General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: EnvS 152: Global Distribution of Goods and the Environment  GE Area: R

Results reported for AY 2012-2013  # of sections: 4  # of instructors: 2

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Department Chair: Lynne Trulio  College: Social Sciences

Instructions: 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?
SLO2: Students will be able to distinguish science from pseudo science
Other: 3,000 words of writing in a style appropriate to analysis of scientific and social science topics

(2) What were the results of the assessment of this course? Lessons learned from the assessment?
This SLO was evaluated primarily a written essay in which students evaluated the scientific merit of several articles that address the question of globalization’s environmental impacts. Students must demonstrate that they understand the basic principles for distinguishing scientific arguments from non-science and pseudoscience-based arguments. Of 80 students taking the course in 4 sections in AY 2012-2013, an average of 61% received an ‘A’ or a ‘B’ on these assignments and 24% received a ‘C’. These results show the majority of students are performing adequately or very well on this assignment.

These sections were all taught on-line which resulted in systemic problems. In particular, many students did not turn in assignments on time and did not consistently participate in discussions. Such issues are more difficult to monitor in on-line courses. Canvas messaging to students provides notice of deadlines. Still, students may not pay enough attention to these. With respect to the assignment itself, the students were able to successfully identify criteria for determining whether an argument has scientific merit, is non-scientific, is bad science, or is pseudoscience. However, they encountered difficulty applying specific criteria to analyze the scientific merits of claims made in three articles written from different perspectives. Many students had difficulty writing about how they analyzed the data in the articles.

Instructors met the writing criterion for this course with: 1) a final paper of at least 1,500 words on the science and social science aspects of a globalization and environment topic that was submitted as a draft, or 2) a 1,500- to 2,000-word written essay on everyday consumer products and their lifecycle impacts plus written responses to weekly online discussions that required analysis of a scientific or social science topic related to globalization and the environment; weekly responses from students ranged from 100- to 700- words in length.

(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.)
While students are doing relatively well with respect to this SLO, one instructor plans to spend more time on the science-pseudoscience assignment by means of an additional exercise or homework assignment. Instructors also plan to increase clarification of the assignments’ directions and messaging to students to improve student success.

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?
All sections of EnvS 152 are aligned with the Area R SLOs, Area R objectives and course assessment procedures. Different instructors who teach the course work together on lectures, assignments and assessment and work closely with the course coordinator to ensure the course meets the SLOs and that assessment tools effectively measure student progress toward SLOs.