

# Action Plan for Assessing Student Learning Outcomes Africana Studies Program Western Michigan University

*Approved by Africana Studies Program Faculty and Director: February 19, 2004*

## **I. Introduction:**

The Africana Studies Program at Western Michigan University is an interdisciplinary program leading to a baccalaureate degree (major) in Africana Studies with a choice in one of two emphases/tracks: (1) Black Diaspora Studies or (2) African Studies. This academic unit also offers the “minor” as an academic option. Using methodologies from humanities, fine arts, and social science disciplines, our courses introduce students to examine the structure, organization, problems, and perspectives of Blacks in North America and throughout the African diaspora. They learn how to read difficult texts and to evaluate them in a rigorous, precise manner. Their critical faculty is developed with demanding writing assignments that test their ability to analyze arguments and to define with care basic terms, complex theories, and central concepts. The pedagogy of the Africana Studies Program curriculum engages students in theoretical, practical, and applied learning through classroom, experiential/cultural, and field experience.

Africana Studies is first and foremost concerned with quality instruction that leads to a better understanding of the historical and contemporary dynamics of the African world. The Program exists:

- to provide an excellent university education while challenging and stimulating students to contribute to the development of their communities’ cultural, aesthetic, and economic environments;
- to generate new knowledge and research opportunities within the discipline of Africana Studies;
- to serve the university’s external community with programming that contributes to life long education.

We have six core tenured and tenure-line faculty who teach, mentor, and/or advise 18 undergraduate majors. Two members hold administrative positions within the university. We also serve 20 undergraduate minors and contribute greatly to the liberal arts/general education mission in the College of Arts and Sciences. Africana Studies works collaboratively on research, policy, diversity, and programming with the Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations, the Division of Multicultural Affairs, and other academic units at WMU.

At its core, the term "assessment" means determining how effectively we do what we do. This means identifying and articulating objectives as clearly and as comprehensively as possible, and determining whether, the extent to which, and how those objectives have been met, including what other, perhaps unintended, outcomes have taken place. These determinations should help us increase our effectiveness in meeting our academic mission.

### **Program Mission Statement :**

**Africana Studies** is the study, research, interpretation, and the dissemination of knowledge concerning African American, African, and Caribbean affairs and cultures. Using methodologies from the humanities, fine arts, and social sciences, Africana Studies examines the structure, organization, problems, and perspectives of Blacks in America and the African Diaspora. The academic *major* provide a meaningful liberal arts training for students from any racial or cultural background.

WMU's Mission states: “. . .the institution should be a place for the creation of knowledge, the analysis of and debate of important issues, as well as the exploration of new ways to address critical issues confronting all human life as our world/globe shrinks and our population expands.” Africana Studies prepares students to think critically, to express themselves creatively, to respect cultural diversity, and to make independent contributions to the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual growth of the world community.

### **Major (B.A.) Requirements :**

We offer an interdisciplinary undergraduate baccalaureate degree program with two emphases/tracks: (1) *Black Diaspora Studies* and (2) *African Studies*. The **major** is a concentration of **36 credit hours** in work from required core courses and a combination of approved electives. Both emphases/tracks include a **language requirement** that emphasize the importance of foreign language study (at the 200-level and above). Students in the *African Studies* track are strongly encouraged to look into the study abroad opportunities available through in Africana Studies and the Haenicke Institute. Student majors satisfy **Proficiency 2, Baccalaureate-level writing requirement** by successfully completing *AFS 380: Special Topics in Africana Literature and Culture*.

## II. Program Goals and Objectives:

Upon successful completion of the program of study students (majors) should have acquired the following skills, knowledge, and/or abilities:

- conduct independent research on selected Africana topics
- conduct power analysis of a social/civil/institutional milieu
- write a critical essay using secondary sources
- communicate orally the histories of African and African Diaspora peoples
- use technology to advance professional and personal goals
- recognize the major contribution Africans and Diaspora people made to the development of world civilizations
- understand the functionality of ethnic studies at academic institutions and community groups

## III. Student Learning Outcomes

The Africana Studies major is interdisciplinary and is organized based on five key knowledge areas: *Fine Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Foreign Language, and Contemporary Issues*. Student learning outcomes have been organized according to each of these areas (A-E below). Faculty/instructors are encouraged to consult the list of outcomes when designing their courses, and identify outcomes they will cover beyond those required for the particular course. Africana Studies majors are required to satisfy each of the learning outcomes identified by professors/instructors in their selective courses.

