General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title  Comm 10/Comm & Human Relations  GE Area  D1-Human Behavior

Results reported for AY 2015-2016  # of sections  5  # of instructors  4

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Department Chair: Deanna Fassett  College: Social Sciences

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 October 1 of the following academic year.

Part 1

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

GELO 2: Students will be able to identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, gender/sexual, age-based, class, regional, national, transnational, and global identities and the similarities, differences, linkages, and interactions between them.

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

Broad Lessons Learned

This is the 2nd time we have assessed GELO 2. Based on our previous and current assessment results, I would like to offer two broad lessons that we have learned.

• First is the need to help students “complexify” culture, moving away from simple definitions based on single dimensions (race or gender or sexual orientation, etc.) to a definition that is multidimensional and focused on the inter-relationships between cultural dimensions. This is clearly aligned to the actual wording of SLO 2, and it simultaneously enables us to approach identify as a multidimensional concept.

• The second broad lesson learned is to do a better job highlighting the larger social forces that shape the interpersonal behaviors and actions that people perform in local environments. The intellectual and pragmatic origins of Comm 10 are based in these types of micro communication behaviors and actions. While we recognize the need (and desire) to stay focused at the micro level, we also see the need to contextualize IP behaviors and actions within the larger social and cultural environments that influence them.

Specific Lessons learned

• The intercultural interview assignment continues to be very helpful for this learning objective. In this paper we have students interview two people from a different culture as well as bring in their culture and the US culture into the analysis. The students learn the ability to communicate in cross-cultural
situations, addressing important cultural differences. Students generally offer feedback that this is the assignment where they learn the most. In a time and place where students have the ability to travel more freely and take advantage of study abroad programs, the idea of researching another culture is quite enticing. However, students are easily sidetracked and can lose focus on the objective of this class: interpersonal relationships. Business practices, geography, food, all these subjects tend to find their way into their research paper. The lesson learned is to set up a workshop with library staff to demonstrate how to use the communication databases for their additional piece of research. This requires students to find articles and research materials for their papers. As a result, the paper now has much more of a communication focus than past semesters.

- One instructor added a new, self-assessment homework assignment based on the book, *The Five Love Languages* by Dr. Gary Chapman. Students do the assessment online with someone with whom they are close (it didn’t matter if it was a romantic or platonic relationship). The purpose is to discover their emotional communication preference whether they prefer acts of service, words of affirmation, physical touch, receiving gifts, or quality time. Students looked at different interpretations of love and how they might cause problems in close relationships. They also wrote about whether or how they might use those results to improve or maintain their relationships. If students were in a romantic relationship, the majority of them chose to take the test with their significant other. When the students discussed the results in class, many volunteered that they were in a relationship with someone of a different culture and how those differences seemed to affect how they expressed and received love messages. This activity was also an interesting avenue to talk about gender differences regarding expressions of love.

(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.)

- Allowing students to choose which cultures they want to focus on for discussion and intercultural interviews ahead of time. That will allow them to give more thought to the process of culture, and how they can apply the concepts to their assignments.

- Broadening the definition of culture in the intercultural interviews paper. Most of the time students use ‘ethnicity’ as culture. In the future we will add a definition of culture directly to the assignment sheet so that they can consider other religions, sexual preference, music styles, age differences, etc. to their definition of culture. This will allow students to broaden their definition of culture.

- Exploring ways to more fully incorporate larger social forces into the course, emphasizing the way that these forces shape and influence interpersonal communication. While the course will continue to focus on micro-behaviors and actions in local contexts an environments, there is room within the existing course outline and assignments to better highlight social, cultural and structural forces.

**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, the course coordinator and instructors are doing an excellent job keeping the goals, SLOs, content, support, and assessment consistent across sections. Regular communication between the coordinator and instructors and between the instructors maintains continuity within and across sections.
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.

We cap enrollment in Comm 10 to 25 students, allowing instructors to add only two students beyond the cap. Since we do not offer larger sections, students are able to receive thorough feedback and engage in practice and revisions of their writing within the current configuration of the course and workload of the instructors.