage even higher rates of student success. This course will be offered in Spring 2014 and will be used again for departmental assessment reporting, and the department will defer any changes to the assignment until the data from the next section can be used to make the most productive decision.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.
SLO 2: Evaluating Diverse Cultural Artifacts
Students will evaluate the interrelationship between diverse aspects and artifacts of American culture.

Connected Document
American Studies BS Curriculum Maps

Relevant Associations:
AMS uses a range of assessment measures suited to academic work in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The department is confident of its assessment measures and the data they provide. The ongoing process affirms the success of student learning in AMS courses, and faculty believe, whereas the department is meeting targets the assessment process can continue to help improve student learning.

AMS Learning Outcomes are inter-related and emphasize the core of Liberal Arts demands for synthetic thinking and strong communication skills. AMS will continue to seek to achieve stated learning outcomes for as many students as possible.

Standard Associations
SACS 3.3.1
3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

General Education/Core Curriculum Associations
6 Humanities - SLO is related to students' ability to deal with questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics as they are represented in literature, philosophy, religion and the arts

Strategic Plan Associations
University of Alabama
2.7 Expand the University's emphasis on global and cultural studies.

Related Measures

M 2: Student Self-Evaluations and Analysis of Artifacts
AMS uses student self-reporting on their understanding of key concepts in individual courses. Instructors will include written responses for students to state their comprehension and confidence in key concepts. Instructors will employ this indirect measure in 100- to 400-level courses.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
AMS asserts a target of 70% of responding students to report their understanding of cultural artifacts as "good" or higher.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
RESULTS SUMMARY: To obtain data regarding this measure, AMS reviewed student evaluations of their self-reported learning outcomes in response to course work for a 100-level course (AMS 151, Spring 2013), which is one the AMS introductory courses built around understanding and analyzing diverse cultural artifacts. In final in-class course evaluations, students responded to questions rating the course as a learning experience (in short, how they defined the quality of their learning as an indirect summative assessment). On a scale rating student learning, students had these options: 1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4=very good; 5=excellent. Of 84 responses (78% of the class total enrollment of 108), 77 (92%) ranked their learning outcomes as "very good" or "excellent." AMS also measured AMS 300. Students rated their understanding of major concepts in the course. In course evaluations at the end of the course, students self-reported their learning outcome of a key course concept. Of the 29 respondents to the survey, 100% of respondents claimed to have a "good" or "excellent" understanding (17=Good and 12=Excellent). INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: The responses of students evaluating their own understanding of major course concepts as related to course material provides a solid indirect measure of student learning.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Improve Course Evaluation Questions
Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
To complement the current university system of online course evaluations, AMS will continue developing departmental evaluation f...

M 3: Collaborative Critical Thinking
AMS uses group work and online discussions to measure collaboration and critical thinking. Students demonstrate understanding of key concepts in collaboration with peers in-in-class group reports and/or online discussions. Instructors evaluate group work and discussions and determine student success. Instructors will employ this measure in all undergraduate levels.

Source of Evidence: Presentation, either individual or group

Target:
The target for collaborative critical thinking measures to assess student capacity for understanding diverse cultural artifacts will be that at least 70% of students at the 200 level courses and 80% of students at the 300- to 400- course levels will demonstrate capacity to collaborate with their peers in performing critical thinking analyses as assigned. The performances will be measured by rubrics; instructor observation, and /or student self-evaluations.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
RESULTS SUMMARY: AMS uses in-class group analytical work as indirect measures for student learning in relation to collaborative critical thinking. For 2012/13, AMS gathered data from a 200-level course (AMS 203, Spring 2013) and a 400-level course (AMS 430, Spring 2013). In AMS 203, students were placed in small groups (3-4 students per group) to respond to specific prompts related to course material. They were asked to
discuss issues and draw conclusions to present informally to the class as a whole. The performances were not graded; rather, the instructor evaluated the quality of student thought and participation. Students consistently performed well as leaders rather than followers of class discussions. In AMS 430, students were also placed in small groups (3-4 students per group) to respond to specific prompts related to course material. They were asked to discuss issues and draw conclusions to present informally to the class as a whole. The performances were not graded beyond recording participation; however, the instructor evaluated the quality of student thought and participation, and 100% of the students self-reported the success of their collaboration. Students consistently performed well as leaders in an active learning environment rather than followers of class discussions. INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: The primary goal is for students to become active and assert control over analysis of material rather than always be content to be receivers of information. AMS will continue to employ group work to enhance student learning and to strengthen collaborative skills. AMS courses universally employ such active learning techniques.

M 4: Analytical Research and Writing

Students write research-based essays analyzing multiple artifacts and sources. Instructors calculate percentage of students whose performance is judged to be satisfactory or outstanding on these assignments. This measure will be employed for upper-level undergraduate courses.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Connected Documents
- AMS Sample Essay Assignment
- AMS Sample Essay Grading Rubric

Target:
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance.
The 300-level and 400-level course target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
RESULTS SUMMARY: AMS uses a research essay assignment to assess student capacity to produce analytical research writing based on understanding diverse cultural artifacts. For 2012/13, AMS gathered data from a 400-level course (AMS 430, Spring 2013) to assess student learning for analytical interpretation and cultural context. The instructor used research essays as a direct summative assessment as students were required to conduct original research and apply critical thinking and writing skills to cultural artifacts and historical context. There was one stated goal: 90.5% of students (19 of 21) achieved the stated goal. INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: The research essay assignment requires substantive synthetic thinking applied to interpretation of multiple artifacts and documents in reference to cultural context relevant to the course. The assignment demands substantive research and more elaborate and complex critical thinking skills and coherent writing. As such, it is a valuable tool for AMS classes. AMS will continue to employ such assignments and seek ways to encourage even higher rates of student success.

M 5: Analytical Interpretation and Cultural Context

AMS faculty demonstrate how to read artifacts via lectures and discussions in all AMS courses. Instructors evaluate student capacity to apply this instruction in their own critical thinking on essay exams. This measure is most accurate when applied to entire exams rather than individual or focused questions. Instructors calculate percent of students whose performance is judged satisfactory or outstanding on these exams. Instructors will employ this measure in 200- to 400-level courses.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Target:
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance:
the 200-level course target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 300-level and 400-level course target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.
Faculty may assert higher targets for specific courses.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
RESULTS SUMMARY: AMS uses a research essay assignment to assess student capacity to write arguments with synthetic thinking. For 2012/13, AMS gathered data from a 400-level course (AMS 430, Spring 2013) to assess student learning for analytical interpretation and cultural context. The instructor used research essays as a direct summative assessment as students were required to conduct original research and apply critical thinking and writing skills to cultural artifacts and historical context. There was one stated goal: 80% of students to perform at 70% or above. The goal was met: 90.5% students (19 of 21) achieved the stated goal. INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: The research essay assignment requires substantive synthetic thinking applied to interpretation of multiple artifacts and documents in reference to cultural context relevant to the course. The assignment demands substantive research and more elaborate and complex critical thinking skills and coherent writing. As such, it is a valuable tool for AMS classes. AMS will continue to employ such assignments and seek ways to encourage even higher rates of student success.

SLO 3: Developing Liberal Arts Methodologies

Students will demonstrate a knowledge of and ability to apply a range of liberal arts methodologies in an interdisciplinary fashion. Instructors will assess this skill with specific questions on essay exams or analytical writing assignments. This measure will be employed in 400-level courses.

