

## Communication Studies Department

### Assessment Report

Example Introduction  
(COST)

Academic Year: 2017-2018

**Mission** It is the mission of the Communication Studies department to engage students in critical inquiry into the functions of language and media, preparing students to make connections across and through our field and to act as reflexive consumers, producers and critics of communication.

#### Introduction

In 2017-2018, we have substantially revised our assessment plan to better reflect the current direction of our department. We have articulated learning outcome goals in areas of theory, method, and reflexive connections. We have also updated all of our department course assessment rubrics to reflect this change and will now assess our curriculum at three different points: the introductory class, the research methods class, and the capstone class. We have also tied each of our assessment items to one of the rubric rows to more clearly identify when we are meeting targets and what areas need more work.

Our goals from last year were largely around creating and maintaining predictability of class sizes following the major curricular revision we completed in 2016-2017. Our classes continue to be enrolled at or over the cap, and we have not had any under-enrolled sections in the last year. As our major grows, we are feeling pressure to increase the class sizes of our research method and capstone classes. These classes are both writing intensive and are already at their limit with our current pedagogical techniques. The capstone application process we implemented in 2016-2017 has continued to allow us to balance students across sections.

The new Exploration and Breadth general education requirements have not diminished the demand for our introductory or elective classes. We continue to be an attractive option for a Humanities credit for students across the university. Public Speaking, although not a Humanities credit, continues to be highly sought after by students outside our major. Last year, we also removed the requirement for all majors to have Public Speaking. We are renumbering this class in the catalog so that it will be listed with our other electives instead of being numbered as an introductory (100-level) course.

#### 1. Goal: Theoretical Proficiency

To lead students to proficiency in theoretical engagement with scholarship in the two main cognate areas of our department: rhetorical studies and critical media studies.

#### Learning Outcome

**1a.** Students will demonstrate fluency in communication theories central to the critical study of rhetoric and media.

| Assessment Mechanism(s) and Target(s)   | Assessment Results   | Target(s) Met/ Not Met?<br>Comments/Improvements   |
|---|--|--|
| Each instructor will assess their class using the department rubric on a single assignment (either focused exam questions or major project) in Critical/Cultural Communication Studies (C/CCS), 70% of students will articulate | 17-18: 112/122 (92%)<br>16-17 46/49 (94%) partial data<br>15-16: 92/102 (90%)<br>14-15: 46/49 (94%) partial data | Target met<br><br>We consistently exceed our target in this area, largely because this course is centered on introducing students to the theories in our |

# Biology Department

## Assessment Report

Example Introduction (BIO)

Academic Year: 2017-2018

### Mission

The Biology Department fosters student understanding of diverse questions and concepts about living systems and the procedures used to study them. We help develop students' abilities in critical thinking, quantitative reasoning and analysis, written communication and information fluency. The courses and experiences offered by the Biology Department prepare students for postgraduate education as well as a variety of personal and career objectives. The faculty members in the Department teach with rigorous academic standards and commitment to student learning.

### Introduction

The Biology Department adopted some new practices for this year's assessment. Upper level students that switched to the 2017-2018 catalog represented our inaugural Capstone course. In response to previous feedback from the Assessment Committee and administration, we created this course that all students will eventually take, either in a four hour or one hour format. The format depends on whether or not students do "Research in Biology" as part of their Biology major. Requirement of this course reduced the number of topical upper-level courses that students take. Consequently, we want to examine how this affects our students' success on the Major Field Test.

For assessments at the introductory level, we added a written assessment of the first year biology lab as well as the oral assessment we have done in the past. We have used the same rubric as used in the Capstone. However, we want to discuss more about standardizing the expectations of performance for the first-years versus seniors. For our writing and oral assessments at the senior level, we chose to only include the numbers from the spring Senior Capstone course for comparative purposes in the future. For this year, this choice excluded any students that did not switch to the new catalog. Those students completed their capstone through independent research or completion of several course undergraduate research experiences (CUREs). However, these students did take the Major Field Test. There did not appear to be any difference in the average performance of students on the "old" versus "new" catalog (i.e. those in the Capstone). Consequently, we feel comfortable using those in the Capstone class as an appropriate comparison group.

For the first time since we incorporated the MFT into our assessments, overall MFT scores failed to meet our expectations. Although the percentage fell just (1%) below our threshold, we have seen a steady decline of scores over the recent years. With a switch of one of our faculty from plant physiology to human genetics, we have not offered as many plant-related courses. Even when we do offer such courses, students often do not opt to take them. Given the pressure on enrollments, we have been hesitant to offer these organismal courses. To respond to this decline, we plan to take a closer look at the content covered by the MFT and see if other courses might

help address the gaps. Based on strong performances in past years, our institutional mean overall still ranks within the 95% percentile.

