



NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

*Faculty and Staff Guide to the
Liberal Studies Program*



2007-2008

Table of Contents

Northern Arizona University's Liberal Studies Program ...

Mission	3
Foundation requirements	4
Distribution Blocks	5
Essential Skills	6
Critical Thinking	6
Effective Writing	7
Effective Oral	
Communication	7
Quantitative Reasoning	8
Scientific Reasoning	8
Assessment Component	9
First Year Seminar	10
Writing and Capstone requirements	11
Appendix A: Syllabus Template	12
Appendix B: Sample Rubrics	15
Appendix C: New Course Proposal Forms	

Liberal Studies Mission

The Mission of the Liberal Studies Program is to prepare students to live responsible, productive, and creative lives as citizens of a dramatically changing world. To accomplish this mission Northern Arizona University provides a Liberal Studies Program that challenges students to gain a deeper understanding of the natural environment and the world's peoples, to explore the traditions and legacies that have created the dynamics and tensions that shape the world, to examine their potential contributions to society, and thus to better determine their own places in that world.

Liberal Studies Program Requirements: Foundation

1. Foundation Requirement

7 units — unchanged.

Courses used to fulfill the foundation requirements cannot count toward the liberal studies distribution requirements.

English Composition Requirement: To meet the 4-6 unit English composition requirement, students take ENG 105 (4 units). Students may also meet the English composition requirement by completing with a grade of C or better, English 101 and 102 (6 units), or equivalents, at another accredited university or community college – see current catalog for further explanation of requirement.

Mathematics Requirement: To meet the 3-unit mathematics foundation requirement, students take MAT 114 or any other current NAU (or equivalent transfer) course of at least 3 units with a MAT or STA prefix—except MAT 101X, 102X, 108, or 150 (or equivalent).

The most noticeable changes for the 2007-2008 academic year are the deletion of the thematic foci and the consolidation of the essential skills.

Liberal Studies Program Requirements: Distribution Blocks

2. Distribution Blocks

25 units + 3 additional hours of elective = 28 units

Students must take courses in each of the four distribution blocks listed below.

- Science (must include at least one lab science) (7 units)
- Aesthetic and Humanistic Inquiry (6 units)
- Cultural Understanding (6 units)
- Social and Political Worlds (6 units)

Additionally, students are required to take an additional course from any distribution block (3 units), also referred to as “Liberal Studies Elective.”

The First Year Seminar is an optional topics course approved for credit within one of the distribution blocks listed above or as the “Liberal Studies Elective.” This option is available to and recommended for first year students with fewer than thirty units. The First Year Seminar is discussed in further detail on page...

Liberal Studies Program Requirements: Essential Skills

3. Essential Skills and Student Learning Outcomes

In addition to the skills and students learning outcomes of the specific course content, each Liberal Studies course will designate *one* essential skill and accompanying student learning outcomes as defined by the faculty Liberal Studies Committee. The Liberal Studies essential skills are: *critical thinking, effective oral communication, effective writing, quantitative reasoning, and scientific reasoning*. Sample rubrics and rubric templates for assessing these skills are in Appendix ...

Critical Thinking

Definition

Critical thinking - particularly as applied to one's own work- includes the skills of 1) articulating the meaning of a statement, 2) judging the truth of a statement, keeping in mind possible biases, 3) determining whether a conclusion is warranted by the evidence provided

Student Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

- Convey, to an intended audience, the meaning of a statement.
- Assess the validity of a claim, taking into account different conceptual schemes, contextual factors, and evidence.
- Evaluate an argument's structure by determining whether the conclusion would be probable if the premises were true.

Courses in the Liberal Studies Program will only choose ONE essential skill as defined by the Liberal Studies Committee.

Essential skills cont...

Effective Writing

Definition

Effective writing conveys information or argues a point of view using organizational structures, supporting materials, and language appropriate for the topic, purpose, and audience.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

- Tailor writing to a specific audience
 - Focus writing on a specific purpose
 - Produce logical, coherent, and well-structured writing
 - Apply appropriate writing standards
-

Effective Oral Communication

Definition

Effective oral communication influences, informs, and/or connects with others by using organizational structures, supporting materials and delivery skills suitable to the topic, occasion and audience.

Student learning outcomes

Students should be able to:

- Discover, organize and deliver content that is adapted to the audience, purpose, and context
 - Use appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication delivery techniques (e.g., loudness, gestures, posture, eye contact, language)
 - Listen actively and respond thoroughly and thoughtfully to questions
 - Create and use appropriate supporting materials and presentation aids
-

Essential skills cont....

