



UMass Amherst’s Educational Effectiveness Plan (EEP) provides departments with an ongoing structure for conducting systematic inquiry into the effectiveness of their efforts to support student success. Departments initially developed and submitted their EEP inquiry plans and evidence gathering strategies in spring 2018 and are asked to provide updates on their progress on a regular basis. EEP activity is also incorporated into the University’s strategic planning process – with departments including their EEP progress and findings into their 2021 Strategic Planning Refresh. What follows is the department’s most current reporting, as synthesized by the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment (OAPA).

Social Thought and Political Economy (STPEC) EEP

Identify the evidence you currently use (beyond GPA) to determine that your undergraduates have achieved the objectives you have for them.

Currently, under the direction of the Director of STPEC, we look at senior surveys and SRTI reports, including the review of SRTI comments on our integrative experience course. We also look at in-house course evaluations and STPEC Program evaluations as well as CUA advising and tracking through one-on-one consultations with majors twice a year. In addition, each semester we collect and place on file syllabi. The Director, Associate Director, and faculty member appointed to teach our Praxis course meet to review student progress, learning outcomes, and samples of student final projects for the Integrative Experience course which is connected to our Internship Requirement. Additionally, we review together the SRTIs and student evaluations of the Focus Seminars taught by faculty outside the department. We are now using the “STPEC SLO Information Guide” during all these reviews and discussions.

Please describe the focus of your inquiry and explain why this inquiry is important to your department right now.

Lines of Inquiry 2018:

- To what extent do our programs and curriculum align with our updated SLOs?
- To what extent are students achieving our SLOs, and are they satisfied with their educational experience as STPEC majors?
- To what extent does the Internship Requirement, as currently configured, align with the updated SLOs?

Progress your department has made toward addressing your line of inquiry, and the types of evidence that you have collected to inform your inquiry.

This response will address both lines of inquiry 1) and 2) together. Line of inquiry 3 will be addressed through discussion of our course, 494PI: Praxis, which is directly connected to our

Internship Requirement, and also fulfills the University's Integrative Experience (IE) requirement.

For discussion and consideration of our lines of inquiry, the Director and the full-time Lecturers decided to use assignment and assessment rubrics of two courses as common points of reference: STPEC 391H: Core I, and 494PI: Praxis. This decision was based on the fact that 391H: Core I is one of our two core curriculum courses, taught exclusively by STPEC faculty, and that 494PI: Praxis is our department's offering for the University's Integrative Experience (IE) requirement. The Integrative Experience course serves as an integrative culmination of the department's curricular offerings (from our required pre-requisites, 101 and 189, through our required Core I and Core II, to our advanced topics Focus Seminars); and that it is directly connected to the STPEC Program Internship Requirement.

For discussion and consideration of all three lines of inquiry the Director produced a memo, the "STPEC SLO Information Guide," to be shared with full-time department faculty and staff, all rotating faculty teaching the Focus Seminars, and with individual students during consultation with the Director and/or the CUA.

Additionally, the STPEC Director continues to work with individual faculty members and instructors in course design and delivery. This consultation is necessary to the design and delivery of the courses taught by instructors from outside the STPEC department (e.g., Junior-Year Writing; and the four Focus Seminars). The Director recruits research faculty to teach Focus seminars and negotiates their topics with them. In selecting instructors and topics, the director considers the SLOs, the quality and innovativeness of potential instructors' research, the currency of particular topics, and the alignment of syllabi with SLOs.

What are your department's next steps regarding your continuing and/or upcoming EEP line of inquiry?

The next steps are to follow up with department faculty and staff, and with Student Executive Committee, on the different EEP steps. The Director will report to the faculty and staff on the effectiveness of using this SLO Information Guide during meetings with new students; with the Student Executive Committee; and consultation with faculty when recruiting for the Focus Seminars. The CUA will report on the effectiveness of using the SLO Information Guide during individual and group student advising sessions, and during internship consultation meetings. The Director and the two STPEC Lecturers will continue to meet regularly to review examples of student assignments and projects, and to consider additions or changes to the STPEC Course Assignments and Assessment Rubric Sample sheet. We will also invite the tenure-track research faculty at UMass Amherst that have recently taught our Focus Seminars to participate. This next step is planned with a view towards better ascertaining alignment of course topics and assignments with our department SLOs. The Director will meet with the Associate Director (and Senior Lecturer) now teaching Junior Year Writing, to consider the effectiveness of this change. We plan to invite faculty from the Writing Program to participate in this discussion.

In Spring 2021 STPEC faculty and staff will work with Student Executive Committee and the Advisory Faculty to organize a showcase of student work produced in Praxis. We will invite faculty teaching the Focus Seminars to participate as well. Additionally, in our capacity as the Director and the Departmental Personnel Committee, we review together the SRTIs and student evaluations of the Focus Seminars taught by faculty outside the department. We are now using the “STPEC SLO Information Guide” during all these reviews and discussions. We will invite the regularly rotating Focus Seminar faculty to participate in this review. We will also request observation of student presentations and projects in these courses. We will also invite the Focus Seminar faculty to participate in the STPEC showcase of student work, and the participation of STPEC students in their Focus Seminars.

What are the Student Learning Objectives for your department or program(s)?

Social Thoughts and Political Economy, B.A.

- Develop interdisciplinary knowledge of social sciences and political economy: Students will have a comprehensive understanding of foundational concepts in anthropology, economics, political philosophy, sociology, history, and other disciplines in the social sciences and the humanities. Students will also have a comprehensive understanding of advanced social science theories that address major axes of oppression/resistance in diverse social and political contexts around the world.
- Develop Interdisciplinary knowledge of Western and non-Western global perspectives: Students will have comprehensive understanding of the history of social theory and social science in the West as well as its critique by postcolonial subjects. Students will also have a comprehensive understanding of the history of social movements throughout the world as well as their relationship to the development of social theory.
- Critical Thinking: Students will be able to critically assess scientific and popular debates about economic and social inequalities, and cultural and social diversity, especially with respect to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, racism, class, globalization, and other axes of power and resistance, and apply their analysis in everyday life.
- Analytic Thinking: Students will develop skills necessary for critical analysis of texts, policies, and social behavior, especially with respect to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, racism, class, globalization, and other axes of power and resistance. Students will develop the capacity to analyze influential economic, political, and sociological paradigms; to analyze the merits and limitations of key theoretical perspectives and pivotal studies in their STPEC concentration; and to engage in interdisciplinary analysis recognizing the existence of multiple perspectives.
- Problem-solving and research skills: Students will demonstrate mastery of the research methods and practices of at least two interdisciplinary social science research skills, including: ethnographic and qualitative methods and analyses, community-based research, internship practicums, fieldwork, multimedia or arts-based research.
- Communicating Ideas: Students will develop the capacity to effectively and creatively communicate verbally and in writing theories, data, and methods of the multiple

disciplines engaged with social thought and political economy. Students will also develop the capacity to engage effectively and creatively in cross-cultural communication.

Experiential Goals

Students will apply their knowledge of social theories and methods by working in an internship. The STPEC major requires students to complete one 3-credit internship, and one critical analysis paper and/or research paper on the internship work experience. The Internship Requirement is also integrated into the STPEC curriculum through the Integrative Experience (IE) course required of all primary majors.