General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: **URBP-101 The City**  
GE Area: **S – Self, Society and Equality in the U.S.**

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

Course Coordinator: **Rick Kos**  
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Department Chair: **Hilary Nixon**  
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 (to be completed by the course coordinator):**

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

   **SLO 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.

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

   **SLO 3:** Students will be able to describe social actions which have led to greater equality and social justice in the U.S. (i.e. religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age).

   **SLO 4:** Students will be able to recognize and appreciate constructive interactions between people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups within the U.S.

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

   **SLO 1:** Students demonstrated critical thinking on topics related to identity in class discussions that required students to present their views on these topics. I guided the discussion in a manner that encouraged the students to think about issues related to equality and inequality. The main lesson learned by the students is that they each bring a wealth of life experience, viewpoints, and some prejudices to the table when matters related to self-identity are discussed. Overall, the students seemed to enjoy the conversation very much – especially since it enabled them to relate their personal experience in an open, candid and respectful manner. Assignment #2 asked students to reflect in writing on matters of cultural and societal influences of suburban expansion.

   • Almost all students (4 out of 5) actively participated in this discussion during the class session.

   • Assignment (#2) on Suburban Expansion raises issues of class and segregation. Of the five students, four earned a grade of A- and one earned a grade of B/B-.
Most of these issues were raised during walking tours of downtown San Jose, Naglee Park, and East Santa Clara Street. Students’ reactions were (informally) assessed during in-class discussions.

**SLO 2:** Students considered historic patterns of urbanization and suburbanization in the United States and in a number of developing countries. One assignment asked students to define and describe “social capital” as a powerful agent of neighborhood and societal change.

- The first two class sessions of the course focus on the historical development of cities, including social, political and economic processes producing diversity, equality, and structural inequalities in the US.

- Two written assignments included reflections on Bay Area new stories and suburban expansion in the United States.

- Facilitated class discussions oftentimes focused on these issues.

**SLO 3:** Similar to the above, students engaged in discussions related to the environmental justice movement and social capital. Students were presented with topics tied to urban sustainability and, via a facilitated discussion, were asked to consider how the term “sustainability” might resonate with different groups. Lectures 7 and 8 introduced students to the work of Robert Putnam, “Bowling Alone”, which explores the relationship between inequality and neighborhood crime. The students then watched a video titled “Chavez Ravine” which explores the impacts of the Dodgers Stadium construction on a low-income, predominantly Mexican-American neighborhood that was removed for the project.

- The first two class sessions of the course focus on the historical development of cities, including social, political and economic processes producing diversity, equality, and structural inequalities in the US.

- Focus on the processes of contemporary urban planning at the end of the semester addresses this question explicitly regarding the impact of planning on equality and social justice using the instructor’s professional experience as a starting point. Students also met with Matt VanOosten, San Jose planner, to learn about strategies to create a more equitable city.

- The written assignment (#2) on Suburban Expansion also raises topics related to class and race perspectives.

**SLO 4:** The very nature of the class composition made the achievement of this learning objective a much easier task. Some students in class have family roots and direct ties to Indonesia, Philippines, India, and Mexico. The other student was American-born and was raised in the Bay Area. I facilitated a number of discussions throughout the semester with a focus on the various ways in which people perceive cities as informed by their personal backgrounds. Students were asked to express their views during two field trips: one, an exploration of downtown San Jose’s urban form and observed social interactions; the other, an exploration of the design qualities of the East Santa Clara Street corridor.

- Specific assignments that facilitated assessment of student learning on issues of interaction include the Suburban Expansion essay; also students’ oral and written reactions to walking tours.

- If the course has a bias, it’s towards planning to build community – which means constructive interaction between different groups. The class looks at mechanisms for facilitating (or minimizing)
such reactions on their walking tours and in their essays on their own communities and on new urbanism.

(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.)

If I were to teach the course again, I would place more emphasis on some of the Area S topics that I tended not to cover in sufficient detail, namely those related to disability and sexual orientation. Although I was aware that these topics needed to be covered, I did not spend enough time locating relevant materials to stimulate student discussion on these topics.

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 instructor has successfully integrated the area Goals, SLOs and other factors into the design of URBP-101. Since this was the instructor’s fourth time teaching the course, Mr. Kos has identified possible modifications to it, as noted above in Section 3. I agree with the instructor’s proposed modifications and feel that they will further align the course structure with the General Assessment Area S goals and learning objectives.