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.

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

GEOG 201 introduces students to broad concerns in human geography by addressing key concepts (e.g., spatial diffusion models, spatial interaction and interdependency, feedbacks and systems theory, distance decay function, central place theory, spatial hierarchy, regionalization, place, spatial scale, and distribution patterns) and how these shape human activities at multiple scales (e.g., local, national, global). The course examines these concepts in units on population and migration, geopolitics, energy systems, urbanization and urban systems, globalization, regional economic development, culture regions and cultural landscapes, and human impacts on the environment.

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):

Students analyze spatial interactions and interdependencies underlying patterns of population and migration, geopolitics, urbanization, globalization, regional economic development, and human impacts on the environment. Students complete online homework assignments that entail applying these concepts to various hypothetical and actual scenarios. For example, they may examine differential impacts of people on the environment based on existing models of sustainability science; categorize population dynamics; synthesize multi-scale state-territory relationship; construct their own index for human and economic development and evaluate it in terms of dominant theories of development. Students learn the foundational concepts in lecture and apply these concepts and through homework activities. Student will be evaluated through exams and homework assignments.

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

Human geography is a visual discipline, as it deals with maps and other representations of the earth's surface (e.g., satellite images, photographs) and human socio-spatial organization. Human geography also entails graphical characterizations of processes and patterns. Students learn to interpret and synthesize the information contained in these characterizations via lecture material, homework assignments, and exams. Students also conduct their own mapping and graphing, and communicate their interpretations in writing, particularly in the context of homework assignments.

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

Students encounter observable facts about human organization and social life in every component of the course, whether lectures or reading assignments or tests. Students grapple with linking conceptual models to empirical facts. Quantification is an inherent part of characterizing and identifying interconnections between people and places, and mapping social activities. For example, students may apply spatial diffusion models and the distance decay function to calculate and
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compare human settlement, migration patterns, and economic activity. Students may calculate and categorize levels of economic development across spatial scales and in terms of social and human development. They may use datasets, such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics, to calculate sectoral employment patterns by state and change over time. In addition, students use the index of dissimilarity to calculate racial and ethnic residential segregation at regional and city scales. They may calculate and predict demographic structural changes based on different assumptions about total fertility and mortality rates. Each learning objective will be addressed by lecture material on fundamental concepts supplemented by assignments and activities, and it is followed up by application to broader contexts. Each learning objective is evaluated by exams and graded activities.

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

Human geography develops the knowledge of self in the global context and the role of both the individual and community in relation to other places and societies. For example, students investigate core concepts in sustainability science to describe how social and economic activities have multiple costs and benefits across different environments over time. Students also examine uneven development and distribution of political and economic differences globally. Social responsibility will be addressed in lecture and evaluated in multiple-choice exams.

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