GECIC Core Competencies and Understandings: Learning Outcomes

A. Artistic Expression
B. Change Over Time
C. Deep Reading
D. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity
E. Experimental Design and Analysis
F. Structured Reasoning
G. Oral Communication
H. Quantitative Data Literacy
I. Social Inquiry
J. Written Communication
A. Artistic Expression

Artistic expression is marked by innovative, creative, and artistic thinking that fosters new and expanded habits of mind. Students thrive by engaging across difference and critically investigating the world through creative processes. The study of artistic expression raise questions about the forms, traditions, meaning, and historical contexts of works in a variety of artistic media and explore issues of method, process, and personal resources in those media. These courses examine the nature of artistic expression and involve students in the creative process, embracing, exploring, and analyzing a maker’s mindset. Courses satisfying the artistic expression CC&U are suffused with the notion that the arts are a powerful and profound influence on human perception and understanding.

Artistic Expression Learning Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate a basic knowledge of the vocabulary and concepts required within the particular medium. They will be able to identify and discuss formal elements of artistic expression and to recognize traditions and conventions used in a variety of artworks within the medium studied.

2. Students will be able to analyze and interpret artistic media with a consideration of their cultural and historical contexts.

3. Students will demonstrate a basic understanding of the artistic process as well as the acquisition of the skills necessary to implement their creative choices. This includes embodied learning as relates to the visual and performing arts; for other artistic disciplines, other modes of learning may be more appropriate.

B. Change Over Time

Courses that explore change over time study the construction of political, social, and/or symbolic worlds across a specific period or epoch. They analyze the ever-changing contexts that influence human thought and action, and challenge social institutions and systems. They also teach students about the nature of historical evidence and the claims that can be drawn from it.

Change Over Time Learning Objectives

1. Students will explore how people have made the world and lived in it, and how they have created and responded to change.

2. Students will draw on different objects of study to analyze change over time: social and legal structures, cultural beliefs and practices, political and economic systems, situating each within the context of time and place.
3. Students will use and evaluate historical evidence from diverse sources (both primary and secondary); this may require bringing large amounts of information into coherent focus or interpreting single artifacts and texts. Applying a critical evaluation of sources, students will consider the limits of evidence and use it judiciously to express clear and subtle insights about the objects of study.

C. Deep Reading

Good, careful readers should do more than comprehend, i.e. “get the meaning” of any written or visual work; they should think about its nuances, its implications, the questions it raises, and possible counter-arguments or alternative perspectives. “Reading”—which in this case may go far beyond processing written language—involves simultaneously constructing and apprehending meaning from the interaction with a text.

Deep reading thus requires students to engage substantively with texts of various forms and genres—written materials, visual and aural works, both primary and secondary sources—that require diverse strategies targeted to the specific qualities of the work under consideration. Deep reading requires a close and sustained engagement on the part of the student, involving three tiered and related practices:

1. **Identification**: Students will learn to place the source in the context of its production and circulation. This includes identifying a source within the following modalities:
   - **genre/discipline** (academic or non-academic, any relevant disciplinary conventions learned through academic discourse or a knowledge framework, etc.),
   - **format** (e.g. print, digital, live performance, physical object),
   - **type** (to identify the conversations that the source belongs to and engages with; for example, primary/secondary/tertiary) and
   - **tone** (irony, humor, satire, anger, authority, and so on)

2. **Analysis**: Students will recognize and use features of a text to build a more advanced understanding of its meaning, paying attention to how its parts interact to make sense (if they do), or what larger meaning they convey. By focusing on analytical reading goals, a student will
   - Articulate an understanding of how parts and wholes interact in a pattern of meaning
   - Demonstrate awareness of the relations among ideas, structure, and other textual features

3. **Interpretation**: Students will develop a clear understanding of what the source communicates, on multiple levels. By concentrating on interpretive reading goals, a student will
   - think holistically about the source overall, moving between the micro and macro levels of comprehension.
   - learn to read selectively as well as linearly. They will focus on the important sections that may allow them to see the whole. They will read these important sections more carefully.
   - think about a source rhetorically (i.e., what the source says or demonstrates), rather than solely as a repository of information.
   - read interpretively by constructing or interacting with the complexity of texts; they will apprehend and apply interpretive frames to a reading to gain deeper, more nuanced understanding
D. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity (DEI)

DEI learning outcomes:
1. Students will systemically analyze the origins and dynamics of domestic and global structural power imbalances within and across groups as reflected through social, historical, and cultural forms and practices, and, if applicable, learn strategies to promote equity.
2. Students should demonstrate knowledge of similarities and differences in attitudes, beliefs, and experiences transnationally, cross-culturally, and across groups.
3. Students should systematically analyze how their own and others’ attitudes and beliefs are shaped by context, including both their self-identification with particular groups and the way that they may be identified with particular groups (including, but not limited to, gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, ability status, religion, class).

