Texas A&M University
Core Curriculum

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

Foundational Component Area: Social and Behavioral Sciences

In the box below, describe how this course meets the Foundational Component Area description for Social and Behavioral Sciences. Courses in this category focus on the application of empirical and scientific methods that contribute to the understanding of what makes us human. Courses involve the exploration of behavior and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, and events, examining their impact on the individual, society, and culture.

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?

This course provides a detailed empirical look at the period of human development known as adolescence. Students will learn about the biological, cognitive, and social developmental milestones that typify this dynamic stage of life and how they interact to move one from childhood to adulthood. Theoretical approaches to studying adolescence will be conveyed, with an emphasis on how adolescence is culturally defined and contextually experienced. The structural and transitional changes that the family unit, peer group, and school go through and their influences on the teenager will be explored. The impact of media on attitudes, behaviors, and actions will be explored. Finally, the burgeoning psychosocial manifestations of autonomy, identity, intimacy, and sexuality will be covered with regards to both their origins and expressions.

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):

This course utilizes a fully interactive “My Virtual Teen” computer simulation program by which a student will “give birth” to a child and then be in charge of their child’s development throughout the semester. The program calls for them to evaluate the different parenting choices available to them for a variety of different life circumstances that are unique to the adolescent period of life (early stages of puberty, first dates, alcohol and drug use, etc.) and they must synthesize what they have learned in class to try and and optimize their virtual teens physical health, cognitive development, and socialization. It is an innovative way for the classroom concepts we talk about in class to present themselves in a “real world” context as is a great opportunity for both reflection and introspection.

EVALUATION: Critical Thinking will be evaluated through monitoring the progression of each student through the My Virtual Teen program and how they respond (both in the choices they make and the justification they provide as to their thought processes behind it) to their teen’s growing physical stature, cognitive capacities, and social expression. In addition, three unit exams will be given for each of the major units (Fundamental Changes of Adolescence, Cortexts of Adolescence, and Psychosocial Development of Adolescence) that will call for the students to answer scenario and contextually based questions that will call for them to use their course knowledge along with critical thinking skills to derive the correct answer.

Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication):
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The course calls for students to utilize a variety of different communication styles across several assignments and projects. Weekly written attendance assignments help students make a personal connection with the subject matter so that they can bring a textbook theory or lecture topic to life by relating it to their own adolescent experiences. The final “audio adolescence” project incorporates an audio component by which students search for a collection of songs that each, individually, represent a chapter that we covered in class during the semester. Drawing from the lyrics, historical era, band background, etc. the students must relate the music to the material and draw out important terms, theories, or other essential aspects that are represented in the songs they selected.

EVALUATION: Communication will be evaluated through the grading of the periodic attendance assignments and judging how well students were able to effectively and persuasively provide their reaction and commentary to a lecture topic, video, or other class aspect that they were asked to respond to. Class discussion on current adolescent topics will also be incorporated into the course so that dialogue and discourse can occur on events that correspond to units we cover in class.

Empirical and Quantitative Skills (to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions):

This class features in-depth examinations that call for the students to use higher order thinking and reasoning skills to answer scenario-based multiple choice questions. Terminology, theories, and other related content are implicitly embedded and included in each question (and not explicitly stated). Students must recognize and observe the pertinent and relevant material so that they then might be able to deduce or reach an informed conclusion as to what the correct response might be.

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

This course is aimed at preparing students to work with, educate, or better understand “youths” in our society. Regardless the domain, based on their knowledge of the unique facets and features of this particular cohort, students will be equipped to effectively engage and reach adolescents in an educational, professional, or recreational setting.

EVALUATION: The evaluation of social responsibility occurs in tandem with a field trip to Bryan High School whereby they have the opportunity to interact with current freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior level high school students and learn about the issues currently facing them in an academic, social, and home environment. All of my students are required to submit thoughtful questions that they would like to pose to the BHS students and are evaluated on the degree of completeness and appropriateness. At the same time, my class is able to share their transition experiences from high school to college and an open dialogue is created in which the two groups (my class and the student panel) are able to share their thoughts on a wide range of topics from curfew to parent involvement. EPSY 321 students are required to write a reaction paper on the quality of this discussion that asks them to introspectively examine the answers the BHS students provided and how they would deal with these if those students were in their class (teacher perspective) or in their home (parent perspective).

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