



GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

General Education Committee

To: Felix Ngassa, Chair of ECS
From: Robert Adams, Chair of GEC
RE: Teaching about Systemic Racism
Date: March 17, 2022

Charge: Review the General Education curriculum – particularly US Diversity and Global Perspectives student learning outcomes – and recommend revisions to increase students’ understanding of the impact of systemic discrimination and racial inequity on individuals, communities, and society as a whole. (1183–2020)

GEC worked with units currently teaching in the US Diversity and Global Perspectives categories to determine (1) if they are currently teaching racism or discrimination in their General Education course(s), and (2) if they are not, would they be willing to.

The feedback we received from the US Diversity courses was that the majority were either already covering discrimination, or would be willing to. The only thing to be done was to craft language for the category description, and create a new Student Learning Objective. GEC discussed options with the units and came up with the recommendations below.

Global Perspectives was tougher. The wide variety of courses in the category made it difficult to find language suitable across the many disciplines, cultures, and foci of the courses. In the end, GEC recommends a modest update to the category description to highlight the fact that racism and discrimination are global issues, but stopped short of mandating a new Student Learning Outcome.

Recommendations

U.S. Diversity Description Change

ORIGINAL: The United States is a nation that has been, and is increasingly becoming, one composed of people from many different backgrounds. Few nations have been faced with the challenges and opportunities of incorporating so many diverse groups of people. Members of such a nation and its societies need to be able to understand how diversity may affect their own individual identities as well as their relationships with people in their social and political communities.

EDITED: The United States is a nation that has been, and is increasingly becoming, one composed of people from many different backgrounds. **With such diversity come opportunities but also challenges, including that of systemic racism and the intersectionality of various forms of discrimination.** ~~Few nations have been faced with the challenges and opportunities of incorporating so many diverse groups of people.~~ Those living in the United States ~~Members of such a nation and its societies need to be able to~~ understand how diversity **and related issues of power and privilege** may affect their own individual ~~lives~~ **identities** as well as their relationships with people in their social and political communities.

PROPOSED: The United States is a nation that has been, and is increasingly becoming, one composed of people from many different backgrounds. **With such diversity come opportunities but also challenges, including that of systemic racism and the intersectionality of various forms of discrimination.** Those living in the United States understand how diversity **and related issues of power and privilege** affect their **lives** as well as their relationships with people and institutions in their communities.

US Diversity Knowledge Student Learning Outcomes Change

ORIGINAL: Students will:

1. Explain historical trajectories and consequences, contributions, worldviews, languages, and/or ways of life of diverse cultures within the United States.
2. Explain how social constructions of ethnicity/race and and at least one of the following social attributes shape group and individual identities: gender, class, abilities, age, sexual orientation, religion, or common history.

PROPOSED: Students will:

1. Explain historical trajectories and consequences, contributions, worldviews, languages, and/or ways of life of diverse cultures within the United States.
2. Explain how social constructions of ethnicity/race and and at least one of the following social attributes shape group and individual identities: gender, class, abilities, age, sexual orientation, religion, or common history.
3. **Explain how racism and systemic racism affect the lives of people of color in the United States.**

Global Perspectives Description Change

ORIGINAL: These courses are meant to help students understand the perspectives and ways of life of people in societies located primarily outside the United States. Courses in this designation provide students with a basis for understanding and interpreting the variety of world cultures, institutions, societies, and issues.

EDITED: These courses are meant to help students understand the perspectives and ways of life of people in societies located ~~primarily~~ outside the United States. Courses in this designation provide students with a basis for understanding and interpreting the variety of world cultures, institutions, societies, and ~~issues~~ **challenges (e.g., discrimination, racism, inequality, environmental issues, poverty).**

PROPOSED: These courses are meant to help students understand the perspectives and ways of life of people in societies located outside the United States. Courses in this designation provide students with a basis for understanding and interpreting the variety of world cultures, institutions, societies, and **challenges (e.g., discrimination, racism, inequality, environmental issues, poverty).**