Initial Assessment of DHI Courses

We remind the reader that the Dietrich Honors Institute just completed the second year of delivering its curriculum to our DHI Scholars. Therefore, the task of formal assessment is one that had not been engaged in up to this point. We are pleased to report that in the summer of 2015 an initial attempt was made to assess the DHI Curriculum. Appendix B of the DHI Assessment Plan indicates the schedule for assessing courses in the DHI curriculum. The appearance of an “A” in the schedule shows where assessment is to take place. Of the DHI courses taught thus far (HONS 109, 113, 114, 128, 126, 127, and 137), the plan calls for some assessment of each of those courses in relation to one or more Student Learning Outcomes. It should be stated that student material was not available for assessing some of these courses and in some instances the student material available is less representative than desired. Also, some of the goals, such as Collegial Identity and Diversity Advocacy, are going to take more reflection on how they can be properly incorporated into courses and adequately assessed. For these reasons, the DHI assessment plan could not be fully followed. It did prove possible, however, to do an initial assessment of four DHI courses (109, 114, 128, and 126) in relation to one or two of the Student Learning Outcomes. This document states the results of those assessment efforts.

Assessment of HONS 109: Becoming Human: Love, Power, Justice (Fall 2014)

Assessment Plan

Student Learning Outcomes Assessed: Upon completion of the core curriculum, students will have demonstrated

- Knowledge gained from engaging big questions and using information to substantiate informed conclusions
- A transdisciplinary approach to comprehensively exploring the content and context of issues before formulating judgments.

Assessment Activities

- Rubric Scoring: Random Sample of Final Student Papers
- Discussion of Results
- Development of an Action Plan

Rubrics (As Formulated for the DHI Curriculum)

- General Knowledge
- Critical Thinking

Assessors:

- Thompson, Dietrich Honors Institute
- Olson-Thompson, Educational Consultant
Assessment Results

Significant Factors:
HONS 109, a three-credit course, was taught for the first time in fall 2013. It enrolls only first-year students admitted into the Dietrich Honors Institute. It was taught a second time in fall 2014. Both times the class size was sixty students. It was not assessed the first year. In the second year student work was gathered electronically so as to have material for assessing the course. That material enabled an assessment to be made. Twelve samples were used in the assessment. From this assessment a baseline for future assessments will be established.

Assessment Baseline:
50% of students assessed will score a 2 or higher on each assessed criterion.

Becoming Human Rubrics
- General Knowledge: With 91.7% of the student samples scoring a 2 or higher, we met our assessment goal.
- Critical Thinking: With 91.7% of the student samples scoring a 2 or higher, we met our assessment goal.

Reflection

General Knowledge Rubric
- On the whole it can be said that student engagement in one or more of the big questions of love, power, and justice has led to the grasping of knowledge.
• Furthermore, students with few exceptions showed a considerable level of effective and responsible use of information.

Critical Thinking Rubric
• Students, generally, showed considerable awareness of how context shapes content and interpretation.
• They displayed a proficient facility with the transdisciplinary approach to learning.
• They also adequately applied higher order thinking and strategies to evaluating and solving of problems.

General Observations
• The findings of the assessment are affirming. Students report that they enjoy the course and their final papers reflect the fact that they have given serious thought to the concepts of love, power, and justice and to how those concepts tie in to their lives.
• The success of students in the course is due in part to the fact that most of them come to us as pretty solid students. Another factor contributing to student success is the variety of ways in which they can gain access to the course content. There are traditional texts to read, short stories, lectures (PowerPoint presentations) of the professor, films, large group discussions, small group discussions, student speeches about themselves, student presentations, individual papers on various topics, group papers, journal entries to write, composing a group contract, assessing of one’s peers, etc.
• Lack of success in this course should be a warning signal that a student will likely have difficulty in other courses, honors and non-honors alike.
• The assessment utilizes a single rubric with multiple themes. This makes for a simple assessment process but at the expense of not allowing for greater nuance in assessing.

Action Plan
• Close watch should be given to those who struggle in this course so that ways to be of assistance to them might be discerned.
• While in this sample of twelve only one student fell short of the assessment goal, this number when multiplied by five (sixty in the class) amounts to a handful of students that likely could use some extra help. Special sessions meeting once every week or two could be formed once students having trouble are identified.
• The many types of learning opportunities made available in the course should continue because they are likely an important factor in ushering students into the content of the course.
• The DHI Honors Council should consider these assessment results and decide whether or not the rubrics utilized should be multiplied to gain greater specificity of insight.
• The assessment baseline for this course should be changed to read: 80% of students assessed will score a 2 or higher on each assessed criterion.
Assessment of HONS 114: Creating Culture: Ancient, Medieval, Modern (Spring 2015)

Assessment Plan

Student Learning Outcomes Assessed: Upon completion of the core curriculum, students will have demonstrated
- Knowledge gained from engaging big questions and using information to substantiate informed conclusions
- Having creatively integrated knowledge from various disciplines and having respect for different worldviews and practices.

