General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Phil 133 -- Ethics in Science
GE Area: V
# of sections: 2
# of instructors: 2
Course Coordinator: Janet D. Stemwedel
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Department Chair: Rita Manning
College: Humanities & Arts
Results reported for AY: 2009/2010

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) We assessed SLO 1: 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) In both sections of the course, students learned about the ideas and attitudes of people from multiple cultures towards science, its methodologies, and its goals, and examined how these ideas and attitudes are shaped by other cultural values.

We used an essay assignment to gauge students’ ability to compare the ways cultural context led to very different attitudes about biomedical research with human subjects in Germany during World War II and in modern sub-Saharan Africa. We used embedded questions on exams to assess students’ ability to compare how particular historical circumstances and cultural values drove attitudes towards scientific development in the Soviet Union during the period of “Lysenkoism”, in post-colonial India, and in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Both course instructors, Stemwedel and Bashaw, felt that the majority of the student work assessed indicated that students were able to compare ideas and attitudes towards science and scientific methodology and to understand the cultural contexts that shape these ideas and attitudes. As might be expected, the students became more articulate in their explanations of these connections as the term went on.

Sample exam questions:

Explain the assumptions about the duties of scientific researchers towards human subjects reflected by the conduct of the “Nazi doctors” and the defense of their conduct offered at the Nuremberg trials. Compare these assumptions to the current assumptions about the scientific duties of scientific researchers towards human subjects in clinical trials of AIDS drugs in sub-Saharan Africa. In your comparison, be sure to explain the ways historical context and cultural values shape these attitudes about the ethics of research with human subjects. (Also, be sure to explain the different attitudes that the researchers and the human subjects bring to their interaction.)

Different societies have different views of what scientific research is good for. Compare the national agendas for scientific research and development that emerged as India gained independence after British colonial rule and as South Africa emerged from Apartheid. Describe the cultural values and attitudes towards science (both
what it had done and what it might accomplish) that drove these agendas, and discuss the historical and cultural contexts that you think are most important to understanding the differences in these agendas.

3) We feel that our current course design and methods of assessment are working for us, and plan no modifications at this time.

**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 – Rita Manning, Department Chair