*Rationale for DEI learning outcomes: At the University of Richmond, we strive “to prepare students to contribute to, and succeed in, a complex, interconnected world.” In addition, we seek “to produce knowledge to address pressing problems faced by people around the globe,” while being aware of our socio-political-economic positions. Building on the Office of the President’s goal of “identifying inequities in the experiences and outcomes of students, faculty, and staff in order to address them systematically and ensure all members of our community can fully participate in the life of the institution,” we see inequities, exclusion, and a lack of diversity as systematic problems; therefore the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion must meet this problem at scale through systematic change. To say DEI must be systematic means that it is not an issue reducible to individual feelings of inclusion or exclusion, but an issue inseparable from power relations that disproportionally affect people based on their differing social-structuring positions.

DEI courses involve three interlocking elements: approach, delivery, and subject matter:
- **Approach to the material:** DEI is woven into the fabric of the course, not included as a “diversity week” or “multicultural month.”
- **Delivery:** the pedagogy of DEI courses should be informed by work in antiracist and/or inclusive pedagogy.
- **Subject matter:** instructors should have subject matter expertise in the proposed course topic. While DEI topics can vary broadly, some areas of investigation might include:
  - The critical study of race, class, gender, sex, disability, ethnicity, sexuality, age, color, nationality and religion, and/or other identity categories, especially with regard to the experiences of historically marginalized populations;
  - The analysis of laws, regulations, procedures, and policies that have enforced or opposed inequity and injustice;
  - The exploration of theories that explain, analyze or critique inequality;
  - The empirical examination of coalition and community-building, collaboration across difference, and other practices aimed at increasing inclusion.
  - The analysis of how art, science, religion, and/or other cultural and institutional practices are implicated in (both shaped by and shaping of) historical and contemporary values and practices with regard to power, privilege, and disadvantage.
E. Experimental Design and Analysis

The ability to design, perform and analyze an experiment is a fundamental skill important for all of our students. The experience necessary to successfully construct a hypothesis, devise a plan for collecting data that proves or disproves that hypothesis, and analyzing the subsequent data, is key to being a professional in modern society. The importance of this skill is not limited to science, nor social science students. Anyone who has ever planned a trip, written a business plan, built a website, home, or business, or supervised a home renovation (to mention only a few examples), benefitted from the structured, step-by-step process that they learned in previous experimental design courses. Secondarily, the ability to utilize instruments and techniques helps our students to develop dexterity, patience and precision. Such experiences also help our students to think beyond the parameters of the “given”, and to imagine new tools and discoveries that will benefit humankind.

Experimental Analysis Learning Outcomes

1. **Design**: Students will gain experience constructing experiments based on testable hypotheses, focusing on the proper controls and measurable outcomes. Experimental design should address reproducibility, variability, bias, and sample size.

2. **Implementation**: Students will execute experiments, from initial set up to final measurements. This may include the use of specialized equipment for data collection, manipulation, and measurement.

3. **Interpretation**: Students will interpret the outcome of experiments as it relates to the initial hypothesis and place these results in the context of other results related to a particular topic.

F. Structured Reasoning

Structured Reasoning courses focus on cultivating the logical and procedural thinking skills essential to solving a wide variety of problems. In these courses, students develop the ability to understand and work within abstract structured logical systems governed by specific rules. Students should learn to translate information for use within a system as well as when and how to meaningfully and precisely apply the rules of the system. Such structured logical systems are commonly studied in mathematics, computer science, linguistics, philosophy, and music as well as other disciplines.

Structured Reasoning Learning outcomes

1. Students will translate problems into and out of a structured logical system.

2. Students will solve problems within a system by precisely applying the rules of the system.

3. Students will form and assess the validity of arguments within a given structured system.
G. Oral Communication

Oral communication focuses on the stewardship of meaningful communication and critical exchange. Oral communication efficacy demonstrates understanding of the interdependence between thought and oral expression, purpose and audience, and content and form. Effective oral communication is informed, integrative and iterative, and serves to build student speaking, listening and questioning skills, confidence and emotional intelligence.

