

Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
Department of Anthropology
Undergraduate Program

Assessment Measures

The Department of Anthropology uses the following measures to assess learning outcomes for undergraduate majors:

- Capstone Projects – senior papers based on supervised research or off-campus practicums, senior seminars
- Senior Comprehensive Examinations (since AY 2006-07)
- Grades and course evaluations for core courses (theory and methods)
- Grades and course evaluations in major elective courses
- Course evaluations (surveys)
- Annual Junior Audits

Assessment Findings

CPIT data on Senior Seminar [attachments 1&2] since 2003 cover a period during which the Department of Anthropology restructured the undergraduate major that included replacing Senior Seminar with Senior Options for supervised research projects (effectively, tutorials) with individual faculty members and off-campus practicums (e.g., internships) in addition to Senior Seminar, which was reduced from two semesters to one. Majors completing one of these Options in the Fall semester may opt also to develop that work into a thesis in the following Spring semester. This change from a single Senior Seminar for all followed several years of surveying students that revealed a steady desire for one-on-one work with faculty members as an alternative to Senior Seminar. It took effect in Fall 2006, when AY 2006-07 seniors chose the new options. One elected the new off-campus practicum (ANTH 453), the other an on-campus research project (ANTH 493), both under individual supervision of a faculty member.

Senior Seminar/Options

CPIT data do not disaggregate Seniors from others taking ANTH 493 [attachment 4], our long-standing course for “Student/Faculty Research” to accommodate individual interests not served by limited course offerings or to follow up popular courses with research-focused or service-focused projects; and with small numbers neither aggregate grades nor occasional student course evaluations provide meaningful comparisons. Enrollment in Senior Seminar ranged from 3 in 2003-04 to 9 in 2005-06. The only posted course evaluation from this period [attached], the last offering in 2005-06 when 9 were enrolled, indicated higher satisfaction with the instructor (9.4/10, by comparison to the CUA average of 8.4 and Department average of 7.6) than with the course itself (8.5/10 by comparison to the CUA average of 8 and Department average of 7). With the new options, numbers have also been too small (2 seniors in 2006-07, 5 in 2007-08, 100% of the graduating class in those years) for meaningful quantitative analysis;

but enthusiasm for the new options has been marked, generally for providing choices and specifically as opportunities to work directly with faculty on individual projects, plus the additional option (in place of a former requirement) of developing a project into a thesis in the final semester as a clear 'extra'. This scheme also makes better use of faculty time than the former two-semester Senior Seminar, in which 'n' was low, and diversity of interests was high.

Senior Comprehensive Examinations

As a second component of senior assessment, we also introduced comprehensive exams in AY 2006-07. The exams are designed in two parts, one to test command of anthropological vocabulary and the other to test critical-analytical command of anthropological studies (how to generalize, compare, extend findings from one study to others). These exams are scheduled for the end of September, and graded A-F by all the faculty with an overall average of C- required for passing. They allow us to identify deficiencies in time to correct them through additional work and, for failures, to retest in the Spring semester; over time, they will provide another way to evaluate the effectiveness of our revised curriculum for the major that complements the Senior Option projects, which are conceived by us and presented to majors as advancement from learning how anthropology is produced to producing some themselves. So far (two iterations), all Seniors have passed comps the first time, though some marginally.

Continuous Assessment, Integrated in the Curriculum

In AY 2007-08, we also introduced a Junior Audit, to be conducted each October and collectively by the department faculty, before pre-registration for the Spring semester. This is our final step for making assessment of majors into a process that occurs at multiple levels: in individual courses for specific material and performance, at the advising level each semester, in Junior Audits for overall progress toward the culminating Senior Options, and in Senior comps and projects for on developing and analyzing a problem anthropologically. These operationalise what we conceptualise as, first, learning how anthropologists think, then what they think about, and finally producing some.

