General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: LING 21 Language and Thinking  GE Area: A3/D1

Results reported for AY 2014-15  # of sections: 8 (F14); 10 (S15)  # of instructors: 5

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Department Chair: Swathi Vanniarajan  College: H&A

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

*GELO 3: Effectively locate, interpret, evaluate, and synthesize evidence in a comprehensive way in support of one’s ideas.*

In 6 of the 18 sections (taught by a single instructor), a 2000-word argumentative essay on a controversial issue, with multiple drafts, was used as the ultimate assessment tool, preceded by another shorter essay. In the rest of the sections, three shorter argumentative essays (500-1000 words) on controversial issues were used, with first drafts that were peer-evaluated and final drafts that were instructor-evaluated. In their essays, students supported their arguments with information from journal articles retrieved from the library. In addition, oral class presentations of student essays were similarly peer and instructor evaluated.

*GELO 4: Identify and critically evaluate the assumptions in and the context of an argument.*

In addition to the essays described above, four problem sets given as homework assignments and a midterm and final exams were used to assess students’ ability to identify logical fallacies and analyze arguments.

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

GELO 3

From the results reported in the form of grade averages (ranging between B and A-), it can be concluded that the majority of students effectively used evidence to support their statements/claims in the final drafts of the essays. In essays assessed earlier in the course, instructors report that students are able to pick a topic and identify fallacies in arguments that are against their stand but they are not always able to see fallacies on their side of the argument or avoid fallacies in writing to support their argument.

GELO 4
Although some students appear to have a very good understanding of logical fallacies and were successful in identifying the different types of fallacies and evaluating arguments that contained fallacies, others were not as successful in analyzing and categorizing arguments presented out of context of an essay in the problem sets.

Lessons learned

One instructor has used the Toulmin model of argument evaluation. She reports that, based on assessment of student work and student feedback, the lectures, in-class activities, and assignments based on the Toulmin model have successfully enabled students to evaluate arguments and to construct strong arguments. We are considering applying this model to other sections.

In their response to an essay question on the final exam many students indicated that they found the study of logical fallacies to be the most useful element of the course and many related that they used their knowledge of logical fallacies to successfully argue with family and friends. The lectures, in-class activities, and problem sets appear to be effective methods of teaching the topic.

Although the assignments are similar across the multiple sections of this course, the information reported was not of the same level to detail.

(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 following modifications address strengthening the in-class activities to address identification and avoidance of fallacies. One in-class activity planned will have students identify claims that are supported by fallacies/unsupported assertions rather than evidence in order to help them better evaluate the use of fallacies. Another in-class activity planned involves group analysis of fallacies in the arguments of given essays as a scaffold for writing longer essays.

To address the level of detail in reporting of assessment data, the course coordinator will coordinate with the instructors to establish specific guidelines and streamline the process.

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, all sections continue to be well aligned with the area Goals, SLOs, Content, Support and Assessment.

(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.

LLD Ling 21 sections have a cap of 28 students and so the instructors are able to give one on one attention to students and their writings. All sections have oral presentation assignments also.