

Department of Anthropology Outcomes Assessment Plan

I. Introduction

Students receiving a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from WWU are expected to have acquired a general knowledge of the four subfields of the discipline of anthropology; cultural anthropology, archaeology, biological anthropology and sociolinguistics. The purpose of this assessment plan is to enable the Department of Anthropology to fulfill the goals of its mission as outlined below.

II. Mission Statement

In today's world of intricate, complex, and life-influencing international and intercultural contacts and interactions, the discipline of anthropology plays a vital role in helping students to better live their lives in that world. The Department of Anthropology does this in two major ways. First, it provides service courses that introduce a broad spectrum of students to the fundamental operative concepts of anthropology which enable them to think critically about their actions and roles in a challenging multi-cultural world. Second, the Department provides in-depth training in anthropology for undergraduate majors and for selected graduate students. Student learning and development lie at the heart of the Department of Anthropology. Critical to this is the classroom and laboratory experience and all that is connected to it. One of the great strengths of the Department of Anthropology is that it provides a solid grounding in the four fields of anthropology: cultural, physical, archaeological, and linguistic. Each of these four fields, and the sub-specialties within them, has different pedagogical needs and perspectives, and enables students to develop important differential aspects of critical thinking and analysis. Within the Department, these fields cross-fertilize, and provide anthropology majors with significant foundational skills and perspectives that have enabled, and will continue to enable, graduates to succeed well in various walks of life. Students must, of course, provide their own effort and self-motivation, but the Anthropology Department has a long-standing tradition of providing all possible help for students in their educational activities. Key aspects of this are a faculty member's manifest interest in the subject matter being taught, respectful openness to students' questions inside and outside of the classroom, and accessibility. Faculty members constantly encourage students to think critically and reason for themselves. Students are encouraged to do in-depth papers, projects, laboratory work, and field experiences. Students are encouraged to present papers at university and professional and, in some cases, to publish their independent or co-authored work. Faculty put significant time and effort into encouraging and fostering these student-centered activities. Another important aspect of enhancing the student experience is faculty enrichment. Fundamental to this is extensive reading and study to stay abreast of current developments in anthropology, and research and publication to further the development of the discipline. The many hours so spent provide the vital breadth and depth of scholarship which a faculty member brings to the classroom in order to ensure students a maximally beneficial university education. Student-centered education takes place within the physical and institutional setting of Western Washington

University. The Department of Anthropology holds it important for all faculty members to participate in the on-going workings needed to sustain that educational environment. This includes advising, committees, and other appropriate services to the Department, and service on university committees and sub-committees. In turn, Western exists within a larger community, and the faculty works within the scholarly community of anthropology. Service commitments make demands on a faculty member's time and energies, but they can, in often unforeseeable ways, contribute to the depth of teaching that a faculty person brings to the classroom, laboratory, or fieldwork. Faculty members in the Anthropology Department value collegiality, in the true sense of the word. They encourage and support one another in their on-going work. All recognize that anthropology is a multi-faceted and diverse discipline whose many fields symbiotically anchor a scholarly discipline which both enriches our culture and provides many practical applications. The Department provides service courses that introduce a broad spectrum of students to the fundamental operative concepts of anthropology which enable them to think critically about their actions and roles in the challenging multi-cultural world of today and tomorrow. The Department provides a solid grounding in the four fields of Anthropology: cultural, physical, archaeological, and linguistic. Each of these four fields, and the sub-specialties within them, has different pedagogical needs and perspectives, and enables students to develop important differential aspects of critical thinking and analysis.

III. Goals

- Provide a deep understanding of humankind, both past and present.
- Analyze and organize the knowledge gained to make it accessible.
- Engage in the practical application of anthropology in the community.
- Gain an appreciation of the diversity of humankind.

IV. Learning Objectives

Goal One: Provide a deep understanding of humankind, both past and present.

? Objective One: Students learn basic concepts of each subfield of anthropology by taking introductory courses in cultural anthropology, archaeology, physical anthropology and sociolinguistics.

?Target Criterion: Successful completion of Anth 201, 210, 215, and 247.

- Evidence: Students are assigned tests and graded assignments in each course in the required subfield.

? Objective Two: Students learn about approaches that connect the four subfields.

?Target Criterion: Complete class assignments that integrate two or more subfields.

