General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Argumentation and Debate  
GE Area: A1

Results reported for: AY 13-14  
# of sections 16  
# of instructors 3

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Department Chair: Deanna Fassett  
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 by the department chair to the Office of Undergraduate Studies with an electronic copy to the home college by September 1 of the following academic year.

Part 1

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

Given that we have assessed SLOs 1 through 4, we opted to assess an additional course learning objective this AY.

SLO5: “Students will be able to gather, assess, and employ evidence from a diverse range of appropriate sources.”

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

Out of 387 students assessed, 43.1% mastered CLO5 at a high level (“B+” or better on assessment activities), 50.7% mastered CLO5 at an average level (“C” or better on assessment activities), and 6.2% either failed to master CLO5, or did so at a marginal level (“C-” or below on assessment activities).

Note: This is a modest improvement over AY 12-13’s failure/marginal rate of 6.8%.

Lessons learned from this assessment: Instructors met in December 2013 and May 2014 to discuss criteria (formal and informal) they use to assess mastery of learning objectives:

* Quiz and midterm questions involved distinguishing between credible and non-credible sources, as well as demographic dimensions of audience analysis.

* Peer critiques included source credibility as an assessment component.

* One instructor noted that students participating in the Sp 14 final debate tended to focus more on source credibility when critiquing their peers’ cases than in previous debates.
Instructors shared examples of activities/assignments that are useful to helping students meet those objectives:

* Classroom exercises (including group discussions and analysis papers) that challenged students to identify and evaluate online sources.

* During an MLK Library visit, Crystal Goldman taught students how to find and distinguish credible sources.

* Written assignments that called for students to analyze the deployment of facts to support claims made about race and ethnicity made by editorials and newspaper articles (particularly in the *San Jose Mercury News*).

* Written assignments that called for students to conduct audience analyses, paying particular attention to the dimensions of race, class, and gender.

* Some instructors required students to integrate at least one scholarly source.

(3) What modifications to the course, or its assessment activities or schedule, are planned for the upcoming year?

Instructors agreed that the course requires no structural modifications to help students meet this CLO. Yet they agreed that some areas of emphasis could be strengthened:

• Instructors will emphasize the role of *persistence* in searching for diverse sources.
• Instructors will encourage students to focus more on evaluating their peers’ source credibility during debate cross-examination periods.
• Instructors will examine ways to expand the definition of *diversity* in this CLO.

Unless otherwise directed, instructors will be assessing CLO1 (Students will be able to identify and assess socially significant and intellectual topics, then compose and deliver extemporaneous oral presentations on these topics) in AY14-15.

NOTE: If instructors are required to assess a new CLO, they have developed some preliminary language: “Students will be able to compare and select appropriate techniques of argumentation in their written work.”

Part 2

(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 coordinator and instructors are doing an excellent 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 40 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.