

**PsTL 1907W Course Evaluation Results  
Spring 2012**

Of the 15 students enrolled in the freshman seminar, 14 were present on the last day of class and consented to have their course evaluation responses used for research purposes.

**Items Related to University of Minnesota SLOs**

The series of items related to SLOs asked, “On a 1 to 10 scale, where 1 = ‘not at all’ and 10 = ‘outstanding,’ please evaluate the extent to which this course accomplished each of the following goals:

1. Can identify, define, and solve problems
2. Can locate and critically evaluate information
3. Have mastered a body of knowledge and a mode of inquiry [not specified for this course]
4. Understand diverse philosophies and cultures within and across societies
5. Can communicate effectively
6. Understand the role of creativity, innovation, discovery, and expression across disciplines
7. Have acquired skills for effective citizenship and life-long learning

Table 1 provides the results for the six University of Minnesota SLOs addressed in the course.

Table 1

*Student responses to items related to University of Minnesota student learning outcomes*

SLO	N	Range	M (SD)	Med	Mode
1	14	6-10	8.43 (1.28)	9.0	9
2	14	6-10	8.79 (1.05)	9.0	9
4	14	7-10	9.07 (1.14)	9.5	10
5	14	7-10	9.21 ( .89)	9.0	9/10*
6	14	6-10	8.86 (1.46)	9.5	10
7	14	6-10	8.86 (1.23)	9.0	10

\*Bimodal

**Items Related to PsTL 1907W Course Objectives**

Course objectives specific to the spring 2012 section of PsTL 1907W included the following:

1. Students will practice analyzing artifacts of popular culture (e.g., art, music, poetry, film, theater, dance, television programs, advertisements, fiction, comics, magazine and newspaper articles, electronic media) in a multicultural context and will determine how they contribute to our understanding (or misunderstanding, in some cases) of diversity issues.
2. Students will use higher-order thinking skills to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate course materials.
3. Students will use knowledge acquired in the course to propose creative solutions to real-life problems.
4. Students will further develop their writing skills; they will (a) distinguish between casual or informal writing and academic writing, as well as engaging in creative writing; (b) learn how to recognize and correct common errors in their own writing and how to read standard editorial symbols; (c) cite sources and provide references in a standard style; and (d) revise writing projects using multiple sources of feedback.
5. Through the final project and final paper, students will explore an aspect of social identity in depth, including examination of historical and contemporary social dynamics, democratic practices, and institutional stratification in the U.S.

6. Students will play a role in facilitating class discussions and will take responsibility for their own learning.
7. Students will make oral presentations and share oral critiques with other class members.

Table 2 provides the survey results for the course objectives, using the same response options.

Table 2

*Student responses to items related to PsTL 1907W course objectives*

Obj	N	Range	<i>M (SD)</i>	Med	Mode
1	14	6-10	9.21 (1.12)	9.5	10
2	14	7-10	8.50 ( .94)	9.0	9
3	14	6-10	8.64 (1.28)	8.5	8/9*
4	14	6-10	8.93 (1.14)	9.0	9/10*
5	14	7-10	9.07 ( .92)	9.0	9
6	14	6-10	9.21 (1.19)	10.0	10
7	14	8-10	9.43 ( .73)	10.0	10

\*Bimodal

### **Items Related to Implementation of Integrated Multicultural Instructional Design**

The instructions for this section of the instrument stated, “This course was designed using the principles of integrated multicultural instructional design (IMID), a model for developing inclusive curricula.” The specific items were:

- Professor Higbee uses a variety of teaching methods that reflect a commitment to engaging a diverse student population.
- Professor Higbee integrates multicultural perspectives within the course content.
- Professor Higbee provides learning support within the course and/or provides resources for learning support.
- Professor Higbee uses assessment and grading procedures that provide equitable opportunities for success for all students in the course, including multiple ways for students to demonstrate knowledge.
- Professor Higbee articulates a commitment to diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice and demonstrates that commitment through her teaching methods, course content, and procedures for evaluating student learning.

The results for these items are included in Table 3.

