General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: ANTH 12 Human Evolution  
GE Area: Core B2

Results reported for AY 2017-2018  
# of sections ___9___  
# of instructors ___4___

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Department Chair: Roberto Gonzalez  
College: Social Sciences  
(Acting Chair, Jan English-Lueck)

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
To be completed by the course coordinator:

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

   Area B2 GELO #3: Students should be able to: recognize methods of science, in which quantitative, analytical reasoning techniques are used.

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

   The assessment for this GELO was completed in three ways: writing assignments, test questions, and labs. For all but one section of the course, instructors used writing assignments and test questions. These writing assignments were on average two to three pages in length and required students to research a topic and focus on scientific methods coupled to quantitative and analytical reasoning. For example, two of the three instructors chose to require students to write on specific fossil evidence and how the fossil evidence is researched and which conclusions are drawn. The questions students addressed varied from “Was Sahelanthropus tchadensis a hominin?” to “Were Neanderthals Homo sapiens?” The students were then required to discuss how paleoanthropologists answer these questions with data. Another instructor used a similar paper assignment, but rather focused on genetic inheritance of ethnic diseases like sickle-cell anemia. She required students to discuss Mendelian inheritance and how population rates are discovered. Prior to having students write this paper, she had an in-class Punnett square group activity to help them understand the quantitative concepts behind ethnic diseases. And, yet, another paper allowed students to focus on controversial topics, such as stem cell research, and use a literature review to understand how scientists study these topics. In all of these sections, the writing assignments were very similar: the number of references required were overlapping, and the methods of grading were similar, and the lengths were similar. Additionally, in each class, exam questions were used to assess students’ ability to understand scientific methods; for instance, students had to fill out Punnett Squares on midterms.

   One section strayed from the other sections in assessing the GELO; this section used a series (7) of lab assignments that dealt with forensic anthropology topics, such as dating remains, determining ethnicity from skeletons, and DNA testing, and a mock trial at the end of the class.
In the sections that used writing assignments and test questions, all instructors reported a high success rate. For exam questions, for instance, 70% of the students in two sections got the Punnett square questions correct. For both sections using the fossil data assignment, the majority of students were able to explain the topic and how fossils were analyzed. Overall, I suspect that over 80% of students grasped these concepts whether they were on an exam or in the writing assignment.

For the lab/mock trial section, students had a hard time understanding what was being asked of them. There was much confusion on the assignment itself and too little focus, which made it hard to assess whether students obtained the information on scientific methods and quantitative analyses.

(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 for those who used writing assignments and test questions. All instructors reported that the students grasped the concepts and that the assignments were appropriate. One instructor did mention that she would like to add more group activities in class to enhance an already good situation. She felt that group work improved test outcomes, especially on the Punnett square and Mendelian genetics section.

The instructor who used the lab/mock trial assignments plans not to use the lab/mock trial assignments; rather, she has decided to use writing assignments that are similar to the other sections and has corresponded with the GE coordinator to ensure that she has writing assignment examples to follow. This will bring her section back into alignment.

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.
N/A (This is an Area B2 course). However, the department is experimenting with smaller sections to see if this provides a more effective mechanism for learning in 18-19.