General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title _ENVS 001_  GE Area _D3________________________________

Results reported for AY __2013-14_______  # of sections ____7________  # of instructors _____3_________

Course Coordinator: ______Rachel O’Malley_ E-mail: _rachel.omalley@sjsu.edu_

Department Chair: ___ Rachel O’Malley (acting)____ College: ____SocSci_

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 SLO(s) were assessed for the course during the AY?
SLO 1: Students shall be able to identify and analyze the social dimension of society as a context for human life, the processes of social change and social continuity, the role of human agency in those social processes, and the forces that engender social cohesion and fragmentation.

(2) What were the results of the assessment of this course? What were the lessons learned from the assessment?
The 2013-14 assessment reflected the experience of 302 students across 7 sections. SLO 1 was assessed by the three instructors using an array of assignments:
- Science vs. pseudoscience, textbook and other reading assignments connected to real time events in the media, documentaries, in-class & Canvas discussions, group research & presentations, midterm/final exams, essays, online written discussions responding to instructor prompts and student posts on a range of topics:
  - water and social equity,
  - personal household water use and how difficult or easy it would be to save 20 gallons of water a day;
  - the beneficiaries and cost bearers of large dams, and
  - human activities related to land subsidence.
- Group work is emphasized, as students will be a part of a team in their professional careers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade earned (SLO assignments)</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Percent of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D or F</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total:</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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An average of 66% of students meet SLO 1 at the A or B level across all sections of this course, with a high of 80% on some assignments. Student work adequately demonstrates that they are getting out into the “real world” to find out more about environmental issues and the people who work on addressing them and that they understand how to evaluate and identify a solution to a major environmental issue.

Instructors identified the following strength:
- Repeating a concept from the course material (e.g., water efficiency) and putting it into a real world context at the personal level (e.g., how I can save water at home).

Students struggled with:
- Articulating their opinions on larger issues, such as what to do about the 1.2 billion people who lack access to clean water for drinking and sanitation;
- Basic research and writing skills, etiquette and form, such as salutations, how to address the course instructor, and when it’s appropriate to use non-colloquial language;
- Lack of specific detail translated for example from what they read to what they write, coherent and thoughtful responses to their fellow students, and seeking outside reputable sources;
- Time management and group activities/ coordination.
Faculty further noted that students who struggle don't seem to put in the time and effort to complete the assignments. These are often the same students who do not collaborate well with groups. Low grades on assignments were generally attributed to students failing to complete one of the assignments or for low writing quality, and absenteeism was cited as a primary reason for failing grades; enrolled but did not drop the course.

(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.)

While faculty are relatively content with the format, ideas for minor improvements included:

- Incorporate more pre-write/ post-write at the beginning /end of the semester to assess overall improvements.
- Recruit Teaching Assistants to help in class to lead and guide small group discussions
- Online course: more effort will be made when the class is taught in the future to encourage students to set aside time during the week to make submissions well before the due date. Low grades on online discussion contributions were generally attributed to students getting online at the last minute and speeding through an assignment in 30 minutes that should have taken 2 hours to complete. Reminder emails will be structured more formally into class management.

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**

(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.

To assure that students are receiving thorough feedback on the writing, faculty emphasize pre-writing, peer-review and re-writing. Students are provided opportunity throughout the semester to improve upon their work through comments on essays and/or discussion assignments.

Examples of writing assignments used to meet minimum word count include:

- **Sustainability, regulation and how federal policy shapes actions at the state and local levels.** This assignment is usually tied to current event reading (ex. President Obama's Climate Change Action Plan, U.S. Supreme Court ruling on GHG emissions under CAA 111d and changes to the electrical sector
- **Organic food and farming in the U.S.** At debate are several important issues including the definition of organic food, its nutritional merits (both pesticide residue exposure, and nutritional values such as vitamins/minerals, etc.), its cost, a comparison of the impacts of traditional agriculture vs. the environmental benefits of organic farming.
- **Disproportionate Burden** - Students choose a specific sector of a community (ex. Bayview Hunters Point in SF, Richmond, West Oakland, specific neighborhoods in Long Beach or Houston, etc.) and research the human health impacts of industry in that area, social justice context and economic/demographics.
- **Field Experience Report**—The goal of the Field Experience Report is for students to investigate a specific environmental issue, topic, or product by conducting a field experience/site visit. For this assignment, students visit an environmentally-related site and write a 3-4 page paper (750-1,000 words) about the site and their visit. They conduct background research to prepare for the visit, develop 2-3 environmentally-related questions to ask and get answered during the visit, visit their site, and interview staff at the site. This assignment is worth 10% of the students’ course grade.
- **Short Research Paper**—students write a 750- to 1,000-word essay that investigates the advantages and disadvantages of shifting to an alternative fuel, such as electricity or hydrogen, to power our personal automobiles. The purpose of this assignment is to help students learn how to evaluate information on fuel and vehicle choices, understand different points of view on the subject, and formulate a partial solution to human society’s “addiction” to fossil fuels. This assignment is worth 15% of the students’ course grade.
- **Ecological Footprint FORMAL PAPER: four to six pages** in length.