We moved to formalise multi-level assessment because it is difficult at the Senior level to disaggregate performance based on training (our input) from students' abilities and commitment in a universe of small numbers. In the final three years that Senior Seminar was the only option (2003-05), average performance in Senior Seminar rose from B (2.96 in Fall 2003, n=5) to A (3.64 in Fall 2005, n=9). In Fall 2006, when the additional Senior Options first were available, the students who elected the Practicum (453) [attachment 3] averaged marginally higher (3.85 n=2) than those previously taking Senior Seminar (451) or Student/Faculty Research (493). This seems anecdotally to have reflected preference for a service-oriented option over the more conventional research-oriented one. It may also reflect shifts toward service in motivation to major in anthropology, which are national as well as local to the students currently recruited by this University.

Intermediary Assessments

Our key intermediary assessments are Junior Audits, begun in Spring 2008 and now scheduled for every October, to identify gaps and to assure that rising Seniors qualify for the Senior Options by having completed prerequisites and prepared with appropriate topical courses. Also, we want to identify students with GPAs in the major at or below B-. Overall GPA of 2.0 is required for admission, and 3.0 in Anthropology courses is required for continuation in the major.

The intervening variable for assessment that is beyond the reach of aggregate grades provided by CPIT is growing interest among anthropology students in service, or applying knowledge over generating it. This is the case among CUA students at large, in our recent major cohorts, and also nationally: orientations to service – specifically, knowing about the world in order to help it – increasingly draw majors in anthropology over the traditional reasons of preparation for graduate study. While over half of our recent graduates go on for further study, fewer than one every two years intends to go directly to graduate school in anthropology. They use the anthropology major as preparation for other studies, which is also a national pattern according to the American Anthropological Association; and with the closure of our graduate program, undergraduate majors do not have that role model at hand. This changing orientation may contribute to only one student in the first year of our new scheme and none in the second opting to develop senior projects further into a traditional thesis (which, with high performance, can earn Departmental Honors on graduation). So far, in the third year of our new scheme, we do not know how many, if any, Senior anthropology majors will opt to turn their Senior Option (4 in a Senior Seminar jointly with 11 MDIA seniors) in the Fall 2008 semester into a thesis in their final semester.

Curricular Improvements

In AY 2006-07, we updated the mission and design for the undergraduate major. Following two-years' study of our curriculum, models at other universities, and changing faculty expertise (both declining number of faculty and changing research foci), we replaced a long-standing 'four-fields' model of socio-cultural, archaeological, linguistic and biological anthropology originating in the 19th century, formalized half a century ago in a period of Methodenstreit in anthropology, and focused on preparing majors for graduate study in anthropology with one recast around socio-cultural anthropology and archaeology, with linguistic and biological anthropology as 'support' courses, within a liberal arts frame. The overall goal of our undergraduate major is to make students conversant with main concepts, findings, core terminology and current theory in socio-cultural and archaeological anthropology, to become informed consumers of anthropological research, and to be able to apply anthropological perspectives and findings to contemporary issues in a globalizing world. It is structured as a series a series of steps through

- Entry-level surveys that cover the contemporary range of social-cultural, archaeological, linguistic and biological anthropology;
- Core courses, a pair on analytical perspectives and on research design and conduct;

- Major electives reflecting the substantive topical areas of faculty expertise (currently, environmental anthropology, immigrants & refugees, cultural dimensions of health, the information society, globalization, gender & culture, political anthropology, ancient art & architecture, the evolution of prehistoric societies, Islam & the Middle East, Latin America, and the contemporary US);
- Senior Capstone options for individual work with faculty members in on-campus research projects and off-campus practicums as well as occasional Senior Seminars by faculty in their areas of expertise.

Among our rationales was providing a clear series of steps for the major from how anthropologists think (Core Courses) through topics/issues they think about alongside and in conjunction with other disciplines (Major Electives) to Senior Capstones for putting learning into practice either as individual research projects or as supervised internships, or in a seminar focused by a faculty research interests instead of primarily on producing a theses. This also responded to expressed student desires for opportunities to work individually with faculty members, and to make clear how to work toward that as a goal. And, as part of the overall University curriculum, it allowed us to focus intermediate courses on topics of wider relevance for non-majors who occupy the majority of seats in our courses.

