General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: ANTH 100W Writing Workshop

GE Area: Z

Results reported for AY 2013-2014

# 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 #2: Students shall write complete essays that demonstrate college-level proficiency. Students shall be able to express (explain, analyze, develop, and criticize) ideas effectively, including ideas encountered in multiple readings and expressed in different forms of discourse.

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

The SLO #2 was assessed for this course using several instruments, including research article reviews and a term research paper. The article reviews, or “précis,” summarized, analyzed, or critically discussed an assigned peer reviewed academic article relevant to the behavioral sciences. As short essays (ranging from 250-700 words) the précis reviews were succinct and to the point, and followed the Harvard Guide to Writing in the Social Sciences, which emphasized thinking about the structure and hypothesis of a diverse array of articles. Eight précis were assigned throughout the semester. The term paper took the form of a 16-page (or up to 8000-word) college level research paper. This paper was broken down into smaller assignments of thesis statement, outline, bibliography, and discrete sections of text.

The lessons learned from the assessment include 1) the importance of immediate writing feedback, 2) combined use of peer and instructor feedback, 3) rewriting and editing sections of text with instructor guidance, as well as 4) developing relevant research skills that focused on small portions of a large research project. One instructor’s use of Criterion, an online assignment managing program, to correct the “précis” essays and term paper sections online resulted in immediate student feedback and opportunities for steady improvement throughout the course. Besides instructor feedback, peer feedback provided opportunities both for added insight for students on their own writing as well exposure to writing style of other students. In-class feedback from peers was one form of immediate feedback for students. One instructor found the peer review to be useful because, even when students missed critical writing problems, they nonetheless could articulate to one another confusion or would point out awkward sentences. The peer feedback was found to be most useful when students were asked to alternate feedback to cover positive aspects of the writing, criticisms of problems, and positive comments about style. One instructor’s emphasis on rewriting and editing précis as separate assignments and rewriting sections of the term paper allowed students to gradually improve their writing while realizing the value of editing and reformulating existing text. Finally, breaking the long term paper into smaller bite-size assignments was a successful approach that helped students not feel intimidated and empowered them to accomplish the task.
(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. Future iterations of this course will continue to emphasize writing skills and demonstrate their relevant to success in college, careers, and professional settings.

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 the instructors collaborate on updating the curriculum. No other changes are planned or necessary.