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 morality on society. We structure our examination by use of four major conceptual perspectives: how moral codes emerge; how moral orders are maintained over time; how moral orders sometimes collapse and require repair; and whether there is an international moral order. The objective of the course is to describe the social processes by which moral orders rise and fall in particular times and places. Students should leave the course with a clearer understanding that moral orders are objective and changeable social facts that may be studied sociologically, and social scientifically, no matter how we answer the philosophical question, are morals “really real.” Students should also leave with a clearer understanding of the various roles moral orders play to shape the course of society, both on a large scale and a small. Students should be able to create analytic arguments about how moral orders arise, change, and sometimes fail and to address the ways sociological study of morality may clarify contemporary debates about moral controversies we face.

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, visual, 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 is involved in the development and assessment of maps, charts, and graphs that summarize and elucidate information.
Texas A&M University

Core Curriculum

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

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 society is riven by moral differences and moral conflict, with terrific consequences for how we define our social responsibility to care for one another, assuming we accept that social responsibility is real. The element will be evaluated by instructor’s evaluation of students’ written and classroom work. In their work, students employ a sociological—an empirical and critical—approach to describe how various moral orders work in society. They assess from a sociological perspective what social consequences moral change (or moral stability) may have. Evaluation of this work allows the instructor to assess the extent to which students can exercise social responsibility, using sociological insights as a means by which to clarify why morals matter, whether in local neighborhoods or distant fields of battle.

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