

Degree/Certificate: Women's & Gender Studies BA

Major/Option: same

Submitted by: Elizabeth A. Kissling

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Part I – Program SLO Assessment Report for 2015-16

Part I – for the 2015-16 academic year: Because Deans have been asked to create College-Level Synthesis Reports annually, the template has been slightly modified for a) clarity for Chairs and Directors, and b) a closer fit with what the Deans and Associate Deans are being asked to report.

1. **Student Learning Outcome:** The student performance or learning objective as published either in the catalog or elsewhere in your department literature.

WGS Program SLO #5: Students will analyze the role of language in producing and perpetuating cultural attitudes.

2. **Overall evaluation of progress on outcome:** Indicate whether or not the SLO has been met, and if met, to what level.

_____ SLO is met after changes resulting from ongoing assessments, referencing assessment results from the previous year to highlight revisions;

_____ SLO is met, but with changes forthcoming;

 X SLO is met without change required

3. **Strategies and methods:** Description of assessment method and choices, why they were used and how they were implemented.

This goal is central in many WGS courses and frequently indirectly assessed. It is principal objective in WMST/CMST 314, Gender and Communication, and was directly assessed in two homework assignments.

- a. The “Sex/Gender and Voice” assignment was developed to help students recognize communication and language as productive rather than as products of gender. Secondary goals were to teach students to avoid generalizing about sex/gender and to apply course knowledge to current events.

This assignment was one of the weekly homework assignments completed on the Canvas discussion board. These assignments are typically brief and open-ended with less rigid grading criteria than formal essays, intended to prompt discussion among class members as well as reinforce course reading assignments. The assignment required students to view two recent

speeches online, both delivered in September 2015, by female candidates for their party's presidential nomination: Former Secretary Clinton spoke to the Democratic National Committee Summer Meeting, and Carly Fiorina spoke to the National Federation of Republican Women Convention. Students were required to comment on how the two speakers' presentation style produced gender effects, prompted by the following list:

1. relevant contextual information
2. the speaker's delivery style and tone (attitude toward audience and attitude toward subject)
3. evidence of stereotypical masculine and feminine styles of speech
4. evidence of intersectional identity
5. gendered/sexed topics and roles
6. ways in which your own and audiences responses may be gendered/sexed
7. communication effectiveness and the influences of speaker style

b. In another weekly homework assignment, students were asked to respond to a question about the linguistic process of resignification, sometimes also called reclaiming, as a strategy for dealing with negative words. They were required to defend their position about whether or not resignification of negative words for women is possible. Yes and no answers can be correct, as long as the student shows an understanding of the process and puts forward a well-reasoned explanation for their position.

4. **Observations gathered from data:** Include findings and analyses based on the strategies and methods identified in item #3.

3a. Findings:

25 students submitted responses to this assignment. Average score was 2.48/3; low score = 0, high score = 4 (answers occasionally receive extra points for excellence).

3a. Analysis of findings:

Student comments generally displayed strong analysis of communication behavior displayed by the two speakers, including use of terms and concepts from class in their analyses. For example, several students noted that Secretary Clinton uses more of a 'report' style of speaking, which some researchers believe is more common among masculine speakers (contrasted to a 'rapport' style, purported to be more common among feminine speakers). Students were attentive to nonverbal behaviors as well as content of the speeches:

"Fiorina walks around the stage tilting her hips from side to side and bobbling her head as she speaks."

"Her [Clinton's] example of single mothers and paying for college funds does seem more towards women issues."

“When watching the speech by Carly Fiorina, it became clear to me that she felt the need to clarify to others that she was to be taken seriously. She had to make the audience believe that she was not just some woman”

“One of the first things I noticed while listening to her [Clinton’s] speech was that she emphasized certain points of her speech. Like, for example, when she would talk about things like reproductive rights for women, equal pay, controlling gun violence, stricter gun laws, and the Black Lives Matter movement.”

3b. Findings

25 students submitted responses to this assignment. Average score was 2.92/3; low score = 0, high score = 4 (answers occasionally receive extra points for excellence).

