Texas A&M University

Core Curriculum

Initial Request for a Course Addition to the Fall 2014 Core Curriculum

Foundational Component Area: Language, Philosophy and Culture

In the box below, describe how this course meets the Foundational Component Area description for Language, Philosophy and Culture. Courses in this category focus on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience. Courses involve the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures.

The proposed course must contain all elements of the Foundational Component Area. How does the proposed course specifically address the Foundational Component Area definition above?

CARC 331 – Field Studies in Design Philosophy is open to majors throughout the University. The course is offered in locations abroad – primarily Italy, Spain and Germany. Bachelor of Environmental Design students in the College of Architecture take the class during their required study away semester. The CARC 331 course introduces design philosophy in international environments away from the Texas A&M campus. Through lectures, site visits and interactions with local artists and architects, students gain knowledge of a broad range of historical and philosophical perspectives that impact design decisions in international contexts, primarily in Europe. The course addresses design decisions from a multitude of scales - from sculpture, paintings, buildings and cities. Powerpoint slide presentations and class discussions introduce students to artistic thought over time. Students develop an understanding of how social, economic, and cultural influences shaped the arts of the specific region under study. A critical theme is the relationship between artists and architects, their ideas, and the context in which they worked.

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Core Objectives

Describe how the proposed course develops the required core objectives below by indicating how each learning objective will be addressed, what specific strategies will be used for each objective and how student learning of each objective will be evaluated.

The proposed course is required to contain each element of the Core Objective.

Critical Thinking (to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information):

Students develop critical thinking skills through consideration and reflection of the lecture material, in-class discussions, interactions with guest lecturers, and the preparation of research papers. The research topics require students to synthesize and evaluate information in both written, oral and graphic formats. This information will be presented to the class as a whole at the mid-term and the end of the semester.

Students will complete required research papers in Paris. Creative thinking and innovation are encouraged as each pair is required to select and visit works of art and architecture that support the hypothesis in their research paper. Information gained through site visits are presented to the class. Creative thinking and innovation are encouraged as the information presented is discussed as being pertinent to other team projects.

Guest speakers who are practicing artists and/or architects in the local community present insights related to the material presented in class, and provide an opportunity for students to interact and discuss perspectives unique to their own.

Students discover processes with which to design coherent and responsible art and architecture in its context while adopting a commitment to social, economic and cultural concerns.
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Students will be required to discuss and formulate questions in order to discover processes with which to design coherent and responsible art and architecture.

Quizzes will not only test the student’s reflection and comprehension of the course material. Open ended questions will require critical thinking and analysis of the material.

Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication):

A variety of means are utilized to foster communication. Interactive class discussions, participation in team assignments, written and graphic expression through the research project will foster communication. In-class discussions and scheduled field trips will provide opportunities for students to ask questions and to participate in a dialog related to specific topics.

Interaction is encouraged by the group research project. Multiple stages of critical analysis and constructive criticism allow for reflection and re-expression. Working on a team research project inherently requires interaction and oral communication from the initial topic selection, inquiry and analysis to the organization and synthesis of the final writing assignment and presentation.

Open ended questions on quizzes allow students to better examine their thought in written form.

Social Responsibility (to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities):

Students come to understand the significant impacts art and architecture plays in our lives and the lives of others. Students come to understand these impacts are not dictated by the surrounding social, cultural, and economic forces; artist and architects have been and are engaged in defining communities. People react to art and architecture, and because of this reaction the creation of art and architecture carries responsibilities at multiple levels (regionally, nationally and globally).

Students are exposed to aspects of European architecture that are markedly different from their U.S. counterparts. Issues of urban history and politics, density, center vs. periphery, public space, public housing are not universal, and there are important lessons to be learned from each culture and in each context.

Adjunct professors local to the area and select lecturers who live and practice in the area give students insights into the local perspective, allowing them to better engage in the community in which they will be living.

Personal Responsibility (to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making):

Site visits include trips beyond the normal tourist destinations, giving students a better idea of life as lived in each context.

Site visits will expose students to the consequences of choice, action and ethical decision making. For example, the site visit to Colonia Guell, a preserved factory town that was conceived by a local businessman, enables students to understand that this project was a direct response to social conflicts in Barcelona at the time. Students will understand how this project, conceived by a single individual, improved social conditions of the factory workers and provided sponsored cultural activities.
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Students will develop a sensitivity to architectural works as generators of redevelopment. Many of the sites visited have been redesigned, or are in the process of being redesigned, as a mixed use hybrid based on the creative city. This urban landscapes are respective of the urban dwellers and their needs.

Students will be exposed to the positive and the negative consequences of actions. This duality will enable the to more fully understand and connect choices and actions with outcome.

Please be aware that instructors should be prepared to submit samples/examples of student work as part of the future course recertification process.