Assessing Content Area 2: Phase I Report
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Executive Summary

Phase I Assessment for Content Area 2 (Social Sciences) consisted of examining enrollment information for the previous 3 semesters (fall, 2008 through fall, 2009) at all campuses, interviewing 10 Storrs instructors from 10 different departments with large CA2 enrollments about the criteria, learning goals, and learning objectives, and independent rating of how well their courses formally assess learning objectives.

The results indicate that whereas students at Storrs are often, but not always, taught by tenure-track faculty members (or graduate students who are supervised by tenure-track faculty members), it is rare for students at regional campuses to be taught by tenure-track faculty members. However, methods of instructions are quite different between Storrs and the regional campuses because Storrs class sizes tend to be quite large (over 100 students), with lectures supplemented by section meetings that are supervised by faculty members but led by trained PhD students, whereas class sizes at regional campuses are small (under 50 students). We chose to interview Storrs instructors and assess those courses so that this assessment would address the largest enrollment of students. Methods for Phase I assessment of regional campuses are outlined; the interview schedule and ratings could likely be mailed to regional campus faculty members, and focus groups to discuss other ideas or issues identified by instructors would supplement this information.

This assessment is in many ways a practical test of whether the learning objectives are appropriate to all the disciplines in CA2 and to the criteria for CA2 courses. Results indicated that instructors and independent raters viewed all 10 Storrs courses as meeting the criteria set out by the University Senate very well, but independent raters saw less evidence of student assessment of some of the learning objectives than they saw of teaching that addresses the learning objectives. Instructors also rated their student assessments somewhat higher than independent raters did. It is certainly the case that instructors have more detailed knowledge of how they assess students, so instructors' ratings may be more accurate. Independent raters were not privy to class discussions in which informal assessment of students' learning could be conducted. But it also may be the case that instructors teach the criteria without assessing students in the ways specified by the learning objectives. In addition, we found that some learning objectives fit some disciplines better than others, the learning objectives are quite advanced, and they may need to be respecified to encompass the range of disciplines within CA2 better.

History of Current Content Area 2

The General Education Oversight Committee passed Guidelines and passed by the University Senate on May 12, 2003, as indicated at http://geoc.uconn.edu/geocguidelines.htm and reproduced below. (Material from other sources included in this report appears in this font.)

Definition of Social Sciences for General Education:

The social sciences examine how individuals, groups, institutions, and societies behave and influence one another and the natural environment. Courses in this group enable students to analyze and understand interactions of the numerous social factors that influence behavior at the individual, cultural, societal, national, or international level. They use the methods and theories of social science inquiry to develop critical thought about current social issues and problems.

Criteria:

Courses appropriate to this category must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Introduce students to theories and concepts of the social sciences.

2. Introduce students to methods used in the social sciences, including consideration of the ethical problems social scientists face.

3. Introduce students to ways in which individuals, groups, institutions, or societies behave and influence one another and the natural environment.

4. Provide students with tools to analyze social, political, or economic groups/organizations (such as families, communities, or governments), and to examine social issues and problems at the individual, cultural, societal, national, or international level. Social issues that might be addressed include gender, race, social class, political power, economic power, and cross-cultural interaction.

The Learning Goals and Objectives for Content Area 2 (Social Sciences; hereafter CA2) were set out by a subcommittee of tenure-track faculty members who are social scientists in 2007. As indicated at http://geoc.uconn.edu/Assessment%20Documents/CA2_Assessment_2-5-07.html and shown below, this subcommittee developed provisos for CA2 assessment, along with Learning Goals and Learning Objectives to accompany each CA2 course criteria, which are listed above.

Content Area 2 (Social Sciences) Assessment Subcommittee
Proposal for Assessment Draft 3, University of CT

This draft encompasses comments from CA2 faculty members, the new CA2 subcommittee members, and the GEOC as of February 5, 2007.

Provisos

1. We hold to the scientific principle that an assessment can only be useful to the university if corresponding variables measuring other potentially meaningful sources of variation are considered in any analysis of student learning outcomes. If such corresponding variables are ignored, there will be no empirical basis on which to decide what aspects of opportunities for general education should be maintained or changed.

2. We are deeply concerned about two major practical aspects of conducting assessments. First, that certain methods of assessment (e.g., portfolios) would require a major allocation of additional resources by the administration without which such assessments cannot be performed. Second, that allocation of necessary additional resources should not detract from other important university missions such as continued improvement of undergraduate majors, graduate education, and especially research.

Introduction and Definitions

Definition of Social Sciences for General Education (UConn Senate, 5/12/03): The social sciences examine how individuals, groups, institutions, and societies behave and influence one another and the natural environment. Courses in this group enable students to analyze and understand interactions of the numerous social factors that influence behavior at the individual, cultural, societal, national, or international level. They use the methods and theories of social science inquiry to develop critical thought about current social issues and problems.

The general education requirements passed by the University Senate in 2003 require that each student take two courses in the social sciences (Gen Ed Content Area 2). Courses in Content Area 2 are expected to fulfill a series of four criteria also approved by the Senate (see below).

At the direction of the Provost's office, UConn has begun developing procedures for assessment of its programs. There is a current emphasis on assessment of undergraduate education, including categorical assessment of the general education requirements (see www.assessment.uconn.edu/ for details.)

At this stage, the Category 2 (CA2) sub-committee of GEOC is attempting to establish a series of learning goals and associated learning objectives that are consistent with the social science course criteria approved by the Senate.

Learning goals are what the faculty intends students to know after completion of two courses in the social sciences content area. The learning goals described below are derived from the specific criteria of Category 2 courses.

Learning objectives are assessable and/or demonstrable student achievements and abilities arising from the completion of those courses. Such objectives are measurable reflections of the content area's learning goals. The learning objectives listed below are not meant to be re-worded into test questions themselves, but rather are intended to serve as guides to faculty developing assessment instruments.

An initial set of goals and objectives was developed by the CA2 subcommittee in April, 2006 and circulated to faculty in October. An open meeting concerning the initial set was held on October 20. That initial set of goals and objectives has been revised to reflect comments made at that meeting and other responses.

