

# How Anth Has Closed the Assessment Loop

**As a result of the 2007-2008 Assessment of Multi-cultural content, Anthropology has implemented several changes within our program. These changes are:**

- Addition of Teaching Assistants for all S/M Anth 100 and S/M Anth 101 sections. These Gen-ed oriented courses account for approximately half of all students in Anthropology courses per semester. These TA's are upper division Anthropology majors who have already mastered the content of the specific courses. The TA's are required to participate in a teaching practicum and hold office hours. TA's in Anth 101 sections conduct review sessions before exams. Most importantly, TA's act as tutors for students who are having difficulty with the multi-cultural content of the courses. Assessing the impact of having these students act as tutors is difficult, but we have received many positive comments from students in Anth 100 and Anth 101 on the SOFI's in these courses, indicating the usefulness of having the TA's available to students, especially for international and EOP/AOP students.
- Expansion of the use of wiki entries in S/M Anth 100 (Aimers section), M/ Anth 224, M/ Anth 226, S/M Anth 229, and S/M Anth 235 so that students can actively engage in and help to create the multi-cultural content of these courses.
- Addition of the use of a pre-test in S/M Anth 215 to more accurately measure the change in students knowledge of multi-cultural content as a result of the course content.
- Shifting to use of primary source materials, as opposed to text books, in S/M Anth 207, S/M Anth 215, M/ Anth 224, M/ Anth 226, S/M Anth 235, and S/M Anth 243. Moving away from text book learning to primary source material in these courses provides a better context for engaging students in an interactive, discussion based approach to learning multi-cultural content. As noted above, discussions in several of these courses occur on the wiki, while the others are in-class discussions.

**As a result of the 2008-2009 Assessment of Writing Competency and Theoretical Competency, Anthropology has implemented a few minor adjustments to the program, but left other aspects of the program unchanged. These decisions are:**

- Based on the results of the two means used to assess Theoretical Competency, we were generally satisfied with the results and decided to leave the theory sequence of Anth 310 and Anth 321 intact. Comments from former Anthropology students indicated very positive application in both graduate school and in jobs related to the discipline of their understanding of Anthropological Theory and the critical thinking skills which are emphasized in these courses.
- The assessment of Writing Competency has led us to begin to revise our writing requirement. While it appears that in general students are developing as writers, the results of the assessment were somewhat inconclusive and difficult to interpret. It was our judgment that the problem in the assessment was the inability to track the changes in writing competency from the beginning of the students acceptance into the major to the end of the program because students were self-selecting the papers that they included in their file to fulfill the department writing requirement. Beginning this year, we scanned the very first paper students wrote in Anth 105 - Intro to Physical Anthropology as pdfs and have stored them on our server space minus the title pages that include student names. Anth 105 is a required course for our majors and is only taught once a year in the Fall Semester, so the vast majority of Anthropology majors will take the course early in their tenure as majors because it is also a key pre-requisite for later courses in the major. Also beginning this year we will do the same thing for final papers in 300-level courses, especially Anth 301, Anth 307, Anth 313, and Anth 346 which have final papers and are popular senior courses. These two sets of papers will be used in the next writing assessment after which we will formally change the writing requirement for the major and make other appropriate changes if warranted by the results.

**As a result of the 2009-2010 Assessment of Library Literacy and Research Methods, Anthropology has implemented a couple of changes to our program. These changes are:**

- As documented in our Library Literacy results, we have noted a significant lack of sophistication in our student's use of scholarly library research tools. Undergraduates appear to be particularly weak in recognizing and using scholarly resources and need to hone these skills by formal instruction in the classroom. The results also show that library instruction sessions significantly improve the students as both scholars and researchers, especially enhancing their search and locate abilities. Therefore we have decided to more actively embed library instruction in our major at the 100 and 200 level. For Fall semester 2010, several courses added 1-2 library instruction sessions. These courses are: Anth 100 (Krumrine and Aimers sections), Anth 204, Anth 207, Anth 216, and Anth 235. Only Anth 100 (Krumrine section) and Anth 216 had library sessions planned prior to this decision, and as a result of the decision the number of sessions in Anth 216 were increased.
- Our assessment of Research Methods showed two things. First, we found that students ability to successfully conduct independent research projects is limited by their inability to search and locate the appropriate scholarly research in order to provide them with thorough literature reviews. Without the appropriate background information their research projects lacked context and sophistication. We believe the changes implemented above to Library Literacy will help to address this problem. Second, we found that the course we set-up to organize independent student research, Anth 392 - Undergraduate Research Seminar, did not work well because the students involved in the course required too much input from the professors who specialize in the topics they were interested in for their research projects. Likewise, one semester the professor with the necessary specialty for two of the student projects was on sabbatical and the professor teaching the seminar found it difficult to properly supervise these projects. As a result of the unsatisfactory nature of Anth 392, we have decided to abandon the seminar format and return to the directed study approach that prevailed prior to creating the course. The one main positive of the seminar, which provides a format for students to practice their GREAT Day and professional presentations in front of peers, will be maintained independent of the course.

**As a result of the 2010-2011 Assessment of Human Diversity and Oral Competency, Anthropology will make minor changes and leave aspects of the program unchanged:**

- We implemented pre/post test assessments in two of the courses included in this cycle. This approach will be expanded in future assessments as a second means of assessment.

