General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Philosophy 66: Introduction to Aesthetics       GE Area: C1

Results reported for AY 2018-2019      # of sections:   8      # of instructors: 3

Course Coordinator: Tom Leddy   E-mail: Thomas.leddy@sjsu.edu

Department Chair: Janet Stemwedel    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?

SLO 2: Arts courses will enable students to respond to works of art both analytically (in writing) and affectively (in writing or through other forms of personal and artistic expression).

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

Javier Cardoza-Kon reports “I guide my students through our readings in aesthetics highlighting themes of communication, politics, revolution, beauty. From reading Aeschylus, Plato, Guy Debord, and Heidegger to watching short films and one full length movie, we explore the concrete role that art has in our political and social movements and interpretations.

I have students write two field papers – one on a performance that they attend (e.g. a musical performance or theater) and one on a visual arts display that they attend (e.g. an art gallery or film festival). The purpose of these papers is to explore the themes discussed in lecture and in direct relation to texts. With emphasis on the importance of clear writing, original thought, and direct textual reference, I usually see about a 10% (or a letter grade) grade improvement between the first and last paper. These papers are a minimum of 1500 words each for a total of at least 3000 words written by the end of the semester – though a good number of students end up writing a bit more. The midterm is a multiple choice and short answer format to assure that the students are keeping up with the readings. The final is an exercise in which the students choose a format of their own to address a theme surrounding a theme such as “dwelling, revolution, and the body.” Having directly worked with each theme academically and through film and visual examples in class, the purpose is to see how the students interpret these three together in their own creative fashion. I have some students who prefer an essay format, but others have written poems, done paintings, digital animation, interactive games, and more.

I have found that by the end of the semester many students, who may just be taking the class for a GE and did not really come in caring very much, leave being engaged in aesthetics and feeling
like their creative approach matters. This is good for me because it means I have helped to connect art and creativity with other “important” aspects of life for my students.”

Fern Alberts similarly reports “Throughout the semester students engage with philosophical texts both analytically and affectively via in class writings, two papers, and two exams. Approximately 70% of the students show strength in their first papers but this significantly increases by the second paper. About 75% of the students seem to do well examining aesthetic concepts on the mid-term and this number usually increases by the final exam.”

Tom Leddy reports: I have students do three two-page homework assignments and one field trip paper in which they are expected to visit a museum or gallery and write both about their affective experience and analyze the work of art in terms of one or more of the philosophers they have studied in the class. The first homework assignment stresses ability to read and analyze philosophical prose about art and aesthetics. The second is more affective, focusing on how to apply a philosopher’s view on art and aesthetics to their own lives. The field trip paper combines the two skills. By the time they wrote the field trip paper in Fall 2018 the average grade moved from C+ to B-. I was overall satisfied with improvement of students in this SLO.

(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.)

There are no plans 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 - Janet Stemwedel, Chair, Philosophy Department

(5) If this course is in a GE Area with a stated enrollment limit (Areas A1, A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z), please indicate how oral presentations will be evaluated with larger sections (Area A1), or how practice and revisions in writing will be addressed with larger sections, particularly how students are receiving thorough feedback on the writing which accounts for the minimum word count in this GE category (Areas A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z) and, for the writing intensive courses (A2, A3, and Z), documentation that the students are meeting the GE SLOs for writing.

The instructor of record provides feedback and grades all writing assignments. The instructor of record, welcomes, if not requires, first drafts of all writing assignments and provides feedback on drafts. If sections are exceptionally oversized they are graded by the instructor of record with the assistance of an Instructional Student Assistant. The Instructional Student Assistant must be approved both by the Instructional Assistant Coordinator and the Philosophy Department Chair for their excellence in both composition and their expertise in the field of the philosophy at issue. Whenever an Instructional Student Assistant (ISA) aids in the grading of a large course, s/he provides feedback along with grading. In all cases, when the help of an ISA is employed, the instructor of record must explicitly notify the students of the class that some writing assignments have been graded and feedback has been
provided by an ISA. The instructor of record then, if so requested by a student, must reread, provide additional feedback, and regrade the written assignment, if a grade revision is warranted.