Connected Document
- American Studies BS Curriculum Maps

Relevant Associations:
AMS uses a range of assessment measures suited to academic work in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The department is confident of its assessment measures and the data they provide. The ongoing process affirms the success of student learning in AMS courses, and faculty believe, whereas the department is meeting targets the assessment process can continue to help improve student learning.

AMS Learning Outcomes are inter-related and emphasize the core of Liberal Arts demands for synthetic thinking and strong communication skills. AMS will continue to seek to achieve stated learning outcomes for as many students as possible.
Standard Associations

**SACS 3.3.1**

3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

General Education/Core Curriculum Associations

6 Humanities - SLO is related to students' ability to deal with questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics as they are represented in literature, philosophy, religion and the arts

Strategic Plan Associations

University of Alabama

3.4 Increase involvement of undergraduate students in research and scholarly activities.

Related Measures

**M 5: Analytical Interpretation and Cultural Context**

AMS faculty demonstrate how to read artifacts via lectures and discussions in all AMS courses. Instructors evaluate student capacity to apply this instruction in their own critical thinking on essay exams. This measure is most accurate when applied to entire exams rather than individual or focused questions. Instructors calculate percent of students whose performance is judged satisfactory or outstanding on these exams. Instructors will employ this measure in 200-to 400-level courses.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

**Target:**

AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance: the 200-level course target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades; the 300-level and 400-level course target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades. Individual faculty may assert higher targets for specific classes.

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met**

RESULTS SUMMARY: AMS assessed student performance on analytical response essays in a 200-level course (AMS 203, Fall 2012) to measure their capacity to develop strong liberal arts methodologies. This assignment (a series of response essays throughout the semester) offers assessment opportunities for several AMS Learning Outcome because they demand critical thinking combined with using multiple sources of information, often in the form of cultural artifacts. The instructor used response essays as a direct summative assessment as students were required to employ critical thinking skills to interpret varying facets of literary expression related to cultural history. There were two stated goals: 1) 80% of students to perform at 70% or higher averaged over seven response essays written throughout the course; 2) average scores should improve as the course progressed. Goal 1 was met: 82% of students achieved at or above 70%. Goal 2 was met: average scores for the response essays steadily increased as the semester progressed and students improved critical thinking and writing skills. INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: The response essay assignment in the 200-level course requires students to synthesize information from multiple sources (readings, lectures, discussions) and apply individual critical thinking skills as they offer individual responses based on textual evidence. The assignment is typical of AMS courses and accurately reflects work engaged by students and assessment efforts in all courses. The results indicate the success of such assignments to meet stated outcomes requiring synthetic thinking and writing. AMS will continue to employ such assignments as measures of student learning. Moreover, to improve student success, AMS faculty will seek to improve already strong results.

**M 6: Critical Methodologies**

AMS uses research essays to help students develop skills in analytical methodologies essential to success in AMS courses and Humanities at large. Faculty evaluate the quality of student applications of methodologies in their research writing and critical thinking. Instructors determine student success and calculate percentages. Instructors will employ this measure in 300- and 400-level courses.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Connected Documents

AMS Sample Essay Assignment
AMS Sample Essay Grading Rubric

**Target:**

AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance: the 100-level target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades; the 200- and 300-level target is for 75% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades; the 400-level target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle**

This measure of critical methodologies duplicates directly efforts listed in measures 1 and 4, and it will be dropped from further distinction. AMS research essay assignments by definition require use of critical methodologies. AMS chooses to continue to rely heavily on these assignments to measure student learning regarding synthetic thinking and analytical methodologies.

**SLO 4: Exploring Concepts and Controversies**

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the central concepts and controversies in American Studies in course exams. Instructors evaluate student performance above 70 percent as satisfactory. This measure will be employed in 100- and 200-level courses.

Connected Document

American Studies BS Curriculum Maps

**Relevant Associations:**

AMS uses a range of assessment measures suited to academic work in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The department is confident of its assessment measures and the data they provide. The ongoing process affirms the success of student learning in AMS courses, and faculty believe, whereas the department is meeting targets, the
assessment process can continue to help improve student learning.

AMS Learning Outcomes are inter-related and emphasize the core of Liberal Arts demands for synthetic thinking and strong communication skills. AMS will continue to seek to achieve stated learning outcomes for as many students as possible.

**Standard Associations**

**SACS 3.3.1**
3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

**General Education/Core Curriculum Associations**

6 Humanities - SLO is related to students' ability to deal with questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics as they are represented in literature, philosophy, religion and the arts

**Strategic Plan Associations**

University of Alabama
3.3 Encourage and reward creative strategies for engaging students in learning and life-long learning.

**Related Measures**

**M 3: Collaborative Critical Thinking**

AMS uses group work and online discussions to measure collaboration and critical thinking. Students demonstrate understanding of key concepts in collaboration with peers in in-class group reports and/or online discussions. Instructors evaluate group work and discussions and determine student success. Instructors will employ this measure in all undergraduate levels.

Source of Evidence: Presentation, either individual or group

**Target:**
The target for collaborative critical thinking measures in examination of concepts and controversies will be that at least 70% of students at the 200 level courses and 80% of students at the 300- to 400-level course levels will demonstrate capacity to explore central concepts and controversies with their individual analyses of course material. The performances will be measured by rubrics; instructor observation, and/or student self-evaluations.

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met**

**RESULTS SUMMARY:** AMS also assesses how well students are able to explore concepts and controversies with in-class group analytical work as indirect measures for student learning in relation to collaborative critical thinking. For 2012/13, AMS gathered data from a 200-level course (AMS 203, Spring 2013) and a 400-level course (AMS 430, Spring 2013). In AMS 203, students were placed in small groups (3-4 students per group) to respond to specific prompts related to course material. They were asked to discuss issues and draw conclusions to present informally to the class as a whole. The performances were not graded; rather, the instructor evaluated the quality of student thought and participation. Students consistently performed well as leaders rather than followers of class discussions. In AMS 430, students were also placed in small groups (3-4 students per group) to respond to specific prompts related to course material. They were asked to discuss issues and draw conclusions to present informally to the class as a whole. The performances were not graded beyond recording participation; however, the instructor evaluated the quality of student thought and participation, and 100% of the students self-reported the success of their collaboration. Students consistently performed well as leaders in an active learning environment rather than followers of class discussions.

**INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:** The primary goal is for students to become active and assert control over analysis of material rather than always be content to be receivers of information. AMS will continue to employ group work to enhance student learning and to strengthen collaborative skills. AMS courses universally employ such active learning techniques.

**M 7: Analytical Reading and Discussion**

Students demonstrate understanding of key concepts and controversies via in-class quizzes, which can often serve as practice for exams. Instructors calculate percent of students whose performance is judged to be satisfactory or outstanding on these assignments. This measure will be employed at 200- to 400-level courses.

