General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: FREN 25A  GE Area: C2

Results reported for AY: 2013/2014  # of sections: 1  # of instructors: 1

Course Coordinator: Danielle Trudeau  E-mail: danielle.trudeau@sjsu.edu

Department Chair: Damian Bacich  College: Humanities and the Arts

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?

SLO 1: Letters courses will enable students to recognize how significant works illuminate enduring human concerns.

In Fall 2013 the reading program for FREN 25A was mostly based on the textbook Reseau which features excerpts from significant French and Francophone writers such as Voltaire, Balzac, de Beauvoir, Ionesco, Maillet, Begag, and other texts such as Fables by La Fontaine and folk tales. These texts feature themes related to justice, identity, class and generation conflicts, and issues related to gender, race, and multiculturalism.

After reading excerpts of works by the above-mentioned authors, the students answered essay questions and wrote essays. In their compositions as well as in class discussions, they were encouraged to respond to the issues found in the stories based on their personal experience and on their readings for other courses, and to share what they had learned with the other students. For example, after reading an excerpt of Le Deuxième Sexe by Simone de Beauvoir, the students had to write an essay on whether gender differences were based on nature or culture. Several students contributed to the discussion by quoting research they had conducted or read on in linguistics, sociology, psychology, and literature. After reading and discussing “Acadie, paradis ébréché” by Antonine Maillet, the students explored the concept of identity and the role language plays in defining one’s identity. Since all students in the class were at least bicultural, the discussions were lively and contributed to enriching the content of the students’ essays.

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

Method and Assessment Tools

Class Activities: These worked very well during the first half of the semester. We read the texts in class in order to work on pronunciation, sentence structure, and vocabulary, as they related to reading comprehension; at home, the students read the texts again, reviewed the objective questions, and wrote drafts of essays related to the readings. The essay topics were those suggested in the textbook.
Then, in class, the students discussed their essay outlines and ideas, shared ideas for structure and content, and prepared a list of keywords or vocabulary that needed further explanation. They had one to two weeks then to write their essays. Rewriting was allowed for the first two essays.

Beginning November, the students were busier with their other courses, and they struggled keeping up with the readings, the grammar exercises, and the essay writing. Many asked for extensions to turn in their written homework, and some students missed several of the class activities related to the essays.

Reading Comprehension: Half class time of each session was devoted to reading out loud, acquiring good pronunciation habits, and developing vocabulary in order to be understand the texts. The other half of the sessions were devoted to group discussions and individual or collective grammar or vocabulary exercises, all focused on written comprehension.

Essay Writing: Progress was evaluated through short essay writing and four longer essays (one to three pages each), totaling about 3000 words. These were assigned as homework, mock final exam, and final examination. While the topics were the same for all students, they were encouraged to find personal examples to illustrate their essays. This stimulated participation in in-class activities (25% of the total grade) and quality in essay writing (25%). The majority of the students increased their knowledge of the subjects through in-class discussions.

Grammar: Time was allotted in each session for grammar review and grammar exercises. Students also had grammar and vocabulary homework.

Assessment of Learning: Out of the 20 students enrolled the first week, 15 completed the class. 14 students received a passing grade (C and above), 2 students received A; 6 students received B- to B+; 3 students received C- to C+; 4 students received D and D+. For most, lower grades are due to grammar and vocabulary test scores, and/or missing class activities. Lower grades in compositions resulted from weaknesses in content and even though the students were offered to redo their compositions, only one or two took advantage of this opportunity to receive better grades.

Since most students had received instruction in essay writing, structure was less a problem than depth of critical thinking. All students needed to learn to confront and balance opinions rather than plainly state their own or dismiss others based on conventional wisdom. This worked particularly well on the following issues: who is responsible for the quality of the environment; how standards in child education differ among cultures and social statuses; how cultural identities may be very complex today especially for second-generation immigrants who partake of two or more cultures.

Lessons learned from the assessment

1. Assigned essay topics obliged the students to focus on the same issues; participation in class discussions was higher and of better quality. Short compositions from the Student Activity Manual were to be completed in preparation for class activities on readings and essay writing. They were also collected and graded. This is a good practice to keep.