In the past, we had also used the MFT to assess quantitative skills. However, such assessment lacked comparative data to other institutions. During 2017-2018, we spent our time investigating options for quantitative assessment in the biological sciences. We have chosen to use questions within BioSquare to gain a better understanding of the quantitative abilities of our students at different levels within the curriculum. Some of the assessment data gave conflicting perspectives, from successful improvements in pre- to post-tests in the sophomore Methods class versus an insufficient number of seniors reporting confidence in whether or not they learned to statistically analyze and interpret data. We plan to spend some time during the 2018-2019 academic year improving our assessment for quantitative reasoning.

For Seniors, we also re-instated the self-assessment Biology Senior Survey for all seniors graduating in May or August (N=21). In general, the students self-rated their experience and knowledge gained as favorable (~ 4 or “Agree” on a scale of 5). Areas of concern included statistically analyzing and interpreting quantitative data, comparing and contrasting functioning of cells with distinct types of metabolism, and describing cycling of nutrients within an ecosystem. We also learned that over half of the Biology majors did not have a Biology faculty advisor, which may hamper their navigation through the biology curriculum. A smaller percentage of students expressed interest in taking the MCAT or GRE this year. Depending on our students’ ambitions, this information may influence the offerings of courses in the future.

Overall, The Biology Department has experienced a period of instability in terms of staffing. We had visitors in position since our most recent retirement and several faculty took sabbaticals within the last 2-3 years. Fortunately, we have had reliable Visiting Faculty in place in the first year sequence and Methods. With our new hire coming on board soon, we hope to regain some more consistency. In addition, we will be examining our assessment practices in more detail as we prepare for our external review.

**1. Goal**

Students will understand and apply knowledge and concepts about the functioning of living systems

**Learning Outcome**

**1a.** Students will understand and apply detailed knowledge and concepts in cellular, molecular, organismal, ecological, and evolutionary biology.

| Assessment Mechanism(s) and Target(s)  | Assessment Results  | Target(s) Met/ Not Met? Comments/Improvements  |
|--|---|--|
| <p><b>Senior majors</b> take the Biology Major Field Test, a standard, nationally-normed test designed to “assess mastery of concepts, principles and knowledge expected of students who have completed or are nearing completion” of a major in Biology. Our institutional mean</p> | <p>Our institutional mean (n=30) placed us in the 84th percentile of the hundreds of institutions using the MFT nationally.</p> <p>2016-2017 n=40, 94<sup>th</sup> percentile<br/>                     2015-2016 n=23, 92<sup>nd</sup> percentile<br/>                     2014-2105 n=24, 99<sup>th</sup> percentile</p> | <p>Target not met. Our institutional performance slipped just below the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile for the first time since we began administering the test in 2012-2013. Examination of sub-scores indicates that performance has particularly fallen off in the area of plant organismal biology. We</p> |