Source of Evidence: Standardized test of subject matter knowledge

**Target:**
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance:
- the 100-level target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
- the 200- and 300-level target is for 75% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
- the 400-level target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met**

**RESULTS SUMMARY:** AMS courses on the whole demand student exploration of major concepts and controversies in American culture. For 2012/13, AMS gathered data from AMS 151 to measure student success at the freshman level in the second of our introductory courses for American Studies. The final exam provided the best source for assessing the level of student comprehension of major issues covered in the course and serves as our primary summative assessment tool. The exam was multiple choice with 40% of the questions related to the final third of the semester, and 60% of the questions being comprehensive. The results met departmental goals: 70.6% of students achieved a 70% grade or higher. **INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:** AMS 151 is an essential course for the for students as it introduces basic concepts and controversies in American cultural history, and its content is provided by all members of the AMS faculty. The exam results met departmental goals, but AMS is not satisfied with those results because the results were so close to failure. Due to renovation of our office and classroom building, the course was held in a venue that proved much more difficult to keep proper attendance; therefore, the instructor took the opportunity to allow students much more freedom in attendance. The instructor believes this experiment is the primary cause of the numbers. Strict attendance will be reinstated for next year, and we will continue monitoring the results. The final exam provides a useful measure of student success, and AMS will continue to employ this assessment tool and seek to improve student success.

**Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):**
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

**Improve Student Learning in AMS 150 and AMS 151**
*Established in Cycle: 2012-2013*
AMS believes that our first-year courses provide valuable opportunities for learning, and we will focus our action plans around ...

**M 8: Student Self-Evaluations and Key Concepts**
AMS uses self-evaluations by students concerning their understanding of key course concepts. Instructors measure percentage of students reporting satisfactory progress. Instructors employ this indirect measure in 200-level courses.

**Source of Evidence:** Student course evaluations on learning gains made

**Target:**
AMS asserts a target wherein 70% or more of students report successful understanding of major concepts and controversies to corroborate other measures reported by instructors.

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met**
RESULTS SUMMARY: AMS uses formative and summative student evaluations to measure student learning related to major concepts and controversies as an indirect assessment to corroborate direct measures determined by instructors. For 2012/13, AMS used a 400-level course (AMS 430, Spring 2012) to measure student self-evaluations of their comprehension of major issues. Before the midterm, students (n=16) responded to questions asking for self evaluation of their comprehension of course concepts thus far. 100% (16) asserted that they had a "good," "very good," or "strong" comprehension of key issues discussed in the first third of the course. INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: Indirect measures are useful in complementing direct measures of student success. AMS will continue to evaluate how students report their understanding of key concepts.

**Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):**
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

**Improve Use of Student Self-Reporting of Learning**
*Established in Cycle: 2011-2012*
AMS seeks to expand and improve its use of student self-reporting of comprehension of major concepts and analytical tasks. For ...

**M 9: Key Concepts and Major Issues**
AMS uses exams to measure student learning success regarding key concepts and major cultural issues. Instructors measure percentage of students who perform above 70 percent. Instructors employ this measure at all levels of undergraduate education.

**Source of Evidence:** Standardized test of subject matter knowledge

**Target:**
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance:
- the 100-level target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
- the 200- and 300-level target is for 75% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
- the 400-level target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met**
RESULTS SUMMARY: AMS uses formative and summative in-class exams to provide direct measures student learning related to major concepts and controversies. For 2012/13, AMS used a 400-level course (AMS 430, Spring 2012) to measure student demonstration of comprehension of key concepts and major issues. 100% of students earned 70% or higher grades on the final essay examination which required synthetic thinking and demonstration of deep understanding of major concepts. INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: Essay exams are a staple of the AMS curricula and will continue to serve as useful direct measures of student capacity to master key concepts and major issues in American Studies.

**Other Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans**

**OthOtcm 5: Improving and Sustaining Recognized Quality**
The program will improve and sustain a high level of recognized quality.

**Relevant Associations:**
AMS uses a range of assessment measures suited to academic work in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The department is confident of its assessment measures and the data they provide. The ongoing process affirms the success of student learning in AMS courses, and faculty believe, whereas the department is meeting targets the assessment process can continue to help improve student learning.

AMS Learning Outcomes are inter-related and emphasize the core of Liberal Arts demands for synthetic thinking and strong communication skills. AMS will continue to seek to achieve stated learning outcomes for as many students as possible.

**Strategic Plan Associations**
University of Alabama
1.1 Promote and enhance areas of academic, scholarship, and research excellence.
1.2 Increase the recognition of the University's service priorities that enhance the quality of life for all Alabamians.
1.5 Effectively use course offerings and class size to support priorities.

**Related Measures**

**M 10: Admissions to Graduate Programs**
Chair will measure student rate of success in admission to graduate and professional graduate programs for those who apply.
Source of Evidence: Graduate/professional school acceptance rate

Target:
All AMS majors with strong academic performance during their undergraduate program should be able to gain acceptance into reputable graduate programs.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle
not reported in this cycle

OthOtcn 6: Building Enrollment and Degree Completions
The program will build and sustain an optimal level of annual program enrollments and degree completions.

Relevant Associations:
AMS uses a range of assessment measures suited to academic work in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The department is confident of its assessment measures and the data they provide. The ongoing process affirms the success of student learning in AMS courses, and faculty believe, whereas the department is meeting targets the assessment process can continue to help improve student learning.

AMS Learning Outcomes are inter-related and emphasize the core of Liberal Arts demands for synthetic thinking and strong communication skills. AMS will continue to seek to achieve stated learning outcomes for as many students as possible.

Standard Associations
SACS 3.3.1
3.3.1.2 Administrative support services
3.3.1.3 Educational support services

Strategic Plan Associations
University of Alabama
1.1 Promote and enhance areas of academic, scholarship, and research excellence.
1.5 Effectively use course offerings and class size to support priorities.

Related Measures

M 12: Degrees Awarded
Chair will measure number of degrees awarded for the past three years, and compare it to ACHE viability standards.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
AMS measures graduation rates to assess its enrollment numbers and degree completions in line with ACHE standards.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle
not reported in this cycle

M 13: Course Hour Production
Chair will measure the undergraduate course hour production for the past three fall semesters.
Source of Evidence: Administrative measure - other

Target:
not applicable

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
not applicable

OthOtcn 7: Achieving High Value Constituent Ratings
The program will be highly valued by its program graduates and other key constituencies it serves.

Relevant Associations:

Related Measures

M 14: Student Satisfaction
Chair will measure student satisfaction with the program from the exit survey of all majors and minors.

Source of Evidence: Student satisfaction survey at end of the program

Target:
AMS expects its graduates to report satisfaction with the program.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
Based on exit interviews conducted by the Chair, graduates overwhelmingly report satisfaction with the program.

M 15: Student Career Plans
We will include indirect measures of informal discussions with majors and minors about future plans.

Source of Evidence: Discussions / Coffee Talk

Target:
AMS reaches out to all majors to provide support for career plans.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle
not reported in this cycle

Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)

Improve Course Evaluation Questions
To complement the current university system of online course evaluations, AMS will continue developing departmental evaluation forms and procedures. The responses for the evaluations as recorded in AMS 150 met targeted goals for
student confidence in understanding diverse artifacts and developing liberal methodologies. AMS will continue to revise the questionnaire to solicit better data from students and discuss other possible factors of the course material so that student learning can be improved. Moreover, AMS will encourage instructors to conduct similar revisions as well as encourage instructors to employ student evaluations DURING the semester to better gauge student progress.

