General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title English 126: Holocaust Literature Area V

Results reported for AY 1 # of sections 1 # of instructors 1

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Department Chair: J. Engell 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? 1 & 3

(2) What were the results of the assessment of this course? What were the lessons learned from the assessment? Unlike most courses in this area, Holocaust Literature focuses primarily on negative aspects of individual cultures. Though there are remarkable stories of individual courage and kindness, it’s hard to attribute that to cultural factors when the vast majority of people in those cultures exhibited no such traits. Getting students to appreciate the exigencies of war-time situations as a complicating factor is also difficult. Students in this course easily meet the SLOs assessed – I guess the lesson learned is how minimal those measures of assessment are when studying real-world catastrophes.

(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.)

Specific Assignments: brief description of guidelines/requirements etc.

SLO1: Students were given a choice of two suggested essay topics (Fiction vs. Non-fiction, Holocaust before Auschwitz), both asking them to compare two of the major works read (by Appleman-Jurman, Fink, and Weil). Students could either discuss the presentation of suffering before (or outside) the death camps, or how that presentation was affected by coming in a work of fiction or a memoir. No secondary research was required for this essay, but a very close reading of each text was.

SLO 3: Students were given a choice of three suggested essay topics (Language of Atrocity, Holocaust as Hell, Voice of the Holocaust) all three asking them to compare two of the major works read (by Wiesel, Levi, or Kertész) in how they dealt with the fundamental problem of the difference between the Holocaust itself and its description in language. They were asked to quote extensively from the primary sources, as well as to use secondary sources from their research.
Exactly what students had to demonstrate on assignment to show achievement of the SLO

SLO 1: Each of these works presented characters from multiple cultures – Jewish, German, Ukrainian, Polish, Russian, Czech, and others. To be successful on this assignment, students had to be able to distinguish between individual and cultural characteristics, and offer evidence and arguments in support of those distinctions. This is complicated by the fact that authors often use single characters as representatives of large groups.

SLO 3: No rubric was used for the SLO, since it would be hard to account for all variations (three suggested topics, each dealing with two of three works, including both fiction and memoir). However, each of the three works was written at some distance from the events of the Holocaust described, making the Holocaust itself (for the purposes of this SLO) the “pressure” and the literary responses of the authors the reaction to it. Students were expected to discuss the difference between the events themselves and the authors presentation or interpretation of them, depending on the topic and the works selected.

How assignment was scored (rubric? Breakdown of grade assigned to show how this particular slo was targeted. Quantitative data/analysis: grades/percentages/scale of high-low

SLO 1: Essays were graded on their composition, treatment of the works as literature, and understanding of the Holocaust. Essays with only a “basic” understanding of the Holocaust received a mark of 80 or less. Only 2 (of 20 submitting the assignment) received an 80 or less on the first stage of the essay; a different 3 students (of 19 submitting the assignment) received 80 or less on the final draft of the essay. On the first stage, 14 essays were thought to have a “good” understanding, and 4 a “very good” understanding; on the final draft, 13 “good” and 4 “very good.”

SLO 3: Essays were graded on their composition, treatment of the works as literature, and discussion of each writer’s response to the Holocaust. Of the 19 essays submitted, 5 were deemed to have an adequate understanding of the author’s response to the Holocaust, 5 were deemed to have a good understanding (B), and 9 were deemed to have a very good understanding (A, mostly on the lower end). Actual grades on the essays differed slightly from these results, mostly because of problems in composition.

Qualitative analysis:

SLO1: The first essay involved works that did not deal with death camps, so “a reasonable understanding of the Holocaust” was much easier to demonstrate. For the second essay, the bar was higher and, interestingly, the number of students at both the top and bottom of the range increased.

SLO 3: Students were most comfortable dealing with Wiesel (short, emotional, told from the point of view of a child) but had problems with Levi (too literary) or Kertész (too subtle). The biggest problem was getting students to deal with the texts as an interpretation of events rather than a single underlying “truth.”

I am not aware of any modifications.

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?