CA2 Criteria, Learning Goals, and Learning Objectives
Criterion 1. Introduce students to theories and concepts of the social sciences (UConn Senate, 5/12/03).

Learning goal 1. Students should be familiar with a selection of social scientific theories and concepts.

Learning objective 1a: Identify strengths and weaknesses of at least two social science theories from different fields as appropriate to completed course work in CA2. (It will be necessary for individual departments or programs to provide relevant lists of theories.)

Learning objective 1b: Identify and explain at least three fundamental social science concepts as appropriate to completed course work in CA2. (It will be necessary for individual departments or programs to provide relevant lists of concepts.)

Criterion 2. Introduce students to methods used in the social sciences, including consideration of the ethical problems social scientists face (UConn Senate, 5/12/03).

Learning goal 2. Students should be familiar with some methods used in the social sciences including the ethical considerations of their use.

Learning objective 2: Identify and explain a method commonly used in social science research, including the ethical considerations of its use, as appropriate to completed course work in CA2. (It will be necessary for individual departments or programs to provide relevant lists of methods.)

Criterion 3. Introduce students to ways in which individuals, groups, institutions, or societies behave and influence one another and the natural environment (UConn Senate, 5/12/03).
Learning goal 3. Students should be aware of some of the types of interactions that occur among individuals, groups, institutions, societies, and/or the natural environment.

Learning objective 3: Apply a theory and selected concepts from social science to such interaction as appropriate to completed course work in CA2. (It will be necessary for individual departments or programs to provide relevant lists of interactions.)

Criterion 4. Provide students with tools to analyze social, political, or economic groups/organizations (such as families, communities, or governments), and to examine social issues and problems at the individual, cultural, societal, national, or international level. Social issues that might be addressed include gender, race, social class, political power, economic power, and cross-cultural interaction (UConn Senate, 5/12/03).

Learning goal 4a. Students should be able to analyze the general structure and operations of groups or organizations in the context of social science.

Learning goal 4b. Students should be able to analyze social issues and problems in the context of social science.

Learning objective 4a: Describe the role of a selected group's or organization's impact on an important social issue or problem, as appropriate to completed course work in CA2. (It will be necessary for individual departments or programs to provide relevant lists of groups and organizations.)

Learning objective 4b: Discuss an important social issue or problem, as appropriate to completed course work in CA2. (It will be necessary for individual departments or programs to provide expectations with respect to discussions.)

Procedures

Assessment is to be considering an ongoing process, conducted as needed to support teaching and learning. This document defines the learning goals and objectives for content area 2, which were designed to inform teaching of general education courses approved within that area. In turn, teaching influences learning, and one aspect of assessment is to measure learning outcomes in such a way to inform faculty members of what teaching methods and topics are successful in helping students achieve learning objectives and what means of learning may be in need of change.

Because the particular learning goals each course is designed to meet have been developed by the faculty members of relevant departments, we feel that the learning outcomes should be developed by departments and instructors so that the outcomes are appropriate to the course content and the methods of instruction. We also recognize that courses approved under CA2 may not have been designed to meet all the learning goals of the area.

To help departments decide how to measure learning outcomes in ways that are most useful to them, the GEOC will host workshops for each content area to provide examples of different ways of measuring learning outcomes and how they could be

informative to faculty members and to provide information about instructional support resources (e.g., ITL).

Goals of Phase I Assessment

The goals of the Phase I assessment were to a) document who teaches CA2 courses and their knowledge of the CA2 Learning Objectives and Criteria, 2) have instructors assess how well their courses measure student learning of CA2 criteria, 3) corroborate instructor ratings of measurement of student learning with those of independent raters, 4) learn from instructors whether the learning goals and objectives as set out by the GEOC CA2 subcommittee are appropriate and useful, and 5) gather instructor insights about the need for faculty development, instructional resources, or redefinition of the Learning Objectives, Learning Goals, or Criteria.

Method

The Phase I assessment of Content Area 2 relies on three sources of information:

1) Data from the Office for Instructional Research about the enrollments by section and instructor of all CA2 courses at all 6 campuses for the previous three semesters,

2) Interviews and discussions with Storrs instructors of 10 large-enrollment CA2 departments (those with over 1000 student enrollments in the past three semesters),

3) Independent assessments of how these same instructors assess student learning of the Criteria, based on syllabi, examinations, and other assignments provided to us by the instructors. We also summarized new issues that the interviews and the differences between instructor and independent rater's assessments identified.

Instructor Participants. We selected 10 departments at Storrs which offer courses to over 1000 students per semester to participate in the Phase I Assessment. If the instructor we invited was unavailable or did not respond to requests, we contacted the department head or invited another instructor from that department to participate. We conducted interviews with 9 faculty members and one graduate student (the student and that students' supervising professor both participated) and received written responses to the interview questions from a tenth faculty member. Ten departments participated, including ANTH, ARE, CDIS, COMM, ECON, POLS, PP, PSYC, SOCI, and WS. The participants included 4 Professors, 1 Associate Professor, 2 Assistant Professors, 3 Instructors in Residence, and 1 PhD student. The Instructors in Residence had 1 or 5 years teaching experience. The assistant professors had 1 or 6 years teaching experience. The associate professor had 12 years' teaching experience. The Professors ranged from having 13 to 27 years teaching experience and the PhD student had 4 years teaching experience. Four of the participants interviewed were the person who had sought GEOC approval for their courses.

Procedure and Measures. Participants were invited to participate by an email letter from Felicia Pratto. Interviews were conducted by Professor Felicia Pratto or PhD student Melissa Sue Angus-John, or by both together. When we began our interviews, we first explained the purpose of assessment at the university and of this particular phase for CA2. We explained that this phase of assessment was to discover what is being taught and by whom, whether the learning goals and objectives are appropriate, and to gather other crucial faculty input. We indicated that we would keep the specific answers of participants' anonymous and were not evaluating their teaching. We had a small group discussion at the end of term for those who could attend. We thanked the chair

or dean (because some participants were department chairs) for their participation later in the semester. Participants were uniformly generous with their time, ideas, and teaching materials and showed very high devotion to general education teaching.

