

# Assessment Report for the Minor in Cultural Anthropology

October, 2017

## 1. IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

- (a) Name of Program: Cultural Anthropology
- (b) Type of Program: Minor
- (c) CAS Division: Social Sciences
- (d) Submitter & Point of Contact: George Gmelch, Professor of Anthropology and co-director of Anthropology Program. [gjgmelch@usfca.edu](mailto:gjgmelch@usfca.edu).
- (e) Other reviewers: Lucia Cantero; Sharon Gmelch

## 2. MISSION STATEMENT

We do not have a mission statement for the anthropology minor.

## 3. PROGRAM GOALS

1. Develop an anthropological imagination – an understanding of anthropology’s holistic and cross-cultural perspective and its application to contemporary social issues and global problems.
- 2) Understand the causes of and breadth of cultural variation and develop a positive appreciation for the diversity of perspectives, practices, and beliefs found within each culture and across cultures.

## 4. PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Develop an understanding of core concepts in cultural anthropology including, but not limited to, culture, holism, ethnocentrism, and cultural relativity.
2. Learn and use anthropological methods, notably participant observation and interviewing, but also other research strategies and tools to collect ethnographic data.
- 3) Develop an understanding of ethical behavior in social science research.

Assessment of a minor like cultural anthropology is difficult because many of the electives that count towards the 5 course minor are offered by faculty in other departments, half of whom are not anthropologists themselves. The faculty teaching these courses fashion their courses to satisfy their own department’s PLOs, not those of the Anthropology Minor.

## 5. SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR 2016-2017 ACADEMIC YEAR

In this, our first year of assessing anthropology’s PLOs, we have chosen PLO #2 “Learn and use anthropological methods, notably participant observation and interviewing, and other research strategies and tools to collect ethnographic data.” We did this by constructing an assessment rubric and using it to examine a sample of term-research papers in two introductory anthropology courses (ANTH 200) taught by Prof.

Rabia Kamal in fall 2016 and spring 2017. For each class we drew a random 15% sample. The assessment rubric can be found in Appendix I.

## **6. Assessment Plan for 2018-2019**

For academic year 2017-2018 we have chosen to do “direct assessment” of PLO #1 -- “Develop an understanding of core concepts in cultural anthropology including, but not limited to, culture, holism, ethnocentrism, and cultural relativity.” We have completed the first stage of the data-gathering through 5 open-ended questions administered to students (N=64) in two sections of ANTH 210, “Cultures through Film,” fall semester 2017. The students will, at the end of the term, be asked to answer the same 5 questions, all dealing with core concepts in cultural anthropology. The difference in their responses between the beginning and the end of the semester will give us some measure of the degree to which they have mastered the core concepts of cultural anthropology.

## **7. RESULTS for 2017-2018**

A randomized sample of 15 term research papers was drawn from the 65 papers submitted in 2 sections of *Introduction to Cultural Anthropology* described above. The papers were reviewed independently by three faculty under the parameters of the assessment rubric in Appendix I. there was a high degree of consistency in the scores assigned to each student paper by the different faculty raters.

The results of the three raters were averaged with the following results: on the measure of quality and comprehensiveness of the interview schedule developed by the student, 33% exceeded expectations, 60% met expectations, and 7% were below expectations. With regard to students demonstrating effective use of interviewing techniques, 13% of the sample exceeded expectations; 73% met expectations, and 14% were below expectations. Finally, on the measure of reflexivity, 40% of the sample exceeded expectations, 53% met expectations, and 7% were below expectations. Generally, these results are consistent with what would be expected for the acquisition of basic anthropological research skills in an introductory-level course.

It should be noted that the vast majority of students taking *Introduction to Anthropology* have chosen the course to satisfy a requirement. Most will not take another anthropology course, much less choose to minor in the field. We do, however, find that some students develop a serious interest in anthropology which they pursue by either majoring in International Studies with a focus on the cultures and values track or by choosing the anthropology minor. Occasionally a student, unsatisfied that USF does not offer a major in anthropology, will choose to transfer. We know of at least a half-dozen students who have done so, and some of them have gone on to graduate school to pursue Masters or PhDs.

While most students in the *Introductory Anthropology* course will not take any further anthropology courses, the social research skills they learn in this course are transferable to many fields, and will serve them well throughout their undergraduate education and beyond. Two of us (George and Sharon Gmelch) have published an article about what our students learn not just about research methods but about their own culture by doing an in-depth interview with an international student and then using that data to write a 10 page oral history of the individuals experiences in coming to the US and in adapting to American university life.

