Foundation Document for Interdisciplinary Humanities 280r

IHUM 280r classes are designed to raise awareness in students that the study of the humanities is not merely about cultural literacy or an anthropological understanding of cultures but also a way of asking and seeking answers to questions of profound import regarding the human condition. As such they are designed to help develop critical thinking along with analytical reasoning and writing skills in GE students as well as students who are just beginning the IHum major.. These classes are designed to be fundamentally interdisciplinary and pose essential questions of what the humanities are and how they help us to better engage issues associated with non-humanities disciplines such as science, law, medicine, business, etc. They should also encourage students to develop a lifetime of learning and service to humanity by helping them to better understand the ways in which the humanities help deal with the difficult questions confronted by society. Class sizes should be capped at around 25 to allow for more teacher-student interaction that will be crucial for exploring the challenging questions raised by the class. The course satisfies the GE requirements for LETTERS

Expected learning outcomes:

After completing this course successful students will…

- be able to demonstrate an informed awareness of and appreciation for the humanities and how they engage important issues and questions confronting the world's societies today;
- have developed critical thinking skills—both verbal and written—that will enable them to integrate the skills from various fields of knowledge in thoughtfully considering the broad social, moral, cultural, and ecological implications of textual and artistic expressions;
- be able to engage with current scholarly and aesthetic discourse about the relationship between the humanities and areas such as law, religion, popular culture, the environment, etc.;
- develop a life-long appreciation for the value of the arts and literature in exploring and answering the difficult questions facing our society and culture.

GE Learning Outcomes for the Letters Requirement:

- demonstrate skills in critical reading as they analyze primary historical, philosophical, theological, or literary texts as artifacts worthy of study in themselves,
- demonstrate they can interpret and appreciate texts in their contexts, understanding a writer's cultural background, purpose, audience, and rhetorical strategies (like argument or figurative language),
- show they can evaluate texts for their power to shape culture and their spiritual insight.

Assessment Measures:

- writing assignments
    - a total of 12-15 pages of graded writing broken up over 3-4 assignments on carefully designed questions
    - A variety of other forms of "low-stakes" writing that guides the students in meaningful reflection upon the readings and topics of the class especially in light of their own experiences and other studies
- short oral presentations

- While certain research expectations might be a part of various written or oral presentation assignments, they should not involve specialized research skills developed in prerequisite classes. These courses should be open to all students from across the university.
- Carefully constructed creative projects may be used as an effective way of helping the students to engage the course material and lead to greater self-reflection.
- written mid-term and final exams designed to gauge critical thinking and analytical skills
- short self-reflection papers
    - to help the students understand their own relationship to the environment and to the artistic process and assess their ability to integrate readings, discussion, and lectures into their thought on key topics.

Course Design Guidelines:

- Course should invite students to consider over-arching, knotty questions facing contemporary society through the lens of the humanities.
- Readings and assignments should be tailored for a general education/non-specialist class.
- Classes will need to teach some of the basic skills of humanistic study such as writing techniques and the tools for basic critical analysis but this should be done through an engagement with the subject matter and not as an end in and of itself.
- Instructors are encouraged to include a service-learning component to the course.

Flexible Titles for IHUM 280r:

- Humanities and the Sacred
- Humanities and Law
- Humanities and Popular Culture
- Humanities and the Environment
- Humanities and Science