

WEINBERG COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES
Proposed modifications to the Weinberg College degree requirements
Fall 2018

Background

The ad hoc Committee on Degree Requirements (CDR) was appointed in the winter of 2016 by Dean Adrian Randolph to conduct a comprehensive review of Weinberg College's degree requirements and to recommend revisions that will best serve the needs and interests of our students. The timing of this undertaking coincided with the publication in December 2015 of the final report of the university-wide Faculty Task Force on the Undergraduate Academic Experience. Moreover, a major impetus for this committee's formation was the clear call from students and faculty at Northwestern (and across the USA) for a requirement in the area of social inequalities and diversities.

Charge to the Weinberg College CDR

- Engage with faculty, students, College leadership, and others to review the College's curriculum and degree requirements.
- Develop a set of learning outcomes that capture the skill-set and mind-set that should characterize a Weinberg College graduate.
- Closely examine the current Weinberg College curriculum and degree requirements, and recommend revisions that address curricular deficiencies or opportunities for strengthening that come to light as requirements are mapped to desired learning outcomes. Particularly close attention should be paid to the general education requirements and to the proposed social inequalities and diversity requirement.

Timeline of main CDR-related activities

Fall 2017 [CDR final report](#) submitted to Dean Randolph
Spring 2018 Foundational Disciplines Convention held to articulate learning goals for each of the six foundational disciplines
Fall 2018 Proposed modifications to the Weinberg College Degree Requirements submitted to the Weinberg College Curriculum Policy Committee

For additional details see the [CDR website](#).

Major proposed modifications

1. Introduction of college-wide learning goals: *Observe, Critique, Reflect, Express*
2. Introduction of two overlay requirements: *When Cultures Meet - USA* and *When Cultures Meet – Global*
3. Restructured writing requirement: one *First-Year Writing Seminar* and one course in Year 2 or later in *Advanced Expression*
4. Modified goals for the *Fall Quarter First-Year Seminar*
5. Updated names, descriptions, and learning goals for the *Foundational Disciplines* (the 'distros')

For additional details see: [Proposal to the Weinberg College Curriculum Policy Committee](#)

WEINBERG COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Proposed modifications to the Weinberg College degree requirements -- Fall 2018

Overview

| Current Weinberg College degree requirements (Total of 45 credits) | Proposed Weinberg College degree requirements (Total of 45 credits) |
|---|---|
| | <u>Overarching learning goals:</u> The Weinberg College degree requirements are guided by a set of overarching imperatives that Weinberg students develop in their undergraduate studies and continuously throughout their lives – <i>Observe, Critique, Reflect, Express.</i> [See note 1 below.] |
| <u>First-Year Seminars:</u> You must take two seminars over the course of your first year. | <u>First-Year Fall Quarter Seminar</u> You must take one <i>First-Year Fall Quarter Seminar</i> . [See note 2 below.] |
| <u>Writing proficiency:</u> All students in Weinberg College are required to demonstrate writing proficiency. To demonstrate your proficiency, you must write satisfactorily in two courses at Northwestern. Typically, these courses are first-year seminars. Students who do not complete the writing proficiency requirement through first-year seminars take other courses, or they sometimes choose to submit a writing portfolio instead. | <u>Written and Spoken Expression</u> You must take one <i>First-Year Writing Seminar</i> after the fall quarter of the first year, and one 300-level course that satisfies the <i>Advanced Expression</i> learning goals. [See note 3 below.] |
| <u>Foreign language proficiency:</u> You must demonstrate proficiency through AP scores, department testing, or Northwestern coursework. | <u>Proficiency in a language other than English</u> You must demonstrate (through department testing or Northwestern coursework) proficiency up to the level equivalent to 6 quarters of college-level language study in a language other than English. |
| <u>Distribution requirements:</u> You must take two courses in each of six intellectual areas. | <u>Foundational Disciplines</u> You must take two courses in each of six foundational intellectual areas. [See note 4 below.] |
| <u>Major in a field of study:</u> You must choose and complete a major. Minors, second majors, and adjunct majors are optional ways to concentrate on other fields. | <u>Specialization:</u> You must choose and complete a major. Minors, second majors, and adjunct majors are optional ways to concentrate on other fields. |
| | <u>When-Cultures-Meet Overlays</u> You must take two courses that satisfy the <i>When-Cultures-Meet</i> learning goals, one that focuses on cultural interactions in the USA and one with a global orientation. [See note 5 below.] |

