

Seaver College General Education (GE) Assessment – Nonwestern Cultures Academic Year 2011-2012

I. GE Program Learning Outcome

Students express broad cultural perspectives informed by their study of the history, literature, religion, philosophy, and artistic traditions of civilizations outside Western civilization. [slightly modified from what we received]

II. Institutional Educational Outcomes (IEOs)

The GE Program Learning Outcome aligns with the following IEOs.

Community & Global Understanding:

Purpose

Develop and enact a compelling personal and professional vision that values diversity.

III. Student Learning Outcomes

| | |
|-----|---|
| SLO | Students will describe aspects of the history, literature, religion, philosophy, or artistic traditions of a civilization outside Western civilization, and discuss how learning about these has broadened their view of the world. |
|-----|---|

IV. Curriculum Map

Students select a course from the following list of courses, each of which introduces the students to some aspect of a civilization outside the West, be it the history, literature, religion, philosophy, or artistic traditions of the civilization. In these courses, the students begin to develop broader and more informed perspectives of cultures and civilizations outside the West.

| | |
|--|--|
| ARTH 300: Non-Western Art | ASIA 345: Modern Chinese Literature |
| ARTH 442: Islamic Art | ASIA 350: Buddhist Texts, Images and Practices |
| ARTH 446: Asian Art | ASIA/FILM 365: Japanese and Asian Film |
| ASIA 301: Sources of Asian Tradition | ASIA 370: Modern Japanese Literature |
| ASIA 305: Survey of East Asia | COM 513: Intercultural Communication |
| ASIA/HIST 310: History of Modern Japan | GSHU 425: Great Books V (Asia) |
| ASIA 325: Pre-Modern Japanese Lit | HIST 320: Pre-Columbian Civilizations |
| ASIA/HIST 330: Trad'l Chinese Civ | HIST 390: Modern History of the Middle East |
| ASIA/HIST 331: History of Modern China | HIST 409: Ancient Civilizations |
| ASIA/PHIL 340: Trad'l Chinese Thought | INTS 444: Democratization and Dev. in Africa |
| | INTS 445: Contemporary African Politics |
| | POSC 456: East Asian Politics |
| | REL 501: The World of the Old Testament |
| | REL 526: The Religions of the World |

V. Assessment Plan

We have chosen to conduct our assessment on five courses selected from the list above: ASIA 305, ASIA 310, ASIA 331, COM 513, and REL 526. These courses have been selected because these courses draw the highest number of students seeking to fulfill the N-W requirement and because these courses represent the diversity of courses the college offers for this requirement.

| | Direct Evidence | Indirect Evidence |
|---------------------|---|---|
| GE Learning Outcome | An essay question as part of the final exam will ask the students to explain how their perspective on the world outside the West has been informed and broadened by the specific topics studied in their class. The essay question to be asked is: Select one of the topics we studied in class, and explain how your perspective of the world outside the West has been informed and broadened by your study of this topic. We will evaluate 75-85 essays. | On a final evaluation survey, students will be asked to evaluate their own level of confidence in the knowledge they have gained from the course. They will be asked how confident they would feel discussing the history, literature, religion, philosophy or artistic traditions of the Non-Western civilization they studied with a fellow student who has not taken the course. |

VI. Rubrics

| | Below Expectation | Satisfactory | Exemplary |
|--------------|---|---|--|
| Thesis | Weak or non-existent thesis. | A thesis which takes a position on the topic, but is not significant. | Strongly worded thesis, and significant, takes a position on topic. |
| Evidence | Little evidence, or irrelevant evidence that does not support the points made. | Evidence is provided, but it is not always the most persuasive evidence available. | Evidence strongly supports the argument, and the different points made. |
| Organization | No apparent organization. Ideas disconnected from each other, and do not flow in a logical order. | A clear organization, but either does not develop the thesis, or does not effectively develop the thesis. | Organization clearly lays out the different points of the essay, and connects them seamlessly. |