Table 3

*Student responses to items related to integrated multicultural instructional design (IMID)*

Item	N	Range	<i>M (SD)</i>	Med	Mode
Teaching Methods	14	7-10	9.29 ( .91)	9.5	10
Content Integration	14	7-10	9.29 ( .91)	9.5	10
Learning Support	14	7-10	9.36 (1.01)	10.0	10
Assessment	14	7-10	9.36 ( .93)	10.0	10
Commitment	14	7-10	9.50 ( .94)	10.0	10

The final question on the course evaluation queried, “At the beginning of the semester you were asked about pop culture studies as an intellectual pursuit. After participating in PsTL 1907W, do you believe that popular culture can be an appropriate lens for exploring diversity and social justice in the U.S.? Why or why not?” Student responses included the following:

- “Yes, pop culture is happening right now! This class does discuss part history but it ties into today’s society. Group discussions should [*sic*] that, and helped develop more of what diversity stands for in so many forms!”
- “I believe it can be because knowing/learning about pop culture can help understand our society and the times we live in.”
- “Yes because I believe pop culture reflects our own views and if we study pop culture we will better understand how to change our ideas of diversity to create more social justice.”
- “Yes, I believe that pop culture is what/how many people get their news and base their lives off of in our country. Now whether this is a good or bad thing it is the ‘real’ thing and because of this we must adapt to it. This being said I think it is a necessity to use pop culture as a lens for exploring diversity and social justice in the U.S.”
- “Absolutely. As pop culture provides an excellent reference to which many people can relate. It functions as a great way to explore diversity and social justice in the U.S.”
- “Yes I think that popular culture can be an appropriate lens for exploring diversity and social justice in the U.S. because there are many materials or ways to be seen or given by people in popular cultures that means we can have many points of views.”
- “Yes, I definitely think pop culture is appropriate lens. Pop culture is always around us, it’s relevant. It’s important to learn because it involves our daily lives.
- “I definitely think so, it is relevant for today & it [*sic*] interesting to learn about.”
- “Absolutely yes, pop culture is all around us and we have to incorporate it into our daily lives on both a social and a learning level.”
- “Yes, at first I was skeptical, but now I can say that I learned a lot. It was a fun class and got a lot of perspectives on different issues.”
- “Yes, diversity & social justice are something that greatly affects [*sic*] American society, and is something that can be studied.”
- “Yes. We have watched many videos and read many articles that give us insight into how we perceive each other and how the world perceives us.”
- “Yes because as a society grows and changes, we need to accommodate those changes and come up with new ways to explore diversity and social justice in the U.S.”
- “Yes, because popular culture contributes to and enhances studies regarding any subject!”

### **Results of Standard Rating of Teaching**

The range of responses for SRTs is 1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, and 6 = strongly agree. Of the 15 students enrolled in the course, 14 were present on the last day of class and responded to the SRT questionnaire. Results were as follow:

- “The instructor was well prepared for class”:  $M = 5.64$
- “The instructor presented the subject matter clearly”:  $M = 5.70$
- “The instructor provided feedback intended to improve my course performance”:  $M = 5.79$
- “The instructor treated me with respect”:  $M = 5.93$
- “I have a deeper understanding of the subject matter as a result of this course”:  $M = 5.64$
- “My interest in the subject matter was stimulated by this course”:  $M = 5.64$

### **Focus Group Results**

Each of the following sections summarizes the responses for one of the focus group prompts.

### **Learning About Social Justice in the U.S.**

The first question asked by the focus group facilitators was, “What have you learned about diversity and social justice in the U.S. as a result of your participation in PsTL 1907W?” Student responses included the following:

- “I would like to say that I noticed at the end of this last portion of the class, I think that we learned a lot about race and how it’s a social construction. And how it is something that is used as primarily when discussing class and how that’s not the only option holding any power to anything. I think that’s really interesting.”
- “I just really appreciated discussing diversity and really having to think about it 'cause, yeah, I've talked about it in a lot of other classes but not this in-depth and . . . going into different aspects of diversity rather than just race and I think the discussion methods and everything really made all of us think critically about it..”
- “Yeah, I agree with that, too, like when I think that people think of diversity it's primarily race, but we learned a variety of different things like disability as we said and I think we are all kind of aware that it was there but now we are more like accepting overall with everything.”  
Thus, several students talked about how broadly the term diversity was defined for purposes of the course, and specifically about the inclusion of disability in the “diversity mix”
- “I feel like I have learned a lot about disabilities. I feel like we focused a lot on that. And then instead of just learning about disabilities we learned more about how people with disabilities actually feel. As a person with a disability I guess.”
- “Well going off what she said before, like I feel like in other classes we talk about like diversity, social justice, and everything, but we never really talk about the disability side of it and I know she [the faculty member] kind of talked about like something she focuses on and so I definitely have learned a lot more about that and like what she's said like about how they feel and everything, because we don't really talk about that in any other classes.”

