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Plan to assess student learning in Social Science General Education Core Curriculum course: GEOS1123 Human Geography; GEOS 2003, World Regional Geography

WHAT UNIVERSITY GENERAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES GUIDE STUDENT LEARNING IN COURSES THAT CARRY SOCIAL SCIENCES CREDIT?

Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of nine hours of social science courses, students will be able to:

- (SSLO1) Identify and/or explain a method of inquiry in one of the social sciences
- (SSLO2) Identify and/or explain human organization and behavior
- (SSLO3) Identify and/or explain challenges associated with the diversity encountered by individuals, organizations, and/or societies
- (SSLO4) Identify and/or explain how technology affects individuals, groups, and/or social institutions
- (SSLO5) Identify and/or explain the changes caused by the increasing interconnectedness of today's world

HOW DOES THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOSCIENCES INTEND TO ASSESS STUDENT LEARNING OF THESE OUTCOMES IN GEOS 1123 and 2003?

The Department of Geosciences; Division of Geography offers three on-campus sections of GEOS 1123 and one section of GEOS 2003 each semester. The classes have between 150 and 210 seats, for a total of seats, for a total of 740 students each semester. At the start of the fall 2016 semester, one section of each class will be selected for pre-test and post-test.

The pretest items will be administered within the first two weeks of class in each of the two courses. The same questions will be administered the last week of classes. The total number of correct answers to the central geographic questions will be computed for each student on each test taken. Comparisons will be made between "pre" and "posttest scores," indicating the mastery of central geographic concepts. We will only use data from students who take both tests; the scores from students who do not take both tests will be dropped.

The items cover a set of approximately 10 core concepts measuring one (or more) of the learning outcomes stated above and covered in all Human and World Regional Geography courses taught in the department. To ensure reliability, the final list of concepts included on the pre-test and the post-tests consists of a sample of the core

concepts submitted or agreed upon by all instructors/faculty members regularly teaching GEOS 1123 and GEOS 2003 during the fall semester. All students participating in the assessment will be asked questions related to their academic standing (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior).

Each semester the faculty teaching the course being assessed will provide a report summarizing the results of the assessment to the department chair who will distribute these reports to the GEOS Geography Undergraduate Coordinator, and the Vice-Chair of the Department of Geosciences for review and evaluation.

Review of the overall performance pre- and post- will result in one of three outcomes: improvement of student post-test scores over the pre-test; no-improvement, and the decline in post-test scores compared with the pre-test. For those assessments that result in improvement in post-test outcomes, instructors may choose to take no action or examine ways to further improve positive outcomes. Results that include no improvement or decline will prompt instructor review of the course content, course objectives, classroom techniques, and assessment tools. For example, in those classes where no-improvement or decline should result, items will be identified and learning objectives will be created to address the negative outcomes. Additionally, instructors in those courses where the assessment tools are distributed may select to interview students on the specific items of concern for additional feedback, to identify barriers, and to develop teaching strategies that may better serve at-risk students. Since both GEOS 1123 and GEOS 2003 are foundation course for Geography majors, the solicitation of the broader departmental review of the results and the proposed changes is deemed necessary. Regular assessment, reports, and reviews will be conducted on an annual basis.

HOW IS THE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT KEYED TO THE UNIVERSITY GENERAL EDUCATION CORE CURRICULUM LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES?

Here are the 15 questions that will be included on the first examination and all subsequent examinations. These questions are appropriate for the conceptual material in both GEOS 1123 and GEOS 2003, thus the same test will be used for both classes.

SSLO1 – Identify and/or explain a method of inquiry in geography

- 1) Which of these topics best represents the concept of hierarchical diffusion?
 - a) the spread of AIDS
 - b) merchandiser efforts to get college students to adopt their products
 - c) spread of swine flu
 - d) the expansion of Wal-Mart.

- 2) Data regarding percent of high school graduates in each US state would be best represented on what kind of map?
 - a) dot density map
 - b) choropleth map
 - c) topographic map
 - d) graduated circles map

- 3) Which of the following statistics best measures the state of economic development in a country?
- a) GNP/capita
 - b) Percent of high school graduates
 - c) Infant Mortality Rate
 - d) Crude Death Rate

SSLO2 – Identify and/or explain human organization and behavior

- 1) The major cause of recent world population increase has been
- a) increasing birth rates
 - b) decreasing death rates
 - c) increasing in-migration
 - d) all of the above
- 2) The main cause of global contemporary urban growth is:
- a) natural increase
 - b) rural to urban migration
 - c) international migration
 - d) rapid industrialization
- 3) For the UN to formally recognize a new country it must meet which of the following conditions?
- a) Have an independent political system
 - b) Have a flag and other iconography
 - c) Have its own currency
 - d) Be recognized by all five permanent members of the UN security council

SSLO3 - Identify and/or explain challenges associated with the diversity encountered by individuals, organizations, and/or societies

- 1) The protection of minority groups in multiparty democracies is generally secured by what institution?
- a) the Constitution
 - b) popular referendums
 - c) the legislature
 - d) an independent judiciary
- 2) Which of the following countries transitioned to a multi-party democracy in 1994 after fifty years of minority-rule?
- a) Canada
 - b) South Africa
 - c) Brazil
 - d) India
- 3) Which of the following statistical measures is most closely correlated to birth rate in a country?
- a) GDP
 - b) Infant Mortality Rate
 - c) Female literacy rate
 - d) Number of doctors/capita

SSLO4 - Identify and/or explain how technology affects individuals, groups, and/or social institutions

- 1) The technological treadmill affects agriculture by;
- a) forcing farmers to produce more crops
 - b) forcing farmers to invest in more technology
 - c) forcing farmers to use more water and fertilizer
 - d) a, b and c
- 2) Space-time compression occurs when new technology makes it easier to do what?
- a) grow food
 - b) produce industrial goods
 - c) communicate over distance
 - d) produce visual images of the earth
- 3) International trade agreements became common in the 20th century as a response to what global event?

- a) WWII
- b) WWI
- c) The Great Depression
- d) The independence of European colonies.

SSLO5 - Identify and/or explain the changes caused by the increasing interconnectedness of today's world

- 1) Which of the following countries represents the largest (by population) Muslim country in the world?
 - a) Indonesia
 - b) India
 - c) Pakistan
 - d) Egypt
- 2) Which of the following is the best example of a super-state?
 - a) The USA
 - b) The European Union
 - b) NATO
 - d) The Geneva Conventions
- 3) What is the new name that is being used to discuss the most recent era of earth history; the era that has been affected by humans.
 - a) the Holocene
 - b) the Eocene
 - c) the Anthropocene
 - d) the Neolithic

HOW WILL THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOSCIENCES USE THE DATA GENERATED BY THIS INSTRUMENT TO PLAN CURRICULAR AND PEDAGOGICAL CHANGES THAT MIGHT BE NECESSARY IN GEOS 1123 and GEOS 2003?

Once the data are collected each year the results will be compiled into a report for the Dean's office. Subsequently that report will be sent out to the relevant core class instructors and the Geography undergraduate co-ordinator will convene a meeting of those core class instructors to discuss the results. Where results indicate that there are noted improvements in student learning the questions and material associated with them will be retained. If there are questions where it is clear that students are not retaining the material we will conduct a review of teaching materials to identify whether coverage of the critical material is adequate in both scope and clarity. In addition, we will assess whether the assessment questions themselves can be modified to better capture changes in student learning over the course of the semester.