ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT ASSESSMENT PROGRAM
Third Annual Portfolio Review Day
2:30-3:45 p.m. Cramer Hall 141
16 June 2005
K.M. Ames

PRESENT

Kenneth Ames (Anthropology Department Chairperson and Anthropological Archaeologist)
Margaret Everett (Sociocultural Anthropologist)
Michele Gamburd (Sociocultural Anthropologist)
Natalie Vasey (Biological Anthropologist)
Tom Biolsi (Sociocultural Anthropologists)
Virginia Butler (Anthropological Archaeologist). Butler, a Faculty Senator, had to leave early to attend the year’s final faculty senate meeting
Doug Wilson (Historic Archaeologist)

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

I. Assessment of Course Portfolios using ‘Applications of Anthropology’ Rubric

The group reviewed course portfolios from ANTH 305 (Cultural Theory) and ANTH 304 (Social Theory) focusing on sub-goal II.2, which states “Students will demonstrate an understanding of how the interplay among theory, research questions, methods, and data shapes our knowledge and/or interpretations of the human past and present.

Outcomes:

* Materials from ANTH 304 included the course syllabus, examples of portfolio assignments and the portfolio assignments. The instructor proved examples of an “A”, a “B” and a “C” paper. However, the instructor forgot to bring copies of other assignments and the final grade distribution. These will be supplied for the class file.

* The faculty discussed the specific course as well as broader issues related to the goal and teaching. The discussion focused on how the goal provided a thread tying the course together and how useful the goal was pedagogically.

* Review of the course materials showed a strong integration of theory, research methods, and data analysis throughout the course. Even the lowest ranked work sample demonstrated basic grasp of assignments. Both the Instructor Materials and Work Samples were rated “3”. Faculty commented on the sophistication of the readings.

* Materials from ANTH 305 included the course syllabus, the portfolio assignment, and copies of 3 student essays (“A+”, “B” and “C”) for the assignment targeted to address this goal. The group reviewed these materials.

* The instructor reported that he had not remembered to use the goal specifically to structure the assignment, which asked students to choose one of six questions to answer. As a result, the essays did not necessarily address or reflect the goal,
although one clearly did so. The instructor reflected on the course and the goal and felt that the goal might have provided the course with a coherence he believed it lacked. The class addressed aspects of both Goal III A.2 and Goal III. A.1 since the professor was examining the construction of culture (Goal III.A.2) and the organization of power (Goal III.A.1) [Students will understand the concept of culture, defined as the social construction of meaning. Students will also understand that the culture concept has changed over time. Students will be able to identify the specific theories of culture that shape ethnographic interpretation and be able to assess these theories critically.]

However, other faculty felt his goal for the class (Goal III.A.2) was an appropriate goal and that continued revision of the course would provide coherence and enable it to address this goal better. The readings etc. seemed entirely appropriate.

II. Scoring Rubrics and Learning Goals

The group discussed the original plans to review the overall scoring rubrics and to develop rubrics for goals in Sections I and II.

Outcomes:
* The group reviewed the “Applications of Anthropology” scoring rubric and decided the rubric worked well as written. No revisions were required
* The group felt the discussions last year and this year confirmed the value of the goals and they did not require revision at this time.

III. Assessment plans for 2005/2006

* The group decided to continue to assess Section II.2. The same goal would be assessed next year. Since this year’s assessment focused on Sociocultural Anthropology, next years would focus on Archaeology and Biological Anthropology. The course selected are ANTH 461 (Advanced Topics in Archaeology) and ANTH 372 (Human Variability).

* The group noted that we need to remind faculty who are responsible for collecting student work samples to be sure to do this. The packet of materials is to include:
  * Syllabus
  * A copy of all assignments
  * The grade distribution for the work sample assignment (not the final course grades)
  * The work sample assignment
  * A copy of the highest A, lowest A, lowest B, lowest C, and the lowest grade in the class.

IV Learning Goals:

* Subsequent to the meeting, Vasey proposed changing Goal III.C. 2 to read:

Students will understand the varied meanings of the term “race” with respect to history, biology, and anthropology. They will understand that the historical and cultural lay-usage of this term is entirely incompatible with modern understanding of the mechanisms responsible for biological variation in human populations.
This change was adopted.

*Subsequent to the meeting, Gamburd suggested we revisit the language in Goals III.A.1 and III.A.2 given the discussions about culture and power in the assessment of ANTH 305. That discussion can be held at the Department’s Fall Retreat.