**Established in Cycle:** 2011-2012

**Implementation Status:** In-Progress

**Priority:** High

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**
- Measure: Student Self-Evaluations and Analysis of Artifacts | Outcome/Objective: Evaluating Diverse Cultural Artifacts
- Measure: Writing Arguments with Synthetic Thinking

**Implementation Description:** AMS will revise student evaluation forms for Fall 2013 and evaluate results. AMS will also incorporate brief, topic-specific student self evaluations during the course to measure student learning progress.

**Projected Completion Date:** 01/2014

**Responsible Person/Group:** Jeffrey Melton and Lynne Adrian (Chair)

**Additional Resources:** None

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**Improve Use of Student Self-Reporting of Learning**

AMS seeks to expand and improve its use of student self-reporting of comprehension of major concepts and analytical tasks. For the course referred to in the 2011/12 (American Popular Humor; offered every year), the instructor will add other questions of key concepts and incorporate "practice" for exams using such questions as assessment measures to improve student learning. If successful, the instructor will help implement such measures in other AMS courses.

**Established in Cycle:** 2011-2012

**Implementation Status:** In-Progress

**Priority:** Medium

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**
- Measure: Student Self-Evaluations and Analysis of Artifacts | Outcome/Objective: Writing Arguments with Synthetic Thinking
- Measure: Student Self-Evaluations and Key Concepts | Outcome/Objective: Exploring Concepts and Controversies

**Implementation Description:** This task will require multiple semesters to gather useful and applicable information to expand into other courses.

**Projected Completion Date:** 01/2015

**Responsible Person/Group:** Jeffrey Melton

**Additional Resources:** None

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**Improve Student Learning in AMS 150 and AMS 151**

AMS believes that our first-year courses provide valuable opportunities for learning, and we will focus our action plans around both AMS 150 and 151. This will be an ongoing effort by the department. Both courses have innovative approaches to team teaching. We plan to maintain their status as innovative courses and begin adopting more active learning techniques to help reach more students are encourage deeper learning. For 2013/14, AMS 150 is making the following changes to encourage more student learning success:

**Students will provide several self-evaluations of learning regarding major concepts during the semester.**

**Established in Cycle:** 2012-2013

**Implementation Status:** In-Progress

**Priority:** High

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**
- Measure: Analytical Reading and Discussion | Outcome/Objective: Exploring Concepts and Controversies

**Implementation Description:** This action plan will be initiated in 2013/2014 and will be measured for two years so that two cycles of each freshman level course can be evaluated to ensure useful data.

**Projected Completion Date:** 06/2015

**Responsible Person/Group:** AMS faculty; Lynne Adrian; and Edward Tang

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**Seeking additional data for AMS 412**

The assessment measure used for AMS 412 in Fall 2012 did not meet instructor targets. The instructor, however, is hesitant to make changes as a result due to the atypical enrollment of this course and will defer until more data can be provided in Spring 2014 when the course will be offered again. If the new data corroborates the data from Fall 2012, the instructor will make significant adjustments to improve student learning with the assignment.

**Established in Cycle:** 2012-2013

**Implementation Status:** On-Hold

**Priority:** Medium

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**
- Measure: Analytical Research and Writing | Outcome/Objective: Writing Arguments with Synthetic Thinking

**Implementation Description:** Response to the unmet target for Fall 2012 will be deferred until Spring 2014 once additional data becomes available.

**Projected Completion Date:** 06/2014

**Responsible Person/Group:** Jeffrey Melton
Mission / Purpose
The Department of American Studies supports the liberal arts mission of the University of Alabama by providing quality general education courses and programs of study leading to the Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Arts degrees in American Studies. The Department promotes knowledge and understanding of American life through scholarly research and is committed to offering teaching and scholarship of the highest quality, which explores the ongoing dialogue about America as a nation and an idea. We strive to contribute to the quality of intellectual life on the campus, in Tuscaloosa, across the state and region, and through American Studies professional associations. We seek to provide students with scholarly opportunities to explore how they are shaped by American culture, as well as how they can shape that culture. A special component of the department's mission is to advance the study and understanding of gender, race, class, and region throughout the curriculum. We also seek to explore the many ways in which the term 'American' does not limit itself to the geographical boundaries of the United States, but expands to include transnational connections.

Student Learning Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans
SLO 1: Writing Arguments with Synthetic Thinking
Students will demonstrate skill in constructing written arguments requiring synthetic thinking.

Connected Document
American Studies BS Curriculum Maps

Relevant Associations:
AMS uses a range of assessment measures suited to academic work in the Humanities. The department is confident of its assessment measures and the data they provide. The process for 2011/12 affirms the success of student learning in AMS courses, and faculty believe whereas the department is meeting targets the assessment process can continue to help improve student learning.
AMS Learning Outcomes are inter-related and emphasize the core of Liberal Arts demands for synthetic thinking and strong communication skills. AMS will continue to seek to achieve stated learning outcomes for as many students as possible.

Standard Associations
SACS 3.3.1
3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

General Education/Core Curriculum Associations
6 Humanities - SLO is related to students' ability to deal with questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics as they are represented in literature, philosophy, religion and the arts
11 Writing - SLO is related to building on students' competency in academic writing skills and aims to extend those skills

Strategic Plan Associations
University of Alabama
3.4 Increase involvement of undergraduate students in research and scholarly activities.

Related Measures
M 1: Analytical Writing
AMS uses Response Essays as a measure for analytical writing skills. The instructor calculates the percent of students whose performance is judged to be satisfactory or outstanding on these assignments.
Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Connected Document
AMS Sample Essay Assignment

Target:
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance:
the 100-level target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 200- and 300-level target is for 75% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 400-level target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.

Connected Document
AMS Sample Essay Assignment

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met
RESULTS SUMMARY:
AMS assessed student performance on analytical response essays in a 200-level course (AMS 203, Fall 2011) and research essays in a 400-level course (AMS 430, Spring 2012).

For the 200-level course, the instructor used response essays as a direct summative assessment. There were two stated goals: 1) 80% of students to perform at 70% or higher averaged over seven response essays written throughout the course; 2) average scores should improve as the course progressed. Goal 1 was met: 82% of students achieved at or above 70%. Goal 2 was met: average scores for the response essays steadily increased as the semester progressed and students improved critical thinking and writing skills.

For the 400-level course, the instructor used research essays as a direct summative assessment. There was
one stated goal: 80% of students to perform at 70% or above. The goal was met: 84% students earned the stated goal.

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:
The response essay assignment at the 200 level requires students to synthesize information from multiple sources (readings, lectures, discussions) and apply individual critical thinking skills as they offer individual responses based on textual evidence. The research essay assignment requires the same type of analytical thinking as the response essays but also demands substantive research and more elaborate and complex critical thinking skills and coherent writing. Both assignments are typical of AMS courses and accurately reflect work engaged by students and assessment efforts in all courses. The results indicate the success of such assignments to meet stated outcomes requiring synthetic thinking and writing.

AMS will continue to employ such assignments as measures of student learning. Moreover, to improve student success, AMS faculty will seek to improve already strong results.

Connected Document
AMS Sample Essay Assignment

M 2: Student Self-Evaluations and Analysis of Artifacts
AMS uses student course evaluations (SOI or departmentally administered evaluations) as an indirect measure of student learning regarding the analysis of cultural artifacts.

