

Programmatic SLO Assessment Report

Degree: Bachelor of Arts

Major/Option: Psychology

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- 1) Student Learning Outcome Assessed:** Recognize well-founded theories, research designs, psychological phenomena and conclusions.
- 2) Strategy or method(s) of measurement:** There were two strategies utilized for measuring this SLO, both summarizing data from a Senior Capstone course taught by Dr. Kurt Stellwagen. His report follows:

This instructional domain encompasses both the general curriculum of Capstone and the material the students generate when they complete 30-minute oral presentations on a specific topic pertaining to the treatment of the mentally ill.

The first was simply administering multiple choice exams that measured the student's mastery of the development of psychology as a science throughout the modern age. Exam material included the major theories of psychology, the major theorists who contributed to the formation of the theories, key terminology, conceptual frameworks utilized, etc. The second was grading the student presentations that were generated. Grading was focused on: (1) the student's ability to grasp the overall historical zeitgeist of a given time and how this affected the manner in which the mentally ill were treated; (2) the student's ability to utilize appropriate research (e.g., using journal articles rather than web based information sites such as Wikipedia); (3) the student's ability to understand how psychological/psychiatric theories evolve over time; (4) the student's ability to understand how psychological theories impact the way mental illness is conceptualized and mentally ill people are treated.

- 3) Observations gathered from data:** Capstone students are motivated senior psychology majors and, in general, they receive moderately high grades. For the exams, average grades were approximately 83% with a large percentage of the class scoring in the "A and B" range. There were some consistent difficulties noted, however. These included both predictable difficulties (e.g., students had trouble remembering the names of historical figures) and some counterintuitive difficulties (e.g., students often missed items that assessed material that they had encountered in previous classes). In explaining the later findings, students typically report that they become "overconfident" when the Capstone class covers material that overlaps with curricular topics covered in previous classes. I have concluded that the student's own sense of the depth and breadth of their knowledge regarding psychology is somewhat inflated.

In general the oral presentations the students deliver are very good and most students receive either “A” or “B” grades on this material. However, one specific problem I have noticed is that the students continue to be confused regarding the instruction to “not utilize electronic resources such as Wikipedia although it is fine to download an electronic copy of a peer-reviewed journal article.” Consistently, some students are confused by this instruction and don’t appear to have an intuitive grasp of the distinction. Of course, this difficulty may also relate to students failing to attend all the classes (and therefore receive all of the pertinent assignment instructions) and/or poor attention and multitasking in class.

- 4) **Actions recommended based on observations:** My observations in Capstone suggest that many students reach my class while continuing to struggle with the basics of how to utilize psychological research (e.g., understanding the basics of what—and what does not—constitute an acceptable/legitimate research source or citation). It does appear that the classes in the Psychology Department’s “research sequence” (i.e., Psychology 309 and 313) need to strongly emphasize the “nuts and bolts” of how to utilize research.
- 5) Plan and timetable for taking action.
 - Fall 2013: talk about having a meeting with undergrad committee to address this during the current year
- 6) Overall evaluation of progress on outcome
 - We have adopted new SLOs for next year that align with APA teaching of undergrad psychology standards.