General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title ANTH 11 – Cultural Anthropology  GE Area D1

Results reported for AY 2016-2017  # of sections 7  # of instructors 4

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Department Chair: Roberto Gonzalez  College: Social Science

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

GELO 4: Students will be able to recognize the interaction of social institutions, culture, and environment with the behavior of individuals.

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

Here the GE coordinator has selected metrics from one instructor who taught two of the seven sections over the course of the academic years. These are representative of all the sections. The metrics for assessment of this learning objective were several exam questions based on lectures, readings and in-class discussions focused on the intersection of human behavior and social and physical environments. The assessments were through student responses to essay and multiple choice questions on two midterms and a final exam; the essays constitute 50% of each in-class exam grade. The questions were developed to support student learning about how sociocultural systems provide an important context for human behavior. Students were given the questions in advance and were able to select the question they answered on each exam. The essay questions from each exam are listed below. In addition, in-class discussions around assigned readings - Dobe Juhoansi (Lee 2012), Polluted Promises (Checker 2005) and Standing in the Need (Browne 2015) linked together cultural adaptations and related them to the post-colonial institutions in Botswana, natural environment and institutional organization in America, and family organization and government institutions in Louisiana, respectively.

Following lectures, the students were provided opportunities to demonstrate their learning by participating in a two-part discussion session. In the first part, students discussed the following questions: How are does culture (shared and learned patterns of behavior) influence individual

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behavior? How does the natural environment influence culture and human behavior? What are some of the institutions that were formed post-Katrina as a result of cultural need? How have humans adapted to their physical environment? What are specific social adaptations (family, in particular) to environmental change? In the second part of the discussion session, the students prepared a statement within assignment groups to share with the class.

Throughout the discussion sessions, nearly half of the class across all sections surveyed actively participated and demonstrated that they understood how physical and natural environments influence cultural and social institutional formation, and that these are dynamic processes constantly adapting to change. The discussion section of this assessment demonstrated that an appreciable number of the students in the courses surveyed have an interest in the core issues of the culture concept, and how humans share cultural traits. The lessons learned from this assessment are primarily that the students became aware of the dynamic interplay between social and natural systems, and that they both work off of each other to create new behaviors. Several students indicated that they now think of their behaviors differently, especially with regard to the natural environment, as they are now aware of social adaptation in response to multiple levels of change. For the exams, the conceptual background underlying each question was explained in depth during class; students were well prepared for the questions. The average grade was a B and no student received a grade lower than C on their essay. Several students also provided examples from their personal lives in support of some answers, thus indicating mastery of the material. All in all, the students were clearly able to meet this learning objective.

Midterm 1

1. Think about Ixtepeji and its five propositions of worldview according to the anthropologist who studied there. Using that idea of propositions as a model, identify what you believe to be the most important propositions of worldview among the Dobe Ju’hoansi that you have read about in Lee’s book. State each as a clear proposition of worldview and provide examples from the book that demonstrate why it is an important proposition. Provide at least three such propositions. Make sure you state them as propositions and not simply as interesting facts about the culture. Students encounter the concept of world view propositions used to explain why specific behaviors make sense in one society and then are asked to extend the concept to another society.

2. Your potential employer has heard you have taken cultural anthropology and is interested in what it means to adopt a "cultural perspective" on behavior; i.e. one in which human action is explained by the concept of culture. You walk confidently into the job interview and provide your synthesis of (1) what the cultural perspective is and (2) why it matters, of course illustrating it with examples from the lectures, Conformity and Conflict, and any other readings or real life experiences you can muster. What does it mean to understand human behavior by using the anthropological concept of culture? How does it contrast with other ways to explain human behavior? Be sure to define your terms. The culture concept is developed during three weeks of lectures as a way to explain behavior and then they are asked to synthesize the perspective and illustrate it with concrete examples of behavior to be explained.
3. To paraphrase a famous anthropologist: "Every person is basically like every other person; like some other people who belong to his or her culture; and like no one else because they are utterly unique." Illustrate these three claims by reference to *The Dobe Ju/'hoansi*. In what ways are they, individually and collectively, like people all over the world? In what ways are individual San more like each other because they are members of the same society that shares a culture? Finally, how is each individual San utterly unique and like no one else? Provide plenty of specific examples from the book. This essay requires that students distinguish between different levels of explanation of human behavior.

Midterm 2

4. Compare and contrast the *roles of men and women* among the San that Lee described and the Mundurucu described by the Murphys. How are they similar and different? What are the reasons for the similarities and differences? In this question students are asked to identify different gender roles and to compare and contrast them in the different societies, thereby linking individual level behavior with broader cultural assumptions and values.

5. Compare and contrast the *social organizations* of the San and the Mundurucu. First, describe the social organization of each. Second, how does each social organization reflect that society’s adaptation to technology and the environment? Third, how is the social organization reflected in the society’s religion? Social organization here refers minimally to descent, residence, marriage, family, and any larger social units of which people are part. This question requires students to systematically analyze the context in which individual behavior is manifested.

6. Compare and contrast *childhood and parenting* in the San and Mundurucu societies. Describe childhood and parenting in each society, addressing some of the important and accepted norms for raising children in each. What experiences do children have in each society and how are they similar and different to the other society? Why do you believe the childhoods are both similar and different? This question, too, asks students to compare and contrast the sociocultural contexts in which childhood is experienced and shaped by different societal assumptions and values.

Final Exam

7. The books about the San, Mundurucu, and Flats cultures all provided examples of strategies that people used for survival. Compare and contrast those strategies among the three cases you have read about. What are they? How are they similar? How are they different? *Here the emphasis is on individual-level strategies that make sense within different social environments and that shape human agency.*

8. We begin with two seemingly contradictory statements:

Statement A: "The cultural patterns of The Flats are rational adaptations to poverty."
Statement B: "The cultural patterns of The Flats are irrational ones that keep people poor."

Your tasks are to:

Construct a sound and convincing argument for EACH of these statements. Explain how both these two arguments can be correct in specific ways, and how they can be reconciled or synthesized.

This question asks students to develop contrasting arguments regarding the consequences of individual and family strategies within a specific environment (one marked by poverty) in order to better understand the interplay of agency and structure.

(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 this course for the upcoming year.

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.

Out of 7 sections of ANTH 011 offered during AY 16-17, only 1 had enrollments exceeding the recommended maximum enrollment by more than 10% (it exceeded maximum enrollment by 12.5%). The anthropology department addressed practice and revisions in writing with this large section of ANTH 011 in the following ways: (1) by relying upon a mutually supportive teaching team that includes a stable group of experienced instructors; (2) by coordinating construction of assignments that facilitate efficient assessment of student work, including assessment of student writing; and (3) by developing increasingly streamlined procedures for providing feedback to students in a timely fashion. Finally, the department chair will be limiting enrollment caps to 10% of the recommended maximum enrollment during AY 17-18 in order to meet the needs of students.