



## Program Assessment Report (PAR)

### Anthropology (ANTH) Baccalaureate Degree

REPORT PREPARED by: Owens, Geoffrey R

ACADEMIC YEAR COVERED BY THIS REPORT: 2020-2021

#### 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

The students will be assessed using multiple choice marker questions in examinations in both the Core Archaeology Class (ATH 2200) offered in Fall of 2020 and Spring of 2020, and upper level Archaeology Classes offered in Fall 2020, and ATH 3600 and ATH 4500, offered in Spring 2021. The percentage of all correct and incorrect responses were recorded. ATH 2200 (both Fall 2020 and Spring 2021) N=35 (Fall); N=38 (Spring) The two following questions were asked (and the correct response follows) 1) Dendrochronology a. Can be used to create regional chronologies thousands of years old 2) One purpose for the use of symbols is for measuring. Which of the following is an example of this? a. stone cubes from Mohenjo-daro, Pakistan ATH 3600 (America's Buried Past) Fall 2020; N=16 1. Which of the following is a NOT a common form of dating used in

historical archaeology? a. radiocarbon dating 2. Excavations at Fort Michilimackinac a. focused on three households dating to the period 1761-1781 ATH 3600 (Archaeology of Industry and Labor) Spring 2021; N=8 1. Archaeological research on Southern plantation sites has often focused on a. Resistance and continuation of African/African-American cultures 2. Archaeologists working at the Ludlow site recovered a. numerous firearms-related artifacts, including cartridge brass ATH 4500 (Anthropology of Conflict) Spring 2021; N=11 1. In the reading Intergroup Violence Among Early Holocene Hunter-Gatherers at West Turkana, Kenya, which describes excavations at the site of Nataruk a. lithic projectile points were embedded in the skeletal remains of some individuals 2. The Dark Tourism associated with the penal sites in Tasmania and Australia a. has a strong class/status component

## **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**

An alumni survey was conducted in 2020, as part of generating a 'business plan' for the College of Liberal Arts programs. This involved sending out requests for alumni to report their activities, and relying on self reporting. We paid particular attention to alumni who found employment in CRM (cultural resource management), or went to graduate school with a concentration in archaeology. Normally, a majors survey would also have been used. But this was not conducted in 2020-2021 due to the Pandemic.

## **III. ASSESSMENT RESULTS/INFORMATION:**

Direct Assessment The students will be assessed using multiple choice marker questions in examinations in both the Core Archaeology Class (ATH 2200) offered in Fall of 2020 and Spring of 2020, and upper level Archaeology Classes offered in Fall 2020, and ATH 3600 and ATH 4500, offered in Spring 2021. The percentage

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Summary of findings ATH 2200 1. In Fall 2020, 85% of students answered the first question correctly, and in the Spring 2021, 76% of students answered it correctly. Both semesters, students exceeded the 70% benchmark in responses to the question by a comfortable margin. 2) In Fall 2020, 85% of students answered the first question correctly, and in the Spring 2021, 84% of students answered it correctly. Both semesters, students comfortably exceeded the 70% benchmark in responses to the question. Summary of Findings Upper Level Classes ATH 3600 (America's Buried Past) 1. Fall 2020 13 correct answers, 3 incorrect (81%) 2. Fall 2020 7 correct answers, 8 incorrect (47%) Fell below the 70% Benchmark. ATH 3600 (Archaeology of Industry and Labor) 1. Spring 2021 7 correct answers, 1 incorrect (87%) 2. Spring 2021 1 correct answers, 7 incorrect (13%) Fell significantly below the 70% Benchmark. ATH 4500 (Archaeology of Conflict) 1. Spring 2021 9 correct answers, 2 incorrect (82%) 2. Spring 2021 9 correct answers, 2 incorrect (82%) Analysis Overall, Outcome 2 performs three duties related to demonstrating mastery of anthropological concepts. First, it attempts to identify where to go to find answers to questions about the lifeways of past peoples. This involves identifying evidence that a specific site will likely contain material remains in proper context pertinent to research questions being posed. Second, once a site is identified, both the material remains and their contexts are subject to analysis and interpretations. The first step is to establish a relative (and if possible, absolute) chronology of the material contexts. Like ethnography, archaeology is heavily site specific; however, unlike ethnographic fieldwork, a single archaeological site may contain within it evidence representing multiple historic phases or traditions that must be sorted out before interpretation can commence. Thus, techniques of both relative and absolute chronology are essential to this sorting process. Finally, evidence must be interpreted, using analogies to cultures documented through ethnographic or historical sources. Unlike ethnography or history, interpretation cannot always be informed by interviewing living cultural participants or through

written documentation. These latter may only furnish analogies to add to the archaeological context in order to aid the interpretive process performed by the archaeologist, who bears primary responsibility for filling in interpretive gaps. For the most part, students demonstrated mastery of concepts by meeting or exceeding the 70% benchmark for marker questions in upper level electives. However, two results stood out the question concerning excavations at Fort Michilimackinac in America's Buried Past, and the question about the Ludlow site in Archaeology of Industry and Labor. In both cases, the questions in which students struggled centered on chronology, since the households sites can be precisely dated to a 20 year period, while cartridge shells represent an easily datable manufacturing product, thus allowing the researcher to develop a precise dating of the archaeological context in which they are found. On the other hand, the students were more successful in drawing inferences about how archaeological contexts can reveal socioeconomic class relations, African-American contexts and the dynamics of group conflict. It is difficult to interpret this significance of the questions with which students struggled. It may be worthwhile to find additional ways to reinforce the lessons on the importance of chronology and dating. However, there were at least two factors during the 2020-2021 academic year that may suggest that these results are unlikely to be repeated. The first is that learning was disrupted due to the Covid 19 Pandemic. Anthropology courses were entirely taught online. The discipline of anthropology is largely a field based discipline, requiring that practicing anthropologists remain physically present in the contexts in which they draw their data. In an online learning environment, it is likely that students may struggle a bit due to the distancing from locations where one might experience archeological excavations. The second consequence is that class sizes were very low, including examinations in which the N was 7, 9 and 13. This also suggests that the numbers may not be statistically significant, and that those that exceed or fall below the 70% benchmark may not represent overall student ability to meet the learning outcomes in normal times. The alumni survey found that a great many of our graduates were working in CRM or a related archaeology field. Many graduate would find temporary CRM work, as this skill is in high demand. Here are some select examples • Devyn Burgert is a user design research for Apple • Lindsey Riddle is finishing her MS in Logistics and Supply Chain Management (at WSU) is the new Department Manager of Inventory and Logistics at Exhibit Concepts. • Tiffinie Snowden is completing an MPH and MA in Medical Anthropology at the University of Memphis and is working at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in the office of Equity and Diversity. • Tyler Heneghan completed an MA in Archaeology at Illinois State and is currently pre-law. He spent the summer of 2019 in Geneva on a UNESCO fellowship. • Five students (Alyssa Stark, Amy Brickey (Czubak), Ben Mauer, Lyndsi Doll, Lauren Lyon) have also entered or are completing their Public History degrees at Wright State. Several have taken positions in local history museums and archives in the region.

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 archaeologist, Dr. Lance Greene. The data were collated and the survey 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. The introductory archaeology class, ATH 2200, is a Core Area 5 social Science course. The evidence from this assessment indicates that there is evidence of progressive learning as students go from the introductory course into the upper level electives and applied courses. 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 the student survey, 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.