We do not, after only 2 years, have a sufficient run of data from Senior Comprehensive Exam results and the Senior Options for quantitative measures of these improvements. On the other hand, small numbers mean we know our majors individually. We see that they quickly grasped the new structure and adapted their course-planning to it, particularly in thinking ahead for semesters-abroad and in understanding how ANTH 200 and 201 are not only prerequisites for Senior Options but also frame intermediate courses for them. All seem to understand the steps as the structure for the major at advising time. Some report that it pushes them to think earlier about Senior Options than at the last minute before Spring advising in the Junior year or even at the beginning of the Senior year. In this, the first success of our revised program has been as an ‘invisible curriculum’ that helps them think about course selection more as a progressive piecing-together and less as filling boxes on their tracking sheets.

We see this structure as progress beyond the model in which anthropology entered universities primarily as graduate study and undergraduate programs were cloned from or reduced versions of graduate programs. That’s how ours was prior this revision: it assured high commitment but in small numbers and at the more intangible cost of integration with liberal arts ideals and curricula. Our choice, and the national trend in undergraduate education in anthropology generally, has been to reframe the subject as a disciplined mode of inquiry more integral to a liberal arts model than as an implicitly pre-professional island. Implementation as steps provides for better monitoring of students’ progress – by structuring it as a progress – toward doing something with anthropological disciplines, findings, and knowledge that leads to making some themselves. They also get to see their own education as a progression from larger to smaller classes to working individually with a faculty member, as something to keep working toward, and as laying a ground for many post-graduate options.

We already capture some of these values in the Department’s optional questions on course evaluations and have begun discussion with CPIT on how they might regularly

disaggregate the responses of majors from those of students taking our courses as electives or as distribution requirements. The final stage for us will be to use the same questions as exit interviews of graduating seniors for the Senior Options overall, which will require creation of a dummy 'course' to generate a unified set of evaluation forms.



THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS

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ANTH 452-01 Spring, 2006
Senior Seminar

Jon Anderson

Class size: 9

Evaluators: 8 (88.9% of class)

Breakdown by class: Seniors — 8

Course taken for: Major — 5 Distribution — 0 Elective — 0 Not specified — 3

Overall Evaluation (10-point scale) 1 = Lowest 10 = Highest

	All Students	Majors	Non-majors	GPA < 3.0	GPA = 3.0+	CUA Ave.	Dept. Ave.
Teacher	9.4	9.6	9.0	9.0	9.4	8.4	7.6
Course	8.5	9.2	7.3	8.0	8.6	8.0	7.0

Course Objectives (5-point scale)

Scale: 1	Disagree <<<<<<>>>>> Agree	5	Range of Responses	
Clear at the start?		4.6	3	5
Achieved?		4.8	4	5
Learned A lot?		4.3	3	5

Questions Specific to the Academic Unit (7-point scale) [view questions](#)

Scale: 1	Strongly Disagree <<<<<<>>>>> Strongly Agree	7	Average Response	Range of Responses	
Question 1:			6.4	5	7
Question 2:			6.3	5	7
Question 3:			6.8	6	7
Question 4:			6.3	4	7
Question 5:			6.4	6	7
Question 6:			6.6	6	7
Question 7:			6.4	5	7
Question 8:			6.0	5	7
Question 9:			6.0	4	7
Question 10:			6.4	6	7