3b. Analysis of Findings

Student comments generally displayed solid understanding of resignification and thoughtful consideration of possibilities. Many discussed the limited success of resignification of **bitch**; several pointed to the nearly wholly successful reclamation of **queer**. A few students presented doubts resignification is truly possible, citing examples of terms such as **c-nt** and **n---er**, and the problematic attempts to reclaim **slut** in recent Slutwalk anti-rape protests.¹

5. What program changes will be made based on the assessment results?

- a) Describe plans to improve student learning based on assessment findings (e.g., course content, course sequencing, curriculum revision, learning environment or student advising).

Assessment results do not indicate need for such changes with regard to this particular course. However, WGS faculty will be submitting new courses and program changes this fall for implementation in the 2017-18 academic year, and we will consider our SLOs and past assessments as we make those curricular changes.

- b) Provide a broad timeline of how and when identified changes will be addressed in the upcoming year.

Curricular changes will be developed this fall and completed by the UAC/CPAC deadline of December 31, 2016.

6. Description of revisions to the assessment process the results suggest are needed and an evaluation of the assessment plan/process itself.

¹ See ‘Black Women’s Blueprint Open Letter to the Slutwalk’, *Gender & Society*, vol. 30 no. 1, pp. 9-13, February 2016, and widely available on line.

Faculty have discussed a need for better advance planning for these assessments so that they are built into courses well in advance. Women's and Gender Studies will be reviewing our assessment process and our SLOs this academic year and we will consult past assessment reports as we revise our assessment procedures. In the future we will choose the specific SLO to be assessed early in the process and courses will be identified before the beginning of each school year so that measures can be proposed and shared. This will also allow more consistent incorporation of feedback from assessment data into each subsequent year.

NEW: PART II – CLOSING THE LOOP

FOLLOW-UP FROM THE 2013-14 PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

In response to the university's accrediting body, the [Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities](#), this section has been added. This should be viewed as a follow up to the previous year's findings. In other words, begin with findings from 2013-14, and then describe actions taken during 2014-15 to improve student learning along, provide a brief summary of findings, and describe possible next steps.

PLEASE NOTE: The College-Level Synthesis report includes a section asking Deans to summarize which programs/certificates have demonstrated "closing-the-loop" assessments and findings based on the previous year's assessment report.

Working definition for closing the loop: *Using assessment results to improve student learning as well as pedagogical practices. This is an essential step in the continuous cycle of assessing student learning. It is the collaborative process through which programs use evidence of student learning to gauge the efficacy of collective educational practices, and to identify and implement strategies for improving student learning.* Adapted 8.21.13 from <http://www.hamline.edu/learning-outcomes/closing-loop.html>.

1. **Student Learning Outcome(s)** assessed for 2014-15

SLO #6 Students will demonstrate familiarity with the multiplicity of views within feminist scholarship.

2. **Strategies implemented** during 2015-16 to improve student learning, based on findings of the 2015-16 assessment activities.

The report last year did not suggest a need to improve student learning toward the SLO, but we are still working on improving the methods for assessing our SLOs. Rather than using a questionnaire as was done in 2014-15, this year we analyzed data from two assignments given in a key course that

focuses on the role of language in producing and perpetuating cultural attitudes. Student performance on these assignments enabled us to directly assess SLO #5.

3. **Summary of results** (may include comparative data or narrative; description of changes made to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery, etc.): Describe the effect of the changes towards improving student learning and/or the learning environment.

It was productive to utilize key assignments in the assessment of this SLO and the analysis showed that students met the relevant student-learning outcome. While our past assessments have shown that students have satisfied the requirements of the student-learning outcome being assessed each year, we are striving to improve our assessment tools as well as to revise our curriculum to keep current with changing expectations within the discipline.

4. What **further changes to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery**, etc. are projected based on closing-the-loop data, findings and analysis?

We will be developing new courses and will be revising existing courses in WGS to ensure that our majors receive a comprehensive, current education in the field of Women's and Gender Studies. We are also reviewing our student-learning outcomes and assessment process to ensure that we are evaluating our students' achievement of the SLOs in the most efficient way possible.