Notes

1. Overarching learning goals

The Weinberg College degree requirements are guided by a set of overarching imperatives that Weinberg students develop in their undergraduate studies and continuously throughout their lives – **Observe, Critique, Reflect, Express**. Rather than representing distinct skills or competencies that can be clearly delineated from each other, we view this set of four imperatives as characterizing the active process of understanding, or intellection, that Weinberg students develop in their courses as well as in their extra- and co-curricular activities.

| Weinberg students learn to... | This means... |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Observe | Weinberg students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cultivate curiosity • seek encounters with the world, both on campus and beyond |
| Critique | Weinberg students develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ability to make reasoned decisions • the ingenuity to develop hypotheses based on empirical evidence • the critical skills to become informed interpreters of information • an understanding of how to approach a moral problem • the capacity to differentiate between trustworthy and unreliable information |
| Reflect | Weinberg students gain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a consciousness and understanding of their place in the world that is both historical and global • an understanding that one's perspective is the product of interconnected webs of people, ideas, and events |
| Express | Weinberg students improve their ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • articulate their ideas in oral, written, visual, digital, and other media • assemble narratives, explanations, data, and arguments that navigate carefully ordered evidence |

2. First Year Fall Quarter (Q1) Seminar

| Current requirement | Proposed requirement |
|---|---|
| <u>First-Year Seminars</u> : You must take two seminars over the course of your first year. | <u>First-Year Fall Quarter Seminar</u> : You must take one <i>First-Year Fall Quarter Seminar</i> . |

First year seminars are small classes in which faculty members from across the college help students hone the skills essential to thriving in a diverse and inclusive academic community. All seminars reflect the particular scholarly interests of the faculty so that students can engage in this learning within the context of an academic field that interests them.

In first-quarter first-year seminars students gain skills in:

- setting and evaluating academic goals
- communicating effectively, both orally and in writing
- studying effectively
- thinking critically
- understanding standards of academic integrity
- knowing when and how to ask for help

Note:

- Faculty members will be invited to submit proposals that explain how they would include exercises/materials, etc. to help students achieve these goals. A bibliography and/or a teaching resource website will be made available to faculty.
- Consider P/N grading for this course.

3. Written and Spoken Expression

| Current requirement | Proposed requirement |
|--|--|
| <p><u>Writing proficiency</u>: All students in Weinberg College are required to demonstrate writing proficiency. To demonstrate your proficiency, you must write satisfactorily in two courses at Northwestern. Typically, these courses are first-year seminars. Students who do not complete the writing proficiency requirement through first-year seminars take other courses, or they sometimes choose to submit a writing portfolio instead.</p> | <p><u>Written and Spoken Expression</u> You must take one <i>First-Year Writing Seminar</i> after the fall quarter of the first year, and one 300-level course that satisfies the <i>Advanced Expression</i> learning goals.</p> |

First-Year Writing Seminar: Focus on the fundamentals of effective, college-level written communication.

- Learning goals, resource and orientation document to be developed by/in consultation with faculty in the Cook Family Writing Program
- Winter or spring quarter of the first year
- Topic-based with small enrollment

Advanced Expression: Focus on effective communication, be it through writing, speaking or other modes of communication, in specific disciplinary or interdisciplinary contexts.