Source of Evidence: Student course evaluations on learning gains made

Target:
No target established

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met

RESULTS SUMMARY:
To obtain data regarding this measure, AMS reviewed student evaluations of their writing skills in response to course work for a 100-level course (AMS 150, Fall 2011). In final course evaluations, students responded to two questions directly related to synthetic thinking and writing: 1) “How helpful were the in-class papers for your learning in this course?” and 2) “How helpful were the on-line postings for your learning in this course?” For both the in-class essays and online postings, students were required to respond to major points made during lectures and to draw connections between varying but related course topics. Students responses affirmed the assertions inherent in the course for the two types of writing assignments: 65% of respondents indicated that the in-class essays were “Very Good” or “Excellent.”

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: The student evaluations serve as a helpful indirect measure of the success of efforts to meet the learning outcome. AMS will continue to employ the assignments.

M 4: Analytical Research and Writing
Students write research-based essays analyzing multiple artifacts and sources. Instructors calculate percentage of students whose performance is judged to be satisfactory or outstanding on these assignments.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Connected Documents
AMS Sample Essay Assignment
AMS Sample Essay Grading Rubric

Target:
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance:
the 100-level target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 200- and 300-level target is for 75% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 400-level target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met

RESULTS SUMMARY:
AMS used a research essay assignment in a 400-level course (AMS 430, Spring 2012) to assess student learning for analytical interpretation and cultural context. The instructor used research essays as a direct summative assessment as students were required to conduct original research and apply critical thinking and writing skills to cultural artifacts and historical context. There was one stated goal: 80% of students to perform at 70% or above. The goal was met: 84% students achieved the stated goal.

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: The research essay assignment requires substantive synthetic thinking applied to interpretation of multiple artifacts and documents in reference to cultural context relevant to the course. The assignment demands substantive research and more elaborate and complex critical thinking skills and coherent writing. As such, it is a valuable tool for AMS classes. AMS will continue to employ such assignments and seek ways to encourage even higher rates of student success.

SLO 2: Understanding Diverse Cultural Artifacts
Students will demonstrate an understanding of the interrelationship between diverse aspects and artifacts of American culture.

Connected Document
American Studies BS Curriculum Maps

Relevant Associations:
AMS uses a range of assessment measures suited to academic work in the Humanities. The department is confident of its assessment measures and the data they provide. The process for 2011/12 affirms the success of student learning in AMS courses, and faculty believe whereas the department is meeting targets the assessment process can continue to help improve student learning.
AMS Learning Outcomes are inter-related and emphasize the core of Liberal Arts demands for synthetic thinking and strong communication skills. AMS will continue to seek to achieve stated learning outcomes for as many students as possible.
Standard Associations

SACS 3.3.1
3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

General Education/Core Curriculum Associations

6 Humanities - SLO is related to students' ability to deal with questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics as they are represented in literature, philosophy, religion and the arts

Strategic Plan Associations

University of Alabama
2.7 Expand the University's emphasis on global and cultural studies.

Related Measures

M 2: Student Self-Evaluations and Analysis of Artifacts
AMS uses student course evaluations (SOI or departmentally administered evaluations) as an indirect measure of student learning regarding the analysis of cultural artifacts.

Source of Evidence: Student course evaluations on learning gains made

Target:
AMS asserts a target of 70% of responding students to report their understanding of cultural artifacts as "good" or higher.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Partially Met
RESULTS SUMMARY:
AMS used student evaluations (online SOI and in-class student evaluations throughout the semester) as an indirect measure of student learning:
For 2011/12, AMS assessed data from AMS 150 (Fall 2011) and AMS 300 (Spring 2012).

For AMS 150, students responded to a specific question related to understanding cultural artifacts: "AMS 150 has improved or changed my ability to identify key points or ideas in something I read, see, or hear outside of class." The answer options were: Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; Strongly Agree. 54% of respondents answered with Agree or Strongly Agree; 25% responded with Neutral and 21% responded with Disagree or Strongly Disagree. In addition, the evaluation asked the following: "AMS 150 helps me to synthesize ideas, information, or experiences into more complex interpretations." 51% responded with Agree or Strongly Agree; 33% responded with Neutral; and 16% responded with Disagree or Strongly Disagree.

For AMS 300, students rated their understanding of major concepts in the course (Tourism and Leisure). In course evaluations at the end of the course, students answered the following question: "How would you define your understanding of the history of tourism and leisure in the United States?" Of the 18 respondents to the survey, 100% of respondents claimed to have a "good" or "excellent" understanding (10=Good and 8=Excellent).

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:
The responses of students evaluating their own understanding of major course concepts as related to course material provides a solid indirect measure of student learning. For the large AMS 150, the results do not meet targets. AMS asserts that the data needs further consideration. In addition to taking as yet undetermined steps to improve student confidence in applying critical thinking skills during the course, AMS must also consider improving the questions themselves. The large number of students choosing "Neutral" on this question is a cause for concern. The problem may be in the answer options. AMS will work to improve both components of these results and consider all implications. In the upper-level and smaller course, students responded with more confidence and met departmental targets.

AMS will continue to promote student evaluations and encourage instructors to expand their use of the assessment tool throughout the semester in addition to typical end-of-semester evaluations.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Improve Course Evaluation Questions
Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
To complement the current university system of online course evaluations, AMS will continue developing departmental evaluation f...

M 3: Collaborative Critical Thinking
AMS uses group work and online discussions to measure collaboration and critical thinking. Students demonstrate understanding of key concepts in collaboration with peers in in-class group reports and/or online discussions.

Source of Evidence: Presentation, either individual or group

Target:
No target established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met
RESULTS SUMMARY:
AMS used in-class group analytical work as indirect measures for student learning in relation to collaborative critical thinking.

For 2011/12, AMS gathered data from a 200-level course (AMS 200, Spring 2012) and a 400-level course (AMS 430, Fall 2011).

In AMS 200, students were placed in small groups (3-4 students per group) to respond to specific prompts related to course material. They were asked to discuss issues and draw conclusions to present informally to the class as a whole. The performances were not graded; rather, the instructor evaluated the quality of student thought and participation. Students consistently performed well as leaders rather than followers of class discussions.
In AMS 430, students were also placed in small groups (3-4 students per group) to respond to specific prompts related to course material. They were asked to discuss issues and draw conclusions to present informally to the class as a whole. The performances were not graded; rather, the instructor evaluated the quality of student thought and participation. Students consistently performed well as leaders rather than followers of class discussions.

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:
The primary goal is for students to become active and assert control over analysis of material rather than receivers of information. AMS will continue to employ group work to enhance student learning and to strengthen collaborative skills.

M 4: Analytical Research and Writing
Students write research-based essays analyzing multiple artifacts and sources. Instructors calculate percentage of students whose performance is judged to be satisfactory or outstanding on these assignments.
Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Connected Documents
AMS Sample Essay Assignment
AMS Sample Essay Grading Rubric

Target:
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance:
the 100-level target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 200- and 300-level target is for 75% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 400-level target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met
RESULTS SUMMARY:
AMS used a research essay assignment in a 400-level course (AMS 430, Spring 2012) to assess student learning for analytical interpretation and cultural context. The instructor used research essays as a direct summative assessment as students were required to conduct original research and apply critical thinking and writing skills to cultural artifacts and historical context. There was one stated goal: 80% of students to perform at 70% or above. The goal was met: 84% students achieved the stated goal.