### A. Fine Arts Area Student Learning Outcomes

In all knowledge courses students will:

1. Write a short paper or report reflecting the writing conventions of the disciplinary area, with at least one opportunity for feedback and revision or multiple opportunity for feedback;
2. Identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they appear in their own and others' work;
3. Demonstrate understanding of at least one principal form of artistic expression and the creative process inherent therein;
4. Demonstrate competence in the analytical tools used to interpret that form;
5. Actively participate in artistic activities specifically related to one or more artistic for;
6. Demonstrate knowledge of scholarship on women within a relevant knowledge area;
7. Analyze social conflicts, prejudices, and/or intolerance arising from such issues as racism, ethnic hatred, religious intolerance, sexuality/sexual orientation; and/or disability;
8. Compare the perspective of at least one non-western, third world or developing society with their own;
9. Demonstrate understanding of the connections between science, technology, and/or the environment and society, and the associated benefits, costs, and risks.

## **B. Humanities Area Student Learning Outcomes**

In all knowledge courses students will:

1. Write a short paper or report reflecting the writing conventions of the disciplinary area, with at least one opportunity for feedback and revision or multiple opportunity for feedback;
2. Identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they appear in their own and others' work;
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities;
4. Demonstrate competence in analyzing texts in the humanities;
5. Demonstrate knowledge of the development of the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, and culture of Africana contributions;
6. Demonstrate knowledge of scholarship on women within a relevant knowledge area;
7. Analyze social conflicts, pre prejudices, and/or intolerance arising from such issues as racism, ethnic hatred, religious intolerance, sexuality/sexual orientation, and/or other disability;
8. Compare the perspective of at least one non-western, third world or developing society with their own;
9. Demonstrate understanding of the connections between science, technology, and/or the environment and society, and the associated benefits, costs, and risks.

## **C. Social Science Area Student Learning Outcomes**

In all knowledge courses students will:

1. Write a short paper or report reflecting the writing conventions of the disciplinary area, with at least one opportunity for feedback and revision or multiple opportunity for feedback;
2. Identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they appear in their own and others' work;
3. Demonstrate knowledge of a basic narrative of Africana history: political, economic, social, and cultural including knowledge of unity and diversity in Black society;
4. Demonstrate knowledge of common institutions in Africana society and how they have affected different groups;
5. Demonstrate understanding of Africa's evolving relationship with the rest of the world;
6. Demonstrate understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis;
7. Demonstrate knowledge of major concepts, models, and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences;
8. Demonstrate knowledge of scholarship on women within a relevant knowledge area;
9. Analyze social conflicts, pre prejudices, and/or intolerance arising from such issues as racism, ethnic hatred, religious intolerance, sexuality/sexual orientation, and/or other disability;

10. Compare the perspective of at least one non-western, third world or developing society with their own;
11. Demonstrate understanding of the connections between science, technology, and/or the environment and society, and the associated benefits, costs, and risks.

#### **D. Foreign Language Area Student Learning Outcomes**

Student majors will demonstrate:

- A basic proficiency in the understanding and use of foreign language;
- Knowledge of the distinctive features of culture(s) associated with the language they are studying

#### **E. Contemporary Issues Area Student Learning Outcomes**

Student majors will:

- Analyze a major issue with contemporary and enduring human significance, bringing in perspectives that have an important bearing on the issue(s) from more than one of the following knowledge areas: fine arts, humanities, and social sciences;
- Recognize and articulate relationships between different knowledge areas;
- Locate, evaluate, and synthesize information from a variety of sources;
- Develop and defend well-reasoned arguments;
- Write a major research paper with at least one opportunity for feedback and revision or demonstrate mastery of the course issue(s) in some equivalent manner as determined by the instructor.

### **IV. Targeted Students**

Student outcomes are assessed via multiple instruments and at various times during the instructional careers of majors. Assessment instruments include:

- Assessment of General Knowledge
- Student Survey Questionnaires
- Portfolio maintenance
- Course-embedded measures

These instruments are employed during the start, middle, and end of the students' instructional careers. Additionally, an Assessment Coordinator is appointed each year to track progress, maintain records and student files, and coordinate the distribution of instruments specific to the various levels of students' progress.