Quantitative Reasoning

Definition

Quantitative reasoning is the application of numerical, visual or symbolic reasoning for the purposes of drawing inferences, understanding phenomena or making predictions.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

- Assess descriptions of both raw and derived quantitative data
- Select and apply the appropriate mathematical, statistical, or graphical model
- Perform data manipulations, and then organize data graphically, numerically, or functionally (e.g., linearly)
- Interpret the results of models, including margins of error from statistical data
- Use graphs to solve problems such as scheduling, organizing information or finding optimal strategies
- Describe and explain the processes and results applying quantitative literacy skills

Scientific Reasoning

Definition

Scientific reasoning includes the skills of: 1) formulating hypotheses on the basis of observations, 2) obtaining and analyzing data to test (i.e., refute or confirm) hypotheses, and 3) explaining phenomena by means of accepted principles, theories or laws.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

- Formulate hypotheses on the basis of observations appropriate for the discipline
- Formulate and carry out tests of hypotheses employing techniques appropriate for that discipline
- Employ appropriate tools for collecting, analyzing, and evaluating data to test hypotheses
- Communicate results of scientific investigation
- Use a scientific theory to explain features of the world within the scope of that theory

Liberal Studies Program: Assessment Component

According to the assessment literature, there are many ways of assessing a university's General Education or Liberal Studies Program. The assessment efforts of this rubric implementation project represent NAU's efforts to create an organic and sustainable assessment process appropriate for the unique character of NAU. The rubric implementation project represents a self-directed assessment practice, focusing on the authentic assignments developed by faculty used to assess student learning outcomes in the Liberal Studies skills.

The purpose of the Liberal Studies assessment project is to create a more cohesive curriculum of study through an assessment of student learning of the essential skills and defined student learning outcomes. Faculty are asked to participate in the assessment of student learning by using their own rubrics, grading forms, or any of the sample rubrics created by the Office of Academic Assessment (OAA) (see website, <http://www4.nau.edu/assessment/> for samples and rubric templates).

The primary planned uses for the aggregate data collected in this assessment project are:

1. Data will be used to compare the relative student proficiencies between the essential skills. For example, which skill scores the highest or the lowest according to the aggregate data. This information will be useful for guidance in the Liberal Studies and department curriculum changes.
2. Data will also be used to compare proficiencies with respect to class standing. In other words, information can be obtained about student class standing and performance in the skill areas. This will indicate the "value added" in a NAU education. This data will be useful to compare to the Collegiate Learning Assessment data. It will also be useful for institutional retention information.
3. Faculty are encouraged to submit rubric data (from one embedded course assignment) to OAA at the end of the semester. OAA will compile the results from these rubrics and report the findings to the Liberal Studies Committee.

Sample rubrics for each of the essential skills are found in Appendix B.

Liberal Studies Program: First Year Seminar

The First Year Seminar (FS) will bring the best faculty teacher-scholars on campus together with first year students in small enrollment classes to explore rich and engaging topics related to faculty interests and current issues. Through this experience, communities will be established among the Seminar students, strong mentoring relationships formed with Seminar faculty, and students will learn about research opportunities.

Courses are designated under the Liberal Studies Program distribution block categories. Some courses may not be offered every year, and topics may vary. FS courses are not open to students with more than 30 units.

FS 111 SCIENCE FIRST YEAR SEMINAR: Students learn the logic and techniques of scientific inquiry to understand the basis and limits of contemporary scientific knowledge. Students develop practical skills to understand scientific issues relevant to society.

FS 121 AESTHETIC & HUMANISTIC INQUIRY FIRST YEAR SEMINAR: Students learn about competing conceptual frameworks and the relationship between context and creative expression.

FS 131 CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING FIRST YEAR SEMINAR: Students learn about features and perspectives of cultures.

FS 141 SOCIAL & POLITICAL WORLDS FIRST YEAR SEMINAR: Students learn about the dynamic relationships between and within human communities, as well as significant psychological, social and/or political components.

Liberal Studies Program: Writing and Capstone Requirements

Students meet these final Liberal Studies Program requirements by taking specific courses required in the student's major. These courses allow students to continue assessing their educational progress as they approach graduation. Students and advisors should consult the student's plan requirements in the appropriate section of the NAU catalog to find out which courses are required for the student's particular major.

- Junior Writing Requirement (3-4 units) (designated with a W at the end of the course number)
- Senior Capstone (3 units) (designated with a C at the end of the course number)

Appendix A: Liberal Studies Syllabus Template

COURSE SYLLABUS TEMPLATE

April 2007: Draft 1

This template is based on the current model approved by the University Curriculum Committee and should be used to develop syllabi for Liberal Studies courses. The bolded areas pertain directly to Liberal Studies courses. For approval purposes, the Liberal Studies Committee requires syllabi to conform to this format. Reviewers ensure that course syllabi are complete in all areas listed below. Previously approved Liberal Studies courses must conform to the following template beginning Fall 2007, including a rubric to assess the selected essential skill.