### **Use of Socratic Method**

The next prompt was, “This class used the Socratic method commonly used in graduate level seminars. Students develop their own discussion questions and discussion is seldom facilitated by the faculty member. How did you feel about that?” The ensuing conversation went like this:

- “I think that it was really effective and . . . I appreciate that a lot because I noticed that in many of my other classes whenever we watch films or whenever we review articles or read chapters of the book we always have a lot of questions that sometimes we end up we don't really write them down all the time but we want to ask. We may want to ask the instructor or we don't really feel comfortable asking a peer. And I think that it was really helpful because there were many questions that I had with some of the films that we viewed here that I was like OK it is good to be able to ask and you know some of the chapters that we have to read in the book. . . . I really like that—it helped me learn a lot better.”
- “Yeah, when we ask the discussion questions instead of the instructor it like insures that what we're talking about is things that we are interested in and curious about instead of just what the faculty member might think is important. But this way we know that we care about the things that we are talking about and have interest in them.”
- “I also like that the discussions are really small and like you just feel like—at least I did—like really comfortable with what you are saying and like the group in general too is pretty diverse and that like you don't feel uncomfortable with what you are saying and it’s just a good atmosphere to talk about in and to get what you are like thinking about because you’re in a smaller group rather than a large lecture.”
- “I feel like having a discussion with like such a little class and this environment really helped get a lot of viewpoints like because there was so many variations of how people think and then our

discussions led to other discussions that I feel like it wasn't so planned out that I feel that it was like a lot of like real ideas and like real things were being said so it wasn't so set up.”

At this point one of the facilitators improvised with a follow-up prompt, asking, “Yeah, so you can share maybe when you watch a film, you can share a lot of common thoughts, and maybe something that you are all interested in or have questions about that. I am really curious about in other courses—are there any such discussions or does the professor always facilitate the class? Or you know the teachers give lectures or something?” The conversation continued,

- “For some of my classes like my writing class, it's very like structured and she always asks questions and everybody is just like silent. [laughter] Well, people probably are tired because it's like really early in the morning, but she usually asks us like different little questions on like the task, text and everyone is really like speechless like I have no idea.”
- “Well, I was going to say that like in like most of my other classes it's not really like discussion based like this one but like in this class it seems like the discussion is like the most necessary part because like everybody here has like they come from such different places and so like I feel like the discussion really makes the class because everybody has so many different viewpoints even though we are doing the same thing and so I feel like it's just important for this class.”
- “I was going to say that I think that so for example in my history class that I am taking the only time that we ever really have discussion because we do talk about a lot but we don't really just have like a full group discussion unless someone asks an interesting question and that's where the difference is with this class.”
- “The other thing is, I think someone stated before the classroom environment is very open like sitting in a circle. I know we hate moving the chairs, but it actually brings us like more together and it's easier to be like seeing someone face-to-face rather than someone behind you so you have no way to like know if they're talking or whatever.”
- “Also like, I feel like with my other discussions in my other courses like the TAs [teaching assistants] are kind of just like looking for an answer like they give they say a question and they're like expecting a certain answer. With this class it's just so much freedom like there is no right or wrong answers and just pretty much what's on your mind and so I think that's like a good tool that like there's so much freedom and that like were not forced to talk but like we can and it's a good environment.”
- “I really appreciate the free environment.”

### **What Students Liked About the Class**

The facilitator followed next with, “What have you enjoyed most about PsTL 1907W?” Student responses included:

- “For me it's been definitely like how easy it has been to come here and just say what is on your mind and like nobody here like judges anybody even just like say it and people like listen to you and have like responses and everything. So definitely how helpful it is.”
- “Yeah I agree with that and just the flexibility and freedom of the class. And it's like it relates to us like everyone because diversity is a real thing, it's not like calculus and you're like never going to use this”
- “I guess I just liked the diversity of each class like sometimes we would watch a movie and sometimes we would have discussion and sometimes people would present—just like keeping the different aspects from each class so it's not the same thing every week. I guess. I liked that.”

It was particularly interesting that many of the focus group participants chose to address the nature of the course assignments, as demonstrated in the following comments:

- “I enjoyed most of the assignments, like for instance taking magazine clips and comparing it to like different social justice issues and it's like our everyday pop culture actually relates to us so it's interesting to find that.”