Appendix 1: Rubric used to measure PLO2

Student name \_\_\_\_\_ Rater \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Exceed Expectations</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>	<b>Below Expectations</b>	
Quality and comprehensiveness of the interview schedule developed by the student				
Student demonstrated effective use of interview techniques (neutral questions, probes, follow-up questions) – as shown in the interview transcript.				
Student demonstrated evidence of reflexivity -- having reflected on the interview experience.				

Appendix 2: *The International Student Interview Research Project*

**Ethnographic Interview: Perspectives from Another Culture**

Anthropologists learn about culture and values from often wide-ranging material collected in interviews. This project gives you a chance to do an ethnographic interview and, at the same time, learn something about how an international student views American culture, San Francisco, and USF.

Interviews are an important tool for discovering cultural perspectives. They are sometimes hard to do, as informants have a way of talking about things that interest them and simply gliding over the things that the anthropologist wants to know. Good interviewing requires maintaining a balance between just letting the informant talk and finding ways to get him or her to focus on the questions you want to pursue.

**Procedure**

1. Create an **Interview Guide**, which is a list of questions that you want to ask your interviewee (see the hand-out on developing an interview guide on Canvas). Divide the questions into categories so they are organized.
2. Discuss the questions you want to ask with someone. Discuss the kinds of things you want to know in trying to understand the experiences of an international student in this culture. For example, in broad terms, why he/she came to America, and to

USF. What he/she expected and how those expectations differ from what he/she found. His or her adjustment or adaptation? What has been difficult getting used to? Impressions of the U.S., of USF, and of American university education generally. The article that was assigned by Natadecha-Sponsel will familiarize you with some of the issues facing international students and international faculty coming to the US.

3. Contact the student you want to interview (**it must be someone you do not know and it must be someone who has not lived in the U.S. prior to coming here for college**) and arrange a date for the interview. Let him/her know it will take about an hour. Meet in a place of his or her convenience. If the student has doubts, assure him/her that the interview is anonymous, that nowhere will his/her name appear, and that you are doing the interview for a class assignment (and, hopefully, because you are interested in the experiences of international students at USF); you may also tell the student that he/she may email the professor (rkamal2@usfca.edu) if he/she wants assurance or more information. Also offer to give the student a copy of your paper.

4. Before conducting your interview, do some background research on the country the student comes from. As a minimum, reading a Wikipedia or encyclopedia article about the country will be helpful.

5. **It is important to record your interview.** Interviewees may feel a bit nervous about being recorded at the beginning, but most quickly become unaware as the interview proceeds. Major benefits of recording to you are that you will not have to take detailed notes during the interview, which will free you to think of good follow-up questions and do a better job of directing the interview. The recording will provide rich data, a complete record of the interview, and the opportunity to quote your interviewee directly in your paper.

Before you begin, test your recording device to make sure it works. Above all, avoid recording in a noisy place. Background noise can make it impossible to hear and transcribe the interview, and it can drive you crazy.

### **Paper Guidelines**

Here are some guidelines for your international student interview paper, **which is due on Friday**

**April 21<sup>st</sup>** along with a partial transcript and the interview guide (please submit all files in Microsoft Word format).

Your paper should discuss most of the following.

- Background: The place the student came from, and aspects of his/her background that help you  
    Make sense of how he/she adjusted to life in the US (family, what was it like growing up?, etc.)
- Described why he/she came to the US
- First impressions of the US – place, people, culture
- Adjustment: What did h/she find difficult to adjust to in US?
- Opinions and perceptions of San Francisco
- Adjustment: What did he/she find difficult to adjust to at USF (e.g. the culture, the “system,”  
    the academics).
- Feelings and perceptions of USF college life
- Adjustment to social life, food, drinking
- Adjustment to academics – classes, professors, homework
- Plans for the future – e.g. Does he/she plan to return to home. Stay in US?
- Your own feelings about doing the interview (at the end)

### **Interview Transcript**

-A **transcript** is a word-to-word written document of a taped interview

-You are required to turn in 3 pages of your interview transcript

-You don't need to transcribe the entire recording. You can make a log of what you recorded and take notes on it. Make sure you transcribe really good quotations that you might want to use in the paper

**\*Note: This paper is *not* meant to be your interpretation of their experiences, but rather their experiences from their own perspective and words.** The best papers are those that offer a good description of the individual, give the reader a sense of the person and his/her "voice," make judicious use of quotations, tell the subject's story without repeating the questions you asked, are well written, offer some analysis, and give a thoughtful exposition of the research process and how you felt about it.