**General Education Annual Course Assessment Form**

Course Number/Title: ANTH 160 Reconstructing Lost Civilizations  
GE Area: R

Results reported for AY 2014-2015  
# of sections: 6  
# of instructors: 5

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Department Chair: Chuck Darrah  
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?

Two SLO were assessed simultaneously during the 2014-2015 cycle.

Student Learning Objective SLO #1: Within the particular scientific content of the course, a student should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the methods and limits of scientific investigation, and SLO #3: Within the particular scientific content of the course, a student should be able to apply a scientific approach to answer questions about the earth and environment. [One SLO from the designated cycle and one SLO reassessed].

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

Instructors expressed a need to integrate assessment of the two closely aligned SLO. This was an outcome of shortcomings revealed in previous assessments. Furthermore, instructors also desired assessment of Quantitative Reasoning in the context of the two SLOs.

SLO #3 was judged to have been problematic in the past and extra effort was applied this cycle to address the content and delivery of related learning materials. Instructors sought to emphasize scientific method in course content as a means of resolving the misunderstandings exhibited by students. Instructors agreed that shortcomings in comprehension of scientific method can in part be explained by the fact that most students who enroll in ANTH160 have a limited background in scientific-based courses or scientific majors and that this hindered student application of scientific approaches to environmental issues.

SLO#1 was reassessed to determine whether the emphasis on scientific methods was an effective remedy to assessed shortcomings in SLO#3. Assessment this cycle sought to find the intersections of course content with Learning Outcomes. In essence, a correlation was sought indicating effectiveness of interventions.

The instructors conducted different forms of content delivery, using lectures, readings, select videos, and simulation exercises. Critical discussions were increased in at least three sections in response to student feedback, and writing assignments stressed scientific methods along with critical thinking. The class discussions addressed the concept of hypothesis formulation and testing in the context of environment/human exchanges. Short written assignments and term papers were structured to specifically address the SLOs.

Students were given assignments requiring a critical assessment of the scientific evidence used to support varied hypotheses. Examples include: The role played by environment in human evolution and migrations; climate variability and the impact on emerging civilizations, the theoretical role of human responsibility for past extinctions. and theories of environmental change and the decline of past civilizations, and the necessary conditions for the rise of agriculture along with the repercussions this has had long-term.
Assessment of content knowledge and conceptual understanding in all sections followed a three point evaluation strategy: 1. objective exams, 2. written essays, synthesis papers averaging four pages in length and term papers of at least eight pages. Objective questions and one or more essays on the Final Exams that required students to analyze the hypotheses presented in the films shown in class. These are unchanged from past instruction. Additionally, in two sections, students participated in a simulated excavation which required synthesis of environmental data along with critical thinking and application of scientific methods.

Overall, instructors judged that the emphasis on scientific methods and discussions, improved student comprehension. This finding held even though instructors used different approaches to content delivery. Instructors felt that by the end of the semesters students could effectively communicate the process of scientific method. However, statistical reasoning remains problematic and this has been the case in previous assessments. Students exhibited a significant appreciation for the link between human development and environmental change, yet a weaker understanding of feedback mechanisms. Global warming awareness was strong and how current civilizations may be contributing, however, past environmental interactions continue to be misunderstood.

(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.)

No modifications appear to be necessary. Based on assessment over two cycles the sustained focus on the character of scientific method has brought noticeable improvements across sections. Instructors focused on addressing scientific methods more robust and this has shown positive results. Instructors will continue to use of statistics in the context of scientific reasoning. Short, intense, writing assignments will continue to be stressed as a means of assessing SLOs.

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?

ANTH 160 has been a challenge for many of the students enrolled—as noted by the GE coordinator, students have often struggled to fully comprehend the scientific method: in his words, "most students who enroll in ANTH 160 have a limited background in scientific-based courses or scientific majors and that this hindered student application of scientific approaches to environmental issues." To address these shortcomings, course instructors have focused intently upon teaching the scientific method, and this has had tangible results. Thanks to the efforts of the course instructors, all sections of the course are still in alignment with the area goals, SLOs, and content. No modifications appear to be necessary at this point in time.

(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 GELOs for writing.

The anthropology department is addressing practice and revisions in writing with larger sections of ANTH 160 in the following ways: (1) by employing a mutually supportive teaching team that includes a stable group of experienced instructors; (2) by coordinating construction of assignments that facilitate efficient assessment of student work, including assessment of student writing; and (3) by developing increasingly streamlined procedures for providing feedback to students in a timely fashion. If provided with adequate resources (which do not currently exist), the anthropology department would welcome the opportunity to hire graduate assistants to help support assessment of student writing.