1. *Assessment of General Knowledge*- is largely designed to assess whether we have met instructional goals that lead to successful student educational outcomes. The questions found on the instrument cover a wide range of areas in African/Diaspora knowledge. As a measure of competency there are certain relevant movements, philosophies, people, and geographical locations all students should have knowledge of upon completion of the course of instruction in Africana Studies. The General Knowledge questionnaire is administered three times: at the completion of required course AFS 200 Introduction and Foundations to Africana Studies; at the completion of the second sequence course AFS 301 The Black Experience: 1866-Present; and at the completion of AFS 465 Internship Experience. A score of 70% or above indicates satisfactory progress at the freshman/sophomore levels. A score of 80% or above indicates proficiency at the senior level of instruction.
2. *Student Survey Questionnaire*- is designed to assess students' attitudes towards instruction and progress made in subject areas. Students will be administered the questionnaire twice: at the end of the course AFS 380: Special Topics in Africana Literature and Culture and as a required exit instrument for graduating seniors.
3. *Portfolios*-students will maintain a portfolio of their best critical essays/research papers produced during each academic year. The final portfolio will contain at least 4 essays-including the research project produces in AFS 380-and will be collected during the senior semester in AFS 465. Portfolios will be kept in students' files in the department. The portfolio represents the best works of students produced over the course of enrollment in the major program. We wish to ensure that students are well grounded and have reached a level of competency that would allow them to communicate effectively the theories, ideas, and philosophies that undergird the discipline.
4. *Course-embedded measures*- Assessment of learning outcomes will also appear in courses by faculty to encourage the use of their own assessment tools within each course for which they bear responsibility. As aforementioned, faculty/instructors are encouraged to consult the goals for learning outcomes (A-C, and E) when designing their courses, and identify outcomes they will cover beyond those required for the particular course. Africana Studies majors are required to satisfy each of the learning outcomes identified by professors/instructors in their selective courses. In each of the knowledge areas two methods are implemented to assess student learning outcomes. These two measures are:

- (a) Write a short paper or report reflecting the writing conventions of the disciplinary area, with at least one opportunity for feedback and revision or multiple opportunity for feedback;
- (b) Identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they appear in their own and others' work.

### Scoring Rubric for Essays and Portfolios

The student portfolio will contain a minimum of 4 essays produced during various stages of instruction in the degree program. The essays should be indicative of students' best efforts in the composition of research and critical essays. One of the 4 essays must be the final research project produced in AFS 380.

Two faculty members will individually evaluate the essays submitted using the criteria listed below. The final score for the submission will be arrived at via consensus among portfolio raters. The score, with written comments from the faculty members, will be attached to individual essays and placed in the portfolio.

By the end of the program, portfolios with a total score of 232 or above will constitute satisfactory progress in the field of study. Minimally, the Program expects a score of 58 or better on individual essay submissions. A perfect essay score is 84 points.

**Instructions:** Determine level of paper by extent to which criterion for each item is met. All items are level 3, if met.

	<b>1 (D)</b>	<b>2 (C)</b>	<b>3 (B)</b>	<b>4 (A)</b>
<b>MECHANICS</b>	<b>Does not meet expectations</b>	<b>Partially meets expectations</b>	<b>Meets expectations</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations</b>
1. Does the essay contain an introduction, body, and conclusion?				
2. Does the essay contain an explicit thesis statement?				
3. Is the thesis clear, limiting, and debatable?				
4. Is the thesis well supported with details (facts and/or examples)?				
5 Are the supporting details relevant to the central argument (thesis)?				
<b>SUBSCALE TOTAL:</b>				

