

**Assessment Report for Anthropology major and minor
Assessment Report for Sociology major, including Criminology option
Assessment Report for Sociology minor**

September 15, 2014

Learning outcomes reviewed in Anthropology for 2013-2014:

- 1) Students shall learn to read, understand, and critique anthropological works.
- 2) Students shall learn to formulate and present materials in an oral format.

Two classes were reviewed for the academic year 2013-2014 following the established review procedures. A summary of the review procedures, outcomes, and new strategies follows the review of each class.

ANTY 350: Old World Prehistory Professor: Michael Neeley

Assessment by: Dr. Michael Neeley

Learning Outcome: Students shall learn to read, understand, and critique anthropological works.

This course provides an understanding of the origins and development of human culture over the past three million years in the Old World (Africa, Asia, Europe, and Australia). Rather than just surveying cultural developments, this course examines key theoretical and methodological developments in the fields of archaeology and paleoanthropology as they pertain to the Old World archaeological record. Specific course outcomes for students include demonstrating an understanding of the archaeology of the Old World ranging from the Lower Paleolithic through the rise of the state, understanding key developments and debates in Old World archaeology, engaging in critical thinking and discussion of Old World themes, and applying these themes in a research paper using primary, professional sources.

The course material was presented through a combination lecture and discussion. The discussions followed topical readings from selected archaeological journals and book chapters. These readings and subsequent discussions gave students an opportunity to explore the archaeological topics that fall within the parameters of the Old World.

Assignments for the class included ten quizzes, covering a different set of readings. These quizzes were administered on a weekly basis. In addition there were three exams that covered: (1) taphonomy and the Lower Paleolithic, (2) modern human origins and the Upper Paleolithic, and (3) agriculture and the emergence of complex societies. There was also a final paper project that required the student to apply their understanding of Old World archaeology to a topic of their choice.

To quantify the research outcomes for this course, I used the scores from the final exam as a data source and aligned the outcomes with the proposed scoring method. The scoring method as defined in the document that outlines the anthropology learning outcomes is:

| | | |
|----------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Scale: | | |
| Unacceptable | 1 | For graded assignments = D, D-, or F |
| Minimally acceptable | 2 | For graded assignments = D+/C- |
| Acceptable | 3 | For graded assignments = C/C+ |
| Exceeds expectation | 4 | For graded assignments = B's or A- |
| Exceptional | 5 | For graded assignments = A/A+ |

A total of 28 exams were submitted by the students. The average score for the final exam was 83% (or 3.64 on a 5 point scale). Using the above scale, this suggests that the class **“exceeds expectations”** for the learning outcome of reading, understanding, and critiquing anthropological works. This appears to be solidly in the middle of the measure and certainly exceeds the acceptable standard. On a student by student basis, four students were in the unacceptable range, four in the minimally acceptable, one in the acceptable, eight in the exceeds expectations, and eleven in the exceptional range.

In the case of the four students in the unacceptable range, they did not adequately prepare for the final exam either through poor attendance or lack of reading as evidenced by their poor scores on the reading quizzes.

In sum, I believe the assessment indicates that students who take this class (and put forth an honest effort) are successful in meeting the learning outcomes of learning to read, understand, and critique anthropological works.

Assessment of ANTY350 taught by Dr. Michael Neeley

Assessed by: Dr. Jack Fisher

Learning Outcome: Students shall learn to read, understand, and critique anthropological works.

The syllabus for ANTY 350 (*Old World Prehistory*) clearly indicates that the students will be engaged throughout the course in reading, analyzing, and critiquing a large number of anthropological publications pertaining to a broad range of important topics in Old World prehistory. These learning opportunities include reading assignments (professional journal articles and scholarly book chapters) on which students were quizzed on a weekly basis, leading class discussion on assigned readings, taking exams, and carrying out a major research project culminating in a written paper.