We first asked about the interviewee's rank, teaching experience, how he or she learned about the CA2 criteria. We then asked the interviewee to rate how well his or her course met the criteria (which were listed for each participant). The Interview Schedule is shown in Appendix A and the Criteria Rating Sheet is shown in Appendix B. To align with previous assessments in other Content Areas, all ratings used a 4-point scale where 4 meant better outcomes.

We then explained the Learning Goals and Objectives for CA2. Before participants rated how well their courses met the learning objectives, we asked them to list a few examples of the contents they teach. This part of the procedure was designed to have them bring their course content firmly to mind. Participants rated their courses in regards to these Goals and Objectives (see rating sheets in Appendix C). Sometimes faculty participants asked us clarifying questions or raised issues regarding different meanings of the Guidelines, Criteria, Goals, and Objectives. Such comments are the basis of our comments about the Criteria and Learning Objectives and Goals. Some participants consulted with their own teaching materials to evaluate their courses.

Finally, faculty members supplied us with written copies of examinations and other materials used to assess students, and either electronic access to or written copies of syllabi, assignments, reading lists, lecture notes, and other teaching materials for us to use in making an independent assessment of how well each course fit the criteria, learning goals, and objectives. We used a similar rating sheet to that shown in Appendix C but also indicated the source(s) on which we based our ratings. We promised participants that we would shred the examinations after completion of the report. Interviews lasted 20 to 60 minutes.

Results

Who teaches CA2 courses

The Office for Instructional Research enrollment data indicate clear differences between the regional campuses and the Storrs campus in the rank and position of those teaching Content Area 2 courses. At the Storrs campus, many CA2 courses are taught by tenure-track faculty members with smaller sections often led by graduate students under the supervision of faculty members. However, in several Storrs departments, large-enrollment courses are also taught by assistant professors in residence and by graduate students, who receive more supervision and training in instruction from some departments than from others.

At the regional campuses, CA2 courses are most commonly taught by adjuncts and instructors in residence (70% of sections). Fewer than 10% of CA2 course sections at the regional campuses are taught by tenure-track faculty members (see Table 1). Informally, we know that in some instances, the instructors at regional campuses are PhD students from Storrs who are supervised by Storrs faculty in their teaching. Although we have no reason to question the skills or dedication of the adjunct faculty, the staffing at the regional campuses is in defiance of the goal of having regular tenure-track faculty members teach general education courses. The fourth principle for General Education Guidelines states, "**Faculty Participation**. General Education courses should be taught by faculty; resources should be allocated to promote this practice." This guideline is not being carried out in practice. The university, including administrators, department heads, and faculty members should determine whether current practice in the allocation of available instructional resources is optimal, and whether the high numbers of non-tenure track faculty teaching CA2 courses indicates the need for faculty hiring. The fact of the matter is that regional campus CA2 courses are rarely taught by faculty members and courses at Storrs are only sometimes taught by faculty members.

Class size for Content Area 2 courses

Based on the Office for Instructional Research (OIR) report, there is a clear difference between how class sizes and delivery between Storrs and the regional campuses. At Storrs, nearly all CA2 courses are taught in large sections of about (and sometimes exceeding) 200 to 300 students. In many, but not all departments, those large courses also have students participate in weekly section meetings led by graduate students who are supervised by IORs, with 20, 25, 30, or 40 students per section. The OIR information is too irregular for Storrs to calculate the average section size for Storrs. However, for regional campuses, sections are smaller, ranging from 13 to 51, but most typically about 25 students. Our interviews with faculty members who have taught both at regional and Storrs campuses lead us to suspect these different course sizes afford very different kinds of instruction and assessment of students.

Implications for Instruction and Student Assessment. Based on interviews with faculty, some of whom supervise regional instructors and some of who have taught both at regional campuses and Storrs, we have reason to believe that the means by which students are assessed necessarily differs greatly between the large-lecture courses (mostly at Storrs) and small courses (mostly at regional campuses). Large lectures often rely heavily on multiple choice examinations and assign

few lengthy student papers, projects, presentations, or other assignments that would entail significant grading time. At regional campuses, instructors engage in substantially more discussion with their students and assign more papers and projects. Thus, if assessment of student learning is done in future, the methods of assessing students at Storrs and at regional campuses will almost certainly need to differ.

Breadth of CA2 Courses Taught

Table 2 indicates which departments offer CA2 courses by campus (note, W sections of courses that are also taught as non-Ws are not counted as separate courses in Table 2). Table 2 shows that Anthropology (ANTH), Communication Sciences (COMM), Economics (ECON), Geography (GEOG), HDFS (Human Development and Family Studies), Psychology (PSYC), and Sociology (SOCI) offer at least one CA2 course at every one of the six campuses. Three departments, Communication Disorders (CDIS), INTD, and Public Policy (PP) offer courses only at the Storrs campus.

Within each campus, a variety of different general education courses are taught, with the fewest available at Torrington (9) and the most at Storrs (44), but with Waterbury offering 14 different courses in CA2, and the other campuses offer over 20 courses each (see Table 3). At least 3 W CA2 courses are offered at each campus. Table 3 also shows the number of students enrolled for the previous 3 semesters (fall, 2008, spring, 2009, and fall, 2009) by campus in CA2 courses. Because over 24,000 of the students in CA2 courses were enrolled at Storrs, with fewer than 3,000 students enrolled at the next most populous campus (Hartford), the instructor interviews focused on the courses taught at the Storrs campus.

Instructors' Knowledge of CA2 Criteria
Four of the participants had sought GEOC/CA2 approval of the course about which they reported. Some had been teaching the course since before the current GEOC Guidelines were in place. Seven of the 10 participants had been informed of the CA2 Criteria by their Department Head or another faculty member, six had received information from email, the website for GEOC, or another source, and 8 had sought out such information on their own. On the whole, participants were highly aware of the GEOC Guidelines and CA2 criteria. Their side comments indicated a very high level of enthusiasm for teaching general education courses and for introducing college students to the goals of CA2.

