General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: RELS162 Religion and Political Controversy

GE Area: S

Results reported for AY 2016-17

# of sections: 2
# of instructors: 2

Course Coordinator: J. Todd Ormsbee
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Department Chair: Shannon R. Riley
College: Humanities & Arts

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 2: Students will be able to describe historical, social, political, and economic processes producing diversity, equality, and structured inequalities in the U.S.

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

Students in RELS 162 examine the historical, social, and political processes that have shaped the relationships between church/state and religion/politics in the U.S., in order to recognize and think critically about how these have contributed to the production of diversity, equality, and structured inequalities. Students were assessed through a Pro/Con Debate Panels on a specific religious-political issue in current American society and through a traditional critical term paper.

Students excelled at identifying current religious issues in contemporary American society and the ways that they shape and even distort American politics. As expected, students showed a range of skills and knowledge in producing their debate panels and papers, ranging from mastery to developmental performance. The average student (high C to mid-B) was able to demonstrate the connection between religion and social, political, and economic structures and developments; students struggled more with the historical component, that is, how these controversies and conflicts have changed over time. Masterful students (a significant minority of students in both sections) demonstrated in their thinking a deeper understanding of how religion is constituted in social systems and in turn acts to (re)constitute those social systems. This was more thoroughly demonstrated in the Term Paper, whereas the Debate Panels were more focused on contrasting value systems in political normatives as they relate to religion’s connection to American society writ large.

(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.)

Some minor tweaking might be necessary for students to be able to better historically
contextualize their thinking and to be able to describe change over time. This will be key to help students understand other GELOs about processes of change.

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?

(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.