General Education Assessment Report Template

Academic Year:
2016-2017

Course Name/Catalog Number:
HON 112 Themes in American Politics

General Education Component:
Constitutions, debate

UULO(s) assessed this year:
☐  x Intellectual Breadth/Life-long Learning
☐  x Inquiry/Critical Thinking
☐  x Communication
☐  Global/Multicultural Knowledge and Awareness
☐  x Citizenship & Ethics

Other learning outcomes assessed this year:

Process: Please provide a brief narrative of the assessment process for this course. Include a description of the type of student work assessed (e.g., research papers, exams, etc.), the number and roles of people involved in the process, any tools used for the assessment (e.g., checklists, rubrics, etc.), and how student learning was evaluated.

Assignments: In this course, students are required to study both the United States and Nevada Constitutions. Dr. Bubb lectures about both Constitutions, and then administers quizzes with short essay questions that students must answer. The questions not only require students to include specific elements about the Constitutions, but to also critically think about them, and understand how they apply to students’ lives today. Additionally, as groups, students are required to debate issues related to politics. Many of the topics include one or more elements of the United States Constitution. Further, students also draft bills with proposed amendments to both the United States and Nevada Constitutions. than just asking them quiz questions. Students also must include components of either or both Constitutions when they debate.

Assessments: Dr. Bubb reviews each quiz and assigns a score based on the quality of the answers. If students demonstrate knowledge of the Constitutions, and critical reflection of them, they receive a check, which is the equivalent of a letter grade “B” or better. If the answers are mediocre, students receive a check minus, which equates to a letter grade of “C” or “D.” If students perform poorly on the quiz by leaving one or more answers blank, they receive a zero, which equates to a letter grade of “F.” For the debates, Dr. Bubb and his students use a rubric to evaluate the quality of student performances in the debates. Dr. Bubb aggregates all scores to determine a final score for each student. This not facilitates direct assessment by the instructor, but also incorporates an element of peer review. The rubrics are left anonymous, and students are able to review them as feedback. For the bills, Dr. Bubb reviews them, and if they are of fine quality, sends them to politicians for feedback. Students have found this to be interesting and informative.
**Results:** Please provide a brief summary of the results of your assessment process. Include both what you learned about your students’ achievement of the specified learning outcomes and what you learned about the assessment process itself, if applicable.

Student learning outcomes results in both classes indicated that the majority of students demonstrated at least satisfactory knowledge of both Constitutions. On the quizzes, in each class, 21 out of 24 students received a check on their quizzes. Three students received check minuses or worse because they failed to show up in time for the quizzes, and/or left multiple questions unanswered. For the group debates, in both classes, 22 out of 24 students received scores of 90% or better. Students who scored below 90% either were either unprepared or had weak arguments. For the bills, all students received full credit because the bills were of sufficient quality that Dr. Bubb sent them to politicians for feedback.

**Conclusions:** Please describe how the results of this assessment process might be used to revise instruction in this course and/or refine the assessment process in future years.

Upon reflection, the majority of students met or exceeded expectations. Further, Dr. Bubb found that many of them enjoy debating. In last year’s report, Dr. Bubb indicated that he would apply the same process to his Honors 111 class, Themes in American History. Dr. Bubb was not assigned that class in the Fall of 2016 nor Spring of 2017, but will teach it in the Fall of 2017, where he will be able to experiment with group debates on historic topics related to the United States and Nevada Constitutions. Further, Dr. Bubb will be able to ask similar questions on quizzes and exams that he asks students in his Themes in American Politics class. Also, Dr. Bubb will meet with Dr. Michael Green who also teaches Honors 111, to include a question on our exams that will enable us to measure students’ the Global/Multicultural Knowledge and Awareness.

**Appendices:** Please attach any applicable assignment descriptions, rubrics, results tables, or graphic representations of results.
The purpose of this assignment is to simulate Congressional debate. As we know, House of Representatives members and Senate members debate over bills and other political matters. Using an argument, they try to persuade their colleagues why it is important to vote in favor or against a bill. Specifics:

1. The class will select political issues of interest to be debated.

2. Each team will have no more than three members.

3. The team that is in favor of the issue will commence the debate with an opening argument that should last no longer than 3 minutes. The team opposing the issue then will have a chance to rebut the favoring team’s opening argument. The debate will continue back and forth for about 15 minutes, and then the timer will ask the opposing team to present its concluding argument. The whole debate should not last longer than 20 minutes because we want to have 5 or so minutes for the audience to ask questions.

4. The teams will be evaluated by their peers and the professor. The professor will compile the scores into an aggregate score. The teams will not be graded on elements associated with public speaking. Instead, they will be graded on clarity of the argument, and substantial supporting evidence.

5. Each team member is required to participate in the debate.

6. Also, each team member will be responsible for doing part of the research so that no single member of the team ends up doing all of the research.

7. After the debate, each team member will submit a three page paper addressing the following elements:

   a. Page one will give an overview of the political issue
   b. Page two will be the team member’s view of the political issue based on the research the member did.
   c. Page three will be a critique of the sources the team member used (Were the sources helpful? If so, why? Were any sources not helpful?)

8. Most of all make the debate a fun learning experience!