

Office of General Education

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URB 31000 Summer 2021 Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

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| Date of report: | August 6 2021 |
| Course: | URB 31000/The City in History |
| Materials used, n: | Writing Assignments |
| Date/semester of assessment: | Spring 21 |
| Assessment Team Members: | Sean Weiss |
| Coordination / Oversight: | Ana Vasovic, General Education |

**Purpose and Justification**

The purpose of this assessment is to identify and qualify strengths and challenges in students’ accomplishment of General Education learning outcomes in URB 31000. Because all summer 2021 classes were online, in this class, all student work took the form of writing assignments; neither exams nor quizzes were implemented. These writing assignments are the basis of this assessment. All writing assignments were built out according to Gen Ed learning outcomes and an analysis of student writing was performed. Students primarily worked on a scaffolded writing assignment over the course of the semester that culminated in a poster project. Weekly low stakes writing assignments were also required. Collectively, students wrote 3,500 words during the semester. These assignments allow students to demonstrate writing, critical thinking and information literacy skills. In addition, these assignments address the following World Cultures and Global Issues (WCGI) outcomes:

•Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of urban history to explore world cultures or global issues.

•Analyze culture, globalization, or global cultural diversity, and describe an event or process from more than one point of view.

•Analyze the historical development of one or more non-U.S. societies.

•Analyze and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation play in world cultures or societies.

**Course Overview**

The course, URB 31000/The City in History, satisfies the World Cultures and Global Issues (WCGI) requirement of the CUNY Pathways Common Core. Course description:

This course offers an introduction to the history of cities. Throughout the course, we will consider urban forms—including architecture, infrastructure, landscape, and planning—in their cultural, social, political, and economic contexts, exploring the relationship among urban form, urban life, and the process of urbanization.

In summer 2021, all courses at CCNY were taught online. The course registered 9 students including 1 auditor. In a typical semester, the course enrolls about 25 students and is taught in person. The syllabus (see Appendix 1) and writing assignment instructions (Appendix 2) are included in this report.

**Assessment Findings**

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| **Proficiency** | **Gen Ed Learning Outcome** | **Brief description of findings**  (ex, students being able or not to demonstrate skills; % of students receiving a satisfactory score, % of students excelling…) | **Select one**  Exceeds Expectations  Above Average  Average  Below average  Below passing |
| Writing skills | Demonstrate an understanding of context, audience, and purpose  Thesis is an arguable position OR  Thesis is defended with argument  Provide credible, relevant evidence in support of the thesis  Follow structure for researched argumentative critical analysis (often done through comparison and contrast)  Use appropriate language that conveys meaning and is grammatically correct | This assessment is based on the final poster submission. 7 of 8 students (87.5%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 7 students, 5 students (71.4%) achieved an “A” level grade; 2 students (28.6%) received a “B” level grade.  This assessment is based on the final poster submission. 7 of 8 students (87.5%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 7 students, 5 students (71.4%) achieved an “A” level grade. 1 student (14.28%) received a “B” level grade. 1 student (14.28%) received a “C” grade; the latter student’s thesis was a statement and not an arguable position.  This assessment is based on the final poster submission. 6 of 8 students (75%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 6 students, 4 students (66.67%) achieved an “A” level grade; 2 students (33.33%) received a “B” level grade.  This assessment is based on the final poster submission. 6 of 8 students (75%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 6 students, 4 students (66.67%) achieved an “A” level grade; 2 students (33.33%) received a “B+” grade.  This assessment is based on the final poster submission. 7 of 8 students (87.5%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 7 students, 5 students (71.4%) achieved an “A” level grade; 2 students (28.6%) received a “B” level grade. | Above Average  Above Average  Average  Average  Above Average |
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| Critical Thinking skills | Clearly state issue/problem delivering relevant information  Analyze and/or synthesize evidence derived from appropriate sources    Formulate and argue a clear position on an issue taking into account different points of view  Develop logical conclusions based on evidence taking into account opposing arguments | This assessment is based on the final poster submission. 7 of 8 students (87.5%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 7 students, 6 students (85.7%) achieved an “A” level-grade; 1 student (14.3%) received a “B” grade.  This assessment is based on the final poster submission. 6 of 8 students (75%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 6 students, 5 students (83.33%) achieved an “A” level-grade; 1 student (16.67%) received a “B+” grade.  This assessment is based on the final poster submission. 7 of 8 students (87.5%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 7 students, 6 students (85.7%) achieved an “A” level-grade; 2 students (14.3%) received a “B” level grade.  This assessment is based on the final poster submission. 7 of 8 students (75%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 7 students, 4 students (57.14%) achieved an “A” level-grade; 2 students (28.57%) received a “B+” grade; 1 student received a “C” grade (14.29%). | Above Average  Average  Above Average  Average |
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| Information Literacy skills | Understand info needs/ search efficiently through either guided research (with assigned texts) or students search for sources  Evaluate info sources through understanding and reviewing information sources, consider if amount of information is sufficient to address the issue  Articulate credibility of sources as appropriate to the discipline  Acknowledge sources and cite accurately; No plagiarism | This assessment is based on a required annotated bibliography. 8 of 8 students (100%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 8 students, 5 students (62.5%) achieved an “A” level grade; 1 student (12.5%) received a “B” grade; and 2 students (25%) received a “C” level grade.  This assessment is based on a required annotated bibliography. 6 of 8 students (75%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 6 students, 4 students (66.67%) achieved an “A” level-grade; 2 students (33.33%) received a “B+” grade.  This assessment is based on a required annotated bibliography. 7 of 8 students (87.5%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 7 students, 6 students (85.71%) achieved an “A” level-grade; 1 student (14.29%) received a “C” grade.  Plagiarism was not an issue in this course. The assessment of acknowledging sources and citing them accurately is based on the final poster submission. 6 of 8 students (75%) successfully achieved this goal: all with an “A” level-grade. Note: the two students who did not use citations in the final submission had used citations in other assignments. | Above Average  Average  Average  Average |
| WCGI Outcomes | Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of urban history to explore world cultures or global issues.  Analyze culture, globalization, or global cultural diversity, and describe an event or process from more than one point of view.  Analyze the historical development of one or more non-U.S. societies.  Analyze and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation play in world cultures or societies. | This assessment is based on the final poster submission. 7 of 8 students (87.5%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 7 students, 4 students (57.14%) achieved an “A” level grade; 2 students (28.57%) received a “B” grade; 1 student (14.29%) received a “C” level grade.  This assessment is based on the final poster submission. 7 of 8 students (87.5%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 7 students, 4 students (57.14%) achieved an “A” level grade; 2 students (28.57%) received a “B” grade; 1 student (14.29%) received a “C” level grade.  This assessment is based on the final poster submission. 7 of 8 students (87.5%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 7 students, 4 students (57.14%) achieved an “A” level grade; 2 students (28.57%) received a “B” grade; 1 student (14.29%) received a “C” level grade.  This assessment is based on the final poster submission. 8 of 8 students (100%) successfully achieved this goal. Of these 8 students, 5 students (62.5%) achieved an “A” level grade; 1 student (12.5%) received a “B” grade; 2 students (25%) received a “C” grade. | Average  Average  Average  Above Average |

