General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title ARTH 70B GE Area C1

Results reported for AY 2012-13 # of sections 5 # of instructors 3

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Department Chair: Anne Simonson 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 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?

All.

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

ARTH 70B is part of a two-semester survey of Western art. ARTH 70B focuses on the art of Europe and the United States from 1400 CE to the present, traditionally ending with Contemporary art movements of the 1980s. This is a standard course usually packaged in a two-semester textbook for our discipline and taught in universities, colleges, and AP high school classrooms all over the U.S. The entire courses deals with the periodization and contextualization of artistic styles within specific cultural parameters. Each style studied reflects specific trends, activities, and changes within the history of human intellectual activity.

SLO 1 (recognition) is assessed by quizzes and tests. The course structure addressing this SLO focuses on cultural accomplishments across time and in various parts of the world. Each lecture presented a specific culture or aspect of a culture within this context. While ARTH 70B is itself taught within the Western tradition, particular attention is given to the appropriation, hybridization and/or emulation of other cultures. Examples include the artistic interpretation of the New World in Renaissance culture; cross-cultural contact during the age of colonialism; depictions of Native Americans in Early American through late-nineteenth century American art; use of the 'primitive' in nineteenth- and twentieth-century art; and the influence of African and Iberian cultural forms in the creation of Cubism. The course also addresses issues relating to women's role as artists as a recurring theme throughout the course. Reasons for the limited access to training, patronage, and opportunities available for women were discussed as a means of identifying historical obstacles faced by women as artists over time.
SLO 2 (affective and analytical response) is measured by in-class and take-home essays, papers, and homework assignments. While each section is a little different; instructors use multiple quizzes, midterms, assignments and make adjustments constantly during the course of a semester, a typical assignment is a group paper on the theme of religious difference and diversity and the resultant effect on cultural forms. For example, readings on the Reformation/Counter-Reformation are used to underscore the role of cultural factors external to art proper in determining the specific form of art in a given culture. In-class discussion groups and 'question and answer' exercises are used intermittently to foster student participation in this process and to gauge student comprehension of material. Other assignments meeting this requirement include papers that take advantage of Bay Area museums (which include the San Francisco Legion of Honor, SF MOMA, Oakland Museum of California, and Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University). Students closely examine, describe, and discuss a minimum of two works of art first through a formal description and then through a detailed analysis of the work based upon a minimum of two scholarly resources. Exam questions meet objective through such measures as four 20-minute essay questions involving describing and discussing a given image in its historical context. These essay questions are administered at regular intervals throughout the semester.

SLO 3 (writing) is measured by evaluation of the quality of written assignments collected for SLO 2. The relative comprehensiveness or depth of understanding of “the historical or cultural contexts in which specific works of art were created” and “the accomplishments of and issues related to women and diverse cultures reflected in such works of art” are also measured by written assignments.

The instructors who support ARTH 70B have worked together for many years, regularly compare notes on teaching and assessment strategies, and are part of an art history faculty that meets for a minimum of six hours/semester to discuss issues of student learning. What we understand about our students’ success in meeting the learning objectives of ARTH 70B is that here are four major issues to contend with:

(a) Course complexity. The difficulties of acquiring immense vocabulary required to discuss the production, aesthetic values, and technical processes of art combined and the vocabulary associated with widely varying social and cultural contexts for its use. As in some of the sciences, our discipline makes use of a variety of classification schema: chronological, geographical, stylistic, technical.

(b) Reading comprehension. There is evidence of considerable difficulties that many students have with reading and processing written information rather than just cutting and pasting it. There are other issues inherent to this course, of course, but many of those can be resolved by skillful teaching. Chiefly:

(c) Different demands of teaching visual materials. The need to “see” in a new way and to analyze visual information, and

(d) Students’ general unfamiliarity with history.

Strategies for addressing these issues increase student learning enormously, and especially those that increase reading comprehension. These make it possible for students to deal effectively with the density of the course material, to make decisions about it and to commit to learning in ways
that they didn’t anticipate. As an example, one instructor requires students to maintain reading logs of weekly readings. A final question in each log asks students to select one favorite item from an assigned textbook chapter and to describe both the appearance and the production of that object and then to explain in what ways it typically functioned in the culture which produced it; regular practice with such open-ended questions enables students to succeed with all course objectives.

In 2012-13, further modifications were undertaken for both sections of this course to enhance student learning through improved access to digital images covered in lecture, study guides, slide lists, and links to legitimate online sites and pedagogical materials. Course materials, including images, course materials and assignments were enhanced through an optimal combination of the extensive resources of the Visual Resources Library, and faculty were introduced to the new Canvas learning environment.

As in previous years, the variety of readings is constantly revised and updated, bringing the latest stylistic analyses and interpretations to the students, and maintaining the relevance of the readings to the many works of art that are currently on exhibit in local museums.

(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 modifications are 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 (SLOs), Content, Support, and Assessment? If they are not, what actions are planned?