

## CULTURES AND IDEAS 2 CORE ASSESSMENT REPORT

OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT

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### Introduction

The Core student learning objectives identify the educational priorities for all undergraduates in Santa Clara University's Core Curriculum. Assessment of student learning is ongoing in the Core—we seek to understand in what areas of the learning objectives students are challenged or excel, and how the Core can offer better support for faculty teaching in these areas.

This assessment report summarizes the process and findings from an assessment of the two learning objectives for the Cultures and Ideas 2 (C & I 2) Core requirement. When the 2009 Core was approved, Cultures and Ideas 1 & 2 were described in the following way:

The study of cultures and ideas enables students to analyze and evaluate the creative and intellectual wellsprings of societies past and present and to think broadly about the relationship of the self and the communities to which it belongs. This two-course sequence will introduce students to the study of significant texts, ideas, issues, and events in their historical context, while considering how they resonate for us in the contemporary situation. The historical study of cultures and ideas encompasses intellectual, artistic, literary, social, political, religious, economic, and/or scientific phenomena. Yet these courses introduce students not only to particular content but also to ways of inquiry that educated persons take to encounter, appreciate, and interpret the past in relation to the present. After much discussion with faculty who teach in this area, the committee believes that three learning goals can form the connective threads that run through each course in this sequence.

First, students should gain a historical understanding of central themes in human experiences and cultures. Courses in this area should develop students' historical consciousness of major themes by tracing their development over significant periods of time (i.e., centuries rather than decades). There are many pedagogically valid ways of fostering this historical understanding, including a chronological approach that either ends in the present or draws connections to the present at strategic points in the course; the introduction of a contemporary event or artifact and a return to the past to trace its emergence; or an examination of the development of a theme separately in different cultures that culminates with the study of their integration in both cultures in the past or present.

Second, students should be able to think and write critically about different definitions of culture and the relationships among global cultures, including the west. Courses in this sequence would consider more than one approach to exploring culture. These courses should reflect some of the lively debate occurring in both the humanities and related disciplines over what constitutes a "culture," how the borders of cultures may be drawn or crossed, and how cultures relate to each other in the past and present. For example, courses might consider the mutual influence of dominant and subordinate cultural institutions or identities within regions, communities, individuals, texts, or artifacts. In addition, courses should strive to move students beyond a belief that humanistic knowledge is just a "matter of opinion" to understanding that some tools of analysis and ways of evaluating evidence produce more accurate, sensitive, or complex interpretations than others.

Third, students should learn about diverse as well as shared human experiences across cultures and historical periods in order to examine and question their own cultural assumptions and values. Cultures & Ideas courses should move beyond naïve beliefs that all cultures or historical contexts are essentially similar ("They are just like us" or "They were just like us") or, on the other hand, that they are essentially different ("They are/were utterly alien and incomprehensible"). Instead, students should develop an ability to grasp both similarities and differences. This impulse can be valuable for the study of cultures that emerge primarily outside the west as well as cultures that

emerge from the west. For example, the study of the individual's duty to community in Confucianism and Greek democratic theory involves examining ideas that are different enough from contemporary American discourse about self and community to stimulate attention to our own assumptions.