VII. Criteria for Student Achievement / Success

For each assessment SLO, list the criterion or criteria established as an acceptable standard of student achievement. Enter this information in the blank cells of the following table.

| | Criterion |
|------------|---|
| SLO | An acceptable standard of achievement is a student who is able to summarize the main features of the history, literature, religion, philosophy or artistic traditions of a civilization outside the West, and then explain, in writing and conversation, supported by evidence, how his/her view of the world outside the West has been broadened as a result of their study of the non-Western civilization. |

VIII. Evidence / Data

For each SLO, present in summary form the evidence/data gathered and indicate your findings based upon the evidence. If necessary, use Appendix C to report raw or original data necessary to support your findings. *Repeat the following section for each SLO.*

SLO #1

Evidence/Data

Our plan for the assessment was that each of the three contributors (Mike Sugimoto was unable to meet with us) was to ask an essay question as part of their final exam for gathering the direct evidence for assessing classes, and also an informal survey question as a part of the indirect evidence for assessing the classes. We decided to limit our assessment to two sections of Asia 305, Survey of East Asia, one section of Com 513, Intercultural Communication, and one section of Rel 526, the Religions of the World. One issue we faced right away was one of miscommunication. The professor conducting assessment for COM 513 only asked the final exam question (that seeking direct evidence) and the professor conducting assessment on the Rel 526 class only asked the informal survey question but made it as part of the exam, so at least the students treated it more seriously. Nevertheless, we still were able to review 76 direct evidence exam questions (42 students, Asia 305; 34 students, Com 513) and 77 indirect evidence survey questions (35, Asia 305; 42, Religion 526). So even though we did not have perfect execution, we still reached our goal of 75+ responses for each question.

We have attached samples of survey questions (indirect evidence) and of test questions (direct evidence) from the Asia 305 course to this document.

Findings

With respect to the direct evidence question, the question we put to the students was this: “Select one of the topics we studied in class, and explain how your perspective of the world outside the West has been informed and broadened by your study of this topic.”

The committee found that in the Asia 305 classes, students tended to tell us that they have much more knowledge of various events that have happened in the history of East Asia, and that it was only a minority of students who explained how their perspective of the world has been “informed and broadened.” So, for example, students told us about an event such as the Cultural Revolution, and filled in all this information that they had not known before, stating that they did not know just how violent Chinese society had become. A minority, albeit a significant minority, told us how they thought differently about human nature, or about themselves in relation to the world.

Rephrasing the question will help us better assess student learning; along with that, we will be better able to apply the rubrics we established—the most important of which has to do with the thesis. If the question is more clearly focused on how the students’ perspectives have changed, the thesis will follow that focus.

For the Com 513 class, the students were asked this same question in the context of a field trip that they had taken to Turkey. They also responded with information about Turkish culture and society. But a significant number also commented on how interested they were in the coming together of tradition and modernity, especially as expressed in relation to Islam, and the committee thought that was a significant insight.

With respect to the indirect question, we had evidence from the Asia 305 class and from the Religion 526 class. The question we asked was: “How confident would you feel discussing the history, literature, religion, philosophy or artistic traditions of the Non-Western civilization you studied with a fellow student who has not taken the course?” In general, we concluded that the information we derived from the indirect survey supported the information which we gleaned from the direct (exam) evidence question.

For the Asia 305 class, 32 students of the 35 participating in the survey answered that they would feel “confident” or “very confident” in discussing class topics with a fellow student (2 other students said they would feel “fairly confident”, a category that we did not provide). The committee found the results of this informal survey more satisfying than the more formal exam question used above, as we could tell the viewpoints of students had truly changed as a result of taking this class. Some spoke of actually talking to others—fellow students, family members—about what they were learning in class. More importantly, student in this class were able to frequently attest that their view of Asia and the world had changed.