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:
The research essay assignment requires substantive synthetic thinking applied to interpretation of multiple artifacts and documents in reference to cultural context relevant to the course. The assignment demands substantive research and more elaborate and complex critical thinking skills and coherent writing. As such, it is a valuable tool for AMS classes. AMS will continue to employ such assignments and seek ways to encourage even higher rates of student success.

M 5: Analytical Interpretation and Cultural Context
Faculty demonstrate how to read these artifacts via lectures and discussions. Students are tested on their understanding of these readings and capacity to apply them on exams. Instructors calculate percent of students whose performance is judged satisfactory or outstanding on these exams.
Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Target:
No target established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met
RESULTS SUMMARY:
AMS used a research essay assignment in a 400-level course (AMS 430, Spring 2012) to assess student learning for analytical interpretation and cultural context. The instructor used research essays as a direct summative assessment as students were required to conduct original research and apply critical thinking and writing skills to cultural artifacts and historical context. There was one stated goal: 80% of students to perform at 70% or above. The goal was met: 84% students achieved the stated goal.

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:
The research essay assignment requires substantive synthetic thinking applied to interpretation of multiple artifacts and documents in reference to cultural context relevant to the course. The assignment demands substantive research and more elaborate and complex critical thinking skills and coherent writing. As such, it is a valuable tool for AMS classes. AMS will continue to employ such assignments and seek ways to encourage even higher rates of student success.

SLO 3: Developing Liberal Arts Methodologies
Students will demonstrate a knowledge of and ability to apply a range of liberal arts methodologies in an interdisciplinary fashion.

Connected Document
American Studies BS Curriculum Maps

Relevant Associations:
AMS uses a range of assessment measures suited to academic work in the Humanities. The department is confident of its assessment measures and the data they provide. The process for 2011/12 affirms the success of student learning in AMS courses, and faculty believe whereas the department is meeting targets the assessment process can continue to help improve student learning.
AMS Learning Outcomes are inter-related and emphasize the core of Liberal Arts demands for synthetic thinking and strong communication skills. AMS will continue to seek to achieve stated learning outcomes for as many students as possible.

Standard Associations
SACS 3.3.1
3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning outcomes
General Education/Core Curriculum Associations

6 Humanities - SLO is related to students’ ability to deal with questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics as they are represented in literature, philosophy, religion and the arts

Strategic Plan Associations
University of Alabama
3.4 Increase involvement of undergraduate students in research and scholarly activities.

Related Measures

M 5: Analytical Interpretation and Cultural Context
Faculty demonstrate how to read these artifacts via lectures and discussions. Students are tested on their understanding of these readings and capacity to apply them on exams. Instructors calculate percent of students whose performance is judged satisfactory or outstanding on these exams.
Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric
Target:
No target established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met
RESULTS SUMMARY:
AMS assessed student performance on analytical response essays in a 200-level course (AMS 203, Fall 2011). This assignment (a series of response essays through the semester) offers assessment opportunities for several AMS Learning Outcome because they demand critical thinking combined with using multiple sources of information, often in the form of cultural artifacts.

The instructor used response essays as a direct summative assessment as students were required to employ critical thinking skills to interpret varying facets of literary expression related to cultural history. There were two stated goals: 1) 80% of students to perform at 70% or higher averaged over seven response essays written throughout the course; 2) average scores should improve as the course progressed. Goal 1 was met; 82% of students achieved at or above 70%. Goal 2 was met; average scores for the response essays steadily increased as the semester progressed and students improved critical thinking and writing skills.

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:
The response essay assignment at the 200 level requires students to synthesize information from multiple sources (readings, lectures, discussions) and apply individual critical thinking skills as they offer individual responses based on textual evidence. The assignment is typical of AMS courses and accurately reflects work engaged by students and assessment efforts in all courses. The results indicate the success of such assignments to meet stated outcomes requiring synthetic thinking and writing.

AMS will continue to employ such assignments as measures of student learning. Moreover, to improve student success, AMS faculty will seek to improve already strong results.

M 6: Critical Methodologies
AMS uses research essays to help students develop skills in analytical methodologies essential to success in AMS courses and Humanities at large. Faculty evaluate the quality of student applications of methodologies in their research writing and critical thinking. Instructors determine student success and calculate percentages.
Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Connected Documents
AMS Sample Essay Assignment
AMS Sample Essay Grading Rubric

Target:
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance:
the 100-level target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 200- and 300-level target is for 75% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 400-level target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met
RESULTS SUMMARY:
AMS used data from AMS 231 (Spring 2012) to assess student learning relative to development of critical methodologies.

Students were tasked to research and write an essay based on the historiography of topics essential to understanding Contemporary American Culture. Students had to compose three such assignments throughout the semester. The data collected is from the final essay which should demonstrate increasing competence in students. The instructor evaluated the quality of the essays, and the grades illustrated significant student learning. Of the 33 students enrolled at the late point in the semester, 100% achieved over a 70% score.

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:
AMS 231 is a required and cornerstone course for AMS majors and focuses most directly on developing methodological understanding for students. As such it is a vital source for assessing student learning. The success of the the students with this assignment is a strong indication of student learning. AMS will continue to employ the assignment and assess student performance.

SLO 4: Exploring Concepts and Controversies
Students demonstrate knowledge of the central concepts and controversies in American Studies in course exams.
Instructors evaluate student performance above 70 percent as satisfactory.
Connected Document
American Studies BS Curriculum Maps

Relevant Associations:
AMS uses a range of assessment measures suited to academic work in the Humanities. The department is confident of its assessment measures and the data they provide. The process for 2011/12 affirms the success of student learning in AMS courses, and faculty believe whereas the department is meeting targets the assessment process can continue to help improve student learning.
AMS Learning Outcomes are inter-related and emphasize the core of Liberal Arts demands for synthetic thinking and strong communication skills. AMS will continue to seek to achieve stated learning outcomes for as many students as possible.

Standard Associations
SACS 3.3.1
3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

General Education/Core Curriculum Associations
6 Humanities - SLO is related to students' ability to deal with questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics as they are represented in literature, philosophy, religion and the arts

Strategic Plan Associations
University of Alabama
3.3 Encourage and reward creative strategies for engaging students in learning and life-long learning.

Related Measures
M 3: Collaborative Critical Thinking
AMS uses group work and online discussions to measure collaboration and critical thinking. Students demonstrate understanding of key concepts in collaboration with peers with in-class group reports and/or online discussions.

Source of Evidence: Presentation, either individual or group

Target:
No target established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met
RESULTS SUMMARY:
AMS used in-class group analytical work as indirect measures for student learning in relation to exploring major concepts and controversies essential to understanding American culture.

For 2011/12, AMS gathered data from a 200-level course (AMS 200, Spring 2012) and a 400-level course (AMS 430, Fall 2011).

In AMS 200, students were placed in small groups (3-4 students per group) to respond to specific prompts related to course material. They were asked to discuss major issues and draw conclusions. They were tasked to present informally their analyses to the class. The performances were graded, and the instructor evaluated the quality of student thought and participation. Students consistently performed well as leaders rather than followers of class discussions.

In AMS 430, students were also placed in small groups (3-4 students per group) to respond to specific prompts related to course material. They were asked to discuss major issues and draw conclusions. They were tasked to present informally their analyses to the class. The performances were graded, and the instructor set a goal of 80% of students to perform at 78% or higher; students achieved 84% and thus met the goal.

