General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: phil 110 Science, Technology and Human Values  
GE Area: Area V

Results reported for AY2013-14  
# of sections: 2  
# of instructors: 2

Course Coordinator: Karin Brown  
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Department Chair: Peter Hadreas  
College: Humanities and The 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, 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 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.

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

The Phil 110: Science, Technology and Human Values course, through a variety of reading assignments, identifies the historical context in which technological innovation in Europe and Asia have transformed the ways of life in these traditions, and subsequently come to influence current technological practices globally and in the United States. For example, a Lewis Mumford reading, from his work Technics and Civilization (1934), invites students to think about how the dominate material and energy resources available in certain regions and times have historically lead to the development of certain, dominate technological practices in those regions and cultures. Some of the regional traditions addressed include Europe, China, India, and the middle East. Furthermore, Mumford explains how the dissolution of earlier, and seemingly disparate techo-cultural practices, can lead to the syncretization of new socio-technical practices in later, distant regions and times. For example, the steam engine first existed in ancient Greece, if only theoretically in the work of Hero of Alexandria during the first century AD. It did not come to dominate social practices in Europe, and later the rest of the world, however, until steam locomotives of the 18th century transformed transportation. In another reading by Langdon Winner, the course explores how intimately our cultural practices, or social forms-of-life (a concept adopted from the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein), are conditioned by the specific technologies adopted within different cultural traditions. For example, the social practices surrounding the adoption of cellular phone technology in Japan looks quite different from its adoption in the U.S. The Japanese, for example, are more readily accustomed to using their cellular phones as devices central to banking, ticket buying, and shopping services. These services have not caught on yet in the U.S., and is arguably due to differences in cultural values and practices. Therefore, the course looks comprehensively at not only how technological innovation influences social practices, but also how our differing cultural values and social practices (e.g., in Japan and the U.S.) condition technological forms-of-life (i.e., the use of cellular phones). These are just a few of the examples by which students are invited to explore the historical context of ideas and cultural traditions through differing scientific, technological, and cultural practices outside the U.S.; and how these practices have influenced
American culture. In assessing the SLO 2 learning outcomes, students are administered two mid-term exams, which help them to practice and develop their ideas around these concepts. More importantly, however, students are required to explore a values issue raised by either science or technology and take a position regarding this issue--defending it through the use of course concepts and insights from the readings. If we are to equate A and B grades in overall course work to indicate student mastery of course content, then we can say that about 85% to 90% of students in the course are meeting the SLO 2 requirement."

(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.)

There are no current plans to change the course in the future. The course is meeting this learning outcome well.

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, Peter Hadreas  Department of Philosophy Chair

(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.

The instructor of record provides feedback and grades all writing assignments. The instructor of record, welcomes, if not requires, first drafts of all writing assignments and provides feedback on drafts. If sections are exceptionally oversized they are graded by the instructor of record with the assistance of an Instructional Student Assistant. The Instructional Student Assistant must be approved both by the Instructional Assistant Coordinator and the Philosophy Department Chair for their excellence in both composition and their expertise in the field of the philosophy at issue. Whenever an Instructional Student Assistant (ISA) aids in the grading of a large course, s/he provides feedback along with grading. In all cases, when the help of an ISA is employed, the instructor of record must explicitly notify the students of the class that some writing assignments have been graded and feedback has been provided by an ISA. The instructor of record then, if so requested by a student, must reread, provide additional feedback, and regrade the written assignment, if a grade revision is warranted."