General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title ANTH 100W Writing Workshop
GE Area Z

Results reported for AY 2012-2013
# of sections: 2
# of instructors: 2

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Department Chair: Chuck Darrah
College: Social Sciences

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?

Student Learning Objective #1: Students shall write complete essays that demonstrate college-level proficiency. Students shall be able to refine the competencies established in Written Communication IA and IB (see attachments).

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

The SLO #1 was assessed for this course using several instruments, including eleven essays and a thirteen page research report. The essays were research article reviews termed "précis," following terminology in the course text Harvard Guide to Writing in the Social Sciences, which emphasized thinking about the structure and hypothesis of a diverse array of articles. The review of articles encourages students to look beyond the conclusions stated in a research article and analyze the logic and scientific method employed in the study. This approach emphasizes that students learn to think as social scientists and be able to identify hypotheses being tested and the means of assessing hypotheses anthropologically. This type of thinking is essential to the learning objective assessed throughout this course and to success in writing with college-level proficiency. Classroom learning emphasized how to read a research article as much as how to write a review of the article. These article reviews prepared students for the final research report, and by the time the report was due each student had some familiarity with writing in the social sciences.

The lessons learned from the assessment include the importance of frequent writing assignments and immediate student feedback in ANTH 100W, as well as developing relevant research skills. The use of Canvas to correct the "précis" essays online resulted in immediate student feedback and opportunities for steady improvement throughout the course. Considerable improvement in written essays during the semester was noted for students who earned B or C final grades in the course. Beyond the mechanics of writing, this 100W course focused on basic research skills in the social sciences and anthropology. The research report in particular emphasized library research as a component of college-level and professional writing. Students gained experience using a variety of library article databases and search engines, organizing their research progress with RefWorks bibliographic software, and professionally presenting research using Powerpoint presentation software.

(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 major modifications to the course, or its assessment activities or schedule, are planned for the upcoming year. Students will continue to write short essays and in-depth research reports as they learn to recognize and develop different kinds of writing in the social sciences. One instructor’s use of a theme to unify the course around “Anthropology of Play” was productive as a means to focus article reviews and encourage students to write about their preferred form of play. While there is no plan to modify activities and assessment instruments in this course, a natural change in the course style each semester will include a change in theme. Student enthusiasm for the theme suggests that students are more likely to be engaged in a topic of interest and relevance to their lives. This is particularly vital for students who have not previously succeeded in college courses with as much reading and writing as ANTH 100W.

Future iterations of this course will continue to emphasize writing skills and demonstrate their relevant to success in college, careers, and professional settings. Most broadly, college-level and professional writing was identified throughout the course as tools necessary for future careers and professional life. Classroom discussions focused on applying writing and research skills to careers, using web resources and social media to identify and apply for job opportunities, and professional development. In Spring 2013 the Southwestern Anthropological Association (SWAA) annual conference was held in downtown San Jose. This conference provided students an opportunity to observe and participate in a professional meeting, and all students were required to attend one research talk and write a review of it as one of their required essays. From this experience, some of the students were encouraged to present their own research findings from ANTH 100W at the conference next year. While there may not be the opportunity for students to attend such a conference every year, future engagement in settings such as this will identified as experiences necessary for professional development.

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?

The department offers one section per semester and it is taught in a manner consistent with the discipline of anthropology and SJSU Area Z goals, objectives, etc. The course has long been well reviewed by students and in fall 2013 it will be taught again by a permanent faculty member who will be updating the curriculum. No other changes are planned or necessary.