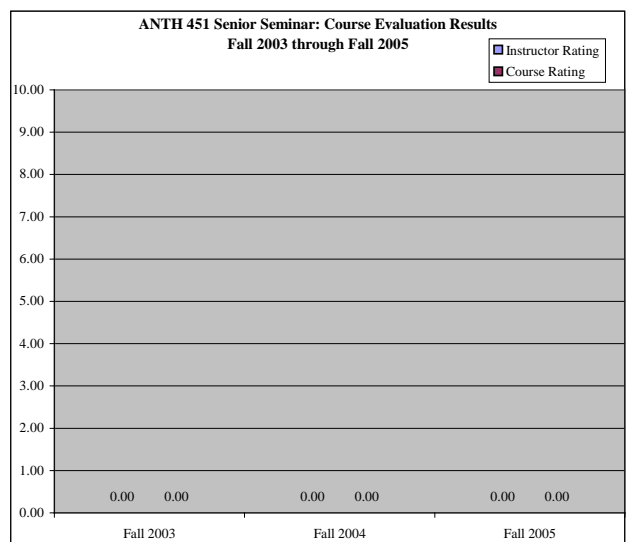
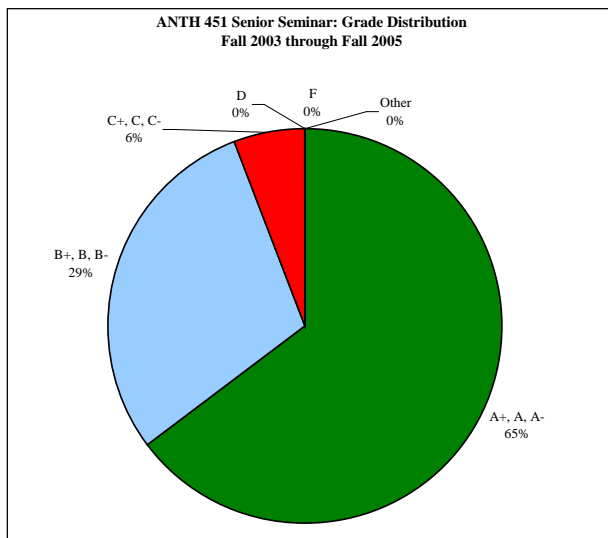
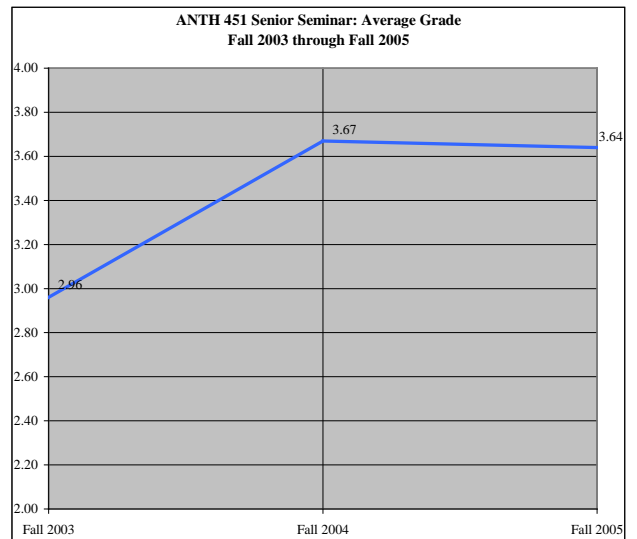
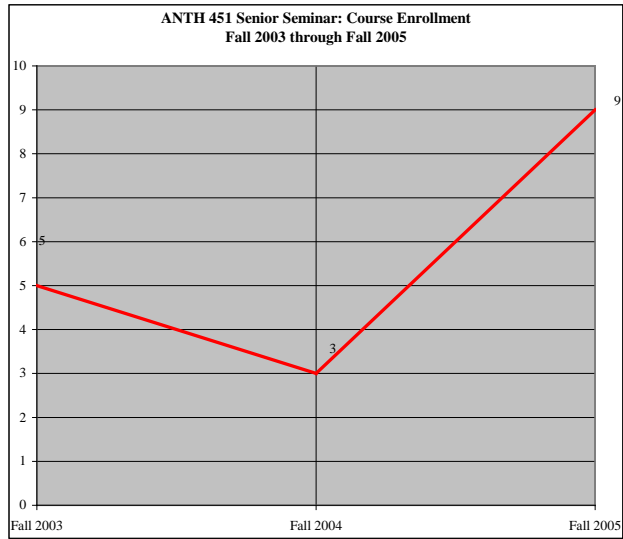
Attachment 1