- The *Advance Expression* requirement can be fulfilled by writing an honors thesis or by taking a 300-level course that offers students the opportunity (through at least one assignment) to:
 - understand and emulate field-specific conventions and protocols for communicating findings to a range of audiences
 - develop the relationship between their voice and field-specific norms of expression, aiming to achieve control over persuasive rhetoric

- May be taken in any quarter beyond the first year
- Taught within department-based curricular offerings; connected to particular fields of study
- Learning goals and assignments can be incorporated into new and/or existing courses by departments and programs. These may be developed by/in consultation with Bob Gundlach, Director of the Cook Family Writing Program.

| Summary of proposed changes to the writing requirement and First Year Seminars | |
|---|--|
| Current: | 2 courses in Year 1 (First Year Seminars) Writing Proficiency typically demonstrated by FYS instructor’s signature verifying that the student is able to “write satisfactorily” |
| Proposed: | 1 course in Year 1 (First-Year Writing Seminar) 1 300-level course in Year 2 or later that satisfies the <i>Advanced Expression</i> learning goals |

4. Foundational Disciplines

| Current requirement | Proposed requirement |
|--|--|
| <u>Distribution requirements:</u> You must take two courses in each of six intellectual areas. | <u>Foundational Disciplines:</u> You must take two courses in each of six foundational intellectual areas. |

The proposed names, descriptions, and learning goals for the six foundational disciplines, as submitted by faculty delegates at the Foundational Disciplines Convention (FDC) on June 15, 2018, are included at the end of this document.

5. When-Cultures-Meet Overlays

You must take two courses that satisfy the When-Cultures-Meet learning goals, one that focuses on cultural interactions in the USA and one with a global orientation.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>When Cultures Meet - USA Addresses the impact of histories, institutions, and/or social structures on groups and on individuals in the United States, focusing on the interconnected issues of equality/inequality and justice/injustice.</p> <p>Courses satisfying this overlay offer students the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn about the past, present and possible futures of this country by considering the intersection of identities, politics, and economics in public and private spheres | <p>When Cultures Meet - Global Explores varieties of human cultures through time and space, paying particularly close attention to the intricacies of cultural interactions—be they marked by war, peace, tension, inequality, or creativity—and to the grand challenges we face today in promoting understanding across traditional cultural boundaries.</p> <p>Courses satisfying this overlay offer students the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study the beliefs and practices of more than one cultural tradition through a lens that emphasizes cultural meetings |
|---|---|

| | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• develop reasoned arguments that take into account the wide range of approaches to issues, institutions, and structures that help define the social life in the United States today | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• marshal information and develop informed analyses of cultural interactions on local, regional, national, and/or global scales |
|--|---|

This two-part transdisciplinary overlay aims to infuse the Weinberg College curriculum with active discussions about how to navigate the local-global continuum amidst the complex and highly dynamic social and political movements of today and in the past. In particular, these overlays ask students to reflect on their own perspective as necessarily the product of interconnected webs of people, ideas, and events.

Transdisciplinary overlays do not add to the number of required courses. Instead overlays introduce a series of lenses through which courses across the curriculum can be viewed. Importantly, overlays introduce a nimble structural element to the overall curriculum that can be continuously updated and adjusted without requiring adjustment to other components of the curriculum.

Appendix

Proposed names, descriptions, and learning goals for the six foundational disciplines, as submitted by faculty delegates at the Foundational Disciplines Convention (FDC) on June 15, 2018.

| Current description | Proposed names, descriptions, and learning goals |
|---|--|
| <p>AREA I: NATURAL SCIENCES</p> <p>This area introduces you to methods of inquiry and fundamental concepts in the natural sciences. Courses consider the theoretical and empirical bases of generally applicable statements about the natural world.</p> <p>WHY STUDY THE NATURAL SCIENCES?</p> <p>Because the natural world so directly affects our lives, it is important to learn about the problems that concern natural scientists and the methods they use to confront them. The properties and structures of atoms and molecules, the principles of cognition, the structure and resources of the earth—all are examples of scientific concerns that underlie issues of fundamental importance to modern society. Understanding the foundations of modern science will enable you to make intelligent judgments about current issues and prepare you to understand those that cannot yet be anticipated.</p> | <p>Natural Sciences</p> <p>The Natural Sciences use a combination of observation, experimentation, and modeling to understand features and mechanisms of the natural world at all levels, from the subatomic scale to the cosmos. Discoveries in the Natural Sciences inform invention and the development of new technologies to solve problems; conversely, new technologies advance discovery and the creation of new knowledge. Courses in the Natural Sciences convey our current understanding of the natural world and the methods by which this understanding is achieved through systematic hypothesis testing. Students learn to appreciate the evidence for our current understanding of nature; the scientific process; as well as the implications, utility, and limitations of scientific inquiry to solve problems and benefit society.</p> <p>Courses in the Natural Sciences are designed to achieve a combination of the following learning outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Demonstrate knowledge related to features and mechanisms of the natural world, including the history, major ideas, and research approaches relevant to various scientific disciplines;2) Formulate hypotheses and utilize skills to acquire, analyze, and interpret scientific data to test and revise these hypotheses;3) Appreciate the implications, utility, and limitations of scientific inquiry, both within the context of a particular field and more broadly for society;4) Articulate the scientific process and the significance of scientific advances, in written and/or oral form. |