2. The textbook used in FREN 25A, Réseau, effectively trains the students to get a better comprehension and appreciation of the French literary tradition, while also developing their linguistic skills. But the texts are not all as stimulated as we would wish them to be. Some of them (e.g. Antonine Maillet’s “Acadie, paradis ébréché”) required extended historical explanation. While the students are not expected to understand every word they read, they need to get involved with the
story while also grasping the socio-cultural contexts in which the texts were written. This may be challenging for second-language learners, many of whom have had only one year studying French. A way to foster and maintain intellectual interest, which tends to fade one month into the semester could be to include additional short stories and fables. Assignments around these additional readings would need to be developed, such as reading reports, mock written and oral exams, translation, essay questions, etc. Some additional reading assignments could also yield extra credit.

(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.)

1. Grammar program: Focus on 1. verbal system: forms and uses of past tenses: imparfait, passé composé, plus-que-parfait, and passé simple; 2. noun system: agreement rules between articles, adjectives, nouns, and pronouns. Select and assign only exercises relevant to the reading program from the student activity manual (SAM) or textbook. Collect these exercises weekly in written form. Check for spelling, agreement, morphology and syntactic uses.

2. Add short stories, folk tales, or fables, along with reading comprehension assignments such as reports or comparative analysis of versions in other languages. Suggestions: Mélusine; Barbe-bleue; Peau d’âne; Le chat botté (texts and films); fantasy tales by A. Daudet: L’Homme à la cervelle d’or (always very popular); La Chèvre de Monsieur Seguin; G. de Maupassant: Le Loup; La légende du Mont Saint-Michel. Fables by La Fontaine: La Cigale et la Fourmi; Le Corbeau et le Renard; Le Loup et l’Agneau (directed by Robert Wilson at the Comédie-française).

3. Translation (from the French into the English): Have the students translate biographical notes from the textbook rather than passages of literary texts.

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?
General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: FREN 25B  GE Area: C2

Results reported for AY: 2013/2014  # of sections: 1  # of instructors: 1

Course Coordinator: Jean-Luc Desalvo  E-mail: Jean-Luc.Desalvo@sjsu.edu

Department Chair: Damian Bacich  College: Humanities and the Arts

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 1: Letters courses will enable students to recognize how significant works illuminate enduring human concerns.

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SLO 1: Letters courses will enable students to recognize how significant works illuminate enduring human concerns.

The students wrote four essays on topics designed to help them become more proficient at describing artistic movements and their effect on French society and the world. References were often made to this learning objective during the lectures and class activities. This helped the students understand the purpose of the assignments and become more curious about how other people might have commented on the same works.

Students studied various artists and authors, such as Marcel Aymé, Assia Djebar, Guerlain, Sissel Tolaas, and Victor Hugo, and viewed short documentary clips on their contributions to society.

Changes in literary and artistic esthetics were presented in their context, with emphasis on women artists, modern technology, esthetics, and the artists’ or authors’ response to issues of conformism, wars and oppression.

While the textbook was the primary source of information on the works of art and artists we studied, we also watched short documentary clips and feature-length films, such as Le Parfum: histoire d’un meurtrier and Séraphine, which provided students with the context in which artistic movements were created and evolved.

What were the results of the assessment of this course? What were the lessons learned from the assessment?
The class average for the four compositions written during the semester was 78.4% and 77% for the final. Some students received Cs, Ds and Fs during the semester, but, with the exception of one student, they stayed in the class and did all the assignments. The final grades were distributed as follows: 3 As, 5 Bs, 7 Cs and 3 Fs.

For the majority of students, putting into words what they observed or felt, especially in a foreign language such as French, was completely new and challenging. It also served as a critical thinking exercise by challenging their notion of art as representation of beauty. As the semester progressed, students became more comfortable and proficient at expressing their viewpoints and feelings as demonstrated in their writing samples. They also became more curious about the artists or authors themselves and often did outside research to supplement their knowledge. Issues dealing with women and sexuality often provoked the greatest reaction. Students came to appreciate that each artist or author had a story to tell which impacted society one way or the other and became more proficient at articulating that contribution.

Although this is a challenging way of fostering progress in essay writing in French at this level, it does yield good results. The students become proficient in the subject faster, they learn to use the linguistic and cultural resources in a productive manner (film and internet searches) to enrich their style, and find ideas to discuss in their papers.

The final served as an effective summative assessment tool to make students more aware that they must continue to train themselves to write and rewrite essays as effectively and clearly as possible.

(2) **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.)**

Have students provide a more detailed outline of the characteristics of the various artists’ works to more clearly demonstrate how the artists and their works “illuminate enduring human concerns.” Students should also be given systematically the opportunity to rewrite the first draft of their essay in or out of class in order to guide them more closely in their revision work.

**Part 2**

To be completed by the department chair (with input from course coordinator as appropriate):

(3) **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?**