General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Philosophy 66: Introduction to Aesthetics       GE Area: C1

Results reported for AY 2015-2016       # of sections:   4       # of instructors: 2

Course Coordinator: Tom Leddy       E-mail: Thomas.leddy@sjsu.edu

Department Chair: Janet Stemwedel       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, 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) What SLO(s) were assessed for the course during the AY?

SLO 2: Arts courses will enable students to respond to works of art both analytically (in writing) and affectively (in writing or through other forms of personal and artistic expression).

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

Prof. Leddy assessed SLO2 primarily through two homework assignments and the field trip paper. He writes: “In one homework assignment students are asked to apply Aristotle’s definition of “tragedy” from Poetics to a movie. Students are expected to pay close attention to the details of Aristotle’s theory and then reinterpret these for modern day usage. In the second assignment students are asked to apply Hume on taste, Burke on the sublime, or Solomon on kitsch to a work of art at home, neighborhood or personal vacation experience. In the third assignment they are expected to attend a show in a gallery or museum and then write a four-page paper in which they analyze and critically discuss one work of art. or two in comparison. Students are required to describe their overall aesthetic experience in relation to this (these) works. In addition, and relevant to this SLO, they are asked to both analyze the work in terms of the concepts provided and also describe their emotional response.

Evaluation of student outcomes is based on the grades in these three papers. The first is a kind of pre-test in that students are seldom familiar with close textual analysis of a philosophical writing or art criticism or with coupling this with close analysis of a work of art (in this case, a movie). They generally do fine with describing the movie but generally fail at the other tasks. As a result most get Cs on the first assignment. But they have a rewrite option, and most improve their grades dramatically once they “get it.” Moreover, they did to get better grades the first time around on the second paper. All students are not only allowed to, but strongly encouraged to, rewrite their field trip papers. Thus the average grade for those who complete the class is B. Since analysis is absolutely central to any philosophy paper, and writing about emotional response is an important component particularly of the field trip paper, the grade on the field trip paper accurately represents the SLO. Using my Spring 2016 section as the base for my analysis I found that 35 out of 39
students who completed the assignment met the outcomes requirement for this SLO by way of a grade of B- or better.

Prof Alberts reports: “Throughout the semester students are given in class and take home assignments that have them respond, in a meaningful way, to aesthetic topics. Usually they do fine at telling me how they feel about the work or topic. However, their ability to analytically articulate both the topic and their feelings is usually remedial level at the beginning of the semester. Continual use of this exercise usually proves beneficial in improving their abilities to think critically about these issues. I provide feedback to their writings and, in addition, their classmates often discuss issues with them. In addition, students are required to complete two field papers where they attend, in person, an arts related event. This in conjunction with the smaller assignments, midterm and final (both of which are in essay format) help to assess their ability to comprehend and write about aesthetic issues.”

(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.)

There are no plans at this time.

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 - Janet Stemwedel, Chair Philosophy Department

(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.

The instructor of record provides feedback and grades all writing assignments. The instructor of record, welcomes, if not requires, first drafts of all writing assignments and provides feedback on drafts. If sections are exceptionally oversized they are graded by the instructor of record with the assistance of an Instructional Student Assistant. The Instructional Student Assistant must be approved both by the Instructional Assistant Coordinator and the Philosophy Department Chair for their excellence in both composition and their expertise in the field of the philosophy at issue. Whenever an Instructional Student Assistant (ISA) aids in the grading of a large course, s/he provides feedback along with grading. In all cases, when the help of an ISA is employed, the instructor of record must explicitly notify the students of the class that some writing assignments have been graded and feedback has been provided by an ISA. The instructor of record then, if so requested by a student, must reread, provide additional feedback, and regrade the written assignment, if a grade revision is warranted.