

Research Report

Sacramento City College

**Office of Planning, Research, and
Institutional Effectiveness (PRIE)**

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PREREQUISITE STUDY FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS IN 2009-2010 PROGRAM REVIEW: ANTHROPOLOGY

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2009-2010 COMMUNICATION SKILLS PREREQUISITES:

For the 2009-2010 SCC program review cycle, two academic programs—anthropology and journalism—include courses with communication prerequisites, which require the highest level of scrutiny in a prerequisite validation (see Buechner 2009 at

<https://file.scc.losrios.edu/InsideSCC/PresidentsOffice/PRIE/PreReqValidPol.pdf> for a complete review of prerequisite validation policy¹).

¹ See also Chancellor's Office, California Community Colleges Student Services and Special Programs Division. (Fall 1997). *Prerequisites, Corequisites, Advisories, and Limitations on Enrollment* and ASCCC, Model The Model District Policy on Prerequisites, Corequisites, and Advisories on Recommended Preparation, Board of Governors, September 1993 and *Matriculation Evaluation: Phase III Local Research Options. Community College League of California, California Community Colleges, Southern California Community College Institutional Research Association, and NOR CAL Community College Research Group, June 1992. See also Assessment Validation Project Local Research Options, Feb 1991, Chancellor's Office and The Matriculation Local Research Options Committee*

Anthropology Prerequisite Validations Fall 2009 (ANTH 300, 301, 310, 320, 330, 341)

Six anthropology courses have English writing prerequisites of ENGWR 50 and ENGWR 59.

Prerequisite validation data includes surveys and transcripts. Students and faculty were surveyed about their perceptions of several aspects of the prerequisite, and success rates of students enrolled in the courses were analyzed using transcript data.

Surveys were sent to all 30 sections between the 8th and 10th week of the Fall 2009 semester for administration to all students and faculty in the course sections listed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Sections Surveyed

Course	Sections Surveyed	Num. of Surveys Completed	
		Student	Faculty
ANTH-300	24552, 24554, 24556, 26308, 27024, 27850, 28016, 28018, 29358	220	9
ANTH-301	24582, 24584, 24586, 28020, 28022, 31648	89	6
ANTH-310	24560, 24562, 24564, 24566, 24574, 24576, 28534, 28618, 31898	261	9
ANTH-320	29360	33	1
ANTH-330	24578, 24580, 28024	75	3
ANTH-341	28062	27	1

One faculty member did not administer student surveys or respond to the faculty survey, resulting in a total of 29 faculty surveys and 705 student surveys across 29 sections.

Overall Results Summary

Table 2 below shows response frequencies for items about preparation levels, course difficulty levels, necessity of prerequisite skills; as well as subsequent student outcomes. Students across sections think that they were at least adequately prepared by the prerequisite and that the current course is just right or too easy. Faculty overwhelmingly agree or strongly agree that the prerequisite is necessary for successful course completion—in fact, 100% of all respondents across sections chose one of these responses. Because all faculty agreed or strongly agreed that the prerequisite is necessary, the table below shows only the “strongly agree” category. Note that for ANTH 330, only one of the three instructors “strongly agreed” that the prerequisite is necessary, but the other two “agreed.”

Table 2: Summary Response Frequencies and Subsequent Student Success Rates

Course	Students		Faculty		Outcomes
	Prepared: <i>Adequately or Over Prepared</i> (%)	Level of Work: <i>Just right or Too Easy</i> (%)	Prerequisite Necessary: <i>Strongly Agree</i> (%)	Prepared Students (%) ²	Successful Students (%) ³
ANTH-300	91.4	86.4	88.9	61.8	58.9
ANTH-301	88.9	78.9	83.3	69.0	75.2
ANTH-310	96.5	95.0	66.7	70.5	67.3
ANTH-320	100.0	97.0	100.0	50.0	65.9
ANTH-330	94.7	94.7	33.3	83.5	55.9
ANTH-341	100.0	100.0	100.0	90.0	82.9

Note: Because 100% of faculty in each of the courses strongly agreed or agreed that the prerequisite is necessary (column 3), the table shows only the “strongly agree” percentage.