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| <p><b>Students in introductory course for majors</b> write a research report. Assessment is by the Biology Department Writing Assessment. This includes five dimensions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) organization and clarity;</li> <li>2) content and supporting evidence;</li> <li>3) student comprehension;</li> <li>4) mechanics;</li> <li>5) format.</li> </ol> <p>For each dimension, 75% of students will meet the rubric criteria for “accomplished” or “exemplary.”</p> | <p>Accomplished or Exemplary:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Organization: 90% (77 of 86)</li> <li>2) Content: 77% (66 of 86)</li> <li>3) Comprehension: 71% (61 of 86)</li> <li>4) Mechanics: 78% (67 of 86)</li> <li>5) Format: 98% (84 of 86)</li> </ol> <p style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Example Targets (BIO)</p>   | <p>Target met on 4 out of 5 dimensions.</p> <p>The evaluation of students at the Introductory year has been more “forgiving” than the evaluation of students in the capstone. In the future, we are considering the implications of using the same standards to evaluate each group, and changing the target for the Introductory students.</p>   |
| <p><b>Capstone students</b> write a research report or review paper. Assessment is by the Biology Department Writing Assessment. This includes five dimensions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) organization and clarity;</li> <li>2) content and supporting evidence;</li> <li>3) student comprehension;</li> <li>4) mechanics;</li> <li>5) format.</li> </ol> <p>For each dimension, 75% of students will meet the rubric criteria for “accomplished” or “exemplary.”</p>          | <p>Accomplished or Exemplary:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Organization: 70% (7 of 10)</li> <li>2) Content: 90% (9 of 10)</li> <li>3) Comprehension: 70% (7 of 10)</li> <li>4) Mechanics: 80% (8 of 10)</li> <li>5) Format: 100% (of 10)</li> </ol> <p>2016-2017</p> <p>Accomplished or Exemplary:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Organization: 79% (23 of 29)</li> <li>2) Content: 69% (20 of 29)</li> <li>3) Comprehension: 76% (22 of 29)</li> <li>4) Mechanics: 76% (22 of 29)</li> <li>5) Format: 90% (of 29)</li> </ol> <p>2015-2016</p> <p>Accomplished or Exemplary:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Organization: 86% (25 of 29)</li> <li>2) Content: 76% (22 of 29)</li> <li>3) Comprehension: 86% (26 of 29)</li> <li>4) Mechanics: 72% (21 of 29)</li> <li>5) Format: 86% (25 of 29)</li> </ol> <p>Over three-year period (2015-2018):</p> <p>Accomplished or Exemplary:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Organization: 81% (55 of 68)</li> <li>2) Content: 75% (51 of 68)</li> <li>3) Comprehension: 79% (54 of 68)</li> <li>4) Mechanics: 75% (51 of 68)</li> <li>5) Format: 90% (61 of 68)</li> </ol> | <p>Target met for three of the five dimensions. In future years, as more biology majors are in catalogs that require the capstone course, we will have a greater sample sizes for these measures.</p> <p>For Organization, students had the option of writing on different topics, which may have contributed to a lack of standard organization. Several students also wrote on the topic of epigenetics, a generally new and complex topic to comprehend in a single course.</p> <p>Over a three-year period, the target was met for all five writing dimensions.</p> |

**1b.** Students will be able to identify three major theoretical paradigms in sociology—structural-functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. Students will be able to define and apply one major theoretical paradigm.

| Assessment Mechanism(s) and Target(s)  | Assessment Results  | Target(s) Met/Not Met? Comments/Improvements   |
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| <p><b>INTRO</b><br/>85% of all students in introductory Sociology classes will correctly answer a multiple-choice question on an in-class exam which asks them to identify the three major theoretical paradigms in sociology.</p>                                 | <p>114- 128/139 (92%)<br/>124- 92/93 (99%)</p> <p><u>2016-2017</u><br/>114- 132/147(90%)<br/>124- 68/71(96%)</p> <p><u>2015-2016</u><br/>114- 81/94 (86%)<br/>124- 105/107 (98%)</p> <p><u>2014-2015</u><br/>114- 138/162 (85%)<br/>124- 60/62 (97%)</p>  | <p>Target Met</p> <p>No improvement needed at this time</p>  |
| <p><b>INTRO</b><br/>70% of all students in introductory Sociology classes will score 70% or better on a question on an in-class essay question which asks them to define and apply one of the major theoretical paradigms in sociology.</p>                        | <p>114- 125/139 (90%)<br/>124- 53/95 (56%)</p> <p><u>2016-2017</u><br/>114- 125/147 (85%)<br/>124- 44/71 (62%)</p> <p><u>2015-2016</u><br/>114- 75/95 (79%)<br/>114- 74/110 (67%)</p> <p><u>2014-2015</u><br/>114- 132/162 (81%)<br/>124- 42/62 (68%)</p> | <p>Target Met in one course, but not the other</p> <p>The relevant professors will discuss these results and compare exam timing (either at the midterm or the final) and essay questions.</p> |
| <p><b>THEORY</b><br/>85% of students in the Sociological Theory class will perform at a satisfactory level (a grade of C) or above on an essay question which asks them to describe and compare and contrast the three major paradigms in Sociological Theory.</p> | <p>17/17 (100%)</p> <p><u>2016-2017</u><br/>5/6 (83%)</p> <p><u>2015-2016</u><br/>10/11(91%)</p> <p><u>2014-2015</u><br/>12/14 (86%)</p>  | <p>Target Met</p> <p>*Rubric attached</p> <p>C or higher for the entire paper was used as the target. The whole rubric was evaluated.</p> <p>No improvement needed at this time</p>            |
| <p><b>SENIOR ORAL</b><br/>Department faculty will determine that 100% of graduating majors provide acceptable answers to a question in the senior oral final exam that asks students to identify and</p>   | <p>7/7 (100%) <i>on second attempt</i></p> <p><u>2016-2017</u><br/>9/9 (100%)</p> <p><u>2015-2016</u><br/>14/14(100%) <i>on second attempt</i></p>  | <p>Target Met</p> <p>No improvement needed at this time. The Sociology professors have agreed to discontinue the oral final and assess this</p>  |

