Department of Anthropology

College of Liberal and Creative Arts

Undergraduate BA Program Assessments Report 2019 - Closing the Loop

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Table of Contents

Overview 1
Mission Statement
Program Learning Goals for the UG Major

Closing the Loop 3
Program Learning Goals Assessed - Introductory Courses - 2018
Assessment Findings
Process for Responding to Previous Assessments
Changes to be Implemented

Assessment Plans for 2019-20 8

Appendices 9
Appendix I. Undergraduate Major Requirements - 39-40 units
Appendix II. Culminating Experience
Overview

This year’s Undergraduate Program assessments are ‘closing the loop’ on concerns around the high DFW rates in Anth 100 Intro to Biological Anthropology, but also they also address improving learning outcomes in all of our 100-level introductory courses.

Mission Statement

The mission statement for the department covers the graduate and undergraduate programs, but the learning goals are program specific. Both the mission and learning goals were last revised and approved by the department in Spring 2017.

*Anthropology at SFSU focuses on the study of human beings from archaeological, biological, cultural, and visual perspectives. Faculty at SF State have research programs in the Bay Area, across the United States, and internationally. We bring this experience to the classroom and into the community. The location of the campus in San Francisco, a diverse, cosmopolitan, urban setting, also enables strategic linkages with local premier universities where our students can take courses and pursue advanced graduate studies. Moreover, the San Francisco Bay Area offers countless occupational opportunities in both the public and private sector, ranging from high-tech and bio-technological industries to public social services working with diverse communities. Our setting also provides unique opportunities for students to learn by engaging directly with local resources and institutions.*

To that end, the Anthropology Department offers a rigorous program with practical training in four sub-fields, identified as dynamic applied specializations. These both reflect the strengths of the faculty and prepare students for practical and creative occupational opportunities in the San Francisco Bay Area. The four subfields the department is committed to are:

- **Medical anthropology**: public health, human rights, community-based participatory research, and health of migrant populations;
- **Visual representation**: ethnographic and applied film making, critique of visual ideology, origins of art, still image and photography;
- **Bioarchaeology**: contextualized skeletal and dental analyses, health of past populations, and osteology in a medico-legal context; and
- **Political Archaeology**: historical archaeology, indigenous/native archaeologies, political uses of the past, ancient political systems, the archaeology of the contemporary past.

Our students explore the theoretical foundations and ethical obligations of the discipline, gain an appreciation for diversity in lifeways, and acquire an understanding of how anthropology can benefit their own communities. Our department creates opportunities for students to practice experiential learning, carry out hands-on field research, and develop independent research. The training students receive reflects the University mission of serving communities, promoting mutual respect, and fostering social responsibility.
Program Learning Goals for the UG Major

I. Diversity: Have an awareness and knowledge of a culturally and biologically diverse world. (Intro Core Courses 100, 110, 120; elective courses)
   a. Describe the field of anthropology and its objectives.
   b. Demonstrate knowledge of how culturally informed beliefs, behaviors, and perspectives vary between diverse global societies.
   c. Demonstrate understanding of how anthropologists study diversity in race, class, gender identity, and age.
   d. Demonstrate comparative understanding of how material culture and symbolic representations vary across diverse societies over time.
   e. Explain the basic processes of biological evolution and the general course of human evolution.

II. Theory: Understand the fundamental principles of the three major subfields. (Anth 300, Area 1 Theory and Foundations; upper division requirement in the 3 subfields)
   a. Characterize the distinctive theoretical and methodological approaches of anthropology.
   b. Critically examine one’s own cultural and social identities and understand how those identities shape beliefs and attitudes.
   c. Understand major causes of social inequality and how to address them through civic engagement.
   d. Articulate a scientific understanding of human biological diversity and the ethical concerns arising from studies of that diversity.
   e. Demonstrate knowledge of the wide range of past and present human biocultural systems, including ecological relationships, social and cultural organization, and processes of cultural change.