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
Outcomes Assessment

SENIOR SEMINAR SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY ANTH 451 Senior Seminar

Term	Course Enrollment	Course Grade		Course Grades						Course Evaluation Results					
		Avg.	StDev.	Grade Distribution						Course Eval.		Instructor Rating		Course Rating	
				A+, A, A-	B+, B, B-	C+, C, C-	D	F	Other**	#	%	Avg.	StDev.	Avg.	StDev.
Fall 2003	5	2.96	0.83	2	2	1					0.00%				
Fall 2004	3	3.67	0.35	2	1						0.00%				
Fall 2005	9	3.64	0.48	7	2						0.00%				

**The "Other" category includes grades of I, W, AU, and P.



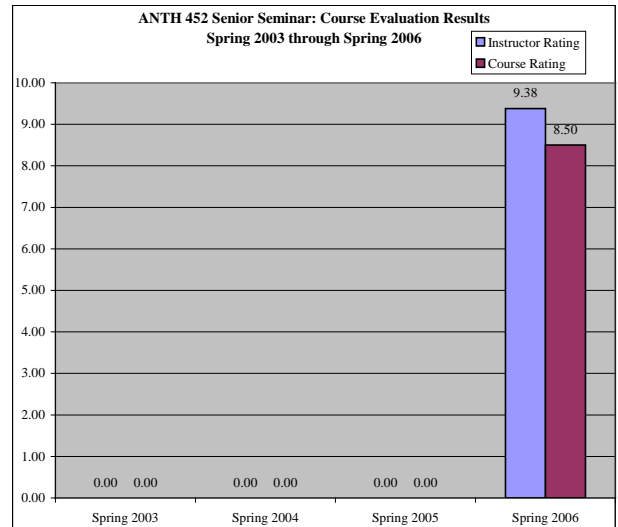
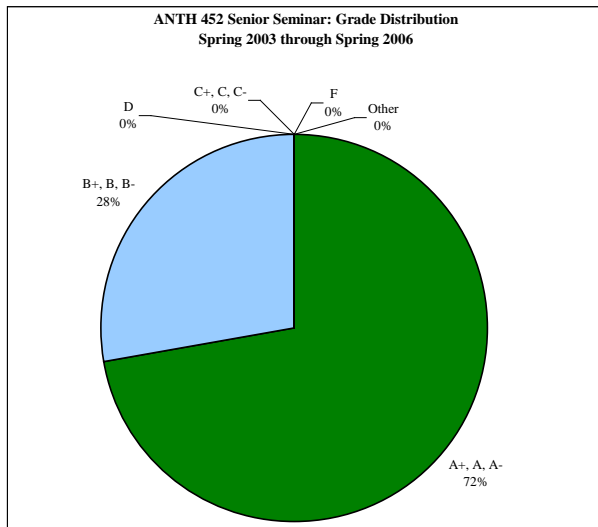
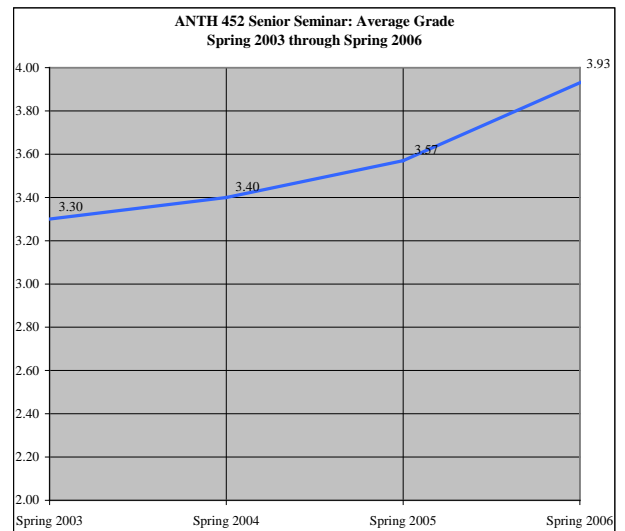
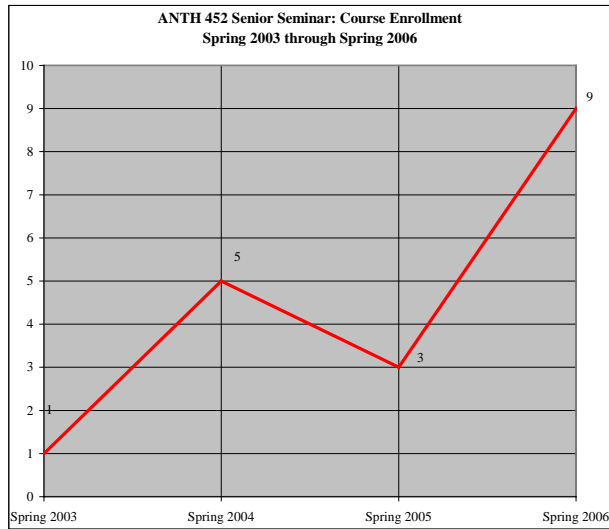
Attachment 2

