General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title CA172 GE Area S

Results reported for AY 2011-12 # of sections 2 # of instructors 1

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Department Chair: Chris Jochim 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 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 recognize and appreciate constructive interactions between people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups within the U.S.

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

Virginia Heffernan’s New York Times article, “Education Needs a Digital-Age Upgrade” (Aug 7 2011) makes an interesting argument about student writing and summarizes the findings of the MacArthur Foundation Digital Media and Learning Competitions. Citing the program’s co-director, Cathy N. Davidson, Heffernan notes that 65% of today’s grade-school children may end up doing work that hasn’t been invented yet. The findings indicate the need for a reform of higher education—yet do not support the gutting of humanities and arts programs that we find so prevalent in “deliverology” discourse (the same can be said of the findings of a 2010 IBM poll and Daniel Pink’s book, A Whole New Mind, etc., which also negate “deliverology” and STEM-focused approaches).

Instead, Heffernan argues, the suggestions Cathy N. Davidson (who also served as the first Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies at Duke University from 1998-2006) articulates in her book, Now you see it, look “more like a classical education” (albeit one that embraces various technologies) than the STEM-centered vision that US academia seems to be embracing. One of the most interesting points Davidson makes, and one that I keep trying to bring to the fore of my pedagogical strategy, is to question the conventional forms through which students demonstrate knowledge and critical thinking. Davidson suggests that videos and other digital formats may become increasingly important forms for assignments in non-arts classes. This is not news for a Program like Creative Arts, which already does much of this kind of work in its core courses; but I’ve yet to integrate these approaches more fully into the Program’s SJSU Studies courses—partly because of SJSU Studies constraints regarding written formats and word count requirements. Davidson also challenges us to think about new kinds of writing forms in addition to the traditional research paper and to develop reading/writing interactions that challenge the model of the solo writer and single reader. In this vein, I revised the writing assignments for CA 172 (The Arts in US Society)—which is both an Area S and required major course. This semester, for the first time, students wrote a series of blogs that were posted on the course website on D2L. They were required to read each other’s blogs and to write response posts throughout the semester on other students’ work. The

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second blog was written collaboratively (students worked in groups of 4 or 5 to produce the blog post—it involved site-specific research as well a self-guided exploration of public art on campus). We discussed all blogs in class (one day devoted to discussion after each assignment) and ranked them according to several criteria—students had to rank each other using the two, three, or four star system built into D2L (which didn’t always work and frustrated at times, however over all the approach was very useful). When asked at the end of the semester, many students claimed to have learned a lot about writing and editing itself by working in small groups and by reading the other blogs.

What follows is a breakdown of grades of the first and final blog posts for both sections of CA172, in regards to SLO 4. In producing collaborative blogs themselves, students also enacted, to some degree, the SLO, which is concerned with “constructive interactions between people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups within the U.S.”

The first blog assignment took place very early in the semester to get a baseline reading of student effectiveness in course SLOs. The assignment required that students think about various US identities in terms of historical, social, political, geographical, and economic forces and processes as depicted in the photographic exhibit, Bill Owens: Ordinary Folks at the San Jose Museum of Art. This is an upper division SJSU studies course as WELL AS a required course for Creative Arts majors, typically in their senior year. This partly explains the unexpectedly good grades for the first set of papers. It would probably not be the case if the course were only a GE class, as non-majors are new to this kind of approach and material. The students that failed did not submit work. The grade breakdown for the baseline blog is as follows for 62 students (two sections, combined):

- A 25 students
- C 14 “
- B 20 students
- D 0 “
- F 3 “

The final blog required that students write an analysis of either Anna Deavere Smith’s one-woman play, Twilight Los Angeles 1992, which addresses power, race, ethnicity, class, and gender in the context of the race riots that broke out in the aftermath of the Rodney King incident or Guillermo Gomez-Peña and Coco Fusco’s The Couple in the Cage – a performance art piece that has similar concerns about race and identity, but within the dynamics of the “scenario of discovery.” Students were asked to describe how the work both produces and depicts constructive and unconstructive interactions between people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups in the US and to give at least one specific example from the video or script. The grade breakdown for the final paper in this class is as follows for 62 students:

- A 31 students
- C 11 “
- B 14 students
- D 0 “
- F 6 “

As noted above, grades were already quite good in the first round of blogs, but there is small improvement in this set (6 students moved from B to A range)—except for the three C students that didn’t turn in a final blog and earned an F. Because course objectives are approached through numerous discussions of different and varied primary sources in the arts (literature, music, popular culture, visual art, etc.), students are able develop the necessary skills by the final writing assignment. The real pay-off comes from looking at the same issues through an interdisciplinary lens.

(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.)

I may reconsider the grading structure on the collaborative blogs. This time, I gave all students in the group the same grade as it was hard to parse involvement. Otherwise, no changes are planned until more data is collected on the blog assignment structure and collaborative blog.

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?