| Current description | Proposed names, descriptions, and learning goals |
|--|---|
| <p>AREA II: FORMAL STUDIES</p> <p>The area of formal studies introduces you to concepts, methods, and the use of formal rules of inference. All formal studies courses show how objects of thought and experience—and their relationships—can be analyzed in formal terms. They differ, however, in the data studied. For example, mathematics and statistics courses focus on numbers, while linguistics courses focus on structures and patterns in natural languages.</p> <p>WHY TAKE COURSES IN FORMAL STUDIES?</p> <p>Becoming familiar with abstract languages or formal rules of inference, whether based on quantitative or symbolic methods, will enhance your ability to analyze and interpret masses of information intelligently, perceive patterns and order amid seeming confusion, and derive sound conclusions from explicit assumptions. It will also help you to communicate your reasoning and conclusions to others clearly and effectively.</p> | <p>Empirical and Deductive Reasoning</p> <p>We learn about the world in two main ways: empirically, from observations, and by making logical deductions from what we already know or conjecture. Courses in this discipline teach students to use these two modes of inference.</p> <p>Empirical conclusions, derived from observations about the world, come with uncertainties or probabilities. Courses in empirical reasoning teach students to apply statistical reasoning to interpret evidence, to estimate the uncertainties inherent in their conclusions, and to build theoretical models based on data.</p> <p>We also reason by deduction from axioms we take as certain, or from conjectural models of the real world. Courses in this discipline teach students both the power and limitations of such formal reasoning. Students will learn to create and analyze chains of mathematical or logical deductions, or computational algorithms.</p> <p>Courses in Empirical and Deductive Reasoning are designed to achieve a combination of the following learning outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Recognize empirical versus deductive modes of inference. 2) Articulate the power and the limitations of statistical reasoning, including the quantification of uncertainties in data. 3) Recognize the dangers of reasoning biases, including conclusions from anecdotal evidence, and the limits of when causal claims can be made from correlational data. 4) Learn to create and analyze formal models of real world phenomena. 5) Appreciate the power of abstraction in applying similar formal constructs to a range of different problems. 6) Learn to clearly and persuasively communicate both empirical and logical arguments, via writing, presentation, and graphical formats. |