- This cycle is the first since all of the human diversity sections added tutoring through hand-selected teaching assistants. We also incorporated more discussion of current social and economic issues into the course formats (including Anth 100, Anth 105, Anth 215, and Anth 243), added wiki work (Anth 100, Anth 229, and ANTH 235), and replaced textbooks with original sources in several courses (including Anth 207, Anth 215, and Anth 243). We are encouraged by our overall results and will continue to expand the incorporation of these changes into our courses between now and the next assessment cycle for this learning outcome.
- There was a noticeable across the board improvement in student success in these courses since the 2007-2008 cycle, but we feel that the rubric we are using needs to be improved. We are creating a working group to look at all of our rubrics.
- Results in oral competency were generally encouraging. Of the assessment categories, expression is consistently the lowest scoring category. These data suggest that our students are relatively competent at organizing and creating presentations, but that they need continuing practice expressing their results to a group. Consequently, the Department of Anthropology has decided to maintain its commitment to providing students with opportunities to orally present their research results in our courses. This will continue to occur at each level of the program. One of the problems we see with the current standards is that the bar they set is fairly low for exceeding the standards. While this does not deter students from becoming orally proficient, it does limit our ability to assess the level of competency they are achieving. We will make minor adjustments in the rubric to raise the bar across all areas of oral competency. In light of her findings in Anth 204, Barb Welker noted that she will continue to require all of her 200- and 300-level students to conduct a formal presentation of their literature reviews. This year she included a library literacy component with conducting the literature review. For the second means of assessment in the next cycle we will have the students use the same rubric as the professors to evaluate the oral presentations.

**As a result of the 2011-2012 Assessment of Writing Competency, Anthropology has implemented minor changes to our program. These changes are:**

- This writing assessment used the 100 vs. the 300 level papers for maximal comparison and shifted to use of a modified AAC&U rubric on assessing writing competency.
- After this assessment, the department writing requirement will be changed to requiring students to pass either Anth 201 or Anth 204 with a C- or higher grade. These courses will both be taught by Dr. Welker and she will use a draft and revisions process during the course to improve student writing. The change will concentrate the focus on writing within two similarly structured courses both with the same instructor. Similarly, we have now implemented writing at all levels of the program.

**As a result of the 2012-2013 Assessment of Research Methods, Anthropology will implement changes to our program. These changes are:**

- We are unsatisfied with the research methods requirement in the program as currently conceived because it comes off as too much of a cookbook approach. Methods are embedded throughout the program, but especially in courses with active, hands-on learning experiences. We will make changes to the program to include a transformational learning requirement. By having students engage in anthropology methods themselves, the change from a these are methods to this is how methods work approach will be complete.
- Directed studies (Anth 399) and honor's research/writing (Anth 393) will be counted as transformational learning experiences and the Anthropology faculty is encouraged to offer and engage students in these manners.

**As a result of the 2013-2014 Assessment of Human Diversity and Oral Competency, Anthropology will implement minor changes to our program. These changes are:**

- Assessment of human diversity will remain unchanged, but next cycle this assessment needs to get back on track.
- While students appear to be doing very well in this learning outcome, the oral competency rubric will be changed again to reflect more subtle issues in student presentations and in ways that raise the bar even further. The student feedback form will also be simplified to see if the tendency for students to not be critical of one another remains consistent regardless of the instrument.

**As a result of the 2014-2015 Assessment of Competency in Theoretical Perspectives, Anthropology will implement changes to our program and leave other aspects unchanged. These changes are:**

- Both theory courses will be re-numbered to 400 level to reflect their status as capstone senior level seminars.
- The program will be changed to eliminate alternative electives to the second theory option. Instead, students will now choose between either Anth 410: Classical Theory, or Anth 421: Contemporary Theory. This decision will also have the effect of spreading the seniors among the two courses, serving to reduce the overall class size in both, but especially in Anth 410, which had experienced course sizes in the 28-30 student range between 2010-2014. These are clearly too many students to run an effective seminar with when expecting daily preparation and participation.
- Because of the clearly lower success that students had describing and contextualizing Anthropological theorists in ANTH 410, a review day was added to the syllabus on the final day of the course before the final. During the review, all of the theorists covered during the semester will be summarized and compared and contrasted with each other. Use of the large white-boards in Bailey 110 facilitates listing all of the theorists at once so that connections can be made between them.
- Self-selected responses from former students show a significant level of satisfaction with the content and approach taken in both courses. These will be left intact as it looks like the courses are doing a good job of preparing students for graduate school and other life experiences which require critical thinking skills.

**As a result of the 2015-2016 Assessment of Writing Competency, Anthropology is implementing a couple of new changes to our program. These changes are:**

- The department writing requirement is being shifted entirely into one course, Human Ecology, Anth 204, which will be re-numbered Anth 316. The number of students taking Anth 201 has tailed off considerably, plus it is much more specialized than Anth 316. By placing all of the department writing requirement in Anth 316 it will allow us to have a more uniform set of writing assignments. Plus we will also benefit from linking the requirement to a course which has a major emphasis in sustainability.
- Anth 105, which is used as the 100 level course for the comparative writing assessment will be re-instituted as a required course for every major. This course will also be required as a pre-requisite of Anth 316. Thus, writing in Anth 316 will build upon writing in Anth 105, INTD 105, 200 level courses - including the Humanities sequence, finishing with 300 level courses in the major which we will use for the writing assessment.