Proposals for new Liberal Studies courses must be accompanied by a syllabus conforming to the following template. Additionally, the syllabus must be accompanied by the appropriate UCC/LSC Cover Sheet. Completed materials should be sent to Shelly.Pleasants@nau.edu and Nicole.Morrow@nau.edu for proper routing. To facilitate timely consideration of your submissions, submitting departments must adhere to the schedule detailed in the appendix.

General Information

- Name of college and department
- Course prefix, number, and title
- Semester in which course will be offered
- Clock hours, credit hours
- Instructor's name
- Office address
- Office hours

Course Prerequisites

Course Description

In addition to specifying subject matter, the syllabus course description for liberal studies courses should address how the course fits in the Liberal Studies program at three levels:

Mission of Liberal Studies

The mission of the Liberal Studies Program at Northern Arizona University is to prepare students to live responsible, productive, and creative lives as citizens of a dramatically changing world. To accomplish the mission of Liberal Studies, Northern Arizona University provides a program that challenges students to gain a deeper understanding of the natural environment and the world's peoples, to explore the traditions and legacies that have created the dynamics and tensions that shape the world, to examine their potential contributions to society, and thus to better determine their own places in that world.

Through the program students acquire a broad range of knowledge and develop essential skills for professional success and life beyond graduation.

Distribution Block

Identify one of the following: Science, Social and Political Worlds, Aesthetic and Humanistic Inquiry, or Cultural Understanding.

Essential Skills

Identify one of the following skills that will be assessed formally in the course: Critical Thinking, Effective Writing, Quantitative Reasoning, Effective Oral Communication, or Scientific Reasoning.

For example: This course is an ethnographic exploration of humankind and its prospects at the close of the 20th century. In examining contemporary ethnic groups, from hunter/gatherers to postindustrial societies, we will investigate the components of culture, processes of stability and change, and human adaptation to local and global environments.

This is a Liberal Studies course in the Cultural Understanding distribution block. The mission of the Liberal Studies Program at Northern Arizona University is to prepare students to live responsible, productive, and creative lives as citizens of a dramatically changing world. To accomplish the mission of Liberal Studies, Northern Arizona University provides a program that challenges students to gain a deeper understanding of the natural environment and the world's peoples, to explore the traditions and legacies that have created the dynamics and tensions that shape the world, to examine their potential contributions to society, and thus to better determine their own places in that world. Through the program students acquire a broad range of knowledge and develop essential skills for professional success and life beyond graduation. In addition to discipline specific skills, this course will emphasize effective writing, an essential skill defined in the University's Liberal Studies Program.

Student Learning Expectations/Outcomes for this Course

This part of the syllabus should indicate course objectives in terms of key outcomes regarding content and the essential skill. Outcomes refer to those activities that demonstrate that students have achieved the course objectives. These should be linked to the essential skill to be assessed and the student learning outcomes identified for the skill. For more information on writing course outcomes, please refer to the resources provided on the Office of Academic Assessment website, <http://www4.nau.edu/assessment/resources/outcomes.htm>.

- What do you want students **to know** by the time they finish a course or major? This is a question about the content of the course or major and about the relationships between

- What do you want students to be able **to do** with what they know? This is a question about the skills that are important to the course or major—how students learn and use the content of the discipline to make or report meaning.

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (aligned with the Liberal Studies mission)

- Methods of Assessment: Be specific about how you will assess student learning in the identified student learning objectives... It would be useful for students and the Liberal Studies Program assessment process to provide a link to the rubrics and assessment procedures in the course.
- Timeline for Assessment (schedule for students)

Course structure/approach

Textbook and required materials

Recommended optional materials/references (attach reading list)

Course outline

Course policy

- Retests/makeup tests
- Attendance
- Statement on plagiarism and cheating

University policies: Attach the Safe Working and Learning Environment, Students with Disabilities, Institutional Review Board, and Academic Integrity policies or reference them on the syllabus.

Appendix B: Sample Rubrics

In coordination with the Liberal Studies Committee, the purpose of designing and implementing rubrics is to assess student learning in the Liberal Studies skill areas. As such, students, not courses, are the primary focus in Liberal Studies Program assessment efforts. These rubrics were developed from the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for each essential skill developed by the faculty Liberal Studies Committee. When used to assess student performance, gaps in student learning in the outcomes for the skill areas may be detected. In short, specific courses or instructors are not the focus in these rubrics. The focus is the student learning in these skill areas that is of interest.

Two types of rubric examples are presented in this Appendix: A four point scale, and a more general template that includes the SLOs.

Appendix C: University Curriculum Committee New Course Proposal Form