A similarly positive result was gleaned from the Rel 526 class. All 42 students stated that they would be confident or very confident discussing with other students material that they were learning in class. Students talked about the great amount of material that they covered, and felt confident that they would retain knowledge of the basic doctrines, practices and history of each religion that they studied. More importantly, they regularly talked about how taking the class had given them more understanding and a greater sympathy for religions outside the West.

In both classes, a very common refrain was this: “I might forget the dates here and there, but I do remember the basic concepts,” and “I can identify the big picture of each religion.” This means that we overall were successful in both introducing these civilizations and in providing them a conceptual framework to pursue future learning. One of many take-aways is that in the future, when our students read news reports of the different civilizations they have studied they will be able to fit such reports into this overall framework that they learned in these courses.

IX. Summary

Based on the evidence and findings reported in the previous section, summarize the findings in narrative form. In the summary, be certain to address the following questions for this area of the GE program.

1. Are the goals being achieved?
2. Are the SLOs achieved at the established standard of achievement?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses?
4. What areas need improvement?
5. What are the future one, three and five year goals for this component of the General Education program?

1. The committee concluded that the goal of the GE Non-Western program is being realized in all the classes. We felt that the students did truly learn about different aspects of these non-Western civilizations—many of these students said just that and they proved it in assignments and tests. We all felt satisfied that these classes are providing our students with both an introduction to Non-Western civilizations, and, more importantly, the framework for future study. And, because the students were taking classes that they had some interest in, and because we feel that the classes were taught well, we believe that the classes whetted the students' appetites; they will come back in the future to learn more—there seemed to be a desire to learn more, and seeing that desire gave us all hope for their future study of these civilizations.

2. The SLO that we established is fine, especially given the great diversity of the classes which can be taken to fulfill the GE requirement. The criteria we established in part VII has been met.

3. We did feel, however, that the question that we were asking for the Direct Evidence component needs to be re-worked so that the students consider how their own views of the world have changed. Most of the student focused on how they are now better informed about the world, but not how “their perspective has been informed and broadened.”

For example, in the Asia 305 class, some students talked about an event like the Cultural Revolution, but they didn't really tell us how their perspective of the world had changed. For example, they didn't say something like “we studied China's Cultural Revolution, and that showed us all how even in a culture which honors the aged as much as China that this was no bulwark against a destructive ideology. We felt the humanity of the Chinese in suffering this very inhuman event.” A few students even responded in ways that not only did not challenge their previous viewpoints, but that even confirmed them.

But then for other students there was a real change in perception. For example, one student wrote the following: “I feel that before this class I saw Asia and Asian history as one large clump of culture and knowledge. After the class, I have come to be able to at least relatively discuss the difference in Asian cultures and why

they are as they are.”

What the university is really looking for in this General Education requirement is increased knowledge, but a knowledge which can transform our students’ way of looking at the world, and their relation to it.

The strength of the GE Non-Western program is that the students have a wide and diverse number of classes to choose from. This means that even though it is a required course, they can choose the class that they want to study. So there is more interest in the classes the students choose.

As a committee, we were not able to see any major weakness. As the committee leader, on further reflection, I was able to see a weakness: there is no faculty member who is ultimately responsible for the GE Non-Western program. This is especially true as the courses that can be taken for the program are scattered over five different divisions. There should be someone who is responsible—or some committee made up of the professors who teach the courses---who can evaluate present and future courses.

4. There are four areas we as a committee felt needed attention, not necessarily improvement.

First, we all recognized that Pepperdine is a very different place from where it was when this GE requirement was first put in place. We now have students from many different parts of the world in our classrooms, representing these different civilizations. For example, in one section of the Asia 305 class, there were six different students of the 20 who were born and raised in an Asian country including students from Afghanistan, India, China, Singapore, Indonesian and another three students whose parents were born and raised overseas. In a second section of the 305 class, there were eight different students who were born and raised in a different Asian country, four of whom who were native Chinese and another two who were native Indian students, all of whom were intending to return to their native lands.

