

# Proposal Information

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## General Education Goals

### Cultural - US Diversity

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.

#### Content Goals

All courses in the U.S. Diversity category include the following content:

1. Feature an examination of the various cultures that make up the United States, highlighting both the variability and similarity in human behavior, beliefs, customs, and values.
2. Examine how identity can be affected by ethnicity/race and at least one of the following social attributes: gender, class, abilities, age, sexual orientation, religion or common history.
3. Examine the historical and social consequences of United States diversity.
4. Consider whether there is a United States culture -- a common culture that unites and subsumes all groups in the United States

#### Content Goals

**Explain how you will teach and measure the following student learning outcomes.**

1. Feature an examination of the various cultures that make up the United States, highlighting both the variability and similarity in human behavior, beliefs, customs, and values.

A. Teach

The course materials (including readings, lectures, and discussions) explore how gender as a system intersects with a number of other systems (including race, class, age, sexuality, and ability) to produce varied life outcomes. The readings focus on U.S. constructions of gender, using the variations within U.S. culture and contrasts with other cultures to point to how gender is socially constructed. We explore gender through a wide variety of contexts in U.S. culture, including scientific disciplines, gender socialization in childhood, ideas of gender in the family and workplace, how gender is reproduced in our educational system, how ideas of heterosexuality produce and reinforce beliefs about gender, and practices of violence as gendered acts. These explorations show how dominant ideas of gender are produced and reinforced (white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, gender-conforming practices) as well as non-dominant practices (such as transgender and other gender non-conforming subcultures, difference racialized understandings of gender, gender within various ethnicities within the United States, and classed understandings of gender).

B. Measure

After completing each reading, but before meeting as a class, students write a response blog, answering an assigned question (250-300 words). These blogs are graded based on effort to engage with the text, since, at the time they are written, we have not yet discussed the reading as a class. Students further demonstrate their knowledge of course materials through their participation in class discussions (which is mandatory and graded), a mid-semester paper that integrates all of the course materials up to that point, a cumulative final paper, and a video project.

2. Examine how identity can be affected by ethnicity/race and at least one of the following social attributes: gender, class, abilities, age, sexual orientation, religion or common history.

A. Teach

The course materials (including readings, lectures, and discussions) focus on how people's lived experiences are influenced by gender norms and how those gender norms are shaped by other systems (including race, class, age, sexuality, and ability) to produce varied life outcomes. As students move through the course, they discover how their understanding of their own gender is not biologically determined but is, instead, socially constructed. This allows them to question the current gender system, deciding if they want to support the current expectations of behavior and gender hierarchy or challenge them.

B. Measure

Students demonstrate understanding of how identity is shaped by race, gender, sexuality, age, class, and ability through their writing of response blogs, discussion in class, their mid-semester and final papers, and the group video project.

3. Examine the historical and social consequences of United States diversity.

A. Teach

The course materials (including readings, lectures, and discussions) focus on how people's lived experiences are influenced by gender norms and how those gender norms are shaped by other systems (including race, class, age, sexuality, and ability) to produce varied life outcomes. The course focuses deeply on gender inequality in the United States and how beliefs about gender intersect with the systems of race, class, age, sexuality, and ability to produce important social consequences. Students learn to question these systems and explore alternatives that provide people of various gender identities and racial and ethnic backgrounds with more equality in terms of chances to achieve their goals.

B. Measure

Through their response blogs, discussion, papers, and video project, students demonstrate knowledge of the historical and social consequences of U.S. diversity. In response blogs and papers, students outline how the major systems of social stratification affect life chances. In class discussion and through their video project, students question these systems and propose alternatives for the future.

4. Consider whether there is a United States culture -- a common culture that unites and subsumes all groups in the United States.

A. Teach

The course materials (including readings, lectures, and discussions) explore both dominant understandings of gender and non-dominant ones. In addition, we explore how these understandings are shaped by other systems of stratification. In this way, students are able to see how dominant understandings shape everyone's life, but also how people construct alternative beliefs and practices to the dominant culture.

