General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Sociology 57: Community Involvement/Personal Growth  GE Area: E

Results reported for AY: 13/14  Number of sections: 1/semester  Number of instructors: 1

Course Coordinator: Christopher Cox  E-mail: Christopher.cox@sjsu.edu

Department Chair: Wendy Ng  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 3: Students will be able to use appropriate social skills and enhance learning to develop positive interpersonal relationships with diverse groups and individuals.

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

The components of this course that contribute the most towards achieving this learning objective are the service learning component, and the in-class group discussions/interactive activities.

In the service learning placements for this class, students get a chance to interact with others from diverse backgrounds. Each of the service placements has students working with various populations, including people of all ages from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For example, those working at the Third Street Community Center, Reading Partners, Santa Maria Urban Ministry and Fuerza Escolar are working with mostly Latina/o children who are from Spanish speaking families. In those sites they also work with volunteers and service learners from SJSU and other schools who come from various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Those working with Project SHINE are working with elders, most of whom are immigrants from Asia. Students working with Sacred Heart Community Center work with many of the city’s indigent residents, including homeless residents of the city. Others who have worked with Veggielution and in Communivercity projects work with a much larger cross section of the city’s residents, which reflects the ethnic, socio-economic, and linguistic diversity of the South Bay at large. In the service sites chosen for this class (our community partners), students have no choice but to interact with the clients and staff of the organization during their time doing service work. This gives many students the chance to interact with populations they would normally not interact with. In many of the sites, students must also work along side other service learners (some even from universities other than SJSU) during their time there. The manifest goal is to get them to
I assign journal assignments where students have to reflect on their interactions with others during their time at their service sites. I also encourage them to interview people in their service sites, and include information gathered in interviews in their term papers and assessment papers.

During class, there are several activities during the semester that are designed to get students to interact with each of their classmates. Given that the demographics of this class each semester are as varied as any General Education class in our department (which is quite diverse), this gives a chance for students to interact with others from different backgrounds. I have some formally structured activities such as active listening exercises, goal setting exercises and group presentations, and less formal activities such as service site discussions and personal share-out discussions that are designed to allow each student to interact with every other person in the room by semester’s end. Topics such as race and ethnicity, economic stratification, gender inequality, and religion are included in the curriculum for this course. Thus, there are opportunities to help dispel myths about various groups; these myths are often barriers to developing positive interpersonal relationships. Giving students an opportunity to link these issues to what they witness in their service sites, and then a chance to share what they encounter with each other gives them a chance to see populations of “others” in a different light. They can then become more open minded to groups outside of their own. There are in-class active listening activities, and class lessons on conflict management that help students to enhance their communication skills. This helps them to learn to work through misunderstandings with others in positive ways. The class also has a strong focus on the concept of social capital – students are made aware of the value of bridging social capital, which helps to connect individuals to groups outside of those in which they have membership. The majority of students report in their final assessment paper that they have a deeper understanding of the value of creating ties to others of diverse backgrounds, and the ways in which it can serve them well later in life. There is also a strong focus on the need to develop strong ties to others (with diversity in mind), as well as weak ties – those which may not be as deeply personal but may be centered on professional activities.

The main tools to assess learning for SLO #3 are the group presentation and the final assessment paper. The formal journal questions which students respond to (in 1.5 to 2 page responses) also provide a way to assess their interactions with others, and their understanding of the importance of developing positive interpersonal relationships.

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.)

No specific modifications are planned for this course, although new activities for social interaction during class are always being generated.

Part 2

To be completed by the department chair (with input from course coordinator as appropriate):

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?

There is only one section of the course and the course coordinator teaches that section, so I have no concern with the goals, SLOs, content, support, and assessment in this course.