Memorandum

Date: July 21, 2011
To: James Brent, Chair
From: Ken Nuger, Pols 120 course coordinator
Re: 2011 annual assessment summary for Pols 120

As in 2010, professors Kenneth Nuger and Ishmael Tariqh both teach sections of Pols 120 and while their approach is somewhat different, both clearly address all four area S learning objectives. The following summary indicates how each professor meets these goals.

1) Students shall be able to describe how religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age identity are shaped by cultural and societal influences in contexts of equality and inequality.

   Professor Nuger engages in readings, lectures, discussions and, if the student so chooses, a research paper on how the Constitution, historical developments such as slavery, discrimination, in both the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as how major movements, such as the civil rights movements since the 1950's affect the development of law as well as the cross cultural perceptions these different groups have for each other. Similarly, Professor Tariqh meets this objective by discussing major historical periods that either suppressed or advanced equality of condition of the above characteristics, especially focusing on key constitutional cases decided by the United States Supreme Court. Both instructors concentrate on the struggle these groups have endured and in so doing, help students better understand how these groups have been initially excluded from society’s mainstream to broader acceptance by society. For example, Professor Nuger discusses the role sociological jurisprudence plays in understanding the subtle, intangible conditions of inferiority that adhere to separate but equal forms of discrimination and how that psychologically created effect led became the basis for reinterpretting the understanding of the Equal Protection and the dismantling of race based discrimination in school.

2) Students shall be able to describe historical, social, political, and economic processes producing diversity, equality, and structural inequalities in the U.S.

   Both instructors regularly intersperse readings, lectures and focused discussions on historical events, governmental periods that link historical periods to their respective political periods and resulting social, legal and economic policy. For example, both instructors link together how slavery and its injustice led the nation to create the Civil War Amendments, or how the Great Depression led to the passage of Social Security, or how the War on Poverty led to a dramatic increase in legal and economic protection for the various underprotected groups, including Medicare for senior citizens. Professor Tariqh extensively focuses on how the gradual empowerment of African Americans helped spark civil unrest and protest, ultimately educating America to the injustice of racial discrimination culminating in the Civil Rights Movement in the latter 20th century. Professor Nuger focuses on the effect discrimination has on determining who are poor and how poverty leads to political alienation and diminished political efficacy. All of these links between history and the resulting government policy output help students understand what the great social movements were and how they ultimately led to important changes in public policy that ameliorated patterns of discrimination.

3) Students shall be able to describe social actions by religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class,
sexual orientation, disability, and/or age groups leading to greater equality and social justice in the U.S.

For both professors Nuger and Tariqh, learning objective three is inexorably linked to objective two. Both professors’ readings, lectures and discussions examine how discrimination leads to alienation and how America’s civil liberties protections and commitment to equal treatment lead to responses, often by way of protest or political group realignment that effectively forces society to examine the injustices that give rise to the unrest and ultimately underscore the need for policy change. Professor Nuger is currently utilizing the evolving controversy surrounding gay marriage as a contemporary example students can relate with to show how discrimination leads to political unrest and efforts to use the nation’s democratic institutions, especially the legislative and judicial branches to pursue conditions of equality.

4) Students shall be able to recognize and appreciate constructive interactions between people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups in the U.S.

Professor Nuger’s students spend a great deal of time examining how different discriminated groups often are bound by the commonality of discrimination to form unlikely coalitions. For example, while Arab culture has little to do with the daily existence for most Black and Hispanic citizens, all three groups suffer from racial profiling, allowing these groups who often have little respect for each other, to coalesce around a common cause. In addition, Professor Nuger has students focus as one of four distinct units, the world of poverty and discrimination and how these twin poisons affect different minority groups who have little in common in similarly destructive ways. Professor Tariqh requires his class to analyze several different cases from major historical areas and different forms of discrimination cases so students can better understand how, for example, the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects many disparate groups, or how the 14th amendment, originally written to protect African Americans discrimination, has been expanded and applied to many other minority groups.

Assignments

Both professors Nuger and Tariqh specifically design both exams and research paper assignment to reflect the student learning objectives. Tariqh embeds the learning objectives directly into the exam questions and research paper assignments while Nuger’s questions and paper require students to address the objectives more subtly, requiring students to integrate theory, history, policy and law to address the learning objectives.

Summary

Professors Nuger and Tariqh have different strategies and assignments. Professor Nuger incorporates a multidisciplinary approach while Professor Tariqh uses a more legalistic approach. Both professors’ curricula, however, requires student to carefully assess each of the four area S learning objectives. This uniformity is the result of the department carefully communicating to all faculty teaching this area S course, the curricula requirements embedded in the course certification materials required of all San Jose Studies courses.

Note, this documents is in substance, a copy of last year’s report. As both Professors Nuger and Tariqh’s iterations of Pols 120 fully comply with the pedagogical requirements for Area S courses, both professors continue to teach their sections of Pols 120 substantially the same as they did in the previous year. Therefore, there is nothing different to address in this years report.