

Guidelines
Course Submissions for General Education (GE) Credit
Foundations of Society and Culture

Mission Statement

The aim of courses in this area is to introduce students to the ways in which humans organize, structure, rationalize, and govern their diverse societies and cultures over time. These courses focus on a particular historical question, societal problem, or topic of political and economic concern in an effort to demonstrate to students how issues are objectified for study, how data is collected and analyzed and how new understandings of social phenomena are achieved and evaluated.

Given this mission, the faculty workgroup that reviewed and certified GE courses in the Foundations of Society and Culture in 2002 ruled that for courses to receive GE credit in this area they need to be focused on the following:

- A society's historical development and/or its political, social, cultural, and economic arrangements and institutions; and
- Some of the principal theoretical approaches and methods common to the work of scholars in history and the social sciences.

Subcategories of Society and Culture: Historical Analysis and Social Analysis**Course Content**

In order for a course to carry either historical or social analysis GE credit, it must do more than just consider the historical and/or social context of a cultural, intellectual, artistic, or scientific phenomenon, e.g., rock in the Sixties; existentialism in the 20th century; baroque painting; developments in human genetics. The mere fact that an object of study is situated in the past within a given society does not necessarily guarantee that a course dealing with it will afford its students an adequate introduction to the concerns, methods, and findings of scholars in history and the social sciences.

Instead, a GE course carrying historical and/or social analysis GE credit must introduce students to the ways in which a given topic can be used to address questions regarding how societies are organized and governed, as well as how their different social, political, and economic arrangements are rationalized and legitimized. For example, a course on Homer's *Odyssey* that carries either historical and/or social analysis credit would need to demonstrate how this text can be used to address such topics as kingship, family structure, communal arrangements, subsistence economics, and religious belief structures in Archaic Greece.

Concurrently, there is an expectation that the readings and assignments in such a course (see *Assignments*) would also familiarize its students with some of the methods that scholars in history and the social sciences use to discover, evaluate, and communicate knowledge.

Course Format

There is an expectation that all large lecture courses carrying Society and Culture GE credit should have discussion sections that meet for at least 50 minutes each week and enroll no more than 25 students (preferably 15-20).

Assignments

Courses carrying either historical or social analysis GE credit should demonstrate in their syllabi how their assignments—readings, writing, field trips, presentations—familiarize a student with both the subject matter of history and/or the social sciences, as well as the various ways in which scholars in these fields do their work. Consequently

- A course carrying historical analysis credit is expected to make substantial use of primary texts in their study of a given period, society, or civilization, as well as demonstrate the special challenges attendant on the use and interpretation of these materials.
- A course carrying social analysis credit should typically deploy cultural, political or economic theory and a variety of empirical methodologies to describe and investigate the structure of social relations, their evolution, and how they shape our views of the world.
- Whether or not a course carries historical and/or social analysis credit, there is an expectation that its students will be required to do a certain amount of written work. This includes writing assignments that require them to analyze and evaluate both primary evidence and scholarship in history and the social sciences, as well as present and defend an argument of their own on given topics.