General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

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

Results reported for AY 2014-2015          # of sections: 4          # of instructors: 2

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

Department Chair: Janet Stemwedel          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?

We assessed SLO 1  Arts courses will enable students to recognize aesthetic qualities and processes that characterize works of the human intellect and imagination.

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

As in the past, Prof. Leddy assessed student understanding of aesthetic qualities (which they learned about through readings and lectures on such philosophers as Plato, Aristotle, Nietzsche, Hume, and Dewey) primarily in the field trip paper in which they were expected to attend a show in a gallery or museum and then write a four-page paper in which they analyze and critically discuss one work of art (or two in comparison). Students are required to describe their overall aesthetic experience with this work. They are asked “What aesthetic qualities are involved in the work?” and are expected to discuss those qualities. Aesthetic qualities include beauty, ugliness, grace, elegance, sublimity, and a number of other concepts as discussed in Professor Leddy’s book The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life. Students were expected to connect discussion of aesthetic qualities to the philosophers who have developed theories about these.

Students are also expected to discuss processes that may have gone into the making of a work of art as well as processes involved in their own understanding, interpretation and evaluation of the work. Processes are discussed in relation to a painting by Picasso, where we view the various sketches and early drafts that led to the final product.

Evaluation of student outcomes is based on the grades in the field trip paper. All students are not only allowed to, but strongly encouraged to, rewrite their field trip papers, thus allowing for improvement based on feedback. Students are encouraged to rewrite any and all graded material up to, but not including, the final exam.

The main concepts taught in this course are concepts of aesthetic qualities and processes. Student understanding of these concepts is the main feature of the grade they receive on the field-trip project as well as other classroom assignments.
Another assessment measure regards three homework assignments which themselves total four and a half pages of writing. Since the field trip paper is the last paper in the class it should reflect any improvement over the semester based on the earlier homework assignments (these are three two-page minimum papers.) Using Section 2 of Spring 2015 as the base for my analysis I found that students met the outcomes requirement for this SLO (by way of a grade of B- or better) 88% of the time in the first homework assignment.

(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.)

Following his plan from the last time this SLO was assessed, Professor Leddy went ahead and eliminated multiple choice exams from his Phil 66 courses replacing them with short essay quizzes and essay exams. In order to correct for a lack of discussion of Asian aesthetic qualities Prof. Leddy is introducing a new textbook on the Japanese concepts of Wabi and Sabi in the Fall of 2015.

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 - Janet Stemwedel, Chair Philosophy Department

(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, 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."