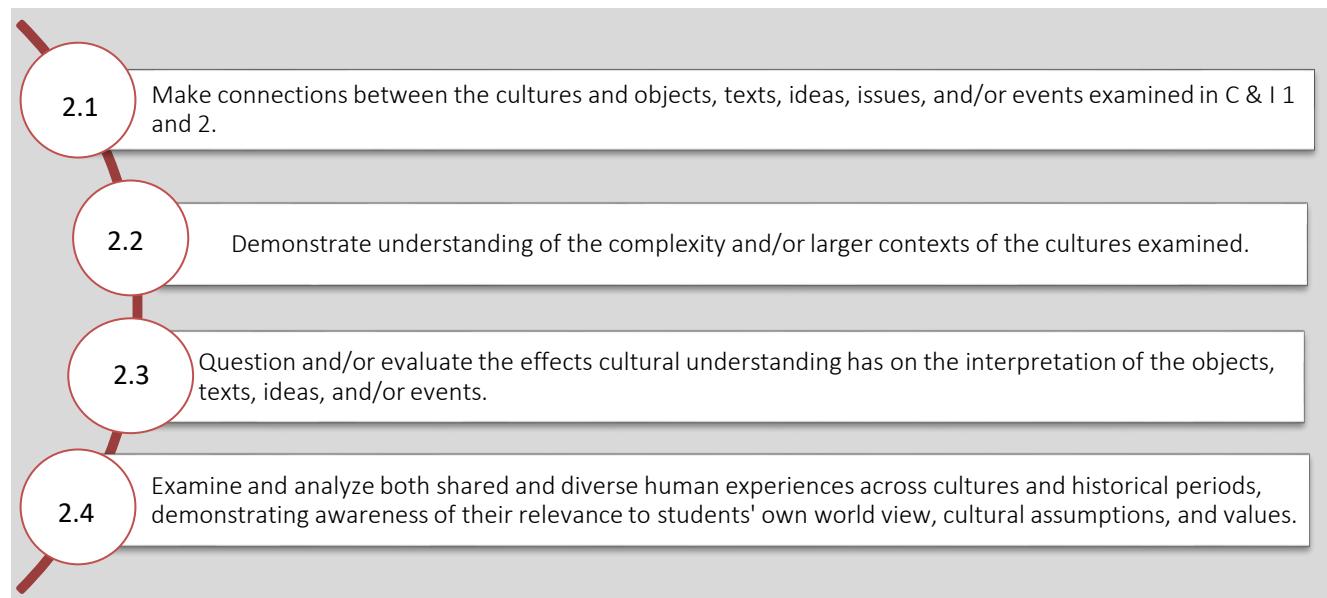
Each of these goals aims to foster in students a more profound understanding of their own and other cultures. Historical and contemporary forms of globalization present both challenges and opportunities. The new and deeper understandings fostered by this sequence should prove important for educating intellectually astute and culturally aware members of a world characterized by cultural convergences, divergences, and change.

The Core Learning goals identified for C & I 2 include:

- **Global Cultures:** The intertwined development of global ideas, institutions, religions, and cultures, including Western cultures
- **Arts and Humanities:** The production, interpretation, and social influence of the fine and performing arts, history, languages, literatures, philosophy, and religion
- **Critical Thinking:** The ability to identify, reflect upon, evaluate, integrate, and apply different types of information and knowledge to form independent judgments
- **Perspective:** Seeking out the experience of different cultures and people, striving to view the world through their eyes

#### **The Assessment Process**

In 2017-2018, the Office of Assessment asked faculty teaching C & I 2 classes in the core curriculum to participate in the assessment of the four C & I 2 learning objectives.



The Office of Assessment identified a random sample of students representing 15% of the 658 enrolled students in the C & I 2 classes in winter quarter. Faculty teaching the courses identified the assignments or exam questions providing the clearest evidence for student learning with respect to the two learning objectives. The Office of Assessment obtained student work from a total of 96 students sampled from 20 courses taught by distinct faculty. The Office of Assessment redacted student and faculty identifiers from this material before a team of four faculty scored the work using a rubric jointly created by the C & I FCC and the Office of Assessment. The scoring team participated in a norming session and then independently scored a portion of the student

work. The rubric included evaluative criteria for each learning objective, scored on a four-level scale of proficiency (from not proficient to highly proficient). Scorers were also encouraged to use a “0” if they did not see any evidence that a particular learning objective was being addressed in the work of the student.

### **What We Learned**

The scores given for each learning objective were tabulated and converted into percentages. Generally, in Core assessments, we hope that the average of student scores for each learning objective reaches the level of “3” (proficient).

#### **LO 2.1 Make connections between the cultures and objects, texts, ideas, issues, and/or events examined in C & I 1 and 2**

Over half (58%) of student work was judged as proficient or highly proficient for learning objective 1.1. Another 28% of student work was judged as approaching proficiency; 8% was rated as not proficient; and 5% was scored as “no evidence,” indicating the scorers did not see evidence that the student work addressed the learning objective at all.

#### **LO 2.2 Demonstrate understanding of the complexity and/or larger contexts of the cultures examined**

The percentage of the student work receiving a score of 3 or 4 reached 47%, with an additional 44% of the work scored as approaching proficiency. Four percent of the work was scored as not proficient, and 5% showed no evidence of learning.