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 Director, Africana Studies Program  
 Revised Assessment Plan  
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<b>CONTENT</b>				
1. Are the ideas in the essay original?				
2. Does the essay contain substance?				
3. Did you learn something that you had not known before?				
4. Is the content run of the mill/overused and /or standard knowledge?				
<b>SUBSCALE TOTAL:</b>				
<b>GRAMMAR</b>				
1. Does the essay contain run on sentences or comma splices?				
2. Does the essay contain spelling errors?				
3. Is the author's diction level appropriate?				
4. Are there other specific problems with grammar?				
<b>SUBSCALE TOTAL:</b>				
<b>STYLE</b>				
1. Are the author's ideas easy to follow?				
2. Does the author's language flow?				
3. Is the author's use of language compelling?				
4. Does the author use varied syntax?				
<b>SUBSCALE TOTAL:</b>				
<b>USE OF SECONDARY SOURCES</b>				
1. Are the secondary sources used relevant to the central argument?				
2. Are secondary sources effectively used?				
3. Do the secondary sources dominate the work's content?				
4. How well does the author document secondary sources?				
<b>SUBSCALE TOTAL:</b>				
<b>TOTAL SCORE:</b>				

Expectations associated with student performance on all instruments are covered in the previous section and in the table below. The Program expects a score of 70% or above the first two times the general Knowledge Questionnaire is administered and an 80% or above for the third administration of the instrument.

The Student Survey Questionnaire measures responses to instruction and attitudes toward progress, explicitly linking educational outcomes with assessment as well as program objectives.

## V. Timeline for Data Gathering

<b>Assessment Instrument</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Performance Expectation</b>	<b>Program Objective</b>
Performance in AFS 200	Freshman Year	100% of majors will earn a score of 70% or above on General Knowledge Test	To provide a better understanding of the dynamics of the African world experience
Performance in AFS 301	Sophomore Year	100% of majors will earn a score of 70% or above on General Knowledge Test	To provide a better understanding of the dynamics of the African world experience
Performance in AFS 380	Junior Year	100% of majors will earn a scores of 70% or higher on Research Project	To challenge and stimulate students to contribute to the development of their communities and to generate new knowledge and research in the field
Performance in AFS 465	Senior Year	100% of majors will earn a score of 80% or higher on General Knowledge Test	To provide a better understanding of the dynamics of the African world experience and to generate new knowledge and research opportunities in the field
Portfolios	Sophomore-Senior	100% of majors will earn an overall score of 232 or above	To provide better understanding of the dynamics of the African world experience and toe generate new knowledge and research opportunities in the field

## **VI. Using Assessment Data**

At the last department meeting of the academic year, the Program will analyze the assessment data from the performance in AFS 200, 301, 380, and 465 as determined by scores achieved on the General Knowledge Test. We will also analyze the assessment data from performance in AFS 380 as determined by research project grades, and assessment data collected from the portfolio.

Based on the data, the Program will frame goals and consider strategies for meeting its goals and the educational outcome for the students it services. The idea here is to construct an on-going program review for effectiveness.

Students are also encouraged to meet with the advisor twice a semester during the regular academic year. In this way, the Program tracks both progress and needs as meeting outcomes are entered into a form placed in the student's file. See attached form.

## **VII. Assessment Responsibilities**

Assessment will become a permanent performance evaluation plan and curriculum review for Africana Studies. The Assessment Coordinator (beginning 2005) and faculty will make recommendations to the Director based on collected data. The Assessment Coordinator will be appointed by the Director every two years to allow for continuity in planning and development. Given the small faculty size, the assess process will engage each faculty member at all stages during the review processes annually.

The 2004-05 Assessment Team includes:

Dr. Lawrence T. Potter, Jr.                      Director and Assessment Coordinator (2004)

### Members

Dr. Ben Wilson

Dr. Deborah Barnes

Dr. Amos Beyan

Dr. Mustafa Mirzeler

Dr. W. F. Santiago-Valles

**Student Survey Questionnaire**  
**(Exit Questionnaire for Students Enrolled in**  
**AFS 380 and Graduating Seniors)**  
**Africana Studies Program**  
**Western Michigan University**

**INSTRUCTIONS** : Please complete the following survey which is offered for Program assessment purposes only. If Africana Studies is not your major or minor, please skip the questions that are in bold.

- If you are an Africana Studies major or minor, please complete all questions on this form.
- Do not write your name on this form.

