



Program Assessment Report (PAR)

Anthropology (ANTH) Baccalaureate Degree

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ACADEMIC YEAR COVERED BY THIS REPORT: 2021-2022

I. PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

For 2020-2021, the following outcome will be assessed Graduates will acquire skills detecting archaeological sites and features, and effectively assess material remains and their contexts to infer the lifeways of past peoples. This is outcome 2 of the four outcomes for the Anthropology program Outcome 1 Graduates will gain an awareness of scientific principles grounding the study of human origins, human biological diversity and adaptive behavior, and the importance of a biocultural approach to such studies. Outcome 2 Graduates will acquire skills detecting archaeological sites and features, and effectively assess material remains and their contexts to infer the lifeways of past peoples. Outcome 3 Graduates will have acquired the tools with which to evaluate and discern the locally-specific but increasingly globalized cultural contexts in which peoples of the world currently interact. Outcome 4 Graduates will have developed strong critical thinking skills through writing coherent, properly documented and substantive research papers and reports.

II. PROCEDURES USED FOR ASSESSMENT

A. Direct Assessment

Assessment- Core Courses ATH 2150 and ATH 2500 Overall, Anthropology Outcome 3, Which of the following best describes participant observation, the principal method by which cultural anthropologists conduct field research? performs a double duty: it both teaches the students about the general empirical research method employed generally in anthropology, while at the same time focusing on the aspects of this method that is most commonly applied in the subfield of cultural anthropology. So, the marker questions present two categories of applications to the disciplinary method: Students' understanding of the importance of "locally specific" knowledge, which lies at the heart of the culture concept, and the concept of participant-observation, which involves using one's own experience as the research instrument in order to obtain

first-hand working knowledge of the culture being studied. The latter represents the principle method of accessing knowledge about culture. The assessment involved two courses offered in the Fall of 2021, and Summer of 2022: A section of ATH 2150, Comparative Non-Western Cultures (N=40), and a Summer session in ATH 2500, Introduction to Cultural Anthropology for Healthcare Professionals (N=9). Both courses are part of the Wright State Core, and are both designated as fulfilling the Global Traditions and Multicultural components. Additionally, ATH 2150 is Writing Integrated. The assessment was conducted using multiple-choice marker questions that included and built upon assessing the students' mastery of this principle method of cultural anthropology. The following questions were assessed: 1) Which of the following is an essential part of the definition of culture as defined by anthropologists? a) It is shared. [we sometimes also substitute the correct answer of "it is socially learned"] 2) Which of the following best describes participant observation? a) the anthropologist actively participating in the daily lives of members of the culture. 3) Which of the following is a characteristic of all ethnographic field research? a) It requires that field research takes a written form. These marker questions were asked on the midterm exams of both 2150 and 2500 in the fall and summer. Upper Level Assessment- 3000 (Spring 22), ATH 3010 (Fall 21) and ATH 3020 (Spring 22) Each of the upper level anthropology electives during the 2021-2022 academic year represented area courses: Native North America, Peoples of Africa and Peoples of South Asia. They are presented a little differently from the Core offerings, as they do not provide an introduction to general anthropological ethnographic methodology. Instead, the learning outcomes emphasize the 'locally specific' nature of findings through ethnographic research. Students also gain exposure to modules that cover archaeological and biological findings, such as South African archaeological evidence of the emergence of human behavioral modernity, and ethical issues such as the disposition of human remains now known as Kennewick Man, examining biological perspectives and ethical dilemmas from the viewpoint of Native peoples. The marker questions were therefore more specific to the regions covered by the course. However, they include the following marker questions that measure students' awareness that certain cultural markers are characteristic of specific regions of the world: 1) (for ATH 3000) What constitutes a cultural area in native American Studies? (N=9) a) A large-scale geographic region where environment and cultures tend to be similar 2) (for ATH 3010) Which of the following represents evidence as to why primatologists say the chimpanzees have culture? (N=13) a) Some behaviors, such as tool use, exist in some troops but not others. 3) (for ATH 3020) What two features of social structure are shared in much of South Asia? (N=12) a) Patriarchy and a strong focus on hierarchy.

