General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

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

Results reported for AY 2015-2016   # of sections 7   # of instructors 5

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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?

Area D1-GLO 3 “Evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary points of view”

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

The metric for assessment of this learning objective was a lecture on Applied Anthropology, followed by a discussion of various domains of application and a seminar-style discussion of the roles for anthropologists outside of academia and how and in which contexts they act to solve real-world problems. The lecture followed up on assigned readings that varied by course instructor, examples of which are: “Orientations to an Anthropology of Practice” (Gwynne 2003) and “Advice for Developers: Peace Corps Problems in Botswana” (Alverson 2012). The general orientation included a survey of issue areas in which anthropologists work and the roles they play outside of academia, using case studies of ongoing, contemporary work of applied anthropologists working in the issue areas of health and wellness, environmental issues, disasters, and technology. A review was of the core issues of applied anthropology was also conducted, including how it can be used to develop or change specific programs and policies or contribute to public and institutional understandings of knowledge produced by anthropologists to improve people’s lives. Finally, the lectures concluded with ideas for how the students could apply anthropology in their lives and careers, regardless of their particular career paths.

Following the lecture, 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 policies cultural phenomena? How can anthropological knowledge and research contribute to improving policies? What are some examples you can think of where anthropologists could contribute to addressing local, regional, and global problems? How can anthropological perspectives help professionals and organizations better resolve cultural biases and cross-cultural misunderstandings (with reference to specific cases from the readings)? In the second part of the discussion session, the students were invited to ask questions of the instructor about the application and practice of anthropology.

Throughout the discussion session, nearly half of the class across all sections surveyed actively participated and demonstrated that they were aware that policies codify cultural values and can therefore be improved by better understanding diverse cultural values and they discussed a variety of potential applications of anthropology for improving policy and addressing pressing social, cultural, environmental, and political issues in California, the United States, and worldwide. Other students were more engaged when given the opportunity to ask the instructor about the application and practice of anthropology. The questions asked ranged from issues pertaining to building a career, designing research, engaging in fieldwork, and ethical dilemmas involved in applied work. 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 applied anthropology. The lessons learned from this assessment are primarily that the students became aware of the diversity of applications of the discipline of Anthropology, including its theoretical and methodological insights, as well as the ability to think critically through the discussions of how the discipline might be used in particular circumstances.

(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.)

The GE Coordinator for this course has elected to experiment with a new textbook in Fall 2016 (Anthropology Unbound – Durrenberger and Erem). This decision comes from feedback by students and experience teaching the course elsewhere. The new text is complementary to the lectures, provides personal insight, and complements the assigned ethnographies to create a well-rounded suite of course materials. The assessment activities for this area will not be modified.

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 15-16, 6 had enrollments exceeding the recommended maximum enrollment by more than 10%. The anthropology department is addressing practice and revisions in writing with these larger sections of ANTH 011 in the following ways: (1) by employing 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. If provided with adequate resources (which do not currently exist), the anthropology department would welcome the opportunity to hire graduate assistants to help support assessment of student writing. Finally, the department chair will be limiting enrollment caps to 10% of the recommended maximum enrollment during AY 16-17 in order to ensure that students receive adequate feedback on their work.