Oral Communication Learning Outcomes

1. Students will develop and deliver a central message with organization and clarity, drawing on a variety of supporting materials (explanations, examples, evidence, etc.) to inform and support.

2. Students will employ appropriate delivery and listening approaches and techniques, particularly as related to language, vocal expressiveness, and nonverbal communication choices.

3. Students will adapt delivery and content choices given different situations, contexts, audiences and interactions.

H. Quantitative Data Literacy (QDL)

QDL is a competency in working with data using quantitative methods. Beyond organization and analysis of this data, application is an essential component of QDL. Individuals with strong QDL skills can develop and execute appropriate quantitative approaches to problems coming from a variety of contexts. Furthermore, they can interrogate and communicate arguments supported by quantitative evidence in a variety of formats (using words, tables, graphs, mathematical equations, etc., as appropriate).

QDL Learning Outcomes

1. **Representation:** Students will represent information and formulate questions in quantitative form.

2. **Calculation:** Students will apply relevant numerical approaches to solve problems and analyze data.

3. **Interpretation:** Students will evaluate assumptions, identify limitations, and recognize ethical implications of particular analytical frameworks and study designs.

4. **Application:** Students will assess outcomes, draw appropriate conclusions, and communicate findings using relevant numerical evidence.
I. Social Inquiry

Social Inquiry is the study of human social behavior and its determinants. Different disciplines within this field focus on different phenomena, including the psychological mechanisms giving rise to social behavior, the ecological, institutional, economic, cultural, or political environments that shape and are shaped by social behavior, and the social behavior of groups as well as individuals. Irrespective of the discipline, Social Inquiry relies on (1) theory in order to predict patterns in social behavior, (2) systematic, empirical methods (whether quantitative or qualitative) to describe social behavior, and optimally (3) systematic analysis of social behavior to test and refine theory. Courses satisfying this competency should include the reading of or involve students in empirical research on patterns of human behavior.

Social Inquiry Learning Outcomes

1. Students will identify and describe theories of social behavior
2. Students will identify, and describe, and, ideally, employ appropriate empirical methods used to describe and analyze social behavior
3. Students will assess ability of theories of social behavior to describe and predict the observed world

J. Written Communication

Students will employ writing effectively across the curriculum to communicate their understanding and analysis of course content while also developing original insights and ideas.

Written Communication Learning Outcomes

Students will produce effective academic writing that is generally:

1. contextually attentive to audience and situation
2. persuasive, claim-driven, and/or governed by a clear perspective
3. supported by thoughtfully chosen evidence, responsibly cited
4. reflective of disciplinary conventions, as appropriate
5. composed with clarity, fluency, concision, and minimal error

Writing intensive courses are distinguished by the intentionality of the course design; they recognize and employ writing as a technology of thought. They are not simply courses that require a certain amount of writing; rather, they focus on enhancing the ability of students to communicate effectively as a core
learning goal. They use writing as a primary means of understanding, exploring, distilling, analyzing, synthesizing, interpreting and reflecting on what is being taught and learned. They draw on a range of pedagogies to develop writing capacities for a variety of learners at all levels. Put in practice, writing intensive courses will . . .

1. Provide developmental instruction in writing.
   - Begin with short, low-stakes, writing-to-learn assignments and build toward longer, formal essay assignments and research papers, written in stages of development.
   - Short papers should be returned prior to subsequent deadlines so students can benefit from feedback before they write the next paper.
   - Longer papers should have preparatory assignments, such as proposals, annotated bibliographies, and literature reviews. Professor should meet with students about the various sections of the paper.

2. Require students to workshop works-in-progress and revising completed drafts—not simply fixing errors, but rethinking, reworking, and reorganizing entire papers.
   - This may be accomplished via peer review, working with a writing consultant, and/or collaborating with professors.
   - Assignments should therefore be spread throughout the semester rather than having one large paper at the end of the semester.

3. Teach students to view writing as a situated practice and style as dependent upon disciplinary conventions, audience, and genre.
   - Assignments should be reflective of the discipline in which they are assigned in terms of their format and subject matter.
   - Reflecting the goal of critical thinking, assignments should be open-ended, without predetermined answers.
   - Students should write using the appropriate authorial “voice.”

4. Demand that all written claims be supported with appropriate evidence and require that sources are used responsibly and properly cited.
   - Students should be introduced to methods of finding appropriate sources.
   - The mode of citation should be discipline-appropriate.

5. Provide individualized instruction to each student by limiting enrollment to no more than 12 students per class.