General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Philosophy 61: Moral Issues  
GE Area: C2

Results reported for AY 2013-14  
# of sections: 13  
# of instructors: 9

Course Coordinator: Bill Shaw  
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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 1: “Letters courses will enable students to write clearly and effectively. Writing shall be assessed for correctness, clarity, and conciseness.”

Philosophy 61 is strongly oriented toward writing as students learn to identify, explicate, and then critically evaluate philosophical arguments as well as to offer more personal reflections on the moral issues that are the subject of the course. Instructors in the course employ a variety of different kinds of writing assignments in an effort to get students to write clearly and grammatically and to organize their thoughts and present their ideas in a logical way.

The course coordinator reviews the course plans and writing assignments of all instructors and mentors new instructors or those who haven't taught the course before.

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

To assess this SLO, instructors are required to save students’ writing from an assignment at the beginning of the semester so that it can be compared with their writing on an assignment at the end of the semester. In measuring and discussing the results from different sections, instructors consider, among other things: (1) the mechanics of the writing with respect to grammar, spelling, and appropriate word usage, (2) the correct use of key concepts, (3) the overall clarity of the writing, (4) the logical structure of the writing, and (5) the quality of the argumentation (for example, the avoidance of purely emotional appeals or irrelevant anecdotes).

The overall results for AY 2013-14 correspond with previous assessment exercises. Students show marked improved across the semester, with some student displaying quite dramatic improvement. (We surmise that these are students who had not been required to do much writing in high school or who had not previously received serious feedback on their writing.)

(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.)
As indicated, the assessment results were favorable, showing that overall student writing improved across the semester. The results do not indicate any obvious way to improve the course. Results did not vary significantly among sections, and what variations there were do not seem to correlate with differences in writing (or reading) assignments among different instructors. So, we plan no modifications in the course or in its assessment. However, the instructors will continue to meet regularly to discuss strategies for improving student writing and other pedagogical issues in the course.

**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. I approve this report. – Peter Hadreas

(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.”