Despite students’ predominant perceptions that they were at least adequately prepared for the ANTH course by the prerequisite, faculty perceptions are substantially lower in four of the six sections (ANTH 300, 301, 310, and 320). Instructors perceive that fewer than 75% of the students were adequately prepared in these four courses, which suggests that the ENGWR 50 and 59 prerequisites may be necessary but not sufficient for success. When coupled with actual success rates for these courses, the evidence strongly suggests that for three courses—ANTH 300, 310, and 320—the ENGWR prerequisite may be necessary but not sufficient for successful completion of the anthropology courses. Consequently, the department may want to consider a higher prerequisite or advisory for these three courses. However, results for ANTH 301 show that students are more confident about their level of preparation than faculty and that over 75% of the students are ultimately successful in the course. This finding suggests that the prerequisite is necessary and sufficient for successful course completion.

The results for ANTH 330 and 341 show that there is substantial agreement between students and faculty that the prerequisite at least adequately prepared students for the anthropology course. However, the actual success rate for ANTH 330 students is substantially below student and faculty estimations of student preparedness, suggesting that either students withdrew from the courses in high numbers or that they were not adequately prepared for success in the course. For ANTH 341, all indicators suggest that the prerequisite is both necessary and sufficient—there is a high degree of agreement among students, faculty, and actual outcomes.

Specific Prerequisite Skills: There is a general item about overall prerequisite skills on the standard survey instrument (see Appendices A and B). In addition, the Anthropology Department elected to include optional items related to *specific prerequisite skills*. The following selected items were placed in the surveys:

- To compose fully developed, logically structured paragraphs and short essays.
- To recognize principles of basic grammar, effective sentence structures, and various rhetorical modes and apply these in written assignments in my own words.

Table 3 summarizes responses from students and faculty regarding the importance of overall skills gained in the prerequisite course and the specific skills listed above. In general, students do not think the prerequisite skills are as important as faculty think they are. However, when specific skills are described

² This percentage is a student-weighted mean of faculty responses across sections.

³ Calculated as A, B, C/CR, divided by A, B, C/CR, D, F/NC, W, I (then multiplied by 100).

in the survey, student and faculty responses suggest that certain prerequisite skills are quite important for both constituencies. The lone exception to this pattern is for ANTH-301, in which overall prerequisite skills are seen as more important than the specific skills listed.

Table 3: Prerequisite Skills

Course	Students			Faculty		
	Skills from prerequisite course Necessary or Important (%)	Compose ... Necessary or Important (%)	Recognize and apply... Necessary or Important (%)	Skills from prerequisite course Essential (%)	Compose ... Necessary (%)	Recognize and apply... Necessary (%)
ANTH-300	55.0	63.0	71.9	88.9	77.8	88.9
ANTH-301	67.8	45.6	59.1	100.0	83.3	83.3
ANTH-310	63.7	78.3	81.8	77.8	77.8	77.8
ANTH-320	63.6	87.9	90.9	100.0	100.0	100.0
ANTH-330	60.3	87.8	86.7	100.0	100.0	100.0
ANTH-341	81.5	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 4 summarizes the way that students fulfilled the prerequisite. In two of the six courses (ANTH 320 and 341), the majority of students fulfilled the prerequisite through the assessment process. In the other anthropology courses, most students fulfilled the prerequisite by taking a prerequisite course.

Table 4: Method of Fulfilling Prerequisite

Course	Took the prerequisite course at SCC (%)	Took the prerequisite course at another school (%)	Through the assessment process (%)	By counselor verification (%)	By the prerequisite challenge process (%)
ANTH-300	27.4	19.2	39.7	10.0	3.7
ANTH-301	62.9	19.1	14.6	2.2	1.1
ANTH-310	17.3	24.6	49.6	7.3	1.2
ANTH-320	12.1	15.2	66.7	3.0	3.0
ANTH-330	22.7	21.3	48.0	6.7	1.3
ANTH-341	0.0	33.3	66.7	0.0	0.0
Overall	25.9	21.8	43.4	7.0	2.0

The results in Tables 1 through 4 taken together suggest that although an overwhelming share of students thinks that the prerequisite English course adequately prepared them for their current anthropology course, actual outcomes suggest that students may be underestimating the importance of the skills needed to be successful in anthropology courses, and that the prerequisites are, in fact, quite important.