B. Scoring of Student Work

Scoring of Direct Assessment Since these marker questions were based on multiple choice responses, grading was conducted, either through CAT's testing services' processing of scantron data, or electronically, using Quiz Examination feature in Pilot. Scantron data was used in face-to-face settings, while Pilot was used mainly in online course delivery environments. The scoring simply involved

tabulating the percentages of students who replied to each of the choices. Although the original assessment plan indicated sampling of 10-20 students per class, all student data were included since they were available as quantitative readouts. In accordance with the 2019-2024 Assessment Plan, the findings were benchmarked at 70% (i.e. if 70% or greater of students answered correctly, this will serve as a direct indicator of students as a whole as having met the learning outcome).

C. Indirect Assessment

Normally, the principle indirect assessment would be use of senior and alumni surveys. However, due to the Pandemic, and information that the current senior survey is improperly formatted (it is more of a satisfaction survey rather than an assessment of students own assessment of meeting learning outcomes), the program is in the process of rewriting the survey. We are waiting for an update of the DSLOs for archaeology, which we wish to modify for the next assessment plan starting in 2025. Currently, students in Jackie Bergdahl's sociological methods class are helping the anthropology program draft a new alumni survey, that we hope to begin utilizing in the 2023-2024 academic year.

III. ASSESSMENT RESULTS/INFORMATION:

The Wright State Core assessment involved two courses offered in the Fall of 2021, and Summer of 2022: A section of ATH 2150, Comparative Non-Western Cultures (N=40), and a Summer session in ATH 2500, Introduction to Cultural Anthropology for Healthcare Professionals (N=9). Both courses are part of the Wright State Core, and are both designated as fulfilling the Global Traditions and Multicultural components. Additionally, ATH 2150 is Writing Integrated. The assessment was conducted using multiple-choice marker questions that included and built upon assessing the students' mastery of this principle method of cultural anthropology. The following questions were assessed: 1) Which of the following is an essential part of the definition of culture as defined by anthropologists? a) It is shared. [we sometimes also substitute the correct answer of "it is socially learned"] 2) Which of the following best describes participant observation? a) the anthropologist actively participating in the daily lives of members of the culture. 3) Which of the following is a characteristic of all ethnographic field research? a) It requires that field research takes a written form. These marker questions were asked on the midterm exams of both 2150 and 2500 in the fall and summer. The upper level major courses during the 2021-2022 academic year represented area courses: Native North America, Peoples of Africa and Peoples of South Asia. The marker questions were therefore more specific to the regions covered by the course. However, they include the following marker questions that measure students' awareness that certain cultural markers are characteristic of specific regions of the world: 1) (for ATH 3000) What constitutes a cultural area in native American Studies? (N=9) a) A large-scale geographic region where environment and cultures tend to be similar 2) (for ATH 3010) Which of the following represents evidence as to

why primatologists say the chimpanzees have culture? (N=13) a) Some behaviors, such as tool use, exist in some troops but not others. 3) (for ATH 3020) What two features of social structure are shared in much of South Asia? (N=12) a) Patriarchy and a strong focus on hierarchy.

