General Education Annual Course Assessment Form  
(due September 1)

Course Number/Title  CA173  GE Area  V

Results reported for AY  2013-14  # of sections  1  # of instructors  1

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Department Chair:  CHRIS JOCHIM  College:  H&A

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 September 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 3: Students shall be able to 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?

The faculty member teaching the class while the primary faculty member was on sabbatical submitted this useful narrative in response to the assessment prompt:

"The class met this SLO through the introduction of different themes. One theme was how technology, chiefly digital technologies, have changed the way cultures understand the functions or uses of art. Digital image technologies have undermined the institutionalized modes of narrative by which cultures have traditionally represented themselves. The pressures exerted by digital image technologies to "re-narrative" human experience work to dissolve cultural differences and produce a "global" mode of representation that supposedly ignores the "borders" established by language and historically unique heritages. We also discussed the extent to which the new global culture is and is not synonymous with a corporate pop culture focused on "markets" rather than on "communities." In connection with this theme, we also explored how modernist and postmodern attitudes toward art and "taste" contribute to the development of class divisions within the "global" culture, so that, for example, certain types of art (e.g., performance art) resonate with a particular, elite social class in many cultures while hugely popular music in India does not become nearly as "global" as songs by Miley Cyrus or viral productions by rappers. Other themes associated with the SLO include the impact of feminism on postmodern representations of sexuality, about which we read several articles about arts censorship, queer representations, and photographic representation of the self in different cultures. Students wrote about these themes in their blogs in response to specific questions. But the idea was to get them to develop a larger understanding of what it means to be "creative" in an era when creativity entails innovation more than the freedom to "be oneself." A problem with the SLO is that it assumes that a "culture," foreign or US, is more hegemonic than it really is, that a whole culture responds uniformly
to internal or external pressures. The course, however, shows that cultures are by no means monolithic; they are, if understood as national entities ("French culture"), very fragmented and becoming even more fragmented, as is anything called a global culture. Another theme of the course was the relation between collaboration and interdisciplinary thinking in the arts--the desire of younger generations to build "networks" and cross boundaries between the arts. This theme operates in conjunction with the themes of "re-narrativization" and the subversive energy of digital image technologies. Students collaborated on three video projects throughout the semester. Each project involved a different team, about 6 persons on a team. The videos explored particular aspects of both foreign and U.S. cultures in relation to specific historical, political, or aesthetic issues that "caused" an artistic phenomenon to happen. For example, one group made a video about how robots are represented in films of different countries, and the video included a lively and witty discussion between the team members about what "caused" the differences in representation. Another group made a video about dance in different cultures, but was unable to explain what "caused" the dance cultures to be different: they said to answer that question, they would have to spend a lot more time studying the history of the culture. Fair point. But I emphasized that the "causes" of art depend as much on our responses to it, on the conditions defining "tastes," as on large scale historical, social, or political circumstances. Writing on and discussing art changes our perception of it and our uses for it. So students embody both internal and external pressures on culture by enhancing their skill at articulating their responses to art--in their blogs and in collaboration on the video projects. We also saw and discussed the French film "Holy Motors" (2012), a very sophisticated example of "re-narrativization" in relation to digital image technology and interdisciplinary ways of thinking about identity, sexuality, performance/simulation, entertainment, and social class (pop culture and high art), among other things."

(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.)

The faculty member returning from sabbatical will consider a video assignment project, however the written requirement for all Area V classes hinders the implementation of creative and effective alternatives to the written assessment standard, even if they prove to be more effective and/or relevant (e.g. video production literacy seems as vital as written and oral literacy).

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. All sections of the course still aligned with the area Goals, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), Content, Support, and Assessment.