



Interdisciplinary Capstone Courses in Gen Ed:
Recruiting Faculty and Supporting the Development of Learning Objectives for Effective Assessment
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Outline of Today's Session

1. Describe the development and evolution of our interdisciplinary gen ed capstone courses. Discuss with participants the use of such a process at their institutions.
2. Describe the management of our courses, faculty recruitment, and faculty development activities.
3. Describe and discuss our current assessment processes and some of our ongoing issues.

Background

Established in 1969, Lehman College, CUNY, is a Hispanic-serving Institution of approximately 9,000 undergraduate and 3,000 graduate students in the Bronx. Our students are overwhelmingly Hispanic and African-American, low-income, and first generation in College. A majority of junior- and senior-level students are transfers, having completed up to 60 credits, or more, at another college.

The current General Education Requirements, established in 2002 consist of: 2 courses in English composition, 1 course in Mathematics, 2 laboratory-science courses, a foreign language course, 1 course from each of 7 distribution areas, 3 writing intensive sections. Additionally, after completion of 60 credits, students, including transfer students, must complete LEH 300 and 301 and 1 additional writing intensive section.

Interdisciplinary General Education Capstone Courses

Our two upper-division (post 60-credit) interdisciplinary courses are LEH 300: Studies in the Humanities and the Sciences and LEH 301: The American Experience. Both courses are open only to juniors and seniors. Both consist of multiple sections on different topics designed by the individual faculty who teach them and both must include content from at least three disciplines. To propose a section of either of these courses, a faculty member submits a course summary and draft syllabus to the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Online Studies, who guides the course development process.

Here are titles of the sections being offered this semester –
LEH300:

Information, Property and Privacy; 20th-Century Ireland in Film and Literature; Berlin in the Twenties; Bioethics; Birth of the Renaissance in Florence; Colonial Ireland: Origins of British Empire; Comparative Political Thought: East and West; Credit Crisis of 2008: Origins and Aftermath; Dreams: The Royal Road to Art, Literature and Film; Everyday Moscow: Past and Present; Film Adaptation: Transforming Classic Texts; Heretics, Swashbucklers and Thieves: Pirates and Piracy in History and the Arts; History and Politics of Ideas: Discipline, Punishment, and the Politics of Incarceration, Law Enforcement, and Surveillance; History and Politics of Ideas: Politics of Public Higher Education; Hollywood Goes to War: WWII and the American Film Industry; Immortality: Pictures of the Afterlife; Jazz: An Examination of Structure and Improvisation in the Arts; Leisure and Recreation in a Multicultural Society; Literature as a Political Tool in Modern France; Love, Lust and in Between: the stories of I.B. Singer; Mexican

Muralism: Revolution and Other Universal Themes; Movie Heroines in a Changing World; Obsession and Infatuation; On Narcissism: Ideas and Images; Philosophy of Science; Politics and Cultures of African Peoples in Africa and the Diaspora; Problems and Narratives of Evil; Retellings, Adaptations, Appropriations; Sexuality and Sex Roles in Transnational Perspective; Telling Tales: Folk and Literary Fairytales; The Doctor-Patient Relationship: Viewed through Art and Science; Theism, Atheism, and Existentialism; Theory of Knowledge in the Arts and Sciences; Widows and Maids: Medieval Images of Women in Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales"; Women and Violence in the Contemporary Hispanic World; Women in the Bible; Writing About Pictures.

LEH301:

America and the World; American Environmental Policy; American Masculine Identity in Art and Politics; American Protest, Politics and Popular Culture; American Wars in Song and Fiction; Americans at Play: Defining a National Character through Leisure; Black is Beautiful: Issues of Culture and Narcissism in American History; Black Popular Culture; CareerVisions: Applying Career Interests to Community Concerns; "Common Sense" vs. Tyranny and Superstition; Education and Social Justice: Practicum to Address Social Issues in a Local Community; FEAR: The Cold War and American Culture; From the Old World to the New: The Irish-American Experience; Globalization and American Media; Haiti: Paths to an American Imaginary; Hip Hop and the Urban Crisis; Immigration: An American Experience; Jewish Immigrant Experience in America; Latin America: The Violent Children of Cain; Law in American Life: A Pre-Law Perspective; Media & Democracy: from Citizen Kane to the Italian Premier Berlusconi; Mexican Modernities: A Cultural History of Mexico; New York City and the Lively Arts; Politics, Culture, and Human Rights; Spaces of Terror, Cultures of Violence, Windows of Revenge; Sport and the American City; The Black Image: From Caricature to Hip-Hop Mass Marketing; The Making of Modern New York: Master Builder Robert Moses; Travel, Memory, and Memoir in the Americas; Undercover Blues: Passing in Film and Fiction; Using Multimedia to Visualize American Culture; Women & Minorities in Film and Literature; Working in Film: Images of American Labor.

Student Reactions

In 2008-09 we surveyed 268 students in LEH 300 (N=212) and LEH 301 (N=56) classes to gauge their reactions to the courses. Their responses were overwhelmingly positive. Below are examples of specific items and students' responses from LEH 300 (each item was rated on a Likert-type scale from 1 = lowest level of agreement with the statement to 10 = highest level of agreement with the statement).

The interdisciplinary approach of this course has given me a better understanding of how the individual disciplines included approach this course's specific topic. (Mean = 7.97, SD = 2.12)

The interdisciplinary approach of this course has improved my critical thinking skills. (Mean = 8.09, SD = 2.21)

In completing assignments in this course, I had to incorporate information and/or perspectives from different academic areas. (Mean = 7.32, SD= 2.66)

When given the opportunity to select reasons why they chose this particular section of LEH 300, 66% chose "This section's topic was interesting to me." and 60% chose "This section's meeting time was convenient to me."

An open-ended question asked students to identify the three perspectives used in their section. A little more than one-quarter of the students were able to list three academic disciplines; almost half were able to identify at least one discipline; however, the other half did not list any academic discipline.