Assessment Activities
- Rubric Scoring: Random Sample of Final Student Exams
- Discussion of Results
- Development of an Action Plan

Rubrics (As Formulated for the DHI Curriculum)
- General Knowledge
- Interdisciplinary Learning

Assessors:
- Thompson, Dietrich Honors Institute
- Olson-Thompson, Educational Consultant

Assessment Results

Significant Factors:
HONS 114, a three-credit course, was taught for the first time in spring 2014, with three sections of the course being taught. It enrolls first-year DHI students who are in their second semester. It was taught a second time in spring 2015, again with three sections being taught. Both times the class size averaged twenty students. It was not assessed the first year. In the second year representative student work was gathered from Dr. Moinet (who had taught one section of the course) and Dr. Kreisel (who had taught two sections of the course) so as to have material for assessing the course. That material enabled an assessment to be made. Twelve samples from the three sections were used in the assessment. From this assessment a baseline for future assessments will be established.

Assessment Baseline:
50% of students assessed will score a 2 or higher on each assessed criterion.
Creating Culture Rubrics

- General Knowledge: With 100% of the student samples scoring a 2 or higher, we met our assessment goal.
- Interdisciplinary Learning: With 100% of the student samples scoring a 2 or higher, we met our assessment goal.

Reflection

General Knowledge Rubric

- The result indicates that students in the Creating Culture course are learning about the cognitive content covered in the study of the ancient, medieval, and early modern cultural periods.
- Students have demonstrated at least a considerable level of effective and responsible use of information.

Interdisciplinary Learning Rubric

- Students, generally, showed a capacity for creatively integrating knowledge from various disciplines.
- They displayed respect for different worldviews and practices.

General Observations

- The findings of the assessment are affirming. Students report that this is a very challenging course and their final exams papers reflect the fact that they have become engaged in cultural studies in such a way to gain significant knowledge.
about Greece and Rome, European culture of the Middle Ages, and cultural developments in the early modern period of the Renaissance.

- Again, the success of students in the course is due in part to the fact that most of them come to us as pretty solid students. Another factor contributing to student success is likely the seminar style of conducting the class, which makes it difficult for students to remain disengaged and tends to sponsor greater student participation and investment in the learning process.
- On the assessment side of things, one wonders if a signature assignment on respecting other worldviews might not be valuable for students and for assessing them in this area.

**Action Plan**

- The DHI has the wherewithal to provide resources for the teaching of its courses. Inquire of the course’s teachers whether three strong films that provide an overview respectively for the ancient period, the medieval period, and the Renaissance period would be beneficial in the teaching of the course. If so, those films should be identified and purchased.
- The teaching styles of the two professors conducting the sections of the course are quite different and yet the results for both are very good. These teachers should be affirmed for doing a good job and encouraged to continue employing the approach they are using.
- The DHI Honors Council should consider these assessment results and decide whether or not the rubrics utilized should be multiplied to gain greater specificity of insight. They might also give thought to whether a signature assignment related to respecting other worldviews is a worthy idea to be suggested for consideration by teachers of the course.
- The assessment baseline for this course should be changed to read: 85% of students assessed will score a 2 or higher on each assessed criterion.

Assessment Plan

Student Learning Outcomes Assessed: Upon completion of the core curriculum, students will have demonstrated

- A transdisciplinary approach to comprehensively exploring the content and context of issues before formulating judgments.

Assessment Activities

- Rubric Scoring: Random Sample of Final Student Papers
- Discussion of Results
- Development of an Action Plan

Rubrics (As Formulated for the DHI Curriculum)

- Critical Thinking

Assessors:

- Thompson, Dietrich Honors Institute
- Olson-Thompson, Educational Consultant

Assessment Results

Significant Factors:
HONS 128, a three-credit course, was taught for the first time in spring 2014, with three sections of the course being taught. It enrolls first-year DHI students who are in their second semester. It was taught a second time in spring 2015, again with three sections being taught. Both times the class size averaged eighteen students. It was not assessed the first year. In the second year representative student work was gathered from Dr. Thompson’s class (who had taught one section of the course) so as to have material for assessing the course. That material enabled an assessment to be made. Twelve samples were used in the assessment. From this assessment a baseline for future assessments will be established.

Assessment Baseline:
50% of students assessed will score a 2 or higher on each assessed criterion.
Interpreting Scriptures Rubric

- Critical Thinking: With 75% of the student samples scoring a 2 or higher, we met our assessment goal.

