General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: E123A/B/C/D: Literature for Global Understanding  GE Area: V

Results reported for AY 2014/5  # of sections: 2  # of instructors: 2

Course Coordinator: BALANCE CHOW  E-mail: balance.chow@sjsu.edu

Department Chair: Shannon Miller  College: Humanities and 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 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”) was the primary target for assessment in one section of the course, whereas SLO 1 (“Students shall be able to compare systematically the ideas, values, images, cultural artifacts, economic structures, technological developments, or attitudes of people from more than one culture outside the U.S.”) and SLO 2 (“Students shall be able to identify the historical context of ideas and cultural traditions outside the U.S. and how they have influenced American culture”) were also assessed in the second section of the course.

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

Specific Assignments: brief description of guidelines/requirements etc.

All class activities (reading, lectures, discussions, presentations, writing, research, and exams) in the course address all the SLOs as described in the greensheet. Part of the course grade is based on a specific essay-type assignment designed to demonstrate the student’s ability to address the questions pertaining to the SLO intended.

To quote Professor David Mesher regarding his E123C class: “Since all cultures are constantly changing, the only issue here might be to identify the cause of such changes – something that may be impossible to do in any definitive way. Literally all our lectures, discussion, presentations, and assignments dealt with important changes in the societies that produced one or more of the literatures we studied (including Australia, New Zealand, and Samoa). Racial attitudes are just one example of the changing cultural values in the South Pacific; attitudes about gender are another example; and one or the other comes up in each of the works we read. Other issues, such as the role of the family, retention of indigenous traditions, and relationships with the natural environment, were encountered when dealing with selected works. Students had an opportunity to discuss those changes in class, as well as to research and explore them in their essays.”
In Professor Mesher’s case, “A straightforward way to assess SLO 3 is to look at one of two questions on the final exam. The students were given that question to prepare before the final, consisting of three different topics, all dealing with the Samoan novel, *Where We Once Belonged*. Each of these topics dealt directly with changes in Samoan society: the first, changes in the traditional “group first” attitude of Samoan society, especially among young females; the second, changes in the way Samoan society deals with family stability and infidelity, as it moves from a community-based traditional society to a more consumer-oriented, urbanized one; and third, changes caused by the increasing inroads of that consumer-oriented and mass-media awareness, especially among the young and especially as brought through American popular culture. At the exam, however, the students were asked to write only on one of those topics – the first.”

In Professor Chow’s E123A class, similarly, essay-type questions were used to assess SLO 2 and SLO 3:

SLO 1 -- “Using *War of the Saints* OR *Farming of Bones* OR *Omeros* as your main text, demonstrate your systematic understanding of the people of the Americas in terms of the most important material (e.g., economic) factors and ideological (e.g., religion, politics, culture) issues which have come to define their history and society.”

SLO 2 -- “The United States of America is an important neighbor for the other states of the Americas. Using *War of the Saints* OR *Farming of Bones* OR *Omeros* as your main text, explain some ways in which the USA and the other states of the Americas have shared or exchanged cultures or influenced / been influenced by one another in terms of ideas, practices, or attitudes.”

(Note: in a previous semester, Professor Chow had the occasion to assess SLO 3 in his class)

**Exactly what students had to demonstrate on assignment to show achievement of the SLO**

Students had to write an in-class essay or essay-type responses to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the topic. Their discussions were to be argued vigorously and supported with evidence derived from the readings, class discussions, research, and other activities.

**How assignment was scored (rubric? Breakdown of grade assigned to show how this particular slo was targeted.**

Typically, essay-type writing assignments are scored according to Departmental guidelines:

The “A” essay will be well organized and well developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment. It will show the student’s ability to use language effectively and construct sentences distinguished by syntactic complexity and variety. Such essays will be essentially free of grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors.

The “B” essay will demonstrate competence in the same categories as the “A” essay. The chief difference is that the “B” essay will show some slight weaknesses in one of those categories. It may slight one of the assigned tasks, show less facility of expression, or contain some minor grammatical, mechanical, or usage flaws.

The “C” essay will complete all tasks set by the assignment, but show weakness in fundamentals (usually development), with barely enough specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. The sentence construction may be less mature, and the use of language less effective and correct than the “B” essay.
The “D” essay will neglect one of the assigned tasks and be noticeably superficial in its treatment of the assignment—that is, too simplistic or short. The essay may reveal some problems in development, with insufficient specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. It will contain grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

The “F” essay will demonstrate a striking underdevelopment of ideas and insufficient or unfocused organization. It will contain serious grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

**Quantitative data/analysis: grades/percentages/scale of high-low**

The result for Professor Mesher’s E123C (Fall 2014) class was as follows:

- B grade: 30 students
- C grade: 2 students

The result for Professor chow’s E123A (Spring 2015) class was as follows:

- Excellent (A+, A, A-) 16 students
- Good (B+, B, B-) 7 students [Note: 10 students if C+ is considered “Good”]
- Fair (C+, C, C-) 8 students [Note: 5 students if C+ is considered “Good”]
- Poor (D+, D, D-) 3 students
- Fail 0 student [Note: 1 student if D- is considered as “Fail”]

**Qualitative analysis:**

The results from the two classes show that the majority of students assessed were able to achieve the SLO targeted.

**Lesson(s) Learned** -- Only a small number of students performed poorly relative to the rest of the class in Professor Mesher’s E123C, whereas up to 1/3 of students in Professor Chow’s class obviously had much room for improvement. However, given the fact that the E123 series involves a broad range of challenging materials from many unfamiliar cultures, it is unlikely for student achievements to be uniform from semester to semester.

(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.)

No changes anticipated.

**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.
(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 SLOs for writing.

**Oral Presentations**

In one section of the course offered, students were given specific guidelines and instructions to complete a presentation project:

*To meet Department Student Learning Objective #5 (“articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts”), and to enrich the learning experience in this class, students are required to make an oral presentation on an appropriate topic of their choice by focusing on the relations among culture, history, and texts.*

**Examples of possible ideas / topics (must relate to the Americas):**

- Countries in the Americas (based on geography and/or climate and/or culture, etc.)
- Americas in Ancient & Modern Times
- Peoples in the Americas
- Cultures, Languages, Religions, Beliefs, Practices, Customs
- Relationships between the Americas & Europe / Asia / Africa / United States, etc.
- Myths, folklore, storytelling, and the oral tradition
- Politics in individual countries or states
- Slavery; colonialism; ethnic conflicts; impact of capitalism & globalisation; migrations
- The Middle Passage; The Black Atlantic; The African Diaspora
- Authoritarianism; Indigenous Rights Activism; Environmental Movements
- Protest literature; dissident writings
- Magical Realism; Ethno-poetics
- Individual authors and literary texts
- Films, musicians/singers; artists
- Notable individuals from/off/in the Americas

The presentation, worth 10% of the overall grade, was assessed on a scale of A to C based on:

- **(A) Solid content materials, especially interesting ideas;**
- **(B) Coherent and organized presentation;**
- **(C) Generating interest & leading to comments/responses;**
- **(D) Description of the presentation experience, with emphasis on what you have learned and what kind of connections you are able to make among culture, history, and texts.**

The Department encourages instructors of the course to incorporate oral presentations to enhance student learning.

**Writing**

Students receive frequent and thorough feedback on their writing during the course as the content materials of E123 (Literature for global Understanding) are mastered by way of personal as well as
analytical and expository written assignments. Instructors teaching E123 often conduct essay-writing and library research workshops as components of their classes; the writing center has also been used as a means to help students improve their writing skills. The use of graduate assistants, resources permitting, would likely enhance the achievement of the writing-related SLO.