

GE rationale and assessment for German 3256: Culture and Ideas

3. A GE rationale that answers specifically the following questions

a) How do the course objectives address the GE category expected learning outcomes? **The learning outcomes state that students are to “analyze and interpret major forms of human thought, culture, and expression.” We will be dealing with major figures in twentieth-century Germany from the sphere of philosophy, literature, and film. All of them will be focused on a major ethical problem involving the German past. Students will be analyzing and interpreting their works in lecture/discussion, as well as in written assignments. The second learning outcome is that students “evaluate how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms which [sic] guide human behavior.” There is perhaps no more important topic in this course than how ideas – in this case extreme ideas about nation, state, race, and morality – came to affect (and distort) human norms and behavior. In presenting material that deals with an extreme case, I believe students are forced to come to terms with their own norms and behaviors in a new way. Let me give you an example: I have taught this course at Berkeley many times. Frequently students will be appalled at the inaction of Germans in opposing measures of inhumanity, especially against the Jews. They claim they would have acted differently. We often discuss what it means to claim you would behave in a more noble and ethical fashion in a safe classroom in the US of the present versus actually doing so in Nazi Germany, where the consequence might have been arrest, torture, and death, not only for you, but also for members of your family. I think students learn a great deal about themselves from this course, and come to recognize that their ideas and ideals are just “talk” until they are tested in difficult situations.**

b) How do the readings assigned address the GE category expected learning outcomes? **Reading assignments (and viewing assignments) are from major figures. They are dealing with these difficult moral and historical issues.**

c) How do the topics address the GE category expected learning outcomes? **The topics are related directly to the reading and viewing assignments, which in turn relate directly to the lectures and discussions. They therefore also help students to analyze and interpret major forms of thought, and to examine how ideas relate to norms and behavior.**

d) How do the written assignments address the GE category expected learning outcomes? **The written assignments will ask students specifically to analyze and interpret the writers and filmmakers that are on the syllabus. The written assignments will deal directly with their ideas and their reflections on norms, values, and behaviors in the past and in the present.**

e) How does the course aim to sharpen students’ response, judgment, and

evaluation skills? **The course aims to sharpen students response, judgment and evaluation by presenting them with prominent writers, philosophers, and filmmakers who are reflecting on difficult situations. Students will be asked to insert themselves into these situations and develop their own responses.**

4. A GE assessment plan

a) Description of the specific methods etc. **I will be using both direct and indirect methods of assessment. I plan to survey students periodically in the course to see what is working for them and what is not working. The written assignments will be focused on the learning outcomes, and I should be able to assess how successful I have been from an examination of the results of the first essay. I occasionally like to give the students a quick written question, ask them to write on it for five minutes, have them pass it in, and use it as the basis for discussion. For example, I might ask students whether Jaspers' categorization of guilt and responsibility is still valid for today, whether it excludes too many from the category of guilt, and whether it tends to exonerate rather than assign responsibility. This sort of method allows me to see how well students are doing with the material assigned. I would like to remain flexible and be able to change my delivery of the material according to what works best for the students in achieving the desired learning outcomes.**

b) Explanation of the level of student achievement expected. **My definition of success for students will include (1) an understanding of the various ways in which postwar German culture came to terms with its past and (2) an ability to reflect on common assumptions we harbor about our own norms and values in a civilized world. I believe most students will be able to achieve this sort of understanding, and I will have to rethink my methods if more than a handful do not accomplish this much in their written work and contributions to discussions.**

c) Description of follow-up/feedback process. **GLL collects final evaluations, and I will certainly consult them to see what the student response has been and to alter methods for more successful attainment of the goals of the course. But I do believe that having indicators during the course, as I have stated above, is essential, and will implement changes according to the feedback I have.**

GE rationale and assessment for German 3256: Historical Study

3. A GE rationale that answers specifically the following questions:

a) How do the course objectives address the GE category expected learning outcomes? **The first learning outcome for historical study is that students “construct an integrated perspective on history and the factors that shape human activity.” Students in this course will be dealing with a period of great historical interest: the Third Reich through reflections on the Third Reich in the postwar period. Students will therefore be exposed to views of the Third Reich from various perspectives. But they will also see the postwar period and its developments. So, for example, the earliest works from the late 1940s and early 1950s show Germany in its state of shell shock and initial recovery from the war, while the works of the 1960s reflect a good deal of the social and political turmoil of that era. In this regard students will be able to see how the past influenced the origin and nature of issues throughout the postwar period, continuing into the present. The assignments will put students in the position of analyzing and writing about critically about source material, much of it primary material from the postwar era, but also some primary material from the Third Reich (Heidegger’s rector speech, for example). There will also be secondary material included, for example the psychoanalytic interpretation and explanation for historical phenomena in the Nazi period. There will be a great diversity of material included in the course.**

b) How do the course objectives address the GE category expected learning outcomes? **The objectives are directly related to the material assigned for the course and all involve an understanding of the past and of an especially important past era in Germany history. One of the main objectives of the course is to see how the past influences the present, and how coming to terms with the horrific past of National Socialism, the war, and the Holocaust is just an extreme example of appropriation of past periods for present purposes.**

c) How do the topics address the GE category expected learning outcomes? **The topics are also directly related to the assigned materials and contribute directly to an understanding of the Third Reich and how the Third Reich is essential for understanding aspects of postwar Germany.**

d) How do the written assignments address the GE category expected learning outcomes? **The written assignments are directly related to the course materials. Students will be asked to reflect on the Third Reich as it has been mediated through postwar documents.**

e) How will students sharpen communication skills through the preparation of essay exams and papers and through participation in discussions in this course? **They will sharpen these skills through exposure to different ideas and**

**perspectives, through articulation of their own ideas and perspectives, and through active interchange in discussions that will challenge ideas and perspectives they currently hold. The papers will be designed to have students argue a perspective, knowing that there are other valid perspectives on these issues.**

4. A GE assessment plan etc.

a) Description of the specific methods etc. **I will be using both direct and indirect methods of assessment. I plan to survey students periodically in the course to see what is working for them and what is not working. The written assignments will be focused on the learning outcomes, and I should be able to assess how successful I have been from an examination of the results of the first essay. I occasionally like to give the students a quick written question, ask them to write on it for five minutes, have them pass it in, and use it as the basis for discussion. For example, I have had success in the past asking students to write their reactions to the fact that in Weiss's documentary drama, drawn verbatim from testimony at the Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt, one witness has lines that are not included in the transcripts. So, the question is what does historical documentation mean? Do we get the "truth" from historical documentation, or is it necessary to add something to arrive at a workable perspective on the past? This sort of method allows me to see how well students are doing with the material assigned. I would like to remain flexible and be able to change my delivery of the material according to what works best for the students in achieving the desired learning outcomes.**

b) Explanation of the level of student achievement expected. **My definition of success for students will include (1) an understanding of the various ways postwar individuals have sought to come to terms with various dimensions of the Third Reich and (2) an understanding for how history depends on perspective and changes with historical change in one's own ear. I believe most students will be able to achieve this sort of understanding, and I will have to rethink my methods if more than a handful do not accomplish this much in their written work and contributions to discussions.**

c) Description of follow-up/feedback process. **GLL collects final evaluations, and I will certainly consult them to see what the student response has been and to alter methods for more successful attainment of the goals of the course. But I do believe that having indicators during the course, as I have stated above, is essential, and will implement changes according to the feedback I have.**