Anthropology Results Course-by-course

Anthropology-300: Physical Anthropology

Prerequisite: ENGWR 50 (*Developmental Writing*) and ENGWR 59 (*Intermediate English Skills*) or ESLW 310 and ESLR 310 with grades of “C” or better; or placement through the assessment process.

Student surveys. 220 students from nine sections of ANTH-300 completed the student survey. Most of the students (46.6%) indicated that they met the prerequisite for the course by taking the previous course at SCC or another institution, 39.7% met the prerequisite through the assessment process, while 13.7% met the prerequisite through counselor verification or the challenge process. When asked to assess their level of preparedness for the course, 91.4% of the students felt they were at least adequately prepared for the work in the course and 86.4% of the students described the level of work in the course as “just right or too easy.” When asked how necessary the skills learned in the prerequisite are to success in ANTH-300, only 55% think they are necessary or important.

Faculty surveys. All of the faculty ($n = 9$) who completed the survey agreed or strongly agreed that a prerequisite is necessary for successful completion of Anthropology-300. However, on average, faculty felt that only about 62% of the students were adequately prepared for the work in the course.

Summary. The student survey meets the criteria in the SCC guidelines; however, the faculty survey does not meet the criteria. There is a clear “perception-gap” between student and faculty regarding how important the prerequisite is and how well it prepared students for the course. Given that only 59% of the students successfully completed the course, the prerequisite may be insufficient for success and the department may want to consider a higher-level prerequisite.

Anthropology-301: Physical Anthropology Laboratory

Prerequisite: ENGWR 50 (*Developmental Writing*) and ENGWR 59 (*Intermediate English Skills*) or ESLW 310 and ESLR 310 with grades of “C” or better; or placement through the assessment process.

Student surveys. Eighty-nine students from six sections of Anthropology-301 completed the student survey. The majority of students (82%) indicated that they met the prerequisite for the course by taking the previous course at SCC or another institution, 14.6% met the prerequisite through the assessment process, while 3.4% met the prerequisite through counselor verification or the challenge process. When asked to assess their level of preparedness for the course, 88.9% of the students felt they were prepared for the work in the course and 77.8% described the level of work in the course as “just right or too easy.” When asked how necessary the skills learned in the prerequisite are to success in ANTH-301, 67.8% think they are necessary or important.

Faculty surveys. 100% of the faculty ($n = 6$) who completed the survey agreed or strongly agreed that a prerequisite is necessary for successful completion of Anthropology-301. However, on average faculty indicated that only 69% of the students were adequately prepared for the work in the course.

Summary. The student survey meets the criteria in the SCC guidelines; however, the faculty survey does not meet the criteria. Although the faculty estimated the percentage of prepared students at only 69%, over 75% of students subsequently passed the course. Taken together with student perceptions that the prerequisite adequately prepared them for the course and that the prerequisite skills are only moderately important, it appears that the current prerequisite is sufficient for successful completion of ANTH-301.

Anthropology-310: Cultural Anthropology

Prerequisite: ENGWR 50 (*Developmental Writing*) and ENGWR 59 (*Intermediate English Skills*) or ESLW 310 and ESLR 310 with grades of “C” or better; or placement through the assessment process.

Student surveys. 261 students from nine sections of Anthropology-310 completed the student survey. Most of the students indicated that they met the prerequisite for the course through the assessment process (49.6%) or by taking the previous course at SCC or another institution (41.9%), the remaining 8.5% met the prerequisite requirement through counselor verification or the challenge process. When asked to assess their level of preparedness for the course, 96.5% of the students felt they were prepared for the work in the course and 90.8% described the level of work in the course as “just right or too easy.” When

asked how necessary the skills learned in the prerequisite are to success in ANTH-310, 63.7% think they are necessary or important.

Faculty surveys. When asked to indicate if the prerequisite is necessary for successful completion of Anthropology-310, all faculty members ($n=9$) responding to the survey agreed or strongly agreed that the prerequisite is necessary for successful completion of the course. All faculty also think that the skills learned in the prerequisite course are necessary or important. However, the faculty members indicated that on average, only 70.5% of the students were adequately prepared for the work in the course.