**Reflection**

Critical Thinking Rubric

- Students, generally, showed considerable awareness of how context shapes content and interpretation.
- They displayed a proficient facility with the transdisciplinary approach to learning.
- They also adequately applied higher order thinking and strategies to evaluating and solving of problems.

General Observations

- The findings of the assessment are affirming. As one who teaches the course, I know that changes could be made to improve student learning. This course emerged out of a long-taught course, “Interpreting the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.” The study of the Qur’an was added to that course and 1/3 of the course is dedicated to that subject. There are two temptations in teaching the course: either shortchange the Qur’an in favor of the familiar material or devote adequate attention to the Qur’an while not cutting back on the Jewish-Christian material to an appropriate level. My error has been to succumb to the latter. In
my case, more material on the other two Scriptures needs to be excised so that students are not overwhelmed by the content.

- The first time I taught this new DHI Interpreting Scriptures course I took the charge to “flip” the classroom seriously, too seriously, and the result was that the level of cognitive sophistication permeating the class was diminished significantly. The second time teaching the class I was determined to rectify that situation and the result was that the “seminar” format of the class was jeopardized. The next time it is taught, an appropriate balance will be struck.

**Action Plan**

- Hold a meeting with those teaching the DHI Interpreting Scriptures course to discuss the question of course content and how each of us has handled that issue.
- With DHI resources available for teaching courses such as this, check with those teaching the course to see if they would support field trips to a synagogue, church, and mosque to talk to religious leaders about the importance of their Scriptures for the religious life of their people.
- The DHI Honors Council should consider these assessment results and decide whether or not the rubrics utilized should be multiplied to gain greater specificity of insight.
- The assessment baseline for this course should be changed to read: 70% of students assessed will score a 2 or higher on each assessed criterion.
Assessment of HONS 126: Composing Contextually: Enlightenment, Romanticism, Postmodernism (Fall 2014)

Assessment Plan

Student Learning Outcomes Assessed: Upon completion of the core curriculum, students will have demonstrated
- The skills to clearly, appropriately, and persuasively express ideas.

Assessment Activities
- Rubric Scoring: Random Sample of Final Student Papers
- Discussion of Results
- Development of an Action Plan

Rubrics (As Formulated for the DHI Curriculum)
- Communicating Effectively

Assessors:
- Thompson, Dietrich Honors Institute
- Olson-Thompson, Educational Consultant

Assessment Results

Significant Factors:
HONS 126, a three-credit course, was taught for the first time in fall 2014, with three sections of the course being taught. It enrolls second-year DHI students who are in their first semester. The class size averaged twenty students. Representative student work was gathered from Dr. Thompson’s class (who had taught one section of the course) so as to have material for assessing the course. That material enabled an assessment to be made. Twelve samples were used in the assessment. From this assessment a baseline for future assessments will be established.

Assessment Baseline:
50% of students assessed will score a 2 or higher on each assessed criterion.
Composing Contextually Rubric

- Effective Communication: With 100% of the student samples scoring a 2 or higher, we met our assessment goal.

Reflection

Effective Communication Rubric

- It can be said that students adequately employed the communication skills of writing, speaking, listening, and/or technology.
- Furthermore, students showed that they understand the relation of genre or format to context.
- Finally, students support their claims with appropriate reasoning, evidence, and attribution.
- Indirectly, one can note that students were learning about composing within the context of learning about the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Postmodernism, so as concerns content they likely gained some insights into these movements.

General Observations

- The findings of the assessment are affirming. Being a good communicator is critical to effective functioning in the world. It is good to see that the sample of students selected were competent communicators.
- Students very much enjoyed taking the field trip to the Cleveland Museum of Art in the context of this class because they could experience in person so many of the art works they had been studying.
• In my teaching of the course I placed too much stress on students writing the classic five-paragraph essay. As the semester progressed it also became apparent that creating a painting, writing a poem, making a film, etc. can also serve as appropriate projects on the basis of which one can do summative evaluating in addition to the writing of a traditional paper. The course is concerned with composing, but composing can take many forms.

**Action Plan**

• The DHI has the wherewithal to provide resources for the teaching of its courses. Inquire of the course’s teachers whether three strong films that provide an overview respectively for the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Postmodernism would be beneficial in the teaching of the course. If so, those films should be identified and purchased.

• The field trip to the Cleveland Museum of Art should definitely be continued since it was well received by so many students as an extremely valuable learning experience.

• The DHI Honors Council should consider these assessment results and decide whether or not the rubrics utilized should be multiplied to gain greater specificity of insight.

• The assessment baseline for this course should be changed to read: 90% of students assessed will score a 2 or higher on each assessed criterion.

Submitted by

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