General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title  History 10B Western Civilization  GE Area  D2

Results reported for AY 2012-13  # of sections  1    # of instructors 1

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Department Chair: Patricia Evridge Hill  College: Social Sciences

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 4: Students will be able to compare and contrast two or more ethnic groups, cultures, regions, nations, or social systems.

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

I was given this course when my original assigned course, History of France, did not obtain the requisite number of students a month before the semester began! I was stunned and unhappy because the History of France is my specialty. So I was given Western Civilization, which I used to teach three times a week at my previous university almost twenty years ago. In those days, I used to worry about getting the facts straight. Three hundred years of history is a lot to cover. Now, as a mature scholar, I had mastered the facts and was more concerned about getting a new generation of students, those plugged permanently into the internet and Facebook, engaged in history. I did PowerPoints for every lecture. I assigned lots of primary sources and a few movies. At the end of every lecture, I left time for discussion. In the end, I was pleased by the results of all of my efforts. I had a great class of forty-three freshmen and sophomores, most of whom truly enjoyed the course.

Some complaints were disheartening, however. A few students complained bitterly of having to read three books besides the textbook. (Each of the books was a novel of less than two hundred pages.) Students also complained that my course was harder than other GE courses. The course was indeed hard in terms of demanding two papers, but I was following GE guidelines. The GE courses are supposed to be challenging so that students improve their skills. I sometimes wonder, though, if students aren’t bullying their professors into relaxing the high standards.

The two papers fulfilled the SLO 4. The first paper gave students a choice. Here is what was asked of them.
1. Using primary sources, analyze how two individuals from different countries defended or criticized the slave trade, colonialism, or imperialism.

2. Using primary sources, analyze the response of two individuals from different colonized countries to Western imperialism.

3. Analyze one document by an imperialist and one document by a victim of imperialism or a resister to imperialism.

Students were free to find their own primary sources. When this task proved challenging to many of them, I provided sources to them:


I suggested that students compare and contrast these two documents, which related experiences in colonial Burma and Algeria. Students had to explain the ways in which these sources reflected characteristics of English and French imperialism. When students handed in their first versions of the paper, 50% were not proficient. Lacking reading skills, some could not even understand the documents. We went over them in class. I met individually with most students. They were then allowed to resubmit their papers. Finally, 90% of the class reached proficiency in this assignment. Of those 90%, 10% showed outstanding skills. I was impressed by the variety of their analyses and their eagerness to do well.

The second paper also fulfilled the SLO. Students had to analyze the Italian novel Survival at Auschwitz and the Czech movie Divided We Fall. The book relates an Italian Jew’s experiences at a concentration camp in Poland, while the movie sheds light on the plight of Jews hiding in Czechoslovakia. The students had to explain what they learned about individual identity in the two different contexts. Students loved the assignment, especially because the Czech movie was dark and funny at the same time. Having learned how to analyze two primary sources from their first paper, 85% of the students showed mastery of the SLO. This time they were not allowed to rewrite. So 15% students did not do as well in the end as I would have liked.

(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.)

If I teach this course again, I would encourage more students to meet with me before the second paper is due.

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.