General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Philosophy 70A: Ancient Philosophy          GE Area: C2

Results reported for AY 2016-2017 # of sections: 2 # of instructors: 2

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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 3: Letters courses will enable students to write clearly and effectively. Writing shall be assessed for correctness, clarity, and conciseness.

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

All sections require written research papers which may be rewritten for an improved grade. The instructor typically marks the papers for correctness, clarity and conciseness. Students, for example, need to be accurate in quotation and statement of fact, clear in argumentation, and avoid excessive verbiage or “wordiness.” All students are encouraged to read the Guidelines for Writing Philosophy Papers, which is the department standard. The Guidelines are found under Support for Your Studies at the Department webpage:  http://www.sjsu.edu/philosophy/resources/ Rewriting allows students to improve their papers with respect to these three criteria.

Carlos Sanchez reports “I had students write 3 papers and one final paper. Each paper was 500 words and the final paper was 1000. The three papers were reflection papers on themes in the readings that students found interesting or applicable to some aspect of everyday life. Thus, the first paper dealt with the material dealing with the Pre-Socratics; the second with the material dealing with Plato and Socrates; and the third, with the material dealing with Aristotle. Each paper was graded for clarity, correctness, and conciseness. Each student was also allowed to rewrite their papers if the paper was lacking in one of these three areas. Grades improved dramatically from the original to the rewrite. The final paper was a Research paper where students had to pick a figure and analyze an aspect of his/her philosophy. I asked students to submit a rough draft where I suggested changes and rewrites. Every student chose this option and roughly 90% of the final papers were good to excellent.”

Dan Williamson says he incorporates this into his syllabus. “Write clearly and effectively; you will do at least the minimum of 1500 words this semester and then some. You will receive constructive suggestions from the professor to improve your writing for clarity and effectiveness throughout all assignments, including the midterm short essays.” He says that “The students are given written and oral instruction based on both written work as well as communication within class on how to improve their writing, its clarity and effectiveness, both in terms of content and style for Philosophy. They are provided with feedback on written work in both midterms. A sample question from the second midterm:
Describe the portrait of the philosopher as seen in the figure of Socrates, as it is represented in *Euthyphro*, *Apology* and *Crito*. Make sure to discuss why Socrates felt compelled to do what he did and his peculiar wisdom and how he portrays himself.

Both the Instructional Student Assistant and I go through each question and provide written notes and what needs to be clarified and what needs to be more effective (an example, a piece of text—the essays are open book—better phrasing and/or grammar, etc.) These kinds of questions were typical of the first midterm as well. The hope is that through this, they will improve for the final. Typical problems would be *not* addressing the key idea of Socrates’ teaching: That of which I do not know, I do not claim to know. To not have this central concept reduces the effectiveness of the answers.

Using the overall midterm results which are fairly representative of individual answers and out of 30 students tallied for this, approximately 10 students were in the B+ to A, A- range and 20 ranged from a higher B to lower B. This was a fairly strong class, although in the final count the range was fairly typical.

In addition, I note that they are given the option to write a single longer paper or a shorter first paper and a longer final paper (5 and 7 pages min. on each). All students are encouraged to visit our website to look at the article on how to write a philosophy paper. The majority of students pick the second alternative. I provide written (typed, usually at least a page) responses on each paper meant to help them improve for the second final paper. I also try to get them to come to office hours as well. The comments and criticisms are both about the effectiveness as well as clarity of their ideas, use of text, a good bibliography and appropriate referencing techniques whether it be in the form of footnotes or more like MLA—I allow them the choice of style.

(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)

This course works well the way it is, so no modification is needed.

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, Department Chair

(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.

Class enrollment for this course did not exceed GE guidelines this year. However this is our standard policy when this happens. The instructor of record provides feedback and grades all writing assignments and welcomes, if not requires, first drafts of all writing assignments and provides feedback on drafts. If sections are exceptionally oversized (which would probably never happen for this course) they are graded by the instructor of record with the assistance of an Instructional Student Assistant (ISA). The ISA 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 philosophy at issue. Whenever an 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. If a student is unhappy with an ISA grade the instructor of record will reread the paper, provide additional feedback, and regrade the assignment (if that is warranted.) Generally speaking, any instructor who is teaching more than 100 GE students in a semester receives ISA help.