

**2009 End-of-Year Report for Capstone Experience Grants  
Center for Educational Effectiveness  
(formerly Center for Teaching Effectiveness and  
Office of Educational Assessment)**

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**Latin American Studies Interdisciplinary Capstone Seminar**

1. Did you complete your capstone project as planned? What changes and modification to the original project did you make, if any?

I completed the capstone project as planned and we piloted as SPAN/LAMS467: Latin American Cities in spring 2010. We will be running the course in alternate spring semesters under its new number, SPAN/LAMS491.

2. Please attach a copy of the final syllabus.

See attached.

3. What concrete results have you, your students, and your department seen from your project? Please give specific examples of what has worked well and what needs further refinement.

Our programmatic goals for the course were the following:

- 1) not enough of the core courses are taught at the upper level, which makes assessment difficult
- 2) consolidation of experience in the major; reinforcement of program community and identity

As a seminar, there were definite pluses and minuses, which we will be looking to fine-tune this spring. The course was under-enrolled due to the fact that students were not aware of the new LAMS rubric, and half the seats were reserved for LAMS. Hence the Spanish section filled and the class was artificially small. We will avoid this next time around by making more space available under the SPAN rubric until the LAMS rubric is more established.

The course satisfied goal one (see below) Students really appreciated the interdisciplinary nature of the course, with 5 lectures by faculty outside my discipline. The small class size allowed for a much higher degree of student participation, interaction, and collaboration as we shared projects at various phases along the way.

However, with regard to Goal 2, I believe we need a bigger sample to make any claims about whether the course is having the desired result. Of the 13 students enrolled only 3 were Latin American Studies majors. A critical mass of majors will be needed to really measure this effectively.

4. How have you assessed student-learning and what did you learn from the assessment? Please address (a) the extent to which students met capstone learning goals; (b) how you might modify the capstone experience based on

assessment data; (c) how capstone assessment results aligned with programmatic assessment goals; (d) what impact does the capstone experience have on the overall program curriculum; and (e) how might you modify your program based on assessment data.

Our student learning goals were:

- 1) students reaching proficiency, in the three areas we were evaluating: cultural awareness, analysis, and communication skills
- 2) more exposure and opportunities for assessing their language competence at the programmatic level

The course provided many opportunities for assessment of all three areas. Primary assessments were based on their class participation, discussion of the texts and other materials via forums, and production of a final wiki. 12 out of 13 students did reach a higher level of proficiency in the three areas we are focusing on.

5. Please attach supporting documentation (e.g. products of student work, writing samples, rubrics).

Student work was in the form of forums and wikis. I am attaching a sample forum discussion and a final wiki.

The online fora were evaluated according to the following rubric:

#### **Braham / Rubric for on-line reflections (forums, blogs, discussion groups)**

**When posting on the forums, please consider 2 or 3 of the following questions:**

1. What is the central idea, concept, or image conveyed in this reading?
2. What did I learn from this reading that I hadn't know or considered previously?
3. How does this reading tie in with other concepts or texts I have encountered in my studies?
4. What questions (ethical, conceptual) does this reading raise for me?
5. What did I not understand about this reading?
6. Is there any object (photo, video, music, text) I could include in my comment to help illustrate and enliven my ideas?

#### **A-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (19-20 Points)**

- Original, timely posts on 9-12 themes
- Consistently posts insightful, creative comments and questions that prompt on-topic discussion.
- Helps clarify or synthesize other group members' ideas.
- Ties readings to other references in or outside the course
- Responds regularly to others' posts.
- Disagreements are stated politely.

#### **B-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (16-18 Points)**

- Original, timely posts on 7-8 themes
- Frequently attempts to contribute to the discussion, even if only asking questions
- Presents relevant viewpoints for consideration by group; interacts freely
- Frequently posts topics related to discussion content; prompts further discussion of topic

- Responds frequently to others' posts

**C-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (14-15 Points)**

- Posts on 5-6 themes
- Occasionally makes meaningful reflection on group's efforts
- Posts don't necessarily offer new insights
- Marginal effort to become involved with group

**D-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (12-13 Points)**

- Posts on 3-4 themes
- Makes short or irrelevant remarks
- Posts in English

**F-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (0-11 Points)**

- Posts on 2 or fewer themes
- Posts in English
- Is rude or abusive

The class average for the fora was 16/20, or a B-. This was due not to the quality of the postings, which were very high, but to some students' not posting regularly.

The final wiki project was evaluated according to the following rubric:

	Inadequate	Developing	Competent	Proficient
<b>Goal 1 Cultural knowledge:</b> Acquisition and command of information about societies, geography, history, politics, arts and cultural norms in Latin America	Knowledge of Latin America expected of educated non-specialist.  No knowledge of existing sources other than random computer searches.	Basic factual knowledge about Latin America.  Knowledge of general sources for information.	Understands theories and concepts as ways to interpret knowledge.  Active use of important discipline-based sources for information.	Applies knowledge to organize information and solve problems.  Ability to select the most appropriate sources for information.
<b>Goal 2 Writing:</b> Analysis, application, and presentation of knowledge.	Unfocused approach, lacking organization and few if any sources.	Recounting factual information using limited general rather than specific sources. Argument limited and/or poorly supported.	Demonstrates analysis based on relevant theories and concepts. Good variety of source materials; arguments supported with relevant facts.	Demonstrates innovative thinking and analysis with well-supported and well-written arguments. Broad spectrum of sources used reflecting available

				information.
<b>Goal 3 Language skills:</b> Can speak, write, and understand Spanish.	Fails to understand instructions, lectures and/or texts in Spanish, or understands but cannot express speak or write adequately.	Understands and expresses self adequately to complete basic tasks and communicate facts and ideas; responds within cultural norms.	Communicates consistently and fluently in Spanish, acquiring cultural and disciplinary norms and usages.	Communicates fluently and precisely, using specialized vocabulary, applying cultural and disciplinary norms and usages.

The class average for the wiki was a 93, reflecting an improvement from the midterm presentation grades ranging between 70 and 94, average 90.

6. How will the capstone experience continue beyond the grant phase? If the capstone experience will be taught by multiple instructors, how will transfer of this grant developed capstone experience be ensured?

The LAMS capstone will be formally added to our program this year. We will be able to sustain the staffing of the course due to the approval, in 2009-10, of a new Spanish major in Language and Culture and the hire of a new tenure-track Assistant Professor specifically in support of interdisciplinary courses.