General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Philosophy 70A: Ancient Philosophy  
GE Area: C2

Results reported for AY 2014-2015  
# of sections: 2  
# of instructors: 1

Course Coordinator: Tom Leddy  
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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?

SLO 1: Letters courses will enable students to recognize how significant works illuminate enduring human concerns.

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

Jim Lindahl, the only instructor assessed his students through the following exam question: The first paper will be on some topic from the material covered since the beginning of the course and up to the PreSocratic philosophers, History and Medicine. I want you to address the question: “Does ancient wisdom have anything to convey to us today?” You will pick one of the pieces that we read during the first four weeks of the class: Hesiod, Genesis, Ecclesiastes, Job, Gilgamesh, Upanishad, Bhagavad Gita, Jataka tale, Buddha, Confucius, Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, the Presocratics (including Parmenides and Zeno), History (Thucydides and Herodotus), and Hippocrates. You will select some claim or idea or perspective or transcendent reality addressed in that piece and connect it to something that we still contemplate today. Consider (as a way to generate some ideas): The importance of giving some mythic structure to understanding who and what we are (as in Hesiod).

Sections of the course were focused on “enduring human concerns.” Lindahl used a lot of material from before the PreSocratics. He tells the students this is the “wisdom” section that focuses on the way people struggled with the “human condition” prior to the growth of analytic philosophy in Classical Greece. They look at the wisdom traditions of Mesopotamia, Greece, Palestine, India and China over the first three weeks. Lindahl also has sections focusing on Christian and Islamic (wisdom and) philosophy. He tries to show how Plato influenced Christian theologians and how Aristotle influenced Muslim scholars. This helps connect the philosophy to contemporary religious beliefs which is an “enduring human concern.” He ends with a 12th c. Samurai tale to look at the Japanese Buddhist attitudes toward death. The reading schedule was diversified so much is that he felt too much focus on forms and essences or whether the world is water or apeiron, was distant from enduring human concerns and left some of the students (especially the non-majors) wondering what the value of studying ancient philosophy is.
Here are some embedded questions on tests that connect to enduring human concerns:

midterm: 8. What is the “human condition” and what is something in Hesiod’s “Works and Days” that seeks to explain it?
1. Human suffering is a focus of much ancient writing. Explain the general idea of the wisdom concerning human suffering found in Job and Ecclesiastes of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament).

Final exam: 3. What is the “problem of evil” and how does Augustine think it can be solved?
7. Why is free will a problem for Christians? Identify two reasons why Boethius thinks we need to believe in free will.

(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)

This course works well the way it is, so no modification is needed.

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, Department Chair

(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."