Summary of Findings- ATH 2150 and ATH 2500 (Wright State Core Courses) 1) Which of the following is an essential part of the definition of culture as defined by anthropologists? a) It is shared. [we sometimes also substitute the correct answer of “it is socially learned”] 2) Which of the following best describes participant observation? a) the anthropologist actively participating in the daily lives of members of the culture. 3) Which of the following is a characteristic of all ethnographic field research? a) It requires that field research takes a written form. For the most part, students in both Comparative Non-Western Cultures and Introduction to Cultural Anthropology for Healthcare Professionals class did well in demonstrating an emerging understanding of the distinctive methodology of cultural anthropologists. In ATH 2150, 92% of students correctly answered the question that culture by definition is shared and/or social learned, and in ATH 2500, 89.21% answered the first question correctly. 90.24% of students correctly answered the second question on Participant-Observation, and in ATH 2500, 80% correctly answered this question. In each instance the results well exceeding the 70% benchmark established for the 2019-2024 Assessment Plan. On the third marker question, students did not perform as well. In ATH 2150, 73.33% of students correctly responded that ethnographic field research must take a written form, while in ATH 2500, only 56.1% answered this correctly. As far as meeting benchmarks, there is a mixed outcome, in which one cohort met the benchmark, while another fell somewhat short. Analysis There may be any of a number of reasons why the students struggled with the third question, particularly in ATH 2500: It is possible that the small class size (N=9) is not representative of the overall student population; the course was also offered online/asynchronous, which might impact their engagement with the class materials. And finally, the summer class, unlike most sections of the course during the year, was taken by a majority of students who were not in fact majoring in a healthcare field. The course was aimed towards students in these fields, and written writing assignments required students to reflect on how ethnographic examples assigned in class might help them become more mindful as deliverers of health care. Many non-healthcare majors simply struggled with such questions, as they had no intention of pursuing healthcare as a profession. The other problem we encountered with this assessment is that, with retrenchment, we have had to increasingly rely on adjuncts to teach ATH 2500. Upon review of the adjunct’s syllabi, it was learned that the adjunct was not using the Anthropology discipline-specific learning outcomes, but was teaching the course based on the generic learning outcomes for the Global Traditions component of the Wright State Core. It is therefore not possible to assess student mastery of discipline specific learning outcomes for these sections because they were not applied. Summary of Findings- ATH 3000, 3010 and 3020 (Upper Level Major Electives) 1) (for ATH 3000) What constitutes a cultural area in native American Studies? (N=9) a) A large-scale geographic region where environment and cultures tend to be similar 2) (for ATH 3010) Which of the following represents evidence as to why primatologists say the

chimpanzees have culture? (N=13) a) Some behaviors, such as tool use, exist in some troops but not others. 3) (for ATH 3020) What two features of social structure are shared in much of South Asia? (N=12) a) Patriarchy and a strong focus on hierarchy. For Question 1, in ATH 3000, 44.4% of students answer this question correctly. For Question 2, in ATH 3010, 46.67% of students answered this correctly. For Question 3, in ATH 3020, 83.3% of students answered the question correctly. Other than in ATH 3020, students fell short of the 70% benchmark. Analysis It is difficult to assess why upper level student fell so short of the benchmark 70%. Each of these courses are rotated in about every two to three years, and past cohorts have generally been able to meet or exceed the benchmarks. There may be a number of factors contributing to students' struggles to successfully manage marker questions: First, the class size was very small, and this may have rendered the results unreliable (generally, N=40 is considered a minimum number to make such data significant). Second, there had been considerable disruption of learning during the Pandemic of 2020-2021; faculty and students were, in many instances, forced to rewrite curricula to adapt to the new online learning environment. Additionally, many students' personal lives were disrupted by the Pandemic, making them less prepared to devote the attention to their learning activities. Finally, there were considerable numbers of students for whom these were the first upper level anthropology courses they took. Many students received the basic lessons of the culture concept through courses taught either at one of the local community colleges, or taught by an adjunct whose learning outcomes may or may not have emphasized the culture concept. It is also worth emphasizing that the upper level marker questions assess their knowledge on multiple levels. For example, Question 2, offered in ATH 3010, requires that students be aware of primatologists' finding that chimpanzees have culture. But it also challenges them to think analytically as to why primatologists have concluded that chimpanzees have culture. The answer is that there are behaviors, such as nut cracking with a hammer stone, that are found in some troops of chimpanzees and not in others; this indicates "locally specific" knowledge that isn't shared species wide. Thus, it measures students' familiarity with the locally specific properties of culture, but it also challenges to be familiar with other elements of anthropology in order to perform the appropriate analysis. For the question on cultural areas in Native American Studies, a possible reason why student found this challenging is that, while the idea of culture areas does emphasize the idea of culture being locally specific, students may have been confused with the idea that "local" could include large regions consisting of many thousands of square miles. This challenges them to think about issues of geographical scale, which is more often emphasized in subdisciplines such as archaeology more so than in cultural anthropology. In short, the marker questions in the upper level courses do not ask students to repeat information already learned at the lower level, but to build upon it.