Instructors' and Independent Rater's Ratings of how well their courses meet the Criteria

Participants were asked to rate how well their course met each Criteria and to provide examples to substantiate their ratings or give evidence for it (most but not all did so). Their own ratings of their courses were very high, with all but a few answers being 4 on the 4-point scale. For the most part, the independent rater concurred with the instructors' ratings (Both instructor and independent rater ratings are shown in Table 4 for each course). It should be noted that the lowest ratings were for Criterion 2, "Introduce students to methods used in the social sciences, including consideration of the ethical problems social scientists face." Our interviews indicated that some disciplines raise more ethical issues regarding how research is conducted, especially those that concern human research subjects, whereas others raise or address ethics (e.g.,

corruption in government) that are germane to the course but not necessarily germane to research methods. Still other disciplines have empirical findings and theory that are germane to ethical questions that the public or other may be concerned about, but they are not necessarily of a methodological nature. The methods issues addressed by the courses are not, in general, the same as "those social scientists face." Because many of the courses give concepts and facts, some disciplines do not address the ethical problems social scientists face (e.g., data interpretation, conflict of interest, ownership of human artifacts), although the courses do address ethical issues in societies that are informed by their disciplines both theoretically and empirically (e.g., public policy debates, corruption, privacy rights, violence). This Learning Criterion should be revisited, particularly including the broad range of ethical questions and methods used in the social sciences.

Instructors' Self-Assessment of Learning Objectives

In addition to introducing students to the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological tools of their respective disciplines, in order to formally assess student learning, the University must agree upon appropriate learning objectives and methods of assessing the same. To establish groundwork for this next phase, the Phase I assessment asked instructors to rate how well their courses assessed student learning for each of the Learning Objectives for CA2. We also asked participants to generate examples of theories, concepts, ethical issues, applications, organizations, and social issues that their courses addressed, and interviews showed that they were easily able to do this. With few exceptions, they indicated that their courses "assess well" (4) the learning objectives (see frequencies in Table 5).

Independent Rater's Ratings of Teaching and Student Assessment of Learning Objectives

Using the syllabi, example lectures, and examinations, quizzes, group projects and other assignments provided by the participants, and the interviews we independently rated whether the courses appeared to teach and to formally assess students on learning objectives. Our ratings per course are shown in Table 6. Overall, we felt that all the courses provided instruction and learning experiences to teach all the learning objectives, usually very well (see top panel of Table 6). The only exception concerned the ethics of research for one course.

We also rated, based on examinations, assignments, and other materials provided to us by the participants, how well each course formally assessed students' learning objectives (see bottom panel of Table 6). If several exam questions, for example, asked students to use or identify concepts, then we rated that course a 4 (assesses well) for Learning Objective 1b "Students can identify and explain at least three fundamental social science concepts." In some cases we inferred that theories were compared because multiple theories were taught in the course. Of necessity, these ratings may be biased downward because instructors have more detailed information of their students' performance than we did. In particular, we did not sit in on course discussions during which instructors may assess student learning objectives, and we did not have grading rubrics or examples of student work for all the assignments given. Therefore, our ratings may not be as accurate as those of the instructors. However, it may also be the case that instructors *teach* in ways that would satisfy the learning objectives more than they grade students in ways that match the learning objectives. For example, we often found that exam questions

would require a student to know and be able to apply a particular theory, but we found few exam questions in some courses that get at strengths and weaknesses of theories, or which compare theories. We hasten to add that this is not necessarily a shortcoming of instruction. The original Guidelines do not require that students are formally assessed. However, if CA2 Assessment moves to assessing students, the involved faculty members will need to agree with the assessors about how to assess student learning outcomes.

Methods of Student Assessment

For each of the six Learning Objectives, participants indicated whether they assessed student learning using exam questions, class discussions, written assignments, group projects, or other (which they were asked to specify). Table 7 shows the frequency of instructor's use of each student assessment method by the learning objectives. For the most part, instructors use class discussions and exam questions to assess student learning of all the learning objectives, and very few provide written assignments, group projects, or other means of assessing student learning or providing student learning opportunities. In interviews, several instructors indicated that the class discussions were designed by them but conducted by graduate students, with whom faculty met weekly. They lamented that it was not practical to use other means of assessing students given the large size of their classes and scarcity of TA support.

Instructors were uniformly enthusiastic about the opportunity to teach general education courses and showed versatility and creativity in how they taught their courses. In particular, instructors were skilled at contrasting students' implicit assumptions against the contents of disciplines as a means to make students more self-aware and versatile. Most, but not all instructors were familiar with the CA2 criteria and rated their delivery and assessment of the criteria and most learning objectives highly. With very few exceptions, the independent raters concurred with the instructors' judgments. An incomplete sampling of the theories, concepts, ethical issues, and research methods taught in the CA2 courses surveyed showed very little overlap between courses, and that there is not a uniform body of theories, concepts, ethical issues or research methods that constitutes a core curriculum for CA2. This is reflected in the abstract quality of the CA2 criteria and in the implicit agreement that courses accept whatever is considered a "theory" within particular disciplines (which might sometimes be called meta-theories or approaches or hypotheses).

Sampling of Content of CA2 Courses

Our interview schedule asked participants to give examples of the theories, concepts, methods, ethics, and interactions that they teach in order to make their self-evaluations more accurate (i.e., based on course contents rather than on general impressions). Although the answers they provided do not systematically sample the contents of the courses, and can in no way be considered exhaustive of any course, as indeed they were asked to generate only 2 or 3 examples, their listing does illustrate some of the breadth of theories, concepts, and methods taught in the social sciences, and the large range of units of social organization about which interactions are taught (see Table 8).