The composition of such classes adds a whole new dynamic to the classes, as the average American student is not only studying these different civilizations, but at the same time is getting to know students who bear these civilizations. This also affects how we teach our classes, as we can encourage these students to share their experiences with the class.

We all affirm that these changes are occurring in our classrooms, and also applaud the richness that this adds to our study of these civilizations. It helps, further, to make our study of these civilizations less removed, and less objectified, of a subject. We did want to recognize this change here, and we want to encourage each other in the program to make use of these students’ backgrounds. The

student from India, for example, can not only help the white kid from Oklahoma better understand his world, but also the Chinese kid from Shanghai.

A second place that we should give attention to, and this is an improvement: we can improve the phrasing of the direct evidence question in our assessment exercise. We need to rephrase the question so that we get the students to think about how their perspective on civilizations outside the West has changed. So, instead of the question which presently reads--“Select one of the topics we studied in class, and explain how your perspective of the world outside the West has been informed and broadened by your study of the topic”; we will next time ask the following--- “Select one of the topics we studied in class, and explain how you now see the world outside the West differently than you did before.” In addition, to make sure that the students even more clearly understand the intention of the question, the teachers can review this question in the last week of class, before finals week.

Thirdly, we want to confirm this kind of focus in our class discussions and lectures. From the discussion which the committee had, we can see that we are already doing this in the classroom, but it bears emphasis. Certain topics afford the professor an opportunity to do this more than others, and so we will want to encourage each other to do this. So, going back to the Cultural Revolution example, we would want to emphasize in this discussion how if this kind of experience could happen to a place like China which reveres old culture and respects older people, how much easier could that happen here in America, if the historical circumstances were different. We should not let our students get away with thinking that all these horrible examples only happen in other places and other cultures.

Fourthly, we recommend that a committee be given the authority to evaluate the suitability of present and future courses for the N-W requirement to encourage a greater coherence, and to discuss the state of the program. Further, the committee could discuss such issues as how many classes to offer a semester, so that students will be able to take the classes they need to fulfill the requirement. It seems that the membership of this committee should come from the professors who presently teach the courses. It could meet once during fall semester very briefly, and then at the end of the academic year for the yearly assessment.

5. Other than the aforementioned areas of improvement, we did not really come up with any other future goals.

X. Closing the Loop & Quality Improvement Program

Based upon your analysis, what actions are necessary to correct weaknesses and improve this area of the General Education program? For each action item, provide the following information. *You may propose as few as one or as many as four (or more) action items. However, acting on fewer changes is likely more realistic than acting on numerous changes at one time. For this reason, prioritize all action items in order of importance and limit action items to those supported by compelling evidence.*

- **Action Item #1:** We want to change the assessment question for the Direct Evidence so that students are reflecting more how their perspectives have changed. We might have a discussion in class before they take the test so they are able to better reflect on their learning.
- **Action Item #2:** This item complements Item #1. We want to emphasize with our students even more than we are now doing that we are studying these civilizations not with an eye to confirming any perspective that they already possess, but that we seeking to change their perspective. Most students are already there. But there were some students who were not. So, for example, when I as the Asia 305 professor do teach about an event such as the Cultural Revolution, I don't want to so much to help them confirm their present beliefs in them the evils of Communism (though that could be a response, that would not be the primary response I would be seeking), but, rather, to let them see the vulnerability of their own humanity in this event.
- **Evidence to support this proposed action:** We discuss this above.
- **Expected outcome:** We expect that we will see a change in the students' perspective, and that that changed perspective will be reflected in the newly re-phrased direct evidence assessment question.
- **Action Item #3:** Form a committee with the charge to evaluate all present and future courses for the N-W requirement, and to coordinate all courses offered.
- **Evidence to support this proposed action:** We discuss this above.
- **Expected outcome:** We hope to see a greater coordination and coherence in the courses offered for the N-W requirement.
- **Expected timeline:** We will implement these three items during the next academic year.
- **Type of Action:** **Resource Neutral** **Resources Required**
- **Resource Detail:** *If resources are required, provide information on the type and nature of the resources requested (e.g., cost, resource implications, source of resource / funds, etc.).*

