General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Soci. 15: Statistical Applications in the Social Sciences

GE Area: B4

Results reported for AY: Spring 2014

# of sections: 2

# of instructors: 1

Course Coordinator: Dr. Megan Thiele

Email: megan.thiele@sjsu.edu

Department Chair Dr. Wendy Ng

College of 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 September 1 of the following academic year.

Part 1

The student learning and content goals for Area B4 courses include the following (1-6):

1. Using mathematical methods to solve quantitative problems. Throughout the course, we will use basic mathematical operations and a calculator to solve statistical problems.

2. Using mathematics to solve real life problems. Practice problems and tests questions will be, in most cases, derived from everyday life. Also, some data will be made up but designed to reflect true-to-life situations and contemporary events.

3. Arriving at conclusions based upon the numerical and graphical data. This includes a familiarity with the organization and representation of quantitative data in various forms: tables, graphs, rates, percentages, and measures of central tendency and spread.

4. Applying mathematical concepts in one or more areas. After covering introductory concepts and procedures, the course will focus on probability and statistical inference. These concepts and methods are central to statistical analysis. By applying statistical inference, students will see how analytical techniques underscore many of the claims that they learn in Sociology courses. For example, when sociologists teach that the poor spend a larger percentage of their income on life's necessities, they do so with confidence because other sociologists performed solid statistical analyses that support this claim.

5. Incorporating issues of diversity. Expect classroom examples and test items to frequently deal with issues of diversity. Expect examples that incorporate variations or diversities of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, physical abilities, age, marital status, citizenship, economic levels, and/or sexual orientation.

6. Writing requirements (minimum 500 words): In clear and concise language, you'll be interpreting what your results both in assignments and when responding to short answer/and or essay questions on your exams. Your writing skills are important. The thoroughness of your explanations, your coherence and your conciseness will be considered in evaluating this part of your work.
(1) What SLO(s) were assessed for the course during the AY?

For spring 2014, SLOs 1, 2 and 3 were assessed. Using a pre-test/post-test design, I administered a multiple-choice questionnaire with 10 questions. In order to answer questions correctly on this pre-/post-test students were required to have an understanding of core concepts from the term including being able to calculate percentages, understand the difference between the three measures of central tendency: median, mean and mode, match types of graphs with variable level: nominal, ordinal, interval-ratio. This assessment relates to the SLOs by allowing students to demonstrate they can use mathematical methods to solve quantitative, real life problems and to arrive at conclusions based upon numerical data.

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

Pre-test/Post-test result

- Student scores went up an average of 1.65 points from the pre-test to the post-test.

- 34% (20/59) mastered these SLOs at high level mastery: 8/10 or better
- 42% (25/59) performed at a moderate level mastery on these SLOs: 6 or 7/10
- 24% (14/59) failed to master these SLOs

As the coordinator for Soci. 15 I think these scores should be improved. One thing I am concerned about is that the post-test comes at a time in the semester where students are particularly stressed about finals and have undergone a whole semester of testing. Additionally, these students are aware that this assessment does not count towards their grade. I think I should embed some questions on the final, which are consistent with these questions and use these to measure progress in the future. I think these may offer a more valid assessment. I know that this course is very difficult for some students and will work to improve these scores in the future. In particular, I will work to not only further connect the Learning Objectives to the course material, but also make sure the assessment is linked more fully to the course material.

(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.)

I intend to continue to modify and amend my teaching materials and presentations. I strive to use less powerpoint and more time for students to work on problems in the future. I also plan to really focus on how well students are getting concepts throughout each lecture period and to review concepts which seem difficult for students. I hope to also do better at holding students accountable for turning work in on time—at all times.
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?

All course sections are aligned. In 2011, the department lost all of its statistical-quantitative faculty when the Sociology/Criminology program was terminated. Faculty moved to the Justice Studies Department. We struggled with assessment having part time faculty teaching the course. In 2013-14, we hired a tenure track faculty member whose area is statistics and quantitative analysis. She is the new course coordinator and will now teach the majority of the sections of Soci 15, thus there will be greater consistency in the assessment practices through her sections and the department will not have to hire adjuncts to teach additional sections.