Discussion and Recommendations

Instruction by Faculty

We found that at regional campuses, instruction by tenure-track faculty in general education courses is the exception rather than the rule. Potentially, this means that regional campus faculty members teach more advanced courses, but it also appears to indicate that the CA2 general education provided at regional campuses is, on the whole, not being done by tenure-track faculty members. A more detailed assessment of staffing practices at regional campuses may reveal whether this should be considered a problem, and this issue extends beyond the scope of General Education. For example, many of those listed as IORs at regional campuses are also graduate students at Storrs. Sometimes this means that they are supervised by Storrs faculty members, but the extent to which this is the case is unknown. If it has become a regular practice to employ adjunct faculty members to teach at regional campuses, then this may be problematic regarding the notion that Storrs and regional campuses are one university. Note that instruction, whose quality we did not assess, is not necessarily poorer by non-tenure track faculty, but the notion that students at the University of Connecticut are exposed to serious researchers in their courses is compromised by the use of part-time and non-tenured instructors. This also has implications for the uniformity of tenure standards across campuses.

One possible recommendation for the next phase of assessment for CA2 would be to engage instructors at regional campuses. We suspect that our survey instruments and rating sheets can be adapted as self-administered questionnaires (indeed, one Storrs instructor used them as such). In addition, department heads and campus directors may need to be interviewed to ascertain the status of the instructors at regional campuses, and their understanding of the General Education Guidelines, Criteria, Learning Goals and Objectives.

Another recommendation for the Storrs campus is to ascertain how much instructional support regarding general education guidelines is provided to graduate students. Although the instructors we interviewed uniformly supervised graduate student section leaders and instructors and met with them regularly (often weekly), the participants in this study may also be among the most interested and engaged in general education, and so their level of involvement may be higher than is typical. However, before this strategy is pursued, we would recommend revisiting the CA2 Learning Objectives and Criteria.

Findings Regarding the Relation between Courses, Learning Objectives, and Criteria

Here we will discuss each of the Learning Objectives in turn, based on the interviews and differences we sometimes found between how learning objectives are addressed in courses teaching versus how they may be formally assessed.

Criterion 1. **Introduce students to theories and concepts of the social sciences.**

Learning objective 1a: **Identify strengths and weaknesses of at least two social science theories from different fields as appropriate to completed course work in CA2. (It will be necessary for individual departments or programs to provide relevant lists of theories.)**

Learning Objective 1a implies that students will not only learn at least two theories, but understand their strengths and weaknesses. We have no doubt that by taking two different CA2 courses as required, students learn this objective because all the courses we assessed taught at least one theory, and there was little overlap between different course contents for theories. However, in order for this learning objective to be met *within a given course*, multiple theories must be taught and compared (e.g., against one another, against situations for which they apply, or against data) *within that course*. It should be noted that some courses are designed to be more interdisciplinary and more inter-theoretical than others, and this, in our view, does not qualify them more or less as CA2 courses. For example, Women's Studies, Political Science, and Public Policy are highly interdisciplinary, Psychology teaches a wide variety of theories, but Agricultural and Resource Economics focuses mainly on one level of economic theory. These issues should be considered when designing student assessments.

Further, in engaging instructors in student assessments, instructors will demonstrate whether each of them only requires students to know particular theories, or to identify the strengths and weaknesses of *each* theory they teach. When we reviewed exam questions, for example, we found far more questions that dealt with facts, concepts, definitions, or applications than we did questions that asked students to overtly recognize strengths or weaknesses of theories. This may be because such a comparison is beyond the scope of introductory level courses. It may be that instructors switch theories to explain different phenomena in their courses, or make the comparison of theories overt in instruction rarely do not ask questions comparing theories (which can be complex). Potentially, the idea that identifying strengths and weaknesses augmented Criterion 1 so that Learning Objective 1a is beyond the purview of Criterion 1.

Learning objective 1b: **Identify and explain at least three fundamental social science concepts as appropriate to completed course work in CA2. (It will be necessary for individual departments or programs to provide relevant lists of methods.)**

Instructors and our assessment showed that this Objective is both taught and assessed. Some participants raised the question of whether there is a core set of theories and concepts that all University graduates should learn from the CA2 courses. Based on the great diversity of course contents (see Table 8) we suspect that CA2 faculty would not agree on a core of theories or concepts, but this issue could be raised in focus groups with faculty members. Certainly the diversity of social science concepts that are taught across the different CA2 courses speaks against the idea that a given set of concepts is standard and that students could be assessed with a standardized instrument about the social sciences.

Criterion 2. **Introduce students to methods used in the social sciences, including consideration of the ethical problems social scientists face.**

Learning objective 2: **Identify and explain a method commonly used in social science research, including the ethical considerations of its use, as appropriate to completed course work in CA2. (It will be necessary for individual departments or programs to provide relevant lists of methods.)**

Learning Objective 2 was arguably the most problematic. Again, we emphasize that this is not necessarily because the courses we assessed do not meet the Criteria for CA2 courses. The first issue regarding Learning Objective 2 is that ethical considerations about the use of research methods are not equally important for all research methods. For example, social scientists who use living human participants as research subjects can teach about the ethical treatment of human participants, but those who conduct largely archival research often cannot. For example, contemporary economics research rarely raises issues about the treatment of human participants. Further, in some disciplines, it is normal to use multiple kinds of research methods (e.g., surveys, experiments) and in others, methods are either more standard (economic mathematical analysis) or are more amorphous (e.g., political science). The second issue regarding Learning Objective 2 is that all the courses addressed ethical issues in societies or in the world from the vantage point of the course discipline, but these are not all *methodological* ethical concerns. For example, anthropology courses might address questions of repatriation of human remains and artifacts, and the use of social science in policy, psychology might address whether mentally ill people can be held against their will and the stigma of mental illness, public policy and political science courses might address corruption, public responsibility, agricultural economics can address the best use of natural resources and who is responsible for behavioral choices. These important social issues engage ethics and can be informed by disciplines in the social sciences, both meta-theoretically and empirically. But they are not necessarily about the ethics of research methods. We suggest that the Learning Objectives be modified to address ethics without insisting that it is subsumed in research methods. Further, we suspect that in fact, CA2 courses mainly address ethical issues, but these issues are not limited to those "social scientists face," as Criterion 2 states, but also those that their disciplines address. We recommend that the CA2 faculty be engaged in a discussion of whether Criterion 2 should be changed in these directions.