Example Results (SOC)

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| <p>Embedded final exam questions were used in selected courses to assess student mastery of targeted core content. Reported data reflects students meeting the minimum standard on each embedded exam problem, as determined by the supervising faculty member. Our goal is that at least 70% of students succeed on these questions. (Direct Measure)</p> |   |  |
| <p><b>CS Major course:</b><br/><b>Computer Science II</b></p>  | <p><b>2017-2018 Computer Science II</b><br/><b>(2 sections reporting)</b></p>   |  |
| <p><b>CSII Targeted SLO1:</b><br/>Students should learn how to use and implement standard abstract data types such as queues, binary heap, stacks, and binary search trees, including both linked and contiguous implementations, as appropriate.</p>  | <p><b>SLO 1 Result:</b><br/>13 of 24 students succeeded (54.2%)<br/>[Last year: 12 of 21 (57.1%)<br/>4-year totals: 47 of 78 (60.2%)]</p> | <p>Target Not Met. The question has multiple parts and students don't seem to be answering all the parts. In the future, we may try to write the question in a way that it's clear there are three questions to answer. In addition, the Spring section of CS II was not introduced to an important topic (recursion) in their CS I course and that concept is important for understanding this SLO.</p> |
| <p><b>CSII Targeted SLO2:</b><br/>Students should learn how to analyze the runtime and space complexity of algorithms, first informally, with an introduction to more formal analyses.</p>   | <p><b>SLO 2 Result:</b><br/>18 of 24 students succeeded (75%)<br/>[Last year: 18 of 21 (85.7%)<br/>4-year totals: 55 of 78 (70.5%)]</p>   | <p>Target Met.</p>   |
| <p><b>CSII Targeted SLO 3:</b><br/>Students should understand the following sorting algorithms, and their tradeoffs: selection, insertion, heap, merge, binary tree, quick.</p>  | <p><b>SLO 3 Result:</b><br/>16 of 24 students succeeded (66.6%)<br/>[Last year: 16 of 21 (76.2%)<br/>4-year totals: 49 of 78 (62.8%)]</p> | <p>Target Not Met. Generally, students seem to understand this question or confuse it with another similar type of sort. Again, with some better phrasing we may get better results. In addition, the Spring section of CS II was not introduced to an important topic (recursion) in their CS I course and that concept is important for understanding this SLO.</p>                                    |

Example Comments/  
Improvements (CSCI)

3. **Goal**

Students will critically reflect on activist practices.

Example Rubric Use (FST)

**Learning Outcome**

3a. Students will demonstrate the ability to critique and evaluate activist practices and strategies.

| Assessment Mechanism(s) and Target(s)   | Assessment Results   | Target(s) Met/ Not Met? Comments /Improvements   |
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| <p><b>INTRODUCTORY LEVEL</b><br/> <b>Activism Rubric, item I.</b><br/>           80% of essays/projects in Introduction to Feminist Studies will be evaluated as “good” or “excellent” according to our rubric in their critical evaluation of activist practices and strategies.</p> | <p>100% (18/18) of papers/projects were evaluated as “good” or “excellent” according to our rubric in their critical evaluation of activist practices and strategies.</p> <p>Previous years:<br/>           2016-2017: 89% (40/45)<br/>           2015-2016: 84% (37/44)<br/>           2014-2015: 75% (15/20)</p> | <p>Target met.</p> <p>We added more readings on contemporary feminist activism to the syllabus, which allowed for more explicit conversations about activist strategies. We also added several questions about different feminist approaches to a problem to the midterm exam. Both of these changes gave students more opportunities to practice this kind of comparative work before doing this assignment.</p> <p>As mentioned in last year’s report, we dropped the number of response papers back down to 8 (after an experiment with assigning more [15] as a way to highlight the importance of course readings). Most students reported in their evaluations and during in-class conversations that the high number led them to read more quickly and less thoroughly.</p> |

**Rubric / Guidelines & Expectations for Activism Project:  
Introduction to Feminist Studies**

Example Rubric Use (FST)