Six Final Exams (Exam #3) were provided for this assessment. The Final Exam consisted of two essay questions, 10 concepts/terms that had to be defined, and a small number of extra-credit points for naming certain archaeological models. The essay questions were well designed to test students' knowledge of the substantive archaeological topics as well as important theoretical, methodological, and conceptual approaches employed in archaeological investigations in the Old World. Both questions required students to discuss a specific journal article that addresses a major question/problem in Old World prehistory. One of these articles pertains to

archaeologists' understanding of the process of animal and plant domestication, and the other pertains to the emergence of state-level societies in southern Mesopotamia. The concepts/terms to be defined tested students' knowledge on specific archaeologically important artifact types, archaeological sites, explanatory models, paleo-environmental episodes, and the like. Students' results ranged from exceptional to unacceptable. The best students showed a good understanding, in their answers to essay questions, of relevant methodological, theoretical, and conceptual approaches, and were able to relate these in a thoughtful fashion to the particular archaeological issues/problem in Old World prehistory that the essay question specified. These students' responses to the definitions of concepts/terms displayed a good understanding of all 10 concepts/terms. In addition, they received the maximum possible extra-credit points. The students who performed poorly displayed, to varying degrees, essay answers that were incomplete, superficial, generalized, or otherwise reflected deficiencies in the student's understanding of the substance of the question. They displayed, to varying degrees, an incomplete understanding of one or more of the 10 concepts/terms that were to be defined. They did not receive the maximum possible extra-credit points.

The Final Exam offered students an excellent venue for displaying their understanding of the substance of key issues in Old World prehistory, as well as major methodological and theoretical advances that guide archaeological research. The sample of students' materials that I have examined convinces me that this course "exceeds expectations" with respect to the designated learning outcome that *students shall learn to read, understand, and critique anthropological works.*

**Anthropology 336, Myth, Ritual, Religion,
Dr. Laurence M. Carucci**

This course was selected by the anthropology faculty to serve as the class to be used to assess the following outcome:

Learning Outcome: Students shall learn to formulate and present materials in a clear and understandable oral format.

The class involved three exams over a number of required books and reserve readings along with a project. Topics for the projects were selected by small teams of students organized into research groups but, while research could be conducted in small groups, the final papers and presentations were to be completed on an individual basis. Topics varied depending upon students' interest, but included work on a local atheist group, on local Buddhist meetings, on neo-Pagan believers in and around Bozeman, on local Catholic religious practices, and others. 100 percent of the content grade for the research project was based on the written paper, but 25% of the overall project was judged on the basis of the quality of the oral presentations. This percentage was decided by a vote of the class members.

Therefore, other than in the rare case where a lack of content had a direct effect on weaknesses in the presentation, only the public speaking components of the presentation were judged as part of the oral presentation grade.

Due to the size of the class and the fact that all presentations had to be given in the final 1/3 of the term (with most of them in the final two weeks), each student was given a 10-12 minute time frame to present their materials. It was suggested that, given the time constraints, no more than 5-6 power point slides be used for the presentation.

Oral presentation grades fell within a narrower range than did the overall grades for the project. All grades were between a mid-C and an A with most falling in the B- to B+ range. This indicates that most of the students in this class can do a reasonable job when asked to present orally even if they were not able to complete a very sophisticated research project. Not surprisingly, those with the most sophisticated projects also did better, on average, with the presentations when compared to other members of the class. Just over 50% of the students in this class were anthropology majors, with others coming from disciplines such as religious studies, psychology, or the physical sciences.

Student presentations were judged on the basis of organization, clarity of verbal presentation -- (voice quality/loudness/modulation, speed of presentation, etc), clarity of the power point presentation (were photos of a size to be readily visible to the audience, were any written materials on the slide easily readable, was too much information presented on a single slide, etc.), engagement with audience (eye contact, excitement conveyed to audience, did speaker talk only to the presentation screen and not direct any attention to audience, etc.)