Summary. The student survey meets the criteria in the SCC guidelines; however, the faculty survey does not meet the criteria. Taken together with the fact that only 67.3% of students successfully completed ANTH-310, it may be that the prerequisite is necessary but not sufficient for course success. The department may want to consider a higher level English prerequisite or advisory.

Anthropology-320: Introduction to Archaeology and World Prehistory

Prerequisite: ENGWR 50 (*Developmental Writing*) and ENGWR 59 (*Intermediate English Skills*) or ESLW 310 and ESLR 310 with grades of “C” or better; or placement through the assessment process.

Student surveys. Thirty-three students from one section of Anthropology-320 completed the student survey. The majority of students (66.7%) met the prerequisite through the assessment process, 6% met the prerequisite requirement through counselor verification or the challenge process, and the rest took a prerequisite course at SCC or another college. When asked to assess their level of preparedness for the course, all of the students indicated that they were adequately prepared for the level of work in the class and 97% described the level of work as “just right or too easy.” When asked how necessary the skills learned in the prerequisite are to success in ANTH-310, only 63.6% think they are necessary or important.

Faculty surveys. The faculty member who completed the survey *strongly agreed* that a prerequisite is necessary for successful completion of Anthropology-320. However, the faculty member indicated that only half of the students were adequately prepared for the work in the course.

Summary. The student survey meets the criteria in the SCC guidelines; however, the faculty survey does not meet the criteria. Given that only 65.9% of students successfully completed the course, it may be that the prerequisite is necessary but not sufficient for course success. The department may want to consider a higher level English prerequisite or advisory.

Anthropology-330: Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion

Prerequisite: ENGWR 50 (*Developmental Writing*) and ENGWR 59 (*Intermediate English Skills*) or ESLW 310 and ESLR 310 with grades of “C” or better; or placement through the assessment process.

Student surveys. Seventy-five students from three sections of Anthropology-330 completed the student survey. Most of the students indicated that they met the prerequisite for the course through the assessment process (48%), an additional 44% by taking the previous course at SCC or another institution, and 8% of the students met the prerequisite requirement through counselor verification or the challenge process. When asked to assess their level of preparedness, 94.7% of the students indicated that they were adequately prepared for the level of work in the class. Furthermore, 94.7% also described the level of work as “just right or too easy.”

Faculty surveys. All of the faculty ($n = 3$) who completed the survey agreed or strongly agreed that a prerequisite is necessary for successful completion of Anthropology-330. Furthermore, on average, faculty indicated that 83.5% of the students were adequately prepared for the work in the course.

Summary. Although the survey data show that both the results from the student and faculty surveys meet the criteria in the SCC guidelines, only 55.9% of students received passing grades at the end of the semester (and close to 20% of the official grades were “F”). Based on data collected from students, faculty, and subsequent outcome data, it appears that the current prerequisite may be necessary but not sufficient for success in ANTH-330. The department may want to consider a higher-level English course as prerequisite or advisory.

Anthropology-341: Introduction to Linguistics

Prerequisite: ENGWR 50 (*Developmental Writing*) and ENGWR 59 (*Intermediate English Skills*) or ESLW 310 and ESLR 310 with grades of “C” or better; or placement through the assessment process.

Student surveys. Twenty-seven students from one section of Anthropology-341 completed the student survey. Most of the students indicated that they met the prerequisite for the course through the assessment process (66.7%) and the rest fulfilled the prerequisite by taking the previous course at another institution. When asked to assess their level of preparedness, all of the students indicated that they were adequately prepared for the level of work in the class. Furthermore, all of the students described the level of work in the course as “just right or too easy.”

Faculty surveys. When asked to indicate if the prerequisite is necessary for successful completion of Anthropology-341, the faculty member responding to the survey *strongly agreed* and indicated that 90% of the students were adequately prepared for the work in the course.

Summary. Both the results from the student and faculty surveys meet the criteria in the SCC guidelines. Given that 82.9% of students subsequently received passing grades in the course, it appears that the prerequisite is appropriately placed for success in ANTH-341.