**Summary**

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| *Briefly summarize overall findings by identifying* ***strengths*** *in students’ accomplishment of learning outcomes/specific benchmarks.*  Writing/Critical Thinking/Information Literacy:  •Because this was a small class, it was possible to give individual assistance to students to hone writing, critical thinking, and information literacy through scaffolded assignments.  •The individualized nature of the research project meant that students had to write about very specific topics. In terms of information literacy, this helped to prevent the threat of plagiarism.  •In relation to critical thinking skills, students excel at forming an opinion based on personal experience. Each student developed research projects based on personal interests, which effectively supported this.  •Students were required to present their final projects to the class on Zoom. I would underscore that all students were remarkably adept at articulating themselves verbally in ways that often exceeded their capacity to do so in writing.  WCGI specific outcomes:  •In their independent research projects, all students excelled at identifying different forms of social differentiation in world cultures. This learning outcome was actively taken up by all students. |
| *Briefly summarize overall findings by identifying* ***challenges*** *in students’ accomplishment of learning outcomes/specific benchmarks.*  Writing/Critical Thinking/Information Literacy:  •Two new incoming students to CCNY were the most challenged in all three of these categories. Those two students would have been better served by first taking a 10000 or 20000 level course in which learning outcomes emphasize description over analysis.  •In relation to critical thinking skills: Although students excel at forming an opinion based on personal experience, they have a harder time reaching conclusions based on the ideas of others or integrating different points of view. See challenges to WCGI below for a continued discussion of this issue.  WCGI specific outcomes:  • WCGI courses necessarily require that students reach beyond personal experience to grapple with non-U.S. societies. While this is a good challenge, the learning outcome would be better achieved through quizzes or exams. Reconciling different points of view in the context of a research paper is a greater challenge at the undergraduate level. |
| *How useful are the text and other resources assigned to this course?*  Because this course was taught online and during a shorter semester over the summer, the number of common required readings was reduced. Instead, students were asked to increase the number of required readings specific to their individual research projects. This was successful given the circumstances. When the course is taught in-person, having a larger number of required readings is helpful for establish a common body of knowledge for the class which can be assessed through quizzes and/or exams. |
| **Conclusions** / “Closing-the-loop” plans to improve student learning/success |
| *Based on your assessment of student learning, how well aligned are the activities and assignments in URB 31000 with the general education learning outcomes?*  The individualized research projects with assignments scaffolded across the semester worked extremely well for average performing, “B”-level students (students who perform at a high level tend to succeed regardless of the assignment type). Building on the same body of knowledge and working through revisions dramatically improved the final research project among this group of students. This kind of assignment does not work as well for low performing students who would have benefited from a series of shorter, independent assignments spread out over the course of the semester. |
| *Based on your assessment of student learning, do you plan to implement or recommend at instructional level changes to improve student learning? Specify topics and pedagogical changes, if applicable.*    In an online environment, students enjoy and benefit from decreasing lecture content and increasing workshop activities. In general, I would further expand workshop activities to increase student engagement and in-class performance. |
| *Provide suggestions, if any, to be done on a departmental or institutional level to support student learning/success in this course.*  No suggestions in this regard. |