The most common areas where improvement could be demonstrated were:

- eye contact with the entire group of students.
- not constantly speaking to the PowerPoint slides showing on the screen
- simplification of slides/too much information on slides/slides should not include the entirety of what you (as speaker) intend to convey to audience
- other issues with PowerPoint slides (print or images too small or not adequate contrast)
- ending statements with questioning tonality (as the presenter, you are the authority)
- organization of presentation
- precise word choice

Overall scores for the entire group of students who presented indicate that the course "exceeds expectations" 4 (on a scale of 5) when it comes to their oral presentation abilities. The overall class average for presentations was at a high "B" level, just shy of a "B+". In contrast, the class average for the content part of the

research projects was also at the "B" level, but closer to a "B-". Of course, while the ability to present is important for anthropology majors and those in related disciplines since this is something they will likely encounter in their future lives, it is not a core content component of anthropology, per se. Nevertheless, inasmuch as MSU no longer has a speech communication requirement for graduation, the anthropology faculty feel it is necessary to ensure that our majors are at least reasonably competent with oral presentations. This assessment indicates that, while there is certainly room for improvement with every student (no one received 100% for their oral presentation), the students in Anthropology 336 provide evidence that this learning outcome has been met at the **exceeds expectation** level.

Assessment of ANTY336 taught by Professor Laurence M. Carucci

Assessed by: Dr. Tomomi Yamaguchi, Associate Professor of Anthropology

Learning Outcome: Students shall learn to formulate and present materials in a clear and understandable oral format.

As part of the class requirement, students must deliver a 10-12 minute presentation on their own anthropological research projects at some point during the second half of the semester. Presenting their own research is a skill that anthropology students frequently need in their upper-division classes, and to prepare students for their future careers in Anthropology and other related fields. Students were encouraged to use power point slides in their presentation, in ways that anthropologists usually do in academic presentations. Students were also provided with instructions as to what constitutes good oral communication and help with constructing high quality visual aids (power point slides) was provided to the students as well.

The criteria of evaluation included: organization of the presentation, clarity of verbal presentation, clarity of the power point presentation, and engagement with audience. All of these are necessary components of successful academic presentations in sociocultural anthropology. The presentation was evaluated independently from the contents of students' projects, and focused only on the oral presentation. Frequently, this meant that a student's grade on the oral presentation varied significantly from the grade the student received for the field research project.

All oral presentation grades were between a mid-C and an A with most falling in the B- to B+ range. The average of all student presentations in the class was slightly above 86%. These grades clearly reflect the successful achievement of the learning outcome of oral presentation in the Anthropology program. While anthropology students will gain additional experiences and practices in oral presentations in their 400-level classes, the results of ANTY336 demonstrated that the students exceeded expectations on the learning outcome for oral communication in Anthropology.

Learning Outcomes Summary for Autumn 2013-Spring 2014
ANTHROPOLOGY FACULTY RESPONSE

The faculty of the Anthropology Program met to review the assessment plan for the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 terms. The reviews were of two upper division courses. The first of these was Anthropology 350, Old World Prehistory, which was assessed to ascertain student success in the learning outcome to *“learn to read, understand, and critique anthropological works”*. The second course was Anthropology 336, Myth, Ritual and Religion, which was assessed to measure the learning outcome to *“learn to formulate and present materials in an oral format.”* The enrollments for these courses were 28 students (Old World Prehistory) and 26 students (Myth, Ritual and Religion). Our review procedures involve having the instructor use the relevant criteria to review his/her own course and have the second specialist in this sub-discipline (archaeology in the case of Old World and social and cultural anthropology in the case of Myth, Ritual) read a subset of the materials submitted by the students, or overview their oral presentations to see if the relevant criteria has been met.

For Old World Prehistory, the instructor (Dr. Neeley) determined that the course, on average, exceeded expectations (4 on a scale of 5) in meeting the learning outcome. The second reviewer (Dr. Fisher), reading a sub-set of the student exams and projects, agreed that the course exceeded expectations in providing students with an opportunity to read, understand and critique anthropological works. In the second course, Myth, Ritual and Religion, Dr. Carucci assessed that the course had exceeded expectations (4 on a scale of 5) in providing students with lab opportunities to formulate and present materials in an oral format. The second reviewer (Dr. Yamaguchi) overviewed a sub-set of presentations and independently agreed that the course exceeded expectations with regard to the proposed learning outcomes.