B. Measure

All forms of assessment for this course (response blogs, class discussion, the mid-semester and final papers, and the video project) are opportunities for students to demonstrate this knowledge. Class discussions and the papers are the spaces where students most focus on the role of dominant understandings and sub-cultural beliefs. Discussions bring this out, as we use discussion time to analyze real-life examples. In the papers, students synthesize the course materials, tying what feels like varied arguments together into a coherent whole. In doing so, they articulate the role of dominant gender norms in everyone's life as well as how sub-cultural understandings challenge dominant gender norms.

**Oral Communication** is the practice of effectively communicating verbally with a public audience across a variety of contexts.

People with a general education are able to synthesize their knowledge of a subject with their speaking and listening skills to effectively craft a verbal presentation appropriate for a specific situation, purpose, and audience. They understand that effective verbal communication involves a dialogue between

speaker and audience and use this knowledge for decision-making about the organization, development, and presentation of appropriate material. They understand that oral communication skills are essential for a knowledgeable speaker to inform, persuade, and inspire audiences.

Students who have oral communication skills can:

- develop content appropriate to the presentation goals
- organize the content in a logical manner appropriate for the intended audience
- demonstrate a range of effective formal and informal presentation skills
- demonstrate evidence of rehearsal through the verbal presentation

Demonstrate a range of effective formal and informal presentation skill.

#### A. Teach

Students acquire oral presentation skills in a number of formal and informal ways throughout the semester. The instructor discusses how to present ideas orally and models such skills when she lectures in class. In addition, students learn these skills by watching others speak in class. Since participation is mandatory and most of the class time is discussion based, students have extensive opportunities to see both effective and ineffective approaches to informal oral presentation as well as to practice those skills themselves. In addition, before the formal oral presentation of the video project (where students speak to the class about their project's inspiration and how they went about completing it and then take questions from their classmates about the argument they make in their video), students receive a handout on effective formal presentation skills and brainstorm together as a class how to best do their formal oral presentation of the video project.

#### B. Measure

Students' informal oral presentation skills are assessed through mandatory participation in class discussions (which is graded). Students' formal oral presentation skills are assessed through formal oral presentation of the video project and the Q&A session that follows the video presentation.

Demonstrate evidence of rehearsal through the verbal presentation.

#### A. Teach

Students learn the importance of practicing oral presentations through the handout on effective formal presentation skills and through discussing that handout as a class and brainstorming together how to best do their formal oral presentation of the video project.

#### B. Measure

Students demonstrate that they have learned the value of practicing formal oral presentations through their formal oral presentation of the video project. Successful presentations will be carefully thought out and well rehearsed.

Develop content appropriate to the presentation goals.

#### A. Teach

Students learn how to tailor their oral presentations to the context they are in through watching those around them give oral presentations (the instructor's formal lectures and their classmates informal contributions to class discussions). Students then practice these skills through their participation in class discussions and in their rehearsal of their formal oral presentation of the video project.

#### B. Measure

Students demonstrate that they have learned how to tailor their oral presentations to the context they are in through their successful contributions to class discussions and through their presentations through their formal oral presentation of the video project. Successful presentations will be appropriate to the context.

Organize the content in a logical manner appropriate for the intended audience.

#### A. Teach

Students learn how to organize the content of their presentations in a logical manner by watching those around them give oral presentations (the instructor's formal lectures and their classmates informal contributions to class discussions). Students then practice these skills through their participation in class discussions and in their rehearsal of their formal oral presentation of the video project.

#### B. Measure

Students demonstrate that they have learned how to organize the content of their presentations in a logical manner through their successful contributions to class discussions and through their presentations through their formal oral presentation of the video project. Successful presentations will be well organized.

**Written Communication** is the practice of creating and refining messages that educated readers will value.

People with a general education use thoughtful writing processes to develop effective written materials for a variety of audiences and purposes, entering larger discussions by using formats and conventions that are important to their readers.

Students who have written communication skills can:

- develop content that is appropriate to a specific disciplinary or professional context
- organize written material to suit the purposes of the document and meet the needs of the intended audience
- express ideas using language that meets the needs and expectations of the intended audience
- use conventions of grammar, punctuation, usage, formatting, citation, and documentation appropriate to the specific writing situation

Develop content that is appropriate to a specific disciplinary or professional context.