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:
The primary goal of group discussions is for students to become active and assert control over analysis of material rather than receivers of information. AMS will continue to employ group work to enhance student learning and to strengthen collaborative skills.

M 7: Analytical Reading and Discussion
Students demonstrate understanding of key concepts and controversies via in-class quizzes. Instructors calculate percent of students whose performance is judged to be satisfactory or outstanding on these assignments.

Source of Evidence: Standardized test of subject matter knowledge

Target:
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance:
- the 100-level target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
- the 200- and 300-level target is for 75% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
- the 400-level target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met
RESULTS SUMMARY:
AMS courses on the whole demand student exploration of major concepts and controversies in American culture. For 2011/12, AMS gathered data from AMS 151 to measure student success at the freshman level in the introductory course for American Studies.

The final exam provided the best source for assessing the level of student comprehension of major issues covered in the course. The exam was multiple choice with 40% of the questions related to the final third of the semester, and 60% of the questions being comprehensive. The results met departmental goals: 83% of students achieved a 70% grade or higher.

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:
AMS 151 is an essential course for the for students as it introduces basic concepts and controversies in American cultural history, and its content is provided by all members of the AMS faculty. The final exam provides a useful measure of student success, and AMS will continue to employ this assessment tool and seek to improve student success beyond its already high level.

**M 8: Student Self-Evaluations and Key Concepts**

Students provide self-evaluations concerning understanding of key course concepts. Instructors measure percentage of students reporting satisfactory progress.

Source of Evidence: Student course evaluations on learning gains made

**Target:**
AMS asserts a target wherein 70% or more of students report successful understanding of major concepts and controversies to corroborate other measures reported by instructors.

**Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met**

RESULTS SUMMARY:
AMS uses student evaluations to measure student learning related to major concepts and controversies as an indirect assessment to corroborate direct measures determined by instructors.

For 2011/12, AMS used a 200-level course (AMS 200, Spring 2012) to measure student self-evaluations of their comprehension of major issues. At the end of the course, students answered the following question: "How would you define your understanding of the 'great American joke' as it is represented in the history of American popular humor?" The results met departmental targets: of 16 respondents, 15 reported a "good" or "excellent" understanding (8=good; 7=excellent; 1 poor), which is 94% reporting confidence in their understanding of a central concept.

**INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:**
Indirect measures are useful in complementing direct measures of student success. AMS will continue to evaluate how students report their understanding of key concepts.

**Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):**
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

**Improve Use of Student Self-Reporting of Learning**

*Established in Cycle: 2011-2012*
AMS seeks to expand and improve its use of student self-reporting of comprehension of major concepts and analytical tasks. For...

**M 9: Key Concepts and Major Issues**

AMS uses exams to measure student learning success regarding key concepts and major cultural issues. Instructors measure percentage of students who perform above 70 percent.

Source of Evidence: Standardized test of subject matter knowledge

**Target:**
AMS asserts targets that vary based on course levels in order to acknowledge improving student performance:
the 100-level target is for 70% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 200- and 300-level target is for 75% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades;
the 400-level target is for 80% of students to achieve 70% or higher grades.

**Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met**

RESULTS SUMMARY:
For 2011/12, AMS used final exams for a 100-level course (AMS 151, Spring 2012) as a measure of student learning outcome related to major concepts and controversies essential to the study of American culture. The final exam for the course, a multiple choice exam with 100 questions, was constructed with 60% of the questions as comprehensive and 40% of the questions related to the final third of the course. Both segments accurately assess have well the students mastered basic concepts central to AMS course study. The exam results demonstrated success and met departmental goals. 83% of students achieved a 70% or higher on the exam.

**INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:**
The final exam for AMS 151 is an especially important assessment tool in that it combines focused questions for the final portion of the course while also incorporating questions that were comprehensive. As such, it provides a strong indication of how well students comprehend both the material essential to the final third of the course and how well they have retained understanding throughout the semester on major concepts and controversies. AMS will continue to gather data regarding student success at the freshman level and seek to improve the results to ensure that hard-working students accurately reveal their learning.

**Other Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans**

**OthOtm5: Improving and Sustaining Recognized Quality**
The program will improve and sustain a high level of recognized quality.

**Related Measures**

**M 10: Admissions to Graduate Programs**
Chair will measure student rate of success in admission to graduate and professional graduate programs for those who apply.

Source of Evidence: Graduate/professional school acceptance rate

**M 11: Student Satisfaction**
Chair will measure student satisfaction with the program from the exit survey of all majors and minors.

Source of Evidence: Student satisfaction survey at end of the program
M 12: Improvement Action  
(measure addressing evaluation of improvement action, if any)  
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

OthOtm 6: Building Enrollment and Degree Completions  
The program will build and sustain an optimal level of annual program enrollments and degree completions.

Related Measures

M 12: Improvement Action  
(measure addressing evaluation of improvement action, if any)  
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

M 13: Degrees Awarded  
Chair will measure number of degrees awarded for the past three years, and compare it to ACHE viability standards.  
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

M 14: Course Hour Production  
Chair will measure the undergraduate course hour production for the past three fall semesters.  
Source of Evidence: Administrative measure - other

OthOtm 7: Achieving High Value Constituent Ratings  
The program will be highly valued by its program graduates and other key constituencies it serves.

Related Measures

M 11: Student Satisfaction  
Chair will measure student satisfaction with the program from the exit survey of all majors and minors.  
Source of Evidence: Student satisfaction survey at end of the program

M 12: Improvement Action  
(measure addressing evaluation of improvement action, if any)  
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

M 15: Student Career Plans  
We will include indirect measures of informal discussions with majors and minors about future plans.  
Source of Evidence: Discussions / Coffee Talk

Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)

Improve Course Evaluation Questions  
To complement the current university system of online course evaluations, AMS will continue developing departmental evaluation forms and procedures. The responses for the evaluations as recorded in AMS 150 did not meet targeted goals. AMS will revise the questionnaire to solicit better data from students and discuss other possible factors of the course material so that student learning can be improved. Moreover, AMS will encourage instructors to conduct similar revisions as well as encourage instructors to employ student evaluations DURING the semester to better gauge student progress.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012  
Implementation Status: Planned  
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):  
Measure: Student Self-Evaluations and Analysis of Artifacts | Outcome/Objective: Understanding Diverse Cultural Artifacts

Implementation Description: AMS will revise student evaluation forms for Fall 2012 and evaluate results.

Projected Completion Date: 01/2013  
Responsible Person/Group: Jeffrey Melton and Lynne Adrian (Chair)  
Additional Resources: None

Improve Use of Student Self-Reporting of Learning  
AMS seeks to expand and improve its use of student self-reporting of comprehension of major concepts and analytical tasks. For the course referred to in the 2011/12 (American Popular Humor; offered every year), the instructor will add other questions of key concepts and incorporate "practice" for exams using such questions as assessment measures to improve student learning. If successful, the instructor will help implement such measures in other AMS courses.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012  
Implementation Status: Planned  
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):  
Measure: Student Self-Evaluations and Key Concepts | Outcome/Objective: Exploring Concepts and Controversies

Implementation Description: This task will require multiple semesters to gather useful and applicable information to expand into other courses.

