

Building a Sustainable Assessment Process for a New Interdisciplinary Program: The Case of the Health Humanities ILM

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Illustration: Wheelchair Goddess by Mikenzi Jones, kenzistudioco.

Program Facts

- New interdisciplinary major (launched 2020) at CAS; not officially under any department.
- Includes courses from 15+ different departments at 4 different Schools/Colleges.
- As many faculty teach “in the program” as teach these courses, but we currently have 6 faculty officially affiliated with the program, some of whom teach our dedicated Introduction to Health Humanities (HUM 145) and Capstone (HUM 445) courses, or other courses specifically introduced for the ILM.
- Number of active students currently (Spring 2025) in the major: 31
- Number of graduates: 2 in 2023, 2 in 2024, projected 9 in 2025

Building a sustainable assessment process: AY24-25 aims

1. Revise program learning outcomes, from an initial 9 to a more manageable 5-6, in consultation with faculty and students.
2. Mapping:
 - New outcomes to Shared Competencies
 - Some program Core courses and Capstone to new outcomes
3. Planning for next year:
 - Decide on 2 outcomes to assess in AY 2025-26, relevant courses and evidence/measures
 - Together with faculty, start thinking about criteria for success and possible rubrics: what counts as successfully meeting these outcomes?
 - Set up a shared OneDrive folder for faculty to share evidence and other relevant documents
4. Develop habits, faculty community, and admin support for assessment needs
 - Difficult with an interdisciplinary major with no departmental home and no dedicated admin

Revised Learning Outcomes, with Shared Competencies

1. Compare and apply some theories and methods in the humanities and social sciences, as they relate to claims about health, illness, disability or health care. (CCT, SIRS)
2. Apply knowledge specific to the health humanities to communicate and critically evaluate one’s own experiences in health-related settings. (CS, CCT)
3. Demonstrate adequate knowledge of different cultural and historical understandings of health, illness, and/or disability, as well as an understanding of social determinants of health and health inequalities. (CGR, EICDI)
4. Engage in moral reflection about questions related to health, illness, disability and/or health care, in a way that is well-informed and culturally sensitive. (EICDI)
5. Demonstrate a situational recognition of when and how to apply health humanities competencies, such as empathetically considering diverse perspectives, and communicating from a place of empathy as a health professional or patient. (CS, EICDI)
6. Complete a capstone research project that demonstrates cumulative learning in the health humanities, and present the project to peers. (SIRS)

Outcomes chosen for AY 25-26; with a partial curriculum map

Shared Competencies	Learning Outcomes	HUM 145 (CS, CGR, CCT) (Intro to Health Humanities)	HUM 445 (SIRS, CS, CCT, CGR, EICDI) (Capstone)
Comp 1: CCT Comp 2: SIRS	1. Compare and apply some theories and methods in the humanities and social sciences, as they relate to claims about health, illness, disability or health care.	I, R Tests, discussion questions, essays, presentations, final projects; Final course grades, course feedback data	R, M Reflective assignment 2 (“electives reflection”), portfolio; Final course grades, course feedback data
Comp 1: CCT Comp 2: CS	2. Apply knowledge specific to the health humanities to communicate and critically evaluate one’s own experiences in health-related settings.	I, R Tests, discussion questions, essays, presentations, final projects; Final course grades, course feedback data	R, M Reflective assignment 3 (“service learning and/or personal experiences reflection”), portfolio; Final course grades, course feedback data
		Still to do: selecting specific assignments from different iterations of the course; developing program-level rubrics.	

Successes and challenges

So far, fully completed aims 1 & 2, and made progress towards meeting 3 & 4.

Aim 1: In Fall 2024, I prepared a draft revision of program LOs, and consulted with IE staff, current Capstone students and two faculty members who have taught HUM 145 and HUM 445 to finalize them.

- Success: Capstone students found the new LOs clear and understandable, and were able to point to places in the curriculum where their learning had contributed towards meeting each outcome.
- Success: With financial support from IE, I was able to have a lunch meeting with two faculty members to discuss the revised LOs. This helped greatly with finalizing them.

Aim 2: In Fall 2024, I mapped the new LOs to the Shared Competencies, and completed a partial curriculum map, mapping almost all of the program’s Core courses, as well as the Capstone, to the new LOs.

- Challenge: Faculty were unavailable to help me with course mapping, so I had to do it on my own. One faculty member whose expertise I need for completing the mapping of one set of courses has been on leave all year.
- Challenge: With no departmental home or regular faculty meetings that there is an expectation to attend, securing faculty cooperation for the program can be difficult.

Aim 3: In Spring 2025, I met with one faculty member to decide on 2 outcomes to assess in AY 2025-26 and to start selecting assignments and discuss the process. The two other relevant faculty members were on leave. I also set up a shared OneDrive folder for sharing documents.

- Success & challenges: Meeting with the one faculty member was helpful, but I also found out that he is leaving SU after next year. I will need cooperation from more faculty to ensure continuity of the process.

Aim 4: With some faculty on leave and another faculty member leaving soon, and no dept home or meetings, building faculty community and habits around assessment is a persistent challenge despite sporadic successes (lunch meeting, another meeting). Discussing admin support needs with CAS.

Action Plans/Next Steps

- Meeting soon with Associate Dean Laura Machia (CAS) to discuss admin support and the future of the Health Humanities ILM
- Selecting and gathering assignments for AY 2025-26 assessment from faculty who taught HUM 145 & HUM 445; developing rubrics.
- Recruiting more faculty to teach core courses in the program, to develop a more robust faculty community even if some are on leave. Securing faculty to teach courses outside of their department is a persistent challenge.