Department of Anthropology

College of Liberal and Creative Arts

MA Program Assessments Report 2019 - Closing the Loop

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Table of Contents

Overview 1
Mission Statement
Program Learning Goals for the MA degree

Closing the Loop 2
Program Learning Goals Assessed
Process for Responding to Previous Assessments
Changes to be Implemented

Assessment Plans for 2019-20 3

Appendices 4
Appendix 1 MA Program Requirements (30 units)
Overview

The MA Program assessments are also ‘closing the loop’ and include some re-evaluation of the syllabi and work-load in our required 1-unit skills 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 MA degree

The successful graduate student will:

1. Possess advanced knowledge and understanding of the concepts and theories of the three sub-disciplines covered by the Department.
2. Have the ability to analyze and evaluate complex data about human biological and cultural systems.
3. Have the ability to employ a comparative approach and make meaningful cross-cultural comparisons.
4. Demonstrate an advanced ability to perform all phases of anthropological fieldwork in one of the three sub-disciplines, including but not restricted to archaeological fieldwork, collection of biological data, ethnographic participant observation, interviewing, audio-visual and archival research methods.
5. Have skills at levels sufficiently high to allow them access to Ph.D. programs in their sub-field, or move directly into a professional employment in their sub-discipline.

Requirements for the MA program are given in Appendix I.

Closing the Loop

Program Learning Goals Assessed

The 2018 assessments focused on evaluation of the creative works or thesis culminating experience. As mentioned in that report, the applicant pool for the F2018 entering class was weak and we had only two students who matriculated. Because of this, assessments for individual courses and specific PLOs was not done and a great deal of our focus was on recruitment of qualified candidates, which was successful and we have 12 matriculated students for the 2019 class.

The 2018 assessments did indicate improved outcomes in the evaluations of the culminating experience, nonetheless we chose to re-evaluate the content of syllabi for our required MA courses.

Process for Responding to Previous Assessments

Fall meetings on the Graduate Program focused on applicant recruitment. We had one preliminary discussion in a spring faculty meeting about the curriculum where we determined, based on faculty and continuing student experiences, that some of our 1-unit syllabi needed revisions. We dedicated one 2-hour faculty meeting to discussing the overall curriculum and MA student experience and to reviewing individual course syllabi in Anth 710 (proseminar), 715, 716, 717, 718 (1-unit courses).

Changes to be Implemented

In discussions with the continuing MA students and with faculty teaching the courses, continuing students had previously identified excessive reading and writing requirements as a source of stress to the graduate co-ordinator and our review of syllabi confirmed that this was an issue in some cases, particularly for 715 and 716. Baseline syllabi/requirements were not the issue, rather individual instructors had implemented changes that went beyond the expected
scope of the course. It was also determined that we had some issues with overlap between Anth 717 Research Proposal and 718 Grant Writing. The changes to be implemented are:

- Scale back the required reading and writing in some of the one-unit courses by having the chair discuss past syllabi with individual instructors where workload was an issue.
- Request syllabi for the 1-unit 715 and 716 courses at least 2 weeks prior to the start of the semester so the workload can be reviewed by the chair and graduate coordinator and changes made if necessary.
- Replace 718 Grant Writing (Spring course) with a 1-unit Presentation Skills course to include both podium and poster research presentations. Proposal to be submitted in Fall 2019.

Assessment Plans for 2019-20

We are considering focusing assessments on PLO #5 through an analysis of student success in finding jobs in their field or enrolling in a graduate program. 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 proceeding with further PLO assessments. Although we had initially planned to review the PLOs and curricular map in 2018-19, with the intense focus on recruitment of incoming students, doing both was beyond the capacity of our faculty.
Appendices

Appendix 1 MA Program Requirements (30 units)

Core: All courses are required (15 units)

Seminars

ANTH 710 Proseminar in Anthropological Methods (3 units)
ANTH 720 Foundations in Visual Anthropology (2 units)
ANTH 721 Seminar in Archaeological Problems (2 units)
ANTH 722 Seminar in Biological Anthropology (2 units)
ANTH 723 Seminar in Problems in Cultural Anthropology (2 units)

Research Skills (1 unit each)

ANTH 715 The Craft of Anthropological Writing
ANTH 716 The Literature Review
ANTH 717 The Research Proposal
ANTH 718 The Grant Proposal

Electives (12 units)

To reach the minimum number of units required for the degree (30 units), students must:

• Take graduate elective classes (numbered 700 and above) selected from those offered in the Anthropology Department or, with approval, from other departments at SF State.

• Students are advised to take ANTH 899 Independent Study (1, 2, or 3 units) as part of their area of specialization. Students may take ANTH 899 no more than twice for a maximum total of six units.

• With approval, students may take upper division undergraduate classes.

NOTE: no more than 30% (nine units) of undergraduate course work may be included on the ATC. (Prerequisite course work may not be included on the ATC.)

Culminating Experience (3 units)

ANTH 894 Creative Works Project OR ANTH 898 Master’s Thesis