

General Education Curriculum for Columbian College of Arts and Sciences April 16.2010

RATIONALE

The General Education Curriculum of Columbian College trains students to engage in *active intellectual inquiry* by developing *analytical skills* and by developing *diverse perspectives*. The fundamental elements of this General Education Curriculum are Perspective, Analysis, and Communication (G-PAC). General Education PAC courses are required in a range of disciplines, providing students with breadth in their learning. But these courses also provide a strong foundation of coursework built on overlapping learning goals that focus on the development of rigorous analytical skills, in some cases including a broad social perspective and in others sharpening a student's ability to communicate that analysis effectively. General Education PAC courses are created and required with the belief that students in Columbian College should not only participate actively in the political, social, cultural, and physical world surrounding them, but learn to provide leadership. Leadership, however, requires rigorous training in a variety of analytical skills, the development of broad social perspective, and the mastery of communication skills in multiple forms of media. When courses from the General Education Curriculum are combined with the in-depth study of a particular major, it is expected that graduates of Columbian College will be able to analyze a variety of problems from different disciplinary perspectives, work independently or collaboratively, as necessary, and leave college with the confidence that they can make a difference in society.

GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES

1. Students acquire breadth of knowledge by taking 24 credits of analytic course work, distributed across a range of disciplines in the following manner:
 - 3 credits of course work in mathematics or statistics
 - Approved courses in mathematics and statistics must achieve the learning goals for quantitative reasoning
 - 6 credits of course work in natural and physical sciences (courses must include a lab component)
 - Approved courses in science must achieve the learning goals for scientific reasoning
 - 6 credits of course work in social sciences
 - Approved courses in the social sciences must achieve the learning goals in either quantitative, scientific, critical, or creative thinking
 - 6 credits of course work in humanities
 - Approved courses in humanities must achieve the learning goals in either critical or creative thinking
 - 3 credits of course work in arts: visual, performing, critical, and historical practices
 - Approved courses in arts: visual, performing, critical, and historical practices must achieve the learning goals in either critical or creative thinking
2. In addition to the 24 credit hours of course work listed above, students must take UW20 and two WID courses. Any of the General Education courses could be WID courses, but students may double count only one WID course towards the 24 credit hours of analytic course work. Students must take UW20 before taking a WID course if they wish that WID course to count towards the fulfillment of the General Education credits.
3. Of the General Education analytic courses, students must take one that includes either a global **or** cross-cultural perspective **and** one that includes local/civic engagement.
4. Students must take one course that includes a component of oral communication, selected either from the General Education analytic courses *or selected from a course required for the student's major*.
 - Students may fulfill an oral communication requirement in a WID course as well as in a General Education course, including courses that count for cross-cultural/global perspectives and courses that count for civic engagement.
5. Courses taken to fulfill General Education requirements may also be counted towards the major.

*Oral communication refers to both oral speech and signed language

LEARNING GOALS: PERSPECTIVE, ANALYSIS, AND COMMUNICATION (PAC)

Through the General Education curriculum, students not only study in a variety of disciplines, they learn different analytical perspectives and receive multiple opportunities to use them, reinforce them, and master them. PAC learning goals stress the importance of perspective (global, cross-cultural, and civic); the development of a range of analytical approaches (critical thinking, creative thinking, quantitative reasoning, and scientific reasoning); and the need to communicate orally and in writing.

Analysis

All courses in the General Education curriculum must include one analytical approach: critical thinking, creative thinking, quantitative reasoning, or scientific reasoning. None of these approaches is limited to a particular discipline or language, and it is hoped that students will encounter them multiple times in different disciplinary, linguistic and cultural contexts.

Critical Thinking refers to the analysis and evaluation of complex information - that is systems of theory or thought – as well as the formulation of logical arguments based on that analysis. Students will be able to:

- Analyze and evaluate abstract information
- Understand and analyze scholarly literature and argument, particularly with respect to theoretical orientation and sources of support
- Formulate a logical argument based on that analysis

Creative Thinking refers to the creation of new or original work. It might involve the creation of new scientific work, an artistic creation, or a new scholarly argument based on a set of findings. Students will be able to:

- Create a new scientific work based on a set of findings
- **or** Create an artistic work based on an understanding or interpretation of artistic traditions or knowledge of contemporary context
- **or** Create a new scholarly argument based on a set of findings

Quantitative Reasoning refers to the process of modeling problems of the real world within a formal abstract system, solving those problems using systematic numerical methods of analysis, and interpreting the results. Students will be able to:

- represent mathematical information symbolically, visually, numerically, and verbally;
- articulate precise mathematical definitions and propositions and draw inferences from them;
- use algebraic, geometric, or statistical calculations to solve problems; and
- interpret and explain information represented in mathematical forms (e.g. graphs, equations, diagrams, tables)

Scientific Reasoning refers to consistent, logical thought patterns which are employed during the process of scientific inquiry that enable individuals to: propose relationships between observed phenomena; design experiments to assess the validity of these relationships; evaluate the results of these experiments; all using the tools, skills, and techniques of quantitative reasoning.

