

**The Efficacy of Assessment Strategies in LBST 2212 African American Literature and
Culture**

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Grant

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Funded by the Office of Assessment and Accreditation at the University of North Carolina Charlotte, this project examined the efficacy of assessment strategies in Liberal Studies 2212 African American Literature and Culture in Spring 2017 and 2018, and Fall 2018 and 2019. LBST 2212 is a 100% online asynchronous course offered through the Department of Africana Studies. Over the past few years, the course has grown significantly from 50 seats to 100 and has moved from face to face to online instruction. While several assessment instruments are currently in use, this research seeks to determine the usefulness of these strategies as an accurate measure of student success. The guiding question is how do the assessment instruments utilized in LBST 2212 contribute to positive student outcomes for diverse learners in a 100% asynchronous online environment. Data analysis yielded invaluable information to improve the viability of the assessments already being implemented. This report addresses findings from the examination of the data set in reference to 1) what was learned; 2) how the findings will be incorporated into instructional practice and curriculum design; 3) the student impact, and 4) what can be done differently. It concludes with a dissemination plan and implications for practitioners.

Discoveries

To determine how the assessment instruments utilized in LBST 2212 contribute to positive student outcomes for diverse learners in a 100% asynchronous online environment, data from Spring 2017 and 2018, and Fall 2018 and 2019 were analyzed. This included a review of the following:

1. Reading Guides (average % scores across all reading guides with grades of 0 included)
2. Forums (Average % scores across all forums with grades of 0 included)

3. Exams (Average % scores across 3 sections exams with grades of 0 included, multiple-choice format)
4. Final Exam (Average score on the final exam with grades of 0 included, short answer format, seems that some years received 100 for completion)

In a course that employs culturally responsive teaching practices and an ethic of care informed by feminist pedagogy, there are several key discoveries (Gay, 2018; Mogadime, 2000). For the purposes of this study, underrepresented minorities (URM) are defined as African American, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander, 'NON' – White and Asian. URM perform better than non-URM on reading guides, forums, and final grades but not on tests or final exams (N = 277). Males do significantly worse than females on every score except the section exams (N = 304). Conversely, female URM and non-URM receive equivalent grades on all assignment types (N = 191). Male URM students receive higher final grades and higher grades on reading guides, assignments, and section exams than non-URM males, (N = 86). Transfer students perform better than new freshmen on all assignments except section exams and the final exam and receive higher final grades (N = 293). When gender is a guiding variable, males do significantly worse than females on every score except the section tests (N=304). Male URM students receive higher final grades and grades on reading guides, assignments and section exams than non-URM males (N = 86). Female URM and non-URM receive equivalent grades on all assignment types (N = 191). Transfer students perform better than new freshmen on all assignments except section exams and the final exam and receive higher final grades.

Improving Instructional Practice and Curriculum Design

The data confirm the lack of an equity gap in LBST 2212. Based on a comprehensive review, several guiding questions will inform instructional practice future curriculum design. To

what extent do inclusive content and utility value factor into assessment outcomes? Does culturally responsive course content boost performance for URM and females? Is other-mothering and an enhanced ethic of care a factor in student success?

Student Impact

The data show that most students are successful on the variety of assessments used in the course. This information is encouraging because it helps to determine what needs to be done to continue this trend. It also indicates that for those students who are not doing well that additional measures should be considered for improving course outcomes. The success of females is promising and may be directly linked to the inclusion of feminist themes in the course content. Overall, the course is reaching most students at a level that supports the lack of an equity gap.

Plan for Improvement

Commitment to the success of every student will guide course revisions. Aligning the course objectives with the course content is already established, however, incorporating feedback from students on the inclusion of works in the course syllabus might be useful. Course redesign that takes into account the scores on tests and exams might lead to other forms of assessment. Additionally, including different types of activities might appeal to all students. Culturally responsive pedagogical practices already in place will be augmented to continue the trends toward student success.

Dissemination Plan

The support of the Office of Assessment and Accreditation is integral to this project. At the onset, at the midpoint, and at the end of the project, a consultation with OAA staff guided the research. The analysis of assessment data proved very helpful and informs this report. Certainly, having access to resources through the OAA that promote best practices within the field of

assessment benefited the project. The information obtained from this study will be used to educate other online instructors about viable assessment options and how to maximize student success. The data and findings will be compiled for both presentations at conferences such as the 2021 Faculty Showcase, one of the 2020-21 Academic Affairs Assessment Team meetings, the Pursuing Extraordinary Outcomes in Public Education Conference, and/or the International Conference on Urban Education. Additionally, the information may be submitted for publication in journals targeting Higher Education practitioners.

Implications for Practitioners

The efficacy of the assessment strategies employed in LBST 2212 is informed by several factors. These can inform practitioners teaching Top 40 classes such as this at the undergraduate level at UNC Charlotte. In *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, Geneva Gay defines CRP as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2018, p. 31). Building on Ladson-Billings’ (2009) emphasis on culturally relevant pedagogy that empowers students, Gay (2018) proposes that culturally responsive practitioners examine how and what they are teaching to build relationships and to establish a classroom climate that promotes student self-awareness and improved learning outcomes. Taking an asset-based approach to teaching and learning ensures deeper learning (Gay, 2018). Employing a politicized ethic of care through othermothering and teacher accountability emboldens and supports students (Lane, 2017). When students see themselves and their culture reflected and valued in the curriculum, the likelihood of academic excellence increases (Delpit, 2006; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Watson-Vandiver & Wiggan, 2018).

References

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