While we agree that the courses under review here are successful in meeting the learning outcomes, there are typically a handful of students who are not particularly successful in the courses. As part of our assessment, this is an opportunity to reflect upon the methods and strategies used and suggest ways in which the student outcomes can be improved. One concern is always with getting students to read all materials required for the course or getting them to read a high quality sampling of the existing research on a particular student field research project topic. Some students often seem to postpone their reading until the last minute or try to get by without reading each work comprehensively. The supporting literature for research projects may be selected by the student in haste, without a consideration of the best and most up-to-date literature on the topic. The supporting literature problem could be addressed by requiring each student to meet with the professor to review their selected literature well in advance of the end of the class. One strategy to encourage students to read in a more consistent and engaged manner would be to require them to engage in on-line discussion groups for each topic or for a selected set of readings. The student conversations that take place around the posted

questions should then offer a good guide to assess whether each student is able to capture the core themes of that particular reading. The professor would then follow up with students who struggle to capture important elements of the readings. Additionally, students periodically could be required to submit synopsis of reading assignments. It is our hope that implementing new reading and research assessment strategies will help students at the upper level move toward accomplishing their goals of increased comprehension and analytic sophistication as they attend to already existing literature in the field of anthropology.

SOCI 318 Research Methods
Instructor: Sara Rasch

Assessment by: Cody Warner and David Eitle
Learning Outcomes: Sociological application

SOCI 318 is an upper division sociology course whose stated learning objectives are: a) understand and describe a variety of different quantitative and qualitative research methods; b) identify the methods appropriate to investigate different research questions; c) frame a sociological research question and identify and apply appropriate research methods to address the question; and d) demonstrate the ability to synthesize the literature on a sociological research question.

We randomly selected 10 papers to. Four A papers, three B papers, and three C papers were selected for the assessment. The papers that were assessed were papers in which the student was asked to propose a research question, provide support for the research questions, and then create a proposal that discusses how the question will be address (i.e., methods utilized). Students were required to provide citations and a reference list.

We constructed the scoring rubric (attached) independent of the paper assignment itself, since the purpose of the assessment is to determine whether learning outcomes are being met. Nonetheless, it is an important caveat to note that the goals of the paper assignment may not be entirely consistent with the assessment of this particular learning outcome.

A' papers:

The A papers that were sampled were generally well written, with adequate attributions and (overall) well organized. The students did a credible job in identifying a testable research question and overall, produced solid support for the research questions.

'B' papers:

The B papers that were sampled were not as well written or as well organized as the A papers (as expected), but were still solid essays. However, the assessment committee began to see students struggle to produce a sociological research question that could be empirically tested. A question was often posed, but it was unclear how the question would guide the literature review that followed. Students still provided suitable support for their research 'interest,' but it was a bit more challenging to discern what their research question was and (for some) what was sociological about the question.

'C' papers:

The C papers were (at best) adequately written and suffered from organizational problems. The biggest deficit, however, was that the sampled papers failed to demonstrate an understanding of what constitutes a sociological research question. The support for the 'interest' was adequate, likely stemming from struggles to frame the interest in a sociologically relevant way.

Recommendations:

Being able to formulate sociological research questions is a critical skill and we found that at least half of the students in this course found this challenging. In addition, those teaching the capstone courses have also noted that developing sociological research questions is something that students struggle with achieving, even at the end of their degree program. In order to improve student outcomes on this learning goal we recommend that all upper division courses emphasize identifying and formulating sociological research questions, including providing more examples in class, having students practice writing questions and giving students more examples on how to set up a paper, organized around the research question.