Students will be able to:

- Understand the hypothetico-deductive method
- Test hypotheses using data and scientific reasoning
- Understand how probability theory affects interpretation of experimental results
- Understand the difference between causation and correlation

Perspective

Students must take two courses in the General Education curriculum that foster a broad social and cultural perspective. One of those courses must include either a global perspective or a cross cultural perspective and one of these courses must promote local or civic engagement.

A **Global Perspective** analyzes the ways in which institutions, practices, and problems transcend national and regional boundaries or link those regions and boundaries together. A global perspective might include, but is not restricted to: the analysis of multi-national or multi-regional efforts to address global problems such as climate change or poverty; the examination of the global circulation of ideas and media images; the global impact of religions; or the impact of diasporic movements of peoples (past or present.) Students will be able to:

- Analyze an issue in terms of its global implications
- Frame questions, gather evidence, analyze evidence, and draw conclusions about an issue in terms of its global implications

A **Cross Cultural Perspective** involves the study of human differences, focusing on how different groups of people organize their social lives and material surroundings. A cross cultural perspective includes, but is not limited to, an analysis of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, religious, gendered, or sexual diversity, either in the present or in the past. Students will be able to:

- Identify and analyze the impact of diverse experiences and/or cultures upon human behavior, thought, and expression
- Use cultural comparison as a tool for understanding how social, cultural, or economic contexts shape understandings and behaviors

Local/Civic Engagement develops the values, discipline and commitment to pursue responsible public action. It asks that students take their knowledge and try to use it to create solutions for the common good, integrating knowledge with ethical and civic concerns. Civic engagement can include, but is not limited to, structured and reflective

participation in a local community or communities or the application of general theoretical knowledge to understanding social issues. Students will be able to:

- Analyze a social issue or civic concern
- Propose an intervention or solution based on broader theoretical knowledge
- Balance diverse perspectives in deciding whether to act
- Distinguish the multiple consequences and implications of their actions

Communication

Students learn to communicate effectively by taking UW20, two WID courses, and a course in either the General Education curriculum or their major that involves oral communication in any language taught at GW.

Written Communication is the effective use of language to express critical thinking that evaluates rhetorical situations, identifies significant lines of inquiry, investigates and analyzes available knowledge, and develops rigorous arguments appropriate to the intended audience. It is developed through UW20 and Writing in the Disciplines (WID).

Students who successfully complete UW20 will be able to:

- Evaluate and analyze evidence and assumptions in complex argumentative texts, including their own writing
- Use research questions to frame and develop an argument
- Apply appropriate rhetorical principles and stylistic conventions for the genre in which they are writing
- Find and incorporate sources from appropriate academic databases in their essays and cite them correctly
- Develop, edit, and proofread their own work through a process of structured revision

Students who successfully complete 2 WID courses will be able to:

- Recognize and apply rhetorical principles and stylistic conventions appropriate to the discipline in which they are working;
- Identify, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and employ information resources and/or other forms of supporting evidence appropriate to the discipline in which they are working;
- Construct rigorous, well-informed arguments and/or sound, probing questions or hypothesis appropriate to the discipline in which they are working; and
- Apply critical, analytical, and evaluative thinking to their own writing, through drafting, revising, and/or editing processes appropriate to the discipline in which they are working

Oral Communication is the effective interpretation, composition, and presentation of information, ideas, and values to a specific audience. Students will be able to:

- Take responsibility for a significant topic with a clear thesis and persuasive argument
- Demonstrate facility with topical and disciplinary knowledge via well-crafted, audience appropriate language
- Demonstrate vocal qualities and physical behaviors that augment content and maintain audience interest

Additional Recommendations for the General Education Curriculum of Columbian College

Technological Competency is acquired by students first in UW20, when they are introduced to basic technological resources for retrieving information (such as the digital databases in Gelman Library.) Further training in technological competency takes place within the major in forms that each major specifically defines.

Ethics and Values are studied in the discussion of academic dishonesty that all students encounter in UW20, and are further developed through courses that involve civic engagement.

Substitution Policy

CCAS requires that all students complete the General Education requirements stipulated above. Approved transfer credits acquired at other accredited institutions or through Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, etc. will count for elective credits, but will not count towards the General Education requirement according to the following rules:

- For freshmen, no courses taken outside the university will count towards General Education requirements;
- For sophomore transfers, only three transfer courses will count towards General Education requirements: one in quantitative and scientific reasoning; one in social sciences; and one in arts and humanities;
- For junior transfers, all appropriate courses will count towards General Education requirements;
- The current policy in effect for UW20 continues as is, requiring students transferring to GW with less than 30 credits to complete UW20;
- Courses taken outside the university can be used for placement into more advanced classes

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