- Evidence: Examples of student work contained in portfolios.

? Objective Three: Students gain depth in one subfield.

?Target Criterion: Student plans of study that demonstrate concentration within the major.

- Evidence: Analysis of distribution of student's concentration within the major.

Goal Two: Analyze and organize the knowledge gained to make it accessible.

? Objective One: Students take sufficient coursework to ensure both breadth and depth in the discipline of anthropology.

?Target Criterion: Complete coursework that covers both general and specific topics; e.g., a general culture area (Peoples of Asia) and a specific culture region (Culture and Society of Japan).

- Evidence: Review of student plans of study and advising in choice of courses.

? Objective Two: Students acquire knowledge of anthropological theory.

?Target Criterion: Successful completion of Anth 301, or other course in theory, depending on concentration.

- Evidence: Students complete written assignments and graded participation in discussion in a theory course.

? Objective Three: Students acquire knowledge of anthropological methods.

?Target Criterion: Successful completion of required courses in quantitative and qualitative methods.

- Evidence: Successful completion of Anth 335, implementation of a required course in qualitative methods.

Goal Three: Engage in the practical application of anthropology in the community.

? Objective One: Students gain knowledge of the practical application of anthropological theory and methods.

?Target Criterion: Successful completion of coursework that incorporates aspects of applied anthropology.

- Evidence: Examples of work in student portfolios.

? Objective Two: Students experience the practical application of anthropology.

?Target Criterion: Participation in service learning, internships or other applied experience.

- Evidence: Analysis of the number of students who have a service learning experience, internship, or field experience.

? Objective Three: Students are able to integrate theory, method and applied application of anthropology.

?Target Criterion: The successful completion of courses that integrate theory, method and application.

- Evidence: Review of course syllabi; analysis of portfolios; instituting a capstone experience.

Goal Four: Gain an appreciation of the diversity of humankind.

? Objective One: Students explore all areas of diversity, including anthropological concepts of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, etc.

?Target Criterion: Required coursework in area of topical and culture area.

- Evidence: Portfolio assembly; exit interviews; instituting a culminating experience.

? Objective Two: Students understand the importance of the anthropological approach to global issues.

?Target Criterion: Coursework that incorporates global issues.

- Evidence: Analysis of portfolios; exit interviews; content of culminating experience.

? Objective Three: Students develop the anthropological perspective of cultural relativism.

?Target Criterion: Integrate into all courses.

- Evidence: Analysis of course syllabi; portfolios, culminating experience.

V. Assessment Methods and Timeline

The student learning outcomes assessment plan for the Department of Anthropology was initiated in Fall 2000. A four-step process was decided upon:

1. an ongoing discussion of curriculum revision;
2. skills requirement student portfolio;
3. capstone course or culminating experience;
4. with 1-3 in place, sample from 2 and 3 to determine baseline measures for department and proceed year by year with feedback to 1.

In the course of discussing student learning outcomes we wanted the major to emphasize “being able to do” as well as “knowing what.” We identified several specific skills we expect students to demonstrate and several bodies of knowledge we desire students to master. Following this identification, we identified courses in the catalog in which these different skills are taught. We will submit catalog copy on changes in the area of “methods” requirement. Individual instructors will make necessary changes to their syllabi to clarify the skills taught in each class.

We will require all majors to develop and maintain a portfolio: a project for each skill from a course in which the skill required is demonstrated. Portfolio contents will reflect skills at:

- a. research, locating primary and secondary documentary sources;
- b. literature analysis, comprehension and critical assessment of professional literature;
- c. data analysis, collect and analyze primary data;
- d. comparative analysis, application of anthropological data on human diversity.

All students take, and all faculty members teach, at least one writing intensive course at the upper-division level. The aim of these courses is synthesis and creativity; the design and completion of a project integrating theory and data to explain or interpret that data. We will organize our writing intensive courses to reflect our assessment goals in two ways. First will be to make sure students know what skills they need to acquire in order to perform the course writing assignment; second will be to include instruction in the integration of those skills of analysis and creativity that will enable students to demonstrate their mastery of anthropological data, analytical methods and understanding in their writing project.

