General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title  History 153, Women in Europe  GE Area  V

Results reported for AY 2012-13  # of sections  2  # of instructors 1

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Department Chair: Patricia Evridge Hill  College: Social Sciences

Part 1

To be completed by the course coordinator:

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

“Students shall be able to compare systematically the ideas, values, images, cultural artifacts, economic structures, technological developments, or attitudes of people from more than one culture outside the U.S.”

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

I decided second semester to do PowerPoint presentations for all of my lectures, introducing my students surreptitiously to the history of European art. This move was a great improvement to the course. For example, there is a famous story in Livy’s history of Rome about the suicide of Lucretia, a Roman woman who was raped. She committed suicide to save the honor of her family. We discussed for thirty minutes as a class the different depictions of her in European art by Germans (Lucas Cranach), Italians (Veronese), and French (Vouet). It was one of the best class discussions I’ve ever had at SJSU. They could see how the original tale by Livy intended to portray woman as self-sacrificing and pure and then how different painters later used that story to either reinforce that image or to make women out to be voluptuous temptresses. Later we discussed World War I and the different propaganda posters that used women to mobilize men in Germany, England, and France. We saw how these posters influenced the movement to give women the vote in the interwar period. In short, the use of visual imagery was very effective in reinforcing the SLO.

In terms of assessment, students were asked in their midterm exam to evaluate the ideas and values of the seventeenth-century German businesswoman, Gluckel of Hameln. They had read her four-hundred page autobiography. They were then required to compare the image that she projected to that of another woman. Often they compared her to Cornelia of Rome or Joan of Arc. I had 80 students last year. Sixty percent of them showed great mastery of the material. 25% displayed adequate mastery of the material. The reason that 10% did not do well was usually that they did not note that she was Jewish, a key element in her biography. I believe this lacuna has to do with a remarkable lack of knowledge of religious history on the part of business majors, engineers, and computers scientists, who constituted the majority of my students. I was dismayed by their ignorance of religion, although I do describe at length the differences between Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Muslims. Another 5% percent showed no ability to analyze a book at all or to make connections. I attribute this problem to a lack of elementary school education or to laziness.
The final exam required students to reflect on how religions have been often used to oppress women. (The midterm asked how religion empowered women. I am not anti-religious.) Students made many references in their answers to Catholicism and the papacy. However, despite the fact that we had read a book about the history of the veil in France and watched a movie about the problems faced by a Muslim woman in a French town, 10% of the students showed a lack of proficiency in terms of the SLO because they did not mention Islam at all. I cannot help but think that they had not paid much attention during the last two weeks of class. They even had had a quiz on the material.

So the lesson learned is that I need to keep reiterating the main points of the course, realizing how ill-informed and indifferent many students are. Fortunately, most of my students paid attention and did well. Ninety percent showed proficiency. In the SOTES reports, I received a 4.6 in terms of the course’s effectiveness, a figure that suggests that the students felt that they got a lot out of my instruction. These were non-history majors, for the most part. I do love teaching this course because I enjoy giving students from all backgrounds the narrative of European history from the Greeks to the present.

(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.)

I have no modifications planned for this year.

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.