

University of Illinois at Springfield

General Education Council

Course Approval Criteria

Area: **Comparative Societies**

To seek general education course approval, faculty or programs must complete two forms:

- UIS New Course Proposal and Change Form
- Baccalaureate Outcomes Checklist

Forms are available at:

<http://www.uis.edu/academicplanning/curriculum/index.html>~~http://www.uis.edu/generaleducation/curriculum/facultyforms.html~~

Submit forms and syllabi to the appropriate college curriculum committee, then to the dean, and finally to the Office of Undergraduate Education (PAC525) for distribution to the General Education Council. For questions, contact the Office of Undergraduate Education (206-7413 or uisuge@uis.edu).

Category Overview for Comparative Societies Courses

The aim of this category is to ensure that, from the beginning of their undergraduate career, students begin to master tools and methods for becoming global citizens. UIS general education seeks to raise student awareness of under-studied societies, marginalized populations, and issues of power. This category focuses on appreciating the historical complexity and diversity of societies, beliefs, cultures and practices around the world by asking students to engage in comparative, interdisciplinary explorations. Comparisons must engage students with materials that present them with substantially alternative human experiences and worldviews (add a link here to a list of disciplinary specific perspectives and/or b. course syllabi examples). Comparisons should extend student awareness beyond modern Europe and the United States, though comparisons need not be explicitly made with contemporary U.S. society. Societies can be premodern or modern, located within or across geographical regions, sub-national, national or transnational, but comparisons should be fair in terms of geographical or cultural scale and in terms of course content.

Beginning in fall 2012, students will take one Comparative Societies course designated by the General Education Council as either Humanities or Behavioral and Social Sciences. Students who come to UIS with fewer than 30 Hours are strongly encouraged to fulfill their Comparative Societies requirement during the first year of college. These courses must be 100 level and 3 credit hours.

Comparative Societies courses are introductory courses and should follow the guidelines established by the General Education Council for baccalaureate levels:

INTRODUCTORY LEVEL courses are foundational for disciplines or interdisciplinary introductions in terms of both content and skills. There is no presupposition of students bringing to class content-mastery or skills beyond the high-school level; some disciplines may use these courses to ensure sufficient college-level preparedness. Courses are open to all students. There is an orientation toward providing the groundwork for further study, specialization, or critique. Basic strategies for dealing with academic materials may be taught (such as note-taking strategies, lab safety and equipment, categorizing kinds of readings, how to find and use academic resources).

Core Capabilities Developed Through Comparative Societies Courses:

Academic Competencies:

1. Students must develop a basic understanding of interdisciplinarity, which involves drawing on the content, concepts, and/or methodologies of two or more disciplines with a deliberate effort to achieve integration.

Explanation: Students should be able to identify, apply and integrate disciplinary perspectives through class discussion and course assignments.

2. Students must participate in an *active learning process*. Active learning involves activities beyond students listening to lecture.

Explanation: Although lecture is a valuable tool in the classroom, students in these courses should read, write, discuss, or work on solving problems. They should engage in higher-order thinking tasks, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

3. Students should demonstrate basic informational literacy, including an awareness of the implicit and explicit assumptions and purposes of the information, sources, and perspectives in course materials.

Content Competencies:

1. Students should begin to develop new abilities to describe the societies they are studying from an insider point of view.

Explanation: CS courses offer students the opportunity to explore societies using perspectives that come from the society studied rather than holding them to a supposedly neutral international or Euro/US measure. Students will be able to demonstrate awareness of aesthetic, political, cultural, religious, historical, economic, social, environmental, or other structures of societies and understand how they change over time.

Example: Use materials composed by members of the society.

2. Students should begin to develop the tools and skills to recognize and appreciate different worldviews as well as the consequences of ethnocentrism, bias, prejudice, and xenophobia. As a part of this process, students should begin to understand how such constructions of “other” develop and change over time.

Explanation: Students should begin looking beyond themselves and their culture or society as the referent when understanding, explaining and defending the perspectives of other peoples. In doing so, students will begin to recognize the historically contingent character of their own national and local cultures. In a CS course, students should begin to develop tolerance, curiosity, and comfort with the complexity of different beliefs and practices.

Example: Understand that community formation often necessitates drawing boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’; investigate how a society has been ‘othered’ by another; and discuss the social, cultural, political, and/or aesthetic impact of that othering.

3. Students should begin to acquire a heightened sense of local, regional, and global interconnections and interdependencies—both historical and contemporary.

Explanation: While we compare societies, it should be clear that no society functions independently or in isolation.

Examples: Study the impact of environmental processes such as volcanism, pollution, and climate change; the impact of nonstate organizations such as those labeled pirates or terrorists; diaspora, migration and transnationalism studies; patterns of aesthetic exchange.

4. Students should begin to recognize how power imbalances and hierarchies are embedded within societies and in relations among societies.

Explanation: In becoming global citizens, CS students may have the opportunity to critically evaluate inequities of power.

Example: Explore how membership based on race/ethnicity, gender expression, sexual orientation, or class often shapes unequal access to resources.