#### A. Teach

Students learn how to write for the discipline of Sociology in three ways. First, they read excellent writing by sociologists (and others in related fields) throughout the semester. Second, they practice those skills by writing short blogs in response to each of those pieces of writing, which they receive feedback on. Using that feedback, they can choose to rewrite their blogs for a better grade. Also, they use that feedback to learn the needed skills to be successful on future blogs. Finally, they practice these skills in their papers (mid-semester and final), which they receive extensive feedback on. Using their feedback from the first paper, they can improve their skills for the second paper.

#### B. Measure

Students demonstrate that they have learned how to write for the discipline of Sociology through their response blogs and papers. As each assignment receives feedback, they learn from each assessment and improve throughout the semester.

Express ideas using language that meets the needs and expectations of the intended audience.

#### A. Teach

Students learn how to use language that meets the needs and expectations of the intended audience in three ways. First, they read excellent writing by sociologists (and others in related fields) throughout the semester. Second, they practice those skills by writing short blogs in response to each of those pieces of writing, which they receive feedback on. Using that feedback, they can choose to rewrite their blogs for a better grade. Also, they use that feedback to learn the needed skills to be successful on future blogs. Finally, they practice these skills in their papers (mid-semester and final), which they receive extensive feedback on. Using their feedback from the first paper, they can improve their skills for the second paper.

#### B. Measure

Students demonstrate that they have learned how to use language that meets the needs and expectations of the intended audience through their response blogs and papers. As each assignment receives feedback, they learn from each assessment and improve throughout the semester.

Organize written material to suit the purposes of the document and meet the needs of the intended audience.

#### A. Teach

Students learn how to organize written material to suit the purposes of the document and meet the needs of the intended audience in three ways. First, they read excellent writing by sociologists (and others in related fields) throughout the semester. Second, they practice those skills by writing short blogs in response to each of those pieces of writing, which they receive feedback on. Using that feedback, they can choose to rewrite their blogs for a better grade. Also, they use that feedback to learn the needed skills to be successful on future blogs. Finally, they practice these skills in their papers (mid-semester and final), which they receive extensive feedback on. Using their feedback from the first paper, they can improve their skills for the second paper.



## B. Measure

Students demonstrate that they have learned how organize written material to suit the purposes of the document and meet the needs of the intended audience through their response blogs and papers. As each assignment receives feedback, they learn from each assessment and improve throughout the semester.

Use conventions of grammar, punctuation, usage, formatting, citation, and documentation appropriate to the specific writing situation.

## A. Teach

Students learn how to use these writing conventions in four ways. First, they read excellent writing by sociologists (and others in related fields) throughout the semester. Second, they receive a handout on these conventions at the beginning of the semester, which is then discussed in class. Third, they practice those skills by writing short blogs in response to each of those pieces of writing, which they receive feedback on. Using that feedback, they can choose to rewrite their blogs for a better grade. Also, they use that feedback to learn the needed skills to be successful on future blogs. Finally, they practice these skills in their papers (mid-semester and final), which they receive extensive feedback on. Using their feedback from the first paper, they can improve their skills for the second paper.

## B. Measure

Students demonstrate that they have learned how to use these writing conventions through their response blogs and papers. As each assignment receives feedback, they learn from each assessment and improve throughout the semester.

Issues course have a maximum capacity of 40 students.

# Issues Course Goals - Identity

**Explain how you will teach and measure the following student learning outcomes.**

1. How the course relates to issues and questions regarding the Issue category.

## A. Teach

Readings, lectures, and class discussions focus on the topic of gender (one of the key areas of Identity, as defined by the GenEd program) as a system and how it intersects with other socially constructed systems of stratification, including race, sexuality, class, age, and ability. Through readings, lectures, and class discussions, students are taught about how gender is constructed, with a focus on scientific disciplines, gender socialization in childhood, ideas of gender in the family and workplace, how gender is reproduced in our educational system, how ideas of heterosexuality produce and reinforce beliefs about gender, and practices of violence as gendered acts.

## B. Measure

After completing each reading, but before meeting as a class, students write a response blog, answering an assigned question (250-300 words). These blogs are graded based on effort to engage with the text, since, at the time they are written, we have not yet discussed the reading as a class. Students further demonstrate their knowledge of course materials through their participation in class discussions (which is mandatory and graded), a mid-semester paper that integrates all of the course materials up to that point, a cumulative final paper, and a video project.