| Current description | Proposed names, descriptions, and learning goals |
|--|--|
| <p>AREA III: SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES</p> <p>The area of social and behavioral sciences introduces you to theories, methods, and empirical research findings focusing on human behavior and its relation to social, cultural, economic, and political groups and institutions. Courses examine the evidence for generally applicable statements about individual and group behavior, as well as social actions, policies, and institutions.</p> <p>WHY STUDY SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES?</p> <p>It is vital to understand your social and institutional environment. What are the relationships between money supply, interest rates, and government spending on the one hand and unemployment, inflation, and balance-of-payment deficits on the other? What are the impacts of race, class, and gender on the social system? What factors influence human behavior and development? In confronting questions such as these, you learn how social and behavioral scientists form hypotheses, construct models, and test their validity. You will then be able to make more reasoned judgments about complex problems of modern society.</p> | <p>Social and behavioral Science</p> <p>We all exist in a complex web of social relationships. Social phenomena, ranging from the most intimate interpersonal interactions to widespread global political conflicts, influence the quality of our lives in countless ways. Social scientists use qualitative and quantitative methodologies to help us understand how we influence, and are influenced by, societal forces. Courses in this area introduce students to theories, methodological approaches, and empirical research findings pertaining to a full range of the human experience, from the level of the individual to that of familial, cultural, political, and institutional structures. Through study of the social sciences, students develop a deeper understanding of their own behavior as well as the complex problems of modern society.</p> <p>Courses in the Social and Behavioral Sciences prepare students to meet three or more of the following objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Recognize and articulate reciprocal relationships between societal forces (e.g., norms, laws, organizational structures), psychological forces (e.g., traits, motives, attitudes), and the behaviors of individuals and groups. 2) Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of social science theories related to the influence of culture and power on the behavior of individuals, interpersonal relationships, and/or group dynamics. 3) Use appropriate quantitative or qualitative research methodologies to observe, describe, understand, and predict human behavior and/or institutional actions. 4) Develop the ability to critique theories, claims, and policies in the social and behavioral sciences through careful evaluation of an argument's major assertions, assumptions, evidential basis, and explanatory utility. 5) Reflect upon the way in which theories and research from the social and behavioral sciences help elucidate the factors underlying contemporary social issues, social problems, and/or ethical dilemmas in the US and/or abroad, as well as inform potential solutions to societal problems. |

| Current description | Proposed names, descriptions, and learning goals |
|---|--|
| <p>AREA IV: HISTORICAL STUDIES</p> <p>The area of historical studies introduces the chronological development of cultural, social, political, economic, and military affairs, and their historical relationships, in a broad temporal perspective. Courses in historical studies offer a wide choice of cultures and eras. Some deal with major national or continental civilizations, some focus on smaller geographic areas, and some look at cultures that transcend traditional geopolitical boundaries.</p> <p>WHY TAKE COURSES IN HISTORICAL STUDIES?</p> <p>Current issues and institutions, ideas and social relations, and problems and policies all have their origins in the past. By learning about the past, you become able to make better judgments about the present. By studying what motivated people in the past, you can broaden your experience, gain a deeper understanding of human behavior, and bring a more mature assessment to your own life and the society in which you live.</p> | <p>Historical Studies</p> <p>Historical studies examine change over time in a wide variety of spheres, including beliefs, cultures, economics, intellectual thought, politics, and society. The scale and scope of offerings in this area range from the local or regional to the global and from the origins of human society to the present day. Students learn to assess, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary sources (for example, documents, testimonies, texts, artifacts, images) and use them to develop arguments in oral and written form. Courses in historical studies teach critical methods including: evaluation of evidence, understanding conditions under which historical actors operated, comprehension of cause and consequence, tracing patterns (continuities and ruptures), comparative analysis of sources, and modes of historical argumentation.</p> <p>Courses in Historical Studies are designed to achieve a combination of the following learning outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Acquire knowledge of historical phenomena (cultural, economic, intellectual, political, and social practices and their interdependent development over time in their local, regional, and/or global contexts) and become familiar with relevant primary and secondary sources. 2) Develop skills of historical analysis, including the means to evaluate sources; become acquainted with scholarly historical demonstration, discussion, and debate. 3) Appreciate the impact of historical developments; acquire historical perspective on the present; consider agency and subjectivity in the context of the times; reflect on the varieties of memory and experience. 4) Express the results of historical investigation effectively and persuasively in written, oral, and visual forms, and engage in debate with other narrators and interpreters of history, both past and present. |

