

American Studies

1999 Assessment Report

Program Changes Made as a Result of Faculty Curriculum Review Committee

Graduate

- American Studies Standard Track Graduate program has adopted the research paper and portfolio (or project) model for the Plan B

Undergraduate

- Because American Studies students have made significant progress toward deciding their future plans after being involved in undergraduate internships, undergraduate American Studies majors are encouraged to take up to three credits of internship credit that applies toward their major requirements for graduation.
- American Studies students are required to keep a portfolio of their course work and a record of their attendance at extracurricular activities; this is meant to help them define their interests as they begin thinking about their senior capstone project.

The attendance at extracurricular events has the added bonus of giving American Studies students the opportunity to interact with each other outside the classroom.

- Students who plan to become an American Studies major are given a two-page survey that has been effective in getting them to identify early on their goals. For example, many students have definite plans of when they would like to graduate but don't recognize that they need two consecutive spring semesters to complete the American Studies major. The survey explicitly asks them to acknowledge when they plan to graduate and when they plan to take the Advanced Seminar and Senior Capstone courses, which are offered only in spring semester.

Program Changes to be Made in the Future

- The American Studies Committee is constantly seeking input about course offerings in the clusters and to the usefulness of the predefined clusters. We currently have six such clusters and will be adapting the cluster offerings as we learn from students and faculty the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the predefined clusters.

Program Successes

- The first ever Senior Capstone class was very successful, both for the students and the American Studies community at USU in general. Students were given the opportunity to present their projects to other students and American Studies faculty. Students who will be engaged in the capstone in upcoming years had a preview of what they will be doing soon and the faculty who had worked with the students earlier in their academic career saw the development of the students' own ideas.

Because of the success, however, there is some concern that if dramatic growth occurs, the program will have difficulty maintaining the level of intensive attention from supervising faculty.

- Our program is building a fine reputation with students from abroad. We currently (fall 1999) have five students on exchange from Leicester, England; one from Munich, Germany; and one from Hungary. We anticipate students from Innsbruck, Austria, soon.

This success, too, will likely stretch our advising and faculty resources.

Best Practices in Assessment/Review Methodology and/or Teaching

- We devised a faculty response assessment tool that we assumed would be quite effective in learning from faculty their impressions of the American Studies program. We sent our nearly 70 one-page comment forms, complete with a coupon for Aggie ice cream. We received back only three completed forms.