General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Comm 20/Public Speaking  GE Area: A1

Results reported for AY 2013-2014  # of sections 2  # of instructors 10

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Department Chair: Deanna Fassett  College: CoSS

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, 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 SLO(s) were assessed for the course during the AY?

Optional SLO 5: Students will be able to (1) Develop written communication skills, and (2) Engage in substantive discussions about diversity.

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

Re: #1 – Written Communication: Students struggle with grammar, outlining, and paragraph structure; they come to us unevenly prepared. Many of them do not look at or make changes on the basis of instructor feedback on their writing. They do not readily appreciate the rationale behind written assignments in an oral communication course, especially full-sentence outlines. It is important for all instructors to reflect on the ways in which they are already writing instructors when they assign writing, whether or not they’re teaching a “writing” class. Instructors take up issues related to strengthening student writing in line with their comfort level (so instructors who are stronger writers and feel confident in discussing writing skills with students do so, while others leave the subject relatively untouched). Because this is an introductory course, we will continually confront students who will have the same sorts of writing struggles; our goal is to better address them in ways that help the students grow from one assignment and one course to another. Modeling is an important way to help students better understand and reflect college level writing expectations.

Re: #2 – Diversity: Students need to develop a more nuanced understanding of diversity. They tend to approach diversity as a kind of naïve difference (“we’re all different and that’s diverse”) or they tend to locate diversity primarily in race/ethnicity or nationality. Further, instructors tend to rely primarily on students’ speeches to introduce diverse, socially significant topics. The challenge with this is that students focus on particular issues or topics (e.g., gun control, global climate change) without linking these topics back to diversity. Instructors can better model understanding of and engagement with diverse issues and communities through their examples. Another lesson learned is that some aspects of the course better engage students in nuanced discussions of diversity than others.
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.)

Re: #1 – Written Communication: (1) Focus on the thesis statement as a place to address the importance of writing skill, including grammar and word choice; better utilize course packet materials on how to author a compelling thesis statement. (2) Include free writing in most class lessons, in part to build a culture of writing (as epistemic). (3) Teach students to build a proofreading guide (error checklist) so that they can better identify and address their most common grammatical patterns of error. (4) Assign focused and lower division-appropriate grammar and source citation worksheets to help students acquire and refine particular writing skills. (5) Offer extra credit for participating in campus writing-related services (i.e., the Writing Center, the Communication Center, LARC). (6) Instead of line-editing a student’s work, offer feedback targeted toward the students’ most common patterns of error. (7) Ask students to revise written work, including author’s notes where they address the instructor’s (or peers’) feedback. (8) Identify students’ most common recurring patterns of error and address one each week with the class. (9) Continue structured guidance with the development of thesis statements. (10) Work to uncover and respond to students pre-conceived notions regarding outlining. (11) Refer students to campus resources (e.g., Writing Center, Communication Center, LARC). (12) Provide students with an outline sample—e.g., “here's what an A outline looks like.” (13) Provide feedback on rough and final versions of formal outlines. (14) Move from midterm to online quizzes; use the time to provide an additional outlining day. (15) Ask students about past writing experiences to better gauge preparedness. (16) Show students a full sentence outline & video (perhaps on the “extra” outlining day) to unpack and explore the relationship between a speaker’s outline and her/his speech.

Re: #2 - Diversity: (1) The cultural artifact and tribute engagements do a better job of introducing diversity into classroom discussions. (2) Introducing a bit more theory (e.g., positionality, diversity with respect to democracy) can help give students a vocabulary for discussion. (3) Selecting a text with more explicit attention to diversity will open up more classroom spaces for dialogue and discussion. (We will begin using Jaffe’s Public Speaking: Concepts and Skills for a Diverse Society in Fall 2014.) (4) Tie discussions of diversity more explicitly to concepts beyond just audience analysis—e.g., social significance, persuasion. (5) Either link the demonstration speech more explicitly to culture or drop it in favor of an assignment that better works toward this goal (e.g., cultural narrative speeches). (6) It may help to teach audience analysis prior to topic selection, so as to better help students choose topics that will engage different particular people. (7) Instructors will begin to select in-class and homework examples that surface complex and difficult experiences with diversity (e.g., through media coverage, popular cultural texts, students’ experiences).

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 (SLOs), Content, Support, and Assessment? If they are not, what actions are planned?

Yes, the course coordinators and instructors are doing a good job keeping the goals, SLOs, content, support, and assessment consistent across sections. Regular communication between the coordinator and instructors and between the instructors maintains continuity within and across sections.

(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 SLOs for writing.

We cap enrollment in Comm 20 to 27 students. Since we do not offer larger sections, students are able to receive thorough feedback and engage in practice and revisions of their writing within the current configuration of the course and workload of the instructors.