Undergraduate Course Descriptions

GENERAL STUDIES PROGRAM (GSP)

Freshman Year

PROSE COMPOSITION

Prose Composition I and II

Prose Composition I and II comprise a two-semester writing sequence in which students develop analytical thinking abilities in the context of academic essay writing. Prose Composition I has two main objectives. The first is to develop students’ self-confidence and fluency by engaging them in the use of writing to express, explore, and develop ideas through a variety of forms, including informal writing (free writing, journal writing, etc.). The second objective is to engage them in practicing the critical and analytical skills they will use throughout their two years in GSP’s writing-intensive program. The course is conducted as a workshop. Students produce a wide range of writing, both in and out of class, which forms the basis for classroom activities. All papers go through multiple drafts, often with input from peers in addition to the instructor.

In Prose Composition II, students develop their skills in analysis and argumentation by exploring the ways in which the ideas of others can be incorporated into their own writing. Students read and discuss longer, more challenging texts; in their own writing, students are expected to incorporate a broad range of primary and secondary sources to develop and support their increasingly complex ideas. Students are familiarized with a wide variety of possible resources at the library and learn the mechanics and conventions of the academic research essay. The course fosters in-class participation, collaborative learning, and workshop presentations.

In addition to the standard sections of Prose Composition II described above, GSP offers two specialized Prose Composition II sections. These sections are designed for students pursuing a major in visual and performing arts, teaching, or social work or for anyone interested in combining the Prose Composition II class experience with a community service project.

Prose Composition II: The World Through Art

Students pursuing degrees in the visual and performing arts can take The World Through Art, a writing course that fulfills the Prose Composition II requirement. The course focuses on artistic and ethical issues concerning the artist and his or her relationship to the University, the community, and the world. Students read texts and write papers connected to the thematic work of the class. The readings include classic and modern texts about aesthetic theory and the cultural and ethical implications of artistic production and performance.

Prose Composition II: Service Learning

Service Learning fulfills the Prose Composition II writing requirement for students pursuing careers in social work or teaching as well as for others
who wish to expand their education through community service. Students read a variety of texts related to education and social issues and develop independent research projects by participating in volunteer work that is meaningful to them and to the communities they serve. This work culminates in a final paper combining ethnography, personal experience, and critical reflection.

CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS

Cultural Foundations I

This course introduces the concept of the self from antiquity through the Middle Ages, focusing on how individuals and social relations are portrayed in literature, in the visual and performing arts, and through music. Ideas and images of the self are examined within the context of their origins in the classical, Judaic, Christian, and Near Eastern traditions and their development through the multiple discourses and traditions that converge in the Middle Ages. Conceptions of the divine and heroic, power and disenfranchisement, and beauty and love are examined. Texts may concern Homeric epics, the Bible, the Egyptian necropolis, Greek and Roman drama, Socratic dialogues, classical and medieval sculpture and architecture, Byzantine icons and murals, illuminated manuscripts, Gregorian chants, troubadour love poetry and medieval romance, and the Gothic cathedral and the Islamic mosque.

Cultural Foundations II

This course continues the thematic and historical lines of development begun in Cultural Foundations I and follows them to the beginning of the modern era. Students continue the examination of the self as it is embodied in a variety of ideals, values, and practices. Particular emphasis is placed on three areas of tension: ancient and modern, self and other, and masculine and feminine. These key dichotomies are examined in successive periods of rebirth and revolution as societies and individuals struggle to redefine human culture and its possibilities. Texts may concern Shakespearean drama, Renaissance portraiture, Restoration comedy, baroque architecture, the opera, the novel, romantic lyric, autobiography, travelogues, slave narratives, and the bildungsroman.

SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS

Social Foundations I

This course introduces the primary questions of philosophic, religious, political, social, and historical discourse. The texts raise the enduring questions of the relationships between the individual person, the environment, the community, the polity, and the divine. Special attention is paid to the development of analytic techniques and the language of critical discussion. Texts are chosen from among the major writers of antiquity and the Middle Ages such as Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides, Cicero, Seneca, St. Augustine, Einhard, and St. Thomas Aquinas and from historic texts such as the Koran and the Bible.

Social Foundations II

This course continues the examination of philosophic, religious, political, social, and historical ideas from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment and the revolutions of the 18th century. This course studies the clash of ideas and values as the Renaissance and Reformation confront the medieval heritage, as science confronts religious cosmology, and as notions of liberty and equality confront traditional authority. Texts are chosen from among the major writers of the period such as Petrarch, Machiavelli, Sir Thomas More, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Galileo, Montaigne, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and the Federalists.