III. Method: Use theoretical knowledge to critically analyze and interpret anthropological evidence. (Area 2 Methods and Practicum - Culminating Experience)
   a. Understand research project design and the role of data analysis or qualitative analysis.
   b. Present opposing viewpoints and alternative hypotheses on various anthropological issues.
   c. Gather and interpret information from diverse sources, including local resources of the Bay Area where relevant.
   d. Demonstrate applied skills in at least one of the subfields of anthropology.
   e. Write concisely and logically, incorporating relevant data and knowledge.

Course requirements for the major are in Appendix 1.
Closing the Loop

Program Learning Goals Assessed - Introductory Courses - 2018

The 2018 assessments focused on the high DFW rates of the Anth 100 Introduction to Biological Anthropology course. As noted in the 2018 report, we did not assess specific PLOs under the assumption that students who are not successful in the course overall are unlikely to be meeting those PLOs.

Assessment Findings

Surprisingly the findings showed no impact of a T.A. on student success. We did show a strong correlation between grades and attendance, and we also noted ‘cohorts’ of struggling students who might benefit from different intervention strategies. One cohort had the lowest attendance and were most likely to fail the course, another had attendance drops mid-semester but still attended >50% of the classes and a third had attended >75% of the classes but were still struggling. As a comparison, we also reviewed attendance and grades in Anth 110 Introduction to Archaeology. Although the DFW rates were not as high as Anth 100, we still noted some increase in DFW grades in recent semesters, suggestive of a changing population of students in our lower division courses who could benefit from more support.

We had indicated in the 2018 assessment report that we would collect data on why students did not attend class. Unfortunately we overlooked comprehensively collecting this data and we currently only have data from 48 students in the Anth 120 course. Of the those, 18 students missed two or more lectures in a once a week class. The reasons cited were: 10 personal or family health, 7 work schedule or transportation problems and 1 found the lectures not helpful and they could study more effectively on their own. While interesting, we would need more data, particularly from the Anth 100 sections, before we can draw any real conclusions.

In response to the 2018 findings, faculty participated in a series of discussions to address teaching practices in all large, introductory courses. Our strategy was to discuss these practices in lower division, large lecture courses in general with the aim of improving student learning in all of them.

Process for Responding to Previous Assessments

The department held a series of meetings to discuss strategies to improve student success in the 100-level introductory courses. In most cases these sessions were part of our regular faculty meetings but we held a final, special at the end of May 22nd to finalize the results of our ongoing work.

Meetings

October 10th - Review of the 2018 Assessments and Planning for Response
December 12th - CEETL Workshop on Teaching in Large Lecture Courses and discussion of best practices
April 17th - Further discussion of Teaching Practices
May 12th - Follow-up and Action Items
May 22nd - Special Meeting to Finalize Strategies
Changes to be Implemented

The final document for best practices in large lecture courses is given on pages 5-7. Some of the changes have already been implemented in the Anth 100 course immediately after the 2018 assessments and as ideas arose in our discussions (e.g., tracking students not attending and intervening; explicit discussion of note-taking strategies). While we did see improvements from Fall 17 to Fall 18 (37% vs. 24% DFW), the rates have historically fluctuated by semester, and the changes were made in only one of two sections. It is therefore unclear if the results are a trend or normal variation. We will continue to monitor these rates.

We are also instituting a procedure for on-going sharing of active learning practices, the academic literature relevant to student success, and slides/materials that can be used in all courses to help students develop effective note-taking and study habits.
The suggested practices were compiled by the Anthropology Department with the aim of increasing student success, recognizing that many of the students are not anthropology majors and often first-time freshman (FTF). Both FTF and transfer students may require help in transitioning to a different level of academic expectations but all students can benefit from the practices outlined. We aim to continue sharing what does and does not work in our classes.

Student Success

1. Take attendance for at least the first three weeks of the semester (before the deadline to drop without a W). You can and should drop students who do not show up for the first day of class. You should email students who miss more than one class and encourage them to initiate a drop if they can not attend regularly. If the students do not respond, you may administratively drop them.

   Related Policy

   ASP, S18-196: At SF State, dropping a course is the student’s responsibility. However, faculty are authorized and encouraged to instructor-drop students who do not attend the first class meeting, are not attending before the end of the drop period, or do not meet the course criteria. Faculty are strongly encouraged to instructor-drop all students who are not attending class before the end of the drop period.

