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?

The course studies the interactions between groups, institutions and events in shaping society and culture by reviewing the core literature in macrosociology and relating the findings in this literature to the empirical configurations of actual historical societies. A broad range of social scientific dependent variables is considered including economic growth, the rational bureaucratic administration of institutions, crime, ethnic mobilization, social protest and the forces of cohesion and division in society. Empirical materials and materials involving rigorous social scientific methodology are used to illustrate the scientific generation of propositions concerning social change at the national and global level. Emphasis is upon how theories of human and institutional behavior are tested and evaluated with empirical evidence. While historical patterns are analyzed, emphasis is upon global change that has occurred in the last 50 years. In particular, new technologies and their effect upon global interactions (including war and conflict) are analyzed.

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):

The course is offered in two versions – a writing intense version and a non-writing intense version. In the writing intense version, students are given paper assignments that involve selecting among alternative models of social change and applying these models to concrete historical cases given in the reading. The first task teaches analysis; the second task teaches synthesis of information and application of theoretical knowledge to new settings. In the exam-based version of the course – shorter and easier versions of these tasks are given to be responded to spontaneously in essay form.
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Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication):

The writing intense version of this course involves the writing of several papers, plus formal lecture and classwork on the techniques of effective writing and presentation. The exam version of the course evaluates students' capacity to explain complex sociological ideas, to describe actual historical societies and social formations and to explain sociological reasoning on simpler questions on a more impromptu basis. Oral communication is developed and assessed through class discussion (especially in small classes) and through class presentations. Visual communication is developed through analysis of charts, graphs, and content analysis of documents and videos. This is assessed with presentations, exams and papers.

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

Both versions of the class present quantitative indicators of social development and social performance. Furthermore, empirical skill in macrosociology often involves historical literacy rather than numeracy per se. Students have to be able to accurately describe societies and social formations that are not their own and do so without "Americanizing" or "falsely modernizing" the distinctive characteristics of the culture and time. This will be assessed through in-class discussion, analyses in papers and exams.

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

The course devotes substantial attention to questions of global poverty, crime, corruption, overt conflict and towards the end of the course, genocide. The course material covers causes of these problems and addresses potential solutions. Explicit attention is given towards what individuals can do to interact with the great forces that turn the wheels of history. This is assessed through in-class discussions and exercises.

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