#### **LO 2.3 Question and/or evaluate the effects cultural understanding has on the interpretation of the objects, texts, ideas, and/or events**

Half (50%) of the student work for LO 2.3 was scored as a 3 or 4, with 34% of the work scored as approaching proficiency. Ten percent of the work was scored as not proficient, and 5% showed no evidence of learning.

#### **LO 2.4 Examine and analyze both shared and diverse human experiences across cultures and historical periods, demonstrating awareness of their relevance to students’ own world view, cultural assumptions, and values**

For LO 2.4: 34% the student work for LO 2.3 was scored as a 3 or 4; 44% as approaching proficiency; 17% as not proficient; and 5% as showing no evidence of learning.

The average scores across all learning objectives fell shy of “3” (proficient). Especially, for LO 2.2 and LO 2.4, a substantial number of student work was rated as approaching, but not reaching proficiency.

### Comparing Results from C & I 1 and C & I 2

The learning objectives for C & I 1 and C & I 2 are quite similar, but students in C & I 2 are asked to go a bit deeper in their analysis and evaluation, as can be seen in the comparison below.

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1.1</b> Identify significant elements of the cultures examined. (Global Cultures, Arts and Humanities)                                                                                                                                |
| <b>2.1</b> Make connections between the cultures and objects, texts, ideas, issues, and/or events examined in C & I 1 and 2. (Global Cultures, Arts and Humanities.)                                                                     |
| <b>1.2</b> Recognize the complexity of the cultures examined. (Global Cultures, Arts and Humanities)                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>2.2</b> Demonstrate understanding of the complexity and/or larger contexts of the cultures examined. (Global Cultures, Arts and Humanities.)                                                                                          |
| <b>1.3</b> Analyze and/or interpret significant objects, texts, ideas, issues and/or events in their historical contexts, using at least one disciplinary method. (Critical Thinking)                                                    |
| <b>2.3</b> Question and/or evaluate the effects cultural understanding has on the interpretation of the objects, texts, ideas, and/or events. (Critical Thinking)                                                                        |
| <b>1.4</b> Examine and analyze both shared and diverse human experiences across cultures and historical periods in order to comprehend the relevance of the past to the cultural present. (Perspective).                                 |
| <b>2.4</b> Examine and analyze both shared and diverse human experiences across cultures and historical periods, demonstrating awareness of their relevance to students' own world view, cultural assumptions, and values. (Perspective) |

The courses used for the C&I 1 assessment were different from the courses used for the C&I 2 assessment (i.e., the samples were taken from different years, so that even if a course was repeated, the students in the course were different). With this caveat in mind, it is still interesting to consider the results from each assessment. As can be seen in the table below, students performed more highly in the assessment of student learning in C & I 1 than in C & I 1.2, especially on the first two learning outcomes.

Table 1. Comparison of Selected Scores between C&I 1 and C&I2

	Met or Exceeded (%)	Approached Proficiency (%)
LO 1.1/2.1	78/58	18/28
LO 1.2/2.2	76/47	21/44
LO 1.3/2.3	58/50	36/34
LO 1.4/2.4	38/34	36/44

In the C & I 1 assessment report, it was noted that:

Faculty raters noted that a substantial percentage of student work (26%) did not make connections between cultural experiences or elements across historical periods, up to and including the present. From the type of student work received, the faculty scoring the work surmised that students were not asked explicitly to address this in the work submitted, although they noted that in their own classes that this often is a topic of discussion. Additionally, the faculty observed that the type of learning that constitutes LO 1.3 and 1.4 continues to develop in the sequence's second course and that it's likely that students will reach deeper levels of analysis in that course.

The expectation that the C & I 2 assessment would reveal a deeper level of analysis was not borne out in the student work. Faculty raters found that much of student work did not provide a more complex analysis of culture as linked to objects, texts, ideas, issues, and/or events (LO 2.1 and 2.2). Similarly, students' work did not show evidence of questioning and/or evaluating the effects of cultural understanding on the interpretation of the objects, texts, ideas, and/or events (LO 2.3). Finally, faculty raters did not see students engaging directly with an examination and analysis of both shared and diverse human experiences across cultures and historical periods, demonstrating awareness of their relevance to students' own world view, cultural assumptions, and values (LO 2.4). As the scorers reflected on the student work, they wondered if the underlying assignments had been designed to capture all of these dimensions. In some students' work, the influence of culture on objects, texts, ideas, etc. seemed more presumed than explicitly articulated.

