General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: **LING 129**  
GE Area: **S**

Results reported for AY: **2010-2011**  
# of sections: **2**  
# of instructors: **1**

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Department Chair: **Swathi Vanniaraajan**  
College: **Humanities and the Arts**

**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 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?

   The assignments that addressed SLO 1 included a 3-page paper explaining students' identities, a reflective paper based on the video Do You Speak American (DYSA), the Midterm, and the final paper (Critical Analysis of a Language Group). Table 1 shows the results of each assignment, broken down by semester:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments addressing SLO 1</th>
<th>Fall 2010 (N= 22)</th>
<th>Spring 2011 (N= 18)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explaining identity (worth 10 points)</td>
<td>36% received 10; 32% received 9; 9% received 8; 14% received 7; 9% received less than 7.</td>
<td>22% received 10; 39% received 9; 33% received 8; 5% received 7.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection on video DYSA (worth 5 points)</td>
<td>68% received 5; 5% received 4; 5% received 3; 23% received no credit.</td>
<td>72% received 5; 28% received 4.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm (worth 15 points)</td>
<td>77% received A or A-; 18% received B+, B or B-; 4% received C+; 4% received D.</td>
<td>67% received A or A-; 28% received B+, B or B-; 5% received D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final project: Critical analysis of a language group other than your own (worth 30 points)</td>
<td>41% received A or A-; 32% received B+, B, or B-; 19% received C+, C, or C-; 9% received INC.</td>
<td>44% received A or A-; 39% received B+, B, or B-; 11% received C+, C, or C-; 5% received D.</td>
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</table>
These results indicate that there is considerable variation in the level of challenge offered by these four assignments. Students generally do well on the video reflection (assuming they turn it in on time) and on the midterm—possibly because they are not challenging students enough. The Explaining Identity assignment and the Final Project, on the other hand, seem to offer a greater challenge and also show more variation in outcomes. This result is consistent with what I have read in my SOTEs and students’ open-ended SOLATE comments, in which some students note that the course should be more challenging. It is possible that these comments come from students majoring in Linguistics. Instructors for this course, as with other GE courses, have to balance the needs of two very different groups -- students who have no background in Linguistics and students who do have some background.

As for how well these four assignments reflect student learning of SLO 1, I would say they do a good job of providing opportunities for students to display their knowledge of and critical understanding of how identities are shaped by cultural and social influences within contexts of equality and inequality. However, the objective itself is quite open and slippery. Most students, without ever taking this course, can communicate quite glibly about some aspect of the objective. Thus, I question to what extent I am assessing student learning that is the result of this course experience, versus knowledge and experiences that students already possess.

(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 Fall 2011 I plan to increase the challenge level on some of the assignments, including the video reflections and the midterm. I also plan to push the class as a whole to go beyond what they already know about identity in social contexts. This expectation can be made explicit both through instructor presentations and through class discussions and activities. If other instructors teach this course in coming semesters, I will be sure to pass these modifications along.

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?

Both sections were taught by the same instructor. The instructor made sure that both sections are in tune with the SLOs, Content, Support, and Assessment. If the course were to be taught by a different instructor, then it would be made sure that the information gathered by the instructor was passed onto the new instructor. Objectively identifying one’s sense of identity in terms of one’s social and cultural experiences is a challenging task. That there is considerable variation among students in performing the task is a testimony to the difficulty of the assignments that they have to work on. Discussions and clear explanations with suitable examples (before the assignments are given) may be needed to narrow the variations among the students in this class.