1. **What is your sex?** (A) Male (B) Female

2. **What is your racial or ethnic group?**

(A) African American (E) Asian

(B) White (F) Filipino

(C) Mexican American (G) Pacific Islander

(D) Other Hispanic (H) American Indian

(I) Other

3. **Age Group**

(A) 19 and under (D) 30-34 (G) 45-49

(B) 20-24 (E) 35-39 (H) 50-54

(C) 25-29 (F) 40-44 (I) 55 and over

4. **How many years have you been pursuing your current degree at the WMU?**

(A) 1 (B) 2 (C) 3 (D) 4 (E) 5 (F) 6 (G) 7 (H) 8 (I) 9 (J) 10 or more

5. **What is your class level?**

(A) Freshman

(B) Sophomore

(C) Junior

(D) Senior

(E) Post-Baccalaureate

6. **Do you consider yourself primarily:**

(A) A part-time undergraduate student (less than 12 units per semester)

(B) A full-time undergraduate student (12+ units/semester)

(C) A part-time graduate student (less than 9 units/semester)

(D) A full-time graduate student 9+ units/semester)

7. **If you transferred to WMU from another institution, what type of institution was it?**

(A) Did not transfer

(B) A Michigan community college

(C) A community college from outside the state

- (D) Another Michigan State University campus
- (E) A University of Michigan campus
- (F) Another Michigan 4 year campus
- (G) A 4-year college or university from out of state
- (H) A foreign institution

**8. At the time of admission to WMU, what was your class level?**

- (A) Freshman
- (B) Sophomore
- (C) Junior
- (D) Senior
- (E) Other

**9. What sets Africana Studies above/apart from other majors/minors in the College of Arts and Sciences?**

**10. Did you declare a subject other than Africana Studies as a major before declaring Africana Studies as a major?**

- (A) Yes (B) No (C) Not Applicable

**11. If so, what was your previous major?**

**12. Did you declare a subject other Africana Studies as a minor before declaring Africana Studies as a minor?**

- (A) Yes (B) No (C) Not Applicable

**13. If so, what was your minor? Many diverse factors play a part in determining the quality of a student's experience with his/her academic program. Please rate the degree of your satisfaction with the following factors (items 14-31):**

- (A) Very satisfied
- (B) Satisfied
- (C) Neutral
- (D) Dissatisfied
- (E) Very Dissatisfied
- (F) Don't Know

**14. Quality of instruction for courses in major**

**15. Faculty command of the subject**

**16. Faculty ability to communicate the subject matter**

17. **Faculty enthusiasm for teaching**
18. **Faculty preparation for class**
19. **Intellectual stimulation from faculty**
20. **Intellectual stimulation from other student's in major**
21. **Faculty receptivity to student's questions**
22. **Opportunity to examine different points of view**
23. **Fairness and appropriateness of testing, grading and evaluation**
24. **Course work in major that is consistent with the instructor's stated objectives or syllabus**
25. **Relevance of course work to major**
26. **Adequacy of library materials relevant to your major**
27. **Instructional facilities (laboratories, equipment, computers) in major**
28. **Availability of necessary classes in major**
29. **Career guidance from faculty in major**
30. **Academic advising from faculty in major**
31. **Helpfulness of major department's office personnel and /or technical staff**
32. **Overall, how satisfied are you with your instructional experiences with Africana Studies?**
  - (A) Very satisfied
  - (B) Satisfied
  - (C) Neutral
  - (D) Dissatisfied
  - (E) Very Dissatisfied
33. **If you could start college over, would you choose to attend WMU again?**
  - (A) Definitely Yes
  - (B) Probably Yes
  - (C) Uncertain
  - (D) Probably No
  - (E) Definitely No

**34. If you could start college over, would you choose the same major again?**

- (A) Definitely Yes
- (B) Probably Yes
- (C) Uncertain
- (D) Probably No
- (E) Definitely No

**35. I would recommend my major at this campus to others.**

- (A) Strongly Agree
- (B) Agree
- (C) Neutral
- (D) Disagree
- (E) Strongly Disagree

**To what extent did the class \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify course number and title in Africana Studies contribute to your improvement in the following skills (items 36-42):**

- (A) Greatly Contributed
- (B) Somewhat Contributed
- (C) Had little effect
- (D) Had no effect

**36. Your competence to conduct independent research on selected Africana Topics**

**37. Your ability to conduct a power analysis**

**38. Your adeptness in writing a critical essay using secondary sources**

**39. Your proficiency to communicate the history of African and African Disapora people**

**40. Your proficiency in the use of technology to advance professional and personal goals**

**41. Your ability to recognize the major contributions Africans and Diaspora people make to the development of world civilization**