**I. COMPARISON BETWEEN AND ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENT ACTIVIST STRATEGIES:**

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| <b>Below Basic:</b> The analysis is often confused and incoherent. The paper/project is wholly descriptive, lacks meaningful analysis, and ideas are not developed or supported. The paper/project does not identify specific activist strategies. |  |
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| <b>Basic:</b> The paper/project makes an attempt to address the topic, but the analysis is weaker than it could be. It contains good ideas, but they are not developed fully enough, nor are they all well-supported. The paper/project identifies specific activist strategies at work in the materials. |  |
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| <b>Good:</b> The paper/project mostly stays focused on the topic and offers a relevant analysis of the materials. Most of the ideas are fairly well developed and fairly well supported. The paper/project identifies specific activist strategies at work in the materials and evaluates them based on course readings and discussions. |  |
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| <b>Excellent:</b> The paper/project stays focused on the topic and offers a meaningful and relevant analysis of the materials. Ideas are developed fully and with specificity. The paper/project identifies specific activist strategies at work in the materials and insightfully evaluates them based on course readings and discussions. |  |
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**II. ORGANIZATION:**

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| <b>Below Basic:</b> The paper/project is not well-organized and the meaning is hard to ascertain; it lacks a clear overarching structure. |  |
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| <b>Basic:</b> The paper/project has an overarching structure, but there are places where it loses focus. |  |
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| <b>Good:</b> Most of the paper/project is well-organized. Instances of inconsistency or confusion are rare. |  |
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| Assessment Mechanism(s) and Target(s)  | Assessment Results  | Target(s) Met/ Not Met? Comments/Improvements   |
|--|---|---|
| Assignments (Character Analysis) from THE73-184 (Fundamentals of Acting-Intro Level) will be rated good or excellent in analyzing and interpreting plays in connection with executing practical skills. Target: 80% per departmental rubric (see Attachment A) | 9/11 majors were rated Excellent, and 2/11 were rated Good. 11/11 of our majors reached or exceeded the level of Good (100%). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No previous data available (see comment in Target(s)' column)</li> </ul> | Standard met. We are now assessing students separately for the two categories (Character analysis and Scene Score). We have been requesting students to include their best Character Analyses in their Capstone portfolio. In addition, students' Character Analyses for productions are now shared with all students, as a way to make "public" not only the performance, but also the research process. |

**Learning Outcome**

**1b.** Students will demonstrate the ability to prepare a scene from a play in connection with executing practical skills.

Example Rubric Use (THEA)

| Assessment Mechanism(s) and Target(s)   | Assessment Results  | Target(s) Met/ Not Met? Comments /Improvements |
|---|---|--|
| Assignments (Scene Score) from THE73-184 (Fundamentals of Acting-Intro Level) will be rated good or excellent in analyzing and interpreting plays in connection with executing practical skills. Target: 80% per departmental rubric (see Attachment A) | 4/11 majors were rated Excellent, 6/11 were rated Good, and 1/1 was rated Acceptable. 10/11 of our majors reached or exceeded the level of Good (91%). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No previous data available (see comment in previous Target(s)' column)</li> </ul> | Standard met.                                  |

**1. Goal**

To empower theatre students to demonstrate competence in critical and analytical skills in connection with creativity, research, and writing.

**Learning Outcome**

**2a.** Students will demonstrate competence in the elements and principles of design. They will explore ideas using images, artifacts, and artwork in order to help guide the viewer understand their chosen emotion in the creation of their "Emotion in a Box Project".

| Assessment Mechanism(s) and Target(s)  | Assessment Results   | Target(s) Met/ Not Met? Comments /Improvements   |
|--|--|--|
| Assignments (Emotion in a Box) from THE72-164 (Design Fundamentals - Intro Level) will be rated good or excellent in the "Use of Art Elements and Principles". Target: 80% per | 11/14 majors were rated Excellent, and 3/14 were rated Good. 14/14 of our majors reached or exceeded the level of Good (100%). | Standard met. The creation of a rubric (shared with students) has helped students (especially majors) to improve on this assignment. |

**Attachment A**  
**RUBRIC: ACTING FUNDAMENTALS**  
**FALL 2018**  
**Instructor:**  
**11 Students enrolled**

Example Rubric Use (THEA)

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| STUDENT: | FACULTY EVALUATOR: |
|----------|--------------------|

|  | <u>EXCELLENT:</u> has all the listed elements; uses quality materials; is free of errors; mistakes and typos. No revision required. | <u>GOOD:</u> has all of the listed elements; contains minor errors of execution or quality. Some revision is appropriate. | <u>ACCEPTABLE/UNACCEPTABLE:</u> missing one or more of the listed elements; has major or distracting errors of execution or quality. Substantial revision required. |
|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Character Analysis:</b> Bibliographic information on play; production history; basic author bio & info; brief synopsis; given circumstances; relationship to other characters; character's primary goal, principal obstacle(s), main actions taken, end result. |   |   |   |
| <b>Scene Score:</b> copy of scene, divided into units/beats; intentions, obstacles, actions and results written for each unit.   |   |   |   |