- “Yeah, I really enjoyed the assignments, especially the final project just because I would never do spoken word anywhere else and so like here to be able to try that.”
- “I agree this is a really different class though like everyone was saying the assignments actually relate to what's going on like [another student] was saying we can just pour out in the assignments instead of like having to worry about if we were saying the right thing and if this is the right answer.”
- “Yeah, cause there is so much freedom in the assignments”

### **What Students Liked Least or Found Most Challenging**

Next the facilitator asked, “What aspect of PsTL 1907W have you liked least? Or what has been the most challenging?” Interestingly, although the readings, films, and other media included in the course addressed age, gender, sexual orientation, social class, language, citizenship, immigration status, religion, and many other aspects of social identity, students perceived an emphasis on disability and race, as indicated in the following quotes:

- “I don't know if this is like something I least liked, but I don't know it kinda bugged me like although talking about disabilities is obviously important but like I feel like we focused a lot on that type of diversity and racial diversity. I'm not saying that those are not problems but there is so many other types of diversity going on in our culture that I feel like not touching those is like almost injustice to those diversities as well so I would like to branch out to other ones.”
- “Yeah, I also noticed that I think a lot of the classes bout racial . . . ”
- “I'll have to agree with that what [another student] said like when we watched a video clip with the dancing and it was interesting to look at that approach of diversity because it was like you know a different kind of tap and for them dancing it was two different styles but at the end of the day the message was still kind of about race and like diversity with that and so it was like you know it would have been nice to branch out more.”

It was clear from several of the comments that the amount of freedom students had in designing their own assignments was challenging, yet still appreciated, as noted in this response:

- “I don't know if I disliked this, but I think it was kind of challenging with the amount of freedom just making sure like expectations were met like I didn't like with the project and the paper I just wanted to make sure that like I did not do too little work or like I was on the right track because there was so much freedom you could really do anything. So that was a little challenging but I mean at the same time I still really did like it ‘cause you had a lot of options.”

Several students responded to this student’s comment by saying that they thought that the assignments were well organized, but they still would have liked more clarification, given the broad range of choices, and more benchmarks. Other comments focused more on environmental factors, such as staying engaged for the duration of the class (2.5 hours) and the small size of the classroom, which made moving the chairs into different configurations difficult.

### **The Use of Pop Culture as a Lens**

The final question was, “Now that you have completed the course, do you believe that popular culture can be an appropriate lens for studying cultural diversity? Why or why not?” The conversation progressed as follows:

- “I definitely think pop culture's a good way to study cultural diversity. We kind of already touched on it [earlier in the focus group] but it's relevant to us today, it's easy to relate to, and in this class with the freedom in the assignments we got to pick which parts of pop culture were especially interesting to us and we got to explore that aspect of cultural diversity the way.”
- “I also agree with you on that—so it's just like it's kind of like a breath of fresh air because we always learn about like history and it's like the same stuff over and over again. It's like, “OK, let's talk about today.’ Yeah, and some of it kind of connects too like with our presentations from like movies and films. It's like if the show or the movie was make like 20 years ago but it's still relevant like today so that ties into pop culture.”
- [Pause, then Facilitator] “Other thoughts?”

- “I mean pop culture is everywhere so it’s hard to like say that it can't relate to social or cultural diversity. . . . Yeah, like the videos she [the teacher] brought in and stuff. I completely agree with [another student] when she said that [pause] I completely lost where I was going.”
- “Like the same history. OK, just that it [pop culture] is today. Cause like we learn about history so much.”
- “And like going off of what she [the teacher] said like it is everywhere and stuff and so like it was really cool to do like the TV and film. . . . Like the video you [talking to another student; they each did a film or television show review and brought in clips] showed, I'd never even, like I'd heard about it but I like never like know anything about it and then like watching it and everything—it really like opened my eyes. And like the two videos that you guys [talking to other students] showed you know like I'd never heard of them before and so and like it was just kind of like cool cause then it’s like pop culture is so big but then you can like do individual projects and like it’s so much about cultural diversity.”
- “Also it was cool being forced to think about how pop culture shows cultural diversity because like just every day you don't like notice that stuff. But like with the assignment for sexual violence where we got to look in magazines and stuff just like realizing how much that is portrayed in pop culture and different aspects besides just sexual violence. But it was cool to be forced to think about that and realize what we take in every day.”