General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Sociology 1: Introduction to Sociology  GE Area: D1

Results reported for AY 2014/2015  # of sections: 7  # of instructors: 4

Course Coordinators: Dr. Amy Leisenring and Dr. Susan Murray  E-mail: amy.leisenring@sjsu.edu

Department Chair: Dr. Wendy Ng  College: Social Science

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 October 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?

Students will be able to place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts.

There were a total of 547 students enrolled in this course in the academic year that was assessed.

SLO 1 was measured by giving a sample of these students (120) a two-part assessment. In the first part, students identify an event that occurred between the year that they were born and the year they turned/will turn 18. In class, students were asked to enter their event on to a timeline on the classroom white board. Examples of events included the attacks on 9/11, the election of Barak Obama, the creation of social media, Hurricane Katrina, etc. The timeline then became the basis of an exercise in which the students were asked to use the theoretical framework of the sociologist C. Wright Mills to address three key questions: (1) What does the timeline reflect about the particular historical moment in which they live in? (2) What does the timeline reflect about the student’s demographic cohort? (3) What conclusions can the students draw about events in their lifetime compare to important events of previous generations?

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

The students are required to do this exercise in small groups in-class. They then use the data as the basis for a paper and questions about the exercise are incorporated into a class exam. As determined both through the assessment of the papers and the accuracy of the responses to the embedded exam questions, out of 120 students, approximately 85% demonstrated mastery of the SLO.

This exercise proved to be very successful in both meeting the outcomes of the objective and also enabling students to develop a critical sociological imagination. The instructor of the exercise has shared it with other instructors of SOCI 1 in the hopes that they will use it in their classes as well
(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.)

In the upcoming year, as a result of the feedback we have received from our 5 year Program Review and from the BOGS review, we plan on developing rubric-based assessments for each of the 4 GELO’s for this course. All instructors who teach the course will be asked to administer the assessments.

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, all sections of the course are still aligned with the area Goals, (SLOs), Content, Support, and Assessment.

However, one change that are going to implement is that after speaking with Dr. Melinda Jackson, the University Director of Assessment, we have decided that instead of requiring one 1500 word paper, we will require several smaller papers that total 1500 to better provide feedback to students and provide them an opportunity to improve their writing skills.

(5) If this is a course in a GE Area with a stated enrollment limit, please indicate how practice and revisions in writing will be addressed in larger sections, particularly how students are receiving feedback on the writing which accounts for the minimum word count in this GE category.

As an GE Area D1 course, this class has an enrollment limit of 40. However, larger sections of 120 students are regularly offered. We employ graduate student teaching assistants in this course to give additional one-on-one support to our students. While we understand the concern about class-size, this arrangement enables the students to receive more support from the instructor – not less. By teaching one 120 person lecture class, rather than three 40 person lecture classes, the instructor has 5 additional hours in the week to meet with and evaluate the work of those 120 students. The pedagogical style used in this course is the same for regardless of class size. The students do in-class active learning exercises, small group discussions, film analysis, peer writing reviews, and all class discussions.

In the section with large enrollments, students are required to turn in a complete draft of their 1500 word paper approximately 11 weeks into the semester. All the papers of all the students are then read, given detailed written feedback, and graded by the instructor. These papers are returned to the students one week later. All of the students in the class then face the decision of whether or not to rewrite their papers based on the written feedback each student received.
In the BOGS report for SOCI 001 a concern over the class size was raised. Dr. Murray, one of the coordinators for the course, addressed the concern in the following manner:

We employ graduate student teaching assistants in this course to give additional one-on-one support to our students. While we understand the concern about class-size, please be assured that this arrangement enables the students to receive more support from the instructor – not less. By teaching one 120 person lecture class, rather than three 40 person lecture classes, the instructor has 5 additional hours in the week to meet with and evaluate the work of those 120 students. The pedagogical style used in this course is the same for regardless of class size. The students do in-class active learning exercises, small group discussions, film analysis, peer writing reviews, and all class discussions.