General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title Philosophy 186: Professional and Business Ethics

GE Area:  S

Results reported for AY  2014-15

# of sections:  Fall, 2014: 16  Spring, 2015: 17

# of instructors:  Fall, 2014: 10  Spring 2015: 9

Course Coordinator: Carlos Sanchez and Rita Manning  E-mail: Carlos.sanchez@sjsu.edu

and Rita.Manning@sjsu.edu

Department Chair: Janet Stemwedel  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 2: Students will be able to describe historical, social, political, and economic processes producing diversity, equality, and structured inequalities in the U.S.

All instructors discussed the issue of discrimination and harassment in the business context. An assessment followed.

Discrimination and harassment in the business context is discussed in week 13 of this course. Students learn about the federal Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and its amendments in 1967, 1994, and 2008 which made it illegal to discriminate on the basis of “religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and age”. The 2008 Genetics Information Nondiscrimination Act added an additional protection from discrimination on the basis of genetic information. The 2012 Supreme Court decision to strike down the Defense of Marriage Act struck down this federal law that prohibited federal recognition of gay marriage. The students both write about discrimination cases and are tested on exams about their understanding of this SLO.

In week 13 of the course, students were asked to respond to a series of questions regarding the ethical issues regarding the issue of gender inequality. Specifically, students were asked to read and consider the case study: “Twitter IPO: Where are the Women?” The study considers the surprising lack of women amongst Twitter’s board, investors, and executive team. Patrick Coutermarsh has said in a recent blog post, “Critics of Twitter claim that the lack of gender diversity is among the many symptoms of Silicon Valley’s chauvinistic and male-dominated culture. Those close with Twitter’s CEO, Dick Costolo, report that finding a woman board member has been a priority, but has been a difficult process.” The assessment asked: describe the ethical issues in this case; is Twitter morally blameworthy for going to IPO without a diverse leadership team?; what steps do you think Twitter should take to correct this discrepancy, if any?
(2) What were the results of the assessment of this course? What were the lessons learned from the assessment?

This assessment was administered late in the semester, so students were already familiar with the main ethical theories discussed in this course. Thus, 80% of the students were able to properly identify the ethical issues involved here by appealing either to Utilitarianism (45%), Kantian deontology (20%), or the Rawlsian theory of justice (15%). The rest simply pointed to the *prima facie* wrongness of a lack of gender diversity. 90% of students held Twitter morally blameworthy, while 10% argued that the discrepancy was merely a result of normal business practice (“you don’t have time to think about gender equality when you are trying to start a business” and “the point is to make money, not to think about who is being left out”). Most students (95%) agreed that twitter should take steps to correct the discrepancy by purposely hiring more qualified women and minorities.

Generally speaking we have found that by the end of the semester over 90% of students came to understand that the law on discrimination and harassment has changed the way inequality is addressed in the workplace.

(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.)

No modifications needed.

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 - Janet Stemwedel

(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.

The instructor of record provides feedback and grades all writing assignments. The instructor of record, welcomes, if not requires, first drafts of all writing assignments and provides feedback on drafts. If sections are exceptionally oversized they are graded by the instructor of record with the assistance of an Instructional Student Assistant. The Instructional Student Assistant must be approved both by the Instructional Assistant Coordinator and the Philosophy Department Chair for their excellence in both composition and their expertise in the field of the philosophy at issue. Whenever an Instructional Student Assistant (ISA) aids in the grading of a large course, s/he provides feedback along with grading. In all cases, when the help of an ISA is employed, the instructor of record must explicitly notify the students of the class that some writing assignments have been graded and feedback has been provided by an ISA. The instructor of record then, if so requested by a student, must reread, provide additional feedback, and regrade the written assignment, if a grade revision is warranted."
In AY 2014-2015, PHIL 186 had twelve sections that exceeded GE enrollment limits. Six of these were 9 to 13 students over the limit, five were 19 to 24 students over the limit, and one section was 102 students over the limit. All of the faculty members teaching PHIL 186 require more than 3000 words in written work from their students, write extensive comments on papers, and provide sufficient time before the end of the semester for students to benefit from the comments. Some faculty allow students to rewrite papers for a better grade, or encourage students to turn in a rough draft before the final paper. In addition, faculty with a load of over 130 students total for the semester are provided with ISAs, graduate students or senior philosophy majors, to help with grading. ISAs are trained by the faculty members in best practices of grading written work. Faculty often go over ISA work themselves to keep an eye on quality, and provide additional comments in the process.

In the larger classes it is also the case that all of the faculty involved require the requisite number of words in written work from their students, write extensive comments on papers, and provide sufficient time before the end of the semester for students to benefit from the comments. Department policy is that the second category of larger classes must have one or more ISAs to assist the instructor in grading written work. Grading always means providing written feedback. It should be noted that even our large classes are interactive and allow plenty of room for student involvement and class discussion, both in Socratic dialogue with instructor and based on small group work in class. Frequently the instructors provide feedback in the class by holding up examples of student work as models or by raising writing issues of general concern. There is often class discussion of student answers to exam and other questions. In addition, it is departmental policy that students be made aware of our “Guidelines on Writing Papers in Philosophy,” a shared set of guidelines made available on our department website. Instructors of larger classes as well as the GE coordinator for PHIL 186 compare assessment results with those in small sections to see whether there are discrepancies that need to be addressed.

In addition to all of this, we have an office room set aside as a Writing Center, which is staffed by ISAs for three days a week with the sole function of providing students who come in with feedback on writing. This is a supplement to faculty office hours, which themselves are devoted to providing writing feedback among other things.