General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Ling 123, Sound and Communication  GE Area: R

Results reported for AY 2014-2015, 8 sections, 2 instructors

(There were actually 10 sections with 3 instructors, but one instructor took sick leave early in Fall 2015, so the date from his 2 sections are not available.)

Course Coordinator: Daniel Silverman (Stefan Frazier substituting)  E-mail: Stefan.frazier@sjsu.edu

Department Chair: Swathi Vanniarajan  College: H&A

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 to <curriculum@sjsu.edu>, 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?
   
   SLO 2: Students will be able to distinguish science from pseudoscience.

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

   The emphasis of Ling 123 is on scientific, evolutionarily-based approaches to the vocal communication systems in both Homo sapiens and other species, including, frogs, songbirds, apes, etc. In short, there is no room for pseudo-science in this class. Were questions to arise that veered towards any pseudo-scientific accounts of the phenomena under scrutiny, the instructors would be sure to point out the error of the student who formulated the question. Fortunately, non-pseudo-scientific approaches such a so-called “intelligent design” have, thus far never come up as an issue that would need to be shown fallacious. Indeed, the fewer references to non-scientific approaches to evolution, the less likely that students might mistakenly consider such ideas scientific.

   Just to take one example, our second essay assignment:

   Frogs vs. birds:
   The topic of the first essay is to compare and contrast the mating signals of two very different vertebrate orders: anurans (frogs and toads) vs. oscines (songbirds). What features do the anuran and oscine mating vocalizations share in common? What features are different? Your essay should discuss the mating signals themselves (their physical properties), as well as how and why those particular vocalizations are produced. You should discuss the organs and brain structures involved in the generation and processing of sound. Finally, you should compare the
physical and social environments that frogs and songbirds live in, and what kinds of socioecological problems each is required to solve.

Note that emphasis is solely on the scientific, and never ventures into pseudo-scientific territory.

Grades on this assignment over all 8 assessed sections:

N = 198.  
A range: 96 (49%)  
B range: 63 (32%)  
C range: 33 (17%)  
D range: 4 (2%)  
F: 1 (<1%)

(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.)

Ling 123 remains extremely successful, with its learning objectives consistently achieved. Each instructor tweaks course content to his or her personal preference, but core content remains both solidly in place, and effectively conveyed to our students. No noteworthy changes are recommended at this time.

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 the sections of this course are well aligned with the course goals, SLOs, content and assessment. No change is recommended.

(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 SLOs for writing.

All sections have a cap of 25 students and so instructors are able to give individual attention to students.