

Assessment Plan
Department of African American Studies
Spring 2004

Mission:

The Department of African American Studies is committed to both the advancement of knowledge of people of African descent and to the empowerment of black people in the local, national and international arena.

Scope of Assessment Plan

This Assessment Plan will address the achievements and outcomes for undergraduate majors in African American Studies and undergraduate students in African American Studies courses in the University's general education core curriculum.

Outcomes and Methods

The Department of African American Studies has identified five sets of learning outcomes that reflect the core set of skills that students should master. The outcomes include:

- I. Analytical Skills
 - A. Students acquire the skills to collect data.
 - B. Students are able to read, understand and critique both social science and humanities research on the experience of people of African descent.
 - C. Students are able to understand interdisciplinary scholarship.

- II. Critical Thinking Skills
 - A. Students formulate research questions and formulate testable hypotheses.
 - B. Students are able to analyze and interpret data.
 - C. Students demonstrate the ability to assess data and formulate new interpretations.

- III. Communication Skills
 - A. Students develop effective written communication skills.
 - B. Students develop effective oral communication skills.
 - C. Students demonstrate the appropriate writing conventions and formats.

- IV. Acquisition of Knowledge
 - A. Students articulate key concepts and theories of African American Studies.
 - B. Students demonstrate an understanding of global linkages between African Americans and people of African descent throughout the world.
 - C. Students demonstrate an ability to understand interdisciplinary scholarship.
 - D. Students can apply data to understand the impact of societal, economic and political factors on the life chances of people of African descent.

- V. Civic Participation
 - A. Students apply knowledge on behalf of the broader community in general and the black community in particular.
 - B. Students develop an ethos of volunteerism and civic engagement.

The Department of African American Studies employs a myriad of assessment procedures for the aforementioned learning outcomes, including: 1) Student course work; 2) Student participation in Departmental community outreach activities; and 3) the Department's honors and awards structure.

The Department of African American Studies will utilize its upper division core courses to constitute its course-embedded assessment procedure. Six upper division courses are required of all African American Studies majors. AAS 3120, African Diaspora, will be used to assess the student's Analytical Skills (B, C); Communication skills (A, B and C); and Acquisition of Knowledge (B). AAS 3120 is a designated writing across the curriculum course. The final examination and writing assignments will be used to assess the above-mentioned learning outcomes. The course instructor will use the final examination and research proposal in AAS 3980, Research Methods in African American Studies to assess Analytical Skills, (A and B); Critical Thinking Skills (A,B and C); and Communication Skills (A and C). The course instructor will use the final examination and written assignments in AAS 3975, Concepts and Theories and AAS 4120, African American Political Thought to assess: Analytical Skills (C); Communication Skills (A,B and C); and Acquisition of Knowledge (A,B, C and D). The course instructor will use the final research paper in AAS 4980 Senior Seminar and Practicum to assess: Analytical Skills (A); Critical Thinking Skills (A,B and C); Communication Skills (A and C); and Civic Participation Skills (A and B) via the final research project. Finally, the Department's literature requirement, which can be fulfilled by taking one of three courses--AAS 3880 African American literature; AAS 3960 African American Literature by Women; or AAS 4890 Caribbean Literature—will assess Analytical Skills (C) and Communication Skills (A and C) via the final examination and final paper. In addition to the course-embedded assessment procedure, the Department will analyze student participation in its community outreach activities to assess Civic Participation Skills (A and B). One such means is through the nominations for the Department's annual Kwame Toure Award for outstanding community service and the John Henrik Clarke Award for outstanding contributions to the discipline of African American Studies.

General Education Outcomes provided by African American Studies courses in the core.

The two courses in the university core curriculum include AAS 1140 Introduction to African and African American History and AAS 2010 Introduction to African American Studies.

Goal Ia. Communication-- Students use writing and speaking effectively for different audiences and purposes.

1. Students develop their ideas in written and oral formats.
2. Students use appropriate writing and speaking conventions and formats.
3. Students use writing as a tool for learning.
4. Students demonstrate the ability to incorporate written and oral feedback into revised work.

Goal Ib. Students use speaking effectively for different audiences and purposes.

1. Students develop their ideas in oral formats.
2. Students use appropriate speaking conventions and formats.
3. Students communicate orally one-on-one and in group settings.
4. Students demonstrate the ability to incorporate oral feedback into revised work.

Goal II. Analysis of Information—Students collect, analyze, and interpret data effectively in a variety of settings.

1. Students collect and weigh evidence.
2. Students distinguish the relationships among evidence, hypothesis, and theory.
3. Students draw inferences from written, quantitative, qualitative, mathematical, and sensory data.

Goal III. Critical Thinking-- Students identify important questions and formulate hypotheses and arguments to answer them effectively.

1. Students identify, select, and analyze questions.
2. Students use their proposed answer to generate and explore new questions.
3. Students analyze interdisciplinary scholarship.

Goal IV. Students analyze important contemporary questions effectively.

1. Students analyze contemporary issues within the context of diverse disciplinary perspectives.
2. Students analyze contemporary multicultural, global, and international questions.
3. Students participate in service-learning.

The two course are designed to provide students will competence in critical thinking (Goal III.1); the analysis of important contemporary questions (Goal IV1 and Goal IV2); and Communication (Goal 1b). Instructors will use embedded assessments based on performance on exams to assess these outcomes.

I. African American Studies Graduates

The Department of African American Studies uses the Georgia State University Survey of Recent Graduates to assess student outcomes. Thirteen competencies are included:

1. Ability to articulate ideas in a clear and concise manner
2. Organize and interpret data appropriately

3. Ability to locate and organize information from multiple sources
4. Effectively use technology
5. Work effectively with others
6. Work effectively on your own
7. Apply scientific reasoning in problem-solving
8. Ability to integrate new information with past knowledge
9. Analyze problems from different points of view
10. Develop original ideas
11. Ability to set goals, prioritize tasks, and meet deadlines
12. Get along with people of other racial/ethnic backgrounds
13. Understanding of values and ethical standards

II. Determine how the results will be disseminated and used for program improvement.

The Department of African American Studies' Assessment committee, appointed annually and chaired by the Chair of the Department, will be charged with the evaluation of the data provided by the course-embedded assessments of the learning outcomes of majors, and the general education outcomes provided by African American Studies courses in the core. Data are also drawn from student participation in Departmental community outreach activities and exit interviews. After reviewing the data, the Assessment committee will ascertain the degree to which each of the learning outcomes are mastered by majors and by students in several education courses.

The Assessment committee will report its findings to the faculty. Data that reflect a good to excellent performance indicate that the learning outcomes are being successfully achieved. When data do not meet this standard (good to excellent), the Assessment committee will develop appropriate proposals to modify departmental curricula to improve the quality of student learning. The Assessment committee will also be charged with regularly reviewing and developing assessment indicators, which include course-embedded procedures, student community outreach participation, exit interviews and results from the University's survey of recent graduates for African American Studies graduates.

III. Implementation Timeline

The Department of African American Studies' Assessment Plan will be activated in Fall 2005 after the department completes its program review. In the interim period, the Assessment committee will develop questions for the exit interview during the Fall 2004. The Assessment committee will make its first report to the faculty during Spring 2006. At that time, the Department will submit a yearly Assessment report of the learning outcomes to the Provost's Office.