Projected Completion Date: 01/2015  
Responsible Person/Group: Jeffrey Melton  
Additional Resources: None
## Curriculum Maps #1  (In which courses are Student Learning Outcomes Addressed)

Use “Introduce” when outcome is first address; “Reinforce” when outcome is reinforced; and “Master” when outcome is expected to be mastered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Prefix/Number</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome 1</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome 2</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome 3</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome 4</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome 5</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Curriculum Maps #2  (What assessment measures will be employed in which courses for each SLO)

Indicate which measure is being obtained in which course by typing “Measure n.n” in the appropriate cell. If you’d rather use a description of the measure, that is fine. Also, indicate the year/semester in which the measure will be obtained (e.g., Fall 2011). Student learning outcomes must be assessed at least once within a 2-year period. Note that a measure does not need to be obtained from every course in which an outcome is covered (see Map #1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Prefix/Number</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome 1</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome 2</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome 3</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome 4</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome 5</th>
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The Superior Essay (A+/A-)
Thesis: plausible, insightful, clear.
Structure: clear, logical; supported by excellent transitions and solid topic sentences.
Use of evidence: primary source information used to buttress every point with at least one example; examples support thesis and topic sentences; smooth integration of quoted material.
Analysis: evidence related to thesis and topic sentences; thoughtful analysis.
Logic and argumentation: ideas flow logically; argument identifiable and reasonable; makes connections to outside material (from other parts of the class, or other classes).
Mechanics: excellent sentence structure, grammar, and diction; varied sentence structure; correct use of punctuation and citation style; minimal to no spelling errors.

The Good Essay (B+/B)
Thesis: promising, but may be slightly unclear, or lacking in insight or depth.
Structure: generally clear and appropriate, though may wander occasionally; a few unclear transitions, or a few paragraphs without strong topic sentences.
Use of evidence: some use of examples to support most points; use of evidence uneven but present; quotes well integrated into sentences.
Analysis: evidence often related to topic sentences, though links perhaps not very clear; moderate depth.
Logic and argumentation: Clear argument with some insightful connections to outside material.
Mechanics: Sentence structure, grammar, and diction strong despite occasional lapses; punctuation and citation style often used correctly; some (minor) spelling errors; few grammatical errors.

The Competent Essay (B-/C)
Thesis: may be unclear (contain many vague terms) or too broad; unclear purpose.
Structure: generally unclear, often wanders or jumps around; few or weak transitions, many paragraphs without topic sentences; modest depth.
Use of evidence: examples used to support some points; points often lack useful supporting evidence (often because there may be no clear point); quotes may be poorly integrated into sentences.
Analysis: quotes appear often without analysis tied to topic sentences; analysis offers little beyond the quote.
Logic and argumentation: logic may often fail; argument may often be unclear; may not make any outside connections and fully develop assertions.
Mechanics: sentence structure, grammar, and diction problems (usually not major or too numerous); errors in punctuation, citation style, and spelling.

The Weak Essay (C-/D-)
Thesis: difficult to identify at all; may be a bland restatement of obvious point.
Use of evidence: few or very weak examples; general failure to support statements, or evidence seems to support no statement; quotes not integrated into sentences (“dropped in” without coherence).
Analysis: little or very weak attempt to relate evidence to argument; may be no identifiable argument, or no evidence to relate it to.
Logic and argumentation: ideas without flow (usually because there is no argument); simplistic view of topic; no effort to grasp possible complexity or depth.
Structure: unclear, often because of weak thesis; confusing transitions (if any); few topic sentences.
Mechanics: big problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction; frequent major errors in citation style, punctuation, and spelling. --Does not meet the basic requirements of the assignment.

The Failing Essay
Demonstrates significant weaknesses in all or most components; shows obviously minimal lack of effort or comprehension of the assignment; has major problems with mechanics, structure, and analysis; lacks clear thesis and adequate, or even minimal, support. --Does not meet the basic requirements of the assignment.

Numerical Rubric:
Thesis and Introduction—20%; Use of Evidence—20%;
Analysis, Logic and Argumentation—40%; Structure and Mechanics 20%
Historiography examines the variations in works produced by scholars and cultural critics about particular persons, events, or forms of cultural expression. (These texts by scholars and cultural critics are sometimes referred to as “secondary documents.”) In that vein, this assignment asks you to choose one of the following subjects and write a short historiographic essay that incorporates two of the readings listed under your selected subject. The tasks of this essay are twofold:

a. Address the strengths and weaknesses of what the two chosen secondary documents have to offer as analyses of your selected topic.

b. Drawing on the secondary documents and specific examples related to your subject (i.e. a specific episode of a tv show, a specific song/music video, or specific details of Reagan’s presidency), offer your own assessment of the selected topic.

All of the readings listed below are available through eLearning or your AMS 231 course packet.

**The Cosby Show**
John Downing’s “The Cosby Show and American Racial Discourse” (1988)

**All in the Family**
Laura Hobson, “As I Listened to Archie Say ‘Hebe’” (1971)
Norman Lear, “As I Read How Laura Saw Archie . . .” (1971)
Joseph Morganstern, “Can Bigotry Be Funny?” (1971)

**Ronald Reagan**

**Michael Jackson**
Greg Tate, “I’m White! What’s Wrong with Michael Jackson” (1987)
Greg Tate, “Michael Jackson: The Man in Our Mirror” (2009)
Hilton Als, “Michael” (2009)

**Madonna**
Luc Sante, “Unlike a Virgin” (1990)
**Points to note:**

* Although this historiography assignment is a different kind of paper from the first one, you should still establish a **clear thesis statement** and support that thesis in the body of the paper with references to **specific details** of the two secondary texts and details about the primary subject itself.

* The two secondary sources should offer **different viewpoints** on your chosen subject. (Note that it is quite possible for two pieces by the same author to differ substantially when written at different times, as with the two pieces by Greg Tate on Michael Jackson listed above.)

* Among the questions you might want to consider:
  
  a. Why do you think the authors of your two secondary texts wind up with contrasting evaluations of your selected topic? What factors and assumptions lead them to their different perspectives?
  
  b. Does one of these two secondary texts make a more convincing argument than the other? If so, how/why?
  
  c. How does your own analysis of the subject compare/contrast to the arguments laid out in the two secondary texts?
  
  d. What do your subject and the two secondary texts tell us about the 1980s/1970s? And/or what do the secondary texts tell us about how Americans tend to **remember** your subject and the 1980s/1970s **now**?

* If you wrote about *All in the Family* for the first paper, I would like for you to choose one of the other options for this assignment.

* If you wish to write on a different topic than the ones listed above, please run your idea past me as soon as possible. Also realize that you will need to find (and read) two secondary texts that express different perspectives about your chosen topic. In the event that you choose an alternative topic, please include copies of your two secondary texts along with your paper.

* The length of your paper should be approximately **four full typed, double-spaced pages**.

* As stipulated in the course syllabus, you are responsible for reviewing the following website (and the linked material under its 11 subheadings) to make sure that you are aware of what constitutes plagiarism:
  
  [http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html](http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html)

**Paper Due:** Friday, March 9 by 12:00 noon

Unless you are a commuter student who does not come to campus on Fridays, do not email your paper to me; bring a paper copy to my office (ten Hoor 106-B) or to my mailbox in the American Studies department office (ten Hoor 101).