General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title  HIST 50: Historical Process
GE Area  A3

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

Course Coordinator: Patricia Evridge Hill
E-mail: Patricia.Hill@sjsu.edu

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 1: Students should be able to locate and evaluate sources, through library research, and integrate research through appropriate citation and quotation

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

I assessed the GELO through three short written assignments, which constituted 20% of the total course grade. The due dates were generally two weeks after the assignment was given, this being a class that meets once a week. The three written assignments were designed to pose a question that required critical reasoning. All sources needed to cited and appropriately quoted. The three assignments were:

Who shot first at the Battle of Lexington? Convince the reader of your conclusion, and provide evidence to back up your logic using primary sources.

Which side seems more convincing in the Shakespeare Authorship Question? Are you a Stratfordian, or are you an Oxfordian?

Describe to the reader a famous or popular conspiracy theory. Give the argument for the conspiracy, and also the argument against it. Cite your sources.

The results from the assessment for the Lexington assignment, is that most students don’t recognize the false dilemma of the question. Most students pick a side and write an argument. That is an acceptable response, but very few will tell me they don’t know. From the Spring 2016 section, 12% failed to write an acceptable essay, 38% were acceptable, and 50% wrote good essays. Historians cannot agree on who was responsible for the first shot at Lexington.

The results from the assessment Shakespeare assignment, is that students generally recognized the logical faults and fallacies of the arguments from both sides. Most students pick a side and write why they feel this
one makes more sense. From the Spring 2016 section, 29% wrote an unacceptable essay, 12% were acceptable, and 59% were good essays. Historians, and English professors, generally agree on the traditional view, but there are some who question the authenticity of Shakespeare as the true author.

The results from the assessment of research into a conspiracy theory, is that students generally really enjoy writing about the theory, and enjoy convincing me that the theory has no merit. This assignment is done near the end of the course, to assess their skills of research and cogent reasoning. From the Spring 2016 section, 8% wrote unacceptable essays, 12% were acceptable, and 80% were good essays. These numbers are probably due to the third essay being a topic the student gets to pick, and they are educating the professor.

(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.)

The third essay about conspiracy theories will be move up earlier in the semester, to see if there are different results. More time will be spent on the Shakespeare essay assignment, to better prepare the students for the paper.

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 GELOs for writing.

Not applicable. The course is capped by the department at 25 students.
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Part 1

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GELO 1: Students should be able to locate and evaluate sources, through library research, and integrate research through appropriate citation and quotation.

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

This GELO was assessed through a 2000-2250-word research paper that required students to do library research, integrate that research with primary source material, and properly source the material (Turabian-style footnotes, bibliography, quotations).

43% students wrote excellent papers. These students found appropriate sources, reflecting the range of scholarly views on their topic; they incorporated primary and secondary sources smoothly as support for their claims; they footnoted all evidence clearly and correctly; and they provided a complete and correct bibliography. 57% of the students wrote papers that were good or very good. These students provided correct and complete footnotes and bibliography, and supported their claims with relevant sources, but they tended to have sources that did not fully reflect the range of scholarship on the issue. These results confirmed that changes I made before this semester were bringing desirable results. In the past, in my attempt to scaffold, in early assignments, I had allowed citations in parentheses and had minimal requirements for outside research. But I decided that this approach meant that there were too many skills for the students to master in the latter part of the semester. So starting this semester, I required footnotes and more incorporation of outside research early on. Thus, the students were able to work on these skills with smaller papers before they needed to use them in the final, more complex paper.

(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.)
Given the success this semester, I plan to continue with my new approach.

**Part 2**

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The students were asked to make 4 bibliographies in the class. Two in groups for debates with 10 academic, peer-reviewed articles and two individually for research papers with 5 academic, peer-reviewed sources. They also had to write two short research papers of 5-7 pages each. In these papers, the students needed to paraphrase and quote academic sources.

The assessed performance of two classes with the exact same assignments are collapsed into the information below.

Bibliographies: 49% Excellent, 10% Good, 20% Acceptable, 20% Marginal, 1% Unacceptable

Papers: 5% Excellent, 45% Good, 20% Acceptable, 20% Marginal, 10% Unacceptable

All the students did not submit all of the bibliographies. Those that did not submit bibliographies tended to receive lower grades than those that did submit bibliographies.

(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.)

Next time that I teach this course, I will make the bibliographies worth more points, so that the students will do them.

**Part 2**

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Yes.

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I had 15 in each course. The students received timely feedback on all aspects of their writing including feedback on thesis, bibliography, extensive outline, and draft.