General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Philosophy 66: Introduction to Aesthetics
GE Area: C1

Results reported for AY 2013-2014 # of sections: 5 # of instructors: 3

Course Coordinator: Tom Leddy E-mail: tle403@aol.com

Department Chair: Peter Hadreas 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 2: Arts courses will enable students to respond to works of art both analytically (in writing) and affectively (in writing or through other forms of personal and artistic expression).

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

Prof. Sonnier writes: Students were assessed by final project: a film project related to art: as a comment on a film of their choice, creating a script, acting out scenes then filming those scenes. Within this project, they comment on the analytical work of two philosophers of art. The second component to this project was an analysis of their own film, both in terms of how well they incorporated views of philosophers, and how well they expressed a view of art. They were then asked to analyze flaws in their project in terms of their analysis & their expression.

70% of students worked at B to B minus level on this project, only 30% excelled above that level. Often, it was the 70% who dominated the final project.

Students in this class showed great promise, & began the class with insightful analysis of both the works of philosophers and works of art. The final projects did not progress as strongly as they could have. Students did not work as well together as expected. Online discussions after mid-semester lagged, and the final projects reflected this lag in analytic & affective expression.

Problems faced in this class stemmed directly from use of our new LMS: Canvas. Canvas’ discussion module is horribly crude, forcing me to break up discussions into topics with specific due dates bi-weekly. This division into topics works fine for upper division students, but for entering freshmen (98% of this class were first time freshmen) bi-weekly due dates did not work well at all. It was difficult to get students to do any online discussion once they missed deadlines within the week. In the future, I would not use Canvas for a class of freshmen.
Prof. Leddy, who taught FTF classes exclusively, writes: Students in my classes were assessed in this respect in the first homework assignment (as a kind of pre-test) applying Aristotle to a movie they have seen, in the field trip paper in which they go to a museum or art gallery and analyze an art work there in terms of one or more of the philosophers of art we have discussed, and in the final exam. In the first and second of these they are asked to analyze their emotions as well, for instance whether they experienced catharsis of pity and fear in the first case. The results were good. Most students showed marked improvement from the first draft of the first homework assignment to the final exam. The average grade for the first draft of the first assignment was a C+. The average grade for the final exam was a B. However, I find that there were marked problems with their ability to focus on the texts of the philosophers studied and actually apply these ideas to the works of art. The main lesson I learned was that this problem is resolved if I insist on students incorporating three to four very short quotes from the philosopher studied, with citation, into their writing, as long as I also provide guidelines for how to properly use quotations in a text. The affective aspect of their analysis always works well, particularly in the field-trip paper.

Professor Lee, who teaches a FTF course similar to Prof. Leddy has similar experiences to Prof. Leddy. She observes that she had students read relevant theories from Plato, Aristotle, Dewey, and Hegel, among others and then discussed them in detail – students were encouraged to engage with the texts analytically and affectively and then apply them to day to day aesthetic encounters as well as critical discussions in the classroom, on their exams, and in their papers. The student’s were required to attend an ‘art’ exhibit and then write two five page papers that discuss one to two art pieces, or one art performance, in relation to a philosophical topic we covered using both analysis of concept and affective analysis. Students were strongly encouraged to re-write their papers, which most did. Students met the outcomes requirement for this SLO with about 65% of them getting a B-average with their first drafts. However, the second drafts showed a marked improvement and grades improved to an A- average.

(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 in the course are planned although we do plan not to use Canvas for discussion in online courses due to problems mentioned by Prof. Sonnier above..

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, Chair Philosophy Department