Notes from History Department Meeting  
Tuesday, October 2, 2012  
Meeting convened: 12:30; adjourned: 1:30  
Present: Pat Patterson, Mieko Matsumoto, Cynthia Smith (Sharlene Nakamoto-Levine, unable to attend)

Results of 2011 Imbedded Assessment

Students were asked questions on exams or final projects related to broad topics chosen by the department. For History 151: the spread and impact of universal religions. For History 152: explain the causes and effects of World War II. These reflected questions aligned with course SLO’s: summarize key ideas in history including major world philosophies, religions and political theories and systems; describe and define major historical events, ideas, places, people, and other items of historical import.

Each person described what they learned from looking at their students results. Pat also reported on general findings from results gathered by Sharleen Nakamoto-Levine, who taught a number of lecture sections in Fall.

There were many insights gained from looking at the results of the imbedded assessments conducted in Fall 2011.

Need to spend more time defining terms.

Students cannot be expected to provide detailed discussion of events in an exam essay unless the instructor took the time in class coverage to provide detailed explanations. They can be expected to explain cause and effect relations in a broad sense and that is in alignment with the SLOs for both World Civilization courses.

There was extensive discussion of how to balance coverage of chronology and events, while also slowing down on some topics to allow students to explore nuances, primary documents, competing perspectives and other more detailed historical understanding. Each instructor will address that balance in their own way, but all need to have that need in mind. It is a survey level course and coverage of specific information and general historical skills (cause and effect) must be accomplished but cultivating an understanding of methods of historical investigation should also be part of the class structure.

The emphasis should be student attainment of critical thinking habits of the mind but cannot expect complex and detailed descriptions of historical events.

The goal in a World Civ class is to address three points: content; skills; critical thinking approaches.
Knowledge Survey for the Fall

The group decided to stick with broad knowledge survey questions, and not be too narrow (since not all instructors cover all of the same terms). And also will not tie the Knowledge Survey to a particular textbook. The emphasis will be to gauge students confidence about learning by asking the kinds of essay type questions used by all World Civ instructions which directly align with SLOs.

Cynthia will map the Knowledge Survey questions to the course slos, and the department will narrow the questions to be asked. All those teaching World Civ in Fall 2012 will be asked to have their students complete this assessment.

Next Steps

A similar form of imbedded assessment will be carried out in spring 2013.

A set of guidelines will be created for lecturers to be sure that common expectations of the need to blend content, skills and critical thinking are clear.

The department will create a resource book, a 'library' with assignments, exams, syllabi from History classes to be used as a reference for all of those teaching history classes.

A general consensus was to be realistic in expectations of students and emphasize meeting the learning expectations of an introductory history class (versus an advanced or tutorial history course.)

It was also agreed that more discussions like this need to take place including sharing expectations, learning strategies, assignments and exams given, and student learning.

The department will meet occasionally to facilitate collegial exchange, with a particular emphasis on including lecturers, to discuss these points. Decided to meet during duty period in January and have a social gathering to which all lecturers will be invited.