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.

How does the proposed course specifically address the Foundational Component Area definition above?

ENGL 365/RELS 360: The Bible serves as the foundational text for Western civilization, but it has traditionally been regarded as much more than that, nothing less than the revealed Word of God mediated through the inspired authors of canonical scripture. It is thus no mere book (or compilation of books), and biblical study is no single activity. The study of the Bible as "literature" is but one of many ways of coming at holy writ, and it has its limitations as well as its advantages. A course of this kind does not aim at doctrinal certainty so much as the recovery of what might be called biblical "literacy." We will be collectively engaged in an exercise in reading, not piety. Thoughtful men and women have long noted that the contemporary world suffers from a kind of cultural amnesia. This course seeks to counter that trend through a process of interpretive restoration. Historical and textual questions are important and will frequently be addressed, shedding much-needed light on our discussions, but our primary goal is the recollection and reclamation of biblical resources that have enriched humanity's worldwide cultural heritage in the past, maintained their relevance in the present, and offer creative possibilities for the future. This course will ultimately reveal how wider social forces shape the philosophical outlooks and aesthetic sensibilities of Hebrew and Christian writers, and ultimately, help students develop an appreciation for what the study of literature of groups that may be different from theirs can teach us about ourselves and our shared humanity. Material from this course will include written texts and such visual representations as photographs, illustrations, films, or theatrical performances.

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.

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

Critical Thinking Skills (CTS): The course will enhance critical thinking skills through consistent reading and class discussion of key ideas in Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. The evaluation of critical thinking skills will be based on exams and class participation and may include written work. Exams will be designed to allow students to demonstrate their ability to evaluate and synthesize key ideas from the assigned reading. Classroom discussion will focus on helping students better understand the nuances and complexities of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.
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Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication):

Communication Skills (CS): The course enhances communication skills through small and large group discussion, writing and visual texts of ideas, issues, questions, and themes central to course reading. The course will help students learn how to develop a greater understanding of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures that may involve guided writing assignments in which they will receive feedback, exams in which students will be expected to effectively convey key ideas from the course succinctly and clearly, and class room discussion in which students will learn how to express questions and thoughts about the subtleties of each text under examination. Material from this course will include written texts and such visual representations as photographs, illustrations, films, or theatrical performances.

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

Social Responsibility (SR): The course enhances social responsibility by providing students with a cross cultural understanding of how history, region, and broader social forces have shaped the distinctive literary traditions of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. The evaluation of social responsibility will be based upon an end-of-the-semester short writing assignment in which students will be asked to reflect upon how their knowledge of literatures from previous historical periods and cultures outside of their own has changed in light of the new information that they now possess. Students will be expected to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden their understanding of how history, culture, and philosophical outlooks have shaped the literary traditions of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.

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

Personal Responsibility (PR): The course will enhance personal responsibility through engagement with moral and thorny ethical issues that arise in class readings. The course material throughout the semester will offer students an opportunity to reflect upon personal responsibility through such topics as religion in the public square, the dynamic centrality of the Judeo-Christian vision to questions of justice, individual and social, and the tension between what has been called the “dictatorship of relativism” and Biblical foundationalism. Students will explore these topics through group discussion, writing assignments, and exams.

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