A faculty discussion about the assessment results of C & I 1 and 2 would be very helpful so faculty could share their insights about the results, and on their experiences teaching in the sequence. Reflecting on the assessment, the following questions seem relevant:

- How do faculty perceive students' learning in the cultures and ideas sequence deepening over the course of the two quarters?
- How are faculty designing distinct assignments or other assessments for the learning objectives over the two quarters, especially when the learning objectives are quite similar?
- Are the learning objectives understood in the same way by faculty across disciplines teaching in the area?
- What are the challenges faculty experience in teaching C & I 1 and 2?

Acknowledgments: The Office of Assessment thanks the C&I & 2 FCC, the faculty teaching Core courses who participated in the assessment, the faculty members who participated as scorers for the student work, and our student assistants who contribute to the many stages of the assessment process.

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Highly proficient (4)</b>	<b>Proficient (3)</b>	<b>Approaching proficiency (2)</b>	<b>Not proficient (1)</b>
<b>C &amp; I 2.1</b> Make connections between the cultures and objects, texts, ideas, issues, and/or events examined.	Reveals insightful patterns, differences, or similarities between cultural elements and the objects, texts, ideas, issues, and/or events examined.	Reveals relevant patterns, differences, or similarities, related to cultural elements and the objects, texts, ideas, issues, and/or events examined.	Some evidence is presented to reveal patterns, differences, or similarities related to cultural elements and the objects, texts, ideas, issues, and/or events examined, but may not represent particularly meaningful connections.	Limited, poorly organized or inconsistent evidence that does not lead to the identification of patterns, differences, or similarities related to cultural elements and the objects, texts, ideas, issues, and/or events examined.
<b>C &amp; I 2.2</b> Demonstrate understanding of the complexity and/or larger contexts of the cultures examined.	Provides a sophisticated and nuanced description of multiple cultural elements related to one or more of the following: history, art, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices; and/or how cultures (or subcultures relate to one another).	Provides a clear description of multiple cultural elements related to one or more of the following: history, art, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices; and/or how cultures (or subcultures relate to one another).	Provides a limited description of multiple cultural elements related to one or more of the following: history, art, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices; and/or how cultures (or subcultures relate to one another).	Provides an ambiguous or inaccurate description of multiple cultural elements OR provides a description of primarily one culture related to one or more of the following: history, art, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practice; and/or how cultures (or subcultures relate to one another).
<b>C &amp; I 2.3</b> Question and/or evaluate the effects cultural understanding has on the interpretation of the objects, texts, ideas, and/or events.	Provides a comprehensive and well-reasoned critical analysis or evaluation about how cultural understanding shapes the interpretation of objects, texts, ideas, and/or events.	Provides a coherent analysis or evaluation about how cultural understanding shapes the interpretation of objects, texts, ideas, and/or events.	Provides a limited analysis about how cultural understanding shapes the interpretation of objects, texts, ideas, and/or events, but may have gaps or overgeneralizations, or areas that are underdeveloped.	Provides little to no description about how cultural understanding shapes the interpretation of objects, texts, ideas, and/or events, with little or no analysis. Work may contain notable inaccuracies about culture or the objects, texts, ideas, and/or events.
<b>C &amp; I 2.4</b> Examine and analyze both shared and diverse human experiences across cultures and historical periods, demonstrating awareness of their relevance to students' own world view, cultural assumptions, and values.	Provides a sophisticated analysis of similarities and differences of multiple cultures/worldviews. Analysis gives thoughtful attention to the historical factors that shape those cultural experiences and their relevance for the present day, and/or the student's own worldview, cultural assumptions, and values.	Provides a coherent analysis of similarities and differences of multiple cultures/worldviews. Analysis conveys an understanding of historical factors that shape those cultural experiences and their relevance for the present day, and/or the student's own worldview, cultural assumptions, and values.	Provides a limited analysis of similarities and differences of multiple cultures/worldviews that may reflect more surface-level aspects of the culture. Limited attention to the historical factors that shape cultural experiences and their relevance for the present day, and/or student's own worldview, cultural assumptions, and values.	Provides a superficial description of similarities and differences of multiple cultures/worldviews. No clear presentation of historical factors that shape cultural experiences and their relevance for the present day, nor the student's own worldview, cultural assumptions, and values.