On May 25, 2012, the Global Studies department met to initiate this assessment project. The plan was to make assessing our seniors’ achievement of our learning goals in their SYEs as time efficient as possible. We had never done this thorough an assessment before; we had looked only at Positionality and Ethics (twice) and Locality and Globality (once). This time we were looking at all the goals. Everyone received a copy of the learning goals, a rubric with instructions for scoring, a sample SYE for norming purposes.

Before the meeting, everyone read the paper and gave the paper a 1-4 for each learning goal as explained on the rubric. At the meeting we discussed the scores we assigned and came quite easily to a consensus on our understanding of the 1-4 scores. After that each of us (on our own time) was to score a total of 4 SYEs using the rubric. Each SYE was to be read twice and to go to a third reader if the scores were too different.

Faculty were to send their scores to me before classes began in August. I compiled the results and then we had a meeting with the dean in December 2012 to analyze the results and discuss their implications for our future work.

Results

The results are not entirely complete because one set of scores was misplaced and another single one was not read twice. Nonetheless we had enough information to begin a discussion. Out of 15 scored projects with six goals each, there are four individual goals with a more than one point difference and three of those occur in the same SYE. That SYE has a total of ten points from one reader and eighteen from the other, so it needs a third reader. But it is the exception. The average scores for each goal are as follows, in order of best to worst:

- Historicity 3.06
- Writing and Critique 2.93 each
- Relationality 2.73
- Global/local 2.7
- Positionality and ethics 2.33

That positionality and ethics ranks lowest, to an unsatisfactory level, is ironic, considering our earlier focus on it. The reason it ranks so low is that the goal was judged totally lacking by four scorers in four different papers. We only have one reading for two of them, so reader reliability
may be an issue. We know that this particular learning goal or objective goes against the grain of much teaching at the university where students are encouraged to take themselves and their “opinions” out of their research, so it tends to disappear if it is not continually emphasized. In addition quite a few GS majors are double majors in disciplines that would probably penalize a student for including his/her positionality in a research paper. According to the mapping of learning goals, almost all GS courses teach this goal. However we need to be focused on emphasizing it as a required element of the SYE. (It was noticeably present on the posters in the spring 2013 SYEs.)

Questions discussed at the meeting:

1. Do we expect SYEs to demonstrate all the learning goals? If so do we expect them to be present equally? **Consensus was yes and yes.**
2. If yes, based on the four-point scale, a number of students are not meeting the criteria for passing. Should we be using a 5-point scale or would they mostly end up with a 2.5? Should a “two” be considered passing? **Consensus was to stick with a 4 point scale.**
3. Are there other things we expect in a passing SYE that are not among the learning goals, such as using primary research, for example? **This was put on the agenda for future debate.**
4. Should we construct a detailed rubric for the learning goals for which we do not have one? Who wants to volunteer? **The consensus was yes, and we will work on it in 2013-14.**
5. Should we revisit the learning goals taught in each core course? Does it make sense to think of each course covering all or most of them? **We plan to review the core course content in 2013-14.**