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XI. Contributors

Assessment of this area of the General Education program was performed by the following individual(s).

| Committee Chairperson | Position Title | Academic Division |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Tom Reilly | Associate Professor, Asian Studies | ISL Division |

| Committee Members | Position Title | Academic Division |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Milt Shatzer | Professor, Communications | Communication Division |
| Dyron Daugherty | Assistant Professor, Religion | Religion Division |

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Assessment Details

The following assessment was used to assess the Student Learning Outcome:
An essay question as part of the final exam asked the students to explain how their perspective on the world outside the West has been informed and broadened by the specific topics studied in class. The essay question asked was: Select one of the topics we studied in class, and explain how your perspective of the world outside the West has been informed and broadened by your study of this topic. A review sheet for the exam question was distributed before the exam, so that students could prepare a thoughtful response. We evaluated 75+ essays according to the rubric listed below.

Appendix B - Rubrics

The following rubric was used to analyze the evidence gathered in the assessment of Student Learning Outcome.

| | Below Expectation | Satisfactory | Exemplary |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|
| Thesis: 1-5 points | Weak or non-existent thesis. | A thesis which takes a position on the topic, but is not significant. | Strongly worded thesis, and significant, takes a position on topic. |
| Evidence: 1-5 points | Little evidence, or irrelevant evidence that does not support the points made. | Evidence is provided, but it is not always the most persuasive evidence available. | Evidence strongly supports the argument, and the different points made. |
| Organization: 1-5 points | No apparent organization. Ideas disconnected from each other, and do not flow in a logical order. | A clear organization, but either does not develop the thesis, or does not effectively develop the thesis. | Organization clearly lays out the different points of the essay, and connects them seamlessly. |

The essay was worth 15% of the final exam grade, and was evaluated using the criteria listed above. A range of 1-5 points was assigned to each of the three components of the essay.

Appendix C - Evidence /Data

The following evidence was gathered in assessment of Student Learning Outcome # 1.

See the copies of questions from the survey and the test, as these are attached to the document.

Appendix D - Chronology

The committee met and performed activities in support of this assessment as indicated below. Please add additional rows as necessary.

| Date | Members Participating (Initials) | Action |
|-------------|---|---|
| 9/28/2011 | TR | Met with Lila Carlsen, SALT Liaison |
| 9/28 | TR | Met with April Marshall, ISL Chair |
| 10/3 | TR | Asked Michael Feltner, Assoc. Dean, for comments |
| 10/10 | TR | Met with April Marshall, ISL Chair |
| 10/10 | TR; DD; MSu; MSh | E-mailed my team (two are in International Programs) copies of Assessment Plan |
| 10/12-19 | TR; DD; MSu | Received feedback on the plan, and discussed corrections and additions |
| 10/17 | TR | Submitted a copy of the plan to Dean Feltner |
| 11/2 | TR | Revised plan according to suggestions of Dean Feltner |
| 4/2/2012 | TR; DD; MSh | E-mailed my team, and set up a time to get together to discuss our findings. |
| 5/3 | TR | Spoke with Lila Carlsen, SALT Liason, about questions related to the final write-up. |
| 5/4 | TR; DD; MSh | On this day, we met as a committee to review and discuss all the evidence—the test question and the survey question—for assessment. |
| 5/7 | TR | Met with Lila Carlsen to review the final assessment document. |
| 5/9 | TR | Met with April Marshall, ISL Chair, to review the final document. |
| 5/9 | TR; DD, MSh | E-mailed the final document to the assessment team, for their review of the final document. |