

GE Civic and Cultural Literacy: American Cultures, Governance and History – Provisional Course Approval Description – draft 5-08

I. Regulations

The U.C. Davis Requirements for Higher Degrees, Regulation 522, sets forth the Baccalaureate Degree Requirement in General Education. Civic and Cultural Literacy, a component of Core Literacies (522-C), includes the requirement for 6 units of courses in American Cultures, Governance and History, of which at least 3 units must be in domestic diversity (522-C-2).

Regulation 523 sets forth the Criteria for General Education Certification of courses, stating “A course in American Cultures, Governance and History provides an understanding of the historical processes, institutional structures, and core analytic skills necessary to think critically about the nature of citizenship, government and social relations in the United States.” (523-C-4) A course in Domestic Diversity provides an understanding of issues such as race, ethnicity, social class, gender, sexuality, and religion within the United States, and develops the student’s ability to think critically about diverse socio-cultural perspectives.” (523-C-4a).

II. Interpretation: Core Literacy in American Cultures, Governance and History (at least 6 units, of which at least 3 units must be in domestic diversity)

The objective of this core literacy is to prepare students to take up the responsibilities and demands of citizenship in an increasingly interconnected and diverse nation. Here, civic literacy is defined by the ability to bring historical understanding and analytic skills to participation in the civic spheres of society, and the ability to think analytically about the nature of citizenship, government and social relations in the United States. Cultural literacy is defined as an understanding of the socio-cultural diversity of the United States and of the relationships between these diverse cultures and larger patterns of national history and institutions.

Courses that fulfill the American civic literacy section of this requirement must present issues pertinent to US governance or history and analyze major forces underlying historical events and political institutions within the US. The goal is to help students develop the necessary skills to understand how US governance and history result from past and ongoing interplay between a wide range of political and social interests. Courses may, but are not required to, introduce a comparative dimension into the core content by including analysis of perspectives of different constituencies.

Courses that fulfill the American domestic diversity (cultural literacy) section of this requirement must fully integrate a consideration of patterned differences that characterize human populations ---particularly differences of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion or social class --- as determinants of issues pertinent to US cultures, governance or history. The goal is to help students develop skills for critically examining the social

structures from which culture emerges, with an emphasis on diverse socio-cultural perspectives on these issues. Courses may train students in cultural literacy by examining networks of social relations (family, peers, community organizations), institutions (schools, media, government agencies, courts, corporations, churches, the military), or cultural production.

Education Abroad Program courses may be used to satisfy the GE American Cultures, Governance and History Literacy requirements if they meet these criteria.

III. Guiding Questions for Courses fulfilling GE Core Literary in American Cultures, Governance and History

1. Relevance: Which specific aspects of American cultures, governance, or history are addressed by the course? Is the course meant to satisfy the Domestic Diversity portion of the core literacy?
2. Specific Content: How does this course address the goals of the American civic literacy requirement or the American domestic diversity (cultural literacy) requirement, as outlined above?
3. Approach: How does the course provide an opportunity to develop understanding and analytic skills?
4. Assessment: How will the course assess whether its goals have been achieved in the students' academic performance (i.e., sample test questions, paper topics, etc.)?