Learning Outcome 4: Sociological Application: Our students will formulate research questions based on critical readings and understandings of sociological research.

| Grading Criteria | Poor (1) | Unsatisfactory (2) | Average (3) | Above Average (4) | Sophisticated (5) |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|
| Formulation of Sociological Research Questions | The research question or problem is neither clear nor adequate and the student fails to demonstrate an understanding of how research questions contribute to sociology | The research question or problem is neither clear nor adequate | The research question or problem is not completely clear and requires significant modifications. | The research question or problem is clear and only requires minor modifications. It may not be very compelling or original, however. | The research question or problem is clear and compelling. It also demonstrates some originality in thought. |
| Support for Research Questions | Student does not provide any support beyond individual experience, speculation, and conjecture for research | Student largely fails to provide support for research question or problem, fails to use appropriate research databases to inform the research question. | Student provides some basis for research question, but large gaps exist in providing relevant theories, research, and sources. | Student includes appropriate theories, research evidence and sources to generate research question or problem, but may be missing some relevant material | Student selects appropriate theories, research evidence and sources to generate research question or problem |
| Overall Organization | The essay is confusing with no organization. | The main points of the essay are ambiguous, making the writer's ideas difficult to follow. | Writing has minimal organization and a basic thesis statement, but does not go beyond the basics. | Writing follows a unified and logical organization, but sometimes drifts from the thesis. | Organization is unified and logical, with excellent transitions |
| Grammar and Punctuation | Severe problems with grammar, usage, or mechanics show very poor control of language and may significantly impede understanding. | Numerous errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics show poor control of language and may at times impede understanding. | The essay has a few major errors and multiple minor errors, but almost all sentences are clear and understandable. | The essay has few major errors. There may be multiple minor errors as long as they do not interfere with understanding. | The essay has no major grammatical and punctuation errors and very few minor errors. Any minor errors do not interfere with the understanding of the essay. |

SOCI 311 Criminology
Instructor: Sara Rasch

Assessment by: Cody Warner and David Eitle
Learning Outcomes: Sociological Theories

SOCI 311 is an upper division criminology course whose stated learning objectives are: a) demonstrate an understanding of the nature and causes of crime and delinquency; b) demonstrate an understanding of the extent and distribution of crime; c) use sociological methodology to study crime and delinquency; d) evaluate explanations of crime and delinquency; and e) analyze and assess primary research literature or research data related to crime and delinquency.

We randomly selected 10 papers to assess for student's application and understanding of theory, concepts, and assumptions. Four A papers, three B papers, and three C papers were selected for the assessment. The papers that were assessed were papers in which the student was asked to identify a social problem, explore the literature salient to the problem, and then apply a generalist criminological theory (or theories) to explain the behavior/problem. Students were required to provide citations and a reference list.

We constructed the scoring rubric (attached) independent of the paper assignment itself, since the purpose of the assessment is to determine whether learning outcomes are being met. Nonetheless, it is an important caveat to note that the goals of the paper assignment may not be entirely consistent with the assessment of this particular learning outcome.

'A' papers:

The A papers that we sampled were of the best quality of the papers we sampled. They were most set apart from the other papers by being well written, fairly well organized, and appear to make appropriate attributions to the work of others. These students also demonstrated a better understanding of theoretical concepts compared to other students. That said, even students who earned this grade seemed to largely ignore the assumptions of the theory being discussed, and could have made more sophisticated examinations of the theory than were provided.

'B' papers:

This group of papers were solid overall, but also demonstrated some clear deficiencies. For instance, the writing and organization of these papers was less sophisticated and some students struggled with producing cohesive statements. Additionally, we witnessed more cases of insufficient attribution, or an overreliance on quotations from the work of others. As a result, the 'meat' of these papers tended to have fewer original ideas/contributions. The actual discussion of theory in these essays was adequate, or at least students were aware of the theories that might inform their topic. However, since the students spent the bulk of their essays discussing the nature of the problem, it was too often the case that there was insufficient discussion or application of theoretical perspectives.

'C' papers:

These papers were clearly the weakest of the three groups, and students really provided barely sufficient (or insufficient) discussions/applications of theory. Overall, these papers were adequately written overall, but the problems of attribution/over-quoting, grammar and organization, and cohesiveness were more prominent. A couple of the papers did not sufficiently demonstrate to the assessment team that they had an adequate understanding of theory.

