General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title  HIST 188: History of Women in the U.S.  
GE Area  S 

Results reported for AY  2015-2016  
# of sections  1  
# of instructors  1  

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Department Chair: Glen Gendzel  
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 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 1: Students will be able to describe how identities (i.e. religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age) are shaped by cultural and societal influences within contexts of equality and inequality.

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

I assessed the GELO via the take-home portion of the midterm examination, which constituted one-half of an exam worth 25 percent of the semester grade. The students had one week to complete the take-home essay. The assignment follows here:

Answer the following in a typed essay of approximately four pages for a maximum of 50 points.

It is common for Americans to characterize the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries as eras during which American women “stayed home and did not work.” Most historians dispute this description of early American life. Why? Provide specific examples from the Block and Sewell books and your lecture notes to support your argument.

Typically, many students follow the lead of historians who traditionally defined work narrowly to include only work for wages conducted outside one’s home. This description of work obscures, ignores, and/or devalues women’s activities and contributions. Using lectures, discussions, documents, essays by historians, films, and a monograph during the first half of the course, I try to help students examine what labor actually meant in early America and recognize that opportunities varied greatly depending on demographic characteristics outlined in the GELO. Idleness was discouraged among all American women, but work meant different things to an indigenous woman, a middle-class farm wife, a young indentured servant, an enslaved African in America, an elite daughter studying to become a teacher, a grandmother, etc.

I evaluated the essay using a rubric that awarded points based on criteria common in the discipline:
• The essay contains an analytical thesis and answers the question.
• Essays from the Block anthology are used to provide evidence.
• Sewell’s monograph is used to provide evidence.
• Lecture notes are used to provide evidence.
• The essay is clearly written and conforms to the norms of standard English.
• The essay is polished and revised.

In addition, three criteria were designed to determine whether or not students demonstrated mastery of the GELO through their essays:
• Women’s unpaid work at home is acknowledged and highlighted.
• Examples are provided of women’s work outside the home for wages.
• Examples highlight the experiences of diverse groups of women.

Based on scores using these criteria, 41% (9 of 22 students) demonstrated “excellent” or “good” mastery of the GELO and 32% (7 of 22 students) demonstrated acceptable mastery. 27% (6 of 22 students) did not exhibit mastery of GELO 1. Four students submitted essays that that were “marginal” or “unacceptable.” Though these students might be able to provide examples of diverse women’s experiences orally, doing so in an upper-division history class requires the ability to analyze a variety of source materials, choose appropriate examples, and organize those examples in a well-written essay.

Most of the students who failed to demonstrate the GELO did not read carefully or spend sufficient time on the assignment. To test this observation, the next time I assess via an essay of this type, I’ll break out the rubric criteria related directly to the GELO and record those scores separately. Students’ grades will still reflect the qualities associated with effective essay writing, as they should, but I’ll have a more direct indication of their mastery of the GELO.

(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.)

Another instructor will teach the course during AY 2016-2017. When I teach it again, I’ll make the changes noted above if assessment activities include an essay evaluated using a rubric.

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.
The course is capped by the department at 25 students.