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 examines the historical and contemporary effects of military institutions and the experience of war on democratic society. We structure our examination by use of three major conceptual perspectives: how wars and democracies affect one another; how democracies control their militaries and the use of force; and how democracies adapt to the waging of chronic war. The objective of the course is to see how and why wars of certain kinds require military organizations that sometimes promote and sometimes challenge the well being of democratic societies. Students should leave the course with a sociological understanding of the challenges modern democracies confront given the ever-changing character of war. Students should be able to create analytic arguments, making claims well grounded in theory and evidence, to address enduring controversies about the experience of war and the ways war and preparations for war affect democratic society.

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 element will be developed by the use, whenever possible, of course readings that take opposing stands on particular controversial theoretical issues. This conflict will spur students to reflect on their readings and on class discussions, to do the creative and innovative work of trying to resolve the conflict. Their success in this endeavor will be evaluated by the instructor’s assessment of several written argumentative essays, the topics for which require a synthetic evaluation of the relative worth of conflicting information.

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

This element develops oral and written communication skills. Skills in oral argument will be evaluated by the instructor’s assessment of student performance in designated interactive discussion sessions. Skills in written argument will be evaluated by the instructor’s assessment of student essays. Significantly for this element, student papers will be assessed in part by how well they are written to persuade different primary audiences—general, scholarly, and political or other social leaders. The goal is to facilitate student abilities to present theories and evidence in ways that are accurate, simple, and direct. Visual communication skills are developed and assessed through students’ ability to read and then create graphs, charts and tables to depict trends.
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Empirical and Quantitative Skills (to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions):

With this element, the instructor evaluates the written works of students to assess their grasp of relevant sociological concepts and the uses of historical, comparative and quantitative methods. The evaluation includes assessment of the student’s ability to interpret basic statistics and different kinds of data presentations. It includes a rudimentary awareness of when and why some methods are sometimes preferred over others. In all, the instructor evaluates the student’s ability to link theory and data to make a logically sound and persuasive argument based on evidence.

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

Ours is an era when war is prevalent, affecting both the quality of military organization and democratic society. Yet understanding how war, military and society are related is an important (perhaps neglected) social and civic responsibility on which this course is focused. This element will be evaluated through the instructor’s assessment of students’ written and classroom work, in which students are asked to analyze major controversies basic to democratic social responsibility. The evaluation assesses what students know about how war and preparation for war affects the character and wellbeing of society, nationally and globally.

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