

Global Awareness: Non-Western

August 2008 (Draft) (Maria DiPalma, John Bolen)

Definition

Non-Western Cultures includes any culture not founded and based upon Western European Judaea/Christian traditions.

Rationale

The Western European Judaea/Christian tradition, while it has influenced the world, actually represents the minority of the world's population. The majority of the world's populations live in non-Western cultures. The fastest growing economic centers are in non-Western cultures. No longer do we live in a world where we can isolate ourselves from other nations. Our work, our food, our play, our education, is directly and indirectly affected by the cultures of the world.

In addition, we tend to have a narrow view of the world based upon our own cultural traditions making us unaware of the narrowness of our worldview. By discovering that there are other ways of living, other ways of seeing the world, other ways of relating to the environment, to the community, to each other, our own worldview will be enhanced and expanded.

We are citizens of the world, not just of a single nation, and if we are to be successful in our endeavors, we need to be aware of our world, and perhaps realize that ours is not always the best way. Because we are products of the Western European Judaea/Christian traditions, we need to understand at least one culture not from that same tradition.

Criteria for Approving Proposals

Learning Outcome: Students will expand their worldview by studying non-Western cultures. Students will be better able to consider how people from non-Western cultures would view the world and live their lives.

For a course to be designated a Non-Western Cultures course, it should:

1. Foster knowledge of a non-western culture
2. Focus on a culture's many aspects: language, music, social customs, etc.
3. Assist the student in comparing his/her Western culture with the non-Western culture they are studying

Three options to fulfill the requirement:

1. Take an on-campus course
2. Study abroad in a non-Western culture for a semester.
3. Study abroad in a May Term non-Western culture.

Source Information on Similar Requirements at other Good Schools

Gustavus Adolphus College

http://gustavus.edu/academics/general_catalog/current/gradreq

Non-Western Cultures (NWEST). The nature of contemporary world events makes an understanding of non-Western and global perspectives a necessary component of a liberal arts education. It is increasingly necessary for people involved in business, politics, economic development, religious interaction, and everyday life to function across traditional linguistic and cultural boundaries. Courses fulfilling the NWEST requirement will enable students to recognize difference in a pluralistic way while encouraging an appreciation of the importance of difference in common and cultural life.

This requirement may be fulfilled either by taking a NWEST course or by completing an appropriate study-abroad experience. A NWEST course will focus predominantly on non-Western material, and will provide students with an understanding of cultures, societies, religious worldviews and/or political/economic systems outside of the familiar Western context. It will provide the student with the tools or opportunity to gain access to an understanding of others' cultures from within the context of those cultures.

A study-abroad experience meeting this requirement will be a semester or yearlong program centered in a non-Western country. Study abroad will provide students with the opportunity to participate in an intensive exploration of, and experience in, another culture through classroom study and daily living. All students who study in non-English speaking countries must study the language of the host country while abroad.

Augustana College

- One 3-credit course (designated by the "G" suffix) which focuses significantly on non-Western social or cultural subject matter

<http://www.augustana.edu/x1780.xml>

St. Olaf College

<http://www.stolaf.edu/committees/gec/genedrequirements/multicultural.html>

MULTICULTURAL STUDIES (MCS-G, MCS-D) (Core Studies)

Description:

Multicultural Studies: The requirement consists of two parts: one course and one component, intended to develop understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. The course develops understanding of cultures outside the western tradition. The component develops understanding of cultural diversity within U.S. society, with a focus on race, ethnicity or gender.

Comment on the Description:

Those working in the area of race, ethnicity and gender recognize that all three of these categories are significant primarily as social categories or constructions, rather than as biological or physical categories.

A. Global Course (MCS-G):

Guidelines:

1. Multicultural Studies introduce students to non-Western traditions and societies.
2. Cultural studies focus on patterned systems of belief and behavior that may be expressed broadly in world views, values, and social institutions, and more specifically, for example, in notions of time and space, custom, and gesture. Courses in Multicultural Studies should, therefore, treat one or more significant aspects of a society or societies in their cultural and intercultural context.

Comments: (Numbers correlate to numbered guidelines)

I. The General Education Committee acknowledges that many "non-Western" areas have been heavily influenced by Western culture, and that some cultural expressions -- say, Latin American literature -- might be interpreted as Western. We will rely on the instructor's course proposal to help us determine if a course should count for Multicultural Studies credit.

Although the description of the Multicultural Studies requirement includes Russian in its enumeration of cultures outside the Western tradition, it may be argued that Russian culture is misplaced and indeed reflects the European tradition. Therefore, courses on Russian culture and on the republics of the former Soviet Union may count as Historical Studies in Western Culture or Multicultural Studies, depending on the principal emphasis of the course.

Courses on African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans are not appropriate for Multicultural Studies course credit but are appropriate for the multicultural component.

2. Courses in a variety of disciplines may satisfy this requirement: for example, literature (in translation or in the original language), fine arts, history, philosophy, religion, behavioral sciences, as well as cultural area studies (Asian Studies, Hispanic Studies, African Studies, etc.). To fulfill the general education requirement in Multicultural Studies, a literature course, for example, might focus on the literature of a particular culture, noting, as appropriate, the influence of the culture on the literature, and vice versa.

Because these courses are multicultural, they are comparative in nature and involve to a greater or lesser extent comparison with other cultures.