2. How complementary and competing perspectives covered in the course contribute to the ongoing discussion about the Issue category you selected above.

## A. Teach

The course is taught using a custom selection of readings that represent diverse perspectives and approaches to the topic. While the readings focus on a Sociological perspective, Sociology is an incredibly diverse discipline. The course materials also draw from Women and Gender Studies. More importantly, the emphasis on discussion of the questions raised by the course materials exposes students to a wide variety of perspectives. The course is designed to allow most of the class period to be discussion. Since students write response blogs on the readings before the class meets, they are well prepared to have a deep and enlightening discussion during class time. The instructor facilitates that discussion, posing discussion questions and introducing real-life examples which the students analyze using what they have learned from the course materials. This heavy use of discussion is a combination of "teaching" and "measuring," as students are taught the concepts through the instructor's facilitation of discussion and by learning from each other's ideas and students demonstrate that knowledge through their participation in discussion.

## B. Measure

Students demonstrate knowledge of diverse perspectives on the topic through their writing of response blogs, discussion in class, their mid-semester and final papers, and the group video project. As described above, discussion during class time is key to both learning these perspectives and demonstrating this knowledge. The larger projects (the two papers and the video project) are also key here, as they facilitate an integration of these diverse perspectives in responding to the assigned prompt. Successful work on these larger projects demonstrates a deep knowledge of these complementary and competing perspectives.

**Each of these three student learning outcomes has four related objectives, all of which need to be taught and assessed in your course. Although it is possible that you may teach more than one objective at a time, or assess more than one objective with one measure, please fill in each of the boxes below. (In other words, it is acceptable to use the same language in multiple boxes.)**



## **Collaboration**

Collaboration is two or more students working together and sharing the workload equitably as they progress toward shared learning objectives.

**Collaboration Objective 1:** Students contribute to the development of shared goals within the group.

### **A. Teach**

Students learn how to develop shared goals within the group through their informal group work in class. With each group activity, they get to try out approaches to group work and apply what they learned from previous group work. In addition, students learn about developing shared goals in a more formal way through their group video project. For the project, students will receive a handout early in the semester about how to effectively work in groups. Too often, we throw students into group work without actually teaching them how to work effectively in groups. We will discuss this handout as a group, brainstorming together how to best work as a group. Then, using the handout, the groups will work together to develop their goals for the video project. Throughout the semester, the groups will meet with the instructor during class and discuss their shared goals and the progress they are making. The instructor will help the groups negotiate any problems or conflicts they encounter.

### **B. Measure**

Students' collaboration will be informally assessed during group work in class. It will be formally assessed through their completion of the group assignment handout and through self-assessment and peer-assessment of contributions to the video project.

**Collaboration Objective 2:** Students contribute their own knowledge and expertise to the group.

### **A. Teach**

This course requires contributions of knowledge from each student to the rest of the class each week in the form of mandatory participation. Through mandatory participation in class discussions, each student learns how to contribute their knowledge and expertise to the whole. They hone these skills during smaller group work during class and through their work in the group video project. Because they get so much practice contributing their own knowledge and expertise, even the shyest of students gain confidence in their ability to contribute to a group. The instructor asks those students who are struggling with class participation to meet her in office hours so they can practice sharing their knowledge in a setting with fewer people. Usually after practicing in office hours a time or two, they begin happily contributing to class discussions and group work.

### **B. Measure**

Students' ability to contribute their own knowledge and expertise to a group will

be assessed through their participation in class discussions (which is mandatory and graded) as well as through self-assessment and peer-assessment of contributions to the video project.

**Collaboration Objective 3:** Students participate actively and responsibly in all group activities.

A. Teach

Students learn how to participate actively and responsibly through both their participation through mandatory participation in class discussions. In addition, with each group activity, they get to try out approaches to group work and apply what they learned from previous group work. The instructor speaks with students who are not participating actively in class to figure out what is hindering their participation. Students who are struggling with participation meet with the instructor in office hours to practice their contributions. For students who are not participating responsibly (usually by "taking up too much space" in class and group discussions), the instructor contacts them via email to discuss more responsible ways of contributing. Finally, students learn about participating actively and responsibly in a more formal way through their group video project. For the project, students will receive a handout early in the semester about how to effectively work in groups. Too often, we throw students into group work without actually teaching them how to work effectively in groups. The handout will include tips on how to best participate in group projects. We will discuss this handout as a group, brainstorming together how to best work as a group.

