General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: AMS159 Nature & World Cultures  GE Area V

Results reported for AY 2016-17  # of sections: 4  # of instructors: 1

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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?**

SLO 3: Explain how a culture outside the U.S. has changed in response to internal and external pressures.

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

Numerous non-U.S. cultures, focused on but not limited to indigenous cultures, were examined through in class online (both textual and in person) discussions; in reading, viewing, and listening assignments; and in course activities designed to increase student understanding and engagement with cultures outside of their usual understanding. Indeed, this is the very focus of the course—how cultures respond to and change in relationship to their environments. Among these assignments were in-person discussions, mid-term and final assessments (short essay format), Module Reports, Discussion Postings (for the online version), and Group Assignments (including Peer Reviews and a Research Project). In Module Reports, students summarize, synthesize, and critique thematically linked readings and exploration assignments; and in Discussion Postings (for the online version) students engage with each other in critical dialogue about those modules. Examples of Module content include: Biocultural diversity, “Landraces,” Species, Habitats, and Communities. In each module, multiple non-U.S. cultures are explored to enable comparison and analysis for student learning. Assessment of Module Reports & Discussion Posts shows student interest and excitement to learn is high; the breadth of cultures explored that makes up the backbone of the course provokes not only increased knowledge, but also clear examples of students moving to self-reflexivity and a cultivation of informed cultural relativity that can lead to better ethical engagement across cultural boundaries. Assessment of these assignments also reveals that, in the context of this particular course, students also engage in cross-cultural learning, where their unconsidered assumptions about environmental interactions, resource usage, and the meaning of eco-systemic interrelationships are challenged and scrutinized for their impacts on the biosphere writ large. Inasmuch as the course assignments are set up to maximize student success and grading is based on level of engagement, assessment reveals that learning is highest when
students commit to and complete work (this is especially true in the online version, where students must rely on their own discipline to fulfill assignments and meet deadlines). Most low and failing scores are due to non- or partial completion, rather than a brute failure-to-learn. One possible area for consideration might be the sheer amount of reading/exploration assigned in each module; there are weeks where it’s difficult to see how a student would complete all assigned work in the 6-9 hours requisite for a 3 credit course (depending on the online or in person format).

(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).

Given the high level of success and learning, no modifications planned.

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.

NA