

Latin American and Latino Studies Program  
Academic Assessment Report 2023-2024  
Prepared and Submitted by  
Steven Rosales, Program Director

The following points address LALS co-majors and minor learning outcomes as evaluated by the LALS program director and instructor, Dr. David Glish-Sánchez.

Results

**A.Evaluation of skills acquired in the Capstone Course:**

Our LALS 4003/H Colloquium serves as the program's capstone course. Due to faltering enrollment, however, the program's instructor has found it necessary to combine the course with either one of two Special Topics courses, Latinx Public Policy (Fall Semester) and Latinx Genders & Sexualities (Spring Semester). Also, both courses are in the bureaucratic process of transforming into LALS coded classes.

Interdisciplinarity:

Through the material engaged and the assignments completed, the students were able to deepen their analytical skills and comfortability by participating in conversations around identity, power, and inequality. This is essential because such conversations are often depicted incorrectly as divisive and fraught with conflict. All of the students conducted themselves with the utmost respect towards their peers and the content of the course. Moreover, the final project in the course required students to develop and create a zine that engaged a topic/theme from the course in a creative yet educational way. The students thus developed skills that allowed them to translate complex ideas and issues for a general audience, which bodes well for the information learned in the course to travel beyond the confines of the classroom.

Diversity of Perspectives:

The students in the class were exposed to social science methods and theories that engaged in critical analysis of the social world to better understand how systemic inequalities like white supremacy, patriarchy, and transphobia and homophobia (along with capitalism and xenophobia) shape the gendered, sexual, and racial experiences of Latinxs in the U.S., Caribbean, and Latin America.

**B.Evaluation of Skills Acquired in the Introductory Course (two sections each in the Fall and Spring Semesters):**

Interdisciplinarity

The program's introductory course (LALS 2013) provides credit for General Education Learning Outcome (GELO) 3.2: *Develop a working knowledge of how scholars and artists think and act in fundamental areas of study, including concepts from the fine arts or performing arts; aesthetic, humane, and ethical sensibilities of the humanities; principles of human interactions of*

*individuals, groups, and institutions; through experiment and observation, the basic principles that govern natural phenomena, and GELO 4.1/4.2: Expand diversity awareness, intercultural competency, and global learning. The two learning outcomes for this goal are for students to learn to interact appropriately within intercultural contexts and develop familiarity with concepts of diversity in the United States.* As a result, the program's instructor, Dr. David Glish-Sanchez, has successfully taught two sections of LALS 2013 per semester at or near capacity since his hire in the Fall semester, 2022. In addition, our program requires our students to achieve Spanish competency at the intermediate level, or a Portuguese equivalent (SPAN/PORT 2013), that fosters an intimate relationship with the Spanish subsection of the Department of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. Our program also provides broad-based and in-depth exposure to the key geographic regions, historical trajectories, social modes, and political, economic, and cultural systems of Latin America and the U.S. Latina/o community that often overlap with our sister international and interdisciplinary programs (AAST, Gender Studies, Religious Studies, Indigenous Studies, and INST).

#### Diversity of Perspectives:

The students in the class were introduced, many for the first time, to Latinx and Latin American Studies as interdisciplinary fields of academic study with their own history, methods, and critical ideas and knowledge. For most students this was their first time taking a course that centered Latinx history, culture, and politics. Students learned the importance of understanding the complexity and diversity of Latin American and Caribbean-descended people and avoid the popular and dominant tendencies in the U.S. to treat Latinx people as a monolith, thus preparing them to interact with Latinx people and communities in a thoughtful and accurate manner. Furthermore, through the two essays assigned, students in the course engaged in both self-reflexive and critical thinking by analyzing contemporary issues and their own personal environments regarding identity, power, and inequality as it concerns Latinx people. Furthermore, the Introductory course plays a vital role in exposing students to the growing U.S. Latina/o community at the University of Arkansas and throughout the U.S. South.

#### **C. Evaluation of Language Skills**

Students pursuing a second major in Latin American and Latino Studies or a minor must complete SPAN 2013, PORT 2013, or equivalent. Provisions are available for recognition of language skills gained by other means than formal course work taken at the University of Arkansas. Further functional work in Spanish or Portuguese, provided by the Department of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures as well as study and residence in a Latin American nation can serve to strengthen language competence and are encouraged. Unfortunately, staffing Portuguese courses, including PORT 2013, has been problematic as multiple tenure and non-tenure track faculty have occupied the position over the years in the Department of World Languages. The position is currently occupied by Instructor of Portuguese, Dr. Renato Amado

#### **D. Evaluation by Comparative Rubric:**

Unfortunately, no survey information was compiled from the ten students enrolled in the Colloquia/Special Topics course this past spring semester. And only one graduating senior of six

total, completed the Senior Survey Exit Questionnaire. Moving forward, however, the LALS director and the program instructor will make a more concerted effort to gather such survey information from future students. We will use survey results to help shape and plan future initiatives and directions for our program and to improve our current curriculum. We will discuss student matriculation in the program and strategize how to better reach students at an earlier stage in their college career.