Criterion 3. Introduce students to ways in which individuals, groups, institutions, or societies behave and influence one another and the natural environment.

Learning objective 3: **Apply a theory and selected concepts from social science to such interaction as appropriate to completed course work in CA2. (It will be necessary for individual departments or programs to provide relevant lists of interactions.)**

Instructors and independent raters concurred that Learning Objective 3 was taught and assessed in all courses. In addition to exam questions that addressed interactions among various social actors, from dyads, families, neighborhoods, organizations, governments, and groups, many questions assessed application of concept knowledge to human interactions. However, instructors noted that the disciplines vary in how much they address how people influence (or are influenced) by the natural environment (Criterion 3). For example, agricultural economics often does address land and water use and farming, and anthropology often addresses how ecology influences culture and vice versa. CDIS addresses hearing, but some sounds are from nature whereas many others are human-made. Criteria 3 would fit all the courses we assessed if it was modified to read, "Introduce students to ways in which individuals, groups, institutions, or societies behave and influence one another and/or the ways the natural environment influences people and vice versa."

Criterion 4. Provide students with tools to analyze social, political, or economic groups/organizations (such as families, communities, or governments), and to examine social issues and problems at the individual, cultural, societal, national, or international level. Social issues that might be addressed include gender, race, social class, political power, economic power, and cross-cultural interaction.

Learning objective 4a: **Describe the role of a selected group's or organization's impact on an important social issue or problem, as appropriate to completed course work in CA2. (It will be necessary for individual departments or programs to provide relevant lists of groups and organizations.)**

All the courses taught material addressing this objective, but three of them were not rated as assessing it formally. It is entirely possible that, as instructor ratings indicated, the courses did assess this objective informally, and it is also clear that all the courses did *familiarize* students with an important social issue or problem. We recommend that discussions with relevant instructors should determine whether they in fact assess this objective rather than just teach it, or only introduce social issues or problems and provide the tools for analyzing them, without requiring that students use the tools to address the issues or problems.

Learning objective 4b: **Discuss an important social issue or problem, as appropriate to completed course work in CA2. (It will be necessary for individual departments or programs to provide expectations with respect to discussions.)**

Instructors and raters concurred that this Objective was taught and assessed in all courses.

Table 1

Instructor Rank for CA2 Courses at Regional Campuses, Enrollments by Campus

Campus	Enrollment	Professor (Full, Associate, and Assistant)	Instructor of residence (Assistant or Associate) / Lecturer / Adjunct	Graduate students
Avery Point				
Fall 2008	519	2	12	1
Spring 2009	562	2	13	3
Fall 2009	545	2	15	4
Total	1626	6	40	8
Hartford				
Fall 2008	930	0	24	4
Spring 2009	965	0	22	6
Fall 2009	1022	1	21	9
Total	2917	1	67	19
Stamford				
Fall 2008	723	3	16	4
Spring 2009	712	8	8	7
Fall 2009	772	5	14	5
Total	1495	16	38	16
Storrs				
Fall 2008	7,946			
Spring 2009	7,610			
Fall 2009	8,526			
Total	24,082			
Torrington				
Fall 2008	147	0	6	0
Spring 2009	130	0	6	0
Fall 2009	149	0	5	0
Total	426	0	17	0
Waterbury				0
Fall 2008	0	0	0	2
Spring 2009	565	0	15	7
Fall 2009	907	3	8	9
Total	1472	3	23	

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Table 2.
Departments offering CA2 courses at each campus (indicated by X).

Department	Avery Point	Hartford	Stamford	Storrs	Torrington	Waterbury
			Campus			
ANTH	X	X	X	X	X	X
ARE				X		
COMM	X	X	X	X	X	X
CDIS				X		
ECON	X	X	X	X	X	X
GEOG	X	X	X	X		X
HDFS	X	X	X	X	X	X
HRTS		X		X		
INTD				X		
LAMS	X	X	X	X		
LING		X		X		
POLS	X	X	X	X		X
SOCI	X	X	X	X	X	X
PP				X		
PSYC	X	X	X	X	X	X
URBN	X	X			X	
WS	X	X		X		

Note. Departments listed in bold offer at least one CA2 course at every campus.

Table 3.

Number of Content Area 2 courses offered by campus, and enrollments per section, Fall, 2008 through fall 2009.

Information	Avery Point	Hartford	Stamford	Storrs	Torrington	Waterbury
No. departments offering CA2 courses	14	13	10	16	7	9
No. different CA2 courses	22	21	21	44	9	15
No. W courses	3	6	4	7	3	3
Students enrolled	1,926	2,917	1,495	24,082	426	1,323
Minimum, maximum students per course section	18-41	14-51	13-46	20-40	12-40	15-48
Average students per course section	30	33	22		22	40

Table 4

Instructors' and Raters' Assessment of How well Courses meet each CA2 Criteria

CA2 Criteria

Course	1		2		3		4	
	I	R	I	R	I	R	I	R
ANTH 1000	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
ARE1150	3.5	4	2	3	4	4	4	4
COMM 1000	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4
CDIS 1150	4	4	3	2	4	3	4	3
ECON1000	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
POLS1602	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4
PSYC1103	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
SOCI1000	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4
WS1124	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

Note. I indicates instructor rating; R indicates independent rater rating. Ratings were made in answer to the question, "How well does this course meets each criterion?" (see Appendix B). Scale was 1 (not at all), 2 (barely), 3 (somewhat) 4 (very well).

Table 5

Frequency of Instructor ratings of course for each Learning Objective

	Learning Objective					
Rating	1a theory	1b concepts	2	3	4a	4b
Not at all	0	0	1	0	0	1
Barely	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somewhat	2	1	5	0	2	1
Assess well	8	9	4	10	8	8

Note. Frequency is out of 10 courses assessed. Learning Objectives are listed in Appendix C. Scale was 1 (not at all), 2 (barely), 3 (somewhat) 4 (very well).