B. Measure

Students' ability to contribute participate actively and responsibly in a group will be assessed through their participation in class discussions (which is mandatory and graded), through their participation in in-class group work, and as through self-assessment and peer-assessment of contributions to the video project.

**Collaboration Objective 4:** Students honestly assess their own contributions and the contributions of others.

A. Teach

Early in the semester, students will receive a handout covering how to effectively work in groups. The handout will include tips on how to best participate in group projects and contribute in group settings. We will discuss this handout as a group, brainstorming together how to best work as a group. In this discussion, we will cover how to assess one's own contribution (i.e. "How do I know I am contributing to the greater good?" ) and the contribution of others. In this conversation, we will discuss the value of diverse perspectives and ways of contributing to groups.

B. Measure

Students will engage in a self-assessment of their contribution to the video project as well as an assessment of the contributions of the other group members on a form to be turned in at the time of their oral presentation of the video

project.

## **Problem Solving**

Problem Solving is the process of designing and evaluating strategies to answer open-ended questions or achieve desired goals.

**Problem Solving Objective 1:** Students construct clear and insightful problem statements that prioritize relevant contextual factors.

### **A. Teach**

For this course, the main "problem" to be solved is the problem of inequality. The readings for the class bring up various issues and causes of inequality and during each class session, students spend time discussing as a class and in smaller groups ways to solve them. Students also engage in problem solving for their group video project. For the video, they identify one aspect of the gender system that they have learned about during the semester which they feel is harmful. In the video, they demonstrate how that aspect harms our society and they propose achievable solutions to address that issue. They then post their video to youtube so that they can share their solutions with anyone with access to the internet, with the hope that their contribution will help make the world a better place.

In making the video, students must clearly demonstrate what the problem they are trying to solve is. As students work together to make the video, they will turn in a problem statement to the instructor and receive feedback before continuing on the video. This feedback will help them learn how to construct problem statements.

### **B. Measure**

Students' ability to construct problem statements will be assessed when they turn in their draft problem statement for the group video project and in the grading of the final video.

**Problem Solving Objective 2:** Students identify multiple approaches for solving the problem within the given context.

### **A. Teach**

The readings for the class bring up various issues and causes of inequality; during each class session students spend time discussing as a class and in smaller groups ways to solve them. Because of the diverse perspectives of the readings, instructor, and students in the class, every discussion includes multiple approaches to solving the problem. Students take what they have learned from class discussions and use it when brainstorming solutions to their identified problem in their groups for the video project.

### **B. Measure**

Students' ability to identify multiple approaches for solving the problem is assessed informally during class discussion and formally in the grading of the video project.

**Problem Solving Objective 3:** Students design and fully explain proposed solutions that demonstrate deep comprehension of the problem.

#### A. Teach

Students learn how to design exceptional solutions through discussions of potential solutions in class. During class time assessment of problems and their solutions, the instructor will guide students through how to best construct solutions. In addition, the handout for the video project includes detailed instruction on what constitutes good solutions for this course. From a sociological perspective, good solutions are "before the fact" as opposed to "after the fact." This means that solutions try to address the problem before it harms people, such as reducing poverty as a way to address issues of crime, rather than using prisons or other sorts of punishment after the crime has already occurred as a way to try to deter future criminals. In addition, good solutions focus on structural changes rather than on individuals. Using the crime example again, reducing poverty shifts the social structures such that people are not pushed into crime as a way to survive. By contrast, prisons and other legal punishments focus on trying to change individual behaviors through deterrents. Such individual focused solutions have been shown to be less effective than structural ones.

#### B. Measure

Students' ability to develop good solutions to the problem is assessed informally during class discussion and formally in the grading of the video project.

**Problem Solving Objective 4:** Students evaluate the feasibility of solutions considering aspects such as the historical context and ethical, legal, or practical impact of potential solutions.

