

Core Curriculum Proposal Form

Foundational Component Area Information

Foundation Component Area: Social and Behavioral Sciences

Intent:

(1) Courses in this category focus on the application of empirical and scientific methods that contribute to the understanding of what makes us human.

(2) Courses involve the exploration of behavior and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, and events, examining their impact on the individual, society, and culture.

Briefly explain how the proposed course meets the expressed intent of the foundational component area:

A distinguishing characteristic of humans is the ability to create, develop, and document knowledge through the use of empirical and scientific methods that require higher order thinking processes. Academic Inquiry engages students with the variety of knowledge development methods we use to generate and study questions about the nature of humanity and the human condition. Course experiences engage students in creative and critical thinking skills and promote understanding of factors that influence the creation, acquisition, and affirmation of knowledge in various fields of study. The course is designed to increase students' awareness of their personal participation in the human quest to know and understand.

Every inquiry is influenced by the foundational knowledge, affirmed belief systems, methodologies and languages in its fields of study and the contextual factors surrounding its conduct, including social, temporal, technological, and ethical. The results of explorations can have dramatic impact on the individual, society, and culture. Academic Inquiry engages students with case studies of the ways inquiry is influenced by human behavior and interactions within and across fields of study, especially when inquiry that is interdisciplinary requires the interaction of individuals from different disciplines with diverse belief systems and ways of knowing. The course also explores how the results of explorations in the sciences, humanities, and the fine arts have changed our understandings of the world and what it means to be human.

(Screen 2)

Required Core Objectives

Critical Thinking
Communication Skills
Empirical and Quantitative Skills
Social Responsibility

Optional Core Objectives

Teamwork

Briefly explain how the proposed course will address the identified Core Curriculum objectives:

Critical Thinking

Academic Inquiry requires students to practice critical thinking skills during comparison and analysis of inquiry methods and ways of knowing in various fields of study. Students must apply critical thinking in all course assignments, notably in their inquiry projects.

Communication Skills

Successful completion of the inquiry project requires both an oral and written report of the exploration and its findings, including the formulation of questions for further study.

Empirical and Quantitative Skills

Readings of inquiries in the various fields of study will examine the use of empirical and quantitative skills by inquirers, how they are used and what they uncover. Inquiry projects will require students to collect empirical and quantitative data applicable to their exploration and present interpretation of their findings, using the appropriate empirical and quantitative language.

Social Responsibility

The study of examples of inquiry in various fields will include the civic, social, cultural, and global relevance of how questions are posed and answered.

Team Work (Optional)

In the group project format, students will reach consensus to formulate questions for in-depth study. Students will collaborate on a team project to investigate their question from various perspectives.

Assessment Plan (Separate pdf will be uploaded.)

Syllabus (Separate pdf will be uploaded.)

Is there any additional information relevant to the proposal that will help the committee in the review process?

Purpose of the Course: The Academic Inquiry (AI) course is part of a larger freshman initiative that is designed to introduce students to the academy and provide them with (1) a combination of academic challenge and institutional support and (2) an environment where quality faculty-student relationships can develop. Although the course was designed with first-time freshmen in mind, there will be some sections of the course designed and offered specifically for transfer students.

Background of Course Development: The AI course is an outgrowth of recommendations initially set forth by the Freshman Academic Experience Task Force formed by the Provost (2010-2011). The Task Force was composed of representatives from all UTSA colleges, the Writing Program, the Colleges' Freshman Advising Center, and the Tomas Rivera Center. Per our charge, we engaged in a yearlong study of steps we might take to ease students' transition to college while introducing them to the rigors of college-level coursework.

Upon acceptance of the Task Force recommendations, the Provost formed the Freshman Focus Steering Committee (2011-2012) to carefully consider implementation of the Task Force's recommendations. This proposal was initially conceptualized by the Task Force, then developed by the AI sub-committee and vetted by the full Freshman Focus Steering Committee. All committees were/are composed of faculty from across all academic units of the University.

Request of CCC: Thus, the Freshman Focus Steering Committee respectfully requests that the University Core Curriculum Committee expand the Social & Behavioral Sciences component to 6 SCHs and designate this course as a requirement to fulfill 3 SCHs (of the 6 SCHs) for this component.