2. Although it will still count in the DFW rates, you should have a policy in your syllabus for students to receive a WU vs. F. This will help separate students who have stopped attending vs. those who are having problems keeping up with course materials.

   Example Policy

   Some students will need to drop the course due to changes in their schedule or other obligations. If you drop before the first withdrawal deadline, the course will not appear on your transcript. A “W” will appear on your transcript if you withdraw after the first deadline. A “W” does not affect your GPA but you are limited to 18 total units of withdrawals.

   It is your responsibility to withdraw from the course. Students who do not withdraw but stop coming to class before the second exam will receive a WU (unauthorized withdrawal). After the second exam, you will receive an assigned grade of “F”. Both grades are counted as a 0 when computing your GPA.

3. After the first exam or major assignment, identify students who are coming to class but performing poorly (C- or less). Send an email encouraging them to come in to you for help, go to CARP, or help organize a student study group.

4. Try to get to know your students as individuals as much as possible in a large class. Circulate around the room to take questions, consider using “selfies” to help you learn/recognize individual students, and encourage them to come up and introduce themselves after class.

5. In the first class, emphasize the correlation between attendance and grades (See attached resources).

6. Discuss note-taking skills and give them the resources so they can learn how to take notes effectively (see attached resources). Reinforce these during the first couple of weeks of the semester. Advertise CARP workshops http://carp.sfsu.edu/content/welcome-carp or invite
CARP to your classroom early in the semester: [http://carp.sfsu.edu/content/class-workshops](http://carp.sfsu.edu/content/class-workshops).

7. Sprinkle active learning exercises and discussions in with the lectures for variety and to keep students engaged.

8. Encourage peer interactions. You need to start on the first day before they are in the habit of disengagement from other students. Have them introduce themselves to their neighbors and/or use an ice-breaker exercises so they feel part of a classroom community.

9. If you have any writing or other assignments, give them an example of what a good assignment looks like before they start so they clearly understand what you want.

10. Take the time to review exams, particularly questions that most of them got wrong. Some students need practice in how to approach college-level question. Even better practice is to have clicker questions or quizzes that are similar to the types of questions that are on the exam that you also review so they can see how to arrive at the answers. These questions can be scaffolded so they progress to require higher-level thinking skills within each lecture and through the semester as a whole.

Growing the Major and Student Retention

1. Identify the majors in the course and encourage them to come to department events and form their own “Anth Majors” group. Talk to them after class about what is going on in the department or invite them for a “group advising” appointment.

2. Talk about Careers in Anthropology in your class, we have a slideshow you could present, or you can ask the chair or the department’s Careers advisor to come in to discuss the opportunities available.

3. Identify students who are “thinking” about an Anthropology major, give them a Careers in Anthropology brochure, encourage them to talk to the “Anth majors” group.
Resources
(see shared folder for new examples and materials)

1. Icebreaker Ideas:
   a. https://ucat.osu.edu/bookshelf/teaching-topics/shaping-a-positive-learning-environment/12-icebreakers-college-classroom/

2. Note-taking Resources
   c. Cornell Note-taking Method:
      i. http://lsc.cornell.edu/notes.html
      ii. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsR-10piMp4
   d. Laptop vs. Longhand note-taking:
      i. Summary: https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/were-only-human/ink-on-paper-some-notes-on-note-taking.html
      ii. References: http://pss.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/04/22/0956797614524581.abstract

3. Class Attendance and Grades data
   a. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0034654310362998
   b. SEE: Anthropology Department 2018 Assessments Data (On iLearn and BOX)

4. Grades: Instructor preparation, Student Attendance and Student Motivation

5. Multitasking/Attention and Grades
Assessment Plans for 2019-20

1. We will continue to monitor the Introductory-level course DFW rates and have on-going discussions of best practices.

2. Collect more comprehensive data to determine why students do not attend class.

3. We are considering focusing assessments on our PLOs listed under items II. Theory. In the curriculum these items are first addressed in our 300-level courses and reinforced in other upper division courses (see curriculum map 2013 assessments). However, will be reviewing and discussing our PLOs and the curricular map in our first or second faculty meeting of the Fall semester to determine if those will need revision before can proceed with further PLO assessments.
Appendices

