General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title  HIST 189B: California Since 1900  GE Area  US3

Results reported for AY  2015-2016  # of sections  1  # of instructors  1

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Department Chair: Glen Gendzel  College: Social Sciences

Instructions: Each year, the department will prepare a brief (two page maximum) report that documents the assessment of the course during the year. This report will be electronically submitted to <curriculum@sjsu.edu>, by the department chair, to the Office of Undergraduate Studies, with an electronic copy to the home college by October 1 of the following academic year.

Part 1

To be completed by the course coordinator:

(1) What GELO(s) were assessed for the course during the AY?

GELO 3 (US3): Students will be able to explain the operations of California government, including similarities and differences between the California and U.S. Constitutions, the relationship between state and local government in California, the basic issues of California politics, and a careful assessment of the impact of demographic changes on the history and politics of the state and the nation.

NOTE: This must have been the intended GELO for US3, even though these words appear under US2, because the words that actually appears in the GE Guidelines (2014) are not related to California Government, which is supposed to be the subject of US3, while these words, which pertain to California government, are not relevant to US2, the GELO in which they currently appear. This apparent error in the GE Guidelines (2014) should be corrected ASAP.

(2) What were the results of the assessment of this course? What were the lessons learned from the assessment?

All exams and writing assignments for this course included political history components relevant to US3. For example, students were required to explain the importance of the Progressive movement in creating California’s system of direct democracy in 1911, and describe multiple episodes of direct democracy in action, such as the Alien Land Law of 1920, the Anti-Fair Housing initiative in 1964, Proposition 13 in 1978, and Proposition 187 in 1994. All students who pass the class must demonstrate knowledge of the foundations of the California political system, including the evolution of the California constitution and the operations of California government. A focus on direct democracy highlights the similarities and differences between the California and U.S. Constitutions, the basic issues of California politics, and the impact of demographic changes on the history and politics of California. For example, the course unit on Proposition 13 in 1978 stressed the ability of powerful interest groups with ample financial resources to influence the political process, as the real estate and landlord lobbies were able to do in this case.
A final exam essay question asked: “Describe THREE major reforms in California politics since 1970. Who wanted each of these reforms? What problem was each reform supposed to solve? How did each reform get passed? What were the results?” Several multiple-choice questions embedded in the final exam similarly asked students to assess how political reforms begun by the Progressives early in the twentieth century have played out a hundred years later. These questions are directly relevant to US3 because they emphasize California government issues, operations, and similarities/differences compared to the federal system. Based on student performance on these assessment instruments, 60% of students showed “excellent” or “good” mastery of US3 concepts; 16% of students showed “acceptable” mastery; 16% of students showed “marginal” levels of mastery; and 8% showed “unacceptable” levels. The students whose performance was the lowest on the final exam were also students who performed worst on simple multiple-choice questions that spot-checked on readings and lectures; hence it is safe to assume that they were students who did not choose to put in the effort necessary to attain mastery of US3 concepts.

(3) What modifications to the course, or its assessment activities or schedule, are planned for the upcoming year? (If no modifications are planned, the course coordinator should indicate this.)

No modifications are planned, though the end of the course will necessarily update the content on California’s initiative process to reflect constant changes and political innovations that are instituted through the ballot box.

Part 2

To be completed by the department chair (with input from course coordinator as appropriate):

(4) Are all sections of the course still aligned with the area Goals, Student Learning Objectives (GELOs), Content, Support, and Assessment? If they are not, what actions are planned?

Yes.

(5) If this course is in a GE Area with a stated enrollment limit (Areas A1, A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z), please indicate how oral presentations will be evaluated with larger sections (Area A1), or how practice and revisions in writing will be addressed with larger sections, particularly how students are receiving thorough feedback on the writing which accounts for the minimum word count in this GE category (Areas A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z) and, for the writing intensive courses (A2, A3, and Z), documentation that the students are meeting the GE

N/A