| Current description | Proposed names, descriptions, and learning goals |
|--|---|
| <p>AREA V: ETHICS & VALUES</p> <p>This area introduces you to the analysis of values, to ways of addressing ethical problems and choices, and to systems of thought or religion that affect value judgments. Courses examine the foundations upon which such systems are constructed and the processes through which judgments are made. They examine ethical questions in different contexts (religious, biomedical, environmental, etc), and/or value systems, both secular and religious, that guide human behavior. Courses may also address the dynamics of ethical change in a society (e.g., why the separation of races may be acceptable to one generation but problematic to another). They may be organized historically or analytically, but all place problems in a context that has a widespread cultural impact.</p> <p>WHY TAKE COURSES ON ETHICS AND VALUES?</p> <p>Courses in ethics and values do not teach morality; however, they do teach how societies express morals and norms. They introduce students to the most significant types of human value systems and/or ethical decision making and examine ways in which such systems develop, spread, and change. Given the centrality of moral and ethical values to human conduct, a deeper understanding of their bases and potential consequences is critical.</p> | <p>Ethical and Evaluative Thinking</p> <p>All human cultures have produced systems of thought and belief concerning ways of being in the world and relating to one another. Courses in this distribution area equip students to engage these systems and wrestle with central human questions. Courses explicitly consider questions concerning values or teach students to think within, appreciate the resources of, and critically reflect upon a particular tradition of thought. Completing this distribution area will help students recognize and reflect on ethical and evaluative questions, become aware of what standards they bring to bear in answering them, appreciate and respect their own and other cultural systems, and work through disagreements with others.</p> <p>Courses in Ethics and Evaluative Thinking are designed to foster the intellectual autonomy students will need to thrive as thinkers and agents in an increasingly complex world.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Attain the conceptual tools needed to recognize and understand prescriptive issues, questions and claims, and to distinguish them from descriptive issues, questions, and claims. 2) Identify the values presupposed by an outlook or discourse. 3) Recognize the complexity of many ethical issues and consider a variety of alternative resolutions and the reasons for holding them. 4) Appreciate the insights available in one or more intellectual or cultural traditions. 5) Reflect upon one’s own answers to evaluative questions, the presuppositions informing them, and the reasons supporting them. 6) Engage in respectful, rigorous and constructive dialogue concerning evaluative issues and communicate thoughtfully and clearly about them. |

| Current description | Proposed names, descriptions, and learning goals |
|--|--|
| <p>VI: LITERATURE AND FINE ARTS</p> <p>Literature and fine arts courses help you understand how the attitudes, ideas, and values of individuals, groups, societies, or cultures are represented in their literature, arts, and other creative activities. This area includes surveys of broad topics, courses that focus on significant eras, and courses that focus on a significant writer or artist. Some courses involve the study of a specific literary or artistic genre, and others involve more analytical and abstract approaches to the arts.</p> <p>WHY STUDY LITERATURE AND FINE ARTS?</p> <p>Many people consider the art and literature of a culture a measure of that culture's highest achievements. Creative activities also represent a culture's identity—to itself and to others—providing unique access to its history, institutions, preoccupations, and aspirations. Studying literature and fine arts can help you better understand other cultures and your own.</p> | <p>Literature and Arts</p> <p>By taking courses in literature and art, students come to understand and appreciate the achievements of the creative imagination in a range of artistic forms and media. These include printed and oral literature, theater, music, the visual arts, and film and digital media. Students learn to describe, value, and critique such works; to identify and query the ideas and perspectives they represent; and to consider them as an array of aesthetic practices through which human beings have attempted to explore and transform their worlds. As students encounter the power of literature and art to imagine the breadth of human experience, they come to grasp the role of the arts in the evolution of human ways of knowing, being, feeling, and expressing. At the same time, students examine the historical, cultural, and social contexts in which creative works are produced, which they at once reflect and contest. In recognizing the many ways in which texts and artistic works create meaning, and by paying attention to the factors that influence such processes, students gain exposure to the descriptive vocabularies, theoretical approaches, and reading practices common to criticism on literature and the arts. What is more, they develop essential skills in critical thinking and cultural analysis that will make them more conscientious readers of texts, images, and objects of all kinds.</p> <p>Courses in Literature and Arts are designed to achieve the following learning outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Observe the forms, genres, and styles of literary and artistic expression through practices of close reading and analysis. 2) Gain awareness of the social, political, cultural, and historical factors influencing artistic expression, the relations between the artist and the public, and the potential of creative art to challenge or to affirm social and cultural norms. 3) Appreciate how literature and the arts reveal the differences and diversity, as well as the continuity and unity, of human cultures. 4) Produce acts of persuasive interpretation, analysis, and commentary on literature and art, both spoken and written. 5) By emulating the subtleties of literature and art, students develop their writing skills and sharpen their powers of interpretation, critique, and aesthetic perception. |