When students underperformed in ATH 2100, the introductory classes, in demonstrating mastery of these concepts, a likely explanation is that instructors often find themselves struggling with trying to undo misinformation that circulates outside of academia about race, science and evolution. In many instances, it is easier to teach students who come to class with virtually no

familiarity with a subject, and therefore with no preconceptions that will work against ideas being presented in the class, than it is to “unlearn” bad information that they may have received in the past. Students in this class probably self-select, and therefore are probably in a better position than the general population to be open to learning new things about these subjects. But instructors may be working against powerful forces that misconstrue the nature of the scientific method and its capacity to expand knowledge. Students in upper level anthropology courses have already had greater exposure to ideas about the scientific method, the concept of race as culture, and evolutionary theory than the general student population. Since the introductory class is usually taken before the upper level electives, they will have already had some exposure to the concepts, and had opportunities to unlearn any misinformation they received prior to enrolling at WSU. However, while students on the upper level do better at grasping the concepts in general terms, they struggle then shifts to applying the scientific method to specific scenarios in courses such as forensic anthropology. It is understandable that sometimes, real mastery will be more accurately demonstrated in applying the concepts, rather than through expressions of abstract and general statements about them. Thus, one would expect that their mastery of the content continues to emerge throughout their college career as they go from exposure to familiarity to application. Students for the most part hovered more closely to the 70% benchmark. This somewhat weaker response may have been due to the complexity of the questions being asked, their applied nature, or the simple fact that the testing instruments were administered during a time when learning was forced to be taken online due to the COVID pandemic. With regard to the majors survey (indirect indicator), this survey seems to indicate that students are taking sufficient courses in the subfield of biological anthropology, and that they seem to be expressing interest and satisfaction in the courses being offered. This suggests that students are gaining sufficient exposure to scientific methodology, and have been developing a willingness to learn more about this aspect of the discipline.

IV. ACTIONS TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

The data were provided to the by our cultural anthropologist, Dr. Geoffrey Owens. The data were collated and analyzed by Dr. Geoffrey Owens. Four of the five learning outcomes being assessed in our five-year plan focus on a specific subfield within Anthropology; and thus data will be provided next year by our cultural anthropologist, Dr. Owens. The Anthropology faculty, having discussed the learning outcomes in the context of our monthly curriculum meetings, all agree that the Anthropology program has enjoyed considerable success, not only in guiding student towards meeting the learning outcomes for the program, but also as a means of recruiting and retaining students. In upper level cultural anthropology offerings by full time faculty, we have already begun the process of beginning each upper level class by repeating the basic lessons regarding the culture concept as used in anthropology, and ethnography as the principle research method. This will hopefully assure that students who may not have had exposure to these concepts, or who forgot what they learned, will be provided with this information again, and more basic marker questions will be included in exams in these classes. There may be limited room for significant improvement, so long as the Wright State University administration cuts support for programs.

During retrenchment, we lost two of our four full-time anthropology faculty. And all of this also occurs in the context of a demand by the administration to increase class sizes, which makes it increasingly challenging to provide the one-on-one attention that enables students to successfully meet these outcomes. For future assessments, the biggest challenge will be to continue to assess students' mastery of discipline specific learning outcomes in an environment of retrenchment. With the resignation of two of our four full-time faculty in anthropology, we have had to increasingly rely on adjuncts. We have attempted to reach out to these adjuncts to include discipline specific learning outcomes in their syllabi; however, the administration has often hired adjuncts based upon proposed course descriptions rather than learning outcomes, and in many instances, are hiring whomever is available, rather than in subdisciplines such as biological anthropology where we most desperately need course offerings. We have reported that our chairs and deans must (1) hire faculty contingent upon their ability to develop learning outcomes that meet the curricular needs of our students and (2) press the upper administration to hire full time faculty, particularly in biological anthropology, to assure that we can meet the curricular needs of our students. For the student and alumni surveys, we are proposing to make two changes (1) add explicit questions as to whether students feel that they have met the learning outcomes in the program and (2) Use Qualtrics as a way to deliver the survey, in the hopes that this will result in greater response, as well as responses when face-to-face survey taking is challenging.

V. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Additional documentation, when provided, is stored in the internal Academic Program Assessment of Student Learning SharePoint site.