GLOBAL CULTURES

African Cultures
This course will introduce students to the great diversity of peoples, places and cultures in the vast African continent. Students will use a variety of sources, historical texts, literature and film to explore the paradigms of traditional cultures of pre-colonial societies, and the disruptions of those structures by the incursions of Islam and European colonialism. Such sources will also be used to explore the de-colonization of the continent with its attendant struggles for independence, and post-liberation problems. Furthermore, there may be some coverage of other topics, such as modernity’s impact on cultural roles and the transformation of African cultures in the Diaspora.

**East Asian Cultures**

The introduction to East Asian cultures will cover one or more of the countries in the area, i.e. China, Japan, Korea. Given each nation’s millennia-long history, only selected aspects of a country’s traditional or modern culture will be presented. The approach to the study of these aspects may include some of the area’s Great Books, as well as other literary, political, philosophical, religious and/or artistic works from traditional, modern and/or contemporary periods. Issues raised may include national or cultural identity against colonialism/imperialism, East-West tensions, modernism’s clash with tradition, the persistence of tradition within the modern, the East Asian Diaspora, and the question of East Asian modernities.

**Latin American Cultures**

This course is intended to give a general view of the great diversity in the areas south of the United States. Given the influences of Europe, the United States, Africa and indigenous Indian cultures on the region’s varied cultures and societies, the course may cover different topics and time periods in different classes, such as the historical background to the social, political, economic and/or ethnohistorical issues of the 20th-21st centuries; or an exploration of the artistic developments in different countries and their relationship to larger societal problems. Course materials will reflect the focus of a particular class.

**Middle Eastern Cultures**

This is a general, inter-disciplinary introduction to the societies, cultures, politics and history of the contemporary Middle East and Islamic north Africa. Texts on sociological, historical and political topics, as well as artistic expressions, films and literary works, may be utilized to examine the region’s rich historical legacy and current complexity. Topics may include the historical and cultural relations between the Middle East and the West; and the impact of historical, economic, and political change on the region’s cultures, societies and contemporary problems.

**South Asian Cultures**

This introduction is to provide a broad understanding of the societal developments of the Indian sub-continent. The countries may include India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and/or Sri Lanka. Coverage may focus on the pre-modern, modern and/or contemporary aspects of the region’s experiences, which span thousands of years. A variety of materials, from fictional and nonfictional texts to video and film, may be used to explore the interactions of tradition and change in different time periods, or such issues as colonialism, sectarianism, and modernization.

**NATURAL SCIENCES**

**Environmental Studies**

Through the application of fundamental physical and chemical processes, humans attempt to harness the environment for their particular needs. In examining this most significant dimension of modern life, this course emphasizes both its harmful and beneficial aspects and deals with such topics as air and water pollution, transportation, energy resources, and waste control. The political context in which these problems occur is also
examined.

**History of the Universe**

This course deals with the history of events in the cosmos leading up to the formation of the solar system and the appearance of life on Earth. Topics include the origin of the universe; the birth and death of stars; the formation of the solar system; terrestrial and giant planets; properties of the Earth, the Moon, Mars, and Venus as seen from earthbound and spacecraft observations; the origin and history of life on Earth; the impact of astronomical and geological changes on biological evolution; life and intelligence in the cosmos; and philosophical implications in the synthesis of astronomy, earth sciences, and the history of life.

**Life Science**

This course examines the fundamental principles and processes of biological science. Topics include the structure and physiology of the cell; energy transformations; the major systems of the body (digestive, respiratory, circulatory, excretory, endocrine, nervous, skeletal, muscular, and reproductive); the synthesis of materials; genetics; and the heredity of selected organisms, with special emphasis on the human species.

**Sophomore Seminars**

**Topics in Modern Culture**

**Topics in Modern Society**

**ELECTIVES**

**Economics I**

This is the first part of a two-semester introductory sequence dealing with economic principles. The course introduces basic concepts of macroeconomic theory. Topics include unemployment; inflation; aggregate demand; income determination and stabilization policies; fiscal and monetary policies; and the Keynesian monetarist debate over stabilization policy.

**Economics II**

This is the second part of a two-semester introductory sequence dealing with economic principles. The course introduces basic concepts of microeconomic theory by examining price theory and its applications. Topics include consumer demand and choice; indifference curve analysis; big business and public policy; and factor markets and the distribution of income.

**Creative Writing I**

This course is designed for students who have mastered basic writing skills but seek guidance in the fine points of literary craftsmanship. While students are free to work in any medium, they are encouraged to experiment with professional creative writing techniques such as exposition, narration, description, characterization, monologue, stream of consciousness, dialogue, and dramatization.

**Creative Writing II**

This course focuses on in-class discussion of student manuscripts. Attention is given to point of view; structure as a means of arousing and satisfying curiosity; and effective use of analogy, irony, metaphor, and symbol. In individual conferences, students discuss their personal writing problems and learn how to edit their own work for syntactical precision. Underlying all work—at home, in class, and in conference—is concern for individual style.