Table 6

Independent rater's ratings of how well courses teach and assess each learning objective.

Teaching — Learning Objectives

Course	1a	1b	2 methods	2 ethics	3	4a	4b
ANTH 1000	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
ARE 1150	4	4	3	2	4	4	4
COMM 1000	4	4	2	3	4	3	4
CDIS	4	4	3	1	4	3	4
ECON 1000	4	4	3	3	4	4	4
POLS 1602	4	4	3	3	4	4	4
PP 1001	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
PSYC 1103	4	4	3	3	4	4	4
SOCI 1000	4	4	3	4	4	4	4
WS 1124	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

Formal Assessment of Students — Learning Objectives

Course	1a	1b	2 methods	2 ethics	3	4a	4b
ANTH 1000	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
ARE 1150	2	4	4	2	4	2	4
COMM 1000	2	4	4	1	4	3	1
CDIS	1	4	4	1	4	1	3
ECON 1000	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
POLS 1602	1	4	2	1	3	4	4
PP 1001	4	4	4	2	4	4	4
PSYC 1103	4	4	4	4	4	2	4

SOCI 1000	4	4	1	1	4	4	4
WS 1124	4	4	1	1	4	4	4

Note. Scale was 1 (not at all), 2 (barely), 3 (somewhat) 4 (very well).

Table 7

Frequency of use of Various Methods of Student Assessments by Learning Objective

Method	1a	1b	2 methods	2 ethics	3	4a	4b
Exam Questions	10	10	9	7	10	10	9
Class Discussions	9	10	9	8	9	9	9
Written Assignments	5	3	4	2	5	4	5
Group Project	1	2	2	1	2	2	2
Other	2	2	2	2	2	2	1

Note. Frequency is out of 10 courses assessed.

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Table 8

Examples of Theories, Concepts, Ethical Issues, and Interactions among Social Entities by Course

CA2 Courses	Theories	Concepts	Methods	Ethics	Interactions
ANTH 1000	Evolutionism Historical particularism Symbolic social construction	Cultural relativism Economics Exchange Marriage Subsistence modes Stratification	Field research Participant observation	Bias in observation and reporting Unintended consequences Revealing private and sensitive information	Exchange interactions Kinship behavior Marriage Relationships with environment
ARE 1150	Demand, supply and market equilibrium Equimarginal utility Production possibilities curve Welfare economics	externalities Law of discriminatory returns Marginal cost and benefit Opportunity cost Public goods Scarcity	Cost-benefit analysis Marginal analysis	Natural resources usage and the environment Population dynamics and economics	Consumers and producers Farmers and environment Policy makers
COMM 1000	Cognitive dissonance theory Homophily Script theory Social comparison Social identity Social learning theory	Cultural dimensions Media effects Organizational culture	Content Analysis Experimental Survey	Disadvantages of methods Unintentional or misuse of method	Families Intercultural interactions Interpersonal relationships
CDIS 1150	Nature vs. nurture	Autism Disability Communication disorders Language development	Experimental studies Survey methods		Culture groups World Health Organization

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CA2 Courses	Theories	Concepts	Methods	Ethics	Interactions
ECON 1000	Free riding Property rights Public choice theory Spontaneous order and unintended consequences Quantity theory of money Supply and demand Theory of economic growth	CPI GDP Fallacy of composition Incentives inflation Scarcity	Comparative statistics Empirical testing (causation and causality)	Implicit theories in understanding economic phenomenon Positive and normative analysis Roles of economists in policy	Spontaneous order Voting and public choice Tragedy of commons
POLS 1602	Democratization Legal decision making Pluralism	Civil liberties Civil rights Democracy equality Liberty Political culture Political participation	Survey research Textual analysis	Disadvantages of methods Unintentional or misuse of method Surveys may ask unethical questions	
PSYC 1103	Attachment theory Nature vs. nurture Peer relations Socialization theory Self-fulfiling prophecy Stereotype threat	Clinical disorders Development Discrimination Prejudice Social relationships	Experimental paradigm Observational methods Questionnaire method	Assumptions of correlational findings Costs and benefits of research Debriefing Inclusion and exclusion of certain groups	Parent child relationships Peer relationships Romantic relationships
PP 1001	Pluralism Rational Choice Theory Issue Voting Retrospective Voting	Incrementalism Public Choice Collective Action	Survey research Public opinion research	Responsibility of government as safety net	Interest groups Free expression of rights Pluralism/Hyperpluralism Marketplace of ideas

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CA2 Courses	Theories	Concepts	Methods	Ethics	Interactions
SOCI 1000	Conflict theory Feminist theory Gender theory Functionalism Racism theories Stratification theory Symbolic interactionism	Inequality Social institutions Socialization System discrimination	experiments Participant observation survey	Harm Invasion of privacy Single and double blind studies	Class inequality Interracial relationships families Gendered relationships Labor markets institutions
WS 1124	Critical race theory Feminist theories Gender theories	Discrimination Homophobia Immigration Labor Poverty Sexual rights Social constructions Social processes Social structures and systems Systems of oppression	Feminist research Critical analysis Humanities approach	Human rights Gender equality Hierarchy Social justice	Politics and agency Knowledge production Community research

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Appendix A Interview Schedule for CA2 Instructors

Interviewer: _____   Interviewee: _____ p. 1
 Date: _____   Interviewee Department & Course: _____
1. What is your status at UConn? I want to know your rank and whether you are in the tenure track. (check one)
___ professor   ___ assoc. professor   ____ assistant professor
___ lecturer or adjunct faculty   ____ faculty in residence
___ staff with a non-teaching component

2. How long or since when have you taught at UConn? _____
3. How many years teaching experience at the college level did you have before teaching here? _____ years
4. I'm here to ask you about (COURSE NAME)_____. This course meets a general education requirement. Are you the person who sought approval for Gen. Ed. Certification? ____ yes _____ no
5. When you asked to or were assigned to teach the course, did anyone tell you that the course is supposed to fulfill a general education requirement? ____ yes ____ no
(If yes, who was that person? _____
(IF 5=YES) 6. Has anyone sent you a memo, sent you to a website, or given you information about the CA2 requirements for this course?

