GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE PROPOSAL

WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY

**SOCIAL SCIENCE**

Area: **SOCIAL SCIENCE**

Date: September 16th, 2013

College: Honors Program

Department: Honors Program

Catalog Abbreviation: HNRS

Catalog Title: Exploring Key Concepts in the Social Sciences: “The Great Salt Lake”

Course Number: 2050

Credit Hours: 3

New: X

Effective Date Spring 2014

**Background Information:**

The proposal for this series of classes was developed as the result of a white paper on Honors assessment I wrote in 2010, which was an illuminating and useful exercise that showed us the strengths and weaknesses of the Honors Program curriculum.

While our 1000 level "Perspectives" classes and our 3000 level seminar proved strong in terms of Honors and Weber State’s mission statements, the 2000 level courses in "Intellectual Traditions" were weak. This proposal aims to strengthen that middle level of Honor class offerings.

The intellectual traditions classes represent a classic approach to a liberal arts education. In contrast, this new set of course proposals allows faculty to explore significant ideas in their areas of expertise. These classes will encourage students to:

--- consider the overlap of one discipline with another;

--explore the different kinds of knowledge available to us;

--understand the strengths and limits of any particular approach to knowledge.

These classes help to broaden students' understanding of an increasingly inter-related world, preparing them for careers we can hardly imagine today.

This series of classes will create a more cohesive set of Honors courses. The student begins with "Introduction to Honors" which focuses on the different kinds of knowledge in an academic setting. This overview prepares students for the 1000 level "Perspectives" classes which introduce students to the particular knowledge base of individual disciplines.

This proposal represents the next step for students, at the 2000 level, as they explore the critical concepts and ideas of a particular academic area.

We are configuring these classes to more closely align with the General Education learning outcomes and the Honors learning outcomes. The "Intellectual Traditions" classes offer students a choice of Social Science or Humanities General Education credit whereas the new classes will be specifically designed around the General Education learning outcomes of one particular area.

A range of faculty across campus are well qualified to teach these kinds of classes.

**Course description as you want it to appear in the catalog:**

HNRS SS 2050: Exploring Key Concepts in the Disciplines: Social Sciences

(3 Credits of Social Science General Education Credit)

This course will focus on the history and development of a central concept in the Social Sciences, using original sources as the primary class texts.

**SOCIAL SCIENCE GENERAL EDUCATION MISSION STATEMENT**

*The mission of the Social Science general education area is twofold: 1. to provide students with a basic understanding of humans and their behavior within their environments; and 2. to assist students in their efforts to contribute to society in their particular professions and as responsible citizens of their various communities.*

**SOCIAL SCIENCE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

All courses proposed for inclusion in the social science breadth category must address at least **two** of the skill criteria listed below. (Mark all that apply.)

\_\_x\_\_ Written, oral, or graphic communication

\_\_\_\_ Abstract logic or reasoning

\_\_\_\_ Use of information technology

\_\_\_\_ Use of library or other research sources

\_\_x\_\_ Critical thinking, cognitive learning, and individual or group problem solving

\_\_\_\_ Collaborative group problem solving

Justification: (From the syllabus)

**Written, oral, or graphic communication**

This class will involve a lot of careful, detailed, thoroughly researched writing (three 5-7 page papers at a minimum, plus more if your final project involves writing), thus written communication is an essential skill. Discussion is integral to Honors classes, thus oral communication is an essential skill. To the extent that final projects involve graphics work (map making, painting, photography) then graphic communication is also a component of this class.

**Critical thinking**

The papers that form the core of the graded work for this class all require problem solving and critical thinking; in-class activities will involve group critical thinking and problem-solving work.

*Please note:* A sample assignment that demonstrates these two learning outcomes is included with this proposal.

A student completing a social science general education course should be able to accomplish **three** of the following five outcomes. (Mark all that apply.)

\_\_x\_ Describe a social science approach to studying and understanding human behavior.

\_\_x\_\_ Describe basic assumptions about humans and their behaviors from a social science perspective.

\_\_\_\_ Explain the basic elements and operation of a sociocultural system.

\_\_x\_\_ Explain the interactions between individuals and their sociocultural and/or natural environments.

\_\_\_\_ Apply a social science perspective to a particular issue and identify factors impacting change (past or present).

Justification: (From the syllabus)

**Describe a social science approach to studying and understanding human behavior**

The perspectives of geography, that space and place matter, that phenomena vary across space in meaningful ways, and that understanding complex geographical problems requires integrating physical, life, and social sciences, are central to this course.

**Describe basic assumptions about humans and their behaviors from a social science perspective**

The Great Salt Lake embodies change. It is a highly dynamic physical and therefore biological system, one which both impacts and is impacted by human society. As views of the lake have changed over time, so have approaches to lake management. Geography’s integrative and spatial perspectives make it particularly well suited to understanding the changing character of the coupled human-natural system that is constituted by the Great Salt Lake and the human population of the Wasatch Front. Spatial scale, another concern of geography, is also highly significant in understanding the Great Salt Lake, as forces and events acting at the global, hemispheric, and regional scales can impact the lake.

**Explain the interactions between individuals and their sociocultural and/or natural environments**

Understanding the Great Salt Lake in its current form requires understanding the interactions between people and their physical environment.

**COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING**

1. Has this proposal been discussed with and approved by the department?

I have talked with Brian Dorsey, Chair of the Geography Department who tells me this proposal does not conflict with department offerings.

2. List those general education courses in other departments with similar subject matter and explain how this course differs.

There are no general education in other departments with similar subject matter.

3. If the proposed new general education course affects course requirements or enrollments in other departments, list the departments and programs involved and attach comments from each.

The proposed course will not affect requirements or enrollments in the any other department.

4. Attach a course syllabus. Include the number of contact hours per week and the format of these hours (e.g., lecture, lab, field trip, etc.).

The syllabus and a sample assignment are attached.

Please note:

* These 2000 Level SS classes will be offered in rotation, no more than one per semester.
* As with all General Education Honors classes, a copy of the syllabus will be sent to the chair of the General Education committee to assure learning outcomes are being covered.

**New Courses Only:**

5. Discuss how you will assess student learning outcomes associated with this course

We will assess the student learning outcomes through the system we use for all Honors classes:

1. Class assessment by faculty which requires the teacher to:

* Select one student learning outcome emphasized in this class
* Explain why this learning outcome was selected
* Submit three pieces of student work with this completed assessment form to show excellent, mediocre and poor demonstrations of your learning outcome
* Comment on the three submissions in terms of your learning outcomes
* What did you learn about your class and/or teaching by doing this exercise?

This is a new assessment tool for us, so we don’t yet have results.

2. A student assessment of the class, based on learning outcomes.

**Current General Education Courses and Existing Courses Seeking General Education Status:**

6. Discuss how you have assessed the applicable or identified student learning outcomes associated with this course.

We have assessed the other classes in this series of 2000 level courses using assessment form #2 described above. We will be instituting assessment tool #1 this semester, Fall 2013.

7. How has this assessment information been used to improve student learning?

At the end of the semester, I read all the student assessments, and also share this information with each teacher.

I also write a formal letter to the faculty member, quoting from the student comments.

The student assessment enables me to open up a conversation with faculty if there’s a need for change or improvement, to drop faculty who earn poor ratings, and to encourage faculty who fulfil well their obligations to the students.

GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE APPROVAL PAGE

**Approval Sequence:**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Department Chair/Date

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Dean of College/Date

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

University Curriculum Committee/Date

Passed by Faculty Senate\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date

Effective Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_