Richard Olmo's Learning Assessments-Submitted 6/07

## ATTACHMENT C

## EXPLORING ASSESSMENT IN GEOGRAPHY 101 and 102

Since attending an assessment workshop in the Spring of 2005 I have explored a couple of assessment techniques in the Introductory and World Regional Geography classes. The first technique was an interactive classroom exercise prompted by a second round of low test scores. To introduce this I asked the students to separate into groups of five and to discuss the class using as a framework several questions that I placed on the blackboard. The questions asked that the students comment on the 1. text, 2. lecture format, 3. pacing, 4. videos and handouts, 5. exams, and then to add any other comments they might have. In addition, they were asked to offer suggestions on how to more effectively reach the goals of increasing their geographic knowledge and literacy.

Students took well to this, and one result is that they socially bonded through the remainder of the term. However, one student later criticized on the course evaluation form the use of the classroom for an activity not related to the course material.

In the order of their treatment of the questions, generally, the students did not like reading the text, thought that the lecture was good but that it provided too much material, felt that at times I erased the board quicker than they could write the material down, liked the videos and wanted more of them, and thought that the exams were very hard; some students felt that the exams were on material not covered in class. Additional suggestions were mainly focused on the exams. Students said that they would appreciate receiving a copy of my notes, and also wanted to have a review session prior to each exam. When I asked them to further elaborate on the review session they said that they wanted me to specifically go over what was going to be on the exam because otherwise there was too much material to study. Students also asked for an alternative to the exams and suggested extra-credit projects and group projects.

It was clear from the discussion and comments that there were several factors that I could adjust. I offered them alternative ways to work with the text, as the main problem appeared to be waiting until just before the exam to read a 40+- page chapter instead of reading a bit at a time. I also suggested ways to take notes from the text. I introduced more discussion during the lecture, to give better context to the material placed on the board and told them that whatever I put on the board would be what I considered the most important material to have. I promised that I would query them to make sure that I did not erase before they could copy the notes, and I have since begun to split the board into two columns, filing one side at a time and erasing one at a time to allow for this to occur more easily. I have not increased the videos as I found that the students liked them because they did not feel that they had to take notes from them; and some because they took advantage of the darkened room to nap. I stated that one of their responsibilities was to take notes from the films and that no, they could not have a copy of my notes. I offered to do a review outside of class time, and stated that the review would take the form of their arriving with questions about things that they were unsure of for me to discuss and clarify, and would not be a session where I effectively provided them with the test questions before the test. There were no takers on the review session. Additionally I offered that they could each submit to me three questions, with answers, in the style of those I ask, for inclusion on the final exam. The majority did this. They also coordinated the distribution of these questions with each other.

Unfortunately, several factors that the students have control over continue to confound them. First, most are unprepared for the demands of college level courses before arriving at UOG. In a remarkable number of cases students should be in remedial level course for the first year and gaps in their education filled so that they can perform at the college level. They remain either unable or unwilling to read the text. They are all-too-often overbooked taking a high credit load, working 20-60 hours a week, and at the same time trying to raise children as a single parent. Because they are the expendable members in their family (i.e. those who do not have a full-time job) they are responsible for dealing with any family emergencies, and that means they miss classes to do so. They tend to think that 1-2 hours studying before an exam should be sufficient.

Because of the problem of students arriving unprepared for the level of the work I have instituted another kind of assessment designed to measure their geographic knowledge coming in, and after their exposure to the course material. This is done through the simple device of a Pre-Test and a Post-Test. Students are told that the test does not count against them, and that they will receive a similar test at the final. This measuring tool was used five different times since the Fall of 2005. The classes were relatively small, and the Pre- and Post-Tests for any given class were identical. T-tests were used to assess the results. In every case the measured difference was highly significant. Students increase their geographic knowledge as a result of spending the term exposed to the course material.

In addition, the standard learning assessment tool of in-class exams was also used. The score of the first exam, and the final grade for the course are listed for those students who participated in the Pre- and Post-Tests. Correlations were run on these data sets. In all classes there was a significant correlation; although it also indicates that there is variability among the students.

Data and statistical results are found on the following five pages.

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