Have you investigated the CA2 criteria or learning objectives on your own? ____ yes ____ no

As you know we are doing this study to find out about the state of teaching and learning in Content Area 2. The GEOC subcommittee for CA2 took the learning objectives that the Senate approved for CA2, and wrote some student outcomes, things students should learn or know how to do, to fit each of those learning objectives. Now we are supposed to find out if the faculty who teach those courses actually agree with the learning outcomes, and whether they feel they teach the objectives and assess student learning for the objectives.
7.   First, I'd like you to have a look at the CA2 objectives and check which ones you feel your course includes in its pedagogic goals. (Hand the criteria sheet with ratings. When completed, take back).
8. Next, I'd like to go through the learning outcomes with you to figure out if you feel that you assess each learning outcomes. We would also like to figure out how different instructors do these assessments. (Hand the learning objectives sheet). So what we do is to read each outcome and decide if that is an outcome you assess, and if so, how? For example, is there a take-home assignment, exam, in-class exercise that is graded, that you use to assess student learning for each outcome. (Hand CA2 faculty assessment of LO sheet. Help them complete it and take it back).
9. Finally, I would like to ask that you give me copies of recent exams, assignments, etc. that you use for assessment in the course so that I can map out how you meet the learning outcomes. (Gather syllabus, assignments, exams, etc – anything pertinent to assessing student learning.)
10. Would you be willing to allow us to see what materials you post on HuskyCT to review how we would see your means of assessing learning objectives? (If so, give instruction sheet with our netIDs).

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Appendix B Instructor Rating Sheet for CA2 Criteria

Course (Dept & Number): _____   Instructor: _____

The Senate set four criteria for Content Area 2. Please rate how well you feel your course meets each of the criteria by writing a number form the scale below in each blank next to each criterion.

1	2	3	4
Not at all	Barely	Somewhat	Very well

____ *1*. Introduce students to theories and concepts of the social sciences.

____ 2. Introduce students to methods used in the social sciences, including consideration of the ethical problems social scientists face.

 ____ 3. Introduce students to ways in which individuals, groups, institutions, or societies behave and influence one another and the natural environment.

____ 4. Provide students with tools to analyze social, political, or economic groups/organizations (such as families, communities, or governments), and to examine social issues and problems at the individual, cultural, societal, national, or international level. Social issues that might be addressed include gender, race, social class, political power, economic power, and cross-cultural interaction.

Appendix C Questionnaire for Faculty to Assess Student Learning for each Learning Objective.

This survey is to assess how well faculty feel they assess student learning in their CA2 course.

For each numbered learning objective (LO), briefly summarize how you teach and measure students' learning, and then circle a number from the scale to rate how much your course assesses this learning objective.

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*1a. Students can i*dentify strengths and weaknesses of at least two social science theories.

Name some of the theories you teach in your course:

How do you measure students' identification of strengths & weaknesses of such theories? (check any that apply or write in a more appropriate answer):

___ exam questions _____ class discussions ____ written assignments _____ group project

___ other: _____

How well does your course assess this learning objective (1a)? (circle a number from 1-4)

1	2	3	4
Not at all	Barely	Somewhat	Assess well

1b. Students can identify and explain at least three fundamental social science concepts.

Name some of the concepts you teach in your course:

How do you measure students' ability to identify and explain such concepts? (check any that apply or write in a more appropriate answer):

___ exam questions _____ class discussions ____ written assignments _____ group project

___ other: _____

How well does your course assess this learning objective (1b)? (circle a number from 1-4)

1	2	3	4
Not at all	Barely	Somewhat	Assess well

---

2. Students can identify and explain a method commonly used in social science research, including the ethical considerations of its use.

Name some of the research methods your course teaches:

How do you measure students' familiarity with methods? (check any that are appropriate or write in your method)

___ exam questions _____ class discussions ____ written assignments _____ group project

___ other: _____

What are some of the ethical considerations regarding methods that your course teaches?

How do you measure students' familiarity with ethical issues? (check any that are appropriate or write in your method)

___ exam questions _____ class discussions ____ written assignments _____ group project

___ other: _____

How well does your course assess this learning objective (2)? (circle a number from 1-4)

1	2	3	4
Not at all	Barely	Somewhat	Assess well

---

3. Students can apply a theory and selected concepts from social science to interactions that occur among individuals, groups, institutions, societies, and/or the natural environment.

Give 1-2 examples of the kinds of interactions your course teaches.

What concepts and/or theories from social sciences do you teach as relevant to such interactions?

How do you measure students' familiarity with such interactions? (check any that are appropriate or write in your method)

___ exam questions _____ class discussions ____ written assignments _____ group project

___ other: _____

How well does your course assess this learning objective (3)? (circle a number from 1-4)

1	2	3	4
Not at all	Barely	Somewhat	Assess well

4a. Students should be able to analyze the general structure and operations of groups or organizations in the context of social science.

What are some of the groups or organizations that your course teaches students about?

How do you measure students' ability to analyze the general structure and operations of such groups or organizations? (check any that are appropriate or write in your method)

___ exam questions _____ class discussions ____ written assignments _____ group project

___ other: _____

How well does your course assess this learning objective (4a)? (circle a number from 1-4)

1	2	3	4
Not at all	Barely	Somewhat	Assess well

*4b. Students should be able to d*iscuss an important social issue or problem in the context of social science.

Give 1-2 examples of social issues or problems that your course teaches students to discuss using social science knowledge.

How do you measure students' ability to discuss important social issues or problems? (check any that are appropriate or write in your method)

___ exam questions _____ class discussions ____ written assignments _____ group project

___ other: _____

How well does your course assess this learning objective (4b)? (circle a number from 1-4)

       1   2   3   4
Not at all   Barely   Somewhat   Assess well