We will require students who enter the major in the Fall of 2000 to begin to compile portfolios. In Winter 2002 will take and evaluate a sample of portfolios from students who plan to graduate in Spring 2002. The sample we collect will form our departmental baseline. We will collect a sample of portfolios from graduating seniors each Spring Quarter and evaluate that sample, comparing it year by year to this baseline to measure increased or decreased student learning outcomes, to provide feedback to the curriculum to allocate increased attention and support to those areas not showing steady, if marginal, increases as time goes by, or to make further curriculum and assessment plan revisions.

The faculty met at an all-day retreat in February 2004 to discuss curriculum changes. One general conclusion that the faculty reached was that Anthropology majors would be better served if they took their classes in a planned sequence starting with the 200 series, then 300, and finally entering the 400-level courses. Following this sequence will allow students to learn about anthropological theories, methods, and then practices. While there is not an exact or precise compartmentalization of these three phases of studying anthropology, the consensus was that fundamentals of theory was an important foundation for subsequent classes in methods and field work or practices. Prerequisites progressing in a logical numerical fashion have been put into place for most courses, further changes will be initiated at a follow-up curriculum retreat in February 2007.

Anthropology 301 was considered a class that all students who wanted to be anthropology majors needed to complete with a C grade or better. After successfully completing the class, students could take more advanced classes in the curriculum. Anthropology 301 would be taught at least once each term. The maximum number of students admitted is 35. Current faculty who teach the course are Boxberger, Young, Saunders and Loucky. Before students can declare a major in anthropology they will have their credits evaluated. If they have not taken Anth 301 at that point they must successfully complete it before they can declare an anthropology major.

In addition to Anth 301, all students who plan to declare an anthropology major must complete Anth 335, Quantitative Methods with a grade of C- or better. The class will be offered two times a year with a top enrollment of 50 students. Stevenson, Koetje and Grimes are the faculty who teach Anth 335. The consensus of the faculty was that once students successfully advance through Anth 301 and 335 they would have a better idea of what the study of anthropology was about and whether it was the major they truly want to pursue. The gateway course requirements to declare a major is an ongoing discussion and has not been implemented yet.

Faculty members proposed that a new course be developed with a tentative number and title: Anth 303 (5cr), Qualitative Methods in Anthropology. In this class students will learn about the design and application of qualitative methods in anthropological research. They will consider the use and approaches to anthropological interviews, surveys and case studies. The class will afford students opportunities to conduct some laboratory work using qualitative methods. Therefore the class will include theory, application and critique of qualitative methods. In terms of academic outcome, students will know how to design, use and critique qualitative methods. Faculty members who offered to help develop the course included Boxberger, Marshall, Loucky and Young. This course was initiated in Spring 2006 and has been added to major requirements beginning in Fall 2007.

It was proposed that rather than having a very large number of 400-level courses listed in the Bulletin and offered as 417s the Department will offer Anth 490. The class will address special topics that faculty want to offer students in the various areas of the discipline in which faculty have special interests and expertise. The classes will be senior seminars and will be writing intensive. The seminars also make it possible for faculty and

students to share research interests and for students to actively participate in a research project. It was suggested that this be a capstone course. This course was initiated in Winter 2006 and will be a major requirement in 2007 labeled as “Anth 490 or other culminating experience under advisement.” We will begin discussion of how to meet this requirement in Winter 2007.

Discussion was introduced about the possibility of offering a class for student internships. The internships would carry variable credits. The faculty member who serves as internship supervisor would receive course credit for the work involved in supervision and coordination of the internships. This action will be considered during Fall 2007.

Service learning was discussed as a technique to incorporate experiential learning into existing courses. Two courses are now taught as service learning and may fill the culminating experience requirement.

Portfolio analysis has not been conducted in the initial proposed sequence. In 2002 it was determined that there were insufficient data to make any meaningful analysis and we have not been able to agree on how to proceed with the analysis since. Anecdotally faculty have made suggestions that were gleaned from working with students on their portfolio assembly and while not a “baseline” study for purposes of measuring student learning assessment this information has informed the decisions on curriculum revision that have been made and that are ongoing, especially the strengthening of the methods requirement and the capstone experience. A preliminary review of the portfolios was initiated in Fall 2006 and suggestions made for revising the portfolio to more accurately reflect student learning outcomes and make analysis more workable. Once the analysis is complete we will initiate an alumni survey to compare with the portfolio data.