Recommendations:

Being able to demonstrate the power of theory to understand social phenomena is an important learning outcome and we found that a number of the students in this class did not provide sufficient attention to theory application. Other faculty have observed this pattern in other classes as well, even in the capstone classes. In order to improve success on this learning outcome, we encourage that faculty put greater emphasis on demonstrating the power of theory and the importance of discussing the assumptions underlying social theory.

Learning Outcome 3: Sociological Theories: Our students will demonstrate an understanding of the role of theory in sociology.

| Grading Criteria | Poor (1) | Unsatisfactory (2) | Average (3) | Above Average (4) | Sophisticated (5) |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| Overall Organization | The essay is confusing with no organization. | The main points of the essay are ambiguous, making the writer's ideas difficult to follow. | Writing has minimal organization and a basic thesis statement, but does not go beyond the basics. | Writing follows a unified and logical organization, but sometimes drifts from the thesis. | Organization is unified and logical, with excellent transitions |
| Understanding of theory / concepts | Major mistakes evident regarding theory or in definition of concepts | Main points of theory are on track, but errors in applying or illustrating theory are pronounced. | Concepts and theory are correct, but only textbook definitions with no elaboration. | Theory and key concepts are well defined and organized/linked properly | Concepts are clearly defined, linked where appropriate, and illustrated with examples |
| Theoretical Assumptions | The essay fails to address assumptions of theory or does so incorrectly | The essay minimally discusses assumptions, but not completely or adequately | The essay provides clear list of assumptions, but doesn't elaborate | The essay describes assumptions, and elaborates, but doesn't connect with concepts. | The essay describes assumptions, and elaborates, and connects with core concepts. |
| Grammar and Punctuation | Severe problems with grammar, usage, or mechanics show very poor control of language and may significantly impede understanding. | Numerous errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics show poor control of language and may at times impede understanding. | The essay has a few major errors and multiple minor errors, but almost all sentences are clear and understandable. | The essay has few major errors. There may be multiple minor errors as long as they do not interfere with understanding. | The essay has no major grammatical and punctuation errors and very few minor errors. Any minor errors do not interfere with the understanding of the essay. |

Learning Outcomes Summary for Fall 2013-Spring 2014

The Sociology Assessment Committee met and reviewed two different courses, based on our assessment plan schedule: SOCI 318 Research Methods and SOCI 311 Criminology. The learning outcomes that were assessed, based on a prior assignment of learning outcomes from our assessment plan, were: a) sociological application- assess whether students were able to formulate research questions based on readings and understandings of sociological research; and b) sociological theories- assess for student's application and understanding of theory, concepts, and assumptions. Our review procedures entail using constructed rubrics designed (before use) to evaluate the learning outcomes with samples of student coursework.

Learning Outcomes: Sociological Application

As stated in our recommendation section, the assessment committee concluded that many of our students still struggled to identify sociological research questions that are testable. We will forward our suggestions to the instructor of the course and encourage the instructor to take the steps outlined in the recommendation section.

We also (once again) saw evidence of the problem of our C students being able to write in a clear, concise, and organized manner. We will discuss our recommendation below in the action plan.

Learning Outcomes: Sociological Theories

The assessment committee concluded that a number of our students did not devote as much attention to exploring the power of sociological theories to explain social problems. Rather, many devoted too much time to the social problem and little attention to the theory or its' application. In short, the issue may be one of *balance*, rather than the failure of students to understand and apply theory to social problems. We will forward our suggestions to the instructor of the course and encourage the instructor to take the steps outlined in the recommendation section.

Action Plan

Based upon the assessment and our faculty discussion, we have decided on the following actions:

1. Discuss the possibility of adding a lower division course (majors only) that will teach writing and reading in sociology. While we discussed this in the past year, we will shortly be meeting as a faculty to discuss changes in the sociology/criminology (including minors) curriculums.
2. Emphasize to our instructors (in addition to students) the importance of students clearly demonstrating the ability to construct sociological research questions and the application of sociological theories to social problems.

3. Continue to emphasize the importance of investigating and exploring the literature to support essays. Examples from both classes demonstrated that this was a priority and there were several good essays that included competent literature reviews.