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
Outcomes Assessment

SENIOR SEMINAR SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY ANTH 452 Senior Seminar

Term	Course Enrollment	Course Grade		Course Grades Grade Distribution						Course Evaluation Results					
		Avg.	StDev.	A+, A, A-	B+, B, B-	C+, C, C-	D	F	Other**	Course Eval. #	%	Instructor Rating Avg.	StDev.	Course Rating Avg.	StDev.
Spring 2003	1	3.30			1										
Spring 2004	5	3.40	0.44	2	3										
Spring 2005	3	3.57	0.23	2	1										
Spring 2006	9	3.93	0.13	9						8	88.89%	9.38	0.74	8.50	1.41

**The "Other" category includes grades of I, W, AU, and P.



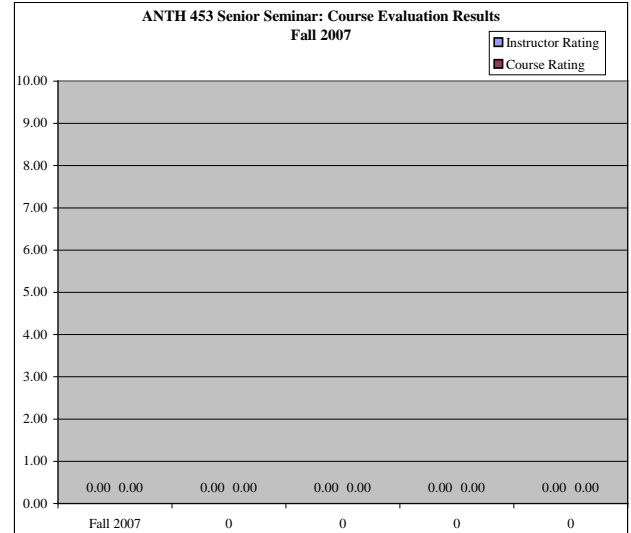
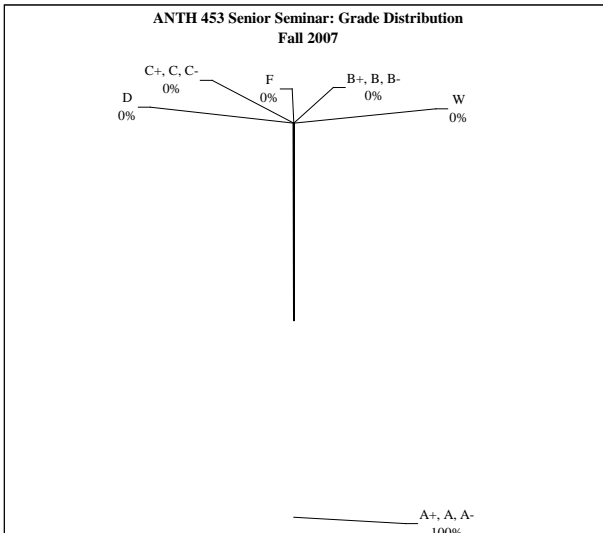
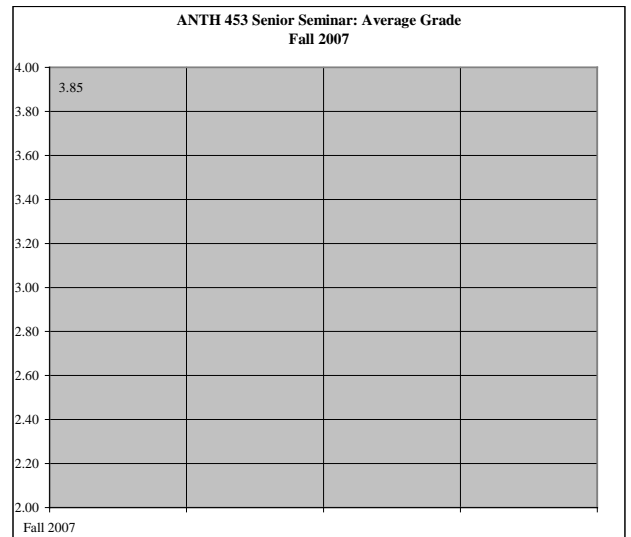
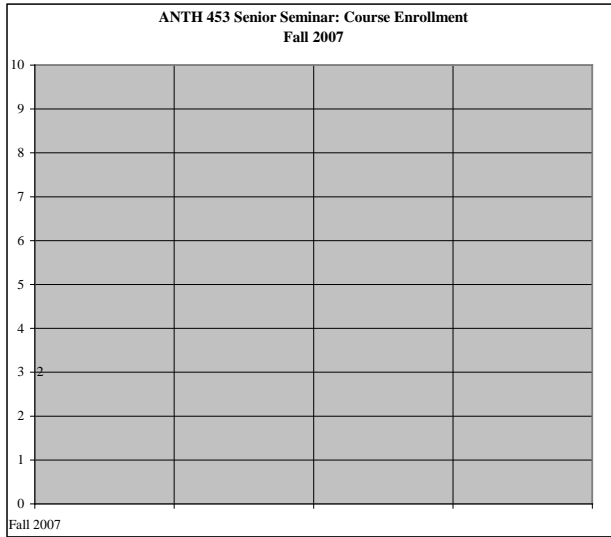
Attachment 3

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
Outcomes Assessment

SENIOR SEMINAR SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY ANTH 453 Practicum/Internship in Anth

Term	Course Enrollment	Course Grade		Course Grades Grade Distribution						Course Evaluation Results						
		Avg.	StDev.	A+, A, A-	B+, B, B-	C+, C, C-	D	F	Other**	Course Eval. #	Course Eval. %	Instructor Rating Avg.	Instructor Rating StDev.	Course Rating Avg.	Course Rating StDev.	
Fall 2007	2	3.85	0.21	2								0.00%				

**The "Other" category includes grades of I, W, AU, and P.



Attachment 4

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
Outcomes Assessment

SENIOR SEMINAR SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY ANTH 493 Student-Faculty Research

Term	Course Enrollment	Course Grade		Course Grades						Course Evaluation Results					
		Avg.	StDev.	A+, A, A-	B+, B, B-	C+, C, C-	D	F	Other**	Course Eval. #	Course Eval. %	Instructor Rating Avg.	Instructor Rating StDev.	Course Rating Avg.	Course Rating StDev.
Spring 2005	1	3.70		1							0.00%				
Fall 2005	1	3.00			1						0.00%				
Fall 2006	2	4.00	0.00	2							0.00%				
Fall 2007	3	3.33	0.65	1	2						0.00%				

**The "Other" category includes grades of I, W, AU, and P.