Appendix I. Undergraduate Major Requirements - 39-40 units

Core: All courses are required (18 units)
- Anth 100 Introduction to Biological Anthropology (3 units)
- Anth 110 Introduction to Archaeology (3 units)
- Anth 120 Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (3 units)
- Anth 130 Introduction to Visual Anthropology (3 units)
- Anth 300 Foundations of Anthropology: History (3 units)
- Anth 305GW Writing Anthropology (3 units)

Area 1: Theory and Foundations (Choose 1 course - 3 units)
- Anth 301 Foundations of Archaeology (3 units)
- Anth 302 Foundations of Human Variation (3 units)
- Anth 303 Foundations of Visual Anthropology (3 units)

Area 2: Methods and Practicum (Choose 1 course - 4-6 units)
Students who take the 6 unit Anth 595 course will reduce their required Anth electives to 12 units. The methods and practicum course fulfills the university culminating experience requirement.
- Anth 333 Primate Behavior (4 units)
- Anth 530 Human Osteology Practicum (4 units)
- Anth 531 Human Evolution Practicum (4 units)
- Anth 592 Archaeological Methods (4 units)
- Anth 594 Zooarchaeology (4 units)
- Anth 557 Ethnography of the Inner City (4 units)
- Anth 595 Visual Anthropology I (6 units)
- Anth 596 Visual Anthropology II (4 units)
- Anth 651 Ethnographic Field Methods (4 units)
- Anth 652 Anthropological Statistics (4 units)

Electives, Anthropology (12-15 units): Electives are any upper division course with an ANTH prefix, including those from the two areas that have not been used to fulfill the Area requirements. Most students will need 12 units in ANTH, but students who complete 6 units from Area 2 reduce the Anth electives to 12 units.

No more than 6 units can be taken in Internships (695), Independent Study (699) and Teaching Assistantships (685) combined. (Note: Students may only receive credits toward the major for a total of 4 units of 685).

Subfield Requirement: At least 1 upper division course (Area 1, Area 2 or electives) must be taken in three subfields: Biological, Cultural/Visual, and Archaeology.
Appendix II. Culminating Experience

Definition of the Culminating Experience from the Requirements for Baccalaureate Degrees, Academic Senate Policy #S11-255

Culminating Experiences

A culminating experience will be required of all students as part of all major programs. Departments and programs will design and implement capstone courses or other culminating experiences for major students at the senior level by Fall 2015. Maximum flexibility will be given to programs and departments in the design of these courses or other experiences, so long as they fulfill the spirit of the culminating experience concept.

Definition: The culminating experience requires students nearing the end of their college years to create a project that integrates and applies what they have learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of “best work”, or an exhibit. It might be attached to a formal course for credit, or might not. Culminating experiences should offer some hands-on element such as internship, study abroad, application of learned skills, or research within the field.

The following additional recommendations pertain:

1. Ideally, the culminating experience will integrate learning from the general education program and major as well as co-curricular activities.
2. It is further recommended that it include a significant writing component appropriate to the discipline.
3. The culminating experience may be designed as either individual or collaborative courses or projects.
4. Departments shall self-evaluate their culminating experience requirements at each program review.

Anthropology Culminating Experience

The culminating experience requirement for the B.A. degree in Anthropology is met by completing the Area 2: Methods and Practicum requirement.

To meet the culminating experience expectations, all Area 2 courses must include:

1. The use of applied skills in at least one of the subfields such as data collection, video production or other appropriate methodologies.
2. A final paper, portfolio of assignments, or creative works project that meets the following guidelines:
   a) A minimum 3000 words or the completion of a creative works project accompanied by a minimum 1500 word narrative.
   b) Incorporation of a major theoretical perspective of the field.
   c) A literature review that uses diverse sources and evaluates opposing arguments.
   d) Demonstration that the student understands data analysis or the appropriate construction of media representation.

Instructors are encouraged to incorporate Bay Area Resources if appropriate.