SMC Core Curriculum Course Proposal Form

Electronically submit a copy of the course proposal form and attachments to the Chair of the CCC. Please submit a separate copy of the proposal form for each learning goal.

1. Name of Proposer: Ronald Ahnen
2. Email address: rahnen@stmarys-ca.edu
3. Department/Program of Proposer: Politics

4. Name of Department/Program housing the course: Politics
5. Name(s) of Program Director/Department Chair (if not the proposer): Patrizia Longo

6. Course Acronym, Number and Title: POL 116 Political Polling and Survey Research

7. Semester(s) in which course will be offered: Spring 2014
8. How often is this course taught? every other year
9. Course Prerequisites (if any): none

10. Unit Value of Course: 1 credit

11. Proper Audience for the course (delete those that don’t apply):
    Sophomores Juniors Seniors

12. The Learning Goals for which the course is being submitted
    (Courses may apply for at most one Pathways to Knowledge goal, and for as many Engaging the World goals as is appropriate. Please complete a separate proposal form for desired goal.)

    Engaging the World:
    • Community Engagement
POL 116: Political Polling and Survey Research (CBR)

Essentially this course covers quantitative approaches to political data including how to construct a survey properly, administer it, analyze and interpret the data using appropriate statistical techniques, and then drawing conclusions about politics using this information. The course is taught as a "hands-on" course in the sense that students are broken into four or five teams that each conduct a real, live research project for a Bay Area organization working in some way for social justice. A variety of projects are offered and students self-select into groups and projects. The project culminates in a 25 to 50 page report with data and analysis that is delivered to the community partner at the end of the semester.

I have ample semester-long support from CILSA for this course, and have been teaching it like this since 2003.

Community Engagement objectives:
1. Apply academic methods and/or theories in a way that promotes collaboration and mutual benefit in a community setting.

As stated above, my students work with the community partner to first find out what their research questions are and then collaborate with agency representatives to design a doable survey research project. The projects are not done as an academic exercise, but are real projects with real results that benefit the agencies. Agencies typically use these data to evaluate their programs, substantiate the benefits of certain programs, or to provide information useful for grant making or re-accreditation (in the case of a school). Assessment for this goal can be accomplished by applying a rubric to the end of semester reports.

2. Demonstrate critical reflection throughout their experience.

Often throughout the semester, we reflect on three different items: 1) the extent to which students encounter barriers to completing the project successfully and figuring out ways to overcome them, 2) how the work we are doing will help the agency ultimately fulfill its mission, and 3) their own feelings about the work they are doing and the role they are playing for the agency. Students must critically reflect on these items so that as they tailor or alter the project or their strategy as it moves forward, it remains in line with the overall mission of the agency and goals of the project. Assessment for this goal can be accomplished through an additional written critical reflection essay that I can ask students to write (not presently in the course).

3. Express their understanding of the interconnections between their experience and their responsibilities as members of social or professional communities.

The course has two written interim reports built into it that require students to address the difficulties they are encountering in their project and how to address them in a professional manner. Sharing among the students about their communication with agency representatives and working as professionals oftentimes on behalf of the organization is almost a daily exercise before covering class material. Assessment for this goal can be accomplished by applying a rubric to the interim reports about their experiences, the problems they've encountered, and the strategies they've employed to overcome those difficulties.