#### A. Teach

Students learn how to evaluate solutions through discussions of potential solutions in class. During class time assessment of problems and their solutions, the instructor will guide students through how to weigh the pluses and minuses of various solutions and how to think through whether the solution will actually work. Students take what they have learned from class discussions and use it when brainstorming solutions to their identified problem in their groups for the video project.

#### B. Measure

Students' ability to evaluate feasibility of solutions and select solutions that are more likely to be effective is assessed informally during class discussion and formally in the grading of the video project.

### Integration

Integration is the process of synthesizing and applying existing knowledge, past experiences, and other perspectives to new, complex situations.

**Integration Objective 1:** Students draw conclusions from examples, facts, and/or theories from more than one field of study of perspective.

#### A. Teach

Integration is taught in two ways in this course: through classroom discussions and through the mid-semester and final papers. In classroom discussions, students are asked to synthesize the ideas from the readings, their own understandings of the world, and the ideas of their classmates, drawing them together and then applying them to real-life situations. After practicing these skills during classroom discussions, students are then asked to further build them in writing their mid-semester and final papers. For these papers, students integrate the course materials and apply them to a real-life example in order to answer the question from the prompt. The example they analyze is generally something that has recently been heavily covered in the news.

The course is taught using a custom selection of readings that represent diverse perspectives. While the readings focus on a Sociological perspective, Sociology is an incredibly diverse discipline. The course materials also draw from Women and Gender Studies. Most importantly, the emphasis on discussion of the course materials exposes students to a wide variety of perspectives. Students then integrate all of these perspectives in their application of them to real-life examples both in discussion sessions and for their mid-semester and final papers.

#### B. Measure

Students' ability to draw conclusions from examples, facts, and/or theories from more than one field of study of perspective is assessed informally during class discussions and formally through the grading of the mid-semester and final papers.

**Integration Objective 2:** Students must adapt and apply skills, abilities, theories, or methods to explore complex issues in original ways.

#### A. Teach

Applying what they have learned to complex topics is taught in two ways: through classroom discussions and through the mid-semester and final papers. In classroom discussions, students are asked to synthesize the ideas from the readings, their own understandings of the world, and the ideas of their classmates, drawing them together and then applying them to real-life situations. After practicing these skills during classroom discussions, students are then asked to further build them in writing their mid-semester and final papers. For these papers, students integrate the course materials and apply them to a real-life example in order to answer the question from the prompt.

#### B. Measure

Students' ability to apply what they have learned to complex topics is assessed informally during class discussions and formally through the grading of the

mid-semester and final papers.

**Integration Objective 3:** Students effectively communicate synthesized knowledge in ways that are inclusive of diverse audiences and perspectives.

A. Teach

The course is taught using a custom selection of readings that represent diverse perspectives and approaches to the topic. This diversity is then added to through the contributions of students during classroom discussions. During discussions, students practice integrating these diverse perspectives while considering the audience of their peers. As Sociology draws a diverse group of students and as this course will not only include Sociology majors as part of the General Education Program, students will learn how to tailor their contributions to a diverse audience in classroom discussions. In addition, students' group video project is intended to speak to the diverse audience of youtube, not just their peers in the classroom and the instructor. As students work on the video project, the instructor will discuss with them how to be inclusive of diverse audiences. Moreover, as part of their video presentation, students will critique each other's videos. During this Q&A session, students will have a chance to learn whether their communication to a diverse audience was effective. If it was not, they will be able to edit the video before posting it to youtube.

B. Measure

Students' ability to effectively communicate synthesized knowledge in ways that are inclusive of diverse audiences and perspectives is assessed informally during class discussions and formally through the grading of the group video project.

**Integration Objective 4:** Students demonstrate self-reflection, building on prior experiences and responding to new and challenging contexts presented in the course.

A. Teach

Throughout the semester, students are encouraged to incorporate their own lived experiences into classroom discussions and response blog answers. This allows them to integrate their knowledge from their life so far with the knowledge available to them from the course materials. Moreover, the group video project asks them to address a topic that is personal to them—the aspect of the gender system that they found most troubling during the semester. In assessing this problem and proposing solutions, students integrate knowledge from their lived experiences with knowledge gained from the course.

B. Measure

Students' ability to reflect on past experiences and integrate them into the course materials is assessed during class discussions, response blogs, and the group video project.