Part 1

To be completed by the course coordinator:

(1) What SLO(s) were assessed for the course during the AY?

SLO 1: Students will be able to describe how identities (i.e. religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age) are shaped by cultural and societal influences within contexts of equality and inequality.

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

I assessed SLO 1 via an essay that constituted one-half of the mid-term exam. Students were asked to:

Answer the following in a typed essay of approximately four pages for a maximum of 50 points.

“Between the American Revolution and the Civil War, middle-class Americans developed an ideal [sometimes called the Cult of True Womanhood or the Cult of Domesticity] of what American womanhood should be. The ideal sometimes proved difficult for middle-class women to live up to; it was often impossible for many women in other segments of society to conform to it.” Discuss this quotation. Include a definition and specific examples from throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of women who fit into the ideal and those who did not. Use both course readings and lecture notes. Cite direct quotations, statistics, or paraphrased statements with the author’s last name and page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence.

Most students in this upper-division class of 25 recognized that the requirements of “True Womanhood” were incompatible with the lifestyles of poor and working-class women. Many noted that even when women of color achieved a position of economic security that allowed them the leisure to cultivate and demonstrate the “virtues” of domesticity, they were perceived by most whites as less than ideal exemplars of American womanhood. Solid essays discussed groups that could afford to comply and those that could not and often included the stories of specific women. The strongest essays included specific examples of women who both chose to conform and those who refused to do
so. Five students submitted “excellent” essays, 13 did “good” work, and 4 wrote “average” essays. In sum, 88 per cent demonstrated mastery of this objective. One student submitted an essay that failed to meet minimum standards for University written work. Another did not attend class on the day of the exam (nor did he return to class afterward).

A major course theme is how from this nation’s origins identities developed in a context where egalitarian rhetoric contrasted with historical experiences, so it’s perhaps unsurprising that most students understood this. But many students focused exclusively on women’s victimization/exploitation. Only a few recognized that some women chose to ignore or challenge the social expectations of their race and class.

(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.)

In readings, lectures and discussions, I’ll highlight first-person accounts by women who chose to confront ideals of domesticity in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Since accounts of exploitation are so dramatic and memorable, students are less able to recognize examples of agency among early American women.

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? Yes.

(5) This course was capped at 25 students.